No Politics, Please!
When Efficacy Suppresses Civic and Political Engagement

Irina Soboleva (i.soboleva@columbia.edu) *
Work in progress. Please check the latest version here.

January 29, 2019

Abstract

Civic education is ubiquitously used to improve civic and political engagement in weak democracies. However, the exact mechanisms through which it changes political behavior are subject to debate. This paper uses an original field experiment (N=1,381) in Eastern Ukraine — a region plagued by war and record rates of political skepticism — to uncover the psychological mechanisms behind successful civic engagement. The experiment uses cognitive therapy to manipulate self-efficacy and administers civic education and brainstorming sessions on community development to manipulate collective efficacy. The results show that the combination of both facets of efficacy has the largest effect on civic engagement, almost doubling the expressed interest in new community projects. At the same time, counterintuitively, improved efficacy suppresses the reported willingness to join existing civic projects or to run for local or regional office. The manipulation of personal and collective efficacy reduces engagement of “skeptics by choice” (those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations) and increases engagement of “skeptics by ignorance” (political abstainers who harbor vague ex-ante expectations on the quality of political institutions). These findings identify the limitations of civic education in contexts of extreme political skepticism and show that increasing individuals’ sense of efficacy without an accompanying change in the quality of democratic institutions leads to further political frustration. This research contributes to our understanding of the psychological dynamics behind political skepticism, examines how political context conditions the effect of efficacy on civic and political engagement, and clarifies the role of psychological attributes in democratic consolidation.

Keywords: field experiments, civic engagement, cognitive therapy, political efficacy, democratic consolidation, political skepticism

*PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Columbia University. The experiment is approved by the Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB-AAAR8352).
## Contents

1 Introduction 3

2 Efficacy, Engagement, and Political Skepticism 6
  2.1 The Puzzle of Critical Citizens and Political Efficacy . . . . . . . . . . . . 6
  2.2 Unpacking the Effects of Efficacy on Civic and Political Engagement . . . . 8

3 The Dynamics of Collective and Political Efficacy in Ukraine 10

4 Experimental Intervention 13
  4.1 Randomization and Treatment Assignment . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 13
  4.2 Experimental Conditions . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 13
    4.2.1 Self-Efficacy . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 14
    4.2.2 Collective Efficacy . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 16
    4.2.3 Combined . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 17
    4.2.4 Control . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 17
  4.3 Outcome Variables . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 17

5 Data Analysis 19
  5.1 Model Estimation . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 19
  5.2 Increased Efficacy and Political Skepticism . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 20
  5.3 Civic vs. Political Engagement . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 22
  5.4 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects: Skeptics by Choice, Skeptics by Ignorance 24
  5.5 Alternative Explanations . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 27

6 Discussion 28

7 Conclusion 30

8 Appendix 32
1 Introduction

Does efficacy\(^1\) prevent civic and political disengagement? On the one hand, abundant evidence suggests that efficacious citizens are better equipped to benefit from democratic institutions and exercise control over authorities (Craig et al. (1990), Anderson (2010), Kahne & Westheimer (2006), Beaumont (2011), Caprara et al. (2009)). The induction of political efficacy has been connected to improved rates of civic and political engagement (Gottlieb (2016), Grossman et al. (2017)), and an individual’s sense of political agency predicts political participation better than competence (Solhaug (2006)). On the other hand, expectations regarding the effect of efficacy on participation fail to account for the widespread dissatisfaction with democracy among politically efficacious voters in Western democracies (Fiorina (1999), Welzel & Alvarez (2014), Kahne & Westheimer (2006)) and the limited effect of civic education programs that are directly designed to improve political efficacy through competence (Chatterjee (2018), Rao et al. (2017), Dunning et al. (2018)). Comparative studies of political skepticism demonstrate that efficacious and emancipated citizens might withdraw from democratic participation (Klingemann (2014)) if their political efficacy is not met with adequate performance on the part of democratic institutions (Welzel & Alvarez (2014), Norris (2011), Croke et al. (2016), de Zuniga et al. (2017)). Thus, we still lack consistent explanations of the mixed dynamic of efficacy and engagement in varying political contexts.

