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Efficacy and political participation : how can i make a difference?

Shadrick M. Mead

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ABSTRACT

EFFICACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Shadrick Mead, MA

Department of Political Science

Northern Illinois University, 2018

April Clark, Director

While there have been numerous empirical studies of the causal determinants of political participation, few have examined how separate efficacious attitudes affect the way in which an individual chooses to participate in the political system. This research examines the relationship between political participation and the efficacious attitudes of individuals in the US electorate. Specifically, it breaks down political efficacy into two forms, internal and external efficacy, as well as, placing various forms of political participation into a typology of direct and indirect participation, to determine the interplay of efficacious attitudes and the likelihood an individual participates in one form of participation or the other. The research finds that efficacy remains an important predictor of participation and the separation of efficacious forms is important in understanding the participatory nature of the US electorate.

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EFFICACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

BY

SHADRICK MICHAEL MEAD
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April K. Clark

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INTRODUCTION

"People often say that, in a democracy, decisions are made by a majority of the people. Of course, that is not true. Decisions are made by a majority of those who make themselves heard..."

Rep. Walter H. Judd of Minnesota

Minnesota Representative Judd had an acute understanding of how influence is distributed in the political world. Those who make their voices heard are the ones more likely to have their political desires met. So why are so few making themselves heard? In an era in which political discord is common and disputes over government activity are omnipresent, there exists a paradox in the American electorate. The United States is characterized by a low level of voter turnout; the situation is even more dire for midterm elections, yet the American public is often very engaged in other political activities (Powell 1986; Zukin et al. 2006). Despite being the “champions of democracy,” according to the Pew Research Center (2018), the United States ranks twenty-sixth in voter turnout compared to other advanced industrial-democratic nations.

Some might equate this lack of turnout with disinterest in politics, yet, scholars routinely uncover a high level of political engagement with the voting-aged population participating in other ways (Powell 1986; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Zukin et al. 2006). A large share of the American electorate does not turn out at the ballot box, but they do participate in more costly ways such as attending protests, community meetings and campaign rallies, donating to interest groups, and raising money for political candidates. Here lies the paradox of political participation in the United States. The cost of voting is much lower than that found in other

political activities that Americans engage in at a level greater than other advanced democratic countries. This is not to say that the cost of voting in the US isn't high depending on various voting barriers.

The purpose of this research is to examine if and how the electorate's perceived ability to influence government, their feelings of external efficacy and internal efficacy, plays a role in understanding the paradox of political participation in the United States. More specifically, this research intends to empirically test the influence of internal and external efficacy on direct and indirect forms of political participation. The literature on the effects of efficacy on various forms of political participation is sparse and has received little attention since the 1980s, a period that is characterized as a turning point in the efficacious attitudes of the American electorate. By examining how feelings of efficacy in its various forms affect the type of political participation the electorate engages in, we can develop a better understanding of their participatory habits, as well as an explanation for political engagement in general.

Rather than conduct another experiment or comparative analysis of voter turnout in different constituencies (Powell 1986) or examine the resource considerations of participation (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995) or the effect of social interaction or environment on participation (Kenny 1992; McClurg 2003; Putnam 2000), this research focuses on political engagement through the lens of the public's internal and external levels of efficacy. If voters lack external efficacy as captured by the perception that the government is unresponsive or apathetic, perhaps a singular vote, or other forms of political participation, is judged as an ineffective way to communicate their policy desires. Additionally, a feeling of an inadequate understanding of government processes, or the absence of internal efficacy, may also deter the electorate from

participating. In short, the two are differentiated as feelings of government responsiveness (external efficacy) and perceived ability to elicit that response (internal efficacy). This research will examine the influence of efficacy on varying types of participation the US electorate engages in. Utilizing Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology of political participation as a template for distinguishing between modes of participation, each form of participation is categorized into direct and indirect modes of influence on government. Direct participation consists of forms of political participation which are designed to affect the government or members of government in an explicit, straightforward way, such as voting, attending rallies, or working for a member of Congress or a party. Indirect participation represents participatory forms meant to influence government in a more suggestive or supportive way, such as campaign donations, influencing others' voting decisions, or displaying party/candidate preferences through the use of bumper stickers or pins.

In short, this research will address the following question: when the electorate participates, how do differing individual levels of internal and external efficacy affect the way in which individuals participate in politics? Does strength in one form of efficacy better predict the form of political participation engaged in? The importance of this research is to establish a better understanding of the electorate's participatory patterns (direct and indirect forms of political participation) as a product of their perceived ability to influence government. If government officials are seen to be unresponsive, self-interested, and inefficient, or the processes of the political arena are viewed as overly complicated, does the electorate express their political preferences? If so, how? Understanding the factors that influence how a person participates in

politics is important in understanding current political behavior by the electorate characterized by an ever more volatile political climate in the wake of the 2016 election.

Efficacy and Participation in America

The focus on participation, although varied, has been on who participates (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), why one participates (Lawrence 1981), encouragement to participate in politics (McClurg 2003; Putnam 2000), and when they participate (Leighley 1995). There are a number of personal, political, and psychological factors that influence political engagement such as resource availability, socialization, education, approval, and learned participation. One such explanation is the "standard socioeconomic status model" (Verba and Nie 1972). In this model, participation is primarily driven by individuals' resources (further elaborated later) and prior civic experience, as well as attitudes which individuals hold regarding their ability to engage politically or perceptions about the political system which predispose them toward political action. The "mobilization model" asserts that participation is a response to cues and political encouragement to participate by social/interest groups, politicians, or political elites (Leighley 1995; Putnam 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen 2002). Learned participation from family members, friends, and social groups, as well as hereditary and biological sources have been found to contribute to patterns of participation among individuals (Bouchard and McGue 2003; Fowler, Baker, and Dawes 2008; Turkheimer 1998). Political factors of participation also include a wide array of influential elements. Changes in institutional structures play a role in the participatory nature of individuals. Verba et al. (1987) report that between 1967 and 1987 patterns in participation rates between blacks and whites was indicative of changes in the institutional structure in American politics. The declining visibility of the civil rights movement

resulted in blacks being less likely to participate in 1987 than in 1967. Participation can also be affected by policy desires affecting both winners and losers of a battle for policy (Flavin and Griffin 2009). Those on the winning end of a policy debate increase not only their likelihood of participation; it also increases their perceptions of legitimacy toward government. However, the mere act of participation in these policy debates increases the likelihood of participation for both policy winners and losers.

