Social and Political Activism as Psychological Traits

July 22, 2010 update.

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Abstract. Social and political activism are measured with reliable scales of as few as five items. About 35 other traits are measured as well. The relationships between these traits are explored, primarily in terms of the traits of "positive" and "negative" activists. 27 percent of citizens report that their parent was an activist. 39 percent consider themselves to be social activists and 23 percent political activists. These two types of activism are highly correlated (.81). More persons describe themselves as constructive rather than destructive in their activism. Constructive activists tend to be higher on charitableness (.34**), positive foreign policy (.23*), agreeableness (.31*), openness (.25*), and extroversion (.23*). They tend to have a positive worldview (.47**). Negative activists tend to report criminal tendencies (.39**), lower conscientiousness (-.31*), and humiliating experiences (.47**).

Introduction and literature review. The principle investigator has puzzled over the nature of social and political activists for several reasons. Many professional and academic groups are active in social and political efforts, such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, Psychologists for Social Responsibility and the Union of Concerned Scientists. The author has been a member of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, reading list serve comments and contributing to efforts to improve the ethical code of psychologists specifically on the issue of mixed loyalties to human rights or national governments violating them in military prisons.

The principle investigator was also temporarily a member of a peace choir. He was puzzled that this choir had a history of severe internal conflict that had prompted the main body of members to break off and form a separate choir. The married couple that had caused the problems was still involved in the original group and continued to cause problems. The male made violent video games for a living, a further apparent inconsistency.

The investigator also attended a couple of conventions of a local community college peace studies program and was puzzled when audience members shouted profanities at each other during the Q and A following a talk by a nationally known journalist. Another featured speaker at the next convention had a long reputation for disrupting government hearings with antisocial behavior that resulted in incarcerations.

History is replete with examples of social and political activism, ranging from the carefully designed non-violent efforts of Mahatma Gandhi in India to promote political independence from British rule to Hitler's carefully designed gradual takeover of Germany via an initially small political party. Some such efforts are peaceful, as were the U.S. anti-war marches protesting the Vietnam War and the sit-ins and Civil Rights marches of the 60's. Some are clearly violent or destructive, as were the Watts Riots of the 60's, and the French Revolution and Boston Tea Party of the 17th Century.

Because some activism seems negative and some positive, it seems worthwhile to define two general classes of social and political activism, negative and positive, or anti-social and pro-social. Negative activism can be defined as activism based on perceptions of an opposing group that is responsible for one's problems and must be opposed in order to achieve group goals. A union, for example, may see business management as stingy and cruel, justifying strikes in an attempt force better working conditions and/or pay and benefits. Pacifist citizens may see a government as bent on warmongering, justifying mass public marches and demonstrations to end wars. An ethnic or religious minority may perceive itself as oppressed or unfairly discriminated against by a differing majority ethnic or religious group, justifying protest marches, civil war, and genocide. Or for that matter, a majority group may perceive a minority group as some sort of threat and oppress or aggress against it, e.g. in genocide, as Nazi Germany sought to eliminate Jews.

In dramatic contrast, positive activism may be defined as activism undertaken to promote pro-social outcomes without first having to tear down, oppose or stop other organizations or governments. Positive social activism examples are the Red Cross, Boy and Girl Scouts, Rotary International, the Peace and Justice Studies Association, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the United States Peace Corps, and the United Nations. Positive political activism could be manifested in an organization promoting citizen education on political issues (the League of Women Voters), or an organization to promote voter registration (e.g. the Oregon Bus Project). Positive political activism would be manifested in an organization supporting political candidates who espouse preferred political agendas (e.g. MoveOn.Org) and in the formation of a new political

party (e.g. the Oregon Independent Party). Founding these organizations does not require opposing, dismantling or demonstrating against other organizations first. Nor does it require negative motivations, such as anger, deprivation or injustice. The motivations can be positive: hope, optimism, visions of improved government, etc.

In February of 2010, a call was made for a special section of the British Journal of Social Psychology, soliciting articles on innovation in theory and research on collective action and social change. Among other content, the guest editors, Martijn van Zomeren and Bert Klandermans, asked for the use of new media/technology to investigate collective action and social change.   They provided three specific references for context, to all of which the editors were authors, singly or jointly. The two most recent of these suggest that the field of collective action and social change has been characterized by researchers as almost exclusively concerned with what has been defined above as negative or anti-social social and political activism (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007, Van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008).