This paper addresses this puzzle by empirically testing the extent to which efficacy improves political and civic engagement. I am specifically interested in the heterogeneous effects of improved self- and collective efficacy in the context of weak, unconsolidated democracies, where government and political efficacy are low, and the institutions of political representation do not achieve desired political outcomes. I conduct an original experiment in Eastern Ukraine, where political efficacy has been suppressed by the col-

---

\(^1\)Self-efficacy, or personal efficacy, refers to individuals’ perceptions of their own personal agency and ability to achieve desirable outcomes in life (Bandura (1982)). Specific facets of self-efficacy — political, governmental, collective, and so on — are context-related. Internal political efficacy captures an individual’s own expected effectiveness in political participation, and external political efficacy captures the expected effectiveness of governmental response to one’s political demands (Craig et al. (1990)). Collective efficacy refers to the expected ability of a social group to solve collective action problems (Moreno et al. (2001)).
lapse of the national government, economic crisis, and political polarization exacerbated by Russia-backed military separatism and annexation of Crimea. With record high abstention rates and widespread skepticism toward the government, the region struggles to sustain civic and political engagement in the course of democratic consolidation. The experiment is organized as an independent large-scale civic education campaign (N=1,381) on a demographically representative and diverse sample of adults from the region.

To measure the effect of efficacy (specifically, its self- and collective facets) on political and civic engagement, I develop original experimental treatments available in Ukrainian and Russian. The first treatment manipulates self-efficacy through guided cognitive therapy. The second treatment manipulates collective efficacy through political education followed by moderated brainstorming sessions on community development. Due to the sensitive political context, direct manipulation of political efficacy would have exerted psychologically disturbing side effects, but manipulation of self-efficacy and collective efficacy with a simultaneous calibration of locus of control yields effects comparable with manipulation of internal and external political efficacy. Respondents are randomly assigned to one of the treatments, to their combined version, or to the control group. The outcome measures involve a behavioral response — respondents’ actual interest in developing at least one of five suggested community development projects — and with a wide array of attitudinal measures.

The results show that improved self-efficacy and collective efficacy increase the willingness to request additional information on community projects or to run for national office. The combination of both facets of efficacy results in the largest effect size, almost doubling the expressed interest in community development. At the same time, counterintuitively, the treatments suppress reported willingness to join other activities. Moreover, increased collective efficacy reduces engagement for those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations and increases engagement for those with low pre-treatment levels of political engagement and competence. The difference between the treatments matters as well; on average, the manipulation of self-efficacy affects both civic and political activities, while the priming of collective efficacy primarily targets political engagement. Finally, I find that prior political experience conditions the effect of
The primary contribution of this paper is explaining the mechanisms behind the mixed effect of efficacy-inducing civic education on civic and political engagement in weak democracies. The experiment shows that enhanced self-efficacy and collective efficacy do not necessarily translate to better engagement. While collective efficacy induces civic engagement, it mostly benefits those individuals who have accepted the regime as a legitimate one but lack political competence. On the contrary, for highly competent citizens, the skepticism in political legitimacy of the regime leads to the opposite result: the improved sense of efficacy leads them to withdraw from political institutions that are considered powerless and futile.

The paper enhances our understanding of the effect of psychological attributes on political engagement and reconsiders the problem of democratic consolidation through the lens of self- and collective efficacy. It shows that individual gains from civic education are higher for skeptics by ignorance — the respondents with very low levels of pre-treatment political competence. Skeptics by choice — those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations — cannot be mobilized to participate in those practices of civic and political engagement that are neither novel nor attractive to them. Thus, improved sense of collective efficacy has an average negative effect on political and civic engagement but closes the participation gap between skeptics by ignorance and skeptics by choice.

