Old Measures, New Implications:

The Meaning of Political Efficacy across Political Contexts

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Abstract

The main goal of this thesis is to comprehend some of the factors explaining cross-temporal and cross-national variations in citizens' feelings of influence upon the political process, namely, political efficacy. For that purpose, this work is structured in three main parts which aim to explain how contextual factors can affect feelings of efficacy and, the sources of cross-national commonalities and differences. The first part, *Electoral Outcomes, Expectations and the (de)Mobilisation of Political Efficacy* contributes to the winner-loser gap literature by assessing the effect of elections, electoral outcomes and electoral expectations on political efficacy in the United Kingdom (UK) 2005 and 2010 general elections. This papers shows that not only electoral outcomes enhance or depress feelings of efficacy but also that electoral expectations have a major impact. The second part of this dissertation, *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?*, studies the cross-national comparability of a standard measure of political efficacy used in the European Social Survey (ESS). This paper employs Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA) and shows that the meaning of political efficacy is not equivalent across the European continent but rather, among subsets of countries with a shared background. The third paper of this dissertation, *Valid Measures of Political Efficacy and their Correlates in the US and UK*, uses the most recent advances in MGCFA applied to ordinal data to assess the cross-temporal and cross-national validity of a pilot battery of questions of political efficacy in the US and UK. The empirical results show that efficacy is equivalent across both countries only when significant differences in average levels of political efficacy are accounted for.

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To my niece Arlet

Introduction

Some years back, I was in Barcelona attending my first lecture on Political Behaviour. It was fascinating to hear how researchers in Columbia and Michigan were trying to explain why citizens voted the way they did more than half a century ago. I did not know that voting behaviour could be explained and even less, predicted. The 'funnel of causality' seemed to be the key to understanding almost everything. I could picture my family, friends and colleagues in there; it helped me to understand where my political opinions came from (and to realise that they actually came from somewhere). The Michigan model was quite convincing.

Indeed, it was important to understand people's vote choices, but that was not the whole story. In a country like Spain, where one cannot go to a café without overhearing at least two or three complaints about the economy and the government, I could not understand why one would not vote. Why would anyone choose not to speak when the chance to have a say is out there? Later, I learned that voting is not always a choice and that abstention sometimes is. I also learned that there are different ways to participate in politics and, I learned that voting behaviour and political attitudes are not the same thing. Those coffee chats were not unique to Spain though; in Italy, Portugal and Greece they were also daily phenomena. Levels of media usage and interest in politics in the South of the continent were apparently the lowest in Europe, something that was almost 'inherent' to *our* culture. But this caricature is probably inaccurate. If citizens do not care about politics, if they are truly not interested, they would not even talk about it.

There is something common to those conversations, their negative tones. It seemed like citizens were not taking any political responsibility, as they did not feel part

of the bigger political puzzle; however, they were ready to complain. They felt confident enough to talk about politics; they had a say, but they were not speaking loudly enough to be heard by the politicians themselves. After all, if they thought that politicians were not willing to listen, that the system would not represent their demands, why bother? It is quite rational not to. That is how I learned about and became interested in political efficacy, by understanding first the difference between *internal* and *external* efficacy.

Political efficacy is a concept that repeatedly attracts the interest of scholars and does so because theory suggests citizen perceptions of their own subjective competence or *internal* efficacy, and the responsiveness of their politicians and political institutions or *external* efficacy, are important. An efficacious citizenry is more likely to confer legitimacy on political systems and avoid the types of disillusionment with systems of government that generate civic and participatory decline, or worse outcomes such as illegal political activity or violent protest (Easton and Dennis 1967; Finifter 1970; Pateman 1970). Still, the implications of such theoretical arguments are difficult to test because researchers are not confident in the validity of efficacy measures commonly found on national and cross-national surveys.

Political efficacy was first defined by Campbell et al. 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' (1954:187). The concept was initially measured through the 'Index of Political Efficacy' consisting of a battery of four agree/disagree questions as follows: (1) I don't think public officials care much what people like me think; (2) Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things; (3) People like me don't have any say about what the government does; and, (4) Sometimes politics and government seem so

complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on. Some years later, Lane (1959) identified two components underlying political efficacy: "the conviction that the polity is democratic and [that] government officials are responsive to the people" (Abramson 1972: 1245). Balch's empirical findings (1974) supported the latter distinction and suggested that political efficacy had two empirical dimensions: 'internal efficacy' or 'citizen's subjective competence' and 'external efficacy' or 'system responsiveness'.

Although the theoretical construct splits into two early on in the literature, survey questions both past and present date to a time where the conceptualisation of efficacy is unidimensional. Classic analyses of data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) in the 1950s employ the four items above mentioned. On the ANES' which run from 1968-1980, two additional statements appear (Acock and Clarke 1990): 5) Parties are only interested in people's votes, not opinions; and 6) Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress in Washington loose touch with the people pretty quickly. The modern cross-national incarnation employed the first wave of the European Survey in 2002 utilises items 1, 4, and 5 and adds questions asking respondents *"Do you think you could take an active role in a group involved with political issues?"* and *"How easy is to make up your mind about political issues?"*.

Balch (1974) correlates statements 1-4 with external political attitudes and behaviours and finds that items 2 and 4 have a modest correlation with conventional and unconventional participation and are nearly unrelated to attitudes towards political trust. In contrast, items 1 and 3 relate better to attitudes towards political trust. This correlational analysis justifies treating efficacy as multi-dimensional: Items 2 and 4 are reflective of an individual's "confidence in his own abilities regardless of political

circumstances" and therefore a reflection of internal efficacy. Items 1 and 3 correspond to respondents' beliefs about "the potential responsiveness of individuals" or external efficacy (Balch 1974:24). There is a slight of hand in the 1960s and 1970s when indicators 5 and 6 enter the survey. In designing the ANES' of the 1970's, Miller et al. (1980) argue that item 3 (along with items 2 and 4) is now reflection of *internal* and not *external* efficacy.

The distinction between efficacy's two dimensions is crucial for understanding today's changing political realities. Members of peripheral parties and protest movements may see themselves as effective in driving and making the case for change but view the current government as unresponsive. Likewise, there maybe some who believe that they lack the skills or interest to become too involved in politics but believe that elected candidates are effective at running the nation. Those in the first group are high in internal efficacy and low in external efficacy while individuals in the latter category have the opposite features (see Pollock 1983; Zimmerman 1989).

The current economic and political climate is characterized by bailouts, austerity measures and anti-austerity protests. The Great Recession has been known as the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression. Its effects went far beyond the collapse of the housing market or equity market fluctuations; its social repercussions are undeniable. The Great Recession has led to a change in the relationship between citizens and their representatives, the way in which citizens express their political demands. New social movements and political parties emerged and the nature of political debates changed. *Occupy Wallstreet*, the *Indignados* movement, the United Kingdom 2010 student protests, the creation of the party *Podemos* in Spain or the rise of the radical right-wing such as the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) are

expressions of this change. The rise of these political and social movements responds, to some extent, to a shared changing international context but the political systems in which they have originated are highly different.

Gamson (1968) advanced that certain levels of political efficacy and political cynicism are key for political mobilisation. Political efficacy has a close relationship with political engagement and political participation [1] as well as direct effects on representative democracy, as it is believed to be an indicator of the health of democratic regimes (Finifter, 1970; Pateman, 1970; Smetko and Valkenburg, 1998). Nowadays, citizens' feelings of political efficacy should be more informative than ever. Political discontent is not a new phenomenon but the ways in which and the extent to which it is expressed are. Citizens seem to be willing to make their voices be heard, but it also seems that they are tired of politicians not listening. Understanding political efficacy and whether it behaves differently under different political systems is key to understand the emergence of these new movements, as well as the increasing levels of political disengagement, political disaffection, abstention or protests during the last years.

Citizen's feelings of influence on the political process are of paramount salience for democratic systems and even more, given the current economic and political climate. Perceptions of *system responsiveness* are one of the main aspects of political legitimacy. If citizens do not believe that the polity is democratic and that government officials are responsive to them, the justification and acceptance of political authority is not likely to endure. Yet, the justification of political authority requires its acknowledgement. It is not possible to assess whether the political system is responsive, leading to its acceptance, if expectations of how it should respond do not

exist. Citizens may have more or less actual knowledge or abilities to participate in politics, but they have to *perceive* that they have those in order to feel politically competent, at least to some degree, and to evaluate whether the political system responds to their demands.

The relationship between political efficacy and legitimacy as well as the impact of efficacy on political participation and democratic functioning has been the focus of attention of many scholars. However, literature regarding political efficacy as a dependent variable is less extensive and less recent. The majority of these works were devoted to the study of the validity and reliability of the existing political efficacy measures[2]. For instance, analyzing data from the 1972 and 1976 ANES, Craig and Maggiotto (1982) find the conceptual validity of the indicators indicative of internal efficacy suspect, particularly the idea that item 4 reflects the internal dimension (refer to pages 7 - 8 for items' definitions). They argue that item 2 also is problematic because disagreement can be an efficacious response if the individual believes there are other avenues to effective political participation such as community organizing or protesting. Acock et al. (1985) argue that if researchers are willing to drop item 2, specify items 3 and 4 as reflective of internal efficacy, items 5 and 6 as indicators of external efficacy, and item 1 as loading on both latent dimensions, the indicators are salvageable. Their paper uses data from seven western countries and suggests that model fits across groups, and the dimensions are associated with external validators such as "government responsiveness". Subsequent research by Acock, Clarke and colleagues employs these indicators to study the change in efficacy over the course of an election (Clarke and Acock 1989), differences across levels of government in the Canadian system (Stewart et al. 1992), or in further validation exercises to cope with additional

revisions to the ANES battery on the 1984 study (Acock and Clarke 1990). Paradoxically, while results of these studies are inconclusive, different measures of the concept have been used in worldwide national surveys as well as cross-cultural ones. As an indicator of the health of democratic regimes, it is essential to understand how political efficacy behaves and whether variations exist across democracies.

The nature of this work is comparative. Survey data is the primary tool for the analysis of individual political behaviour. The virtues of survey data are well known, as well as their potential biases and shortcomings. Surveys are designed to test theories, to assess relationships among concepts. One of the main concerns of survey researchers lies in the validity and reliability of survey indicators. Agreement on the definition of a concept has to be reached before designing its measurement. We have to agree on what we want to measure before thinking about the best way to measure it. The argument is pretty simple but not always followed. This is especially important for cross-cultural research.

Cross-national surveys quite often *import* measurement instruments designed in (or for) other contexts. As long as the external validity of these indicators is tested for, they can be confidently used and causal inferences can be drawn. Scholars with an interest in understanding political behaviour from a comparative perspective or the role that institutions may play in driving individual choices, benefit from the exponential growth of cross-national surveys during the last decades. See, for example, the European Social Survey (ESS), the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), and the World Values Survey. A small number of concepts on these surveys are subject to cross-cultural validation via Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA). For instance, Reeskens and Hooghe (2008) study the three item ESS battery designers

hypothesize tap generalised political trust. With the items measured on a 0-10 scale, they assume the indicators to be continuous and find they perform reasonably well as a valid and reliable concept of generalized trust across European countries. Davidov and his colleagues (2008) employ MGCFA to examine the cross-cultural validity of a battery of basic human values developed by Schwartz (1994). However, when concepts are well-grounded in a discipline their validity is sometimes assumed rather than tested for. After all, if the goal of cross-national surveys is to study differences across countries, why assume *a priori* that these do not exist?

This dissertation is structured in three papers, which aim to comprehend how (if) some contextual factors have an effect on feelings of political efficacy - its enhancement or depression - as well as the basis of cross-national similarities and differences. The former concern is addressed in the first paper, *Electoral Outcomes, Expectations and the (de)Mobilisation of Political Efficacy*. This paper provides a meaningful insight on how some contexts, such as elections, exert an impact on political efficacy. This task represents a first step towards the comprehension of variations in feelings of political efficacy within a specific political system, the United Kingdom. In order to understand the emergence of minor parties in the country or the rise of protests, it is essential to understand not only levels of political efficacy at different points in time but also those factors altering citizens' perceptions of influence on the political process. Since elections are the most important participatory process in a democracy, they offer a valuable scenario to assess whether citizens' feel that they can influence politics. More specifically, the paper contributes to the winner-loser gap literature by assessing the effects of electoral outcomes and electoral expectations on perceptions of influence on politics in the UK 2005 and 2010 electoral contests. The

basic conclusion of the paper is that the expected likelihood of a party winning the general election is positively associated with feelings of influence on politics among the party's supporters. In addition, voting for winning or losing candidates affects citizens' perceived impact on the political process. However, political efficacy also proves to be an enduring attitude among the electorate and, as such, less permeable to electoral outcomes.

The issue of cross-national comparability is addressed in the second and third papers. In these cases, survey methodology is not only a tool but, to a certain extent, an end in itself. These papers aim to contribute to the existing literature on the measurement of political efficacy by providing an approach that has been, so far, neglected. Despite the controversy around the measurement of political efficacy, there is no research focusing on the cross-national validity of the concept. Hence, the second and third papers of this dissertation aim to fill this gap in the literature by assessing whether different sets of survey indicators behave similarly across Europe and, between the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Paper 2, *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?*, analyses the (lack of) cross-national comparability of the standard battery of survey indicators used in the European Social Survey (ESS), that aims to measure feelings of political efficacy across Europe. The empirical results that I report show that efficacy does not have an unequivocal meaning across Europe, as shown by the Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analyses performed (MGCFA). Nevertheless, the measurement of political efficacy used in the ESS is invariant across certain subsets of countries; countries that share a political, cultural or historical background. Finally, *Valid Measures of Political Efficacy and their Correlates in the US and UK* departs from the findings of the previous paper

and uses the latest advances in MGCFA for ordinal data to test for the cross-temporal and cross-national validity of a pilot battery of questions of the concept in both countries. The findings of this paper reveal that the meaning of political efficacy is equivalent between the US and UK but they also show that US citizens feel far more efficacious than their British counterparts.

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[1] For instance see: Almond and Verba 1963; Balch 1974; Barnes 1966; Barnes and Kaase 1979; Campbell et al. 1964; Craig and Magiotto 1982; Craig et al. 1990; Easton and Dennis 1967; Gamson 1968; Niemi et al. 1991; Rosentstone and Hansen 1993; Smetko and Valkenburg 1998; Siegelman and Feldman, 1983.

[2] For instance see Acock and Clarke 1990; Aish and Jöreskog 1990; Balch, 1974; Barnes 1966; Converse
[2] For instance see Acock and Clarke 1990; Aish and Jöreskog 1990; Balch, 1974; Barnes 1966; Converse
1972; Craig and Magiotto 1982; Craig, Niemi and Silver 1990; Finkel 1985; Hayes and Bean 1993; Kaase and Newton 1995; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Morrell 2003; Niemi et al. 1991; Pingree 2009; Stewart et al. 1992; Wright 1975.

Part I:

Electoral Outcomes, Expectations and the (de)Mobilisation of Political Efficacy

Carla Xena

Abstract

Elections are the most salient participatory process in representative democracy. They offer a precious opportunity for citizens to feel they can influence the political process. Literature on the so-called winner-loser gap has shown how political attitudes such as political legitimacy and political efficacy, essential indicators of the health of democratic regimes, can be shaped by electoral outcomes (Anderson et al., 2005). Yet, the question of whether these changes can be attributed exclusively to electoral outcomes or to individuals' *expectations* about them, remains unanswered. Analysis of the impact of electoral expectations has traditionally focused almost exclusively on vote choice models – it has almost entirely ignored their possible effects on other important political attitudes and dispositions. This paper seeks to address this gap by assessing the impact of electoral expectations on perceptions of influence on politics, namely, political efficacy. For this purpose, pre-election and campaign data for the UK 2005 and 2010 contests is used since differences in the degree of certainty of the forthcoming electoral contest offer a good chance to test the extent to which differences in political efficacy between winners and losers also depend on individuals' electoral expectations. The advantage of focusing on two consecutive UK general elections means that a range of other contextual factors relating to the character of the electoral system and the political system are effectively held constant. The results from the pooled ordinary least

squares (OLS) regressions performed for both elections confirm that the sources of political efficacy vary among supporters of the three main parties depending on expectations about each party's success but also that this variation is contingent upon past electoral outcomes.

1. Introduction

Conventional political theory regards minimum levels of political engagement and political participation as requisites for the health of democracy. These have been traditionally associated with specific political attitudes such as feelings of political efficacy. Campbell *et al.* defined the concept of 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" (1954: 187). Over the years, a broad body of research has been especially concerned with the disentanglement of the relationship between subjective political efficacy and different forms of political involvement and political participation[1]. Nonetheless, the relevance of political efficacy as an object of study does not rest only on its implications for political participation or involvement but also in its direct effects on representative democracy. In this respect, efficacy is thought to be an essential indicator of the health of democratic regimes (Finifter, 1970; Pateman, 1970; Smetko and Valkenburg, 1998).

Easton and Dennis defined diffuse support as "the generalized trust and confidence that members invest in various objects of the system as ends in themselves" (1967: 62-63). Diffuse support is not contingent on specific rewards or deprivations but rather it is offered unconditionally (Easton, 1965: 272-74). Hence, sentiments of system legitimacy are considered to underlie feelings of efficacy. The normative and practical implications of political efficacy for representative democracy have translated into a

vast body of research placing emphasis on its conceptual and empirical delimitation as well as on the implications of political efficacy for democratic functioning, specifically, its relationship with other attitudes and forms of political involvement.

Whether political efficacy is contingent upon specific outcomes has paramount implications for political stability and democratic theory. To the extent that political efficacy varies along with the political or electoral context, it cannot be conceived any longer simply as an indicator of a regime's diffuse support. In this context, the findings reported by Anderson *et al*. (2005) suggest that feelings of system responsiveness and political efficacy are permeable to electoral outcomes, as the winner–loser gap has an impact on political attitudes that may translate into an erosion of political legitimacy. However, the disentanglement of the effect of electoral outcomes on political attitudes is not an easy task, as post-electoral reported attitudes are likely to be affected both by electoral behaviour and by election outcome. The use of electoral expectations instead of outcomes in models of political efficacy represents a new and potentially valuable approach to assessing the extent to which political efficacy can be affected by electoral contexts. First, it contributes to the literature on the winner–loser gap through a new standpoint that accounts for the effect of expectations, instead of (or potentially as well as) behaviour, on political attitudes. Second, the impact of those factors leading to variations on political efficacy can be estimated net of voting behaviour. Third, it allows an assessment of whether election outcomes are a *necessary* condition to shape feelings of efficacy, contributing to the gap between winners and losers, or rather, whether feelings of efficacy are also (and perhaps more strongly) affected by the prior psychological consideration of anticipating a victory or a defeat.

In order to assess whether expectations exert the abovementioned impact on political efficacy it is important to note that these may be affected by the degree of

certainty that characterizes an electoral contest, information that mostly reaches citizens through the media. Differences in the degree of certainty about the electoral outcome of the 2005 and 2010 contests in the UK offer a good opportunity in this respect. Whereas the majority of 2005 opinion polls (Ipsos MORI, Populus, ICM Research Limited, YouGov) gave a clear advantage to the Labour Party (its estimated lead was between 3 and 8 percentage points over its nearest rival, the Conservatives), the context of the 2010 general election was characterized by a notably higher degree of uncertainty that was, in turn, exacerbated by the plausibility of a new forthcoming scenario, a hung parliament. Thus, by focusing on the UK 2005 and 2010 general elections this paper aims to assess to what extent citizens' feelings of political efficacy – or differences between (potential) winners and losers– do not only depend (if) on election outcomes but also on individuals' expectations about those outcomes.

2. The Mobilisation of Political Efficacy

Political efficacy has implications for political participation and democratic functioning, but political participation may also affect feelings of efficacy. Different forms of electoral and non-electoral political participation have proven to have a positive effect on subjective political efficacy[2]. Two mechanisms may account for the impact of electoral participation on feelings of efficacy (Acock and Clarke, 1989:552-553). First, there are pure *participation effects*. Theories of "mobilisation of support" (Ginsberg 1982; Weissberg, 1975; Ginsberg and Weissberg, 1978) rest on the idea that political participation fosters feelings of system's legitimacy since it "induces citizens to believe that the government is responsive to their own needs and wishes" (Ginsberg, 1982:182). Thus, voting and campaign activity are expected to have a positive impact on

feelings of efficacy since citizens' implication in the electoral process would make them feel responsible for the electoral outcomes (Ginsberg and Weissberg, 1978:49). Second, there are o*utcome – contingent effects*. Voting and campaigning for winning candidates would increase feelings of efficacy because those who participated will think they can actually influence the political process and officials will be responsive to the demands of those who supported them.