Studies cited concern social groups involved in conflict, opposition, protest and "taking to the streets" in demonstrations, popular disturbance and mass violence. Motives include feelings and perceptions of injustice, outrage, oppression, group-based deprivation, group-based anger, frustration, minority group discrimination, "illegitimate inequality", "suddenly imposed grievances" and "violated principles".

The present author was puzzled that studies of positive social and political activism were not cited in these works, or only peripherally. Also, there were no hints that studies had employed measures of social and political activism as psychological traits. If such measures could be devised, studying these phenomena would be simplified for two reasons: one would not need access to social and political groups per se for study and such groups are often in flux and short-lived, so they may fade before study can be arranged. Furthermore, groups of anti-social activists, such as terrorist groups, are for obvious reasons likely to resist intimate study of their inner workings.

<u>Method.</u> The present author assumed that different personality or opinion complexes would characterize activists versus non-activists and that perhaps there would be measurable differences between the traits of political and social activists and between activists who are peaceful and constructive versus those who are oppositional and destructive. And he presumed that there is a gradual continuum from such activism to major social and political movements and change, as reflected in the French Revolution, Hitler's rise to power and the rise

to power of many military dictators, such as those ostensibly representing constructive social philosophies but often becoming ruthless leaders concerned primarily with obtaining and maintaining personal political and military power over their nations (Mao in China, Castro in Cuba). Thus, it seemed important to try to tease out possible psychological differences between persons interested in social and political activism, especially in terms of potentially constructive versus destructive tendencies, motivations and objectives.

Can we provide an understanding of the psychology of activism and perhaps identify and differentiate between those who are most likely to promote lasting constructive changes in society versus those who use activism to promote their personal power exacted at the price of social oppression and cruelty?

A review of literature revealed no measures of positive and negative social and political activism as psychological traits.

Scales for measuring social activism and political activism were written by the principal investigator, as were related measures of attitudes about improving society or tearing down its institutions by positive or negative activism activities. In addition, about 35 other scales were written to assess traits of related interest, such as criminal tendencies, childhood humiliation and abuse, having felt loved as a child, religious beliefs (fundamentalism and kindly religious beliefs), foreign policy attitudes, environmentalism, warmongering endorsement, human rights endorsement, different worldviews and the Big Five personality traits. Several of the measures were from scales created for earlier studies by the author. Some were created specifically for this study. The questionnaire is online and can be observed by taking at the author's web site (Politicalpsychologyresearch.com) or can be obtained from the author.

The scales were written in Likert scale format with options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). They were loaded on the principal investigator's non-profit web site, Politicalpsychologyresearch.com. 91 students from two community colleges on the East Coast (about a dozen) and Eugene, Oregon (about 80) completed the questionnaires online for extra credit in their psychology classes. The student subjects ranged in age from 16 to 65 (mean 27.8, standard deviation 9.5). They ranged in education from 9 to 21 years (mean 13.8, standard deviation 1.5). 71 percent were women.

The study was done in 2009. Data was analyzed by SPSS software. Scales were created usually after item analysis to check for and maximize reliability, in most cases retaining all items for a scale. In some cases scales were combined, as they were highly correlated.

Results. The basic statistics for the scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic trait statistics.

1. Trait #	2. Trait	3. No. of items	4. Scale items	5. Range of mean item scores	6. Mean of mean item scores (MIM)	7. Standard deviation	8. Chronbach alpha reliability	9. Frequency : % MIM => 3.5
1	Parent an activist	1	1	1-5	2.22	1.38	High?	27
2	I'm a social activist	Best 5 of 13	2, 4, 6, 8, 10	1-5	3.11	1.00	.92	39
3	I'm a political activist	Best 5 of 13	3,5,7,9,11	1-5	2.78	.98	.90	23
4	General activism	3	28-30	1-4.67	2.32	.92	.73	11
5&6 combined	Improving society focus	4	31-34	1-5	3.33	.83	.81	48
7	General constructive activism	6	35-41	1-5	3.10	.65	.76	22
8&9	Negative. soc. & pol. activism	6	42-47	1-4.67	2.55	.75	.86	11
10	General negative activism	22	48, 50, 51, 52, 56, 60, 65, 68, 29, 70, 71,	1-4.18	2.51	.63	.84	3.5
11	Cooperative worldview	1	75	2-5	4.27	.79	High?	90
12	Competitive worldview.	1	76	1-5	1.91	.94	High?	14
13	Social disenfranchisement	10	77-86	1-4.90	2.73	.76	.89	17
14	Criminal tendencies	9	87-95	1-3.89	1.85	.65	.70	2
15	Loved as child	4	96-99	1-5.00	3.63	.95	.85	67
16	Abused/neglected as a child	3	100-102	1-5.00	1.90	.93	.71	7
17	Badly treated as a child	9	103-111	1-5.00	2.11	.96	.94	7
18	Destructive pleasure	3	112-114	1-4.00	1.75	.69	.77	1