In this study, I examine the attitudinal determinants of political behavior with respect to efficacy. The perceptions the electorate hold on their ability to participate effectively in politics are a large influence on their decision to participate. These efficacious attitudes are one of the important factors individuals employ in turnout decision-making processes. Judgments of effectual influence are broken down into two types: internal and external efficacy. Balch (1974) demonstrated that efficacy breaks down into these two pairs, each exhibiting different patterns of association with values and beliefs such as political trust. Both forms of efficacy indicate the degree to which an individual feels he/she can influence the political system (Balch 1974). Internal efficacy is the belief that one has the requisite skills, ability, and knowledge to secure a response from the government even when officials are seen as unresponsive. External efficacy is the belief that government institutions and elites are responsive to one's attempts to exert political influence (Clarke and Acock 1989; Craig and Maggiotto 1982). Efficacy, however, is not stagnant, it waxes and wanes over time with an individual's perception of political attentiveness and their perceptions of effective understanding of government processes. Studies have shown that efficacy has been on a slow decline since the 1960s, but most importantly it has declined greatly in the US electorate beginning in the mid-1980s (Chamberlain 2012).

There are many potential influencers that may elaborate why efficacious perceptions change over time. Research identifies several factors that affect one's sense of efficacy, like social status, emotions caused by government action, civic resources (such as time, money and experience), and political socialization (Campbell 2006; McClurg 2003; Valentino, Gregorowicz, and Groenendyk 2009; Weber 2013), as well as many other external factors which have an effect on these attitudes such as presidential approval and consumer sentiment; or a sense of community and connectedness can serve to reinforce (or diminish) feelings of efficacy (Anderson 2010; Chamberlain 2012). A sense of belonging and purpose provide powerful incentives to participate, especially in more active and traditional means such voting. As one becomes more versed in various forms of civic participation, their sense of efficacy increases (Flavin and Griffin 2009).

Other personal factors, such as education, can also be seen to affect an individual's level of efficacy. Internal efficacy is undoubtedly connected to educational attainment, with those who are less educated exhibiting lower levels of efficacy. The differential efficacy associated with education is due to this disadvantage and the lack of political knowledge to accomplish something of value in politics (Guest 1974; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Studies find that those who participated in government and civics classes reported greater political efficacy and this effect carried over to increased political attentiveness (Pasek et. al. 2008). Additionally, presidential approval contributes to the perception of legitimacy in government, which studies find positively affects external efficacy judgments (Chamberlain 2012). In short, a variety of factors exert an influence on feelings of efficacy, with the effect – positive or negative – contingent on particular considerations and discussed in greater detail below.

Many scholars maintain that efficacy is a necessary condition for participation. Low levels of efficacy may lead to less participation because people perceive themselves as powerless to affect government activity and thus may spend their time on other tasks (Ainsworth 2000; Lawrence 1981). The two forms of efficacy may not complement each other; individuals can have high internal efficacy but low external efficacy. Internal and external efficacy are expected to have various effects on the likelihood of participating in political activities as well as the type of political participation. Unfortunately, the internal-external efficacy distinction rarely has been explicitly tested in empirical studies and it is the deficiency that this research addresses.

The forms of political participation that occur in the US are vast and range from traditional forms of participation, such as attending rallies, or less obvious forms such as attempting to influence another's vote, to even nontraditional forms like protesting (Bean 1991). Ekman and Amnå's (2012) typology of participation breaks down political participation in two ways, manifest and latent, which are referred to here as direct and indirect forms of political participation. Direct forms of political participation are those in which the participant is attempting to make a forthright influence on government activities, such as voting, attending rallies, and working directly for members of government. Pollock (1983) finds that given various high-low levels of internal and external efficacy, the type of participation an individual engages in becomes noticeably different for certain political activities. For example, those with high external efficacy are more likely to vote, while those with high internal efficacy are more likely to contact their member of government. Individuals with low levels of both internal and external efficacy tend to withdraw from political activities, while high levels of both would predict a greater propensity to participate in a wide variety of political behaviors. Additional research also

finds that those who experience high levels of external efficacy are more likely to participate in direct forms of participation such as voting and campaigning (Michelson 2000; Pollock 1983). Other studies have found the propensity to engage in nontraditional forms of political expression such as the likelihood to participate in protest or other “aggressive” tactics is associated with an individual’s sense of efficacy and trust in government (Citrin 1974; Muller 1977; Schussman and Soule 2005). These studies indicate that those who experience higher levels of external efficacy are more likely to be involved in direct forms of participation.

Indirect forms of participation are an obscure kind of engagement that may be regarded as “pre-political.” Ekman and Amnå’s (2012) note that this form of participation “is based on the simple observation that citizens actually do a lot of things that may not be directly or unequivocally classified as ‘political participation’, but at the same time could be of great significance for future political activities” (p. 287). This type of participation is mostly seen in ways that attempt to influence others such as trying to change another’s vote, displaying political preferences using yard signs or bumper stickers, or donating money. It appears that when low levels of trust in government are combined with high levels of internal efficacy, the potential for participation remains likely, though not in the form of voting (Pollock 1983). Beyond this, however, there seems little in the extant literature that addresses the impact of internal efficacy on the propensity for an individual to participate in indirect forms of political participation.

