

Two dimensions of citizens' feelings of responsiveness: regime and incumbent responsiveness

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1. Introduction

Existing studies on citizens' evaluations of responsiveness refer to a mix of potential objects and acts. Commonly used batteries of questions intended to measure perceived responsiveness are ambiguous as to exactly who is being (un-)responsive, be it politicians, members of parliament (MPs), political parties, the government or public officials. Keeping acts of responsiveness constant, this paper seeks to evaluate whether or not citizens' feelings of responsiveness differ systematically across different objects. More specifically, this paper tests for the distinction between regime-based and incumbent-based feelings commonly held in the political support literature.

Previously, Craig et al.'s (1990) attempt to draw such a distinction for the case of external efficacy, defined by them as perceived responsiveness, has not been entirely successful. Based on David Easton's (1975) conceptual work on political support, the authors maintain that a distinction between incumbent-based and regime-based feelings of responsiveness should be made. However, in their pilot study they were only partially able to separate them. Many of the items were highly correlated across concepts, making the distinction 'fairly tenuous' (Craig et al., 1990: 298). The authors attribute these findings in parts to their measures of incumbent-based feelings as lacking sufficient clarity in the reference objects used. They recommend further testing of alternative questions and response options.

Building up on these existing findings and experiences, this paper picks up the quest to test for two-dimensionality of objects within the concept of perceived responsiveness. It aims at contributing to existing research on survey questions pertaining to political attitudes and behaviour. In doing so, two batteries of questions are developed which only differ in their objects, the regime versus incumbents. They are identical as to actions tapping responsive behaviour. Based on experimental results obtained for each of the batteries in a survey amongst Swedish citizens during spring 2012 we show that these citizens do indeed separate between regime- and incumbent-based responsiveness. More so, the results indicate that each yields differential predictive power of measures of institutional trust and has differential causes. In sum, our argument put forward in the following sections is one of two-dimensionality, theoretically and empirically, in the concept of perceived responsiveness, similar to other feelings of political support.

The argument proceeds in the following steps. Firstly, we review the empirical literature on perceived responsiveness. The first section argues that measures of perceived responsiveness originate in the concept of efficacy and more specifically in its variant of external efficacy. The review of existing survey instruments reveals a lack of coherence amongst the objects referred to in asking citizens about their feelings of responsiveness. Section three conceptualises perceived

responsiveness and argues for a theoretical and empirical differentiation of regime- and incumbent-based feelings based also on the concept's similarities to other attitudes of political support. Hypotheses are formulated that keep acts of responsiveness constant but test for variation amongst reference objects. Accordingly, section four introduces our operationalization and data before the fifth section presents the results. Finally, a summary and conclusion is provided.

2. Empirical literature on measuring perceived responsiveness

As an important political attitude towards democratic systems, the latent construct of perceived responsiveness is frequently used in empirical studies. Across studies, batteries of questions refer to different objects of (un-)responsiveness. Most comprise an indistinguishable mix of reference objects. The studies in the following short literature review mark just a smaller part of the rich substantive and methodological literature on perceived responsiveness. However, it shows that the literature is remarkably diverse in its objects of responsiveness.

Miller and Listhaug (1990), for example, aim at explaining different levels of perceived government responsiveness by party system characteristics in Norway, Sweden and the US during the period 1964-1986. Their measures of perceived responsiveness vary in the three countries, due to data availability. However, there is a large overlap enabling comparative analyses. The item asked in all three countries refers to political parties as the object of responsiveness whereas the Swedish and US datasets include in addition an item referring to public officials as the point of reference.

Craig et al. (1990) employed a methodological study on perceived responsiveness, relating it to measures of trust for criterion validity. For the National Election Study (NES) Pilot Study external efficacy was defined as citizens' 'beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions' (Craig et al., 1990: 290). One of the goals of the study was to draw a distinction between incumbent-based and regime-based efficacy. In attempting so, the items used to measure each concept have different objects of responsiveness as their reference point. Incumbent-based efficacy makes reference to public officials, candidates, politicians, and those elected whereas the study's regime-based efficacy items use government and public officials as the object.

In a similar vein, Niemi et al.'s (1991) study is a conceptual and methodological one. They are also concerned with the concept of 'beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions' and 'perceived governmental responsiveness' (Niemi et al., 1991: 1408). While the study's main goal is to draw a distinction between internal and external efficacy, the operationalization of responsiveness follows that of Craig et al. (1990) in that the objects of responsiveness are incoherent and include public officials, political parties, and the government.

Also, Acock and Clarke (1990) are concerned with methodological issues of perceived responsiveness. Their study employs American national election data from 1964-1984 when measuring the concept of perceptions of governmental responsiveness, operationalized in terms of external efficacy again plus two alternative items. The variables used for measuring perceived responsiveness have as their object 'those we elected to Congress in Washington', parties, and government (Acock and Clarke, 1990: 88-9).

