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Internal, External, and Government Political Efficacy: Effects on News Use, Discussion, and Political Participation

Homero Gil de Zúñiga , Trevor Diehl, and Alberto Ardévol-Abreu

News use and political discussion are often studied as important factors in understanding the effects of political efficacy on participation. However, measurements of external efficacy often blur distinctions between personal ability and government responsiveness. This study establishes a measure for perceptions of competence in the institutions of democratic government—government efficacy (GE). Drawing on panel survey data from the United States, confirmatory factor analysis introduces GE as a unique construct. Political efficacy dimensions are tested for their impact on news consumption, discussion, and political participation. Results add to the extant literature revolving the role of political efficacy on news use, discussion, and participation.

Political efficacy has long been regarded as one of several antecedents to participation in institutional politics (Blais, 2010; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

The more one feels able to understand politics and have their voice heard, the more likely they are to pursue democratic endeavors. Political efficacy has also been considered an important outcome in theories of deliberative democracy. The more one discusses politics, the more likely one is to come away from those experiences feeling more confident in their political skills, eliciting a “virtuous” circle between participation and individual self-efficacy (Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Morrell, 2005; Smith, 1999). These pro-social, democratic behaviors depend,

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in large part, on information provided through the mass media. Although a number of studies have examined the impact of news media exposure on political efficacy (Kaid, McKinney, & Tedesco, 2007; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Tedesco, 2007), the potential role of political efficacy as a precursor to media use has yet to be fully explored. In addition, research on political efficacy has been hampered by incomplete measures, construct validity issues, and inconsistencies in theoretical application.

Scholars differentiate internal, external, epistemic, and situational forms of political efficacy (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Morrell, 2005; Pingree, 2011). Variations in interpretation of the role and function of political efficacy speak to its importance for the field. However, the concept often relies on just a few National Election Studies (NES) survey items. When those items changed, the concept also changed. In addition, notions of internal and external efficacy have not been measured consistently (Morrell, 2003). In an attempt to clarify these shortcomings, this study argues that perceptions toward government competence, and the representative system as a whole, need to be measured as an entirely separate construct. External efficacy measures, in contrast, often blur the distinction between self-focused evaluations on one hand, and outwardly focused evaluations on the other.

This study introduces *government efficacy* (GE) as perceptions directed entirely outside the realm of individual competence, and toward the competency of one's government. Employing confirmatory factor analysis, we validity test all three efficacy measures. The survey items are drawn from a custom survey dataset from the United States, and the survey items are based on previous literature. Alternate efficacy measures are explored in relation to news use, political discussion, and political participation. Using data from a nationally representative, panel sample, analyses show that perceptions of the competence of one's government are different than traditional measures of political efficacy. GE is a strong predictor for news use. GE also leads to political participation, but only through the regular consumption of news and public affairs information. Finally, the implications for this measure are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy examines how evaluations of experiences in political life shape participatory behaviors. These behaviors are determined by a general sense of self-mastery that influences decisions, aspirations, effort, and perseverance for any particular goal (Bandura, 1991). How, and if, an individual participates in politics determines whether one can cultivate a sense of confidence in one's ability to solve problems in a democratic system (Mill, 1991). Efficacy has been thought to increase the importance of politics in everyday life, leading to behaviors that closely align with democratic norms (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). An increased sense of political competence has been an important key to understanding levels of political knowledge, the likelihood of voting, contacting public officials, attending rallies, and

political deliberation (Bennett, 1997; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Walsh, 2004). Angus Campbell and his colleagues defined political efficacy as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties” (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187).

Similar to other perceptual and psychological variables, the concept of political efficacy is highly contextual (Gil de Zúñiga, 2006). Drawing on Bandura (1991, 1997), since individual’s have diverse motivations, experiences, and capabilities, efficacy beliefs should be studied according to the mode of activity in social life (Wollman & Stouder, 1991). Political efficacy has been studied as a multi-dimensional construct, traditionally drawn from NES survey items to differentiate *internal* and *external* efficacy. *Internal efficacy* (IE) refers to citizens’ feelings of personal competence “to understand and to participate effectively in politics” (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990, p. 290; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991) *External efficacy* (EE) refers to citizens’ perceptions of the responsiveness of government to citizens’ demands (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972). External efficacy, in theory, stands for an evaluation of the relationship between voter and politician, citizen and elected official (Craig et al., 1990). If we assume that efficacy measures are not universal, different modes of interaction with politics warrant a diversity of corresponding efficacy measures (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015).