This research has broader implications for the study of comparative democratization, political psychology of skepticism and abstention, and the experimental study of self-efficacy. The paper contributes to the literature on comparative democratization by exploring heterogeneous political outcomes that a large-scale induction of collective efficacy generates. Improved self-efficacy alone has a limited positive effect among the least engaged groups but negatively affects those citizens whose political competence is already very high. While in some countries this heterogeneity benefits political opposition and less efficacious social groups (Grossman et al. (2017)), in other political contexts the long-term change in political power after the treatment is less obvious. The research also contributes to the literature on political skepticism and abstention by explaining why civic education
has a limited ability to overcome political abstention in a regime with low political capacity. Political skepticism conditions the effect of political information on participation (Carr et al. (2014)). Politically competent respondents with higher collective efficacy disengage from civic life when exposed to civic education because their dissatisfaction with political institutions will stir up their suspicion of political manipulation by elites. Finally, the paper shows that increasing individuals’ sense of efficacy without an accompanying change in the quality of democratic institutions leads to further political frustration, thus contributing to the experimental research on the political effects of efficacy. Civic education campaigns that do not account for these dynamics might cause adverse effects for democratic consolidation.

2 Efficacy, Engagement, and Political Skepticism

2.1 The Puzzle of Critical Citizens and Political Efficacy

This paper addresses the puzzling relationship between the facets of efficacy and political disengagement. Abundant research suggests that efficacious citizens are better prepared to benefit from democratic institutions, exercise control over authorities, and organize a collective action (Kahne & Westheimer (2006), Caprara et al. (2009), Anderson (2010), Beaumont (2011), Kim (2015)). Across the globe, governments use civic education to improve citizens’ involvement in public matters (Chzhen (2013)) by increasing their political confidence and promoting their sense of political efficacy (Schedler (1998), Galston (2001), Aleman & Yang (2011), Fioramonti (2012)). Observational data show that competent democratic citizens who are aware of their political opportunities are better prepared to defend their political interests (Craig et al. (1990)). As Galston states, “the more knowledge citizens have of civic affairs, the less likely they are to experience a generalized mistrust of, or alienation from, public life.” (Galston (2001), p.224).

Yet, the relationships between political competence, the facets of efficacy, and engagement remains unclear.

First, recent studies yield mixed evidence on the effect of civic competence on political engagement (Lieberman et al. (2014), Chatterjee (2018), Rao et al. (2017)). Simply providing citizens with information on political opportunities or politicians’ performance is
insufficient for improving engagement (Dunning et al. (2018)). To be effective, civic engagement programs must reduce the costs of participation, present novel information, initiate a snow-ball effect involving all community members, and improve the sense of individual political efficacy (Lieberman et al. (2014), McClendon (2014), Gottlieb (2016), Adida et al. (2018)). Sense of agency itself predicts political participation and civic engagement better than knowledge (Solhaug (2006)).

Second, the decline of democratic enthusiasm in Western countries shows that better information and higher efficacy may lead to increased expectations of democratic performance and the dissatisfaction with political and civic engagement (Fiorina (1999), Kahne & Westheimer (2006)). Comparative studies of political skepticism suggest that efficacious and emancipated citizens might withdraw from democratic participation (Klingemann (2014)), because their rising aspirations for democracy are not met with adequate performance of democratic institutions (Norris (2011)). The evidence on the connection between deliberation and political efficacy also remains mixed (Dyck & Lascher (2009), Morrell (2005), Jaske (2018), Pei et al. (2018)).

Some evidence suggests that the political regime might affect the relationships between political efficacy, competence, and engagement. On average, more educated people in advanced democracies have a better sense of agency and participate more (Dassonneville & Hooghe (2017), Diwan & Vartanova (2018)) while in electoral authoritarian regimes such as Mugabe’s Zimbabwe educated citizens avoid political participation because of its futility (Croke et al. (2016)). Similarly, political efficacy might translate to better engagement only if available political and civic activities are considered worthwhile to pursue, and if the political regime is perceived as legitimate.

This paper aims to clarify the dynamic between self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and engagement in the context of extreme political skepticism. I explore two research questions: the extent to which the manipulation of individual self- and collective efficacy improves political and civic participation and the way in which political skepticism conditions this improvement. I suggest, following (Welzel & Alvarez (2014)), that increased efficacy results in lower engagement for those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations. I am specifically interested in the heterogeneous effects of im-
proved efficacy in the context of weak, unconsolidated democracies, where the institutions of political representation are not good enough to achieve desired political outcome. The focus on microlevel psychological dynamics behind political engagement allows us to clarify the causal logic behind the political and civic disengagement of efficacious citizens and to empirically isolate the effects of different facets of efficacy on political behavior.

