

Political Self-Efficacy: Theory and Empirics

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Political Efficacy

Classic studies of public opinion have long recognized the importance of efficacy to individual political behavior (Almond and Verba 1963, Campbell et al. 1960).

Political Efficacy

“the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process.” (Campbell et al. 1954, p. 187)

Internal and External Efficacy

Clarke and Acock (1992) define

internal efficacy as “the perception that one has the requisite skills and resources to influence the political system,”

and

external efficacy as “the perception that government institutions and elites are responsive to ones attempts to exert political influence.” (p. 552)

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Internal and External Efficacy

Examples of questions:

internal efficacy: “Eu me considero bem qualificado(a) para participar na política.”

and

external efficacy as “Os que governam o país se interessam pelo que pessoas como eu pensam.”

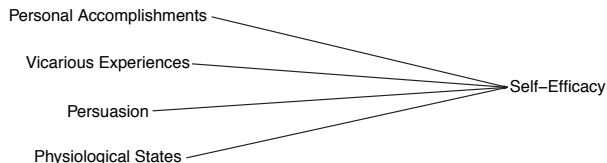
Self-Efficacy, part of SCT

Bandura's definition of self-efficacy: "Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives." (Bandura 1997)

People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them.

Self-Efficacy, part of SCT

Social cognitive theory presents four different mechanisms through which beliefs of self-efficacy are affected (Bandura 1997).



Self-Efficacy, part of SCT

Personal experiences (accomplishments) are the strongest source “because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed.” (Bandura 1997, p. 90).

Self-Efficacy as a belief

Theoretically,

Beliefs and attitudes have two dimensions: the direction and the strength.

Direction: yes or no? Strength: how much?

How to Measure Self-Efficacy (Bandura 2006)

- Self-efficacy is concerned with perceived capability, hence, the items should be phrased in terms of can do rather than will do.
- The construction of an efficacy measure should rely on questions designed with relevant information about the specific domain.
- Rich self-efficacy scales will have variation in the gradation of challenge the tasks demand. Again, it is important to identify the forms of challenges or impediments tasks of the specific functioning domain may take.
- Response scales should vary from 0 to 100 with a 10-space in between. This creates an 11-point scale where there should space for enough variation, and a 0 and 100 that represent no efficacy and full efficacy.

Political Self-Efficacy

Examples of questions:

Para cada um dos itens abaixo, por favor, classifique até que ponto voc acredita em sua capacidade de executar a ação descrita.

Expressar abertamente minha opinio poltica, mesmo em ambientes hostis

What we know– AmericasBarometer

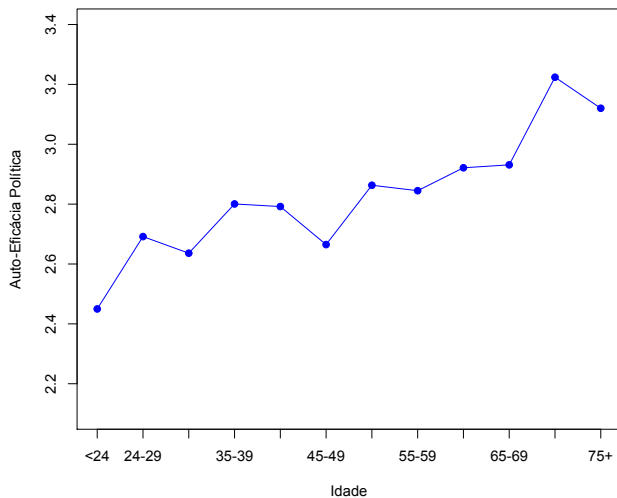
Now we will use a similar ladder, but this time 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree. A number in between 1 and 7 represents an intermediate score. EFF2. You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?

EFF2. O(A) sr./sra. sente que entende bem os assuntos políticos mais importantes do país. Até que ponto concorda ou discorda desta frase?

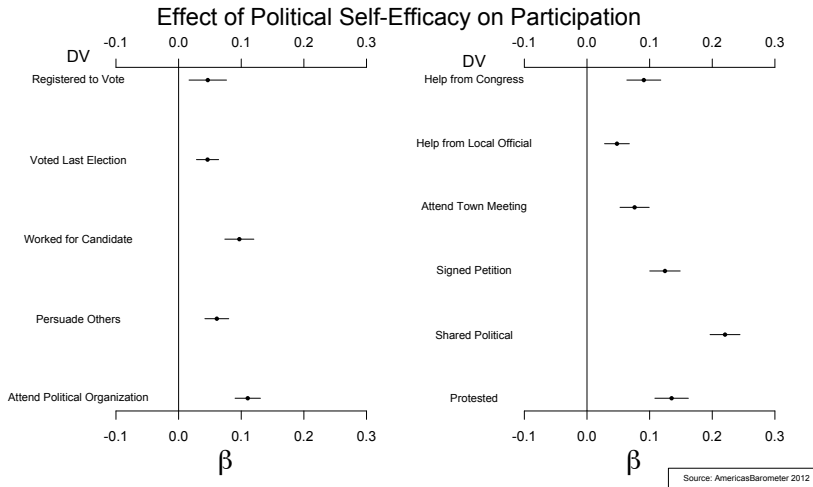
Demographics

Men > Women, Age +

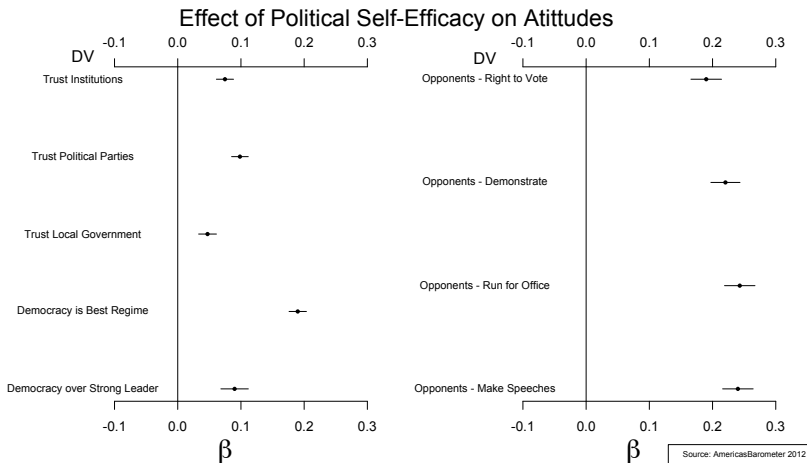
Eficácia por Idade, Brasil 2014



Behavioral Correlates



Attitudinal Correlates



The problem of Causality

$$A \rightarrow B$$

Individuals with higher levels of political self-efficacy will participate more.

$$A \leftarrow B$$

Individuals who have positive experiences participating will have higher levels of efficacy.

$$A \leftrightarrow B$$

$$A \leftarrow Z \rightarrow B$$

More educated individuals have higher levels of efficacy and also participate more.

Effect of Configuration of Parties on Efficacy

Randomly assign participants to varying configurations (internal validity).

If individuals have a more difficult task ahead of them, do they judge their self-efficacy to be lower?

Hypothesis: as political contexts increase the amount of information and cognitive efforts required from citizens to evaluate the electoral choices and make political decisions, the perceptions of their own capacity to understand and participate in politics weaken.

Few Parties



Many Parties