Using perceived responsiveness as a dependent variable again, Hayes and Bean (1993) try to explain its variation by socio-economic factors. The cross-sectional data they employ stem from 1986-1987 and were gathered in four western countries. And similar to previous studies, they operationalize responsiveness in terms of external efficacy and accordingly use the government as the object of responsiveness.

A study conducted about ten years later by Mossberger and Tolbert (2005) on the implementation and benefits of e-government, takes individual's perceptions of responsiveness as a dependent variable. Again, it is operationalized by external efficacy and has the government as its object.

Craig et al. (2006) analyse NES data from 1964 to 2004 in order to investigate, amongst others, the effect of not being a voter of the winning party on the level of perceived responsiveness. Since they argue that governmental responsiveness is 'conceptually very close to the concept of external efficacy' (Craig et al., 2006: 585), it only follows from that that their operationalization has again the government as the object of responsiveness.

In testing for whether or not the negative wording in the common battery pertaining to efficacy yields an impact, Clarke et al. (2010) conduct survey experiments in the Canadian context of the 2004 national election. Here, too, the reference objects cover an array of reference objects: 'those elected into Parliament', 'federal government', and 'political parties' (Clarke et al., 2010: 109).

Lastly, consider a very recent study conducted by Chamberlain (2012) on the perception of responsiveness, explained by government performance and economic conditions in a longitudinal design stretching a period from 1952 to 2008. Data stem from the American NES. Just like in other studies, Chamberlain (2012: 4) argues for an operationalization that utilises external efficacy. He states that 'external efficacy, by definition, relates to perceptions of the government's responsiveness to citizens demand'. The items used make reference to the government and public officials as their objects.

What can be seen from this short review of studies on perceived responsiveness is that they all use a mix of reference objects in their batteries, namely the government, public officials, political parties, MPs, or those elected. This might be due to the fact that most of the studies reviewed here operationalize perceived responsiveness in terms of external efficacy. And since most studies reviewed here use National Election Studies for their analysis, it only follows that most will have the same set of survey items and thus objects of responsiveness: the government, public officials, or political parties. While the object 'government' probably entices in most citizens an understanding of current power-holders, public officials and political parties as objects of responsiveness are possibly more associated with the entire system. In the absence of rigorous tests one can only speculate as to citizens' precise associations with these terms. However, it is apparent that each of the objects referred to in the commonly used battery taps a different body of democratic authority.

Existing attempts to systematically distinguish between different kinds of objects were not overly successful. Craig et al. (1990) seek to differentiate in their study between objects of responsiveness. Drawing on Easton's (1975) and Shingles' (1988) previous work, the authors state that they 'desire to distinguish between two different foci of citizen beliefs about government responsiveness' (Craig et al., 1990: 291). The authors test two different kinds of objects, one relating to incumbents (public officials, candidates, politicians, those elected) and one to the regime (government, public officials).

Their findings suggest that regime-based feelings are clearly distinguishable from trust or internal efficacy items, however not from incumbent-based responsiveness. In fact, the set of items intended to measure incumbent-based responsiveness did not perform as desired in any instance, for the authors were also not able to separate it empirically from incumbent-based trust. On the basis of this, the authors recommend that 'none of the IBE [incumbent-based efficacy] questions tested in the pilot study be adopted' (Craig et al., 1990: 301).

In search of an explanation for their findings, the authors concede that the objects referred to in their survey items (candidates, public officials, politicians, and those elected) might not make respondents think of the current incumbents but more of incumbents in general. Note that the authors assume, as demonstrated in their wordings (Craig et al., 1990: 309), that public officials tap feelings about incumbents whereas the government pertains to regime-based efficacy. However and as mentioned before, the term 'government' is more likely to be associated with a temporally elected body and thus may entice incumbent-based feelings (cf. Feldman, 1983). Conversely, 'public officials' is a rather neutral term which may swing both ways.

In addition, Craig et al. also admit flaws in the acts referred to. They acknowledge that the items were 'more on the ultimate fairness of both procedures and outcomes than on the responsiveness of incumbent authorities per se to popular demands' (Craig et al., 1990: 299). Nevertheless, the authors still maintain that a distinction between the concepts of incumbent- and regime-based trust, for instance, should be made. Equally, they do not abandon the idea of a separable feeling of incumbent-based efficacy or responsiveness, despite its rather close empirical linkages to incumbent-based trust in their analysis. Rather, they indirectly suggest a causal relationship between the two: 'many Americans tend to evaluate the trustworthiness of incumbent authorities at least partly in terms of the latter's perceived responsiveness to citizen demands' (Craig et al., 1990: 301).