19	One God only	1	115	1-5.00	2.61	1.59	High?	40
20	Golden rule	1	116	1-5.00	4.40	.86	High?	92
21	Warmongering	4	117-120	1-3.50	2.24	.62	.41	1
22	Environmentalism	2	121-122	1-5.00	4.18	.94	.83	88
23	Human rights endorsement	4	123-126	2.25-5.00	4.37	.68	.71	89
24	Charitable actions	5	127-131	1-4.60	2.51	.93	.81	16
25	Positive foreign policy endorsement	4	132-135	2.00-5.00	4.02	.67	.73	83
26	Public democracy endorsement	5	136-140	1.60-5.00	4.23	.75	.62	83
27	Big Five Agree.	1	141	2 to 5	4.34	.73	Okay	88
28	Conscientiousness	1	142	1 to 5	4.02	.88	Okay	74
29	Openness	1	143	1 to 5	4.16	.92	High?	78
30	Extroversion	1	144	1 to 5	3.75	1.02	High?	64
31	Emotional stability	1	145	1 to 5	3.34	1.09	High?	45
32	Negative worldview	7	146-152	1 to 3.86	2.39	.68	.77	7
33	Indifferent worldview	5	153-157	1 to 4.20	2.00	.69	.79	1
34	Superior worldview	5	158-162	1 to 3.60	1.79	.68	.77	1
35	Positive worldview	5	163-167	2.20 to 5	3.56	.68	.76	54
36	General humiliation	14	168-181	1.00 to 4.21	2.04	.85	.93	5
37	Childhood family humiliation	3	168-170	1 to 5.00	2.13	1.10	.82	13

Notice in this table that be items used to construct each scale are provided in column 3, No. of Items. In most cases these are the items designed to measure the trait. In some cases, e.g. for traits 2 and 3, item analysis revealed that only a few items are needed to provide very reliable measures. Highly reliable brief measures are valuable for research, as they enable one to measure more traits in a given study without overtaxing questionnaire subjects. Notice also in the fifth column that for most scales the range of scores is from 1 to 5, the maximum possible, which is desirable, as it presages high reliability.

Reliability data.

Reliabilities are provided in column 8 and for the most part are quite adequate. Adequate reliability is necessary, as reliability sets an upper limit on the validity that can be detected in the form of the correlation between two variables. One notable exception to the generally good reliabilities in the present study is the low alpha for warmongering, .41. In other studies, a 10-item scale had typically provided reliability of .90 or better. For this study only

4 items were used, with somewhat disappointing results. However, as the reliabilities of the other traits in this study are rather strong, significant relationships between warmongering endorsement and those traits could be detected. For example, the correlations are -.38** with Human rights and +.38** with Religious fundamentalism, consistent with several prior studies by the author.

Notice also that for some measures reliable scales can be created with only a few items, such as 3 or 4. Some traits are measured with single items, which can't yield an alpha coefficient. However, if the standard deviation for the scale is high, adequate reliability can be assumed. For example, item 1 measures with a single item whether one's parent was an activist. This item has a mean of 2.22 and a standard deviation of 1.38. Scale 4, General Activism, is measured with 4 items, with a similar mean of 2.32 and standard deviation .92. Its reliability is .73. Because the standard deviation for scale 1 is much larger (1.38), higher reliability than .73 can be assumed for this measure. Following the same logic, reasonable reliability is assumed for the single-item measures of the Big Five traits (scales 27-31).

Frequency data. The proportion of citizens that manifest high levels of the traits in these two clusters can be defined as those whose mean item scores on the trait measure are above a neutral point. On a 5-point Likert scale, one can use a cut-off of 3.5. The percentage of persons in this study with mean item scores at or above 3.5 is given in column 9.

The questionnaire provides the following definitions at the outset:

"Social activism" means actively promoting social change, as by writing, speaking, rallying or protesting to change social systems or services, such as changing attitudes toward groups or providing services to disadvantaged groups.

"Political activism" means actively promoting changes in political power for a specific government or citizens in general.