Previous literature has employed causal modeling to test these expected relationships. The result is a more thorough understanding of the propensity to move from orthodox styles of participation to more extreme modes such as a protest (Bean 1991) as well as core explanatory factors to find political activation (Schussman and Soule 2005), while others have examined the

means necessary to be politically active (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). This research contributes to the existing research by testing for a relationship between feelings of efficacy and the type of political expression they participate in given their levels of internal and external efficacy. For the most part, recent literature has relegated political efficacy to little more than a control variable recognizing its influence on the propensity to participate. Little attention has been devoted to understanding how efficacious attitudes have affected the way in which an individual chooses to participate in the political process. The willingness to participate is affected by many factors not within the scope of this research, such as civic skills, group effects, socialization, and political interests (Chong and Rogers 2005; Kenny 1992; McClurg 2003; Putnam 2000); however, this research focuses on the relationship between efficacy and willingness to participate in two different forms of political participation – direct and indirect.

Taking this literature into consideration this research intends to empirically test three hypotheses. First, the literature tells us that an individual who experiences higher levels of overall efficacy is more likely to engage politically. Thus, one would expect those with efficacious predispositions to be more participatory in all forms of participation (direct and indirect combined), which elaborates the first hypothesis:

H1: Individuals with higher overall efficacy will be more likely to participate politically.

The estimated effects of external efficacy is that the greater the individual feels that government is responsive to one's political goals and desires, the more likely one is to engage in political activities designed to make a direct influence on government activities, such as voting, attending rallies, and working directly for members of government. Since they perceive

government in this way, those with external efficacy should involve themselves in more direct forms of participation, which would indicate the expectations of the second hypothesis:

H2: Individuals who believe that they have influence over the government (external efficacy) are more likely to participate in direct forms of political participation.

Internal efficacy indicates the degree to which an individual feels one possesses an understanding in government processes and therefore is more likely to participate in politics. Considering this, one should expect that those who possess a greater sense of internal efficacy are more likely to be involved in indirect means of participation linked to influencing those around them, such as convincing others to vote in a particular direction, which contributes to the expected relationship of the third hypothesis:

H3: Individuals who believe that they have an understanding of government processes (internal efficacy) are more likely to participate in indirect forms of political participation.

The intent of this research is to estimate the effect of efficacy on the type of participation the US electorate engages in. The literature has identified the means by which the electorate participates and the motivations for engaging in political participation; however, a gap exists within the literature as to how they participate given their perceptions of effectual action. Furthermore, the literature primarily addresses participation as a whole, rather than categorizing them into a typology which imposes varying degrees of cost and differential effects on policy and political outcomes. It is through this research that I address this gap in the literature, specifically, utilizing Ekman and Amnå's (2012) participation typology as a means of

categorizing various forms of political participation into direct and indirect types to empirically test how internal and external efficacy influence the mode in which individuals participate.

DATA AND METHODS

This research utilizes the American National Election Survey (ANES) post-election survey, 1966-2008 (N=23,341) and will be used to investigate the separate and combined effects of internal and external efficacy on the particular mode – direct or indirect – in which the electorate participates. This time period offers the opportunity to assess long-term trends in political participation, and the ANES instrument offers the most comprehensive measures for investigating the efficacy-participation relations over a long period of time. I employ ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to test the hypothesis about the effects of external and internal efficacy on direct and indirect forms of political participation.

Dependent Variable: Political Participation

Measurement of the dependent variables is captured utilizing various survey questions provided by the ANES designed to assess direct participation and indirect participation. Six questions are categorized into their two distinct parts as identified by Ekman and Amnå's (2012) participation typology. The direct and indirect indexes range from 0-3. The questions that were compiled for the *direct* political participation scale are as follows:

- (1) "Did [you] vote in the national elections?"
- (2) "Did [you] attend political meetings/rallies during the campaign?"
- (3) "Did [you] do any work for one of the parties or candidates?"

For *indirect* forms of participation, the following questions were combined into a 3-point index:

(1) “During the campaign, did you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates?”

(2) “Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?”

(3) “During an election year, people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns. Did you give money to a political party during this election year? Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office?”

Responses to these questions were based on a (1) Yes or (0) No choice and coded so that higher values are indicative of having engaged in more forms of political participation. An additional dependent variable for overall political participation combined the responses to create a 6-point index designed to capture political participation in general and ranged from a low of 0 or no participation to a high of 6, indicative of engaging in all forms of political participation.

Independent Variables: Internal and External Efficacy

To measure the independent variables of internal and external efficacy, three questions from the ANES are utilized. External efficacy is measured by one’s responses to the following two prompts: (1) “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think” and (2) “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” Responses to these prompts were based on a (0) Agree or (1) Disagree choice. For internal efficacy, a single prompt captures differences in belief systems that portray an inward attitude toward politics: “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” Responses to these prompts were based on a (0) Agree or (1) Disagree choice. Admittedly relying on a single indicator for internal efficacy might raise concerns. The ANES lacks additional questions that measure beliefs about the capacity to act effectively in politics. Prior research utilized an additional prompt, “Voting is the only way that a person like me can have

any say about how the government runs things”, but this raises validity concerns. Craig and Maggiotto (1982) notes that “disagreement might denote a belief that one can be effective in ways other than voting, with agreement indicating one's confidence that the government can be controlled by citizens who exercise their right to vote” (p. 89). In other words, both agreement and disagreement may indicate high levels of efficacy or may represent beliefs about the government's responsiveness to citizens, a measure that is more akin to external efficacy. Indeed, the item was removed from the ANES in 1982. Thus, an index ranging from 0-2 represents external efficacy and a 0-1 scale for internal efficacy, with the higher numbers representing greater levels of efficacy. Additionally, a combined efficacy scale was created combining the two indexes into a composite index measuring general efficacy ranging from 0-3.