The upshot of Craig et al.'s research findings is that their items did not perform as hypothesised in terms of separating incumbent-based from, on the one hand, regime-based responsiveness and, on the other hand, incumbent-based trust. The authors attribute some of this firstly, to the items wordings, and secondly to the interrelatedness of the concepts of responsiveness and trust. With these conclusions and experiences in mind, in order to successfully disentangle incumbent-based responsiveness from regime-based responsiveness the theoretical base for such an idea needs to be laid carefully.

3. Distinguishing between regime and incumbent responsiveness

Perceived responsiveness can be regarded as an evaluative political attitude, similar to other political support attitudes such as satisfaction, confidence or trust. Perceived responsiveness refers to citizens' evaluation and assessment as to whether or not, and the extent to which, representatives respond to their demands. Although the connection has not been made explicit, this understanding of the concept fits well with Easton's (1975) definition of political support. Easton (1975: 436) defines support 'as an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favourably or unfavourably, positively or negatively.[...] In short, in its common usage support refers to the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some object through either his attitudes or his behaviour.' Perceived responsiveness is equally an attitude through which a person expresses her

feelings to the object of responsiveness, based on past experience. Therefore, perceived responsiveness can be considered as belonging to the set of political support attitudes.

David Easton's (1975) work on political support famously distinguishes between diffuse and specific support, and it is precisely in the specific support dimension where the concept of perceived responsiveness finds its place. While diffuse support incorporates citizens' general feelings towards an object, specific support, according to Easton (1975: 437) relates to performance and perceptions of the object. 'It is directed to the perceived decisions, policies, actions, utterances or the general style of these authorities.' Already prior to Easton, Almond and Verba (1963) make a similar point in their seminal work *The Civic Culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. They differentiate between cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations amongst citizens towards the political system that jointly describe a polity's political culture. Most interestingly, they define evaluative orientations as 'judgements and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria with information and feelings' (Almond and Verba, 1963: 14). Both definitions and clarifications – Easton's on specific political support and Almond and Verba's on evaluative orientations – apply also to the concept of perceived responsiveness. Accordingly, perceived responsiveness can be considered as belonging to the set of specific political support beliefs or evaluative orientations, similar to trust, satisfaction, or confidence.

Establishing this connection between perceived responsiveness and specific political support provides an immediate base for a distinction between incumbent- and regime-based responsiveness. It is well established in the literature on political support to differentiate between different objects of support. Starting with Easton (1965, 1975), a differentiation is made between three levels or objects of support, namely the community, the regime, and the authorities. And the theoretical distinction is plausible indeed. For it is well-imaginable that someone is in favour of the regime but not of current authorities. Or as Dalton (1999: 59) justifies the distinction: 'Negative attitudes towards political officials can exist with little loss in support for the office itself or the institutional structure encompassing this office.' The overall importance of this distinction is also clear from this example: system stability is not necessarily threatened by negative attitudes towards incumbents (Muller and Jukam, 1977). Accordingly, regime-based responsiveness would be a more stable attitude whereas incumbent-based responsiveness is exposed to changes and fluctuations during a term of office, similar to the thermometer items asking about politicians' popularity. Therefore, on a theoretical base, a distinction between different levels or objects of support is plausible and important for gaining a better understanding of citizens' evaluations of the democratic system.

This theoretical distinction has also been supported by empirical results. Dalton (1999) and Klingemann (1999), for instance, perform factor analyses that confirm the multi-dimensionality of political support attitudes. More specifically, Canache et al. (2001) find that the item of satisfaction with democracy is not a uni-dimensional concept within citizen minds. Fisher et al. (2010) come to similar conclusions when conducting an empirical study on the concept of trust in Britain. These are only some of the latest empirical findings on the multi-dimensionality of political support. Their results and implications are well-established as reflected in most survey's distinction. The European Social Survey (ESS), for example, differentiates between satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with government. Equally, the battery of trust items included in the ESS spans several objects, namely parliament, politicians, parties and EU parliament. Also, the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) acknowledges a difference between a general and a specific performance of

democracy, for it includes an item asking about respondents' satisfaction with the democratic process, on the one hand, and about citizens' evaluation of the government's performance, on the other hand. Similar distinctions can be found in the European Election Study and World Value Survey. Empirical results and the establishment in survey items validate the theoretical expectation of a differentiation in citizen minds. And as Norris (1999: 13) argues: 'If the public can and does distinguish between different objects of support, our analysis needs to be aware of these distinctions.'

If perceived responsiveness belongs to the set of political support beliefs and attitudes, and if political support beliefs distinguish commonly between different objects, then we should also find a distinction in objects in citizen minds as far as perceived responsiveness is concerned.

H1 Regime-based responsiveness and incumbent-based responsiveness are two empirically separable concepts in citizen minds.