2.2 Unpacking the Effects of Efficacy on Civic and Political Engagement

The paper makes four contributions to the experimental study of efficacy and engagement in the context of political skepticism.

First, I experimentally identify the mechanisms through which efficacy affects participation in civic and political activities (Anderson (2010), Lee (2010), Morrell (2005), Vecchione & Caprara (2009)). Studies demonstrate that improved efficacy stimulates civic and political engagement and benefits traditionally alienated political groups and less efficacious constituencies (Grossman et al. (2017), Lieberman & Zhou (2018)). Yet, it is not clear if the manipulation of efficacy improves political participation through self-evaluation (i.e., self-efficacy itself), through change in collective or political efficacy, or through the interaction of improved political efficacy with political attitudes or social status (Pei et al. (2018)). I address this gap by separately manipulating self-efficacy (internal sense of powerfulness and agency), collective efficacy (the belief in a community’s potential to achieve collective outcomes), and their interaction.

Second, I examine how various facets of non-political efficacy influence political agency (Velasquez & LaRose (2014), Caprara et al. (2009), Flanagan (2009), Pattie et al. (2003)). Political studies mostly address political efficacy (a sense of having a good understanding of political issues, a say in political governance, or a high expectancy of success from a public position (Morrell (2003))) or government efficacy (the attitudes toward the effectiveness of governance in general (de Zuniga et al. (2017))). I propose paying closer attention to the political role of collective efficacy - the expected ability of a social group to solve collective action problems (Moreno et al. (2001), Stajkovic et al. (2009), Lee (2010), Anderson (2010)). In contexts where political institutions are discredited, and political efficacy is
frustrated, collective efficacy substitutes political efficacy. Advancing our understanding of
this process, I demonstrate how collective efficacy affects the willingness to run for office or
to establish an organization to defend property rights in the context of Eastern Ukraine,
where political efficacy has been diminishing due to political abstention, polarization, and
military conflict.

Third, I explore the interplay of efficacy and engagement under an understudied scope
condition - extreme political skepticism and low government capacity (Pinkleton et al.
(2012)). The political context moderates the effect of education on political values (Catter-
berg & Moreno (2006), Diwan & Vartanova (2018)), but few studies systematically examine
the interaction of the induced sense of efficacy with political participation in countries with
low state capacity. Such contexts, in which political institutions lack legitimacy, are sub-
ject to civil conflict and contention as a result of extreme rejection of the system (Dyck &
Lascher (2009), Seligson & Carrión (2002)). Groups with frustrated political efficacy might
perceive civic education as a tool of forced political integration or regime legitimization
(Croke et al. (2016)). Thus, the direct manipulation of political efficacy in such contexts is
problematic, because respondents would either avoid participation in such an experiment
or, given their low political efficacy, feel triggered by the treatment. At the same time,
collective efficacy might not be affected by the political context, especially if civil society is
strong enough to compensate for either the lack of political efficacy or government failure,
and general self-efficacy might also not be deprived since it would refer to a broader range
of actions, not necessarily related to politics. The hypothesis is not confirmed, as I find that
the induction of self- or collective efficacy in the context where political institutions are
objectively incapacitated leads to a suppressed willingness to exploit existing engagement
opportunities but increases the interest in developing new forms of civic engagement.

Finally, I uncover understudied heterogeneous treatment effects of efficacy induction
(Grossman et al. (2017)). In the context of political skepticism, two groups of skeptics
are present: those who are not interested in politics and do not feel competent enough
(skeptics by ignorance) and those who have tried various civic and political activities but
grew frustrated by the results (skeptics by choice). The induction of collective efficacy
motivates skeptics by ignorance to participate more while alienating skeptics by choice.
3 The Dynamics of Collective and Political Efficacy in Ukraine

To uncover the effect of efficacy on democratic political engagement, I organized a field experiment on civic engagement in Ukraine. The country’s political context allows to study the role of political efficacy in democratic consolidation. On the one hand, Ukraine has been going through a process of decommunization and democratic development, showing remarkable levels of self-organization and civic activism (Diuk (2014), Stepanenko & Pylynskyi (2015), Gatskova & Gatskov (2015)). On the other hand, successful civic protests were not backed up by a comprehensive transformation of post-Soviet clientelist networks, did not reduce economic inequality, and did not institutionalize as inclusive structures of political representation (Matsiyevsky (2018)). Thus, recent Ukrainian political development has frustrated political efficacy in the East. The development allows us to distinguish between different individual and collective facets of self-efficacy and disentangle their effect on civic and political engagement.

