

# Political Engagement and Anti-System Behavior: Beyond Activity and Passivity in Democratic Participation<sup>1</sup>

Many considerations of political behavior have been concerned with understanding and predicting individuals' civic activity. To do this, a great deal of scholarship has dichotomized outcome variation using observational criteria for active participation and passive non-participation. Other variations segregate “empowered”, “mobilized”, or “engaged” advocates from “apathetic”, “disinterested”, or “disadvantaged” counterparts. But are all forms of activity the same? Are all forms of passivity the same?

For the purposes of many examinations, the answer has been effectively ‘yes’. The most prominent studies which look at civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963), mobilization (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), voluntarism (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995), and associational membership (Putnam 1993) have considered the causes of specific activities that qualify as activism in the scope of democratic claims-making. This is sometimes limited to voting behavior, but is regularly expanded to also consider organizational belonging, volunteerism, social movements and other forms of political activity. The inactive bisection is composed of those who choose not to participate in civic life in the germane ways under consideration. However, should it matter if an examination of democratic participation does not differentiate between the activity of a unionist who writes letters to senators and the activism of a disillusioned rioter who uses violence to make a point?

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<sup>1</sup> The study of alienation makes a person especially aware and appreciative of supportive communities. I am deeply grateful for the guidance and commentary of a variety of people, each of whom took the time to listen to or read my ideas and share their own. In particular, I am indebted to Anna Boucher, Ryan Enos, John Gledhill, Peter Hall, David Held, Christian Joppke, Henrietta Moore, Stephen N. Smith and John B. Thompson. The structure of my ideas benefited immensely from the generous advice of Archon Fung. And finally, I am thankful for the wisdom and collegiality of Sidney Verba, who embraced me and my scholarship—which is occasionally critical of his own—in the interest of furthering social science.

Does it matter that these examinations do not differentiate between the passivity of a single working mother who is too busy to advocate and a permanently estranged person on society's periphery? It depends what we are interested in explaining—how, or how much.

Thus far, the seminal studies mentioned above and the wide-ranging discussions they stimulated have been less concerned about the nature of civic engagement or disengagement, and more concerned with their intensity. Contemporary scholarship is consumed by the question of why some people participate more than others, and to date, a broadly supported conclusion is that resource possession is the most determinant variable affecting people's behavior. This has been explained as socioeconomic status (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), education (Peterson 1990), civic skills (Ayala 2000), social networks (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Lake and Huckfeldt 1998; McClurg 2003), and internet usage (Weber et al. 2003), among many other ways.<sup>2</sup> To account for more than “how much” participation, we must conceptualize the participation decision not only as a choice between activity and inactivity, but rather as a choice of a particular type of political activity among a set of potential acts (Leighley 1995: 198). This requires the complication of the conventional dichotomy between the active and the passive. This is a matter of valence.

In this paper, I contend that current examinations of activity and passivity within the democratic political system should be complicated by considering the position of many active and passive individuals outside of or against the democratic political system. Such estrangement and opposition assumes many different forms. And if political science accounts of “participation” are limited by their parsimony, sociological accounts of “alienation” (or even related ideas of anomie, marginality, and estrangement) have been hindered by a vagueness that prohibits the concept's application as a meaningful term of empirical reference. It doesn't help

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<sup>2</sup> Other prominent theories have pointed to differences in individual personality (Milbrath 1965), rationality (Green and Shapiro 1994), and institutional opportunity structures ( See McAdam, et al. 1999; Meyer 2004). Relevantly, explanations related to political opportunity have been criticized for ignoring the variability in individual actors' capacity to recognize and take advantage of political opportunities (See Tarrow 1998).

that inactivity is largely unobservable. The conversion of these theoretical ideas into systematic empirical theory therefore requires further rigorous and comprehensive analyses of types of political activity and the development of empirical indicators (Finifter, 1970).

In the following article, I intend to lay the groundwork for an empirical theory that connects the sociological approach to alienation and the political scientific approach to engagement as two sides of the same coin. Indeed, I argue that each approach only deals with half of a coherent phenomenon. Although I suspect that each respective half is accurately understood in isolation, my perspective is critical of both and constructive in a way that employs ideas from each side to build a more comprehensive model of political activity and passivity. Given the more developed empirical understanding of political engagement, I begin by critically examining contemporary understandings of alienation and its multiple dimensions. From this review, I find that its subjective and unspecific conceptualization undermines its application as an empirical descriptor. In response, I begin the process of empirical classification by defining *anti-system behavior* as an observable manifestation of political alienation, and contrast it with current understandings of engagement with the political system. This allows us to complicate current classifications of active and passive political behavior with a model that accounts for valence.

By considering the valence of activity and passivity, we expand variation in outcomes. In so doing, we may re-evaluate explanatory variables for more specific relationships. Accordingly, the remainder of the article hypothesizes that consideration of other forms of political behavior will limit the explanatory power of resource-based models. I argue that while resource-based understandings may predict undifferentiated activity or inactivity within the political system, engaged and anti-system behavior is significantly underpinned by variable expectations of the political system and perceptions of political efficacy. I then apply this model and its hypotheses to three relevant cases to exhibit their explanatory capacity, and subsequently outline possible ways to operationalize them in scholarly practice.

## Conceptualizing Contemporary Alienation

Few concepts in political and social thought are as amorphous as the idea of alienation. This is mostly from simple overuse, which if nothing else, reflects the perceived relevance of the term in such a vast variety of intellectual and practical spheres. Indeed, alienation—a term first popularized by Marx and Engels with reference to a grueling system of unrestrained capitalism supervised by a disconnected state—has found tantamount significance in describing and understanding attitudes and civic behavior in modern democratic political systems.<sup>3</sup> In the contemporary era, this is principally thanks to an increasingly liberalized global economy that has fostered enormous inequality and exploitation as much as it has created new opportunities for prosperity. It is also thanks to individual actors' enhanced capacity to express discontent and resist a weakening state structure, which appears to be compensating for this debility by expanding the imposition of its oversight often for the sake of its own preservation. With such transformations in the structure of modern societies and political communities, "alienation" has served as a convenient way to describe the amorphous but conceivably interrelated collection of political behaviors that reflect some degree of estrangement from the political system. Over the years, alienation has been employed to describe Marxian rifts between the working classes and bourgeoisie (Marx 1956; 1959; 1963), Durkheimian anomie of secular capitalists' atomization (1952; 1964), the exclusion or quietism of minority groups, the political violence of revolutionary movements, and more contemporarily, general "non-participation."