Despite the widespread use of these measures in scholarship, there has been a lack of consistency in how they are applied. In a review of efficacy literature, Morrell (2003) shows variation in the adoption of scales for internal efficacy, while others either confused, or failed to differentiate external efficacy. For example, one potentially troubling habit is the adoption of a variation on the “politics are too complicated” question to stand as the sole item for internal efficacy (Bennett, 1997; Gallego & Oberski, 2012; Gastil, Black, Deess, & Leighter, 2008; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). The question reads: “Sometimes politics and government are so complicated that a person like me can’t understand what’s going on.” Statistically, the “complex” item falls within the internal efficacy factor, though it carries less weight (Niemi et al., 1991). Conceptually, the item contains elements of both internal and external efficacy (Morrell, 2005) and it has been criticized as a less robust measure, since it lacks the informational and behavior elements present in a scaled-item index (Valentino, Gregorowicz, & Groenendyk, 2009). Considering these shortcomings, we propose a separate measure for efficacious beliefs that better capture evaluations of the external political system.

Government Efficacy

Responsiveness to citizen input is potentially a larger idea, encompassing a range of government activities. As Richardson (2013) notes, responsiveness is a “dynamic relationship involving a variety of interactions that may take place between representatives and represented” (p. 171). A more complete measure of representative efficacy would take an account of the communicative interaction between

constituents and politicians (Kolln, Esaiasson, & Turper, 2013; Richardson, 2013). In addition, as Velasquez and La Rose (2015) point out, efficacy is highly contextual, and should be considered according to the particular mode of participation.

Government efficacy borrows from debates in political economy on the quality of government, or the effectiveness of government output in general (Agnafors, 2013; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). Though these debates tend to center around the difficulty in building an objective measure of quality, this article suggests employing the concept as a proxy for perceptions of democratic legitimacy. Attitudes toward the effectiveness of governance in general should be separated from feelings of personal self-competence, and perceptions of direct representative efficacy. In addition, these concepts should not be conflated with trust in government and political trust, as these all have potentially different implications for political outcomes (Wollman & Stouder, 1991). In this context, internal efficacy is an entirely self-focused, personal evaluation. GE is an outward focused belief, one based on an evaluation of the democratic competence of a government.

From a conceptual point of view, political trust is a related concept, defined as citizens' degree of satisfaction with the government's policies (Hetherington, 1998; Miller, 1974; Stokes, 1962). People's judgments about the trustworthiness of the system and the government, however, can be based on a range of aspects, from incumbents' ethical qualities to their ability and efficiency, or "the correctness of their policy decisions (Stokes, 1962, p. 64). Government efficacy, in contrast, focuses specifically on perceptions of how the government articulates claims and demands that emerge from citizens to provide them with what they need and deserve. Government efficacy, therefore, is closely linked to "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process" (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187), and that is why it may be regarded as a sub-dimension of political efficacy. Thus, although there might be some overlap and interdependence between the two concepts, government efficacy looks more specifically at the government performance in working on everyone's behalf, making decisions based on what citizens want, and representing all citizens. It would not be surprising that GE may depend upon levels of trust in the government, as "crooked" incumbents that do not "do what is right" (NES government trust items) could hardly meet the demands of the society. However, government efficacy goes beyond this: it emphasizes individuals' perceptions of how the government allows for the effective participation of all citizens, and whether its policies are the result of everyone's input.

Expanding on Craig et al.'s definition of external efficacy, GE "involves beliefs about the potential for ordinary citizens to play a meaningful role in the political process" (1990, p. 299), however, GE shifts the perception of competency from the individual self, to the system as a whole (Table 1). In other words, GE is a notion of legitimacy that taps *how well* a government performs in terms of democratic norms.

Early attempts to statistically confirm a distinction between perceptions toward the system as whole, and individual perceptions of self-efficacy in NES items were inconclusive (Craig et al., 1990; Morrell, 2003). Since GE taps perceptions well

Table 1
Measured Dimensions of Political Efficacy and Corresponding Object of Perception

Perceptual Context		
Internal (endogenous)	Overlap	Government (exogenous)
I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country	People like me don't have any say in what the government does	My government works on everyone's behalf
I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics	No matter whom I vote it won't make a difference	My government makes decisions based on what citizens want

beyond those addressed in the NES questions, this article hypothesizes that GE is a different dimension of political efficacy. Therefore, the following are proposed as a hypothesis and research question:

H₁: Government efficacy is a different construct than external/internal political efficacy.

RQ₁: How does government efficacy relate to internal and external political efficacy?

Democratic Outcomes

Researchers have explored the role of efficacy in political participation, political deliberation and news consumption. Findings vary, though a sense of political competency has been generally identified as a prerequisite for active citizenship (Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Morrell, 2003). Individuals who feel that government actions, decisions, and services are the result of an inclusive, representative process, should be more willing and able to participate in democratic life. On the other hand, it is possible that high levels of GE might lead individuals to participate less in civic life, since they are not motivated to personally affect change (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). In addition, comparing GE to other forms of efficacy should help define the concept in relationship to 1) political participation, 2) discussion, and 3) news consumption.