This is an idea already brought up and tested by Craig et al. (1990). But, as mentioned before, they were not successful in empirically separating the two. One of the problems they encountered was that they could not distinguish between incumbent-based responsiveness and incumbent-based trust. Political trust, defined as 'a basic evaluative orientation toward the government founded on how well the government is operating according to people's normative expectations' (Hetherington, 1998: 791; see also Stokes, 1962; Miller, 1974), is probably related to responsiveness, but possibly, like Craig et al. (1990: 301) suggest, in a causal manner. A person's level of trust in incumbents possibly drives perceived responsiveness of incumbents. Likewise, a person's level of trust in the system fuels perceived responsiveness of the system. However, it is also reasonable to expect that attitudes are related across objects. Therefore, we would only expect stronger associations amongst some concepts, relative others. Specifically, we expect the following:

H2 *Ceteris paribus*, levels of incumbent-based responsiveness show a stronger association with levels of trust in government, compared to levels of regime-based responsiveness.

H3 *Ceteris paribus*, levels of regime-based responsiveness show a stronger association with levels of trust in parliament, compared to levels of incumbent-based responsiveness.

As mentioned above, political support beliefs are important for system stability and thus can be indicative of a potential threat to the system. Therefore, it is particularly of interest, as demonstrated in the short literature review, to understand what consequences different levels of political support might yield. This is not any different with varying levels of responsiveness across different objects. The effects of high levels of incumbent-based responsiveness, however, might not be the same as those instigated by high levels of regime-based responsiveness. The literature on retrospective voting and performance-based economic voting has found evidence for individual vote choices being also a result of citizens' evaluation in government performance (see for instance, Fiorina, 1981; Lewis-Beck, 1988; MacKuen et al., 1992). The idea is straightforward: The more satisfied or content citizens are with the incumbent administration the more likely they are to cast a vote for them. Lately, it has been shown that this connection is also transferable beyond Election Day and can also be found for

vote intentions expressed in opinion polls (Kölln and Aarts, 2013). If this holds for feelings of satisfaction with government it should equally be true for other evaluative opinions such as responsiveness. Accordingly, we expect to find an association between positive evaluations of incumbents and a vote intention for them.

H4 *Ceteris paribus*, levels of incumbent-based responsiveness show a stronger association with an expressed vote intention for any of the governing parties, compared to levels of regime-based responsiveness.

H5 *Ceteris paribus*, the differences in average levels of incumbent-based responsiveness between expressed vote intention for either governing or opposition parties are larger compared to the differences in average levels of regime-responsiveness.

With these hypotheses our analytical strategy to test for two-dimensionality in the concept of perceived responsiveness follows different paths. To test the first hypothesis we use principal component analyses and expect a two-factor solution with item loadings according to the different dimensions. The remainder of the hypotheses mark tests of concurrent criterion validity. H2 and H3 state expectations about causal correlations with other theoretically relevant attitudes. The last two hypotheses, H4 and H5, aim at differentiating the two dimensions through exploring their potential individual consequences. The underlying rationale is that, if the two dimensions have different causes and effects they might not be measuring the same construct.

4. Measures and data

To test these hypotheses, we designed survey questions particularly for the purpose of this project. The measure of perceived responsiveness follows closely the literature on political representation. According to Pitkin (1967: 209), political representation means ‘acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them’. Contemporary understandings of responsiveness are largely driven by her work and have not altered much in recent decades. Throughout her influential book she is very careful in pointing out what responsiveness is *not* by providing negative definitions. Firstly, she argues that her understanding of responsiveness should not be confused with simply the implementation of anything the represented demand. She writes: ‘There need not be a constant activity of responding, but there must be a constant condition of responsiveness, of potential readiness to respond.’ (Pitkin, 1967: 233; emphasis in original) This means that representatives are not supposed to be reactive to whatever citizens demand. Rather, representatives enjoy certain autonomy and are supposed to use this so as to act in the interest of the represented, but not necessarily according to citizens’ instant demands (cf. Eulau and Karps, 1977: 249). Secondly and elaborating on this point, Pitkin points out that while representatives should be acting in the interests of the represented, they should provide reasons for their actions, at least when they mismatch with what citizens actually demand. This means that responsiveness, according to Pitkin (1967: 209), requires of representatives to explain and provide arguments to citizens for why their demands were not followed, whenever they were not. This implies some form of representation as communication (cf. Disch, 2011; Esaiasson et al., 2013). It is exactly in this specification of the

concept of responsiveness where participatory or deliberative elements find their place. Yet, this is not to say that Pitkin envisions some form of deliberative representation. Instead, her idea concerns the possibility of conflict while still aiming at avoiding it. 'The representative must act in such a way that there is no conflict, or if it occurs an explanation is called for.' (Pitkin, 1967: 155, 209) This refers again to the aforementioned readiness to be responsive. In short, Pitkin's account of responsiveness may be contemporarily summarised as follows: representatives' obligation to act in the interest of the represented and to provide reasons for their actions whenever those are at odds with citizens' actual demands (cf. Disch, 2011).