The meaning and impact of alienation has been continuously examined throughout different historical periods. However the bulk of scholarly attempts to conclusively define its nature and expression was carried out in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>4</sup> It was in this era that Robert

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<sup>3</sup> For examples of this from different periods, see Johnson, 1973 and Langman and Kalekin-Fishman, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief history of the idea of alienation, see Josephson, Eric and Mary Josephson, *Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society* (New York: Dell, 1962) and also Bell, Daniel, "The Rediscovery of Alienation: Some Notes Along the Quest for the Historical Marx," *Journal of Philosophy*, 56 (November 1959), pages 933-952. Further works unmentioned in this section from this time period include McDill, Edward L. and Jeanne Ridley, "Status Anomia Political Alienation and Political Participation," *American Journal of Sociology*, 68 (September 1962), pages 205-

Nisbet mused, “Synonyms of alienation have a foremost place in studies of human relations. Investigations of the ‘unattached,’ the ‘marginal,’ the ‘obsessive,’ the ‘normless,’ and the ‘isolated’ individual all testify to the central place occupied by the hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science...It has become nearly as prevalent as the doctrine of enlightened self-interest was two generations ago” (Nisbet, 1953: 15). Melvin Seeman provided grist for the mill when he published his influential article, “On the Meaning of Alienation” in the *American Sociological Review* in December 1959. In this piece, Seeman proposes five variants of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. In the interest of paving the way for future studies that correlate these alternative meanings with social conditions and behavioral responses, Seeman compared the employment of alienation in previous works.

Since then, the vast majority of literature has sought to refine Seeman’s list of understandings or apply them socio-psychologically. Zeller, et al (1980) sought to explore alienation’s multidimensionality and demonstrate its quantitative separability into the four Seeman-inspired variables of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and social isolation. Their data suggested substantial stability in the dimensions of alienation over an eight-year period. In a significant empirical contribution, Finifter (1970) connected four similar dimensions of alienation to existing political attitudes. Later, in arguing that political alienation is actually a significant element of political systems, David Schwartz (1973: 3) wrote that “recent empirical research has found alienation to be significantly associated with a wide range of important political attitudes and behaviors,” including revolutionary activities, low or withdrawn political interest and participation, negative attitudes toward governmental organizations, rioting, support for demagogues, non-voting and protest voting, and participation in radical right-wing activities.

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213; and Meier, Dorothea Meier and Wendell Bell, “Anomia and Differential Access to the Achievement of Life Goals,” *American Sociological Review*, 24 (April 1959), pages 189-202.

However, in establishing the many variants and expressions of alienation, the term serves as a weak, flawed reference for social scientific enquiry. The different “dimensions” described and measured by Seeman, Finifter, and Zeller, et al all simply suggest that “alienation” is a sociological construct that is too plastic to facilitate explicit reference or any real examination of its effects. This ambiguity enables a plethora of versatile, if not utterly paradoxical employments of the term. Following a thorough discussion in Johnson (1973), principal points of contestation revolve around questions of (1) whether alienation should be used as an active transitive verb (“one person alienates another”) or in passive constructions (“something or someone is alienated,” or “is being alienated”); (2) whether the individual or group deliberately rebuffs the efforts of its society to include or—and not mutually exclusively—if the society is actually the exclusionary actor; (3) whether the alienated entity is conscious of its occurrence or not; and 4) whether alienation is experienced individually or collectively. In light of this ambiguity, Johnson (1973) wrote that the term exists as a “panchreston”—a word which, in attempting to explain all, essentially explains nothing.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond this ambiguity, the dimensions of alienation—powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation—are conventionally thought to occur co-dependently. (See Olsen, 1969: 291; Zeller, et al, 1980: 1202). But in the contemporary era, this is not necessarily true. Indeed, there are diverse counterexamples demonstrating powerlessness in a strongly integrated normative community (many minority communities or devolved nations), or normlessness among a collective (yuppies or trade colleagues).

One of the reasons that this has not been a major problem thus far is because alienation has been mostly considered theoretically. When it has been examined in practice, it has generally been reflected by “non-participation”. Indeed, without a semblance of agreement about the meaning of alienation, investigations into the subject often entail limited empirical evidence

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<sup>5</sup> The word “panchreston,” however, is from Hardin, George, “Meaninglessness of the word protoplasm,” *Scientific Monthly*, 1956, 82, pages 112-120.

in support of their contentions. There is thus a distinct need for a conception of alienation that draws upon classic theories of social failure, relates to contemporary non-participation in the field, and identifies specific empirical expressions to be examined and explained. The following section of this article begins to develop a practical path forward.

## **Introducing Anti-System Behavior**

The first step is to specify the empirical form and scope of the “alienated political behavior” that concerns this discussion. In providing citizens with the ability to self-govern, democracies facilitate a range of advocacy tactics which enable ordinary people to express their ideas, preferences and exert influence over the direction of their society. This range of actions is nevertheless restricted to those tactics which do not entail coercion or infringement upon the capacity of others to participate as well. Such tactics—while perhaps efficacious—circumvent the system’s established channels for influence and, in doing so, undermine its capacity to reflect popular will. Even with this concern for responding to popular will, democracies also depend on a citizenry that is confident in the government’s capacity to govern without constant reinforcement. Indeed, democracies make myriad daily decisions without public consultation. To make this form of self-governance function effectively then, the system simultaneously depends on citizens’ generally passive vigilance of government action and, when germane, citizens’ active intervention to express dissatisfaction. While voting in elections represents an appointed opportunity for intervention, most other forms of voluntary participation are subject to the impulsive, inspired desire of citizens to advocate. In this spirit, passivity with the readiness to act and participation within democratic channels can be thought to support such a political system.

Alienated political behavior can therefore be thought to exist in contraposition to the political system, outside the boundaries of its procedures of consultation. The first such contraposition exists among political advocates who act to impose their preferences on the

political system by employing tactics that circumvent the system's established channels for influence and, in doing so, undermine its capacity to reflect popular will. As suggested above, such activities may include violence, bribery, exclusivist hate groups, intimidation, or campaigning for civic abstinence. The second contraposition exists among individuals with potential cause to advocate who choose to never make any claims of the system—a conscious withdrawal. The key here is that such individuals' passivity is not a conscious "taking a step back" with an intention to return when it is more feasible or they feel more motivated. Instead, it represents a conscious commitment to inactivity, the removal of oneself as a stakeholder in the political system, regardless of their desire for reform.