Controls

The literature identifies a number of factors that influence participation, including social demographic characteristics and political orientation. Several indicators are coded as dummy variables such as gender with 1 representing male and 0 for female, race is coded as “white” or “nonwhite” with the latter serving as the reference group, marital status is coded 1 for married as compared to the baseline category of not married, and party contact indicating whether someone from a political party contacted them about engaging in some form of political activity is coded 1 for “yes” and 0 for “no”. Age is coded as an interval variable ranging from 17-99 years old. Party ID is recoded to contrast Republicans and Democrats, with independents acting as the baseline category. Education is categorized on a scale of 1-4, with 1 representing “grade school or less” (0-8 grades), 2 “high school” (12 grades or fewer), 3 “some college” (13 grades or more but no degree) and 4 “college or advanced degree.” In part because of how the ANES reports income,

income was categorized 1-5, with 1 denoting that the respondent falls into the “0-16 percentile,” 2 the “17-33 percentile,” 3 the “34-67 percentile,” 4 the “68-95 percentile,” and 5 the “96-100 percentile.” Religious service attendance was coded 1 for “Never”, 2 “Sometimes”, and 3 “Always.”

As mentioned earlier, activation plays a large role in participation, as well as interest in politics, thus control variables are necessary to ensure their participation was a result of personal efficacy, rather than activation or common interest. Likewise, trust in government may dissuade voters from being participatory since if they view the government as trustworthy they may feel there is no need to participate. Thus, trust in government and political interest are utilized as control variables. Trust in government and interest in politics are worded as follows: “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right” and “How much attention do you pay to what's going on in politics generally” respectively. For both trust in government and political interest, the response options were based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. Political interest was coded from 1 “hardly at all” to 4 “most of the time” and trust in government from 1 “almost never” to 4 “just about always.” A final note on trust in government should be mentioned. Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) find that external efficacy is separate from political trust, at least when the former is measured in terms of the fairness of political procedures and outcomes rather than in terms of elite responsiveness to popular demands, thus utilizing questions in regard to trust of government and government officials does not properly measure the effects of efficacy attitudes.

RESULTS

The results in Table 1 demonstrate the separate and combined effects of efficacy on overall political participation. To achieve the research goals, the modeling approach requires employing eight models in a stepwise fashion. In this way, Model 1 tests the sole effect of external efficacy on participation and Model 2 turns the focus on internal efficacy. Model 3 considers the effects of external and internal efficacy separately, and Model 4 tests for the combined efficacy effects. Models 5-8 incorporate a number of predictors known to influence differences in political participation as controls. Finally, a similar modeling approach is utilized for testing the efficacy relationship on direct forms of political participation (Table 2) as well as indirect forms of political participation (Table 3).

To examine the effects of efficacy (internal and external) on political participation (direct and indirect separately and combined) I employ analysis at the aggregate and individual levels. First, aggregate efficacy trends are conveyed in Figure 1 and demonstrates that efficacious attitudes have varied dramatically over the time period 1966 to 2008. Since efficacy is understood to predict the propensity to participate politically, examining the overtime trends is necessary for considering potential biases in the modeling and analyses, as well as how efficacy has changed in the American electorate over time. Second, several models are employed to estimate the effects of external efficacy, internal efficacy, and overall efficacy on direct and indirect (separately and combined) forms of participation. Models 1-4 represent the base models

wherein the sole effects of efficacy on participation are considered. Models 5-8 incorporate controls for the remaining predictors thought to affect political participation.

Figure 1 demonstrates overtime changes in efficacy over the 46-year period. Some notable features are immediately apparent. First, the figure shows internal efficacy has routinely been the lowest form of efficacy with large majorities of Americans disagreeing with the statement that the “government does not seem too complicated.” Additionally, it has remained low and consistent overtime only peaking over 30% in 2000. Second, the feeling of having control over what government does has remained, the highest indicator of external efficacy over time. The perception that officials care what voters think, the other indicator of external efficacy, has also been decreasing over time. In fact, both measures of external efficacy have declined substantially from their pinnacle year in 1984, decreasing by nearly half. Comparatively speaking, internal efficacy has been considerably lower on average than external efficacy over the four decades examined.

Table 1. Combined Political Participation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Intercept	.940 (.011)***	1.08 (.009)***	.884 (.011)***	.876 (.011)***	-1.04 (.048)***	-1.10 (.048)***	-1.02 (.048)***	-1.02 (.048)***
External Efficacy	.220 (.009)***		.180 (.009)***		.098 (.009)***	.068 (.016)***	.089 (.009)***	
Internal Efficacy		.201 (.017)***	.154 (.017)***	.262 (.007)***			.053 (.016)***	.115 (.007)***
Combined Efficacy								
Age					.065 (.000)***	.062 (.000)***	.068 (.000)***	.068 (.000)***
Male (<i>Female Baseline</i>)					.021 (.014)**	.012 (.014)*	.016 (.014)***	.017 (.014)*
White (<i>Nonwhite Baseline</i>)					-.002 (.018)	.004 (.018)	-.002 (.018)***	-.002 (.018)
Education					.138 (.008)***	.138 (.008)***	.129 (.009)***	.129 (.008)***
Income Level					.094 (.007)***	.100 (.007)***	.092 (.007)***	.092 (.007)***
Married					.000 (.015)	.001 (.015)	.002 (.015)***	.002 (.015)
Church					.061 (.009)***	.069 (.009)***	.062 (.009)***	.062 (.009)***
Attendance					.120 (.022)***	.122 (.022)***	.118 (.022)***	.119 (.022)***
Republican								
(<i>Independent Baseline</i>)					.116 (.021)***	.119 (.021)***	.115 (.021)***	.115 (.021)***
Democrat								
(<i>Independent Baseline</i>)					.189 (.016)***	.190 (.016)***	.188 (.016)***	.188 (.016)***
Contacted by party					.231 (.007)***	.234 (.007)***	.223 (.007)***	.223 (.007)***
Political Interest					-.024 (.011)***	-.005 (.011)	-.023 (.011)***	-.023 (.011)***
Trust Government								
Adjusted R ²	.048	.040	.070	.068	.245	.240	.247	.247
N=	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341

*** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05; Standard errors in parentheses

Note: Combined participation index is a combination of responses to having voted, attended campaigns/rallies, working for a party/candidate, influencing others votes, displaying campaign signage/stickers, and donating to a political campaign.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Intercept	.612 (.006)***	.700 (.005)***	.589 (.006)***	.584 (.005)***	-.631 (.027)***	-.673 (.027)***	-.623 (.027)***	-.624 (.027)***
External Efficacy	.208 (.005)***	.158 (.009)***	.179 (.005)***		.097 (.005)***	.044 (.009)***	.092 (.005)***	
Internal Efficacy			.111 (.010)***				.028 (.009)***	
Combined Efficacy				.234 (.004)***				.103 (.004)***
Age					.141 (.000)***	.136 (.000)***	.143 (.000)***	.143 (.000)***
Male (<i>Female Baseline</i>)					-.001 (.008)	-.008 (.008)	-.003 (.008)	-.005 (.008)
White (<i>Nonwhite Baseline</i>)					.002 (.010)	.008 (.010)	.002 (.010)	.003 (.010)
Education					.143 (.005)***	.148 (.005)***	.138 (.005)***	.137 (.005)***
Income Level					.098 (.004)***	.105 (.004)***	.097 (.004)***	.098 (.004)***
Married					.011 (.008)	.010 (.008)*	.011 (.008)	.012 (.008)
Church Attendance					.098 (.005)***	.105 (.005)***	.099 (.005)***	.100 (.005)***
Republican (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)					.099 (.012)***	.102 (.012)***	.098 (.012)***	.098 (.012)***
Democrat (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)					.115 (.012)***	.119 (.012)***	.115 (.012)***	.116 (.012)***
Contacted by party					.166 (.009)***	.169 (.009)***	.165 (.009)***	.165 (.009)***
Political Interest					.184 (.004)***	.191 (.004)***	.180 (.004)***	.178 (.004)***
Trust Government					-.010 (.006)	.009 (.006)	-.010 (.006)	-.008 (.006)
Adjusted R ²	.043	.025	.055	.054	.228	.222	.229	.228
N=	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341

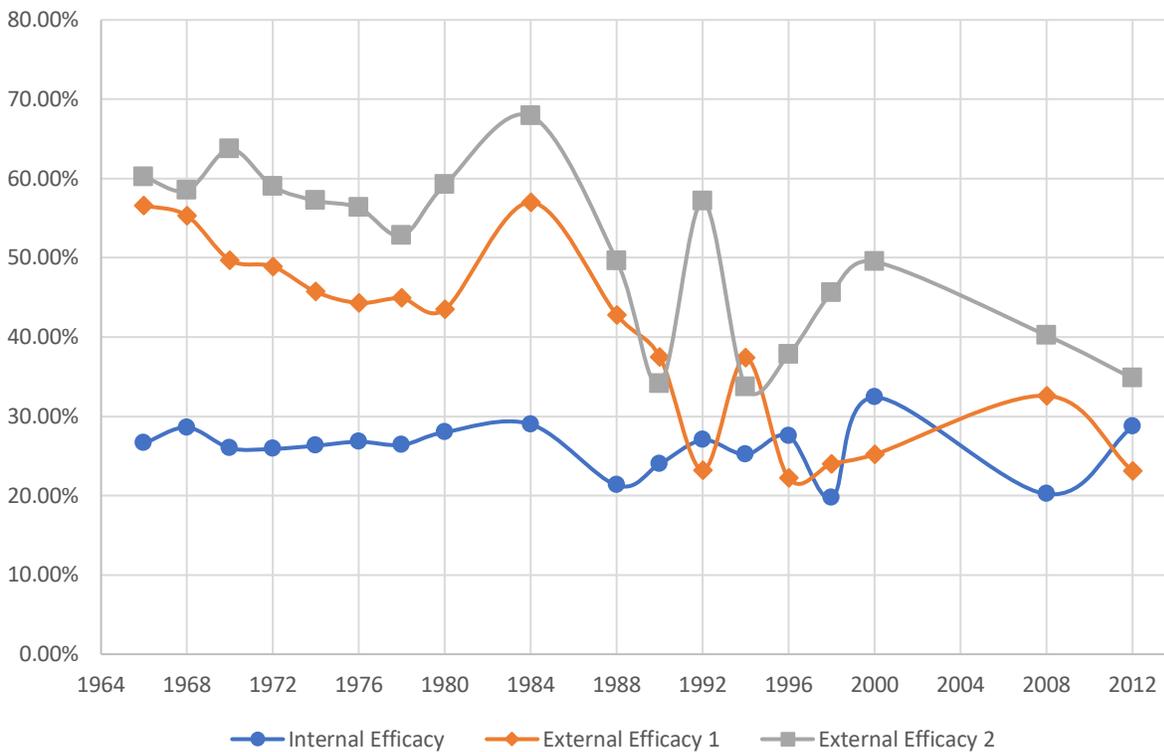
*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; Standard errors in parentheses
Note: Direct participation index is a combination of responses to having voted, attended campaigns/rallies, and working for a party/candidate

Table 3. Indirect Political Participation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Intercept	.329 (.007)***	.386 (.005)***	.295 (.007)***	.288 (.007)***	-.416 (.031)***	-.435 (.031)***	-.398 (.031)***	-.397 (.031)***
External Efficacy	.171 (.006)***	.184 (.010)***	.131 (.006)***		.073 (.006)***	.071 (.011)***	.062 (.006)***	
Internal Efficacy			.149 (.011)***	.215 (.004)***			.060 (.011)***	.094 (.005)***
Combined Efficacy								
Age					-.020 (.000)***	-.022 (.000)***	-.018 (.000)**	-.018 (.000)**
Male (<i>Female</i> Baseline)					.035 (.009)***	.027 (.009)***	.029 (.009)***	.032 (.009)***
White (<i>Nonwhite</i> Baseline)					-.006 (.012)	-.001 (.012)	-.005 (.012)***	-.006 (.012)
Education					.095 (.006)***	.091 (.006)***	.084 (.006)***	.087 (.006)***
Income Level					.064 (.005)***	.067 (.005)***	.062 (.005)***	.062 (.005)***
Married					-.009 (.010)	-.008 (.010)	-.007 (.010)***	-.008 (.010)
Church					.011 (.006)	.017 (.006)**	.062 (.005)***	.012 (.006)
Attendance					.105 (.015)***	.106 (.015)***	.104 (.015)***	.104 (.015)***
Republican					.084 (.014)***	.086 (.014)***	.083 (.014)***	.083 (.014)***
(<i>Independent</i> Baseline)								
Democrat					.157 (.010)***	.158 (.010)***	.156 (.010)***	.156 (.010)***
(<i>Independent</i> Baseline)					.210 (.005)***	.207 (.005)***	.200 (.005)***	.202 (.005)***
Contacted by party					-.029 (.007)***	-.016 (.007)**	-.028 (.007)***	-.031 (.007)**
Political Interest								
Trust Government								
Adjusted R ²	.029	.034	.050	.046	.154	.154	.156	.156
N=	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341	23,341