These are immediately followed with 30 statements in Likert scale format, measuring social and political activism. Examples:

I admire social activists.

I admire political activists.

I think of myself as a social activist.

I like to speak up at meetings of political activists.

I write letters to the editor about social issues.

I financially support one or more organizations that promote political activism.

The items about social activism form a reliable scale (scale 2), as do the items about political activism. Indeed, only 5 items of each category are needed to provide reliable measures, as indicated in Table 1. The correlation between these two scales is .81**.

Referring to the data in column nine, 27% of the persons in this study report that they had a parent or other close relative whom they consider an activist. 39% consider themselves to be social activists, 23% political activists. Thus, by the definitions used, the study group includes a substantial ****** proportion of persons who consider themselves as falling in the group of interest. Various activism activities are measured in subsequent scales (4 through 10). The frequency data for these measures reflects a greater proportion in the constructive or positive emphasis. For example, 48% for scales 5 & 6 combined as single scale (because the two scales correlated very highly with each other), and 22 percent for general constructive activism, compared to 11 and 3.5 percent for negative activism (scales 8&9, and 10).

Similarly, many more persons (90%) see humans as basically cooperative (scale 11) versus competitive (14%, scale 12). A relatively small proportion reports mistreatment and antisocial tendencies, scales 13, 14, 17 and 18. 17% see themselves as "socially disenfranchised". 7% report abuse, neglect or general bad treatment in childhood. 1% admit to enjoying destroying things. In contrast, a majority (67%) reports having felt loved as children in their family, neighborhood and school.

Religious beliefs of a fundamentalist nature were measured by only one item, reflecting belief in a unitary God. 40% endorsed this idea. Typically only about 6% of adults endorse a more comprehensive and reliable measure of this trait. Kindly religious beliefs are also measured with only one item, endorsement of the Golden Rule. 92% of the present study subjects agree

with this belief, close to the 89% who have endorsed a longer and more reliable scale for this trait.

The percentage of persons who endorse warmongering in this study is low (1%) compared to many prior studies by the author, in which about 6% is typical. This may be due in part to the fact that only 29% of the present sample was ***** males, and males are somewhat more likely than females to endorse warmongering.

The percentage of persons who endorse several pro-social traits were typical of other studies: 88% endorsing environmentalism (scale 22), 89 % human rights (scale 23), 83% a positive and helpful foreign policy (scale 25) and 83% government serving citizens as members of the community overall rather than as members of special interest groups (scale 26). 16 percent report making charitable donations. While this proportion may seem small, we must keep in mind that the subjects are students and may not be able to afford much financial support of the needy.

The proportion reporting relatively high levels of the Big Five personality traits seems reasonable, considering that Agreeableness is often highly endorsed in studies the author has done with other groups. And, we can expect successful community colleges students to be open-minded, hard-working, social and reasonably stable emotionally, as measured by the four other Big Five traits.

The last six scales in the study questionnaire provided frequency data commensurate with that in prior scales measuring similar dimensions. 7% report a negative worldview (scale 32). 1% report a worldview of indifference (scale 33). 1% also report a worldview of superiority (one of the five dimensions of the five Eidelson worldviews, measured in scale 13 as Social Disenfranchisement). 5 percent report general humiliation (scale 36) and 13 percent report childhood family humiliation (scale 37).

Relationships between the variables.

In the discussion below, correlations significant at the .05 level are indicated with a single asterisk, those significant at the .01 level or better with a double asterisk.

Neither gender nor education correlated significantly with the several measures of activism. Age correlated negatively and slightly with attitudes

about improving society (scale 5/6) (-.22*). Older persons were slightly less likely to be interested in improving society.

Age correlated negatively and slightly with having felt loved in childhood (scale 15) (-.21*), older persons reporting slightly less love. Age correlated .33** with an abusive childhood (scale 16), older persons tending to report more abuse. Age correlated slightly with public democracy endorsement (scale 26) (.21*), older persons more likely to endorse government serving citizens as members of the community overall, rather than as members of special interest groups. Age correlated negatively with a negative worldview (scale 32) (-.29**), with older persons being less likely to have such a worldview. Age also correlated positively (.28**) with Family Humiliation (scale 37), older persons reporting more childhood humiliation. Education correlated negatively with Kindly Religious Beliefs (-.30**), older persons tending to endorse them somewhat less.

Because age and education were not correlated significantly (.005), relationships between education and Kindly Religious Beliefs, need not be controlled for age.