Political Participation

Several early studies find positive correlations between political efficacy and voting (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Verba & Nie, 1972), and between ballot initiatives and both internal and external efficacy (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Smith & Tolbert, 2004). Some suggest that the combination of low external efficacy and high internal efficacy leads to participation (Gamson, 1968; Pollock, 1983). These scholars

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argue that dissatisfaction with government responsiveness, coupled with a sense of political confidence, leads to campaigning, voting, and protest. However, the connection between external efficacy and participation has not been reliably confirmed. For example, Finkel (1985, 1987) found correlations between voting, campaigning and protest, and external efficacy. These findings are conditional however, and scholars argue that external efficacy is only boosted when an electoral outcome is in-line with expectations (Iyengar, 1980). Others have found no evidence of a connection between participation and external efficacy (Dyck & Lascher, 2009; Green & Shachar., 2000; Valentino et al., 2009).

Attitudes toward the fairness of the system as a whole (GE) might help explain these conflicting results. Based on the findings discussed above, the following hypothesis and research questions are proposed:

H₂: Internal efficacy (W^1) is positively associated with political participation (W^2).

RQ_{2a}: How does, if in any way, external efficacy (W^1) relate to political participation (W^2)?

RQ_{2b}: How does, if in any way, government efficacy (W^1) relate to political participation (W^2)?

Political Discussion

In theory, Fishkin (1995) argues, people who deliberate become empowered and feel that their government truly is “of the people.” It should follow that political discussion leads to efficacious attitudes. However, as with political participation, empirical findings on the role of political efficacy and political talk have been mixed. For example, in Morrell’s (2005) experiment, he found no difference in internal efficacy between groups that solved problems in conversation versus taking a vote. Though Morrell did show evidence that face-to-face deliberation boosts internal efficacy for that particular event. Similarly, Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) found that face-to-face political discussion is more closely related to internal efficacy than external. Gastil and Xenos (2010) show a reciprocal connection between community talk and internal efficacy, but not for external efficacy.

In general, these findings suggest that internal efficacy and political talk are related. This is appropriate, considering that reflection on one’s ability to understand and act politically should be a natural outcome of discussion. In contrast, attempts to measure external efficacy are highly dependent on the context of the event. Accordingly, several studies note that an increase in external efficacy depends more on the positive evaluation of the deliberative experience, and less on the fact that discussion takes place at all (Gastil et al., 2008; Gastil & Xenos, 2010). It stands to reason then, that GE might provide an alternative explanation for that context. This study seeks to confirm previous findings, while testing the role of GE in discussion with the following hypothesis:

H_{3a}: Internal efficacy (W^1) is positively associated with political discussion (W^2).

Since this study does not account for situational context of conversations, it proposes that external efficacy will not be related to general political discussion:

H_{3b}: External efficacy (W^1) is not associated to political discussion (W^2).

If Fishkin's (1995) conception of deliberation is correct, and deliberation leads to a feeling of a government "by the people," it follows that political discussion and GE should be positively related. However, the lack of empirical research on the claim leads to the following as a research question:

RQ₃: What is the relationship between government efficacy (W^1) and political discussion (W^2)?

News Use and Information Efficacy

Scholars have long noted the connection between news use and political participation (Yoo & Gil de Zúñiga, 2014). The positive reinforcing, so-called "virtuous circle" of news consumption and participation has been studied at length (Bachmann, Correa, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2012; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; McLeod et al., 1999; Norris, 2000; Valenzuela & Arriagada, 2011). Political efficacy, in part, has been theorized to help explain how this circle works. That is, the more one consumes news and public affairs information, the more likely one is to feel confident in their ability to understand politics (or vice-versa). (Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Pingree, 2011; Tewksbury, Hals, & Bibart, 2008), with a possible exception within social media context effects, driven by the 'news finds me perception' (Gil de Zúñiga, Weeks, & Ardèvol-Abreu, 2017).

The relationship between external efficacy and news use is once again, less clear. Some scholars argue that poor quality news leads to a lack of perceived competence in the political system, causing individuals to recoil from politics altogether (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; De Vreese, 2005; Pinkleton, Austin, & Fortman, 1998). Valentino, Beckmann, and Buhr (2001) point out that the framing of politics in the news matters for attitudes toward government. Taken together, the relationship between news consumption and external efficacy might be a negative one, based on one's level of GE. However, GE might be positively associated with media use, since some empirical findings suggest that reading community papers leads to less disillusionment with government in general (Jeffres, Atkin, & Neundorf, 2002; Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

Of particular interest to this study is the more recent concept of information efficacy, closely related to news use and political efficacy in general. Information efficacy is the "the voter's confidence in his or her own political knowledge and its sufficiency to [vote]" (Kaid et al., 2007, p. 1096) Information efficacy has been shown to play a key role in explaining the connection between exposure to political information and political participation (Kaid et al., 2007; Tedesco, 2007). For example, exposure to political debates and televised political advertisement seems to raise young citizens' levels of information efficacy, which in turn makes them more likely to vote (Kaid et al., 2007). Although these relationships

between media exposure, efficacy, and participation have been fairly well studied (Kaid et al., 2007; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001; Tedesco, 2007), the opposite direction of influence (the effect of media use on political efficacy, and the subsequent influence of efficacy on participation) is far less explored.