The operationalization of perceived responsiveness follows closely this contemporary understanding. At the same time, the items are similar in contents to previous or established measures of perceived responsiveness. Note that it is not the primary aim of this paper to improve existing measures of responsiveness. Rather, our goal is here to empirically distinguish between two dimensions within responsiveness, regime and incumbent. In order to remedy some of the validity threats a different operationalization might create, we test two alternative batteries for each reference objects. Keeping the acts of responsiveness constant, this produces a total of four batteries of questions, two for each object. In the subsequent analysis the different operationalizations will be referred to with *A* and *B*, while the objects are indicated by *regime* and *incumbent*.

We administered the questions on a survey amongst Swedish citizens in spring 2012. It was important to test our hypotheses in an established democracy with a long history of democratic structures, such as Sweden. Citizens of established democracies can clearly distinguish between incumbents and the regime as a whole, compared to citizens of new democracies whose feelings about the incumbents might influence feelings about the regime more immediately (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008). Citizens in an established democracy such as Sweden have possibly an idea of how responsive the regime is in general based on past experience, and are able to separate those evaluations from levels of responsiveness of those currently in power.

The data for our tests stem from the *Citizen Panel* as part of the MOD project (Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research) administered by the University of Gothenburg.¹ The panel is a standing web-based, self-selected survey that is non-representative of the Swedish population. Respondents of the panel tend to be more educated, more interested in politics and more male in numbers compared to the general Swedish population (Dahlberg et al., 2011). This entails that we cannot generalise from any of our findings to the wider Swedish population. According to Yeager et al. (2011), however, the use of a non-probability sample is justifiable in such cases as ours when the primary goal is to reject the null-hypothesis, in this case that the two dimensions cannot be separated.

The panel survey is composed of a core questionnaire and a supplementary section. In the Spring 2012 wave (IV), fielded between 26th March and 16th April, 2012 in total 11,359 people were approached; the response rate was 64.24 per cent. As part of the supplementary section, two operationalizations created for this current project were answered by a total of 734 and 728 respondents respectively, randomly selected from the sample and randomly distributed to one of two groups. The groups were presented with the following questions², first the block of regime

¹ For more information, please visit: http://www.mod.gu.se/english/data/data/Citizen_Panel/

² The precise wordings in Swedish can be found in the Appendix.

questions which were immediately followed by the questions pertaining to incumbents.³ Table 1 reports the summary statistics of the items used in Group A and B.

A regime

“Now you will receive several questions about your evaluation of how the representative system functions after elections.

Generally speaking, to what extent to you think elected politicians do the following on a scale from 0 (=to very little extent) to 10 (= to very much extent):

1. ... are informed about citizen opinions?
2. ... care about citizen opinions?
3. ... provide reasons for the actions they took?
4. ... provide reasons for the actions they are going to take?
5. ... decide according to citizen opinions?”

A incumbent

“Now you will receive several questions about your evaluation of how the current government has been doing since its election in 2010.

To what extent to you think that the government has been doing the following on a scale from 0 (=to very little extent) to 10 (= to very much extent):

1. ... are informed about citizen opinions?
2. ... care about citizen opinions?
3. ... provide reasons for the actions they took?
4. ... provide reasons for the actions they are going to take?
5. ... decide according to citizen opinions?”

B regime

“Now you will receive several questions about your evaluation of how the representative system functions after elections.

Generally speaking, to what extent to you think elected politicians do the following on a scale from 0 (=to very little extent) to 10 (= to very much extent):

1. ... listen to citizens' wishes?
2. ... explain their politics to citizens?
3. ... try to accommodate citizens' wishes?”

³ In order to test for possible ordering effects, both groups were split into half; half of the respondents received the reverse version of the two batteries in A and B. An ordering effect was not found.

B incumbent

“Now you will receive several questions about your evaluation of how the current government has been doing since its election in 2010.

To what extent do you think that the government has been doing the following on a scale from 0 (=to very little extent) to 10 (= to very much extent):

1. ... has listened to citizens' wishes?
2. ... has explained its politics to citizens?
3. ... has satisfied citizens' wishes?”

item	N	mean	median	std dev
A reg 1	367	4.25	4	2.48
A reg 2	367	3.91	4	2.48
A reg 3	367	3.48	4	2.42
A reg 4	367	3.53	4	2.42
A reg 5	367	3.36	4	2.32
B reg 1	361	4.02	4	2.49
B reg 2	361	3.96	4	2.36
B reg 3	361	3.98	4	2.45
A inc 1	367	3.82	3	2.56
A inc 2	367	3.41	3	2.48
A inc 3	367	3.54	3	2.52
A inc 4	367	3.73	4	2.57
A inc 5	367	3.31	3	2.41
B inc 1	367	3.86	4	2.64
B inc 2	367	4.17	4	2.72
B inc 3	367	3.76	4	2.52

Table 1. Summary statistics, responsiveness items.