Two additional mechanisms explain the positive relationship between elections and political efficacy, regardless of participation. On the one hand, according to the *pure outcomes* hypothesis, those who support winning candidates will feel more efficacious because the winners are expected to be responsive to the demands of their support groups and also, because the electoral outcome itself is the result of the preferences of people from the same partisan and socio-economic group (Acock and Clarke, 1989: 553). On the other hand, elections may have a *democratic coronation* effect by fostering political efficacy among citizens who have been socialised in a polity where electoral processes are thought to legitimise political authorities and thus, increasing citizens' affinity with the political regime (Ginsberg and Weissberg, 1978:49).

In the light of theories of mobilisation of regime support, political participation is believed to enhance the acceptance of the political regime, which would therefore encourage perceptions of system responsiveness but would not have any influence on subjective political competence (Finkel, 1985). Ginsberg and Weissberg's findings (1978) support the claim that electoral participation yields a positive influence on citizens' beliefs about the regime. Most of the positive postelection shifts in the 1968 and 1972 United States presidential contests were observed among those who actually voted while the effect of voting for winning or losing candidates remained uncertain. In a similar vein, Finkel (1985 and 1987) provides compelling arguments supporting the

idea that electoral participation reinforces perceptions of system responsiveness but it seems to have no profound effect on feelings of subjective competence[3].

Nevertheless, the disentanglement of the relationship between political participation and political efficacy has proven to be a complex exercise. Contrary to theories of mobilisation of support, the work by Acock and Clarke (1989) suggests that elections, not electoral participation, enhance political efficacy. In the American 1968, 1972 and 1984 presidential contests, this mobilisation took place through *pure outcomes* effects rather than a *democratic coronation.* Acock and Clarke argue that not only preferences for winning candidates are required for elections to influence political efficacy but also participation in the outcome. Feelings of political efficacy among those who voted for winning candidates experienced a positive post-electoral increase but the same pattern concerned those who did not participate but supported winning candidates[4].

As stated above, if political efficacy depends on specific outcomes its potential effects on political stability and democratic theory cannot be disregarded. On the one hand, as Ginsberg and Weissberg note, discontent among electoral losers should not affect regime beliefs but be redirected toward safer objects such as the particular individuals involved in the process (1978:51). If feelings of system responsiveness are permeable to electoral outcomes, political efficacy cannot be regarded as an indicator of diffuse support. Iyengar considers political efficacy a measure of diffuse support since "(…) is not a fleeting response to current political realities but is, instead, a more firmly embedded attitude concerning the responsiveness of the regime" (1980:255). Therefore, as an indicator of diffuse support, political efficacy should not vary along with specific rewards such as electoral outcomes, as support for the regime is unconditional (Easton, 1965: 272-74). In addition, perceptions of subjective political

competence should not vary along with particular political contingencies; otherwise, the basis of representative democracy may be eroded. If citizens' subjective ability to understand and interpret the political universe around them is unstable, they may eventually lack incentives to take part in the political system at all. They might not participate or be critical of the regime thus, becoming apathetic citizens.

3. Research Aims and Hypotheses

This paper seeks to assess *whether and to what extent political efficacy can be shaped by electoral expectations and election outcomes*. The foregoing discussion implies a series of hypotheses that aim to determine whether sentiments of system legitimacy underlie political efficacy or, on the contrary, if efficacy is conditional upon rewards, namely, electoral outcomes and potential outcomes (expectations). Each of them is outlined as follows:

(H1) *Elections, in themselves, have a positive effect on political efficacy.* A positive relationship is expected between elections and political efficacy in the light of the *democratic coronation* hypothesis. Hence, political efficacy would increase for the whole electorate regardless of specific outcomes.

(H2) *The proximity of elections has a positive effect on political efficacy among supporters of all parties.* If the *democratic coronation* hypothesis is true and political efficacy increases regardless of support for winning or losing parties, specific electoral outcomes should not condition positive changes in efficacy. Therefore, not only elections in themselves would have the potential to enhance political efficacy but also the proximity of the contest, the period when the electoral campaign takes place. Regardless of whether the campaign has a direct effect on political efficacy, feelings of

influence upon the political process are expected to be higher in the immediate period preceding an election. The closeness of the contest would entail more frequent considerations about politics, hence, making citizens gain awareness of the forthcoming chance to have an influence on politics.

(H3) *Differences exist in average levels of political efficacy among supporters of the past election winner(s) and loser(s) but they disappear contingent upon the new electoral outcome.* If political efficacy is affected by electoral outcomes (Anderson et al*.,* 2005), pre-electoral political efficacy is expected to be higher among supporters of the past election winner(s) and lower among the past election loser(s). Higher levels of efficacy among supporters of the winning party could somehow reverse beyond the elections due to the behaviour of the party in office, as suggested by Acock and Clarke (1989:562). However it is rather improbable that the effects of the most recent elections will completely disappear while the supported party remains in power. Therefore, even though political efficacy is not likely to experience major changes during the office term, elections are expected to influence political efficacy, as they are the most important participatory process in representative democracy. Accordingly, pre-electoral differences in political efficacy among supporters of the past election winner(s) and loser(s) are likely to be translated into new differences between winner(s) and loser(s) if the party in office is not reelected.

(H4) *The perceived likelihood of success of a party in a) the general election and b) the constituency has a positive effect on political efficacy among its supporters.* If electoral outcomes matter for political efficacy –due to the mechanisms outlined in either *pure outcomes* or *outcome contingent* hypotheses– so do expectations about the outcome. If voting is not necessary but neither sufficient since knowledge about the outcome is required (Acock and Clarke, 1989:559-60), a similar argument can be translated into a

pre-electoral scenario. Thus, positive expectations about the supported party electoral success would be necessary for political efficacy to be enhanced. Consequently, it is worthwhile to assess whether expectations do exert an impact at both levels, national and constituency since expectations may differ. A positive relationship between the perceived likelihood of success of the party the respondent identifies with at the national and constituency levels and feelings of efficacy is expected.

(H5) *The higher the degree of electoral uncertainty, the greater impact of expectations*. The effect of expectations should be more remarkable for the 2010 UK general election as the degree of uncertainty was higher than in the previous contest, hence, its positive impact on perceptions of influence on politics is also expected to be greater. In 2005, the Labour party obtained a 35.2% vote share following a long term declining trend, whereas the Conservative party reached 32.4% in line with its steady increase in vote share. The election outcome of 2005, where differences between the two main parties became notably smaller than in the previous contests, lead to a turning point that culminated in 2010 as depicted in Table 1. As stated earlier, in 2005 most opinion polls gave advantage to the Labour Party whereas in 2010 the possibility of a hung parliament appeared to be the most plausible scenario.

Table 1. *Evolution of Vote Share*

	1997	2001	2005	2010
Labour	43.2	40.7	35.2	29
Conservatives	30.7	31.7	32.4	36.1
Lib Dem	16.8	18.3	22	23

Source: The Electoral Comission (2010).

4. Data and Methods

The test of the hypotheses described above requires data that contain post-election information, but also information from two distinct periods prior to the election -before the campaign starts and during the campaign itself. The 2005 British Election Study (BES) included a three wave pre-campaign-post election panel of *N*=2959 and a post-election "top-up" sample with *N*=1202, giving a total post-election *N* of 4161.The post-election wave also included an *N*=3226 self-completion questionnaire. The 2010 BES Campaign Internet Panel Survey included a pre-campaign wave of *N*=16816, campaign wave of *N*=14973 and post-election wave of *N*=13356 [5]. Opposed to cross-sectional designs, the use of panel data enables a dynamic approach to the study of political attitudes. Moreover, the inclusion of two pre-electoral waves allows estimating the impact of those changes taking place during the electoral campaign period, which may or not be the result of the campaign itself but take place while this is being held, the immediate pre-electoral period.

The indicator of political efficacy used in this study is measured through the response to the single question "*On a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 means a great deal of influence and 0 means no influence, how much influence do you have on politics and public affairs?*" Unfortunately, the data do not include the standard political efficacy battery of questions that would enable to assess whether the causal mechanisms outlined in the previous section operate differently for the internal and external dimensions of the concept. However, there are no data available enabling such analysis. Nevertheless, recalling Campbell *et al.'s* original definition (1954: 187), this question would tap both the internal and external components of efficacy since it captures the individual self-perception of influence on the political system, which is to say it captures "the feeling

that individual political action *does*[6] have, or can have, an impact upon the political process".

The measure of expectations used in the 2005 BES differs between the pre-election and campaign waves[7]. In the pre-election questionnaire respondents are asked *"Which party is most likely to win the [election in your local constituency/general election]?"* followed by a list of the main parties[8]. Therefore, answer categories are exclusive. In contrast, in the campaign questionnaire the perceived likelihood of success of each of the parties in each arena is measured through the following question: *"On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means very unlikely and 10 means very likely, how likely is that [Labour / the Conservative Party / the Liberal Democrats] will win the [election in your local constituency / general election]?"* Due to the discrepancy between the pre–election and campaign measurement of electoral expectations, the lowest level of measurement will be used in order to allow for comparison between both periods. Therefore, dummy variables have been constructed coded "1" for those cases where a specific party is considered to be more likely to win than its rivals. However, the cases coded as "0" do not contain the same information for pre-electoral and campaign data. In the latter case, zeros also include those cases where different parties are given the same likelihood of winning, since the original variable is a 0 – 10 scale for each of the parties. The measure of expectations used in the 2010 BES Campaign Internet Panel Survey is consistent across the three waves, based on the above-mentioned 0 – 10 scale, so the variable can be used in its original form. An additional analysis has been performed for the 2010 election where expectations have been recoded into a lower level of measurement in order to assess the robustness of the results.[9]

All of the hypotheses formulated in this paper regard variations in political efficacy among *supporters* of a party (or party identifiers) rather than its *voters*. *Support*

for a party is measured through the question *"Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?"* Three dummy variables have been included, coded 1 if the respondent thinks of him/herself as Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat, respectively, and 0 if he or she identifies with any other party [10] . The terms party supporter and party identifier will be used interchangeably in this study. According to Acock and Clarke (1989), elections may promote positive political attitudes, making citizens feel more efficacious. But the success is not guaranteed. Electoral participation might not be necessary or sufficient for a positive shift to occur. In the light of the *pure outcomes* hypothesis, voting would not be necessary. Thus, an enhancement of political efficacy would not only be experienced among voters but also supporters of the winning party. For the test of hypotheses 4 and 5, where the effect of electoral expectations on influence on politics will be assessed, data from the pre-election and campaign waves will be used. Since hypotheses 4 and 5 place emphasis on electoral expectations – thus voters cannot be included in the analyses but party identifiers – hypotheses 1 to 3 will also consider identifiers instead of voters, hence, guaranteeing consistency among the tests of all hypotheses.

The test of the hypotheses 1 to 3 will be carried out through t-tests in order to assess whether mean levels of political efficacy vary at different points in time (paired-sample for H1 and H2) and among supporters of different parties (unpaired for H3). Hypotheses 4 and 5 will be tested through Pooled Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. Since panel data are used, a lagged dependent variable (LDV) is included in order to control for autocorrelation. Moreover, the inclusion of pre -electoral efficacy as a predictor enables us to assess the net effect of the independent variables in the interim between the two periods, pre-election and campaign. In addition, robust

standard errors (clustered by respondent) have been estimated to control for heteroskedasticity. The variables' abbreviations and the core regression equation are presented below:

- Party abbreviations: *Lab* for Labour Party; *Cons* for Conservative Party and; *LD* for Liberal Democrats.
- Expectations: $Party_C$ and $Party_E$ for constituency and national levels, respectively.

The dependent variable for the core regression equation is political efficacy measured during the electoral campaign. Gender, age and education act as sociodemographic controls (for a justification of the inclusion of these variables see Finkel 1985 and 1987). The interaction terms included in the equation capture the effect of electoral expectations at the constituency and national level, respectively, among supporters of the three main parties (party identifiers, a total of six interaction terms). Therefore, if the coefficients for the interaction terms are significant, hypothesis 4 - *the perceived likelihood of success of a party in a) the general election and b) the constituency has a positive effect on political efficacy among its supporters* - will be supported.

$$\text{Political Efficacy} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Political Efficacy}_{t-1}) + \beta_2(\text{male}) + \beta_3(\text{age}) + \beta_4(\text{educ}) + \beta_5(\text{Lab ID}) + \beta_6(\text{Cons ID}) + \beta_7(\text{LD ID}) + \beta_8(\text{Lab}_C) + \beta_9(\text{Cons}_C) + \beta_{10}(\text{LD}_C) + \beta_{11}(\text{Lab}_E) + \beta_{12}(\text{Cons}_E) + \beta_{13}(\text{LD}_E) + \beta_{14}(\text{Lab}_C{*}\text{Lab ID}) + \beta_{15}(\text{Lab}_E{*}\text{Lab ID}) + \beta_{16}(\text{Cons}_C{*}\text{Cons ID}) + \beta_{17}(\text{Cons}_E{*}\text{Cons ID}) + \beta_{18}(\text{LD}_C{*}\text{LD ID}) + \beta_{19}(\text{LD}_E{*}\text{LD ID}) + \varepsilon$$

5. Results

5.1 Descriptives

Tables 2 and 3 describe the evolution of mean levels of political efficacy in 2005 and 2010 over the three periods under consideration among supporters of the three main parties and the whole electorate.

Table 2. *Evolution of Mean Levels of Political Efficacy 2005* (*N* in parentheses)

	Pre-election	Campaign	Post-election
Labour	2.85 (*1292*)	2.74 (*2109*)	2.86 (*2106*)
Conservatives	2.24 (*857*)	2.16 (*1324*)	2.35 (1349)
Lib Dem	2.50 (*439*)	2.51 (*784*)	2.61 (746)
Electorate	2.29 (*7533*)	2.26 (*5943*)	2.41 (*5787*)

Table 3. *Evolution of Mean Levels of Political Efficacy 2010* (*N* in parentheses)

	Pre-election	Campaign	Post-election
Labour	2.65 (*4755*)	2.67 (*4185*)	2.29 (*3982*)
Conservatives	2.29 (*4465*)	2.25 (*3890*)	2.05 (*3828*)
Lib Dem	2.47 (*1921*)	2.59 (*1989*)	2.35 (*1868*)
Electorate	2.26 (*16244*)	2.30 (*14325*)	2.05 (*13122*)

Average levels of efficacy remain essentially low during the six periods, regardless of particular political affiliations, ranging from 2.05 to 2.86. For the UK 2005 contest, the campaign did not seem to lead to an increase to feelings of influence in politics but rather the opposite (with the exception of Conservative identifiers). In 2005, post-election levels of efficacy appear to be higher for supporters of the three main parties and the electorate after the election took place. In contrast, for the UK 2010 contest, mean levels of efficacy were higher during the campaign than the previous pre-

electoral period but in this case, Conservative identifiers where the only ones for whom efficacy appears to be lower during the campaign. Perhaps, one of the most salient features of both tables lies in the fact the mean levels of political efficacy among supporters of the Conservative party, remain consistently lower than those of the rest of the groups for all the periods. In addition, contrary to the pattern observed in Table 2, the 2010 election seemed to lead to a generalized depression of feelings of efficacy among supporters the three main parties and the whole electorate. This decrease is quite likely to be attributed not only to the electoral outcomes but also to the agreements following the 2010 election. On the one hand, the two parties with most votes were not able to form a single party government. On the other, the Liberal Democrats became part of a coalition government for the first time, which could have increased feelings of influence on politics among their supporters. However, the Lib Dems' alignment with the Conservatives, probably perceived by Lib Dem supporters as the 'wrong' party, led to a decrease of political efficacy among these.

5.2 Two sample t-tests

The two sample t-tests performed suggest that some of the differences described above are statistically significant (see tables 4 and 5). The 2005 UK general election did not seem to have any positive or negative effect on political efficacy among supporters of the three main parties. In contrast, the contest seemed to lead an increase of feelings of influence upon the political process for the whole electorate when pre and post electoral means are compared (2.29 and 2.41, respectively, differences significant at the 1% level), suggesting that a *democratic coronation* effect (H1), to some extent, took place. However, the general 2010 election appears to have the opposite effect. The comparison between pre-electoral (2.26) and post-electoral means of efficacy (2.05) of

the whole sample indicates that, contrary to expectations (H1), the election by itself did not enhance feelings of efficacy but instead, a generalised depression of feelings of political efficacy is observed among the whole electorate, as well as among supporters of the three main parties. In the case of Labour supporters, post-electoral efficacy is significantly lower than pre-electoral (2.65 and 2.29 respectively). Indeed, it could be argued that if changes in efficacy respond to a *pure outcomes* effect rather than a *democratic coronation*, the same causal mechanism that operates for supporters of the winning party could discourage efficacy among supporters of the losing party (Labour). However, the mechanism does not work for Conservative identifiers. Despite being the largest party in terms of parliamentary seats, the differences between pre and post-electoral means of efficacy among the Conservatives are significantly lower after the election (2.29 and 2.05 respectively). Among the Liberal Democrats, the null hypothesis of equal means is not rejected at the 5% significance level but it is at the 10%; the election did have a negative effect among them.

Overall, these findings indicate that elections *per se* do not clearly promote feelings of efficacy. Whereas in 2005 a *democratic coronation* effect seems to exist (H1), in 2010 perceptions of influence upon the political process where significantly lower after the contest not only among supporters of the three main parties but also among the whole electorate. In a similar vein, neither support for winning or losing parties fosters or discourages citizens' efficacy. In addition, although a *pure outcomes* effect does not seem to take place on the 2005 election, as there are no significant pre and post-electoral differences among supporters of the main parties, the 2010 findings do not imply that this hypothesis could not operate. While support for a losing party implies that the demands of people from the same socio-economic and partisan preferences are not likely to be satisfied, the opposite does not need to be necessarily

true if the supported party wins the contest. If there is no single party government supporters' demands will be bargained and "shared" among coalition partners. Therefore, to win the most seats in an election might not be enough to enhance feelings of influence upon the political process since these are likely to be affected not only by the electoral outcome but also by the *final* outcome, which in the case of coalition governments does not ensure the satisfaction of supporters' demands[11]. Indeed the 2010 election has often been characterised as one in which no party 'won' – although the Conservatives were ahead on both seats and votes, they failed to secure enough seats for an outright Commons victory and so were pushed into what, for many voters and politicians, was an unwelcome coalition government.

Contrary to hypothesis 2, the proximity of elections does not appear to have a positive effect on political efficacy among supporters of all parties. This effect should only be expected where a *democratic coronation* effect also exists as both hypotheses operate through the same underlying mechanism; if political efficacy increases regardless of support for winning or losing parties, electoral outcomes should not condition positive changes. Thus, since the *democratic coronation* effect has been only observed among the whole electorate for the 2005 election, the proximity of the contest (campaign period) could have the potential to exert a positive impact in 2005. However, neither the 2005 nor 2010 results seem to corroborate hypothesis 2. Differences between the pre-electoral and campaign periods are not statistically significant among the whole electorate or party supporters. On the contrary, the campaign could even have had a negative effect among the whole electorate and Liberal Democrat supporters on the 2010 election. Overall, these findings do not support hypothesis 2: mean levels of political efficacy were not higher during the campaign period.

If hypothesis 3 is true and electoral outcomes play a role in explaining variations in political efficacy among supporters of winning and losing parties, differences should also be observed between the 2005 and 2010 elections. Table 3 suggests that pre-electoral means of political efficacy were higher for Labour supporters (the past election winner) than those of Liberal Democrats or Conservative identifiers. As expected, these differences are still significant after the election, as the party was re-elected. Indeed, the t-tests performed also confirm that these differences remain during the 2010 pre-electoral period. Therefore, as hypothesised, if the supported party is in power, perceptions of influence upon the political process are encouraged. The preferences of people from the same socio-economic and partisan group are being represented; the system is responsive to citizens' demands. For similar reasons, a change of government is expected to translate into new differences among supporters of winning and losing parties. Although new differences appear after the 2010 contest, the relationship works in the opposite direction than predicted. The mean of political efficacy for Labour supporters remains higher than that of the Conservatives. In the case of Liberal Democrats, post-electoral efficacy is also higher than for the Conservatives. This may reflect the point alluded to above – that although the Conservatives secured the most votes and seats, their inability to achieve a parliamentary majority was regarded as a failure by many of their supporters. As a whole, these results suggest that even though elections are the most important participatory process in a democracy, political efficacy is not so permeable to electoral outcomes but also, defined by a long lasting component. Political efficacy remains higher for supporters of the past election winner, The Labour Party, and lower among the Conservatives. Nonetheless, this explanation may not be comprehensive, as it would not account for differences between the two past election losers, Conservatives and

Liberal Democrats. Most likely, post-electoral efficacy responds to a combination of past outcomes and pre-electoral expectations, being lower for Conservative identifiers who initially thought they could have formed a single party government who was going to satisfy their demands, and higher for the Liberal Democrats who played a key role in the government formation process.