While several theoretical and empirical models of political behavior effectively classify forms and rationales for participation, they do not take up the issue of extreme forms of political activism and committed non-participation. I therefore complicate earlier understandings of political alienation to entail a sub-type that I term *anti-system behavior*. The *active* variant encompasses citizens' disruption of the political system. The *passive* variant encompasses citizens' withdrawal from the political system.

The *active* anti-system individual is committed to behavior that undermines or attempts to topple the democratic system. He or she may engage in clubs, organizations, and other political efforts that become substitutes for the democratic political system or are detrimental to it. His or her form of protest is not intended to reform the system, but to defeat it.<sup>6</sup> An example might be someone espousing or practicing political violence, but also an individual who encourages others to not vote or otherwise participate. This removes the active anti-system individual from political claims-making, along with those they are able to persuade. This definition excludes strong critics of the democratic political system who see struggles against

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Sartori's theory of anti-system parties considers that an anti-system party (like the PCI) may ultimately become a component of the system, if accepted after the use of anti-system means. While the same issue lingers here, this article and its conceptualization of political behavior is concerned with means—unconditional on the normative question about whether ultimate incorporation justifies them.

“powers-that-be” as a struggle for improving democracy in a system that they perceive to have become less democratic. As long as such a movement attempts to improve the democracy in non-coercive ways that do not infringe on others’ capacity to dissent, there is no reason to think of them as anti-system. Indeed, such movements attempt to improve the system using the mechanisms of the system.

The *passive* anti-system individual does not voluntarily participate in democratic political life. He or she is withdrawn. As previously discussed, apathy in the form of non-participation does not necessarily mean a person is alienated. They may be satisfied, complacent, ignorant or lack the resources to participate. So passive anti-system behavior encompasses individuals’ conscious removal from the political system. Unlike active anti-system behavior, this passive variant neither intentionally weakens the democratic system, nor intentionally hinders or overrides other citizens’ capacity to make claims. Instead, it allows disagreeable governance to continue, under circumstances which citizens believe they have a legitimate grievance. Withdrawal leaves a lack of government accountability, a less representative political system, and a widening social rift between those citizens who make claims of the system and those who do not. Whereas active anti-system behavior circumvents the democracy’s mechanisms and impairs the capacity of other citizens to make claims, passive anti-system behavior atrophies democratic mechanisms and mutes the claims of the alienated themselves.

Anti-system behavior has few antecedent definitions in political science and political sociology, particularly in studies of democracies. Most other works of scholarship use the term without definition, often in reference to deviant behavior.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most significant use was by Edward N. Muller, Thomas O. Jukam, and Mitchell A. Seligson, in their 1982 article,

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that, in defining “anti-system” *political parties*, Capoccia makes a distinction between “ideological anti-systemness” and “relational anti-systemness.” He argues that “ideological anti-systemness” regards a political party’s opposition to the democratic system, while “relational anti-systemness” regards the party’s opposition to the values of the democratic system. This study is concerned with both forms of “anti-systemness” as it is expressed in individual actors’ behavior. See Capoccia, Giovanni. C. 2002. “Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 14, pages 9-35.

“Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior.” In this paper, the authors define “antisystem behavior”—like others—as exclusively active or aggressive in nature. It included: “1) fights with police or other demonstrators, 2) a wildcat or unofficial strike, 3) a group who refused to pay taxes, 4) taking over factories, offices, or other buildings, and 5) a group which wanted to overthrow the government by violent means.” I would argue that there is nothing anti-democratic about sit-ins, unofficial demonstrations, or civil disobedience in the form of tax evasion—even if they may be illegal. Historically, there have been many peaceful, democratic movements that have advocated a political position by using forms of disobedience that do not infringe on others capacity to express themselves or employ forms of coercion. Martin Luther King, Henry David Thoreau and Cesar Chavez were each imprisoned for ostensibly illegal but ultimately non-coercive activities to advocate their political will.

For this reason, contemporary legality is not a useful criterion for anti-system behavior. Illegal behavior may strengthen the system, as long as it is not coercive or infringing on others’ advocacy. Laws are variable, and while some are made to facilitate equal participation, others are made to entrench the status quo. From a more critical perspective, it is worth underscoring that the distinction made here is not concerned with normatively validating or invalidating forms of political behavior. Indeed, all behavioral choices may exist equally authentically in the democratic political system. This distinction instead objectively acknowledges that anti-system behavior hinders the ability of the anti-system individuals and others to make claims and thrive in the democratic system. It is not unique to one group or one type of democracy.

### ***Counterfactual: Engagement***

The next step is to define the inferred counterfactual to anti-system behavior. In many ways, David Easton’s idea of “diffuse support” encompasses the general affect for the entire political system (1965: 272) that is lacking among anti-system individuals. Not dependent on specific benefits or deprivations, diffuse support suggests individuals’ connection to the political

system—whether he or she is active or passively supportive. However, without precise empirical references, diffuse support has been overshadowed as a term of political behavior scholarship in favor of “engagement”. Like alienation, theories of active engagement exist as abstract ideals, but engagement ideals are more applicable to empirical reality. They also tend to supplement one another, rather than compete with one another. For example, Putnam’s associationalism would work alongside the cognitive engagement suggested by Zukin, et al (2006), rather than mitigate its impact. For this reason, I have elected to merely adumbrate the various expressions of active engagement below. Drawn from a variety of sources, the list is not exhaustive but is a comprehensive practical application of different forms of active engagement.

- a. Voting and jury duty
- b. Party membership
- c. Participation in a commune, union, or cooperative
- d. Affiliation with an NGO, a special interest or advocacy group
- e. Participation in community activity or a peaceful protest, strike, civil disobedience, etc.
- f. Writing or corresponding with an elected representative or official
- g. Attending meetings of community authorities, or other local boards
- h. Serving in or running for a position as an elected official
- i. “Cognitive” engagement: Regularly reading news publications and following political/community news
- j. Non-compulsory volunteer or community service work
- k. Membership to a sports team/league, church or mosque organization, music band or choral society, or other inclusive club/group that builds normative agreement or social capital
- l. Writing letters to the editor, blogging, or engaging in other means of public or collective political expression

For the purposes of this article, the relative quality of the different modes is less important than their basic employment, as there is no singular activity above that necessarily triggers the state of ideal active engagement. Instead there are various that suggest a certain degree of engagement, and the absence of anti-system behavior. As a result, any combination of activities from the list above suffices to suggest that a subject is engaged in behavior that makes peaceful claims of the democratic system and its spheres of dialogue. We are thus able to embrace a variety of forms of active political engagement because each indicates a general connection to the political system.