Drawing on the above findings, the following hypotheses and research question are proposed:

H_{4a}: Internal efficacy (W^1) is positively associated with news consumption (W^2).

H_{4b}: External efficacy (W^1) is negatively associated to news consumption (W^2).

RQ₄: What is the relationship between government efficacy (W^1) and news consumption (W^2)?

There is also empirical evidence to suggest that efficacy, news use, discussion, and political participation are related in a path model. Interpersonal discussion, especially when focused on politics or current events, has repeatedly been shown to have a direct, positive effect on political participation (Gil de Zúñiga, 2015; McClurg, 2003). This beneficial outcome is observed when individuals talk about politics often enough (discussion frequency) and/or with a significant number of persons (discussion network size) (Eveland & Hively, 2009). Political discussion has also been found to mediate the relationship between news use and political participation (Cho et al., 2009; McLeod et al., 1999). Similarly, citizens access most of information about politics and current events through the media. This mediated information about the social environment constitutes the “raw material that fuels political discussion” (Mondak, 2010, p. 94). The “media as fuel” metaphor helps explain the connection between news use and political discussion (Cho et al., 2009), and political participation (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Pinkleton et al., 1998). Given both direct and indirect impacts of news use and political discussion on political participation, it seems reasonable to expect mediating effects of these variables on the relationship between various dimensions of efficacy and political participation. The number of possible pathways and the lack of empirical research on GE lead us to ask the following research question:

RQ₅: In an overarching theoretical model, what is the role (if any) of political discussion and news use (W^1) on the relationship between the three dimensions of political efficacy and political participation?

Method

Sample

The data for this study were drawn from a two-wave, national panel study conducted at a research university in the United States in late 2014 and early 2015.

Respondents for the survey were selected from an online panel administered by Nielsen. Nielsen employs a stratified quota based on gender, age, education and income, so that the sample would tend to match as much as possible the U.S. Census (Correa, Bachmann, Hinsley, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2013; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). Compared to the census, the sample had fewer young people, was more educated, and had fewer Hispanics. Though the numbers differ from those reported in the Census, generalizability should not be affected, since the overall sample was comparable to other surveys employing random collection methods (Pew, 2013), and was comparable to the national population as whole.¹

Measures

The analyses included four groups of variables: demographics, socio-political controls, and media trust. Then the study introduced different dimensions of political efficacy as the independent variables of interest: internal, external, and government political efficacy. As the study relies on two-wave panel data measurements, all the indexes were constructed with the exact same items at W^1 (first wave) and W^2 (second wave). Except where noted, items used a 10-point Likert scale.

Internal Political Efficacy. Political efficacy is a central measure in this study and thus, it includes the most universally used and tested (Morrell, 2003, 2005) items for internal efficacy dimension. Two items were: "I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country" and "I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics" (Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .87; $M = 5.3$ $SD = 2.6$)².

External Political Efficacy. This construct is similar to both NES items and those used in previous studies (Craig et al., 1990; Morell, 2005): "people like me don't have any say in what the government does (recoded)" and "no matter whom I vote for, it won't make a difference (recoded)" (Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .71; $M = 6.0$ $SD = 2.6$)

Government Political Efficacy. This new dimension of efficacy is based on the range of attitudes toward the competency of one's government. Seven items were averaged to generate the index of such perception: "my government works on everyone's behalf," "my government makes decisions based on what citizens want," "our political institutions (e.g., Congress, political parties, etc.) represent all citizens," "my government provides citizens with efficient services," "today's American democracy works well," "American democracy is the result of everyone's input," and "my government's decisions are transparent" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$; $M = 4.3$ $SD = 1.9$).

News Use. Respondents separately rated how frequently they use a variety of outlets to get news. Specifically, they were asked about their frequency of exposure to news through network TV, local TV, satirical news programs, national newspapers, local

newspapers, online sites, cable, radio, citizen journalism sites, hyperlocal sites, tablet app or browser, smartphone app or browser, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Reddit, LinkedIn, and news aggregators (21 items averaged scale, W^2 Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$; $M = 3.1$ $SD = 1.2$). (See [Appendix 1](#)).

Discussion Frequency. Individuals were asked to provide an estimate about how frequently they engage in discussions about politics and public affairs with “spouse or partner,” “family and relatives,” “friends,” “acquaintances,” “strangers,” “neighbors you know very well,” “neighbors you don’t know well,” “co-workers you know well,” and “co-workers you don’t know well” (9 items averaged scale, W^2 Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$; $M = 3.1$ $SD = 1.7$).

Political Participation. The questionnaire asked respondents how often in the past 12 months they had “attended a political rally,” “participated in any demonstrations, protests, or marches,” “donated money to a campaign or political cause,” “participated in groups that took any local action for social or political reform,” “been involved in public interest groups, political action groups, political clubs, political campaigns, or political party committees,” “voted in local or statewide elections,” and “voted in federal or presidential elections” (6 items averaged scale, W^2 Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$; $M = 3.5$ $SD = 1.6$).