Table 4. *Differences in mean levels of political efficacy, 2005* (*p* values*)*

	HYPOTHESIS	DIFFERENCES	H_0: differences = 0		
			H_a: differences < 0	H_a: differences ≠ 0	H_a: differences > 0
Electorate	1	Pre - Post	**0.001**	0.002	0.999
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.783	0.434	0.217
Labour	1	Pre - Post	0.439	0.878	0.561
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.905	0.190	0.095
Conservatives	1	Pre - Post	0.127	0.253	0.873
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.813	0.374	0.187
Lib Dem	1	Pre - Post	0.196	0.391	0.804
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.468	0.936	0.532
Pre-election	3	Labour – Conservatives	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
		Labour – Lib Dem	0.997	0.007	
		Conservatives – Lib Dem	0.267	0.053	0.973
Post - election	3	Labour – Conservatives	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
		Labour – Lib Dem	0.994	0.013	
		Conservatives – Lib Dem	0.006	0.012	0.994

Note: paired two sample t-tests for hypotheses 1 and 2, unpaired for hypothesis 3.

Table 5. *Differences in Mean Levels of Political Efficacy, 2010* (*p* values*)*

			H_0: differences = 0		
	HYPOTHESIS	DIFFERENCES	H_a: differences < 0	H_a: differences ≠ 0	H_a: differences > 0
Electorate	1	Pre - Post	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.060	0.119	0.940
Labour	1	Pre - Post	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.315	0.630	0.685
Conservatives	1	Pre - Post	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.740	0.520	0.260
Lib Dem	1	Pre - Post	0.960	0.080	0.040
	2	Pre - Campaign	0.063	0.126	0.937
		Pre - Post			**0.000**
Pre-election	3	Labour – Conservatives	1.000	0.000	**0.003**
		Labour – Lib Dem	0.997	0.007	
		Conservatives – Lib Dem	**0.001**	0.002	0.999
		Labour – Conservatives	1.000	0.000	**0.000**
Post - election	3	Labour – Lib Dem	0.195	0.391	0.805
			0.000		
		Conservatives – Lib Dem		0.000	1.000

Note: paired two sample t-tests for hypotheses 1 and 2, unpaired for hypothesis 3.

5.3 The Role of Electoral Expectations

Table 6 presents the results obtained through pooled ordinary least squares regressions for the model described in section 4. For 2005, the results have been estimated using the measure of expectations where the categories are exclusive. Therefore, those cases where parties are expected not to win or when two (or three) parties are given the same likelihood of success have been coded as '0'. The same procedure has been applied in for the 2010 data (lower measurement of expectations)[12].

Table 6. *OLS Regression Estimates of Effects on Political Efficacy*

	2005		2010	
Political Efficacy t-1	0.589***	*(0.015)*	0.610***	*(0.010)*
Male	-0.013	*(0.058)*	-0.034	*(0.040)*
Age	0.009***	*(0.002)*	-0.009***	*(0.001)*
Education	0.279***	*(0.077)*	0.085	*(0.061)*
Lab ID	0.422**	*(0.177)*	0.274***	*(0.074)*
Con ID	0.104	*(0.109)*	-0.171	*(0.107)*
LD ID	0.299***	*(0.113)*	0.278***	*(0.078)*
Expectations				
Lab Constituency	0.082	*(0.100)*	0.061	*(0.073)*
Con Constituency	0.001	*(0.108)*	0.013	*(0.067)*
LD Constituency	0.045	*(0.127)*	0.038	*(0.079)*
Lab G. Election	0.018	*(0.096)*	0.251**	*(0.105)*
Con G. Election	-0.059	*(0.189)*	-0.066	*(0.056)*
LD G. Election	0.104	*(0.243)*	0.393**	*(0.189)*
Expectations Party Supporters				
Lab Constituency	0.014	*(0.128)*	0.034	*(0.097)*
Lab G. Election	0.027	*(0.177)*	-0.097	*(0.131)*
Con Constituency	0.276*	*(0.142)*	0.138	*(0.087)*
Con G. Election	0.314	*(0.231)*	0.319***	*(0.103)*
LD Constituency	0.167	*(0.210)*	0.000	*(0.132)*
LD G. Election	-0.366	*(0.361)*	0.183	*(0.292)*
Constant	-0.169	*(0.177)*	0.986***	*(0.116)*
N	*4709*		*11393*	
Adj. R-sq	0.374		0.382	

Note: unstandardised beta coefficients are reported. ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1
Standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity in parentheses.

Gender, age and education have been included as control variables in order to avoid misleading inferences. The unexpected observed differences in some of the socio-demographic variables, namely age and education, between both contests could be attributed to survey mode differences. For instance, in 2005 age correlates positively with perceptions of influence on politics whereas this relationship is negative and still significant in 2010. Internet surveys are likely to over represent younger individuals and at the same time, more likely to attract respondents with higher levels of political interest and engagement – whom may consider having greater influence on politics. In a similar manner, one could interpret differences between the impact of education between both periods due to survey mode / sampling differences but it is rather improbable that those discrepancies can be attributed to real distinct effects between electoral contexts.

Whilst differences between the campaign and the prior period remained unclear with the two sample t-tests analyses, the OLS regression estimates present a different scenario. The coefficient estimate for the lagged dependent variable shows that there is an average dynamic effect of the independent variables on political efficacy (political efficacy t-1, β=0.589 for 2005 and β=0.610 for 2010, both significant at 1%) but also, it indicates that support for certain parties and expectations about the electoral outcomes alter feelings of political efficacy in the in the interim between the two periods, before the election and during the electoral campaign waves. Hence, suggesting that the relationship between party identification and electoral expectations, respectively, and perceptions of influence on politics, may be mediated by the electoral campaign[13].

In line with H5, a first overview at the results obtained for 2005 seem to indicate that expectations did **not** play a substantial role in shaping the publics' perceptions of influence

in politics. These only seem to matter among Conservative supporters and only at the constituency level (Party Supporters, Con Constituency β=0.276, p<0.1). Even though the party was following an increasing trend in vote share with respect to the two previous elections, the fact that most opinion polls gave advantage to the Labour Party in the general election probably made them aware of the implausibility of obtaining a victory at the national level. In addition, identification with the Labour and Liberal Democratic Party in 2005 (Lab ID β=0.422, p<0.05 and LD ID β=0.299, p<0.01) and 2010 (Lab ID β=0.274, p<0.05 and LD ID β=0.278, p<0.01), appears to hold *per se* a positive effect on political efficacy. One the one hand, these results could be explained by the consecutive victories obtained by the Labour Party despite its constant decline. On the other hand, Liberal Democrat identifiers –who were not in a position to win these elections–, were probably satisfied by their steady increase in vote share over time, thus, enhancing feelings of efficacy among its supporters. It is worth noting that identification with the Conservative Party, although not statistically significant, seems to have a negative effect on perceptions of influence on politics.

Supporting hypothesis 5, a positive effect of national expectations among supporters of other parties can be observed for Labour and Liberal Democrats (Expectations Lab G. Election β=0.251, p<0.05 and Expectations LD G. Election β=0.393, p<0.05). Expectations about the national success of these two parties emerge in the 2010 election whilst it did not exist in 2005. Nevertheless, these effects do not remain the same once party identification is taken into account. In 2010, the likelihood of the Conservative Party of winning the

election had a positive effect among its supporters (Party Supporters, Con G. Election β=0.319, p<0.01). The Conservative Party supporters' expectations of winning over Labour were particularly encouraging. Conservative partisans who had been out of power for years –resulting into lower levels of political efficacy than their opponents- had a plausible chance to influence the political process as the electoral outcome had yet to be decided in a highly uncertain context.

Table 7 shows how the results vary if we use the 2010 original measure of expectations without reducing the level of measurement as follows: *"On a scale that runs from 0 to 10, where 0 means very unlikely and 10 means very likely, how likely is that [Labour / the Conservative Party / the Liberal Democrats] will win the [election in your local constituency / general election]?"* The table depicts what happens when these more subtle expectations measures are employed as predictors of efficacy. In Table 6, the recodification of electoral expectations indicates the likelihood of one the parties winning over the other two. Thus, differences in the sample of respondents between the two analysis performed for 2010 can be attributed to missing observations in the original measure of expectations (N=11393 Table 6, lower level of measurement and N=10442 Table 7, original measure). The results presented in Table 7 include only respondents who give the likelihood of winning for each of the parties whereas in Table 6 only those who give *a* party the highest chance of winning are included. Therefore, the higher level measure represents a more fine grained view of the role of electoral expectations in 2010. It can be argued that fine grained is not necessarily better as it is demands more from the respondents and, after all, they are probably more interested in which party is most likely to win rather than in the likelihood of winning of each party. However, for the purposes of this paper, the higher level

measurement of expectations has higher reliability since it reflects the answers to the original questions posed to the respondents.

Table 7. *OLS Regression Estimates of Effects on Political Efficacy 2010, Original Measurement*

Political Efficacy t-1	0.601***	*(0.011)*
Male	-0.003	*(0.042)*
Age	-0.008***	*(0.002)*
Education	0.090	*(0.063)*
Lab ID	-0.107	*(0.152)*
Con ID	-0.472**	*(0.212)*
LD ID	0.048	*(0.152)*
Expectations		
Lab Constituency	0.032***	*(0.010)*
Con Constituency	0.025***	*(0.010)*
LD Constituency	0.016*	*(0.009)*
Lab G. Election	0.011	*(0.013)*
Con G. Election	-0.027*	*(0.016)*
LD G. Election	0.057***	*(0.012)*
Expectations Party Supporters		
Lab Constituency	0.008	*(0.015)*
Lab G. Election	0.047**	*(0.023)*
Con Constituency	0.021	*(0.015)*
Con G. Election	0.058**	*(0.025)*
LD Constituency	0.021	*(0.020)*
LD G. Election	0.018	*(0.028)*
Constant	0.548***	*(0.191)*
N	*10442*	
Adj. R-sq	0.389	

Note: unstandardised beta coefficients are reported. ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.1. Standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity in parentheses.

The use of the original measure of political efficacy in the analysis results into some remarkable differences. First, the coefficient estimates for party identification and their associated standard errors change although not their direction. Whereas Labour and

Liberal Democrat identification do not hold a positive effect on feelings of influence in politics any longer, identification with the Conservative Party remains negative and becomes statistically significant (Con ID β=-0.472, p<0.01). Conservatives' feelings of efficacy are discouraged in 2010 even though they could benefit from the new electoral scenario. Thus, these effects corroborate the results obtained with the t-tests results and in line with H3, political efficacy behaves differently between supporters of the winning and losing parties but the translation of these differences into new ones after the election – between both elections in this case- is not guaranteed. Although it is true that political efficacy responds to a sort of winner-loser dynamic, it is also true that it appears to be an enduring attitude embedded in the electorate.

Whilst Table 6 showed a positive effect of national expectations among supporters of other parties for Labour and Liberal Democrats, in the results presented on Table 7, the positive effect only remains for the Liberal Democrat Party (Expectations LD G. Election β=0.057, p<0.01). Most likely, these results are due to the distribution of preferences among the electorate. Supporters of the Labour and Conservative parties, respectively, and those who opted for smaller parties, preferred the Liberal Democrats to win the election than the major rival(s), hence, enhancing their feelings of influence on the process. The opposite pattern emerges for the Conservative Party, maybe seen as the less preferred party among supporters of other parties (Expectations Con G. Election β=-0.027, p<0.1). An additional difference between the use of the two levels of measurement can be observed for the role of electoral expectations at the constituency level. These did not appear to matter when the lower level of expectations was used (Table 6). However, positive effects

emerge with the use of the original measure (Expectations Lab Constituency β=0.032, p<0.01; Expectations Con Constituency β=0.025, p<0.01 and; Expectations LD Constituency β=0.016, p<0.1).

Another significant disparity between Tables 6 and 7 rests on the effect of electoral expectations among party supporters. When the original measure of expectations is used, the likelihood of winning the general election has a positive significant effect between the two biggest parties (Party Supporters, Lab G. Election β=0.047, p<0.05 and; Party Supporters, Con G. Election β=0.058, p<0.05). The coefficients obtained for the Liberal Democrats depict a different picture. The party had lesser chances to form a single party government and many to be crucial in a hung parliament, thus, among its supporters, expectations about the Lib Dems' success were not a necessary condition for political efficacy to be encouraged – they would not win the election but they would succeed and the party supporters were aware of it. In contrast, among Labour and Conservative supporters, expectations were much more important as the final outcome was going to be uncertain, essentially depending, on the Liberal Democrat Party choices. It is worth noting that among Labour supporters, the party's expected success in the general election does not have a positive effect on feelings of influence upon the political process when the lower level of expectations is used (Table 6, Party Supporters, Lab G. Election). These differences could be explained by the fact that during the pre-electoral period, citizens became more aware of the plausibility of a hung parliament but also of the chances of the Conservative Party to defeat Labour, even though, the final decision was likely to be taken by the Liberal

Democratic Party for which expectations did not matter in any case as their future influence in the coalition formation process was almost guaranteed.

Overall, these results support Hypotheses 4 and 5 despite the differences observed in the results between the two levels of measurement for electoral expectations. In this sense, *the higher the degree of electoral uncertainty the greater impact of expectations* (H5). In 2005, national expectations did not have any effect on perceptions of influence on politics – neither among partisans nor non-partisans. Only the likelihood of the Conservatives winning in the constituency had an effect among the party supporters. In contrast, due to the unpredictability of the 2010 outcome, citizens' perceptions of their influence on politics depended highly on their electoral expectations. In addition, *the perceived likelihood of success of a party in the general election has a positive effect on political efficacy among its supporters* (H4) but the party's success at *the constituency* level is not as relevant. Moreover, these electoral expectations do not only matter among party supporters but also among supporters of other parties, probably, due to the distribution of preferences among the electorate. Expectations are important when it comes to the most salient political arena and only, when the supported party has plausible chances of winning the election. The likelihood of the Labour and Conservative parties had a positive effect on perceptions of influence on politics among their supporters (Table 7) even though partisans probably became aware of the 'real' chances of winning of their party –as shown by the lack of effect of electoral expectations among Labour supporters in Table 6– during an electoral campaign where the role of media was key. The same argument would explain why expectations did not matter for the Liberal Democrats, as they were not going to win

the election but they would decide how the government would look like.

6. Conclusion

Elections are the conventional mechanism through which citizens express their demands in representative democracy and, as such, they provide the ideal conditions for citizens to feel that they can have an impact on the political process. However, these demands are not likely to be represented in and satisfied by the system if the actors that canalise them are not elected. But electoral success does not ensure either their satisfaction. Elections do not enhance perceptions of system's responsiveness to individual's actions but neither does support for winning parties.

This paper presented a new approach to the extent that it did study the effect of electoral expectations on political attitudes rather than on voting behaviour. It focuses on electoral outcomes as well as on electoral expectations. One the one hand, it demonstrates the closeness between perceptions of influence on politics and perceived vote utility. On the other, it shows that the act of voting or even winning, are not necessary for citizens to feel efficacious as anticipating the desired outcome rather than winning or participating, creates the 'illusion' of future utility no matter the accuracy of electoral expectations.

The evidence provided in this paper does not support H1. While it is true that that the United Kingdom *general election of 2005 did increase of feelings of political efficacy* among citizens, the 2010 general led to a generalised depression of feelings of efficacy among the whole electorate. Thus, a *democratic coronation* hypothesis does not operate; political efficacy does not increase regardless of support for winning or losing parties. In addition, the t-tests performed showed how differences between the pre-electoral and

campaign periods are not statistically significant among the whole electorate or party supporters. Consequently, *the proximity of elections does **not** have a positive effect on political efficacy among supporters of all parties* (H2) since this hypothesis is derived from H1.

The analyses performed corroborate the existence of *differences in average levels of political efficacy among supporters of the past election winner(s) and loser(s)*, however, *these differences do **not** disappear contingent upon the new electoral outcome* (H3). Political efficacy is, indeed, affected by electoral outcomes (Anderson *et al.* 2005) but these, have a long-term effect rather than an 'electoral effect'. For Conservative Party supporters, political efficacy is significantly lower than for supporters of its rivals in 2005 and 2010. Furthermore, identification with the Conservative Party has a negative effect on feelings of influence on politics in 2010. A winner-loser dynamic exists as electoral outcomes exert an impact but only over time. Political efficacy is an enduring political attitude embedded in the electorate and, as such, is less likely to be affected by electoral expectations or outcomes.

Political efficacy may not depend on specific rewards (like voting for the winning side) but expectations do play a role, possibly even a pivotal role. *The perceived likelihood of success of a party in the general election has a positive effect on political efficacy among its supporters* (H4) but the party's success in *the constituency* is not as relevant. Hypothesis 4 is only partially supported. In 2010 perceptions of influence on politics operated differently among supporters of the three main parties and for Labour and Conservative supporters they did so depending on expectations about their electoral success but also, contingent upon the past election outcomes. Among Liberal Democrat supporters, perceptions of the

likelihood of the party winning the election did not appear to affect political efficacy as the party was not likely to win the election but had many chances to be decisive in the 2010 government formation process. Consequently, expectations of winning the general election did not encourage perceptions of influence on politics among Liberal Democrat supporters because, regardless of who won the contest, the party supporters' demands were likely to be satisfied. Furthermore, in 2005, national expectations did not exert an impact on perceptions of influence on politics –neither among partisans nor non-partisans– supporting Hypothesis 5, *the higher the degree of electoral uncertainty the greater impact of expectations*. Citizens' feelings of political efficacy in 2010 depended highly on their expectations due to the unprecedented levels of uncertainty that characterised the electoral contest.

Although early work treats efficacy as a unidimensional construct, Lane's (1959: 149) argument that efficacy "combines the image of the self and the images of democratic government...contain[ing] the tacit implication that the image of the self as effective is intimately related to the image of democratic government as responsive to the people" has been almost unanimously accepted by scholars. However, this chapter did not account for the extensive literature attempts to operationalise the internal and external latent dimensions of political efficacy since it uses a unique indicator. Hence, even though the formulation of the British Election Study (BES) survey question taps, theoretically, both dimensions, the current paper fails to assess whether it does so empirically. Given the wording of the indicator and the – electoral – context under which the question is asked, it is unknown whether the effect of electoral expectations on political efficacy would hold if a more complex (and comprehensive) indicator had been used. Since respondents are asked

about their influence on politics before the election, their reported efficacy is more likely to be strongly correlated with the 'efficacy of their vote'. In addition, even though respondents' perceived vote utility is, indeed, one of the aspects of the efficacy, it is also true that political efficacy is a much broader concept. For instance, one should expect – or/and hope for – subjective competence to participate in politics (internal efficacy) to be less affected by electoral expectations or outcomes as individuals' political abilities and skills are more likely to be stable over time. Consequently, the findings obtained for the United Kingdom 2005 and 2010 election cannot be generalised to other nations.

Furthermore, the UK case presents some singularities that make the extrapolation of findings difficult but raises, at the same time, relevant questions for the study of the impact of electoral outcomes and expectations across nations. The results obtained for 2010 illustrate how feelings of efficacy experience a significant depression – even for the *winning* party supporters. These findings are not so astounding to the extent that they are consistent with the work by Karp and Banducci (2008) whose results show that citizens are less likely to think that their vote 'makes a difference' – indicator for external political efficacy – where coalitions take place. In addition, the negative effect of coalition governments on efficacy is bigger when the number of parties represented in the government increases.

From the evidence presented in this paper it cannot be logically deduced that elections or expectations demobilise or mobilise political efficacy since the results differ significantly between both electoral contests. The results suggest that political efficacy can be permeable to political conditions, such as elections, but it also demonstrates that

elections may not be necessary to shape certain political attitudes. Perceptions of influence on politics do not appear to be affected only by electoral outcomes but by electoral expectations, especially, under contexts of high uncertainty. It would be worthwhile to test whether external and internal political efficacy respond differently to these conditions. If perceptions of system responsiveness are contingent upon specific expectations or rewards (outcomes), they may translate into a lack of involvement in politics that may erode a systems' legitimacy. But, if citizens' subjective competence to understand and participate in politics depends on such contingencies, the lack of engagement is almost guaranteed. Representative democracy may face serious trouble.

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[1] For instance see: Almond and Verba 1963; Balch 1974; Barnes 1966; Barnes and Kaase 1979; Campbell et al. 1964; Craig and Magiotto 1982; Craig et al. 1990; Easton and Dennis 1967; Gamson 1968; Niemi et al. 1991; Rosentstone and Hansen 1993; Smetko and Valkenburg 1998; Siegelman and Feldman, 1983.

[2] Almond and Verba 1963; Bowler and Donovan 2002; Finkel 1985 and 1987; Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978; Smith and Tolbert 2004; Pateman 1970.

[3] Likewise, campaign activity proves to exert a positive impact on feelings of external efficacy but the empirical evidence is less straightforward with regard to internal efficacy which is positively affected by campaign participation in West Germany (Finkel 1987) while it is not in the United States (Finkel 1985).