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; Standard errors in parentheses

Note: Indirect participation index is a combination of responses to having influenced others votes, displaying campaign signage/stickers, and donating to a political campaign.



Internal Efficacy: Government does not seem too complicated; External Efficacy 1: Officials care what I think; External Efficacy 2: I have a say in what government does

Figure 1. Efficacy over time.

Political Participation

Table 1 examines the effect of efficacy on overall political participation (direct and indirect participation combined). Models 1-4 report the results of the base model consisting of the sole effects of efficacy (external, internal, and overall) on combined political participation. The results show that external and internal efficacy have nearly identical effects on the likelihood of engaging in political participation in general and the same is found to be true in Model 3 when the two are staked together. Model 4, however, shows that the combined effect of efficacy substantially increases the propensity to participate. Thus, the model indicates that, all else equal, a one-unit change of some attribute of efficacy finds an increase of .262 ($p < .000$) on the participation scale. A substantive interpretation of these results indicates that an increase in the efficacious index from 0 to 3 on the likelihood to participate in politics is about 13%. The addition of control variables is added to Models 5-8 and; as expected, the effects of efficacy become noticeably reduced but they remain strong. This is a result of what was discussed earlier, wherein other sociodemographic, political, and psychological factors play a role in the likelihood of participation. Contrary to the baseline models, these later models provide greater explanatory power over the initial models, with the models including both forms of efficacy exhibiting a better model. Additionally, Model 8 finds that combined efficacy has the greater effect on the tendency to participate in politics. This would suggest that when examining an overall likelihood to participate, a look at individuals combined levels of efficacy will provide a stronger predictor of political participation. These findings then confirm the first hypothesis that individuals with higher overall efficacy will be more likely to participate politically.

Direct Participation

Table 2 examines the effects of efficacy on direct participation. Consistent with Table 2, Models 1-4 report the results of the base modeling effects on direct political participation. The results show that external efficacy has a stronger effect than internal efficacy on the likelihood of engaging in direct forms of participation such as voting or attending a rally. The extant literature would indicate that the perception of legitimacy and attentiveness of government (external efficacy) would positively contribute to the likelihood of political participation and Table 2 supports these previous findings (Michelson 2000; Pollock 1983). As expected, Model 4 shows that the combined effects of internal and external efficacy have an even greater effect on the propensity to participate. When the control variables are added in Models 5-8, the efficacy effects are substantially reduced but efficacy remains an important contributor for engaging politically such as voting, attending rallies, and working for a campaign. Consistent with the results in the Models 1-4 external efficacy in particular, retains the greatest effect on direct participation as compared to the influence of internal efficacy. It is worth pointing out that the introduction of control variables has the largest influence on internal efficacy, with the effect decreasing by more than half, (similar to the weakened effect found in Model 6, Table 1), suggesting a compositional effect associated with an individual's sense of understanding governmental processes. In short, the inclusion of control variables finds that the effects of sociodemographics, partisanship, political trust, and party contact mobilization have an effect on an individual's propensity to participate outside of efficacious attitudes. To summarize, the results show that external efficacy is positively associated with direct participation and, more

importantly, provides support for Hypothesis 2, which expects external efficacy to influence a greater propensity to participate in direct forms of political participation.

Indirect Participation

Table 3 examines the effects of political efficacy on indirect participation. Consistent with the models contained in Tables 1 and 2, the base models (Models 1-4) contain the results of efficacy on indirect forms of participation such as campaign donations and influencing another's vote. The results in the table show that, as hypothesized, internal efficacy has a greater effect on indirect participation – as compared with the external efficacy influence – but the difference is negligible. Possessing the knowledge that one understands the complex processes of government indicates an increase in indirect forms of participation, such as trying to influence another's vote, as they may feel they possess the adequate know-how to engage in this way, and the model reflects this idea. Again though, overall efficacy remains the greatest influence over this form of political participation. As with earlier models, the addition of the control variables in Models 5-8 substantially reduces the effect of efficacious attitudes. A point of interest, however, is the finding that internal and external forms of efficacy have roughly the same effect on indirect participation once a number of factors known to influence participation are accounted for in the model (as seen in Models 5-7). This would indicate that both forms of efficacy are equally important for an individual to become engaged in indirect forms of political participation. A combined index of overall efficacy illustrates a stronger understanding of the effects of efficacy on indirect participation. This finding again supports the general claim that efficacy promotes political participation in any form. However, as internal efficacy is not associated with an

increased propensity to participate in indirect forms of political participation, Table 3 fails to confirm the expectations of the third hypothesis.