Control Variables

Discussion Network Size. Survey respondents were asked two questions, in open-ended fashion, to provide an estimate of the number of people they talked to face-to-face or over the phone about politics or public affairs; and how often they talked about politics or public affairs via the Internet, (including chat rooms and social networking sites) during the past month. Both items were added into a single index. The variable was highly skewed (W^1 $M = 4.01$, $Mdn = 1.00$, $SD = 20.2$, skewness = 19.64; W^2 $M = 3.57$), so they were transformed using the natural logarithm (W^1 $M = .33$, $Mdn = .24$, $SD = .37$, skewness = 1.32).

Political Knowledge. Respondents were asked eight questions related to public figures, recent news events, and institutional rules (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993). Correct responses were added to create an index of political knowledge (8 items averaged scale, W^1 Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$; $M = 2.9$ $SD = 1.2$).

Political Interest. Prior research has identified people's levels of interest in politics as an important variable while explaining pro-democratic attitudes and behaviors, particularly in relation to political efficacy (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Accordingly, this study controls for this effect by asking subjects to rate “how interested are you in information about politics and public affairs” and “how closely do you pay attention to what's going on in politics and public affairs” (Spearman-Brown Coefficient = .96; $M = 6.7$ $SD = 2.7$).

Media Trust. The level of trust in the mainstream media may also be a relevant indicator in predicting whether citizens consume news, assimilate information, and get mobilized. Respondents were asked about their level of trust in “mainstream news media,” “news aggregators,” “news from alternative news media,” and “news from social media sites” (4 items averaged scale, W^1 Cronbach’s $\alpha = .72$; $M = 4.3$ $SD = 1.7$).

Demographics. The models included measures for gender (50.2% females), age ($M = 52.71$, $SD = 14.77$) and race (77% white). Education was operationalized as highest level of formal education completed ($M = 3.61$, Mode = 2-year college degree). For income, each respondent chose one of 8 categories of total annual household income ($M = 3.61$, Mode = \$50,000 to \$59,999).

Statistical Analysis

To test the research questions and hypotheses, the study takes advantage of a two-wave panel data design. First, confirmatory factor analyses is performed to assess whether GE is different than internal and external efficacy. Using OLS regression models and SEM, first cross-sectional effects are showcased (first column in Tables 3–5). Then, lagged effects (second column in Tables 3–5) show the effect of all three dimensions of political efficacy in time 1 over levels of our different dependent variables in time 2, as a regular continuum. A fixed model effect (third column in Tables 2–4) will show intra-personal change over the 3 months of individual scores (also SEM in Figure 1). Finally, an autoregressive model (fourth column in Tables 3–5) predicts the effect of all dimensions of political efficacy on people’s levels of news use, discussion, and participation in time 2, but also controlling for the effect of individuals’ prior levels of these variables in time 1.

Results

This article first sought to establish GE as a separate construct from other measures of efficacy (H_1). Table 2 shows the results from a confirmatory factor analysis of survey data for all efficacy questions. Confirming previous studies, items thought to represent internal and external efficacy represent distinct categories. More importantly, results showed that GE is a separate construct. With the exception of the modest loading ($\geq .40$) for the item, “my government provides citizens with efficient services,” factor values were consistently high. Measures of fit show robust distinguished factors (in both waves) to indicate a reliable measure for GE; measures of fit in W^1 ($\chi^2 = 42.7$; $df = 41$; $p = .39$; RMSEA = .08, CFI = .99, TLI = .98) were comparable to W^2 ($\chi^2 = 50.7$; $df = 41$; $p = .14$; RMSEA = .04, CFI = .95, TLI = .94). These results indicate that items used to tap GE were reliable over two waves, and distinct from the internal and external efficacy.

Table 2
Structural Equation Modeling Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Political Efficacy

Factor/Measure	Political Efficacy (W ¹)	Political Efficacy (W ²)
Internal		
I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country	.732	.690
I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics	.920	.900
External		
People like me don't have any say in what the government does (recoded)	.683	.631
No matter whom I vote it won't make a difference (recoded)	.668	.981
Government		
My government works on everyone's behalf	.926	.949
My government makes decisions based on what citizens want	.925	.884
Our political institutions (e.g., Congress, political parties, etc.) represent all citizens	.878	.861
My government provides citizens with efficient services	.440	.400
Today's American democracy works well	.552	.772
American democracy is the result of everyone's input	.772	.846
My government's decisions are transparent	.581	.831
<i>Measures of fit</i>		
χ^2	42.7	50.7
Df	41	41
p-value	.39	.14
CFI	.99	.95
TLI	.98	.94
RMSEA	.08	.04

Note: Sample size = 1,021. Cell entries are standardized SEM coefficients for Confirmatory Factor Analysis at $p < .05$ or better.