Note. 'reg' refers to regime and 'inc' to incumbent.

5. Results

Before examining whether or not a distinction of regime- and incumbent-based responsiveness is concurrent criterion valid, it needs to be empirically established that citizens make actually such a divide in general. Principal component analyses per operationalizations, *A* and *B*, are supportive of our hypothesis, albeit not in both cases to the same extent.

The principal component analysis of the ten items in *A* (*regime* and *incumbent*) suggests a two-factor solution (initial Eigenvalues component one= 6.86, component two= 1.20). Employing a varimax

rotation, the items pertaining to incumbency load highest on the first component, whereas regime-items load highest on the second component, as displayed in Table 2. The incumbency component explains 40.64 per cent of the variance, in comparison to 39.98 per cent that is explained by the regime component after rotation.

In comparison, the initial principal component analysis on the six items included in *B* do not suggest a two-factor solution, based on the Kaiser test (initial Eigenvalues of 4.26 for first component and 0.85 for second component). However, since the percentage of variance explained by the second component is still substantial with 14.15 per cent in the initial solution, a two-factor solution was imposed onto the items. Employing a varimax rotation the items loaded as expected on the two components, see Table 2. The first component including regime-items explains a total variance of 43.37 per cent, compared to the component tapping incumbency-feelings that explains 41.7 per cent of the variance after rotation.

These first findings lend preliminary support to hypothesis H1 that regime- and incumbent-based responsiveness are two separate concepts in citizen minds. However, it should be borne in mind that *B* only produces a two-factor solution with the predicted loadings after imposing it.⁴

	component	
	1	2
A reg 1	0.31	0.85
A reg 2	0.28	0.89
A reg 3	0.38	0.8
A reg 4	0.43	0.72
A reg 5	0.33	0.85
A inc 1	0.81	0.39
A inc 2	0.85	0.38
A inc 3	0.85	0.31
A inc 4	0.84	0.25
A inc 5	0.82	0.4

Table 2. Rotated component matrix, A

	component	
	1	2
B reg 1	0.26	0.89
B reg 2	0.41	0.78
B reg 3	0.33	0.87
B inc 1	0.84	0.39
B inc 2	0.87	0.27
B inc 3	0.89	0.34

Table 3. Rotated component matrix, B

Next we test whether each dimension yields different associations with comparable dimensions of political trust, as expressed in H2 and H3. For this, the individual items were combined to separate scales, by summing up the individual values and dividing the sums by the number of items. The correlation matrices of items for each of the batteries can be found in the Appendix. The scales are all internally consistent, according to Cronbach’s Alpha (*A regime*= 0.935; *A incumbent*= 0.941; *B regime*= 0.889; *B incumbent*= 0.92) and construct valid, according to factor analyses. Also, individual

⁴ Confirmatory factor analyses for both operationalizations were conducted. While a two-component solution presented in both cases a better fit compared to a one-component solution, nevertheless neither did produce good fits overall (A: RMSEA=0.194, Bentler-Bonnett NFI= 0.874; B: RMSEA=0.253, Bentler-Bonnett=0.903).

Cronbach’s Alpha values if deleted for each item do not suggest that any of the items should be removed. Corrected discrimination coefficients report more than acceptable results and can be found in the Appendix for each battery’s items. The summary statistics for the scales are displayed in Table 4.

	N	mean	median	std dev
A regime	357	3.75	4	2.06
A incumbent	359	3.57	3	2.26
B regime	362	4.01	4	2.12
B incumbent	366	3.93	4	2.49

Table 4. Summary statistics, responsiveness scales

For testing our hypotheses H2 and H3 pertaining to an association of different dimensions across political support concepts, different trust items are used. The *Citizen Panel* provides several trust items, including trust in government and trust in parliament, ranging from 1 (=a lot of trust) to 5 (=no trust at all). We anticipate that the object ‘government’ is more closely associated with incumbents while ‘parliament’ taps more regime-based feelings. Accordingly and as already stated in H2 and H3, we expect a stronger association between incumbent-based responsiveness and trust in government, on the one hand, and regime responsiveness and trust in parliament, on the other hand. The summary statistics of the trust items after reversing are displayed in Tables 5 and 6, divided into the Groups A and B, respectively.