Most of the variables have adequate to excellent reliabilities. The warmongering endorsement measure (scale 21) has an inadequate reliability, probably because only 4 items were used. 10-item measures of this trait have yielded reliabilities as high as .90 in prior studies.

Having had a parent activist is completely unrelated to being an activist oneself (the correlation between scale 1 and 2 is .00, and between scales 1 and 3 it is .05). Seeing oneself as a social activist is strongly related to seeing oneself as a political activist, with virtually no differentiation (.81**).

These measures of activism would seem to have face or content validity, simply by the nature of the items themselves. A sample of the items was included above for scales 2 and 3. Further validation appears in the form of correlations between various measures of activism and other traits.

The activists in this sample are more interested in building up good social and political systems than in tearing down bad ones. Scale 4, General Activism, correlates positively with two measures of positive activism: scale 5/6 (.38**) and 7 (.41**). Scale 4 correlates negatively with a measure of negative activism, scale 8/9 (-.21*).

We must keep in mind that this is just the first study using the particular definitions of the terms "political activist" and "social activist", and our sample is of modest size and of only one community college, so our conclusions should not be too strongly assumed to represent the broader world of activism but just a hint at the psychology underlying activism. Keeping this in mind, the data provides further suggestion that the activists in this sample tend to have positive attitudes, as General Activism (scale 4) correlates negatively with Competition (-.25*) and positively with being charitable (scale 24) (.50**).

However, interesting differences appear when positive activists, as measured by scale 7, General Constructive Activism, are compared to negative activists, as measured by scale 10, General Negative Activism.

Scale 7 includes items such as:

I actively support one or more current political parties or organizations, e.g. League of Women Voters, Young Republicans.

I believe that such organizations are more appropriate than organizations that espouse radical change of social or political systems.

Scale 10 includes:

I often feel angry when thinking about social and political issues.

I often find myself in arguments with others about social and political issues.

While neither group (Scales 7 and 10) reports childhood abuse, neglect or humiliation to unusual degrees in their childhood families, they show differences in other experiences and adult worldviews. For discussion, General Constructive Activism will be referred to as "CA's" (constructive activists). General Negative Activism will be referred to as "NA's" (negative activists).

CA's do not feel that they have been badly treated in life (scale 17) (.05), while NA's tend to (.39**). CA's do not necessarily report criminal tendencies (scale 14) (-.13), while NA's are somewhat likely to (.24**). CA's are somewhat likely to describe themselves as charitable (.34**), while NA's are not necessarily (.16). CA's are somewhat likely to endorse a positive foreign policy (scale 25) (.23*), while NA's do not necessarily (.01).

CA's tend to be slightly higher on Agreeableness (.31*), Openness (.25*) and Extroversion (.23*), while NA's tend to be lower on Conscientiousness (-.31**).

CA's do not necessarily have a negative worldview (scale 32) (-.18), while NA's tend to (.38**). NA's tend not to have an indifferent worldview (scale 33) (-.40**) while NA's may or may not (.02). CA's tend to have a positive worldview (.47**) (scale 35), while NA's may or may not (-.13). CA's may or may not feel generally humiliated by experiences (scale 36)(.07), while NA's are somewhat likely to (.42**).

As many traits are included in this study, another way to examine the data is to select a trait of specific interest to the investigator and see how it correlated with other traits. For example, the traits of persons who endorse environmentalism can be explored by examining the correlations between this trait (scale 22) and the other traits.

Persons who tend to endorse protection of the environment as measured by scale 22 will be called "Environmentalists". Environmentalists tend to be female (-.27*), and tend to see humans as basically cooperative (.30**, scale 11) rather than competitive (-.38**, scale 12). Environmentalists tend not to believe there is only one God that all persons in the world should worship (scale 19) (-.36**), tend to endorse the Golden Rule about treating others as you would like to be treated (scale 20) (.40**), tend not to endorse warmongering (scale 21, -.27*), tend to endorse human rights (scale 23)(.43**) tend to endorse a positive foreign policy (scale 25)(.34**), tend to endorse public democracy (government serving citizens as members of the community overall rather than members of special interest groups)(scale 26)(.31**), tend to be open-minded (scale 29, .23*) and tend not to have either an indifferent worldview (scale 33, -.28**) or a superior worldview (scale 34)(-.42**). These findings are consistent with those from prior studies by the author.