Correspondingly, I understand passive engagement as a state of inactivity within the democratic political system. Such a state may be occupied by someone who is complacent, satisfied, lazy, ignorant, or otherwise too busy to actively participate. However, if motivated or enabled, the passively engaged person would be inclined to become active in the ways adumbrated above. This complicates current ideas of engagement by acknowledging that the engaged take breaks from active civic life without necessarily withdrawing from the political system.

### ***Modeling Anti-System Behavior***

Figure One (on the next page) is a dynamic model of analytical types of engaged and anti-system behavior, given these passive and active distinctions.<sup>8</sup> It is separated into four quadrants delineating activity and passivity, engagement and anti-system behavior. In Quadrant II, those citizens engaging in conventional and unorthodox forms of political and civic engagement are represented. This list is not necessarily exhaustive but derived from a compilation of common forms of engagement. While they may be actively engaged for normative, instrumentalist or traditionalist reasons, they are nevertheless observably active. (See Held, 2006: 251). Quadrant I contains those citizens who are actively attempting to undermine, disrupt or destroy the political system. These individuals are actively anti-system. Quadrant III is composed of those citizens who report themselves to be temporarily inactive in the democratic political system. Some of these individuals feel no current motivation to participate. Others are too busy with other matters of priority. Still others might be fully satisfied, or might simply not know the means of participation. As discussed earlier, democratic governance—to some extent—depends that all

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<sup>8</sup> This diagram is partially based on one created by Stephen Koff. See Koff, Stephen, “The Political Use of the Concept of Alienation,” in Frank Johnson (ed.), *Alienation: Concept, Term and Meaning* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pages 269-293.

ENGAGED	ANTI-SYSTEM
<p><b>II. Active:</b> State of active participation within the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Voting</li> <li>b. Party membership</li> <li>c. Commune, union, cooperative</li> <li>d. Advocacy group, NGO</li> <li>e. Non-violent protests, civil disobedience</li> <li>f. Correspondence with an elected official</li> <li>g. Civic meeting attendance</li> <li>h. Serving in or running for public office</li> <li>i. Follow political news regularly</li> <li>j. Volunteer or community work</li> <li>k. Social capital-building activity</li> <li>l. Political self-expression</li> </ul>	<p><b>I. Active:</b> Activity that impairs, circumvents, disrupts or overthrows the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Violence for political purpose</li> <li>b. Membership in an exclusivist organization</li> <li>c. Revolutionary action</li> <li>d. Clandestine activity</li> </ul>
<p><b>III. Passive:</b> State of inactivity within the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Complacent, satisfied</li> <li>b. Ignorant, disinterested</li> <li>c. Otherwise occupied</li> </ul>	<p><b>IV. Passive:</b> Committed inactivity and withdrawal from the system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Rejection</li> <li>b. Withdrawal</li> </ul>

**Figure One: Anti-System Behavior and Engagement** *The four quadrants model the observable behavior of different individuals who are anti-system or engaged, passively or actively.*

citizens are complacent and trustful enough to not participate in the deliberation of every political issue, but only those chosen with discretion. Finally, Quadrant IV encompasses those citizens who report having permanently withdrawn from the sphere of civic life. These individuals are passively anti-system.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the discussion of non-participation and passivity in the context of “political behavior” complicates the way we conventionally conceive of “behavior.” Indeed, the term connotes an affirmative nature. However, I think it is reasonable to consider abstention, withdrawal and rejection as behavioral as more activist forms. Indeed, if actors must choose to participate, then they must also choose to abstain. Volition is still entailed.

The activism of democratic engagers (Quadrant II) and active anti-system individuals (Quadrant I) is easily distinguishable by the nature of their observable behavior and affiliations. However, the difference between the passivity of individuals engaged within the democracy (Quadrant III) and the passivity of anti-system individuals (Quadrant IV) is not behaviorally observable. Indeed, both are inactive. Instead, the difference is that the passive anti-system individuals *never* intend to become active democrats, while the passively engaged individuals still *may*, given a change in circumstances or resources. While the former is effectively divesting from participatory opportunities, the latter is effectively abstaining. In this spirit, the distinction is not about whether an individual accepts the public goods and provisions afforded by the political system, like health services, welfare, education, or housing. Consumption does not indicate support or participation as much as it suggests instrumentalism. The distinction suggests the need to solicit individual actors' intentions.

A complication arises when individual actors occupy more than one classification simultaneously. These borderline examples include:

- Type I/II* an actor who is democratically active about some issues and complacent about others;
- Type II/III* an actor who engages in both active democratic engagement and active anti-system behavior (such as an activist who occasionally uses violence);
- Type III/IV* an individual who is universally passive, envisions future action in some respects, but is otherwise withdrawn.

Such cases are hardly anomalies; indeed, they are conventional. In these cases, it is useful suggest the key triggers of classification. Any actor who exhibits active anti-system behavior (*Type II/III*) should be considered actively anti-system, because their choice to rebel against or circumvent the system corrupts any other activity within it. Any actor that is ever actively democratic and not actively anti-system (*Type I/II*) may be classified as actively democratic, as this reflects a (very common) form of selective activism. Passive democratic engagement is therefore characterized by universal passivity with openness to one-day engaging (*Type III/IV*),

while passive anti-system behavior is characterized by withdrawal without any intention to one-day engage.

Further to this point, it is important to note that the model's boundaries are by no means rigid. The primary analytical types are abstractions from reality, capturing important behavioral aspects. As illustrated by the gradient separating the ideals of engaged and anti-system behavior, there are possibilities for movement between categories. This represents the free flowing nature of political capital.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is possible to observe that individuals who normally work within the democratic system may onetime stray into exclusivist organizations or efforts undermining the democratic process. And it is possible that those once committed to the destruction of the democratic system find a way to satisfy their goals by reforming the system, rather than by upending it. It is equally possible that citizens may move from passive withdrawal to inspired anti-system behavior, at different times and with regard to different issues. This model therefore suggests that political behavior—both engagement and anti-system—may have an attitudinal basis. If so, it could be hypothesized that anti-system behavior is to some degree dependent on how the world is interpreted by the agent.