A					
		N	mean	median	std dev
government		367	2.76	2	1.22
parliament		364	2.49	2	0.93
B					
		N	mean	median	std dev
government		365	2.88	3	1.27
parliament		365	2.65	2	0.99

Table 5. Summary statistics, trust items, A and B

We estimated the bivariate relationships between *A regime* and trust in government and trust in parliament, respectively. The same was done for *A incumbent*, *B regime*, and *B incumbent*. The bivariate correlation coefficients (Pearson’s) are reported in Table 6. Ceteris paribus, they indicate that for both operationalizations, *A* and *B*, coefficients are higher between regime-based feelings of political support (regime responsiveness and trust in parliament), and between incumbency-based

feelings of political support (i.e. incumbency responsiveness and trust in government), as predicted. To be sure, the results also show an association in the other direction, namely, on the one hand, that regime responsiveness is connected to governmental trust and, on the other hand, that incumbent responsiveness is related to trust in parliament. This has to do with the interrelatedness and potentially spill-over effects of the concepts. As mentioned above, we did expect these cross-correlations. However and equally, we expected to find stronger associations within the same dimension. And these findings are indeed supportive of our hypotheses H2 and H3. It appears that feelings of incumbent- and regime-based responsiveness are not only empirically distinguishable but also mirror a differentiation of other political support constructs.

		Pearson's
A		
regime/government		0.358
regime/parliament		0.427
incumbent/government		0.638
incumbent/parliament		0.388
B		
regime/government		0.510
regime/parliament		0.578
incumbent/government		0.746
incumbent/parliament		0.467

Table 6. Bivariate relationships

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

The last step of our analysis tests for potential differential consequences of incumbent- and regime-based responsiveness. We asked respondents for their hypothetical vote choice for the Swedish Riksdag, were general elections held today. Respondents could choose between the eight parties currently represented in parliament and several opt-out answers, such as 'don't know' or 'wouldn't vote at all'. We recoded the responses into government (=1) and opposition (=0) parties according to the governmental composition in spring 2012. That means responses expressing a vote intention for the parties Moderaterna, Centerpartiet, Folkpartiet, or Kristdemokraterna were coded as 1 and responses for any of the opposition parties (Socialdemokraterna, Vänsterpartiet, Miljöpartiet, Sverigedemokraterna) were coded as '0'. Across the two operationalizations, the frequencies of responses for either category are displayed in Table 7.

Vote intention			
	N	gov	opp
A	150	34.7%	65.3%
B	135	15.3%	58.5%

Table 7. Distribution of vote intentions across A and B.

Firstly, consider Table 8 showing Pearson’s correlations between the dimensions of responsiveness and vote intentions. For both groups of operationalizations, A and B, incumbent-based feelings of responsiveness yield a much stronger connection with vote intention than regime-based responsiveness. These results are strongly supportive of H4. Finally, Table 9 reports the results of a series of ANOVA tests to assess H5. The first and second test evaluate whether or not citizens perceptions of incumbents’ responsiveness differ systematically dependent on their vote choice for or against the incumbents. And as hypothesised, for both operationalizations we found that the average perception of incumbent responsiveness is significantly higher for those citizens expressing a vote intention for one of the governing parties. Conversely, we were expecting to find such effects (if any) to a lesser degree in citizens’ perception of regime-responsiveness. These expectations were confirmed by the results reported in the third and fourth test of Table 9. Taken together, these results are supportive of H5.

		Pearson's
A incumbent/vote intention		0.598
A regime/vote intention		0.237
B incumbent/ vote intention		0.610
B regime/ vote intention		0.243

Table 8. Correlations between responsiveness and vote intention (gov=1).
Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

vote intention/ incumbency						
Test number		Summary statistics			ANOVA	
		N	mean	std dev	F	p-value
	A					
1	Government	51	5.412	1.992	80.873	0.000
	Opposition	96	2.417	1.885		
	B					
2	Government	56	6.125	1.973	78.215	0.000
	Opposition	56	2.974	2.076		
vote intention/ regime						
		Summary statistics			ANOVA	
		N	mean	std dev	F	p-value
	A					
3	Government	50	4.520	1.776	8.653	0.004
	Opposition	97	3.474	2.166		
	B					

4	Government	54	4.982	1.786	8.137	0.005
	Opposition	78	3.987	2.086		

Table 9. Summary statistics and ANOVA of vote intention and responsiveness.

6. Conclusion

This paper addressed the question whether or not citizens' feelings of responsiveness differ systematically across different objects, keeping acts of responsiveness constant. More specifically, this paper tested for the distinction between regime-based and incumbent-based feelings commonly held in the political support literature. It argued that existing measures of perceived responsiveness are unclear as to the object of responsiveness. Usually, batteries of questions include an array of political agents, such as politicians, members of parliament (MPs), political parties, the government or public officials. While some of these relate more closely to the incumbents, others tap more clearly the political system as such. Further, we argued that responsiveness belongs to the group of political support attitudes. Similar to concepts such as trust or satisfaction, perceived responsiveness is a basic political attitude indicative of someone's political support in general. And while the literature commonly draws a distinction between political agents in other political support beliefs, attempts to accomplish this for perceived responsiveness have not been entirely successful yet.