The second set of hypotheses and research questions explored the relationships between political efficacy and political participation. In most of our models, cross-sectional ($\beta = .245, p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 32.7\%$), lagged panel regression ($\beta = .170, p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 26.8\%$), and fixed effects ($\beta = .198, p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 34.1\%$), IE is positively associated to political participation. The rest of the political efficacy dimensions, including GE, had no direct effect (see Table 3). These results suggest that GE is not as strong a predictor for participation as internal efficacy. In other words, attitudes of competence in government do not lead individuals to political action directly. Further tests however, indicate that GE is positively related to political participation via news use cross-sectional ($\beta = .039, p < .001$), and EE is negatively associated to political engagement via news use cross-sectional ($\beta = -.032, p < .01$)

Table 3
Crosssectional, Lagged, Fixed Effects, and Autoregressive Regression Models Testing Effects of Political Efficacy (Internal, External, and Government) on Political Participation

	Pol. Part. Crosssectional	Pol. Part. Lagged	Pol. Part. Fixed	Pol. Part. Autoregressive
<i>Step 1—Demographics</i>				
Age	.084**	.117***	.098***	.059**
Gender (female)	.011	.012	.021	.004
Education	.059*	.047	.060*	.006
Income	.042#	.032	.044#	.004
Race (White = 1)	.005	.001	.008	-.003
ΔR^2	7.7%	6.8%	7.6%	6.8%
<i>Step 2—Antecedents</i>				
Media Trust	.161***	.180***	.187***	.068**
Political Knowledge	.018	.042	.016	.030
Political Interest	.113**	.099*	.143***	.022
Discussion Network Size	.210***	.191***	.243***	.046*
ΔR^2	21.7%	18.2%	24.1%	18.2%
<i>Step 2—Autoregressive Term</i>				
Political Participation W^1	—	—	—	.692***
ΔR^2				34.0%
<i>Step 3—Variables of Interest</i>				
Internal Political Efficacy	.245***	.170***	.198***	.002
External Political Efficacy	.029	.038	.027	.018
Government Political Efficacy	.025	.034	.035	.017
ΔR^2	3.3%	1.9%	2.3%	0.01%
Total R^2	32.7%	26.8%	34.1%	59.0%

Note. Standardized regression coefficients reported. N = 1,020.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .10$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

The next set of hypotheses sought to explore efficacy in relation to political discussion. IE (H_{3a}) was a positive predictor of discussion in all models: crosssectional ($\beta = .135$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 41.1\%$), lagged panel regression ($\beta = .105$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 30.7\%$), fixed effects ($\beta = .118$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 38.8\%$), and autoregressive ($\beta = .035$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 46.6\%$). EE negatively predicted citizens' political discussion levels at the crosssectional ($\beta = -.048$, $p < .05$) and fixed effects ($\beta = -.053$, $p < .05$) tests. GE is not directly related to political discussion (see Table 4 for all results).

The last set of study questions explored the role of political efficacy in news consumption. IE shows no direct effect with regard to people's news use. As expected, EE negatively predicts people's news use: crosssectional ($\beta = -.108$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 36.3\%$), lagged panel regression ($\beta = -.063$, $p < .05$; total model $R^2 = 29.6\%$), and fixed effects ($\beta = -.090$, $p < .001$; total model $R^2 = 36.5\%$). On the other hand, GE is the only dimension of

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Table 4
Crosssectional, Lagged, Fixed Effects, and Autoregressive Regression Models Testing
Effects of Political Efficacy (Internal, External, and Government) on Discussion
Frequency

	Discussion Crosssectional	Discussion Lagged	Discussion Fixed	Discussion Autoregressive
<i>Step 1—Demographics</i>				
Age	-.046#	-.047#	-.058*	-.023
Gender (female)	.007	.001	.024	.004
Education	.002	-.003	-.006	.002
Income	.070**	.092***	.082***	.056*
Race (White = 1)	-.048*	-.071**	-.054*	-.046*
ΔR^2	4.0%	4.2%	4.5%	4.2%
<i>Step 2—Antecedents</i>				
Media Trust	.154***	.158***	.161***	.079**
Political Knowledge	-.112***	-.112***	-.055*	-.054#
Political Interest	.249***	.271***	.283***	.142***
Discussion Network Size	.400**	.277***	.327***	.069*
ΔR^2	36.0%	25.9%	33.3%	25.9%
<i>Step 2—Autoregressive Term</i>				
Discussion Frequency W^1	—	—	—	.519***
ΔR^2				16.2%
<i>Step 3—Variables of Interest</i>				
Internal Political Efficacy	.135***	.105***	.118***	.035*
External Political Efficacy	-.048*	.010	-.053*	-.035
Government Political Efficacy	.012	.005	.037	.002
ΔR^2	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	0.02%
Total R^2	41.1%	30.7%	38.8%	46.6%

Note. Standardized regression coefficients reported. N = 1,020.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .10$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

political efficacy that is positively associated to news use crosssectional ($\beta = .117$, $p < .01$) lagged panel regression ($\beta = .084$, $p < .05$), and fixed effects ($\beta = .116$, $p < .001$) (see Table 5).