## **Explaining Anti-System Behavior**

This model of political behavior unites political science and sociological approaches to participation and alienation. Currently, many political science accounts—defined by the progress of resource-based models—encompass the left side of the figure, but miss the right side. The discussed sociological accounts of alienation consider the deviance and estrangement on the right side, but in a way that is largely disconnected from the engagement on the left side. Thousands of tests have proven the merit of resource-based models in their ability to predict the intensity of civic engagement—between passive and active (down to up, and up to down)—with

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<sup>10</sup> This shiftiness across time means that behavior (and its causal factors) can be inquired at different moments, and movement between boxes can be traced. Indeed, it would be interesting to see trends of movement as they relate to changes in the measurement of independent variables and different social or political contexts.

reasonable accuracy (perhaps on both sides of the figure). However, resource-based models are unable to account for valence (left to right, and right to left). In response, I hypothesize that perceptions are salient indicators of whether actors will be engaged or anti-system, on the left or right sides of Figure One.

Historical conceptual understandings of alienation have always acknowledged the relevance of attitudes and interpretive biases. For many definitions, alienation *is* an attitude. However, empirically, political and sociological analyses have for the most part connected alienated political behavior to structural conditions such as poverty, government policy, institutions and other challenges that suggest the objectification of individual actors rather than credit their own independent interpretative capacities. On the contrary, I hypothesize that anti-system behavior is very much subject to individuals' perceptions and expectations (of themselves and the political system)—that the spectrum of engagement patterns within a common sociopolitical environment is associated with people's diverse interpretations of that common sociopolitical environment.

This hypothesis connects closely to scholarship about the role of political efficacy. Political efficacy was originally defined as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, that is, that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties” (Campbell, Gurin and Miller 1954: 187). This idea was also acknowledged by Almond and Verba, who wrote that “the belief in one's competence is a key political attitude” (1963: 257). Importantly, this concept was later distinguished into considerations of internal political efficacy—perceived personal competence—and external political efficacy—perceived system responsiveness (Balch 1974; MacPherson et al. 1977). These ideas were more recently expanded by Yeich and Levine (1994: 260) who argue as well for the relevance of collective political efficacy, “perceptions of system responsiveness to collective demands for change.” A vast variety of studies have followed, many of which have demonstrated the impact of variable

political efficacy measures on voting or political mobilization.<sup>11</sup> But does the role of political efficacy matter when we're measuring different forms of active engagement? Indeed, while some scholars find positive correlations between internal and external efficacy and its impact on voting (Zimmerman and Rappaport 1988), others have contended that high perceived personal competence (internal) and low perceived system responsiveness (external) is the optimal combination for protest mobilization (Craig and Maggioletto 1981). This conclusion suggests that different valences of activity are likely subject to the interactions of different independent variables.

To put it simply, I hypothesize that anti-system behavior is underpinned by the perception that the democratic political system is not ultimately interested in the individual's welfare or receptive to their ideas. Reactions to the following set of statements (and potentially other related statements) help identify such a worldview:<sup>12</sup>

- 1) My government and society is not or is no longer interested in my welfare, or the welfare of people like me.
- 2) At a most basic level, this country's democratic system does not consult or no longer consults the views of citizens like me.
- 3) It is not possible or no longer possible for the political system to change for the better.
- 4) I am cannot produce the changes I want to see through forms of peaceful political participation, self-expression or collective action.
- 5) My beliefs and values do not or no longer connect with the dominant beliefs and values of my government and society.

In many ways, this resonates with Hegel's contention that individuals become alienated from their societies when their views or values conflict with those of their community. Indeed, Hegel links alienation to the individual's lost sense of control of their world, their transformation from actors into spectators.

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<sup>11</sup> See Niemi, Craig and Mattei 1991; Craig, Niemi and Silver, 1990; Bowler and Donovan 2002; Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Pinkleton, Um and Austin 2002. For a more complete list, see Morrell, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Note that these questions are not phrased for delivery in a survey setting.

<b>ENGAGED</b>	<b>ANTI-SYSTEM</b>
<p><b>II. Active:</b> State of active participation within the system:</p> <p>Small or no discrepancy between expectations of the political system and perceived levels of fulfillment.</p>	<p><b>I. Active:</b> Activity that impairs, circumvents, disrupts or overthrows the system:</p> <p>Large discrepancy between expectations of the political system and perceived levels of fulfillment.</p>
<p><b>III. Passive:</b> State of inactivity within the system:</p> <p>Small or no discrepancy between expectations of the political system and perceived levels of fulfillment.</p>	<p><b>IV. Passive:</b> Committed inactivity and withdrawal from the system</p> <p>Extremely low expectations of the political system and oneself.</p>

**Figure Two: Hypothesis** *The four quadrants model the perceptions and expectations of different individuals who are anti-system or engaged, passively or actively.*

I suspect this is a matter of individuals’ expectations about their system’s responsiveness, their expectations of their own power, and their perceptions of whether or not these expectations are fulfilled in practice. Conventionally known as “subjective status deprivation”, the discrepancy of expectations and perceived fulfillment pertains to economic status, and more relevantly here, political and social status. In practice, I anticipate that those individuals with greater discrepancies will be more likely to exhibit active anti-system behavior. Meanwhile, those individuals with smaller discrepancies will be more likely to demonstrate active or passive engagement with the political system. And those individuals with very base expectations of the political system will withdraw from it, on the logic that the individual actor will neither disrupt nor engage a political system he expects nothing from in the first place. (See Figure Two.)

The salience of these ideas will ultimately depend on fieldwork, where their observable implications can be tested: If my hypothesis about the salience of individuals' expectations and perceptions is accurate, individuals engaging in active anti-system behavior will have high expectations of the political system to deliver certain levels of justice, equality, and liberty but perceive low attainment; Meanwhile, individuals reporting passive anti-system behavior will have very low expectations; Democratic activists and the complacent will have expectations that are somewhat or mostly fulfilled by the political system.

### **Applying Anti-System Behavior**

In the interest of demonstrating the conceptual and practical utility of this new model and its accompanying typology, it is useful to consider some of the more prominent cases in which political behavior perplexes established notions of civic engagement and alienation. In this section, I will briefly consider current debates about political behavior among African Americans, Islamists in Western democracies, and Roma enclaves within European civil society. At the end of this section, general observations from these stylized cases will be classified in the model figure as a sample application of the concepts discussed thus far.