This paper tested operationalizations of perceived responsiveness that clearly separate incumbent-based feelings from regime-based evaluations. Results obtained through factor analyses showed initial support for the idea. Further, testing for associations with the important related construct of political support indicated that indeed incumbency-based feelings relate more closely to trust in government, while regime-based responsiveness has systematically a stronger association with trust in parliament. It appears that feelings of incumbent- and regime-based responsiveness are not only empirically distinguishable but also mirror a differentiation of other political support constructs. Finally, we found that each of the dimensions of responsiveness yields differential consequences. Incumbent-based responsiveness holds a stronger association with an expressed vote preference for any of the incumbent parties, compared to regime-based responsiveness. Overall, these results are supportive of the idea of two-dimensionality within the concept of perceived responsiveness.

So far, the paper only tested for the dimensions' correlations with other related constructs. In the next step, it will be evaluated to what extent regime- and incumbent-based responsiveness have different causal determinants, as well as differential causal consequences.

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Appendix

1. Question wordings in Swedish

A regime

“Nu kommer några frågor om din uppfattning om hur det representativa systemet fungerar efter valen.

Allmänt sett, i vilken utsträckning tycker Du att politiker som är valda (0= i mycket liten utsträckning; 10= i mycket stor utsträckning):

1. ... håller sig informerade om medborgarnas asikter?
2. ... bryr sig om medborgarnas asikter?
3. ... efter sina beslut förklarar varför de gjort som de gjort?
4. ... fore sina beslut förklarar varför de tanker göra som de gör?
5. ... beslutar i enlighet med medborgarnas asikter?”

A incumbent

“Nu kommer några frågor om hur den nuvarande regerinen skött sig efter valet 2010.

I vilken utsträckning tycker Du att regeringen (0= i mycket liten utsträckning; 10= i mycket stor utsträckning):

1. ... har hållit sig informerad om medborgarnas asikter?
2. ... har brytt sig om medborgarnas asikter?
3. ... efter sina beslut har förklarat varför de gjorde som de gjorde?
4. ... fore sina beslut har förklarat varför de tanker göra som de gör?
5. ... har beslutet i enlighet med medborgarnas asikter?”

B regime

“Nu kommer några frågor om din uppfattning om hur det representativa systemet fungerar efter valen.

Allmänt sett, i vilken utsträckning tycker Du att politiker som är valda (0= i mycket liten utsträckning; 10= i mycket stor utsträckning):

1. ... lyssnar till medborgarnas önskemål?
2. ... förklarar sin politik för medborgarna?
3. ... försöker tillgodose medborgarnas önskemål?”

B incumbent

“Nu kommer några frågor om hur den nuvarande regeringen skött sig efter valet 2010.

I vilken utsträckning tycker Du att regeringen (0= i mycket liten utsträckning; 10= i mycket stor utsträckning):

1. ... har lyssnat till medborgarnas önskemål?
2. ... har förklarat sin politik för medborgarna?
3. ... har tillgodosett medborgarnas önskemål?”

2. Correlation matrices, batteries

A regime					
	A reg 1	A reg 2	A reg 3	A reg 4	A reg 5
A reg 1	1				
A reg 2	0.837	1			
A reg 3	0.712	0.735	1		
A reg 4	0.679	0.688	0.745	1	
A reg 5	0.766	0.811	0.766	0.704	1

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

A incumbent					
	A inc 1	A inc 2	A inc 3	A inc 4	A inc 5
A inc 1	1				
A inc 2	0.875	1			
A inc 3	0.724	0.750	1		
A inc 4	0.655	0.697	0.798	1	
A inc 5	0.794	0.884	0.751	0.709	1

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

B regime			
	B reg 1	B reg 2	B reg 3
B reg 1	1		
B reg 2	0.752	1	
B reg 3	0.859	0.777	1

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

B incumbent			
	B inc 1	B inc 2	B inc 3
B inc 1	1		
B inc 2	0.722	1	
B inc 3	0.891	0.779	1

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.

3. Corrected Discrimination Coefficients

	Kendall's Tau
A reg 1	0.724
A reg 2	0.753
A reg 3	0.697
A reg 4	0.668
A reg 5	0.732
A inc 1	0.721
A inc 2	0.770
A inc 3	0.719
A inc 4	0.660
A inc 5	0.752
B reg 1	0.690
B reg 2	0.669
B reg 3	0.718
B inc 1	0.740
B inc 2	0.657
B inc 3	0.796

Note: All values are significant at the 0.01 level.