In consideration of the over time changes in political efficacy demonstrated in Figure 1, an additional test consisted of examining the effects of efficacy during two time periods, 1966 to 1986 and 1988 to 2008. This test was designed to account for potential biases introduced by the dramatic changes in efficacious attitudes in the U.S. that occurred after 1984 that may contribute to an under- or over-estimation of the effect of political efficacy on political participation. However, the findings in those models failed to yield significantly different results from those reported in the tables containing the entire time period (1966 to 2008) and are thus not shown. Additionally, robustness checks were created in separate models that consider the influence of individual time points and then for the most recent time period in 2008, which can be found in the appendix. The influence of efficacy while controlling for the influence of separate post-election years indicates that despite considerable variation on political participation across election cycles, the independent effect of efficacy remains. The results confirm internal (.051) and external (.076) efficacy positively influence participation, but again the effect is enhanced when individuals possess both. A final check consists of testing the efficacy-participation relationship in the 2008 time period to ensure the results of the cumulative models are reflected in the most recent election cycle for which data exists. Again, the results confirm that internal and external efficacy positively influence political participation while the combined effect is also found to be greater; however, much of the sociodemographic indicators of participation lose their significance, which may be due to either the variable importance of the predictors on participation or the smaller sample size of this model.

Other Findings of Note

Although the focus of this research is not on explaining all the predictors of participation, it is worth pointing out the more notable relationships. I find that many of the control variables confirm relationships maintained in the existing literature. Variables such as education, income, mobilization contact by the party, and political interest are positively associated with political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

The directional and statistical influence of the control variables remains largely unchanged between the two tables. However, the variables of church attendance and trust in government become statistically significant. The effect of gender indicates that there is no gap in direct participation, but men are significantly more likely to engage in indirect political action than their female counterparts. The lack of significance in marriage is not surprising. The literature finds that marriage can either reduce or increase the level of participation, ultimately depending on the partner's level of political engagement and influence exerted during the relationship (Stoker and Jennings 1995). Additionally, as the literature would suggest, when controlling for sociodemographic variables, primarily resources, we find that race has no significance in the likelihood to participate in politics.

The influence of trust in government on participation is consistently negative, suggesting that individuals with higher trust are less likely to participate. However, the government trust relationship only reaches statistical significance when considering indirect forms of political participation. The presence of trust in government reduces the likelihood of participation in indirect forms of participation, which is a relationship detailed in the literature. Between the two tables there is a difference in participation tendencies associated with partisan affiliation. In

considering direct participation, the likelihood that an individual participates in this way is higher for Democrats than for Republicans; however, the inverse is true regarding indirect participation: Republicans are more likely to engage in politics via indirect forms such as campaign donations. This seems to conform with the current understanding of the political action taken by the electorate on the basis of their chosen partisan affiliation. The models indicate that Democratic voters are more likely to act in ways that attempt to directly influence government, while Republican voters choose to participate in political activities that are characterized as offering a more vocal and communicative opportunity. In short, several sociodemographic and political predispositions prove important for explaining the propensity to participate, and the results here largely confirm the relationships established in the extant literature.

DISCUSSION

The differential effects of internal and external efficacy on the varying forms of political participation are the focus of this research. This study has addressed the gap in the extant literature by specifically examining the way in which an individual chooses to participate in politics given one's level of internal and external efficacy. By separating the two forms of efficacy, a clearer understanding of efficacious perceptions illuminates the basic attitudes required to participate in direct or indirect forms of political participation, as well as political participation in general. The results show that political participation does appear to be responsive to changes in efficacy. Further, the responsiveness of direct and indirect forms of political participation are influenced, in part, by the type of efficacious attitudes and in differing ways.

The research, however, indicates that in measuring the effect of efficacy on participation, a composite measure containing elements of internal and external efficacy provides a more reliable indicator of efficacious attitudes, at least as far as political participation is concerned. In all analyses, the combined efficacy index revealed an effect that was stronger than the separate component parts, indicating that the presence of *both* internal and external efficacy better explains the variation in political participation. Thus, the utilization of a combined efficacy index in statistical modeling remains the more prudent choice when examining participation as it has been utilized in the current literature. However, the effects of each form of efficacy are still, at least in part, important in understanding the way in which the US electorate chooses to participate.

This research has found, as seen in Table 2, that the effects of external efficacy outweigh the effects of internal efficacy in both the base models and the controlled models. This would indicate that the feeling that government is responsive to their political desires has greater explanatory power on whether an individual chooses to engage in direct forms of participation than does internal efficacy. While combined efficacy represents a stronger effect than external efficacy alone, the difference is minimal (.097 compared to .103), elaborating the importance of this perception in the base models. Political interest, party mobilization contact, education, age, and income levels are all participatory indicators with a higher effect on the willingness to participate in politics, but as noted earlier, efficacy is an important but insufficient factor for explaining variation in political participation. Table 3, however, shows that the effect of internal efficacy, in the case of indirect participation, yields a greater result than that of external efficacy. The coefficient is again very close to that of combined efficacy in the base models. The addition of control variables in this table, however, shows a differing result than the previous model. Here we find that the effects of external and internal efficacy become nearly identical with the incorporation of the controls, differing by only .002. This is likely because, though internal efficacy would promote more indirect methods of participation as measured in this model, doing so may still require that their efforts in these means still require acknowledgment by government and politicians; thus possessing external efficacy is also a factor in indirect forms of participation. The importance of controlling for other predictors suggests that efficacy matters above and beyond the sociodemographic and political (as captured by party contact, political interest, and governmental trust) explanations for political participation. That is, while education, age, and partisanship are important predictors, an efficacious public is an important contributor to a democratic society. These attitudinal predispositions can encourage the public to be

participatory in politics and the democratic process. Thus, while efficacy is not the greatest predictor of participation, it remains a necessary condition for individuals to participate in politics.

In this research I argue that Americans are engaging in various forms of political participation aimed at accomplishing various policy and political goals. The likelihood of pursuing these goals through political participation is affected by the degree to which internal and external efficacious attitudes are held. In large part the hypothesized relationships manifested as expected. This indicates the relative importance in efficacious attitudes towards various forms of participation. Given these findings, one would be remiss in assuming that attention to each form is unnecessary in understanding the participatory nature of the US electorate. External efficacy is found to be important when it comes to both forms of participation. The finding of this research indicates that external efficacy in direct participation is the most important self-perception when separating the two forms; however, in examining indirect participation, the two forms of efficacy had nearly identical results. I suspect that the reasoning for the latter is that government responsiveness is required in order to engage in persuasive forms of participation. Though the third hypothesis was not confirmed in our findings, internal efficacy remained a strong indicator of indirect participation. Internal efficacy remains important and I believe that this self-perceived attitude may become increasingly important as we continue to advance into the digital age of easy message spreading and content sharing.