#### ***Islamists in the West***

The British Bangladeshi community in London's East End is almost uniformly working-class. Average income among the borough's Bangladeshis is £182.00 per week, and 45% of the Bangladeshi community has no educational qualifications (Korom Ali, 2009). According to the Greater London Authority (2002), the British Bangladeshi community has the highest levels of unemployment, poorest housing, and lowest levels of educational attainment and health in the United Kingdom. It reports that 20% of Bangladeshis live in seriously overcrowded housing, and 80% have an income below the national average. Among all of England's local authorities, Tower Hamlets (the East End's borough) is the second most disadvantaged (Toynbee Hall,

2006). With a quarter of the borough's households earning an annual income below £15,000, Tower Hamlets is the 8<sup>th</sup> most income-deprived, and the 32<sup>nd</sup> most employment-deprived in the UK. This is a community with shallow roots in the British democracy (or any democracy), frequently working multiple jobs to barely support some of Britain's largest families (many care for five or six children)—a textbook case of resource shortage.

Considering this resource deprivation, London's East End Bangladeshis are remarkably active citizens. The community is exceptionally cohesive, as deficient conditions have created extraordinary bonds of communal interdependency. The borough's myriad meetings, protests, clubs, and community organizations create a village atmosphere that has out-muscled nearly all of the East End's white working class cockneys, most of whom have moved east toward Essex over the last 30 years. Local Bangladeshi groups and civic causes seek to mitigate poverty, improve family health, promote development in their native province of Sylhet, foster religious ethics, and organize local cultural events. Resource-based models would most likely explain such elevated levels of civic engagement among both political elites and the less educated by pointing to the civic skills promoted by the "bari" (village) political culture and its functional interdependencies.

Over the past three decades, there has been a steady rise in Muslims' adherence to Islamist doctrine, which advocates the application of Islamic jurisprudence to non-religious sectors of life throughout North America and Europe (not to mention Muslim majority countries). Without much fanfare, this has led to the rapid expansion of the Islamic finance industry, halal dining, Islamic schools in the West, and low military enrollment rates among Muslim citizens. Much more polemically, greater Islamism has also led to the introduction of shari'ah courts in selected venues, wider reference to Quranic doctrine in protesting government actions, and campaigns for the creation of an Islamic state (*khalifah*) in the place of current democracies. Such references to scripture in lieu of government legislation have prompted

arguments that Islamist individuals are radically alienated from their societies and the structure of democratic engagement.

Where earlier ideas of alienation are ambiguous about such complicated circumstances, the typology of anti-system behavior enables us to make systematic classifications and determinations. The anti-system model differentiates political behavior that employs the system's mechanisms from that which circumvents or disrupts democratic processes of expression, consultation, and representation. While they do supplant the authority of civil courts, *shari'ah* panels' decisions are appealable to their government-backed counterparts. In this way, they render citizens the option of religiously informed intermediaries and dispute resolution, not so differently from Jewish rabbinical courts (which themselves controversially exclude women) and arbitrations for credit card debt resolution (Feldman, 2010). Even if not implementing national legal statutes, such forms of out-of-court reconciliation function under democratic law, and are ultimately subject to its superior judgment in cases of continued disagreement. Similarly, the use of religious doctrine to justify political opinions is nothing new to democracies, even if it is anathema to "secular" societies. Democracies do not instruct individuals about *how* to develop their ideas, nor what their convictions should be. Indeed, American politics has been strongly influenced by the opinions of evangelical Christians who regularly cite Biblical passages to justify their issue positions. In this way, despite clearly falling in the realm of democratic engagement, the actions of many Islamists perplex earlier concepts of alienation.

On the other hand, a minority of East End Bangladeshi civic organizations pursue an agenda against the democratic system. In particular, the transnational Islamist party Hizb-Ut-Tahrir assembles activists to campaign for the re-establishment of a global Muslim caliphate and the undermining of local democratic politics in the interim. Hizb-Ut-Tahrir tends to recruit from two groups—those neighborhood Muslims who are frustrated democratic activists doubting the fairness of the political system, but also another group of neighborhood Muslims who share the same sentiment but have opted to vacate the civic sphere completely. Such neo-caliphatic

campaigns actively work to undermine participation in the democratic government by discouraging voting, working to topple the democratic political system, and (among a fractional minority) using violence to express their ideas. Each of these political techniques circumvents democratic forms of advocacy, and subsequently qualifies as anti-system behavior.

Such varieties of political behavior are unexplained by models of political behavior oriented around activity and passivity, which can neither distinguish between participation within democratic channels and participation that is coercive, nor non-participation as a respite and non-participation as a commitment. As supposed by this article's expressed hypothesis, recent research suggests that—among individuals with similar demographic characteristics—those actors who engage in such behavior tend to be the European-born children of migrants who sense a violation of their political rights and citizen entitlements by a political system that is disinclined to foster their general welfare (Gest 2010). They are subject to specific (and sometimes lofty) expectations of equality and justice that go unfulfilled. As a result, these young people perceive the political system to be discriminatory, disappointing, and unresponsive to their attempts to participate.

### *African Americans*

While African Americans are not conceived as “outsiders” in the United States like Muslims and Roma in Europe, they have been historically disempowered and subject to lower rates of political participation. A great deal of research has focused on whether low levels of African Americans' trust in government were grounded in dissatisfaction with the entire political system (Shingles, 1981; Avery, 2009), or short-term displeasure with incumbent politicians and their current policies (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974a, 1974b, Hibbing, 2002; Citrin & Green, 1986; Citrin & Luks, 2001; Hetherington, 1998; Weatherford, 1987). The model of anti-system behavior provides scholars with a vocabulary to classify this distinction and more nuanced criteria to measure its empirical relevance. The typology distinguishes different forms of passivity—thus

discerning quiet despair from quiet complacency, resolute withdrawal from lethargy. It asks whether inactive individuals intend to one day participate when they have political cause, or when their participation is facilitated. More specifically, it asks whether individual actors who are not participating in the political system are circumventing it, when they would otherwise have a desire to engage.