In order to investigate how all the variables relate to one another in an overarching theoretical model, an SEM test was used (Bootstrapped 1,000 iterations; $\chi^2 = 8.36$; $df = 5$; $p = .14$; RMSEA = .03, CFI = .989, TLI = .973, SRMR = .022) with news use ($R^2 = 3.1\%$), political discussion ($R^2 = 17.5\%$), and political participation ($R^2 = 18.1\%$) as criterion variables. Accordingly, a fixed effects SEM test (Figure 1) also clarifies these connections as a structure for intrapersonal change over time, with direct and indirect paths. The model showed IE was directly related to both discussion ($\beta = .066$, $p < .05$ or better) and participation ($\beta = .147$, $p < .05$ or better). No indirect effects were found stemming from

Figure 1
Fixed Effects Structural Equation Model of Internal, External and Government Political Efficacy on News Use, Discussion, and Political Participation.

Note. Sample size = 907. Path entries are standardized SEM coefficients (Betas) at $p < .05$ or better. The effects of demographic variables (age, gender, education, race, and income), sociopolitical antecedents (political knowledge, political interest, discussion network size, and media trust) have been residualized in the model. Model goodness of fit: $\chi^2 = 8.36$; $df = 5$; $p = .14$; $RMSEA = .03$, $CFI = .989$, $TLI = .973$, $SRMR = .022$). Explained variance of criterion variables: News Use $R^2 = 3.1\%$; Discussion $R^2 = 17.48\%$; and Political Participation $R^2 = 18.1\%$. This theoretical model was also bootstrapped based on the Standard Errors with 1000 iterations, converging in 876 iterations and with a 99.99% confidence interval.

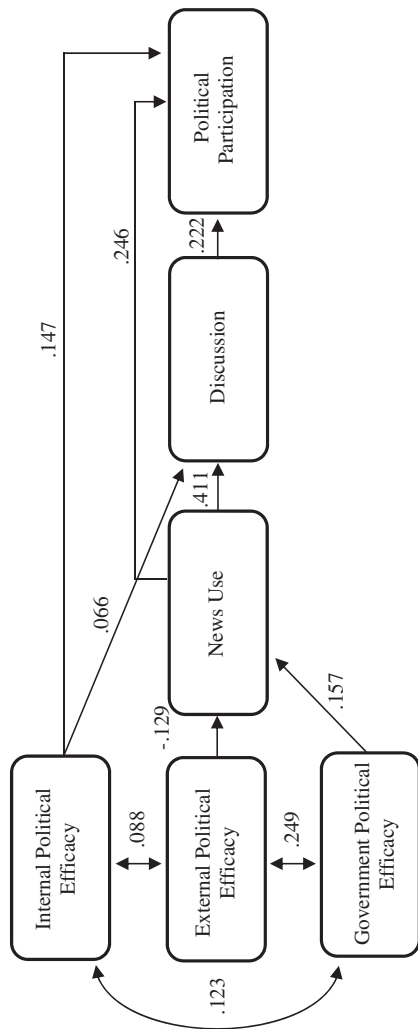


Table 5
Crosssectional, Lagged, Fixed Effects, and Autoregressive Regression Models Testing Effects of Political Efficacy (Internal, External, and Government) on News Use

	News Use Crosssectional	News Use Lagged	News Use Fixed	News Use Autoregressive
<i>Step 1—Demographics</i>				
Age	-.042	-.081**	-.047	-.056*
Gender (female)	.035	.007	.043	-.015
Education	-.009	-.001	-.010	.004
Income	.092***	.064**	.071**	.008
Race (White = 1)	-.101***	-.118***	-.108***	-.057*
ΔR^2	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%
<i>Step 2—Antecedents</i>				
Media Trust	.415***	.359***	.423***	.106***
Political Knowledge	-.040	-.053	.015	-.029
Political interest	.177***	.198***	.184***	.090*
Discussion Network Size	.098***	.075**	.072**	.015
ΔR^2	29.8%	24.1%	30.4%	24.1.8%
<i>Step 2—Autoregressive Term</i>				
News Use W^1	—	—	—	.609***
ΔR^2				24.6%
<i>Step 3—Variables of Interest</i>				
Internal Political Efficacy	.065	.069	.065	.029
External Political Efficacy	-.108***	-.063*	-.090***	.003
Government Political Efficacy	.117**	.084*	.116***	.013
ΔR^2	2.1%	1.1%	1.7%	0.01%
Total R^2	36.3%	29.6%	36.5%	53.3%

Note. Standardized regression coefficients reported. $N = 1,020$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .10$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

IE. Conversely, EE leads people to consume less news ($\beta = -.129$, $p < .05$ or better) and participate less politically via their news use crosssectional ($\beta = -.032$, $p < .01$). Finally, GE is directly related to higher levels of news use ($\beta = .157$, $p < .05$ or better) and positively predicts political participation through news use ($\beta = .039$, $p < .001$; see Table 6).