[4] Acock and Clarke attribute the lack of impact of candidate preferences on political efficacy among non-voters in congressional elections to the lack of information about electoral outcomes while the opposite applies to presidential contests (1989: 559 – 560) . Therefore, knowledge about the outcome is implicit in the pure outcomes hypothesis.

[5] Up to date, no general agreement has been reached about whether and to what extent internet as a survey mode matters in modelling political behaviour. Critics of internet surveys stress non – probability sampling procedures as one of its main weaknesses. However, there is no reason to believe that the parameter estimates and the explanatory power of models based on internet survey data would be significantly different than those obtained through different data gathering processes after proper weights are applied (for instance see Sanders et al. 2007). In this study, corresponding socio-demographic weights have been applied to avoid sampling biases.

[6] Italics mine. The question used in this paper refers to perceptions of actual influence on the system (does have) rather than hypothetical (can have).

[7] All the analysis presented in this paper will focus on *supporters* of the three main parties: Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats.

[8] For the constituency, parties listed as follows: Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, Green Party, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Britih National Party (BNP), Other. For the general election: Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Other.

[9] In this paper, results obtained through the above mentioned measures of 'raw' expectations are presented. The analyses have also been performed using a version of relative expectations, the translation of expectations for each party into probabilities; results do not change (not included here).

[10.] For a further discussion of the debate on the measurement of party identification in the British context see Bartle and Belluci (2009).

[11.] In a similar manner, Karp and Banducci (2008) advance a negative relationship between number of parties in government and external political efficacy.

[12.] The analysis for 2010 where the full range of expectations is used is presented in table 7.

[13] Although the test for campaign effects poses relevant theoretical questions, these go beyond the scope of the present paper so that model parsimony is not sacrificed.

Part II:

Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?

Carla Xena

Abstract

The increasing availability of cross-national survey data in recent decades has been accompanied by a rising concern about the cross-national comparability of survey indicators. One response to this concern has been the development and spread of methodological tools that allow tests to be conducted for the accuracy of specific measurement models. Yet, when concepts are deeply rooted in a discipline, it is sometimes assumed that the existing measures represent the theoretical concepts they are aimed to tap. This assumption disregards that cross-national differences over the meaning of concepts may undermine the external validity of any theory under examination. This paper uses Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA) to assess the extent to which the concept of political efficacy has a homogeneous meaning across Europe. Based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS 2002), the results indicate that the concept is *not* equivalent across the continent. This in turn implies that valid comparisons cannot easily be made across groups. Rather, measurement invariance only exists among respondents from countries with similar cultural, political or historical backgrounds. The spread of theoretical constructs does not guarantee the spread of their validity. If measurement models matter, so does the political context.

1. Introduction

Over the years, studies on political efficacy have placed emphasis not only on the delimitations among its dimensions but also, on the construction of a valid and reliable measure of the concept. An important paradox underlies this predominant emphasis. Although the concept of political efficacy has travelled far beyond the boundaries of the country where it arose, the United States of America (USA), there has not been a commensurate concern about the cross-cultural equivalence of its measurement. Since the Index of Political Efficacy was developed and included in the American National Election Study, most research on the measurement of the concept focused on the reliability and validity of the construct essentially within the American context, thus not really enabling the generalisation of its findings to different political contexts.

The implicit assumption that the measurement, hence the meaning of political efficacy, is equivalent across different cultural contexts results into three main concerns that motivate the present paper: (1) a lack of conclusive evidence supporting the construct's external validity; (2) although both national and cross-national surveys have included items that deviate somewhat from the originals, quite often no theoretical justification has been provided for those variations; and (3) as a consequence of the previous consideration, the export of the concept to different political and cultural contexts, such as Europe, has resulted in alterations in the original survey items – but the question of whether these redefined indicators and their relationships with the latent constructs is equivalent *within* the new heterogeneous context(s), remains unanswered.

This paper examines whether and to what extent political efficacy has a homogeneous meaning across Europe. Using data from the European Social Survey

(2002), the results indicate that the battery of questions used to measure citizens' sense of political powerlessness does not have an unequivocal meaning across European nations.

2. Political Efficacy and Democratic Functioning

In recent years, a growing number of researchers in the field of political behaviour have devoted effort to understanding the increasing levels of political alienation, apathy or disengagement among Western industrialized countries. These concerns are well grounded. A lack of political engagement may generate reticence to participate in the democratic process, resulting in a general apathy towards politics. Nevertheless, an increase in the number of citizens critical of democracy may also foster the transformation and evolution of democratic institutions and the relationship between citizens and their representatives (Dalton, 1988). In other words, lack of engagement may encourage citizens to search for new ways to express their political opinions and frustration with the functioning of democratic institutions, leading to their change or decay (Torcal and Montero, 2006).

In the light of political disengagement and its impact on democratic functioning, citizens' feelings of political efficacy play a crucial role. Subjective political efficacy is defined 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, Gurin and Miller 1954, 187). Lane (1959) noted two ideas underlying the concept of subjective political efficacy: "the conviction that the polity is democratic and [that] government officials are responsive to the people" (Abramson 1972, 1245). This conceptual distinction was supported by Balch's findings (1974) concluding that political efficacy has two empirical dimensions. One refers to citizens' subjective

competence or 'internal' efficacy while the other refers to system responsiveness or 'external' efficacy. This approach is nowadays broadly accepted, regarding internal efficacy as "citizens' feelings of personal competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig, Niemi and Silver, 1990:290); and external, as "citizens' perceptions of the responsiveness of political bodies and actors to citizens' demands" (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Miller, Miller and Schneider, 1980).

The conceptual delimitation between internal and external efficacy becomes particularly relevant due to the distinct nature of the challenges it poses to representative democracy. A lack of external political efficacy may result into an erosion of the conventional mechanism through which citizens express their demands to the political system – voting. However, while low levels of external efficacy and turnout represent, undeniably, a major threat to the functioning of democratic regimes, they will not necessarily result into negative consequences for contemporary political systems. Indeed, low levels of *external* political efficacy may lead to a change in the nature of the relationship between citizens and their representatives – though citizens may still become critical democrats, instead of apathetic, searching for new ways of participation to express their demands. In this sense, certain levels of political efficacy and political cynicism are thought to be key elements for political mobilisation (Gamson, 1968). Yet, a lack of subjective political competence – *internal* efficacy - appears to be more challenging for democratic politics. If citizens are not able to understand and interpret the political universe around them, they cannot be critical of the system and they will lack incentives to take part of it. They will not vote nor search for new ways to participate, thus, becoming apathetic citizens. As Justel states (1992: 92) "as long as the number of citizens with cultural deprivation decreases, the number of democrats will

increase as well as that of critical democrats (…) in consequence, to encourage and to ensure citizens' political competence is the best way to preserve democracy and to avoid its denaturalization".

3. The Underlying Structure of Political Efficacy

The concept of political efficacy was initially conceived as a unidimensional phenomenon measured through a battery of four agree/disagree questions developed by the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre (SRC): (1) People like me don't have any say about what the government does; (2) Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on; (3) Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things; and, (4) I don't think public officials care much what people like me think. These items were the basis for the so called "Index of Political Efficacy", designed to measure sense of political powerlessness.

Despite the posterior general acceptance of the bidimensional approach to political efficacy, researchers placed a remarkable emphasis on the conceptual delimitation of internal and external political efficacy respectively, as well as on the construction of a valid and reliable measure of the concept[1]. From the time that the "Index of Political Efficacy" was designed, most data available referred specifically to the USA where, as a result, most research on the measurement of political efficacy focused its attention, not enabling the generalisation of findings to other political contexts. However, over the years, several cross-national surveys have incorporated the SRC political efficacy items or some variations of them to their questionnaires without either testing for the accuracy of their measurement within the *new* political contexts or providing a theoretical justification for any question-wording deviations from the

originals. Although the spread of the concept has responded to a wide general agreement on its relevance for political participation and democratic functioning, only a few scholars have used comparative data to study its structure, causes or consequences across democracies.

Recent studies suggest that political institutions do play a role in explaining cross-national variations on political efficacy. Some formal institutional settings, such as the type of electoral system, the number of parties represented in the Parliament or electoral supply, prove to have an impact on certain *external* efficacy indicators (for instance see Karp and Banducci, 2008; Kittilson and Anderson, 2009). Still, the relationship between political institutions and *internal* efficacy has not been systematically tested to date. Furthermore, institutions may matter not only due to their single effect on specific items but also, they could affect the associations among indicators of the concept and among those indicators and the concepts, or latent constructs, they are aimed to tap. In this vein, the work by Muller (1970) seems to indicate that cross-national differences cannot be disregarded when it comes to explaining the relationships among dimensions of the concept. Muller's study starts from Barnes' definition of political competence, as an individual attribute composed of "political skills plus the sense of efficacy necessary for effective political action" (Barnes 1966, 60). Muller's findings suggest that even though a single structure holds for the nations analysed, the relationships among the dimensions of the construct vary according to context. In particular, Muller finds that there is a lack of association between citizens' sense of political competence and their ability to influence government in Italy and Mexico, while a positive association appears in the United States, United Kingdom and West Germany. The reason behind these patterns may rest,

as he suggests, on the political history of Italy and Mexico characterised by the phenomenon called *clientelismo*: "This type of system, to the extent that it is perceived as operative, would not encourage members to associate their beliefs in the responsiveness of government to the members in general with their perception of their own ability to influence political decisions" (Muller, 1970: 803).

If internal and external efficacy are two dimensions of the same construct, instead of two distinct concepts, an association between the two should be expected. On the one hand, internal efficacy could exert an impact on external efficacy, as a minimum sense of political competence is a prerequisite to recognise how the political system works, thus, to perceive system responsiveness. On the other hand, feelings of external efficacy may also affect perceptions of personal abilities to participate in politics, as the political system's responsiveness can reinforce or hinder citizens' actual political abilities and skills - by making politics more close or remote to them - and by extension, the way these are perceived. In addition, the relationship between "citizens' feelings of personal competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig, Niemi and Silver, 1990, 290) and "citizens' perceptions of the responsiveness of political bodies and actors to citizens' demands" (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Miller, Miller and Schneider, 1980) could be also mediated by informal institutional settings such as clientelism or corruption. Whether the relationship between internal and external efficacy is affected by political institutions, may then be formal, informal or both, is of paramount relevance as it would entail a redefinition of the concept, accounting for cross-cultural differences, to guarantee its external validity. At the same time, assessing the effect of cross-national features on political efficacy requires the prior

disentanglement of the nature of the concept in order to enable valid comparisons as the meaning of its indicators may vary according to context.

The above framework provides the theoretical basis to challenge the assumption that political efficacy has a single structure across nations, raising some interrelated questions: (1) does a single structure hold across all or most European nations? ; (2) is the meaning of the concept equivalent across cultures? ; (3) does the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of the concept vary according to political context? Hence, the aim of this paper is to assess to what extent the measurement of political efficacy is equivalent across Europe. "After all, why assume measurement invariance *when invariance can be tested?*"[2] (Medina, Smith and Long, 2009, 339).

4. Measurement Invariance

In cross-cultural research, constructs have to be equivalent across nations to enable valid comparisons of results. To achieve that validity, two conditions must be satisfied (Kankaraš and Moors, 2010). First, the interpretation or meaning of constructs has to be similar across the contexts under examination – interpretative equivalence must hold. Once this precondition is satisfied, equivalent measurement procedures – procedural equivalence – have to be defined. Interpretative and procedural equivalence in cross-national research may be undermined, respectively, by two main sorts of biases (Kankaraš and Moors, 2010; Van de Vijver and Leung, 1997; Van de Vijver, 1998). On the one hand, *construct bias* leads to systematic differences in the interpretation or meaning of constructs across cultures. On the other, *method bias* may result from differences in the process of measurement such as sample, instrument or administration bias.

To state that constructs must be equivalent across cultural contexts is not to say that differences cannot be observed among groups, but that these have to be the result of what the items are intended to measure. Measurement invariance refers to whether or not, under different conditions of observing and studying a phenomenon, identical measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute (Horn and McArdle, 1992: 17). In this paper Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA, Jöreskog, 1971) will be used to assess measurement invariance, an approach that enables the examination of measurement form and parameters by group. As a theory-testing form of measurement modelling, it starts by testing the fit of the predefined model for one context and proceeds using the results of the CFA to assess whether factor invariance holds across the other groups. MGCFA compares the fit of a less restrictive model, in which measurement parameters are free to vary across groups, to a more restrictive one where the parameters are fixed to be equal across groups. If the fit of the more restrictive model is significantly better than that of the unrestricted (or less restricted), measurement invariance will be supported (Medina, Smith and Long, 2009: 338).

Thus, the test for measurement invariance involves a set of consecutive and increasingly restrictive steps that entail three levels of invariance depending on the parameters constrained. The initial step implies the definition of a well-fitting multigroup baseline model. It requires the same number of factors and the same items loading on each factor across groups. The goodness of fit of this model enables the assessment of *configural invariance*, where a similar factor structure holds across groups. The configural model does not guarantee that this structure is equivalent across groups, as it does not test for the equivalence of factors and their corresponding indicators. Nevertheless, it does play a key role since (1) it enables the analyst to

perform equivalence tests simultaneously and (2) it provides the fit value against which the subsequent models will be compared to (Byrne 2008, 873). *Metric* (or measurement) *invariance* represents one step further in restricting the model as not only the overall structure but also the factor loadings are constrained to be equal across groups. For the first group (arbitrarily decided), factor loadings are freely estimated whereas for the rest of groups the loadings are constrained to be equal to those of the first group. Metric invariance represents a necessary condition for equivalence of meaning of constructs as it implies intergroup equality of the slope parameters measuring the relationship between latent and observed variables. Yet, latent variable scores can still be biased – hence, not fully comparable – as the origin of the scale among groups may differ. The most restrictive level of measurement invariance, *scalar invariance*, requires not only the equality of loadings but also intercepts across groups. Only in this case, systematic differences among scores, such as group means, can be attributed to differences in the common factors (Kankaraš and Moors, 2010).

Nevertheless, in applying CFA (and MGCFA) to ordinal data, like Likert type scales, it is not assumed that the observed items are directly influenced by the latent factor, but indirectly through a continuous latent response variable. Item-specific threshold parameters that split the continuous normally distributed latent response variable into different categories have to be estimated. Factor loadings and intercepts are parameters of the observed items in the continuous case but they are parameters of the latent factors in the ordinal case. Thus, in continuous CFA the slopes of the items' response curves are determined just by the factor loadings whereas these are determined also by the intercepts and the thresholds in the ordinal case. The assessment of equivalence of meaning when MGCFA is applied to ordinal data requires

constraining factor loadings, thresholds, and intercepts at the same time (Davidov et al. 2011, 159-161).

Hence, MGCFA becomes a useful instrument to assess whether survey constructs (and items) are equivalent across groups, namely, European nations for the purposes of the present study. The use of this statistical tool will allow assessing not only whether the same (expected bidimensional) factor structure holds across countries, but also whether the slopes and intercepts of the factors are invariant across groups. In addition, since the battery of questions designed to measure political efficacy consists of a set of ordinal items – see Section 5.1 for variable description – only by simultaneously testing for the equivalence of item thresholds the comparability of latent scores across countries can be guaranteed. In sum, only if the latter condition is also satisfied political efficacy would be equivalent across Europe and the measurement instrument used by the ESS valid cross-nationally, leaving room to further cross-cultural research where the survey questions and factor scores can be confidently used.

5. Analysis

5.1 Data

This paper uses data from the first round of the European Social Survey (ESS 2002), including a battery of five questions for political efficacy that enable tests to be conducted for the nature of the relationships between the indicators and for battery's dimensionality across Europe[3]. The analyses include those countries where the full battery of questions was asked[4]. The first three questions below aim to tap feelings of internal efficacy and the two remaining external. The battery deviates from the SRC original. The first item is based on questions asked by Almond and Verba, whereas the

rest were redesigned from questions used in surveys such as the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Responses are recorded on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 5. Respondents are asked to answer:

(1) "Do you think that you could take an active role in a group that is focused on political issues?" 1 Definitely not – 5 Definitely (Variable: 'polactiv')

(2) "How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues?"
1 Very difficult – 5 Very easy (Variable: 'poldcs')

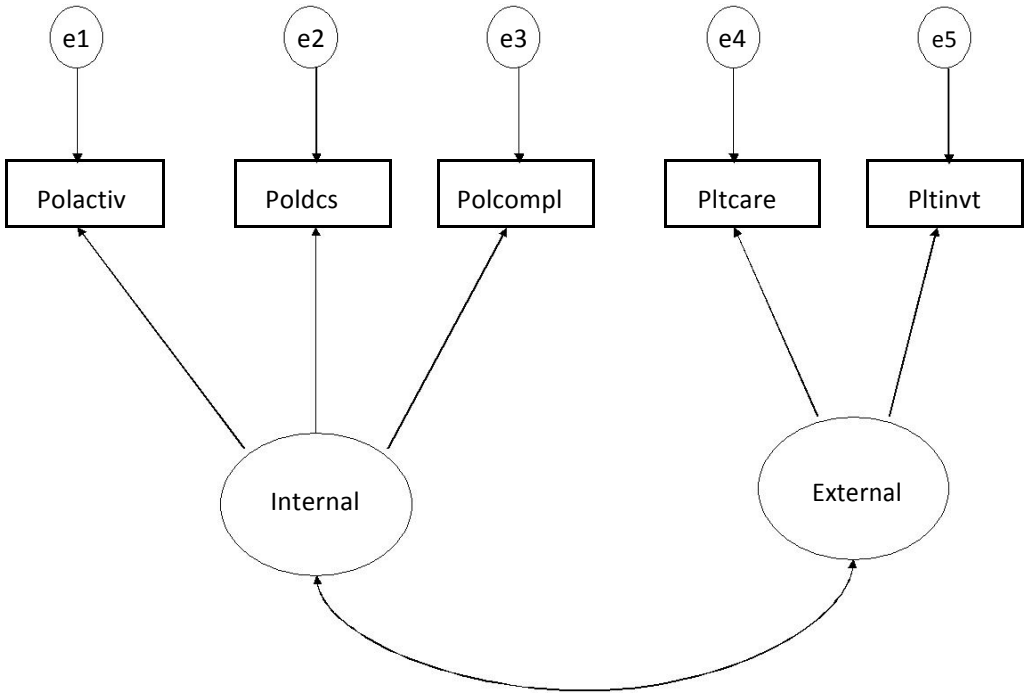
(3) How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on?" 1 Never – 5 Frequently (Variable: 'polcompl')

(4) "Do you think that politicians care what people like you think?"
1 Never – 5 Frequently (Variable: 'pltcare')

(5) "Would you say that politicians are more interested in getting people's votes than in their opinions?" 1 Never – 5 Frequently (Variable: 'pltinvt')

Figure 1 illustrates the expected relationship between the indicators and latent constructs.

Figure 1. *A general model for Political Efficacy*



5.2 Single – Country CFA

Prior to the measurement invariance tests, it is important to perform single country CFA (Byrne 2001, 175-176), to assess whether the same number of dimensions is found across European nations. The program Mplus 7.11 has been used in all the analyses reported in this paper (Muthén and Muthén, 1998 – 2011). Preliminary data analysis consisted of single one–dimensional CFA models but the goodness of fit measures used to assess how well the model fits the observed data led to its rejection for all countries. In this paper, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), χ^2 value and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) will be reported. The χ^2 test of model fit will not be used to assess the actual overall fit of the model, as it is a measure widely recognised for its high sensitivity to sample size (Jöreskog, 1969), but it will be reported since the RMSEA and

CFI formulae use its value[5]. The RMSEA penalises the lack of parsimony, being sensitive to the number of parameters estimated and reasonably insensitive to sample size (Brown, 2006: 83 – 84). The CFI tests for the fit of a specified solution with respect to a more restricted (nested) model where the covariances among the indicators are fixed to zero or no relationship between the variables is assumed. Although there is no general agreement on the cutoff values to assess the goodness of fit of the models, Hu and Bentler (1999) and Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2004) suggest a CFI > 0.90 - 0.95 and RMSEA < 0.05 - 0.08 to assess significance, criteria that will be used in the forthcoming analysis. The closer the CFI to 1 and the closer the RMSEA to 0, respectively, the better model fit. To set the metric for a factor, the factor loading of one of the indicators will be fixed to one (reference indicator). The model parameters have been estimated using robust Weighted Least Squares (WLSMV, Muthén, du Toit and Spisic, 1997). This procedure uses the diagonal of the weight matrix in the estimation and the full weight matrix to compute standard errors and Chi-square. Table 1 shows the results obtained when CFA is performed for each of the countries, separately, and only one latent variable (dimension) is specified in the model.