What does this all mean for understanding political participation? For starters, it indicates that efficacy remains an important predictor of participation. Each form (internal and external)

provides varying weight to the likelihood that an individual will participate in certain ways. Understanding the electorate's level of efficacy, in each of the separate forms and combined, can help improve the predictive capability of researchers, pollsters, and government officials in determining how US citizens might participate. In this way, increasing efficacious attitudes may encourage political activation in more predictable ways. The applicable utilization of this research would indicate the obvious; establishing the electorate with a better sense of efficacious attitudes would lead to a more participatory and democratic society.

Based on these findings a rational starting point is in the of creation or encouragement of efficacy, particularly external efficacy. Since external efficacy is built on the legitimacy and feelings of government responsiveness, enhancing these attitudes would serve to augment individuals' perceptions of effective political participation (Michelson 2000; Pollock 1983), thus creating a more participatory and democratic society. As mentioned earlier, external factors influence efficacy such as consumer sentiment (Chamberlain 2012). An important observation in viewing Figure 1 is the timing of declines in external efficacious attitudes. The drop in the beliefs that one's political voice matters and the government is responsive corresponds to a time period in the US when economic turmoil can be found, only interrupted by the "dot com boom" of the early '90s, but perhaps, additionally, in the grand scheme of things, the rise of polarization and political elites may be more to blame for the continued downward trend over time.

This study focused on more traditional means of participation. However, in recent years a greater expanse of participatory options has been utilized by the US electorate. The implications of this study for future research suggest that an examination of the effects of efficacy on new, less traditional forms of participation may be in order. The continued growth of social media is a

key area for future research. The effects of efficacy on the utilization of social media to spread a political message would seem the most promising area of study as it requires little face-to-face interaction and less formal knowledge of the political system, since information and opinion can readily be shared or retweeted with the click of a button. Other less traditional forms of participation such as the likelihood of signing a petition directed toward members of government or the propensity to be involved in political demonstrations present other areas of interest in understanding how efficacious attitudes affect the participatory nature of the electorate in the United States' current political atmosphere.

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APPENDIX

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

APPENDIX

Table A1. Combined Political Participation with Years

	(1)	(2)
Intercept	-1.32 (.051)***	-1.32 (.051)***
External Efficacy	.076 (.009)***	
Internal Efficacy	.051 (.016)***	
Combined Efficacy		.101 (.007)***
Age	.061 (.000)***	.061 (.000)***
Male (<i>Female Baseline</i>)	.016 (.014)**	.017 (.013)**
White (<i>Nonwhite Baseline</i>)	.000 (.018)	.000 (.018)
Education	.119 (.009)***	.119 (.009)***
Income Level	.098 (.007)***	.098 (.007)***
Married	.003 (.015)	.003 (.015)
Church Attendance	.064 (.009)***	.064 (.009)***
Republican (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)	.116 (.022)***	.116 (.022)***
Democrat (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)	.116 (.021)***	.115 (.021)***
Contacted by party	.183 (.015)***	.188 (.015)***
Political Interest	.233 (.007)***	.234 (.007)***
Trust Government	-.021 (.011)***	-.021 (.011)***
1968	.109 (.033)***	.109 (.033)***
1972	.069 (.035)***	.069 (.035)***
1976	.119 (.028)***	.119 (.028)***
1978	.063 (.029)***	.063 (.029)***
1980	.087 (.033)***	.087 (.034)***
1984	.093 (.030)***	.093 (.030)***
1988	.089 (.031)***	.089 (.031)***
1990	.007 (.030)	.008 (.030)
1992	.126 (.029)***	.126 (.029)***
1994	.025 (.031)***	.025 (.031)***
1996	.074 (.033)***	.074 (.033)***
1998	-.002 (.034)	-.002 (.034)
2000	.081 (.034)***	.081 (.034)***
2008	.086 (.050)***	.087 (.050)***
Adjusted R ²	.279	.279
N=	23,341	23,341

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; Standard errors in parentheses

Table A2. Combined Political Participation in 2008

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	-.923 (.376)*	-.906 (.369)*	-.824 (.371)*	-.825 (.372)*
External Efficacy	.133 (.072)**		.084 (.074)	
Internal Efficacy		.196 (.126)***	.172 (.131)***	
Combined Efficacy				.195 (.056)***
Age	-.024 (.003)	.004 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	-.015 (.003)
Male (<i>Female Baseline</i>)	-.095 (.108)*	-.118 (.105)**	-.106 (.106)*	-.095 (.106)*
White (<i>Nonwhite Baseline</i>)	.011 (.127)	.003 (.126)	.005 (.125)	.008 (.126)
Education	.106 (.068)*	.102 (.066)	.085 (.067)	.085 (.067)
Income Level	.049 (.054)	.060 (.053)	.053 (.053)	.047 (.053)
Married	.073 (.124)	.068 (.122)	.079 (.122)	.082 (.123)
Church Attendance	.014 (.065)	.015 (.64)	.014 (.064)	.013 (.065)
Republican (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)	.149 (.173)*	.158 (.171)*	.152 (.152)*	.148 (.171)*
Democrat (<i>Independent Baseline</i>)	.290 (.162)***	.309 (.160)***	.306 (.159)***	.298 (.160)***
Contacted by party	.097 (.110)*	.094 (.109)*	.094 (.108)*	.095 (.109)*
Political Interest	.361 (.061)***	.319 (.062)***	.317 (.062)***	.336 (.061)***
Trust Government	-.012 (.087)	-.002 (.085)	-.012 (.085)	-.017 (.086)
Adjusted R ²	.273	.292	.296	.290
N=	467	467	467	467

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; Standard errors in parentheses