Discussion

This article advances literature on political efficacy by proposing a new operational construct that better captures attitudes toward the effectiveness of democratic government as a whole. Confirmatory factor analysis results provide statistical evidence for three separate factors for survey items related political efficacy. Accordingly, GE achieved a solid internal consistency ($\alpha .91/.92$ in the first and second wave, Table 2).

Table 6
Indirect fixed Effects Model Effects on Political Participation

Indirect Fixed-Effects (W^2-W^1)	B
Government Political Efficacy → News Use → Political Participation	.039***
External Political Efficacy → News Use → Political Participation	-.032**
News Use → Discussion → Political Participation	.091***

Note. Standardized regression coefficients (β) reported. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). N = 907

Additionally, items related to IE, EE, and GE behaved differently in each statistical model tested, suggesting three different constructs are being tapped. Consistent with previous literature, we found that IE is an antecedent for discussion frequency and political participation (Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Valentino et al., 2009). We did not find similar results for EE, as it was inversely related to news use, discussion frequency, and had no effects on political participation.

More importantly for this study, GE had positive direct effects on news use. In addition, news consumption mediates the relationship between an entirely externally focused efficacy measure (GE) and political participation. Although prior research has emphasized the role of IE in predicting pro-democratic outcomes, IE fails to be directly related to news use in the more stringent models tested here. Instead, we find that GE matters for predicting news consumption, and that news consumption leads, in turn, to participation in institutional politics. The perception that the government is working on everyone’s behalf leads people to keep up with information about news and public affairs. Perhaps individuals higher in GE seek out news to learn more about the socially relevant ways in which the government is working to cope with everyone’s needs. These individuals may be less interested in information related to conflict or corruption in government, and instead are motivated to utilize democratically relevant information. Further content studies and individual news preference analysis would be needed to shed light on this quandary.

For the case of IE, the effect on participation is not mediated at all. In other words, news consumption does not explain how, or why, internal efficacy matters for predicting participatory behaviors. This may be, of course, because those high in internal competence are also the same individuals that participate in politics regardless. The conflicting findings across the board for political efficacy further illustrate the highly contextual and nuanced role the focus and tone of political attitudes play. As noted in Table 1, reflecting on the government as a whole is a decided move away from Bandura’s classic conception of efficacy as reflection on the self.

The SEM test also shows significant connections among political efficacy, news use, discussion, and political participation. Similar to previous findings (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Smith, 1986; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003), news use has direct effects on political participation, but also indirect effects through discussion. Thus, the news media consumption is an important mediator of GE, facilitating political discussion and, in turn, participation in politics.

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One of the greatest limitations highlights the study's lack of a political trust measurement to be included as control in the models. However, we have included trust in the media as a proxy measure for political trust, as both of them are positively correlated (Lee, 2005). A number of studies have found "a cluster of attitudes" towards the government and the news media (Bennet, Rhine, Flickinger, & Bennet, 1999, p. 17). This is also evidenced by data from the General Social Survey and Pew Center that show a decline in both trust in the media and trust in the government for several decades now. Although imperfect, we believe controlling for trust in media partially alleviates this issue. Future research should more systematically include political trust as a control when measuring the effects of GE on people's behavioral processes.

The limitations should not detract from the study's findings, as the sample was similar to other widely used data sets (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2010), employed panel data, and found robust differential effects of efficacy providing clear evidence for separate constructs. The SEM empirical test also advanced the theoretical understanding of how people's diverse political efficacy constructs yield different effects on participatory behaviors. Future studies might further explore GE in relation to trust, political cynicism, and news use. Though studies have found that some types of news coverage lead to cynicism, others find that community news can decrease cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Jeffres et al., 2002). In the current study, media trust was included in all the models. GE was still positively related to news use, even after accounting for trust in the media, thus GE is driving news consumption, independent of trust. In addition, news use is facilitating a process of participation, acting as a mediator between people's GE and political involvement. These results offer more support for the roles of people's political efficacy and the news media in facilitating participation in public life.

Appendix 1 Descriptive Statistics of index Measuring Frequency of News Use in Wave 2

	Mean	SD
Network TV	6.17	3.24
Local TV	6.75	3.11
Fake News Programs	2.52	2.53
National Newspapers	2.89	2.66
Local Newspapers	5.17	3.45
Online Sites	3.04	2.72
Cable News	4.84	3.28
Radio	3.84	3.02
Citizen Journalism Sites	1.98	1.89
Hyperlocal Sites	1.92	1.96
Table App/Browser	2.52	2.60

(continued)

(Continued)

	Mean	SD
Smartph. App/Browser	2.69	2.70
Facebook	2.94	2.79
Twitter	1.88	2.13
Google+	1.77	1.90
Pinterest	1.32	1.19
Instagram	1.29	1.21
Tumblr	1.27	1.16
Reddit	1.30	1.24
LinkedIn	1.54	1.52
News Aggregators	3.53	2.94

Notes

1. For details on the survey employed here, see (Diehl, Weeks, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2015; Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2016).

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