Discussion. This study attempts to demonstrate that social and political activism can be studied as psychological traits. Reliable measures of activism in general and political and social activism specifically were obtained, as were measures of positive and negative activism respectively. The scales for these traits seem to have validity in the form of consistent positive correlations between positive activism and pro-social traits, such as being charitable and agreeable, and positive correlations between negative

activism and anti-social traits, such as warmongering endorsement and a negative worldview.

Thus, it appears possible to measure social and political activism as psychological traits, providing researchers with tools for studying these phenomena without the complications of studying activists directly. It would be interesting, of course, to have activists complete questionnaires including measures of these traits, but that would not appear to be absolutely necessary, as random groups of citizens appear to vary enough on the scales to provide reliable measures. The relationships between these measures and other traits then can be easily explored.

The present study is limited in several respects, providing only a hint at richer findings that might be forthcoming with samples of persons of more focused activism endeavors. The present subjects were simply community college students in psychology classes. Samples of vigorously engaged social and political activists could be expected to provide more vivid evidence of pro-social and antisocial traits consistent with their activism styles.

Thus, the present study is offered not as an important statement on theory of activism or a definitive statement of the traits of activists. Rather, it is offered simply as a demonstration of a few points: that social and political activism can be measured as psychological traits, they can be measured reliably with brief questionnaire scales, and that such measures appear to be reasonably valid.

The present scales measure social and political activism with specific scales based on specific definitions. Other theorists and researchers can define these concepts differently and devise scales to measure their uniquely defined concepts. Different definitions and measures can be expected to yield different validities and thus different insights than those suggested by the present effort.

Advantages of the trait study of social and political activism.

Studying social and political activism not as movements but rather as psychological traits has several advantages. One is that it permits different definitions of these concepts and their specific study. The researcher can begin his questionnaire with a clear definition of the terms and then craft statements relevant to that definition to ask research subjects how strongly

they endorse those statements. Thus, different researchers can study the concepts of activism in varying ways using varying definitions.

This technique also has the advantage of enabling researchers to study activism without having to seek out activist organizations per se and gain permission to investigate them. Terrorist organizations, for example, are unlikely to welcome scientific investigation of their inner workings. Terrorism endorsement can be studied as a psychological trait, including interest in joining such an organization (McConochie, 2007).

This questionnaire technique also has the advantage of enabling the researcher to study activism when no activism is overly manifest. Activist organizations tend to come and go and may fade before a researcher can gain access to its leaders and members for study.

Another advantage of this technique is enabling researchers to study latent activism, rumblings of dissent or needs of society not yet manifest as movements. Activism inspired and led by budding military dictators can be very dangerous for nations, deserving early detection and definition. Needs for positive, constructive change in government policy my be present strongly in citizen hearts long before sitting governments are willing for reasons of special interest group power to consider them. For example, citizens may be much more willing to define and promote sustainable communities by reducing use of fossil fuels than are governments dependent on fossil fuel company contributions to campaign accounts of sitting legislators. This willingness could be detected with questionnaire research before a social movement emerged promoting it. Certainly there are many needs for improvement in government policies and programs around the world in light of the serious and multiple problems generated by population growth, pollution of the atmosphere from CO_2 emissions, ease with which communicable diseases can be transmitted via modern transportation, dangers posed by access to sophisticated and deadly military weapons and explosives, and use of propaganda by negative activists to promote destructive activism.

Finally, questionnaire research might provide a means of studying the origins of social and political leadership. There are only a few within activist groups who are their leaders, making research more difficult. And leaders of negative activist groups, such as Osama Bin Laden, are inaccessible for intimate examination for obvious reasons. Researchers can

design questionnaires to measure citizen interest in leading various types of social and political movements, good and bad, constructive and dangerous, to learn about the motives, skills and other attributes of such persons. This information could, theoretically, lead to applications of direct value to communities, helping to nurture the development of positive activism, such as manifested in organizations like the Red Cross, Rotary International and the Peace Corps. It could also be used to discourage the evolution of negative activism, as manifested in terrorist organizations, hate groups, ethnic conflicts, civil wars and genocides. Thus, this technique might help foster a new field of social psychology, applied social psychology, or augment the efforts of current applied social psychologists.

The present authors hope that their initial effort will stimulate further such research.

Caveats and Limitations.

The present study is limited in several respects. The subjects are only community college students and Americans. The sample size is modest at 91. The authors are not experienced social psychologists and may have missed some important issues, including overlooked prior studies of similar nature. Hopefully, these limitations will not discourage readers from finding some helpful results from the present contribution.

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