Three political trends are suppressing the political efficacy of the average Ukrainian, thus making the research context especially intriguing for experimental intervention. First, the post-Soviet legacy of irresponsive elites and low political accountability created a bad equilibrium in Ukrainian politics, with most people being disappointed in political institutions, skeptical of democracy, and mistrustful of political elites (Pisano (Forthcoming), Kotkin & Beissinger (2014), D’Anieri (2010)). Analysts describe the average Ukrainian’s civic life as passive because of the “disappointment with the post-Soviet transformation and low subjective social status” (Gatskova & Gatskov (2015), p.673) and underscore the limited role of civil society organizations in disseminating cooperative and democratic values (Stewart & Dollbaum (2017)).

Second, during the period from 2013 to 2018, Ukrainians went through a rapid transformation from the political hopes and aspirations accompanying the Euromaidan political protest to large-scale political turmoil and civil war (Stepanenko & Pylynskyi (2015)). As observers note, even after Euromaidan, “[the] modus operandi of elites’ political culture, composed of clientelism, secretive deals and quota based nominations to government
positions continues to operate” (Matsiyevsky (2018)). The rapid decline in democratic expectations reinforced the attitudes of alienation and learned helplessness. The fleeing of a large fraction of the political elite including President Yanukovych further eroded political trust (Shevel (2015)). The recent political experience of Ukrainians, especially those from the East and the South, have dampened their internal locus of control and undermined their political efficacy.

Finally, civic engagement campaigns in Ukraine have been having an uneven effect because of the country’s high ethnolinguistic polarization. There is an ongoing debate on whether language practice and ethnic identity predict political attitudes. Some scholars question the direct effect of ethnicity on voting patterns and policy issues (Frye (2015)) while others note its increasing relevance (Pop-Eleches & Robertson (2018)). There is no consensus on whether the new nationalist turn in Ukrainian politics led to a shift in identities of Russian-speaking Ukrainians (Metzger et al. (2016)), and some approaches underscore the rapidly changing meaning of Ukrainianness and Russianness altogether and the mixed effect of ethnic identity on polarization and political attitudes (Giuliano (2018), Kulyk (2018)). Irrespective of competing microlevel explanations, the West turns out and participates at a higher rate than the East, and the two easternmost regions are excluded from national politics after the eruption of the Donbas conflict. Thus, the political efficacy of Eastern Ukrainians has been suppressed by the collapse of the national government, political polarization, and ethnolinguistic polarization, and exacerbated by the Russia-backed military invasion and annexation of Crimea. Most respondents in my sample do not vote or refuse to disclose their political preferences.

On the other hand, civil society was able to bounce back and counteract these trends by incorporating ethnically and socially different groups to self-organized networks of social trust and by effectively substituting the state in providing public services. Ukrainian civic society is among the strongest ones in the post-Soviet space, and it essentially replaced the less-efficacious state in a wide range of civic activities, ranging from school management and water supply to providing essential material support to army battalions fighting in the ATO zone (Kvartiuk (2016), Worschech (2017)). The communities throughout the country are actively involved in integrating internally displaced people from Donbas and providing
social support to wounded soldiers (Drozd (2017)).

Counterintuitively, the ethnolinguistic diversity that hinders Ukrainian political stability simultaneously contributes to the strength of its civic society. The analyses of identity politics in Ukraine show that popular worries about Ukrainian ethnic radicalization are not supported by empirical evidence. On the contrary, Ukrainian civil society leans toward moderate policy proposals and prioritizes the development of a unifying civic identity (Onuch et al. (2018)). The variety of paths towards participation ensures that people with different backgrounds and identities find a suitable role in large-scale political events like Euromaidan or the Orange Revolution (Onuch & Sasse (2016), Smyth (2018)).