More interestingly, like Muslims, many communities of African Americans complicate the predictions of the Civic Voluntarism Model and its concern with resources. At a disproportionate resource disadvantage, many African American communities are nevertheless exceptionally politically active. In their influential examination, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) find that “blacks in high-black-empowerment areas—as indicated by control of the mayor’s office—are more active than either blacks living in low-empowerment areas or their white counterparts of comparable socioeconomic status.” In probing to understand this, they find that African Americans’ empowerment fostered “a more trusting and efficacious orientation to politics” that facilitated participation and activism—supporting my earlier hypothesis about the salience of individual perceptions. Avery (2006) later follows up this work and argues that political mistrust among African Americans is an indication of displeasure with the political and social system: “The lack of trust among Blacks is rooted in unhappiness with continued racial discrimination and inequality that persist in American politics and society. ... African Americans who have high levels of racial group consciousness, indicating unhappiness with the position and power of Blacks in society relative to that of Whites, will be less trusting of government than their counterparts (2006: 654).”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Avery also argues that distrust due to discontent with the political system leads to protest politics. This logic, however, is flawed. Protest, as long as it is peaceful, does not reflect an individual’s or group’s lack of confidence in a political system, because non-violent protest works within that system to create change. In a democracy, protest is not revolutionary; It is a public form of expression that is more visual than a petition or letter to the editor. Therefore, to protest is to trust that the system works well enough to acknowledge (if not change because of) the demonstration. Protest therefore does not circumvent the system. It circumvents the incremental and often elite-biased processes of legislation, lobbying, and agenda-setting. It is more reflective of a specific distrust in government officials than in the system that structures it.

Because of minority group consciousness and the senses of collective injury that often accompany it, it is possible that out-groups (like African Americans, European Roma, or European Muslims) make different calculations of political trust than in-groups (like European Whites, American Christians). Group consciousness refers to a community's political beliefs about its relationship to other constituencies. It encompasses identification with a group, dissatisfaction with its positionality, and the attribution of the group's current unequal status or resources to discrimination by the current system or power structure (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980; Miller, Gurin, Gurin, & Malanchuk, 1981 in Avery, 2006). In light of this explanation, these out-groups may be more skeptical of positive short-term trends, and more sensitive and reactionary to negative trends, as a product of their sensitivity to discrimination and exclusivity. Hypothetically, they may be more likely to generalize about the honesty and function of the *entire* system in disadvantaged circumstances, whereas self-identifying in-groups are less likely to blame the system and its officials, if those officials appear to relate more closely to their experiences. Group circumstances would thus impact the construction of personal perceptions and expectations.

### ***European Roma***

Roma (or Gypsies) represent a historically disempowered community in Europe. Even though democratization in Central and Eastern Europe enabled excluded political minorities to actively participate in politics, the period of democratization has signified more hardship and calamity for the Roma than for any social group (Barany, 2002). With notable exceptions at the European and national levels, large proportions of Roma tend to relate to governments and their local political systems in ways similar to pre-democratic times—via designated intermediaries. Many Gypsies dichotomize the world between Roma and *gadje*—non-Roma—and this has contributed to the creation of parallel societies governed by parallel systems of justice and administration. Many Roma communities are ordered by the *divano*—an informal mediation procedure to rectify

minor grievances—and the *kris*—the resolution of criminal, moral or civil disputes using judges (Niremburg, 2009: 96). Relations with civic authorities were managed by so-called Gypsy “kings” or “barons”, tasked with helping Roma avoid full compliance with purportedly adversarial state policies—thereby sidelining Roma constituents from the process of governance. Current theories of alienation would be confounded by Gypsies marginality because it is ultimately mediated by recognized interlocutors.

The model of anti-system behavior, however, accounts for the fact that these interlocutors are conventionally un-elected and tend not to solicit the common will of their constituents. Some are not even Romani. As a result, Roma do not expect honesty or altruism; they simply expect that the successful “king” will recognize community needs and resist monopolizing all gains (Ibid.). Their yielding reinforces a greater separation between Romani and non-Romani governance, and suggests that Roma may not approach the state as vested citizens. While it can be argued that the process of determining community needs involves political deliberation between the intermediary and the concerned individuals, many Roma community members are excluded from such discussions, and civic engagement with the state and political system remains ultimately tasked to a liaison. Such a political model removes certain individual actors from the process of self-governance, and promotes a clientelist relationship with the state and its mediators—creating many *de facto* autonomous nations within a state. Indeed, because Romani tribes and factions have frequent difficulty collaborating, it has been reported that Roma find it difficult to even act as a bloc. Therefore, in effect, the clientelist relationship with civic authorities necessarily means that the minorities of inactive Roma individuals on the fringes of Romanian, Hungarian, and Polish polities qualify as passively anti-system. They remain disengaged, unsupportive of their country’s relatively new democratic institutions, without much intention to reach out to political systems deemed to be the instruments of foreign communities.

ENGAGED	ANTI-SYSTEM
<p><b>II. Active:</b> State of active participation within the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) African American Officeholders</li> <li>B) Roma Civil Society</li> <li>C) Islamist Democrats</li> </ul>	<p><b>I. Active:</b> Activity that impairs, circumvents, disrupts or overthrows the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) The Politically Violent</li> <li>B) Neo-Caliphathists</li> <li>C) Ethno-Religious Exclusivist Groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>III. Passive:</b> State of inactivity within the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Single Parents</li> <li>B) The Politically Disinterested</li> <li>C) The Satisfied</li> </ul>	<p><b>IV. Passive:</b> Committed inactivity and withdrawal from the system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Atomized Roma</li> <li>B) Distrustful African Americans</li> <li>C) Discriminated Muslims</li> </ul>

**Figure Three: Case Matrix** *The four quadrants now house different observations of political behavior across the three different cases touched upon in this article.*

In congruence with this article’s expressed hypothesis, this enduring legacy of disengagement through clientelism is underpinned by a set of relevant perceptions about the political system. Rostas (2009: 176) notes that Roma tend to have limited knowledge about democratic political life, low trust in democratic institutions, and low engagement. There is a common perception among Gypsies that they are universally derided and associated with poverty, significant unemployment, and a lack of education. For this reason, even accomplished Roma are reluctant to openly acknowledge their ethnic identity (Rostas, 2009: 178). Amongst those who continue to identify as Roma, there is a perception that even when Romani representatives are elected to serve in the political system, the system has no capacity to solve Romas’ everyday problems anyway (Ibid). This aptly reflects the exceptionally low expectations hypothesized earlier to underpin withdrawal and passive anti-system behavior.