Table 1. *Goodness of fit measures using single – country CFA (one dimension)*

COUNTRY	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**X^2**
Spain	0,85	0,30	763,92
Ireland	0,84	0,25	655,37
Greece	0,84	0,34	1448,56
Italy	0,83	0,29	497,64
Austria	0,82	0,26	781,78
Czech Republic	0,81	0,32	678,09
Portugal	0,80	0,32	763,47
Norway	0,79	0,24	571,45
Hungary	0,79	0,26	559,81
Belgium	0,79	0,23	513,07
Denmark	0,76	0,33	815,04
Sweden	0,75	0,27	723,80
Germany	0,75	0,31	1440,63
Netherlands	0,75	0,31	1102,43
Luxembourg	0,75	0,24	445,38
Israel	0,74	0,24	726,26
Slovenia	0,73	0,27	559,61
Poland	0,73	0,29	871,26
Great Britain	0,72	0,28	790,11
Switzerland	0,72	0,27	768,92
Finland	0,28	0,73	800,38

As these results show, a one-solution factor structure does not provide a good fit to the data. None of the countries presents an acceptable model fit according to the cutoff values mentioned above since CFI < 0.90 and RMSEA > 0.08 for each of the

countries. Therefore, in line with previous literature on political efficacy, a two-solution confirmatory factor analysis has been performed for each of the countries as depicted in Figure 1. Table 2 presents a summary of the model results by country, standardised factor loadings and correlation coefficients between the two latent variables.

Table 2. *Single country CFA two dimensions, standardised results (standard errors in parentheses, for all values reported p <0.01)*

	INTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY			EXTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY		
COUNTRY	**Polactiv**	**Poldcs**	**Polcompl**	**Pltcare**	**Plinvt**	***r***
Austria	0.590 *(0.023)*	0.633 *(0.022)*	0.665 *(0.023)*	0.916 *(0.032)*	0.746 *(0.027)*	0.425 *(0.026)*
Belgium	0.698 *(0.026)*	0.599 *(0.024)*	0.571 *(0.023)*	0.930 *(0.046)*	0.597 *(0.032)*	0.412 *(0.033)*
Switzerland	0.642 *(0.021)*	0.674 *(0.021)*	0.649 *(0.022)*	0.937 *(0.048)*	0.594 *(0.034)*	0.360 *(0.029)*
Czech Rep.	0.631 *(0.026)*	0.762 *(0.025)*	0.707 *(0.025)*	0.952 *(0.044)*	0.708 *(0.034)*	0.397 *(0.031)*
Germany	0.481 *(0.019)*	0.738 *(0.020)*	0.656 *(0.019)*	0.943 *(0.042)*	0.701 *(0.033)*	0.296 *(0.024)*
Denmark	0.699 *(0.022)*	0.678 *(0.230)*	0.691 *(0.022)*	0.944 *(0.044)*	0.711 *(0.035)*	0.362 *(0.030)*
Spain	0.066 *(0.023)*	0.780 *(0.021)*	0.698 *(0.021)*	0.934 *(0.032)*	0.773 *(0.027)*	0.452 *(0.028)*
Finland	0.588 *(0.025)*	0.631 *(0.024)*	0.605 *(0.025)*	0.882 *(0.035)*	0.699 *(0.030)*	0.403 *(0.028)*
Great Britain	0.600 *(0.027)*	0.530 *(0.024)*	0.672 *(0.028)*	0.892 *(0.052)*	0.704 *(0.042)*	0.282 *(0.031)*
Greece	0.811 *(0.013)*	0.879 *(0.013)*	0.574 *(0.015)*	0.938 *(0.036)*	0.728 *(0.030)*	0.347 *(0.024)*
Hungary	0.471 *(0.031)*	0.741 *(0.030)*	0.655 *(0.027)*	0.945 *(0.045)*	0.659 *(0.035)*	0.387 *(0.032)*
Ireland	0.629 *(0.027)*	0.575 *(0.024)*	0.609 *(0.025)*	0.844 *(0.032)*	0.804 *(0.030)*	0.401 *(0.028)*
Israel	0.511 *(0.025)*	0.704 *(0.027)*	0.557 *(0.025)*	0.897 *(0.054)*	0.652 *(0.041)*	0.305 *(0.031)*
Italy	0.699 *(0.029)*	0.798 *(0.026)*	0.528 *(0.027)*	1.009 *(0.041)*	0.725 *(0.032)*	0.444 *(0.034)*
Luxembourg	0.594 *(0.034)*	0.620 *(0.032)*	0.613 *(0.031)*	0.816 *(0.062)*	0.702 *(0.054)*	0.323 *(0.038)*

	INTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY			EXTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY		
COUNTRY	**Polactiv**	**Poldcs**	**Polcompl**	**Pltcare**	**Plinvt**	***r***
Norway	0.780 *(0.030)*	0.413 *(0.024)*	0.561 *(0.025)*	0.960 *(0.039)*	0.618 *(0.029)*	0.407 *(0.030)*
Poland	0.620 *(0.021)*	0.697 *(0.021)*	0.701 *(0.021)*	0.891 *(0.046)*	0.692 *(0.038)*	0.336 *(0.029)*
Portugal	0.688 *(0.023)*	0.772 *(0.023)*	0.694 *(0.022)*	0.909 *(0.035)*	0.800 *(0.033)*	0.380 *(0.031)*
Sweden	0.615 *(0.025)*	0.601 *(0.024)*	0.616 *(0.023)*	0.900 *(0.038)*	0.672 *(0.030)*	0.403 *(0.029)*
Slovenia	0.607 *(0.026)*	0.755 *(0.023)*	0.649 *(0.022)*	0.792 *(0.054)*	0.663 *(0.047)*	0.339 *(0.035)*

These results allow for a tentative assessment of the similarities and differences of the two-dimensional solution model for political efficacy across Europe. First, the items designed to measure external political efficacy load higher on the latent construct than its counterparts on internal efficacy. Thus, implying that the ESS external efficacy items seem to tap better what they aim to measure. In addition, the indicators 'pltcare' and 'plinvt' behave similarly for all the countries, being closer to 1 for the former than for the latter which suggests that system responsiveness or external efficacy has more to do with respondents' perceptions of politicians caring about what they think rather than with respondents' views on politicians interested in gaining votes.

For internal political efficacy, differences between items' loadings on the latent construct do not appear to be so marked across countries. None of the three items loads higher on internal efficacy for all or the majority of countries. Contrarily, the strength of the loadings seems to be not only similar across countries – as for external efficacy – but also similar across items. However, differences are to be noted for some countries. In Germany and Hungary, the complexity of politics and government holds a week association with internal efficacy (β Polactiv < 0.5 in both cases). In contrast, the relationship between 'polactiv' and 'poldcs' and the latent construct is stronger for Greece than for any other country (factor loadings above 0.8). It is also worth noting, that Norway differs from the Southern country (and less markedly but also from the rest of countries) to the extent that perceptions of how difficult it is to make one's mind up about political issues is weakly associated with internal political efficacy (β Poldcs < 0.5). Last but not least, the correlations between the latent dimensions of the concept are essentially weak, with Spain and Italy presenting the highest values (r = 0.45 and r = 0.44, respectively).

Table 3 presents the goodness of fit indices obtained associated with Table 2, when the internal and external dimensions of political efficacy are specified in the model. The CFI reveals a good model fit for all nations (Finland is the only case where CFI < .95 but still above .90). In contrast, the RMSEA goodness of fit criterion (RMSEA < .08) can only be accepted for half of the countries under examination: Spain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland and Slovenia[6]. Since discrepancies between the CFI and RMSEA criteria exist for these countries, results are inconclusive. Despite the high CFI values obtained, the model goodness of fit is not guaranteed.

Table 3. *Goodness of fit measures using single – country CFA (two dimensions)*

COUNTRY	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	$\mathbf{X^2}$
Spain	0,99	0,06	32,27
Greece	0,99	0,07	59,99
Hungary	0,99	0,06	24,52
Ireland	0,99	0,08	52,78
Italy	0,99	0,05	15,43
Norway	0,99	0,07	42,01
Poland	0,99	0,08	51,38
Slovenia	0,99	0,02	7,78
Austria	0,98	0,09	73,54
Belgium	0,98	0,08	53,79
Czech Republic	0,98	0,10	61,19
Germany	0,98	0,10	120,12
Denmark	0,98	0,10	68,27
Great Britain	0,98	0,08	58,95

- Table 3 continued –

COUNTRY	CFI	RMSEA	X^2
Israel	0,98	0,07	47,43
Luxembourg	0,98	0,06	26,26
Netherlands	0,98	0,09	84,91
Portugal	0,98	0,10	70,17
Switzerland	0,97	0,09	74,46
Sweden	0,95	0,14	149,06
Finland	0,92	0,17	239,64

In sum, the preliminary results presented in this section suggest that political efficacy is not a unidimensional concept. An overview at the items' factor loadings and correlations between internal and external efficacy when a two-factor solution model is applied to each country, shows how the ESS (2002) indicators for external political efficacy behave similarly across countries but the results are less clear-cut when it comes to internal efficacy. Nevertheless, only MGCFA allows for a full comparison of loadings across countries as the model fit is calculated for a unique pooled sample. In addition, a two-factor model fits much better the data than a solution where a unique factor is specified. However, the goodness of fit indices presented for the bidimensional hypothesis do not lead to unequivocal conclusions, as shown by the differences between the CFI and RMSEA estimates. Still, additional analyses performed suggest that the bidimensional model as presented above is the best fitting one (results not included here, please refer to endnote 4 for further details). Thus, it will be used as a baseline for the MGCFA as it is theoretically and empirically justifiable.

5.3 Cross-national Invariance

In order to assess whether the meaning of political efficacy is equivalent across Europe, the analyses start by testing for the less restrictive level of invariance (configural) and the baseline model is progressively constrained. Table 4 reports the goodness of fit measures by model type. Mplus allows testing for the equality of threshold parameters but fixes, for identification purposes, all the intercepts to zero. The program permits testing of whether differences in the intercepts across groups are due to differences in all or just some of the thresholds across groups (Davidov et al., 2011:159-161). Since the model to be estimated is congeneric – each measure of political efficacy is associated with only one latent construct (dimension) – one threshold for each of the indicators and a second threshold for the reference indicator of each latent variable are set to equal across countries (see Davidov et al., 2011:162). In addition, the parameters for *all* items do not need to be equivalent to permit a valid comparison of results (Byrne, Shavelson, and Muthén 1989; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). In most cases, complete invariance is unlikely to be found. Partial metric and scalar invariance require the equivalence of *at least* two items per construct still enabling valid cross-group comparisons (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998; Vandenberg and Lance, 2000).

Therefore, in order to assess whether the meaning of the political efficacy is equivalent across Europe, the factor structure has to be the same – same number of factors and same items loading on the same factors across groups - and, at least, two of the factor loadings but also two intercepts and two thresholds (since ordinal data is used) have to be constrained to be equal across groups. Only if these conditions are satisfied, partial scalar invariance can be accepted implying the equivalence of the meaning of political efficacy cross-nationally, hence, allowing valid comparisons across

group scores. Table 4 shows the MGCFA results of five models constraining configural, metric and scalar invariance across the 21 European countries. Although the model fits the data better the lesser the number of constraints applied, differences in the goodness of fit measures by model type are not especially remarkable.

Table 4. *MGCFA goodness of fit measures constraining configural, metric and scalar invariance across twenty-one countries*

MODEL TYPE	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2	*df*
1. Configural	0.982	0.091	1438.616	84
2. Partial Metric	0.975	0.088	2003.963	124
3. Metric	0.972	0.086	2217.119	144
4. Partial Scalar	0.880	0.116	9401.921	344
5. Scalar	0.842	0.123	12317.65	404

Three conclusions can be drawn from Table 4 presented above. First, and most important, the MGCFA results indicate that the measure of political efficacy used by the ESS (2002) is not invariant across Europe, as partial scalar invariance, required in the ordinal case to guarantee measurement equivalence, is not supported (CFI = 0.880 and RMSEA = 0.116). Second, it is worth noting the differences between the RMSEA and CFI values. The CFI values support configural, partial metric and metric invariance (CFI > 0.95). Although none of these would allow for valid comparisons across group scores, they would suggest that a certain degree of equivalence exists among countries. However, the RMSEA, which penalises for the lack of model parsimony, does not support any degree of equivalence across groups (RMSEA > 0.08 for all models). In sum, the lack of consistency between the indices reinforces the idea that the measurement is not invariant. Third, in comparison to the two-dimension single country CFA results

(Table 3), these findings are somewhat contradictory. Since the CFI indicated a good model fit for the most European nations, some degree of invariance was expected, at least configural. However, these results are not inconsistent with those of Table 3 to the extent that only half of the countries complied with the RMSEA criterion as well.

Nevertheless, measurement invariance may not hold for all but still apply to some of the countries under examination. To assess whether this is the case, separate MGCFA analyses are conducted for countries with similar cultural or political contexts or on the basis of their geographical proximity. If the challenge to the assumption that political efficacy is an equivalent construct across European nations rests on the idea that distinct cultural contexts may entail different interpretations of the concept, equivalence of meaning should be also expected where a shared background exists. Therefore, the following countries have been grouped together on the basis of their commonalities: (1) Benelux: Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg; (2) Great Britain and Ireland; (3) Northern Europe: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden; (4) Southern Europe: Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal. Groups 1 to 3 have been chosen on the basis of their geographical proximity, political history and shared language. Although a common language does not exist in the North of Europe, Denmark, Norway and Sweden belong to the same historical and cultural-linguistic region (Scandinavia). The fourth group has been established on the basis of prior literature discussing whether a distinct political culture exists among these Southern democracies. However, the findings are still inconclusive (for instance see Martin, 2004; Torcal and Magalhães, 2009). Table 5 presents the results obtained for each of the groups[7].

The subsequent MGCFA conducted present a different scenario than the one obtained with the inclusion of twenty-one European nations. The analyses presented

below indicate that the concept of political efficacy is to some extent equivalent among similar contexts. In Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg the model demonstrates to preserve its goodness of fit as parameters are progressively constrained. Not only factor structures but also factor loadings and item thresholds appear to be equal across groups (CFI = 0.955 and RMSEA = 0.068 for scalar invariance).

Table 5. *MGCFA goodness of fit measures constraining configural, metric and scalar invariance across groups*

GROUP	**MODEL TYPE**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**	**X^2**	***df***
Benelux	1. Configural	0.983	0.079	157.343	12
	2. Partial Metric	0.982	0.071	170.885	16
	3. Metric	0.982	0.067	175.919	18
	4. Partial Scalar	0.963	0.066	359.677	38
	5. Scalar	0.955	0.068	433.853	44
Great Britain and Ireland	1. Configural	0.985	0.080	111.893	8
	2. Partial Metric	0.985	0.071	113.668	10
	3. Metric	0.985	0.068	113.865	11
	4. Partial Scalar	0.980	0.057	158.374	21
	5. Scalar	0.978	0.056	176.987	24
Northern Europe	1. Configural	0.960	0.126	497.807	16
	2. Partial Metric	0.958	0.110	523.848	22
	3. Metric	0.955	0.106	557.729	25
	4. Partial Scalar	0.909	0.102	1139.588	55
	5. Scalar	0.874	0.111	1560.996	64
Southern Europe (excl. Greece)	1. Configural	0.991	0.079	121.588	12
	2. Partial Metric	0.990	0.069	128.233	16
	3. Metric	0.985	0.081	191.37	18
	4. Partial Scalar	0.971	0.078	378.95	38
	5. Scalar	0.964	0.081	465.742	44

Indeed, a similar picture is depicted by Great Britain and Ireland where both factor loadings and thresholds are equivalent (CFI = 0.978 and RMSEA = 0.056 for scalar invariance). However, the concept of political efficacy is not measurement invariant, thus not comparable, across the North of Europe. In this latter case, the results do not permit to assess measurement invariance as the RMSEA indicates a poor fit to the data for all model types. Once again, inconsistencies emerge between the CFI and RMSEA criteria. Since the former indicates a good model fit – CFI > 0.90 up to the level of partial scalar invariance – but the RMSEA doesn't, the meaning of the concept cannot be considered to be equivalent across the North of the continent. The model for Southern Europe has been estimated with the exclusion of Greece. The country's X^2 contribution to the MGCFA model is considerably higher than the rest of groups also generating difficulties for model convergence. Once Greece is omitted from the analysis, measurement invariance holds across Spain, Italy and Portugal (CFI= 0.971 and RMSEA =0.078 for partial scalar invariance). Thus, the ESS political efficacy battery of questions appears equivalent – and can be used for group comparisons - among these three countries.

Overall, the results presented in this section confirm that the political efficacy battery of questions used by the ESS (2002) is not equivalent across Europe. The MGCFA performed across twenty-one countries indicate that the parameters are not invariant at the partial scalar level of measurement invariance (Table 4). In contrast, the subsequent MGCFA performed suggest that whereas similar cultural contexts do not guarantee an unequivocal interpretation of the concept, this is much more likely to occur where a shared background exists as shown by (a) Benelux countries, (b) Great Britain and Ireland and (c) Spain, Italy and Portugal. Hence, these results deny the

possibility to make valid comparisons of means, factor scores or composite measures of political efficacy across Europe. Such comparisons remain valid and meaningful only for these specific subsets of countries.

6. Conclusion

In cross-cultural survey research, comparability of results requires construct comparability, which only takes place where *interpretative* equivalence and *procedural* equivalence exist. In this paper, the use of Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA, Jöreskog, 1971) allowed to assess whether the construct of political efficacy is interpreted in a similar way across nations by testing the extent to which the model parameters' are invariant across groups. If measurement invariance refers to "whether or not, under different conditions of observing and studying a phenomenon, measurement operations yield measures of the same attribute" (Horn and McArdle, 1992: 17), the measurement of political efficacy used by the ESS (2002) did not measure the same attribute across the twenty-one nations under examination. Three concerns gave rise to this research: (1) the lack of evidence supporting political efficacy's construct external validity; (2) the absence of a theoretical justification behind the redefinition of the original battery of questions and; (3) the need to assess the equivalence of the construct within the contexts where it has been exported to. Concerns that resulted into the aim of evaluating the extent to which the meaning of political efficacy is equivalent across Europe.

The analyses conducted provide a clear answer to the research questions presented earlier in this paper. First, a singular structure does not hold across the twenty-one European nations as configural invariance does not apply but also, shown by the inconsistency between single country CFA and MGCFA results as well as by the

discrepancies between the goodness of fit indices for individual country CFA. However, configural invariance could guarantee a common factor structure but this would not be enough to ensure the same interpretation of concepts across groups. Second, only when the item's factor loadings along with its intercepts and thresholds are constrained to be equal across groups (partial scalar invariance), a similar interpretation of the latent construct can be expected. This shows to be the case for three groups of countries: (a) Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg; (b) Great Britain and Ireland and; (c) Spain, Italy and Portugal. For these nations, not only the underlying structure of the construct is the same but also its meaning equivalent intragroup as partial scalar invariance is supported (CFA > 0.95 and RMSEA < 0.08 for the three groups). Lastly, the strength of the relationship between the dimensions of the concept cannot be assessed since the lack of measurement invariance across Europe does not enable valid comparisons among group scores.

These findings have important implications for cross-national research on political attitudes. The case of political efficacy illustrates that even when group means or scores are not directly compared across groups, inferences about the relationship between political attitudes and other behaviours may be misleading. The literature on efficacy pays a great deal of attention to its relationship with different indicators of political participation - from the pioneer five nation study by Almond and Verba (1963) to the most recent work by Karp and Banducci (2008) or Kittilson and Anderson (2009) on the impact of national institutional settings on feelings of efficacy. However, how informative *truly* are the estimates of the effects of institutions – such as the electoral system, the number of parties in government or the stability of democracy – on efficacy if the meaning of the latter differs across countries?

In addition, whilst models of internal and external efficacy utilising the traditional indicators yield correlations between the two dimensions that are sometimes greater than 0.90 - calling into question the ability of the indicators to distinguish between the two concepts - the correlations reported in this paper are much more modest. There are competing theoretical arguments as to whether the dimensions should be distinct or interrelated. Coleman and Davis (1976: 191-193) believe in the close association, noting "individuals who believe the system is responsive to people like themselves will be more likely to believe that they personally have the skills to induce government officials to act." In contrast, Craig and Maggiotto (1982) contend that there is no reason that beliefs about subjective competence should be related to attitudes concerning system responsiveness. Further theoretical and empirical work is necessary to adjudicate between these rival viewpoints.

The concept of political efficacy is not equivalent across the continent but among some countries. Thus, a shared background would explain why a concept is interpreted in a similar way, but only partially. Northern European countries or Greece, respectively, do not follow the pattern. Linguistic heterogeneity could affect the interpretation of the concept, hence, the lack of measurement invariance among North European countries (as one non-Scandinavian country has been included in the group) as well as Greece (the only non-Romance language in its group). Furthermore, cultural and political commonalities could be necessary but not sufficient for a concept to be interpreted in a specific manner. Moreover, the extent to which these common elements affect the way political efficacy is understood remains unanswered. In future studies it would be wise to place emphasis not only on those additional elements, which may

entail a different interpretation of the concept across contexts but also, on how the specific forms that these commonalities take, such as formal and informal institutional settings, may modify its meaning.