Finally, while the country is regionally divided, other typical cleavages are not salient (Arel (2018)). Ukrainians are not as polarized on social and economic issues as they are on political ones. Altogether, the fleeing of President Yanukovych, the conflict in Donbas and the Russian annexation of Crimea unified Ukrainians around the issues of the implementation of democratic reforms, the eradication of corruption, and geopolitical integration with European Union (Giuliano (2018), Nikolayenko & DeCasper (2018)). Thus, even though political efficacy of most Eastern and Southern Ukrainians is frustrated, their personal and collective efficacy is not. In fact, collective efficacy became the political efficacy in Ukraine, as no political leader managed to provide the scale of political and social transformation that civil society aspires to achieve (Diuk (2014), Krasynska & Martin (2017)).

Running a field experiment in Eastern Ukraine presents an opportunity to test the microlevel effect of individual and collective efficacy on civic and political participation in the context of frustrated political agency. Within Eastern Ukraine, I specifically focus on the South-East. The region is more economically deprived and politically disengaged than the West, the North, and the Center (sampling in the East was not possible due to the war zone restrictions). The study is set in Kherson, a typical province of the Ukrainian South-East. As in the whole country, its electoral landscape is diverse and highly competitive, but suffers from elite capture and clientelism in electoral politics, learned helplessness and alienation from politics, and exposure to violence and an influx of internally displaced people. The population remains skeptical of the actual benefits of democratic reforms: most Khersonians do not know their local deputies (Bely (2016)). The province features
4 Experimental Intervention

4.1 Randomization and Treatment Assignment

In 2018, I recruited 1441 respondents for the experiment. Subjects were recruited via three recruitment channels: (1) random demographically weighted recruitment on streets (793, 55%); (2) personal invitations distributed via mailing lists provided by local social activists (334, 23.2%); (3) and targeted online recruitment via social media (314, 21.8%). The resulting sample is slightly more female than the general population (57.8% female compared to 52.1%), close to the population median of age (40.3 compared to 40.4), and slightly more educated. Linguistically, the sample is representative of the Ukrainian East and South (16.4% of respondents speak Ukrainian). The sample is diverse enough to detect heterogeneous treatment effects.

The pilot wave included 60 subjects, the main experiment, reported below, involved 1381 participants. A blocked randomization protocol was used on-the-spot to assign respondents to one of four blocks, which were formed based on their age (18-34, 35+) and gender, thus reducing sampling variability and increasing the precision of ATE estimates. The treatment is balanced along covariates.

The study was administered in seven locations – five in suburban areas and two in the center of Kherson. All respondents received monetary compensation at the end of the survey. The experiment was set in a lab-in-the-field, and the treatment assignment resulted in the reception of the treatment by all subjects. Subjects had personal ID cards with a masked group identifier during the experiment, ruling out the possibility of mistakenly treating a subject from the control condition or not administering the treatment on those in treated conditions.

4.2 Experimental Conditions

The experimental design isolates the specific effect of induced sense of efficacy by separately manipulating self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Subjects in the first experimental
condition (Self-Efficacy) received cognitive therapy which manipulated their self-efficacy by priming their awareness of personal successes. Importantly, the treatment did not feature any political information. All examples were private (family relationships, personal or professional development). The only mechanism through which we expect the treatment to work is the induction of self-efficacy. Subjects in the second experimental condition (Collective Efficacy) were educated about recent community successes in recycling, infrastructure innovation, property management, and anti-corruption school budget reform. The improvement of collective efficacy is achieved through learning from the success stories and developing a plan to adopt these successes in their own neighborhood during a subsequent brainstorming session. The combined treatment causes the simultaneous induction of self- and collective efficacy. The difference between the treatments decomposes the effect of self-efficacy per se (the one we manipulate in the first treatment) and the effect of collective efficacy.