### *Measuring Anti-System Behavior*

The applications above exhibit the utility of the proposed typology and my hypotheses, but also the impact of structural context on the composition of individual agents' perceptions and expectations of the political system. As Giddens argues, agents are knowledgeable—reflexively constituting their respective realities—but ultimately always bounded by structural conditions and unintended consequences (See structuration theory in 1984 and 1991). My hypothesis emphasizes the underlying importance of agency and judgment, and individuals' subjectivity in *how* they interpret their surrounding social circumstances. Structures are rarely 100% determining. So perceptions are not completely exogenous of resources or institutions, but the effect of resources and institutions are significantly modified by perceptions.

The next step will be to test such ideas by soliciting the perceptions and expectations of certain populations. Given this article's nomination of new types and dynamics of political behavior, we must first identify quantifiable variables that reflect the suggested determinants of anti-system behavior. I briefly suggest three such variables here. Scholars have already sensitized examinations of political behavior to the first: actors' appraisal of internal, external and collective *personal efficacy*. Recent work by King, et al. (2004) has been useful in considering ways of measuring complicated perceptions like personal efficacy. The authors generalize ideas in application-specific research by asking survey respondents for self-assessments and for an assessment of several hypothetical persons from written vignettes. The same could be done for quantifiable measures of *system confidence*—which encompasses the faith that individual actors have in the political system or government's concern with their welfare and agreement about social values. Additionally, this article makes the case for a greater focus on senses of *relative deprivation*—the discrepancy between individuals' expectations of the political system and their perceived levels of attainment. In this manner, we may better understand the impact of individual subjectivity on political behavior, and its relationship to more standard variables of resources, social capital, age, education, and ethno-religious culture.

## **Corroboration and Counterarguments**

My hypotheses and their relevance to the case studies led me to consult Ted Robert Gurr's 1970 examination of political violence. In *Why Men Rebel*, Gurr contends that actors are disposed to violence when there is a discrepancy between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction (1970: 23). In Gurr's terminology, the discrepancy between individual's "value expectations" and "value capabilities" produces a sense of "relative deprivation" that drives them to employ violent tactics against opposing political groups or institutions (1970: 13). Similarly concerned with perceptions, Gurr surmises that people may be subjectively deprived with reference to their expectations even though an objective observer does not judge them to be in need (1970: 24). And alternatively, the existence of what an objective observer deems to be object deprivation is not necessarily thought to be unjust by those who experience it (Ibid). This theory has yet to be applied in any detail to individuals' non-violent withdrawal from the political system.

The importance of perceptions is also hinted at by the work of Verba, Schlozman and Brady. In asking why people do not become political activists, they write that "three answers come to mind: because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked." Though significantly less emphasized than resources, the authors point to non-participants' lack of "psychological engagement with politics" (Verba, et al, 1995: 269). It is this suggestion that—within the second group—activism is affected by people's perceptions of their personal efficacy that, in my mind, merits further examination—particularly in circumstances where disengagement is documented among those with strong social networks and without great resources. Verba, et al. indeed recognize this when they acknowledge that "activity frequently takes place in the context of rich interpersonal networks" and "personal connections among acquaintances, friends, and relatives" (Ibid, 17). Still, while the anti-system behavior model fills the explanatory void of passive and active anti-system behavior left by the Civic Voluntarism

Model, it may be subject to the same criticisms directed at Verba, Schlozman and Brady. These critiques argue that the authors do not account for unknown unmeasured structural variables or confounding psychologies. This article's emphasis on specified perceptions may help narrow our focus on these confounding psychologies, which can then be tested to see if they are correlated with resources anyway.

The main ideas and hypotheses of anti-system behavior are further corroborated by work in social control and delinquency theory. In his seminal work, *Causes of Delinquency*, Travis Hirschi (1969) argues that individual actors are less likely to act against their communities when they feel a sense of indebtedness to it or a sense of participation in it. Such a perception of involvement and membership is thought to derive from trust in the government and its interest in meeting individual needs. Those perceptions that lead to divestment can be further developed by integrating the aforementioned studies that dimensionalize alienated sentiment. Powerlessness, normative confusion, and isolation each underpin and characterize anti-system worldviews—most likely in different ways for different actors. The key difference is that anti-system behavior and its (hypothetically) associated worldviews pertain specifically to political institutions and systems, rather than the general human condition. While this distinction limits the application of my ideas beyond the political sphere, it is hoped that it strengthens its significance in classifying and explaining the causes of unsupportive political behavior.

A further alternative perspective may contend that the model of anti-system behavior is normative—that it specifically authenticates democratic participation over other behavior. My response is two-fold. First, this new model is no more normative than resource-based models and others that seek to typologize political behavior and its impetuses (See Held, 2006: 197, 251). Second, the model of anti-system behavior quite objectively observes whether certain behavior is within the scope of democratic channels for advocacy and engagement without necessarily suggesting that anti-system behavior is anything other than circumventive.

## **Conclusion**

Given the extent of conceptual ideas about alienation, the intentions of this article are of a humble sort. In the interest of better understanding the objective nature and causes of contemporary alienated behavior, I have sought to disentangle this complicated, amorphous concept in a way that facilitates the development of empirically observable variables and systematic empirical theory. Indeed, despite abundant analysis, there is a paucity of objective, descriptive terminology—particularly of the sort that is relevant to emerging forms of modern political behavior.

As a sort of political sub-type of alienation, the anti-system behavior I derive here typologizes extreme political action (and inaction) and contextualizes it among different forms of engagement in a way that previous ideas about “activity” and “passivity” do not. This enables researchers to distinguish those behaviors that reinforce the political system and those which do not. I believe the proposed typology reflects the keys to the democratic system’s sustainability by focusing on citizens’ employment of its channels for participation and consultation. The concerned forms of behavior can therefore serve as an objective dependent variable for future investigations of contemporary political communities—allowing researchers like me, who hypothesize that political behavior is significantly dependent on individuals’ interpretations of a shared reality, to test for correlation.

There is no shortage of testing grounds. In the light of contemporary social and political conflicts, we must be careful not to over-interpret these new concepts and apply them beyond their scope and intention, nor attribute any normative aspect to them. The world does not require another adjective to patronize or criticize estranged minorities. It simply requires a more precise vocabulary to classify, contextualize, and understand their and other individuals’ political behavior.

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