This paper demonstrates that constructs are not necessarily comparable in cross–cultural research. Even when group scores are not directly compared, a major problem remains for cross-cultural studies. From the findings presented above, it remains unclear whether the equivalence of the concept – where it exists – is the result of shared cultural traits or a similar linguistic background. If measurement invariance is the consequence of common linguistic origins, more emphasis should be placed on questionnaire design and translation. However, if invariance is the result of culture *per se*, the perspective from which cross-cultural studies are approached should change. In this line, the work by Davidov et al. (2008) shows that Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg share similar human values. If citizens share certain values because of their context, they may as well share political attitudes. If that were the case, cross-national surveys would benefit from a more extensive use of MGCFA techniques before moving onto further multivariate analysis.

Since political efficacy is thought to be an essential indicator of the health of democratic regimes, not only political efficacy scores but also often some of the items are included in comparative analyses. The inclusion of an item belonging to a battery of questions in such analyses, let's assume the item to be valid and reliable, requires extreme caution when interpreting its effects since it was designed as part of a concept which does not have a unequivocal meaning. A lack of construct comparability does not threaten the validity and reliability of survey indicators by itself. However, it does

undermine the validity of the concepts these indicators aim to tap, that is to say, the theories these batteries of questions are designed to test for. If the interpretation of a concept is uncertain the test of a theory will be inconclusive.

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[1] For instance see Acock et al. 1985; Acock and Clarke 1990; Aish and Jöreskog 1990; Balch, 1974; Barnes 1966; Converse 1972; Craig and Magiotto 1982; Craig, Niemi and Silver 1990; Finkel 1985; Hayes and Bean 1993; Kaase and Newton 1995; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Morrell 2003; Niemi et al. 1991; Pingree 2009; Stewart et al. 1992; Wright 1975.

[2] Emphasis in original.

[3] Data from the First Round of the European Social Survey (ESS 2002) has been selected since later rounds do not include the full battery of questions. Hence, not allowing for the tests of dimensionality between internal and external efficacy.

[4] Sample sizes in parentheses: Austria (2254), Belgium (2364), Czech Republic (1356), Denmark (1504), Finland (2000), Germany (2919), Greece (2555), Hungary (1681), Ireland (2039), Israel (2497), Italy (1200), Luxembourg (1549), Netherlands (2364), Norway (2036), Poland (2107), Portugal (1501), Slovenia (1517), Spain (1713), Sweden (1999), Switzerland (2040), Great Britain (2051).

[5] The indexes are calculated as follows: $CFI = \frac{(X^2 - df\ Null\ Model) - (X^2 - df\ Proposed\ Model)}{(X^2 - df\ Null\ Model)}$ and $RMSEA = \frac{\sqrt{(X^2 - \mathrm{df})}}{\sqrt{[\mathrm{df}\,(\mathrm{N}-1)]}}$

[6]The Modification Indices (MI) – estimates of the expected χ^2 decrease when a parameter becomes free or an extra path is added, not reported here – suggested the inclusion of additional items to the external dimension, 'poldcs' for some countries and 'polactiv' for some others, to improve the overall model fit. The variable *poldcs* ("How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues?") was added to the external dimension for Great Britain, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway and Poland. The variable *polactiv ("*Do you think that you could take an active role in a group that is focused on political issues?") was added for Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden. Greece was the only case where the Modification Indices suggested the addition of *polcompl* ("How often do politics and government seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on?") to the external dimension to improve the overall fit of the model. The estimation of the models including the MI information led to a small increase in the overall model fit but the loading of the added items was not greater than 0.2 for any of the countries.

[7] Eight countries have been excluded from the forthcoming analysis due to the inexistence of a shared background or, since the existing literature does not justify its grouping on the basis of existing differences in their political cultures.

Part III:

Valid Measures of Political Efficacy and their Correlates in the US and UK

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Abstract

The measurement of political efficacy has been one of the most contested debates in survey research methodology and public opinion since Campbell *et al*. defined the concept in 1954. Despite the great deal of attention generated by the debate and controversy around its measurement, no general agreement has been reached to the date. However, this lack of agreement did not prevent the concept from being *exported* to a variety of political contexts without assessing the constructs' external validity. Standard reflective indicators that appear on cross-national surveys such as the European Social Survey (ESS) have low internal and cross-cultural validity (Xena, 2014). A rival set of measures developed in the mid 1980s by Craig and his colleagues have high internal validity but have not been tested in the cross-national context. Employing data from simultaneously fielded surveys in Britain and the United States, this paper employs the latest advances in multi-group analysis with ordinal data to demonstrate that a) the indicators employed by Craig *et al*. are invariant across the two countries, supporting the findings of Paper 2 – political efficacy

measures only travel when there is cultural, historic or linguistic similarity; and b) Americans are more efficacious than Britons, as evidenced by significant differences in latent group means.

1. Introduction

In early quantitative studies, measures of political efficacy are used to separate those who believe "the affairs of government can be understood and influenced by individual citizens" from those who believe "politics is a distant and complex realm that is beyond the power of the common citizen to affect" (Campbell et al., 1960: 104). Early empirical work treats political efficacy as a single concept and errs toward tapping an individual's belief about their own ability to be effective citizens in the public sphere (Pateman, 1970; Thompson, 1970; Finkel, 1985). Citizens who have such abilities are seen as possessing what Almond and Verba (1963: 257) call "subjective competence," and their presence is vital to the stability and functioning of representative democracies.

However, significant scholarly disagreement exists, even in the early literature. As an example, Muller (1970) argues that Almond and Verba's concept of political competence really has three dimensions: 1) the attention one pays to politics and public affairs as measured by following the news and/or knowledge of political leaders; 2) the ability to influence government or a belief that one would get involved in a civic matter and be effective at affecting change; and 3) political efficacy which contains measures tapping citizen beliefs as to how responsive they believe the government is to their concerns.

Rosenberg's (1954-1955) qualitative work from the early 1950s identifies respondents reluctant to discuss politics because of their feelings of inadequate expertise or knowledge of the subject. These individuals are both lacking in political awareness and do not have faith in their ability to participate. Other respondents are shown to disengage from politics because of feelings that it is "futile" to participate because the political class is

seen to be unresponsive to the beliefs of ordinary citizens. Many who feel inadequate also feel the system is unresponsive, but there is also a group of interviewees who, regardless of their own agency, feel that politicians and the system will never be responsive. This differentiation is picked up by Robert Lane (1959: 149) who notes that political efficacy "combines the image of the self and the image of democratic government. [It] contains the tacit implication that the image of the self as effective is intimately related to the image of democratic government as responsive to the people." Beliefs that politicians are responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens is dubbed external political efficacy, and peoples' subjective assessments of their abilities to affect political change is coined internal political efficacy.

There is an expectation of interplay between citizen levels of internal and external efficacy, so even though the concepts are viewed as theoretically distinct, high levels of correlation between the two types of efficacy are expected (Clarke et al., 2010). Coleman and Davis (1976: 191-193) summarize: "[I]ndividuals who believe the system is responsive to people like themselves will be more likely to believe that they personally have the skills to induce government officials to act" (quoted in Craig and Maggiotto,1982: 86).

Research from the 1980s brings questions about construct and statistical conclusion validity as it relates to the concept of political efficacy. Balch (1974) empirically demonstrates that survey questions measuring efficacy break down into two separate dimensions. Craig and Maggiotto (1982) argue that high levels of correlation between the efficacy dimensions should not be assumed because internal efficacy is a measure of internal "political effectiveness" while external efficacy has more to do with attitudes towards "system responsiveness." According to Craig et al. (1990: 305), the correlation that does exist occurs "presumably because beliefs about one's own competence help to shape

beliefs about the potential for citizens generally to play a meaningful role in political decision making." But there is a counterargument.

Research dating back to the early 1960s (e.g. Agger *et al*., 1961) suggests that those low in internal efficacy can be more likely to believe that politicians are doing what they can to help the citizenry. In contrast, those high in internal efficacy believe that they will do a better job in office than those elected and this mentality is reflective of or fosters low levels of external efficacy. The fact that internal and external efficacy can, in some circumstances, be mutually reinforcing while in others is unrelated underscores the need to divide the concept of efficacy in two. After decades of research, scholars agree that internal efficacy concerns "citizens' feelings of personal competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990: 290) while external efficacy focuses on citizens' perceptions of the responsiveness of political bodies and actors to citizens' demands (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Miller et al., 1980).

The original measure of political efficacy designed by Campbell *et al.* consisting of a battery of four agree – disagree questions (1954) travelled far beyond the United States (US) borders. However, to this date, the measurement of political efficacy and its potential extrapolation to distinct political contexts remains an unresolved controversy. The aim of this paper is to assess the external validity of the alternative measures of political efficacy proposed by Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) and tested in the 1987 American National Election Study (ANES). Using data from the US and United Kingdom (UK), the results enable us to corroborate the validity of the measure and its measurement invariance across both countries.

2. Leaving Behind the Traditional Measure of Political Efficacy

A vast amount of literature on political efficacy focused extensively on its measurement, however, a lack of agreement has characterised the debate, leading to the emergence and use of a variety of indicators across countries over the past decades. The original survey items developed by Campbell et al. (1954) and used in the ANES consisted of a battery of four agree – disagree questions aimed to tap citizens' sense of political powerlessness, the so-called "Index of Political Efficacy", as follows:

Internal Efficacy

(1) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does"

(2) "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on"

External Efficacy

(3) "Voting is the only way that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things"

(4) "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think"

In the 1987 ANES, Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) introduced some pilot study questions to the survey in order to assess the reliability and validity of a new measure of political efficacy, the relationship between its internal and external dimensions and, with political trust, respectively. The new battery of questions consisted of six items aimed to measure internal efficacy and four aiming to tap external efficacy. Although the pilot study items appeared to work very well in the US, the validity of the new measure has not been tested elsewhere. Most national election studies and cross – national surveys still include the traditional battery of political efficacy as designed by Campbell et al. (1954) or some

variations of it, often, with a lack of theoretical justification for those changes. In addition, political efficacy does not seem to have an unequivocal meaning across diverse political contexts. In Europe the equivalence of meaning of the concept (or measurement invariance) does not hold across the continent but only among those countries that share a similar cultural, political or historical background (Xena, 2014).

Therefore, the theoretical relevance of this paper rests on three aspects: (1) assessing the cross-temporal validity of the battery of questions designed by Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990); (2) the test of the external validity of the pilot measure by applying it to a different political context, the UK; and (3) assessing whether the measurement of political efficacy is invariant across the US and the UK, which is to say, whether the construct's meaning is equivalent in both countries.

3. Data and Methods

In late May and early June 2012, 2346 Americans and 2349 Britons were surveyed over the internet by the firm YouGov, for the primary purposes of measuring the attitudes respondents in these two nations had on matters of foreign policy. Focusing on the two English speaking democracies, allows to extend the findings of Paper 2. One of the conclusions of *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?* is that in cross-cultural research, the interpretation of constructs has, to some extent, a linguistic background. Hence, by selecting two cases in which a shared language exists, if measurement of invariance does not exist, this cannot be attributed to the countries' language. YouGov employs matched sampling and weighting techniques to bring the demographic and newspaper readership characteristics of those surveyed into line with the characteristics of the two populations. As part of this questionnaire, respondents were asked about propensity to partake in political activities and their perceptions about their own political effectiveness and responsiveness of the political elites to their political

activity and awareness. The survey generating the data used in this paper is from the second wave of a survey primarily focused on foreign policy attitudes[1]. In contrast to most cross-cultural surveys measuring political efficacy, the alternative battery of political efficacy items first proposed by Craig et al. (1990) and Niemi et al. (1991) for use on the American National Election Study (ANES) were employed. The revised efficacy questions were asked on a series of grids where their order was randomised and they were intertwined with questions measuring political trust.

The items designed to measure internal and external political efficacy, respectively, consist of a battery of Likert type questions with five answer categories. Respondents were asked to indicate "*whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement*". "Don't Knows" were coded as missing, with answers imputed in the multivariate analyses. Most statements are positively worded except for items 3 and 6 for internal efficacy and items 3 and 4 for external efficacy. Variables were coded so that higher categories signified more efficacious answers. The variables are described as follows:

Internal Efficacy

1. UNDERSTAND: "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our government."

2. INFORMED: "I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people."

3. NOSURE: "I don't often feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government." (Reverse Coded)

4. PUBOFF: “I think that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other people.”

5. SELFQUAL: “I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.”

6. COMPLEX: “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” (Reverse Coded)

External Efficacy

1. LEGAL: “There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.”

2. FINALSAY: “Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.”

3. MAKELISTEN: “If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen.” (Reverse Coded)

4. NOSAY: “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.” (Reverse Coded)

Tables 1 and 2 depict the response distributions for the items, each listed under the proposed internal or external efficacy dimension, and tests for differences in responses across the two countries (Chi-square test). A minus sign (-) indicates a negative worded item. A first glance at the response frequencies for both countries denotes some differences regarding overall levels of political efficacy. Both tables indicate that US citizens feel more political efficacious than in the UK.

Table 1. *Response Distributions to Revised Internal Efficacy Questions* (%)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	$\chi^2_{(d.f.=4)}$	*N*
Puboff	UK	4.7	17.2	27.4	36.6	14.1	96.4	2245
	US	6.4	11.3	25.3	33	24.1	(p=0.00)	2255
Inform	UK	4.1	9.2	26.7	47.8	12.2	242.9	2282
	US	5.2	8.5	20.4	35.4	30.6	(p=0.00)	2273
Nosure (-)	UK	13.1	31.3	27.6	24.1	4.0	296.2	2275
	US	32.8	25.3	23.1	13.1	5.7	(p=0.00)	2229
Understand	UK	2.1	9.6	26.2	49.3	12.7	54.5	2280
	US	2.8	4.6	19.9	40.3	32.4	(p=0.00)	2239
Selfqual	UK	8.8	23.5	33.8	26.1	7.7	282.0	2283
	US	8.7	11.1	27.8	29.9	22.5	(p=0.00)	2235
Complex (-)	UK	11.1	25.5	25.5	30.6	7.3	158.4	2281
	US	23.7	24.3	22.6	20.4	9	(p=0.00)	2231

Internal political efficacy in the US appears to be notably higher than in the UK. For all the positive worded items (Puboff, Inform, Understand and Selfqual) the percentage of agreement is higher for US citizens than for UK citizens whereas the opposite occurs with the negative worded items (Nosure and Complex). In a similar way, levels of disagreement are remarkably higher in the UK for all positive worded items and lower in the US with the only exception of Inform ("*I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people*") where the percentages for both countries are pretty similar (Strongly disagree 4.1% for UK and 5.2% for US and; Disagree with 9.2% for the UK and 8.5% for the US). Once again, the opposite pattern emerges regarding the negative worded items, for

which levels of disagreement are notably higher in the US. In addition, it is worth noting that UK citizens do not only feel less efficacious but also, the percentage of those who answer "neither agree nor disagree" is higher which could be as sign of lack of subjective

Table 2. *Response Distributions to Revised External Efficacy Questions* (%)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	$\chi^2_{(d.f.=4)}$	*N*
Legal	UK	9.2	26	29.9	31	4	304.4	2174
	US	5.5	12.9	25.9	39.7	16	(p=0.00)	2212
Finalsay	UK	26.3	35.7	21.5	14.2	2.3	140.9	2260
	US	26.6	27	20.4	15.8	10.2	(p=0.00)	2219
Make listen (-)	UK	4.8	21.3	16.3	39.1	18.5	231.1 (p=0.00)	2254
	US	16.4	24.9	17.9	24.1	16.7		2224
Nosay (-)	UK	4.1	19.9	21.3	36.4	18.3	234.6	2280
	US	14.3	24.9	24.4	22.5	13.8	(p=0.00)	2225

political competence *per se* (respondents who are not sure of what to answer may opt for the middle category).

Table 2 leads us to similar conclusions regarding external political efficacy or system responsiveness. For the positive worded item Legal, the percentage of agreement is significantly higher in the US than in the UK. Indeed, the US system may provide citizens with more legal tools to influence the government although high variation exists across the US. For instance, the frequency of use of tools such as referendums differs across states. For Finalsay, the percentage of agreement (Agree and Strongly Agree) is higher in the US than in the UK, however, it is worth noting that a plurality of both UK and US citizens gave an inefficacious response to the question (Strongly Disagree 26.3% in the UK and 26.6% in the US and Disagree with 35.7% of respondents in the UK and 27% in the US). As it happened

with internal efficacy, most Britons give inefficacious answers to the negative worded items (Agree and Strongly Agree) whereas efficacious responses are much more common among Americans.

The differences presented in the tables above were already suggested by Almond and Verba (1963). Across all questions, the sample of Americans provided more efficacious responses than their British counterparts, and the two response distributions were always significantly different from one another. Another point worth mentioning is that Americans were almost always more prone to providing answers at the extremes (i.e. "Strongly Agree" or "Strongly Disagree") than their British counterparts. This could be a cross-cultural difference in how the two samples respond to surveys or a function of Americans, in the aggregate, feeling more strongly about their political (in)efficacy. The most striking feature of these tables lies on the consistency between differences in average levels of political efficacy between the US and UK for all the items presented. The distribution of such responses is highly suggestive of an efficacy gap.

In order to assess Craig, Niemi and Silver's (1990) proposed construct external's validity – whether it is equivalent between the US and the UK – the methodology employed in this paper will follows that from the paper *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?* (Xena, 2014). Hence, multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA, Jöreskog, 1971) will be used to test for measurement invariance. A set of successive and increasingly restrictive steps in which parameters are progressively constrained, will be applied to a baseline model in order to assess the existence of configural, metric and scalar invariance.

The last pertinent point that has implications for the model comparisons we conduct below concerns the process by which the coefficients are estimated. The survey indicators utilized in this paper are categorical and ordinal. As a consequence, parameter

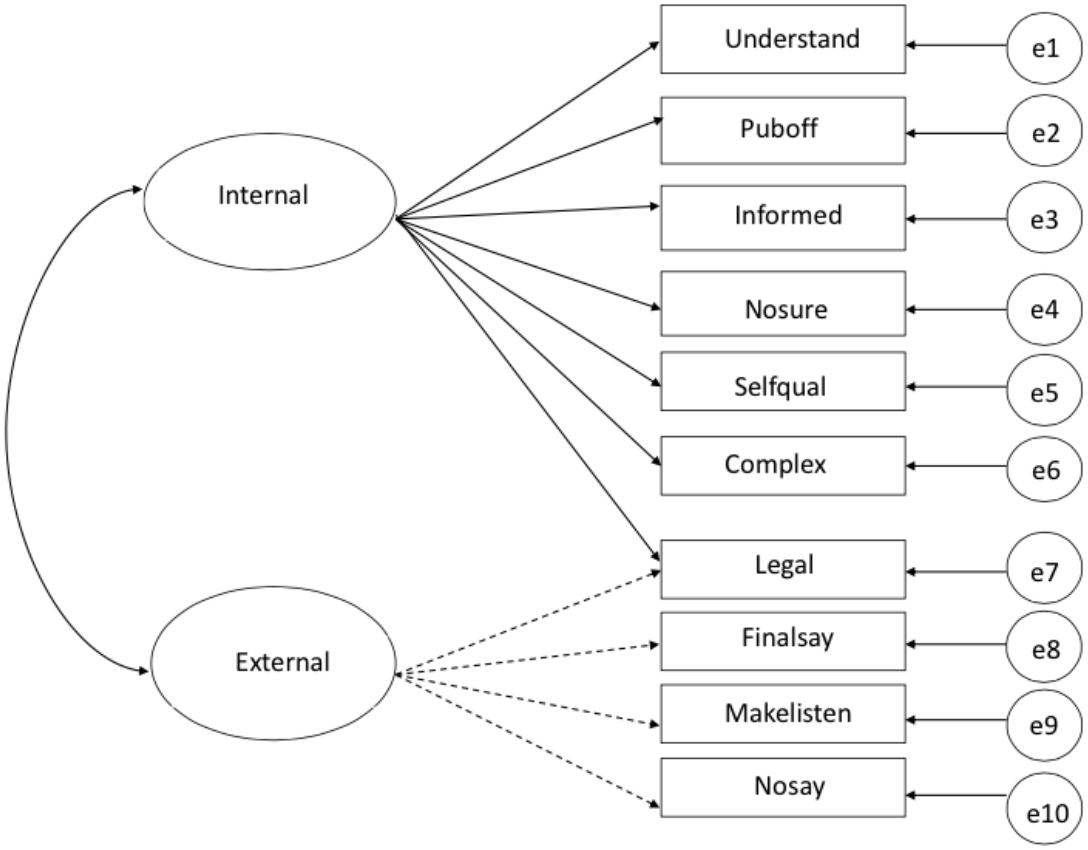
estimation occurs via ordered probit, where loadings connect a latent factor to latent response variables. As Davidov et al. (2011: 159) note, "CFA for ordinal data assumes that the observed items are not directly influenced by their corresponding latent factor but indirectly via a continuous latent response variable…[The item specific] threshold parameters partition the continuous normally distributed latent response variable into several categories. If the value for the continuous latent response variable exceeds a threshold, the observed value of the item changes to the next category."[2] Parameters and model fit statistics used in the models presented in this paper are obtained via MPLUS' Weighted Least Squares with Adjusted Means and Variances (WLSMV) estimator and the number of thresholds obtained is equal to one less than the number of categories present for each of the observed variables. To evaluate the goodness of fit of the models, the X^2 value, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) will be used. The cutoff values CFI > 0.90 - 0.95 and RMSEA < 0.05 - 0.08, by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Marsh, Hau, and Wen (2004), will allow us to assess significance.

4. Results

4.1 Political Efficacy: The American Case

Two decades ago, Craig et al. proposed the measurement model for external and internal political efficacy depicted in Figure 1 and validated it using data from the 1987 ANES face-to-face pilot study[3]. How does the model perform using a matched sample interviewed over the internet?

Figure 1. *Craig, Niemi and Silver's model (1990)*



An initial Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed only a mediocre fit for the two factor model ($\chi 2$= 955.75, 34df, RMSEA=0.11, CFI=0.93).[4] However, inspection of the residuals uncovered a so-called "Methods Factor," which suggested a response set bias; that is a select number of respondents in the United States likely gave the same answer to each question regardless of content, which all appeared, in a grid format on the same screen in the internet survey. Adding the methods factor with indicators consisting of all of the negatively-worded questions –Nosure, Complex, Makelisten and Nosay– substantially improved the fit of the model ($\chi 2$= 273.14, 28df, RMSEA=0.06, CFI=0.98).

Further improvements in fit came in two more steps, the first by adding two cross-loadings. The Finalsay indicator that probed respondents' beliefs about whether they believed they had the final say about how the country is run, regardless of who is in power, had a slight but significant (negative) loading on the Internal Efficacy dimension. This is not only methodologically plausible, but it is substantively justifiable that the people's final say is linked to feelings of subjective competence. The main portion of the question taps beliefs about how much the government represents citizens' opinions but it does so by presenting the government say and citizens' say as opposed to each other. On the External Efficacy dimension, the PubOff indicator had a small but significant negative loading. This, too, makes sense because some of those who believed they were up to the task of effectively serving in office might also by those who felt that current politicians were performing their roles poorly and not responding to public needs. The PubOff indicator, positively worded, also has a negative loading on the methods factor. Adding these cross-loadings resulted in a further improvement in model fit ($\chi2$= 198.90, 26df, RMSEA=0.05, CFI=0.99).

The second and final step to fitting the model involved two modifications. First, the opening up the significant error covariance between a) the PubOff and Selfqual questions, two indicators that tapped respondents' perceptions of their abilities to participate in politics at the mass and elite levels; and b) the Makelisten and Nosay indicators – respondents' may believe that they don't have a say if public officials are not willing to listen to them. Second, fixing the insignificant covariances between the Methods and Internal Efficacy and External Efficacy factors, respectively, to zero to preserve two degrees of freedom. The final model is depicted in Figure 2 ($\chi2$= 197.540, 26df, RMSEA=0.05, CFI=0.99).

Figure 2. *Craig et al. revised model*

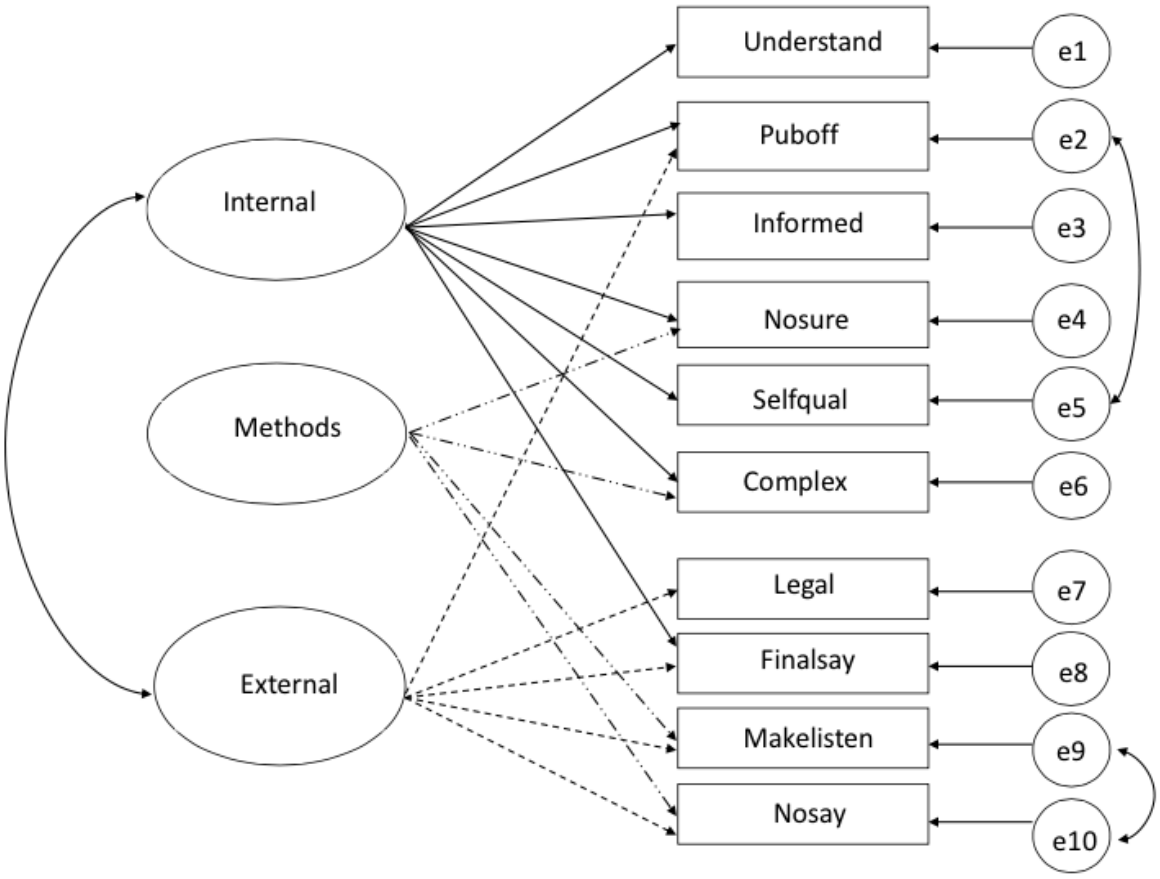


Table 3. *Craig et al. revised model for the US, standardised results*

	Estimate	SE
Internal Efficacy		
Puboff	0.65	*(0.02)*
Informed	0.85	*(0.01)*
Nosure	0.62	*(0.02)*
Understand	0.88	*(0.09)*
Selfqual	0.80	*(0.01)*
Complex	0.53	*(0.02)*
Finalsay	-0.13	*(0.03)*
External Efficacy		
Legal	0.78	*(0.03)*
Finalsay	0.62	*(0.03)*
Makelisten	0.34	*(0.03)*
Nosay	0.50	*(0.03)*
Puboff	-0.07	*(0.02)*

- Table 3 continued -

Methods Factor		
Nosure	0.45	*(0.03)*
Complex	0.66	*(0.03)*
Makelisten	0.39	*(0.03)*
Nosay	0.37	*(0.03)*
Correlations		
Methods and Internal	0.00⁺	*(0.00)*
Methods and External	0.00⁺	*(0.00)*
Internal and External	0.32	*(0.03)*
Puboff and Selfqual	0.23	*(0.03)*
Makelisten and Nosay	0.35	*(0.03)*

Note: all coefficients above significant at p <0.00 except⁺ for *r*(Methods,Internal) and *r*(Methods, External), covariances fixed to 0. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3 presents the standardised factor loading estimates and correlation coefficients of the model. For the Internal Efficacy factor, all the items show a moderate or strong correlation with the only exception of Complex (β = 0.53) and Finalsay, an item that originally belonged to the External dimension but allowed to have a dual loading in the final model (β = -0.13). Although the loading of this latter item is small, its inclusion in the model is justified as it results into a better fit to the data. For External Efficacy, as similar pattern emerges. The item Puboff, which also loads on both dimensions has a small but significant correlation with the External factor (β = -0.07). The items loading on the Methods factor, which accounts for the negatively-worded items, show relatively small but significant coefficients, ranging from β = 0.37 for Nosay to β = 0.66 for Complex. In addition, the correlation between the Internal and External Efficacy factors is relatively small (*r* = 0.32), suggesting that the revised measure of Political Efficacy is successful in distinguishing between the two empirical dimensions of the concept.

At this point findings from the empirical results warrant discussion. The loadings of the indicators on their hypothesized dimensions are quite strong. In addition, unlike results from the factor analyses using the traditional indicators common on cross-national surveys, there is a clear distinction between External and Internal Efficacy. The revised indicators employed to measure levels of political efficacy across a representative sample of Americans produce distinct dimensions of internal and external political efficacy, and once potential response set bias is accounted for via a "Methods Factor", the resulting structure is the same regardless of whether respondents were asked these questions in a face-to-face survey in 1987 or over the internet in 2012.

As mentioned above Craig, Niemi and their colleagues (1990, 1991) provided clear and convincing evidence that the traditional measures of political efficacy employed in survey research were problematic nearly a quarter century ago. Further, their revised measures of political efficacy were valid and were particularly useful when it came to understanding the causes and consequences of Americans' beliefs about their own political agency and the responsiveness of their politicians. However, few efforts, if any have been made to cross-culturally validate the "new" indicators.

4.2 Political Efficacy in Britain

The traditional indicators of political efficacy sometimes fail to distinguish between internal and external Efficacy. In addition, some widespread indicators, such as the ones used by the European Social Survey (2002) lack cross-cultural validity (see *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel Across National Borders?)*. When these indicators are employed, an indicator of external efficacy in one nation is, in empirical estimations, better specified as an indicator of internal efficacy in another or vice versa.

The results above suggest that the ten revised indicators employed above are reflective of distinct and valid latent dimensions designated as Internal and External political efficacy in the United States and that the revised measures of Craig, Niemi, and his colleagues stand a test of time. Although these results validate the cross-temporal validity of the alternative measures of political efficacy developed by Craig, Niemi and his colleagues, they say nothing as to whether respondents in different nations respond to the indicators in a similar fashion, or whether the relationship between the latent factors and the indicators is similar enough for us to judge that the interpretation of the internal and external Efficacy latent variables are the same across the two countries. In order to test for the cross-national validity of the indicators and to set a baseline model to perform further analyses, it is necessary to assess the goodness of fit of Craig et al. revised model (Figure 2) in the UK. The results are presented in Table 4. The model seems to fit better in the UK than in the US and performs, by standards of model fit, exceptionally well ($\chi 2$= 84.25, 26df, RMSEA=0.03, CFI=1.00).

Table 4. *Craig et al. revised model for the UK, standardised results*

	Estimate	SE
Internal Efficacy		
Puboff	0.51	*(0.02)*
Informed	0.85	*(0.01)*
Nosure	0.67	*(0.01)*
Understand	0.85	*(0.01)*
Selfqual	0.80	*(0.01)*
Complex	0.56	*(0.02)*
Finalsay	-0.08	*(0.03)*

- Table 4 continued -

External Efficacy		
Legal	0.75	*(0.02)*
Finalsay	0.64	*(0.02)*
Makelisten	0.47	*(0.03)*
Nosay	0.63	*(0.02)*
Puboff	-0.22	*(0.03)*
Methods Factor		
Nosure	0.33	*(0.03)*
Complex	0.73	*(0.07)*
Makelisten	0.30	*(0.04)*
Nosay	0.31	*(0.04)*
Correlations		
Methods and Internal	0.00⁺	*(0.00)*
Methods and External	0.00⁺	*(0.00)*
Internal and External	0.13	*(0.03)*
Puboff and Selfqual	0.25	*(0.03)*
Makelisten and Nosay	0.23	*(0.04)*

Note: all coefficients above significant at p <0.00 except⁺ for *r*(Methods,Internal) and *r*(Methods, External), covariances fixed to 0. Standard errors in parentheses.

The factor loadings and correlations presented above behave similarly in both countries. Most of the items hypothesised to load on the latent Internal dimension correlate above 0.5. The only noticeable difference between the US and UK refers to the item Puboff, which shows a smaller loading on internal efficacy (β = 0.51). However, the loading of the item on the external latent dimension is stronger in the UK than in the US (β = -0.22 and β = -0.07, respectively). No major discrepancies seem to exist between the loadings of the items on the Methods factor although most of them show stronger loadings in the US than in the UK with the only exception of Complex (β = 0.73 for the UK). Finally, average levels of political efficacy are not only lower among British respondents, as shown in Tables 1 and 2,

but also the association between its internal and external factors is much smaller in the UK (β = 0.13). The distinction between dimensions is more pronounced in the UK.

Table 5. *Explanatory power of Craig et al. revised model for the US and UK*

	Estimate	
R^2 *Observed variables*	US	UK
Puboff	0.40 *(0.02)*	0.28 *(0.03)*
Informed	0.72 *(0.02)*	0.72 *(0.02)*
Nosure	0.59 *(0.03)*	0.56 *(0.03)*
Understand	0.78 *(0.02)*	0.72 *(0.02)*
Selfqual	0.64 *(0.02)*	0.63 *(0.02)*
Complex	0.72 *(0.04)*	0.86 *(0.09)*
Legal	0.61 *(0.05)*	0.57 *(0.03)*
Finalsay	0.34 *(0.03)*	0.41 *(0.03)*
Makelisten	0.27 *(0.03)*	0.32 *(0.04)*
Nosay	0.38 *(0.03)*	0.50 *(0.04)*

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

Finally, Table 5 reports the R^2 of the observed variables, the percentage of variance of the items explained by the three latent factors. Our measurement model seems to be more successful in explaining the internal efficacy items than the external indicators in both countries. Although the model is less satisfactory in explaining the variance of some of the items, such as Puboff for the UK (28%) or Makelisten for the US (27%), its overall performance is more than acceptable.

4.3 A Valid Cross-Cultural Comparison?

It remains to be seen whether the revised indicators are invariant across the two English speaking mature democracies. Obtaining configural invariance is a necessary condition if researchers wish to compare levels of external and internal efficacy present among the citizens of both nations (Steinmetz et al. 2009). Configural invariance is present only if it can be demonstrated that the CFA for the British data results in the same three factor model shown in Figure 2. Metric invariance only occurs when the factor loadings on each of the indicators can be shown to be equal across groups. Scalar invariance takes place, if the items' intercepts are also invariant across groups. To compare mean levels of both types of political efficacy across countries, full equivalence is not necessary as partial metric invariance – the equivalence of, at least, two items per construct – allows for the comparability of group scores (Byrne, Shavelson, and Muthen 1989; Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). Unlike classical multi-group comparison testing, MGCFA with ordinal data requires the factor loadings, intercepts and threshold parameters to be constrained simultaneously (see *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders*; section 4 *Measurement Invariance* for a comprehensive description of the procedure). Only if invariance occurs when these parameters are constrained, the comparison of group scores will be valid.

Several increasingly restrictive MGCFA have been performed in order to assess the cross-national validity of Craig et al's. revised model. The models differ in the extent to which parameters are constrained to be equal across the two English speaking democracies. First, we start with a configural model which allows us to test whether the same factor structure –same number of factors, same items loading on the same factors and covariances between items as depicted in Figure 2 – exists in both groups. The goodness of

fit of the configural model is more than satisfactory (χ2= 431.57, 64df, RMSEA=0.05, CFI=0.98)[5].

The second model tests for scalar invariance as it constraints the two groups' factor loadings and thresholds to be equal[6]. Only if scalar invariance is supported, the meaning of the Craig et al.'s revised battery of questions for political efficacy can be considered equivalent across the US and UK. Once the additional constraints are applied to the model, the goodness of fit experiences is significantly damaged (χ2= 1946.97, 105df, RMSEA=0.09, CFI=0.92). These results indicate that, although a similar factor structure exists in both countries, the revised battery of questions is not equivalent.

In order to identify the potential sources of model misfit, we have estimated the Modification Indices (MI) showing the expected χ^2 decrease when a parameter becomes free or an extra path is added to the model[7]. Note that the Modification Indices indicate the expected χ^2 decrease after a *single* parameter is freed or added the model but they do not tell us anything about χ^2 changes when parameters are simultaneously added or unconstrained. The Modification Indices suggested that by freeing the factor means the model fit to the data would improve substantially. Indeed, this modification is empirically justifiable. As shown by the response distributions in Tables 1 and 2, even though responses to the survey questions in the US and UK follow similar trends, average levels of internal and external efficacy are noticeably higher in the US.

As a result, we have freed the means for the three factors in the third MGCFA model, allowing them to vary between the US and UK. The factor means have been set to 0 for the US and the UK estimates support the idea of an efficacy gap between both countries (UK factor means: -0.78 for internal, -0.47 for external and -0.07 for methods). The χ2 decrease

is remarkable, leading to a model fit improvement ($\chi2$= 784.75, 102df, RMSEA=0.05, CFI=0.97). In order to find the best fitting model to the data, we have performed a fourth final MGCFA in which we relax the constraints applied to the residual variances of the indicators so that these are allowed to vary across groups. Freeing the error variances allows us to gain degrees of freedom which results in an additional improvement of model fit ($\chi2$= 437.352, 92df, RMSEA=0.04, CFI=0.99).

Table 6. *MGCFA estimates constraining factor loadings and thresholds, factor means and items' residual variances allowed to vary (standardised results)*

	US		UK	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Internal Efficacy				
Puboff	0.66	*(0.02)*	0.54	*(0.02)*
Informed	0.84	*(0.01)*	0.85	*(0.01)*
Nosure	0.63	*(0.01)*	0.66	*(0.02)*
Understand	0.89	*(0.01)*	0.85	*(0.01)*
Selfqual	0.81	*(0.01)*	0.79	*(0.01)*
Complex	0.54	*(0.02)*	0.56	*(0.02)*
Finalsay	-0.11	*(0.02)*	-0.10	*(0.02)*
External Efficacy				
Legal	0.77	*(0.02)*	0.80	*(0.02)*
Finalsay	0.56	*(0.02)*	0.64	*(0.02)*
Makelisten	0.38	*(0.02)*	0.46	*(0.02)*
Nosay	0.53	*(0.02)*	0.60	*(0.02)*
Puboff	-0.15	*(0.02)*	-0.15	*(0.02)*
Methods Factor				
Nosure	0.42	*(0.03)*	0.41	*(0.02)*
Complex	0.67	*(0.03)*	0.64	*(0.03)*
Makelisten	0.37	*(0.03)*	0.34	*(0.03)*
Nosay	0.37	*(0.03)*	0.32	*(0.02)*
Correlations				
Methods and Internal	0.00+	*(0.00)*	0.00+	*(0.00)*
Methods and External	0.00+	*(0.00)*	0.00+	*(0.00)*
Internal and External	0.33	*(0.03)*	0.12	*(0.03)*
Puboff and Selfqual	0.26	*(0.03)*	0.20	*(0.03)*
Makelisten and Nosay	0.33	*(0.03)*	0.24	*(0.04)*

Note: all coefficients above significant at p <0.00 except+ for *r*(Methods,Internal) and *r*(Methods, External), covariances fixed to 0. Standard errors in parentheses.

The specified model, not only proves to be invariant across the UK and US – once the factor means are freely estimated– but also, the parameters behave similarly in both nations. Regarding Internal Efficacy, all factor loadings show a positive and relatively strong correlation with the latent variable in the two countries (β > 0.54) – with the only exception of Finalsay, due to its dual loading. A similar picture is presented by the items loading on the External Efficacy dimension. As shown by the single country analyses (Tables 3 and 4), the loadings of the indicators on the External factor are moderately weaker than their Internal counterparts. In addition, all the loadings for the US are slightly weaker than those for the UK. However, the pattern followed is the same in both countries, Puboff shows the weakest coefficient (β=-0.15) and Legal the strongest (β =0.77 for the US and β = 0.80 for the UK). Also, no remarkable cross-national differences emerge from the loadings of the negatively-worded items on the Methods factor. Last but not least, it is worth noting that the strength of the correlation coefficients between Internal and External Efficacy in the UK and US remains quite low, especially for the former country (*r* = 0.12 for the UK and *r* = 0.33 for the US).

Table 7. *Explanatory power of the final MGCFA model*

	Estimate	
R^2 *Observed variables*	US	UK
Puboff	0.39 *(0.02)*	0.30 *(0.02)*
Informed	0.70 *(0.02)*	0.73 *(0.02)*
Nosure	0.58 *(0.02)*	0.60 *(0.02)*
Understand	0.79 *(0.02)*	0.71 *(0.02)*
Selfqual	0.65 *(0.02)*	0.63 *(0.02)*
Complex	0.74 *(0.04)*	0.72 *(0.04)*
Legal	0.59 *(0.03)*	0.64 *(0.03)*
Finalsay	0.28 *(0.02)*	0.40 *(0.02)*
Makelisten	0.28 *(0.03)*	0.33 *(0.03)*
Nosay	0.42 *(0.03)*	0.47 *(0.03)*

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 7 presents the explanatory power of the MGCFA presented in Table 6, where the factor loadings and thresholds are constrained to be equal across the US and UK and the factor means and items' residual variances are freely estimated. The latent variables explain a vast percentage of the variance of the ten survey items, reaching above 70% for some variables and no less than 28% in any case. Overall, the specified measurement model performs exceptionally well, providing a good fit to the UK and US data, revealing significant loadings and correlations and, minimising the residual variances of the survey indicators.

5. Conclusion

The above analyses scratch the surface of cross-nationally validating the indicators in two English speaking longstanding democracies, using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA). Although MGCFA dates back to the work of Joreskog (1971), the ordinal nature of the responses choices for the revised indicators necessitate techniques appropriate for the measurement level of the variables. Building on the work of Millsap and Tien (2004), Temme (2006), and Davidov et al. (2011), Section 3 details the ordinal probit model the widely used software package, Mplus, utilizes to obtain parameters for the MGCFA. Attention is given to the constraints necessary to identify the model, and the importance for considering *both* the equivalence of factor loadings and thresholds in a simultaneous fashion. This is an important departure from the separate steps of metric and scalar invariance those conducting MGCFA with continuous indicators employ.

As the literature suggests, two dimensions clearly underlie the concept of political efficacy: "citizens' feelings of personal competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics" (Craig et al., 1990, p.290) or internal efficacy; and "citizens' perceptions of the responsiveness of political bodies and actors to citizens' demands" (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Miller et al., 1980) or external efficacy. We demonstrate the

cross-temporal and cross-national validity of Craig et al.'s measure after a Method's factor is introduced to the model.

Nevertheless, for the two countries, the introduction of slight modifications to the original model results in a better fit to the data. First, we add two cross-loadings to the measurement model. On the one hand, we allow the Finalsay indicator ('*Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office'*) to load (additionally) on the *Internal* Efficacy dimension since it partially taps feelings of subjective competence. On the other hand, we also add the item Puboff ('*I feel that I could do as good of a job in public office as most other* people') to the *External* Efficacy dimension, as respondents who think they could perform well in public office might also think that those who are currently in office are not doing their job effectively. Second, we open up the error covariances between Puboff and Selfqual and between Makelisten and Nosay indicators. Lastly, we fix the insignificant correlations between the Methods and Internal Efficacy and External Efficacy factors to zero. This final model presents a very good fit to the US and UK data and it is therefore used to assess measurement invariance across both countries.

The results presented in this paper show how political efficacy passes the scalar invariance tests only when the factors' means are allowed to vary across the US and UK. The questions designed to tap Internal and External Efficacy are interpreted in a similar manner in the two English speaking democracies. Hence, these items can be confidently used in future empirical work in the US and UK. Craig et al.'s battery of questions is externally valid in the UK, cross-temporally valid in the US and measurement invariant across both countries. However, caution is advised. From the results presented in this paper we cannot conclude how the survey items would behave in different contexts. Measurement invariance should not be assumed when it can be tested. Our analysis

indicate that the revised indicators for internal and external efficacy are equivalent across two major English speaking democracies and suggest that the modified indicators are a better jumping off points for future (minor) revisions to the 'traditional' battery.

In Section 4 we conduct analysis using the appropriate techniques for modelling latent variables ordinal indicators and demonstrate that the alternative indicators perform extremely well, with separate confirmatory factor models for US and UK data fitting the hypothesized model. We also designate a 'Methods' factor to account for the variance that comes about presumably because of the revers ordering of four indicators. The equivalence of the loadings and thresholds allow us to free the latent variable means, and it is clear that Britons have much lower levels of both Internal and External Efficacy than do their American counterparts. Americans vary more in their latent levels of political efficacy than do Britons. Finally, in what we believe is a first in the literature, we leverage the equality constraints on the loadings and thresholds to free the error variances on the indicators (Table 6). The equality of loadings and thresholds coupled with the large differences in the latent variances on both substantive and the 'Methods' dimensions suggest tat the variation we observe is a function of 'true' latent variation on the dimensions.

At this stage, it is important to place emphasis on the magnitude of loadings the negatively worded indicators on the Methods Factor. The agree-disagree statements were put to respondents in a grid-based format delivered via an internet survey. This finding suggests that a not insignificant number of respondents likely engaged in "satisficing" or quickly filling out a pattern of answers regardless of question content to move to the next screen. The inclusion of the Methods Factor allows us to "purge" the substantive factors of measurement error likely related to satisficing. However, the need for a "Methods Factor" reinforces the argument that the use of grids in survey questionnaires have tradeoffs- they

allow respondents to move through a survey more quickly and this allows more questions to be placed on the survey, but this decision comes at the cost of increased measurement error related to question ordering. On a more positive note, the similarity in the structure of this "nuisance" factor across the two groups suggests that representative samples of respondents in the US and UK in approach grid based questionnaires in a similar manner.

Finally, it is important to note the significant differences between average levels of political efficacy between Americans and Britons. But why so? Further research should place emphasis on the reasons behind these patterns or, in other words, the extent to which the political system may exert an impact on feelings of influence upon the political process. Indeed, it is plausible to argue that institutional variations such as the form of government, the type of electoral system or the existence (or absence) of direct democracy practices may affect citizens' feelings of system responsiveness. However, whether these also explain variations in perceived levels of subjective competence, poses a key normative question for contemporary democracies.

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[1] The survey and Scotto's time on the project was funded by ESRC Grant RES-061-25-0405. Residents of Northern Ireland were excluded from the UK sampling frame.

[2] For a more technical exposition, see Millsap and Yun-Tein (2004) and Muthén and Asparouhov (2002).

[3] In Figures 1 and 2 dashed and non- dashed arrows have been included for simplicity of visualisation but they do not have different meanings.

[4] For space and sake of brevity, the full results from all models are not shown.

[5] For model identification purposes, the residual variance of the indicators is fixed to 1 so that the thresholds of the items are allowed to vary across groups. The factor means are set to 0.

[6] The constraints from the previous model remain.

[7] Results not included.

Discussion

This work started by presenting the social motivations of this research. It introduced the concept of political efficacy by acknowledging existing differences in political attitudes within the European context, as well as similarities in the rise of certain forms of political participation across the continent but also beyond its boundaries. Political efficacy is thought to be a key indicator of the health of democratic regimes and also, a fundamental political attitude enabling the comprehension of the recent political and social changes taking place in Europe in the last years, such as increasing levels of abstention, the emergence of smaller political parties and new social movements or, the rise of public protests. These changes seem to suggest that there is a gap between external and internal efficacy. Citizens' appear to be expressing their discontent with the system – its lack of responsiveness – by searching for alternative or additional ways to participate in politics, demanding a change in the relationship with their representatives. However, since this context is rather recent, the scope of these political and social changes is still unknown. In order to assess whether they will lead to further transformation of the current democratic institutions future research should make an effort to disentangle the existence of age, cohort and period effects. The test for these effects will elucidate whether Western democracies are dealing with a short-term problem or rather, whether these effects will persist over time, as generational replacement takes place, thus, leading to a crisis of democratic legitimacy and calling for the change of democratic institutions.

Political efficacy is included in many models of political participation and, in the case of cross-cultural group or country comparisons, some suggest that comparative levels of efficacy are an important signal of the health of representative democracies or,

inexistent among marginalised groups. Since it is an important concept in the study of political behaviour, debates as to how to measure this diffuse and latent concept consume pages and volumes of journals dating back to the 1950's. Large cross-cultural studies of political and social behaviour such as the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) and European Social Survey (ESS), still employ the traditional indicators of political efficacy or close variants that have their origins at the oldest voting and political behaviour studies from the Michigan SRC. However, this dissertation shows that those indicators do not perform well in Europe.

The work by Niemi, Craig, and their colleagues (1990) argues for a set of indicators they believe to reflect the latent concepts of internal and external efficacy and distinguish between the two. Subsequent work by Morrell (2003) studies the use of their revised indictors in the literature and conducts his analyses to assess the concept's internal and external validity. Still, most literature often focuses on populations of single nations or subgroups, thus, without testing for *cross-cultural* validity. Assuming that concepts are externally valid, instead of testing for it, entails the risk of comparing behaviours or attitudes that are not *truly* comparable and, reaching misleading conclusions about the relationship between political efficacy and voting or protest movements across nations.

This PhD thesis aimed to understand *variations in feelings of political efficacy across time* (Paper 1) *and space* (Papers 2 and 3). Two subgoals have guided the structure of this work, (1) *to comprehend how some contextual factors enhance or depress feelings of influence on politics*, and (2) *to understand the basis of cross-national similarities and differences in feelings of political efficacy*. The first concern has been addressed in the first paper whereas the second has been dealt with in the two

following papers. The cross-temporal (Paper 1) and cross-national (Papers 2 and 3) nature of this work, departed from the expectation that political contexts alter individuals' feelings of political efficacy. The hypotheses derived from this expectation and tested in the three parts of this dissertation make this work pioneering. First, *Electoral Outcomes, Expectations and the (de)Mobilisation of Political Efficacy*, is an original piece of work that contributes to the literature on the winner-loser gap by assessing the effect of electoral expectations on feelings of political efficacy, a relationship that has been disregarded until now. The paper shows that not only electoral outcomes but also expectations shape political attitudes such as political efficacy. The second paper, *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy travel across National Borders?* is a novel study that challenges the implicit (but wide-spread) assumption of political efficacy's cross-national equivalence. It shows that in some countries, the traditional question battery fails to measure the same underlying concept as it was originally devised in the US. Third, the novelty of *Valid Correlates of Political Efficacy in the US and UK* rests on the use of a pilot measure across both countries that allows test to be conducted for measurement invariance in the two English speaking democracies. The analysis shows important differences in levels of political efficacy in the US and UK but it also demonstrates that the meaning of the concept is equivalent across the two countries once these differences are taken into account.

Overall, this dissertation helps us to have a better understanding of how political efficacy behaves under specific political contexts and which factors affect these variations. This study is intended to be as informative or comprehensive as possible; however, necessarily, some theoretical questions emerged during this work.

The literature on electoral expectations has paid a great deal of attention to the effect that these have on individuals' vote choices, but the effect of expectations on political attitudes has been mainly ignored. *Electoral Outcomes, Expectations and the (de)Mobilisation of Political Efficacy* addresses this gap by testing for the effect of electoral outcomes, elections and electoral expectations on perceptions of influence on politics. As the most salient participatory process in representative democracy, elections – and not only electoral outcomes – have the potential to promote feelings of political efficacy among citizens. The paper uses data from the UK 2005 and 2010 elections since they offer a good opportunity to test whether the effect of expectations on efficacy is also affected by differences about the degree of (un)certainty of the electoral outcome. By placing emphasis on electoral expectations *and* electoral outcomes, this paper has demonstrated that individual's perceptions of influence on the political process are closely linked to perceptions of the utility of their vote but also, that voting in itself or winning are not requirements to feel politically efficacious since the rational thinking process is affected by the psychological anticipation of a victory (or a defeat) rather than the actual outcome, regardless of the accuracy of voters' electoral expectations. From the evidence presented in the first paper, four main conclusions can be drawn. First, elections *do not* always foster efficacy among citizens who have been socialised in a context where election processes legitimise political authorities and increase affinity with the political regime. Whereas the 2005 general election led to an increase of feelings of efficacy among the electorate, the 2010 electoral contest had the opposite effect. Second, support for the winning or losing party generates differences in levels of political efficacy but these differences are enduring rather than permeable to electoral outcomes. Third, electoral expectations do have a positive effect on efficacy but only, when the number of seats obtained by a party *really* matters. If obtaining an

electoral majority is not the only element affecting the government formation process, electoral expectations will have a secondary role. Lastly, the impact of expectations is exacerbated by electoral uncertainty, as shown by differences between the 2005 and 2010 UK general elections.

The literature on political attitudes is full of attempts to operationalise unobserved or latent constructs which, for example, manifest themselves in the form of subjective attitudes measured by surveys or scores on scales coded by experts. Yet, the first chapter of this dissertation does not account for these attempts, which are theoretically and empirically accounted for in the subsequent chapters. The BES choice is, from my point of view, an additional example of the insufficient theoretical justification behind the modification of the traditional political efficacy survey questions. The BES uses a single question aiming to tap both internal and external efficacy but also, the question differs from the majority of survey items used by the literature as it offers respondents a 0-10 scale instead of a Likert type scale. Hence, the findings obtained for the UK 2005 and 2010 contests cannot be extrapolated to (or directly compared to) other nations.

To this respect, it should be acknowledged that the conclusions drawn from the analysis of Paper 1 might have been partially led by the indicator used. Whether it is true that the question "*On a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 means a great deal of influence and 0 means no influence, how much influence do you have on politics and public affairs?*" aims to tap both the *internal* and *external* dimensions of efficacy, it could also be the case that respondents think of the efficacy of their vote rather than a broader sense influence on the political process. Two factors would account for this rationale. First, since citizens' political knowledge is, on average, low, it is sensible to assume that they

think of their impact on the system through elections rather than non-electoral and non-conventional means of participation. Second, not only citizens are more prone to think in terms of their vote because elections are the process they know most about and most important in a democratic system but also, because we are dealing with election year surveys. Hence, the use of alternative and additional questions – or better, a battery of indicators – could lead to different conclusions and mitigate this 'electoral' effect. Particularly, the inclusion of questions relating to *internal* efficacy or respondents' subjective competence to participate in politics (understanding, necessary skills and abilities) *should* be less affected by either electoral expectations or outcomes.

In this sense, the first paper demonstrates that political efficacy is less permeable to electoral outcomes than to electoral expectations but whether internal and external efficacy respond differently to these factors, remains unanswered. Unfortunately, there are no data available enabling such comparisons, as questions about political efficacy are common in national electoral surveys whereas electoral expectations are not asked that often. Subject to data availability, it would be worthwhile to test the effect of elections, electoral outcomes and expectations on feelings of internal and external efficacy, respectively, as the permeability of these to contextual factors could raise concerns about the health of contemporary democratic regimes. Additionally, it would be wise to devote further attention to the effect of electoral outcomes and expectations on political efficacy in electoral systems other than the UK and to assess the extent to which electoral uncertainty does play a role – given the idiosyncratic character of the UK 2010 election.

The main virtue of *Does the Concept of Political Efficacy Travel across National Borders?* is that it challenges the assumption that the measurement – and hence the

meaning – of political efficacy is equivalent across European nations. Three main motivations gave rise to this study: (1) a lack of conclusive evidence supporting the construct's external validity; (2) the absence of a theoretical justification behind the inclusion of survey items in national and cross-national surveys that deviate from the original battery of questions; and (3) the need to assess whether these new redefined indicators and their relationship with the latent constructs is equivalent *within* the new heterogeneous contexts to which the concept has been exported. This paper uses Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA) to test whether the battery of questions used by the European Social Survey (ESS 2002) to measure political efficacy is invariant across the twenty-one European nations under examination. Three conclusions can be inferred from the results reported. First, in accordance with former literature, the concept of political efficacy consists of two empirical dimensions, *internal* and *external*. After defining unidimensional and bidimensional models for each of the countries, respectively, the two-factor solution shows an exceptionally good fit to the data for all the cases. Second, the construct is *not* comparable across the continent, as its interpretation differs. Political efficacy, as measured by the ESS, is not *measurement invariant*, hence, its meaning is not equivalent across Europe. Third, the latent construct can be interpreted similarly, enabling valid comparisons of group scores, only where a shared linguistic, cultural or historical background exists. The empirical analysis conducted shows that intragroup equivalence holds in three subsets of countries: (a) Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg; (b) Great Britain and Ireland and; (c) Spain, Italy and Portugal. The key conclusion here is that, using traditional measures of efficacy, cross-national comparisons of group means across Europe cannot strictly be made – any such comparisons need to be both made and interpreted with considerable caution.

Valid Correlates of Political Efficacy in the US and UK contributes to fill an important gap in the literature on the measurement of political efficacy. The theoretical relevance and novelty of the manuscript rest on three goals: (1) assessing the cross-temporal validity of the battery of questions designed by Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) in the US; (2) testing for the external validity of the pilot measure by applying it to the UK and; (3) testing whether the measurement of political efficacy is invariant across the US and UK. By using the most recent advances in MGCFA with ordinal data this paper demonstrates that: (1) Craig et al.'s measure is cross-temporally valid after an additional factor controlling for question wording effects is introduced to the model; (2) by allowing some survey items to load on both internal and external dimensions and to correlate among them the original model improves significantly; (3) political efficacy is invariant across the US and UK but only, once the (4) sizeable differences in average levels of political efficacy are accounted for as US citizens are much more efficacious than Britons. The results obtained through the use of a pilot measure, along with the findings of Paper 2, support the idea that concepts and measurement instruments do not travel easily across borders. In sum, these findings call for the application of the two most important rules in cross-cultural research: (1) a similar interpretation of constructs or interpretative equivalence and, (2) equivalent measurement procedures or procedural equivalence.

The lack of cross-cultural validity of survey indicators can bring conclusions about the systematic factors that cause or are caused by varying efficacy levels into doubt. Mueller's (1970) classic five nation study examining the ability of efficacy to influence political participation shows that the loadings of the statements vary considerably across nations. Thus, comparison of the latent variable scores across

nations and in follow-up multivariate research possibly is invalid. Karp and Banducci (2008) examine the individual level and system level variation in survey respondents' agreement or disagreement with a statement that reflects the efficacy of one's vote. They note that partisan preferences are stronger in countries with proportional representation (PR) and this generates an increase in the efficacy levels of those in nations with this form of electoral system, as measured by the single indicator. However, in the absence of cross-national validity of this efficacy indicator, one can make a rival claim that voters in PR systems respond to the indicator in a different manner than do respondents living in nations with majoritarian electoral systems.

As an indicator of the health of democratic regimes and political legitimacy, and as a key factor to understand current political participation trends, new social movements and political parties, any effort to identify and understand the causes of political efficacy and its variation across cultures is highly valuable. This dissertation shows that the meaning of political efficacy is not invariant across nations – as a common background has to exist for political efficacy to be interpreted in a similar way – but it also suggests that differences in levels of political efficacy are country specific and, as such, they can be the result of institutional settings. The results from Papers 2 and 3 raise crucial questions for cross-cultural research but this research is less effective in offering answers. How to respond to these challenges depends, essentially, on the origins of the lack of comparability. This study shows that *culture* and/or *language* might be the root of the problem. Therefore, further cross-cultural research should take into account three potential scenarios in tackling the problem.

First, is it a matter of *language*? In Europe, the equivalence of concepts takes place within subgroups of countries that share linguistic origins. Similarly, political

efficacy is measurement invariant in the two English-speaking democracies under study. If language is the problem, more resources should be invested questionnaire design, translation and pilot questionnaires. Second, is it a matter of *culture*? This case is more problematic as it is highly complex to discern the effects between language and culture, as language is "only" one of the aspects of a country's background, but also, because it could be the result of *both* factors. The work by Davidov et al. (2008) shows that the battery of basic human values developed by Schwartz (1994) is equivalent across Benelux countries. Davidov et al.'s finding support the idea that measurement invariance is 'culturally' affected but they also suggest that these countries share something else beyond language. These results are of particular interest here because they bring us back to the classical public opinion distinction between beliefs, values and attitudes. Do citizens share certain (political) attitudes because they also share specific values? The assessment of whether the source of the lack of invariance rests on these "broader" cultural differences, calls for further cross-national research focusing on the comparison of values and political attitudes. For this purpose, the use of MGCFA techniques is particularly useful. Furthermore, the comparison between the two Anglo-Saxon democracies in Paper 3 demonstrates that differences in political attitudes can be modelled, which is to say, accounted for. Third, is it a matter of *institutional* differences? Institutional differences can be considered a type of cultural differences but they might have to be tackled in a different way. In this case, multilevel structural equation modelling techniques are especially suitable since they allow for the simultaneous estimation of individual and country-specific effects along with measurement models. Be as it may, as Medina, Smith and Long put it "(…) why should we assume invariance *when* invariance can be tested?" (2009:39)

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