4.2.1 Self-Efficacy

The Self-Efficacy treatment administers a session of individual cognitive therapy. It combines the manipulation of two interrelated aspects of self-efficacy: self-efficacy itself and internal locus of control. There are four reasons to add the locus of control calibration before self-efficacy training. First, and most importantly for the subsequent manipulation of self-efficacy, it reduces frustration by balancing unrealistic expectations. Civic engagement programs seem to boost citizens’ self-esteem without providing them with tools to calibrate their locus of control, thus leading to unrealistic expectations for democratic practices (Galvin et al. (2018)). Second, internal locus of control correlates with higher political and civic engagement (Anisfeld (1981), Fast (1973)) and higher political trust (Lindström (2010)). Third, it activates sense of agency (Sullivan (1993), Launius & Lindquist (1988)) and overcomes learned helplessness in politics, as it is associated with a lesser need for strong leadership and authoritarianism and higher demand for self-governance and independence (Hiroto (1974), Jarmakowski (2009)). Finally, internal locus of control orients citizens towards their immediate surroundings, reducing the pressure of polarized national politics and priming them to care about their community. It is shown to increase participa-
tion in recycling programs (McCarty & Shrum (2001)) and to lead to more concern about environmental pollution and global warming (Mostafa (2016)).

Respondents began by completing a quick introductory session that acquainted them with the ideas of internal locus of control and self-efficacy. The information was presented in a manner accessible to people with no psychological education. At the end of this session, subjects were asked to consider several mundane life situations and decide which of the presented solutions are within the locus of control of the characters involved. The results were recoded to measure the degree of comprehension. The success rates were moderate across both groups that featured the treatment (Self-Efficacy and Combined), with respective comprehension rates of 57.1% and 60.6%. Accounting for the comprehension rate does not change the results of model estimates, thus I report the estimates without comprehension controls.

Then, the treatment switched to self-efficacy induction. Respondents were asked to write short reflections (on a provided printed form) about some life concern of their choice. Most respondents chose topics related to health improvement, job change or search, and family relationships. The form prompted them to outline some realistic solutions to their concern, providing nudges like “What can you feasibly change in this situation?” or “How can you improve your control over this situation?” Research assistants checked the reflections for completion and accuracy to make sure that the respondents identified the solutions correctly. After that, respondents were asked to reflect upon their past successes and to identify the personal strengths that helped them to achieve their goals in similar life situations. The treatment ended with respondents listing the traits of their personality that they are proud of and that help them to reach desirable outcomes in life. “Stubbornness”, “persistence”, and “determination” were the top three categories (with “optimism” and “flexibility” falling far behind).

Naturally, a short intervention of this kind might not impose a long-lasting cognitive benefit. At the same time, most respondents confessed that they had never thought about their lives through the lens of internal locus of control and high self-efficacy and that they enjoyed this new perspective.
4.2.2 Collective Efficacy

The second treatment primed collective efficacy. The design of the treatment repeated the structure of the first one, prompting subjects to first receive some information on the topic and then reflect on their efficacy in achieving desirable outcomes. At the same time, it targets the most important aspects of internal collective efficacy: supporting the sense of belonging to an active community, sharing the skills for social action, engaging in deliberation, and pursuing public goals in collaboration with peers (Beaumont (2011)).

Respondents watched four videos made by local TV presenters specifically for the experiment. The videos describe four original and successful real-life initiatives led by local people: a new and transparent system of school budgeting, an innovation in electricity infrastructure, the establishment of a homeowners’ association, and a recycling campaign. All respondents filled in a short questionnaire with comprehension questions after they watched the videos. Most of them did watch the videos and correctly understood the content. The comprehension rates (the number of correctly answered questions) were 76.8% and 75.3% in the groups that received this treatment (Collective Efficacy and Combined). The comprehension difference does not predict the difference in the treatment effects in these groups.

Then, subjects were invited to a civic brainstorming session guided by moderators. The moderators were recruited from local universities’ psychology departments and were trained to lead the brainstorming group discussion. During the session, subjects were prompted to discuss the videos, share their opinion on other local initiatives, and think of the potential tools of engagement that they could use to enhance the quality of their lives. The discussions used deliberative practices to improve collective efficacy (Bowler & Donovan (2002), Jaske (2018)) and induced the growth mindset to prevent respondents from leaning toward negative thinking about past failures (Claro et al. (2016), Ng (2018)). When a depressing story of a failed civic initiative was shared by the respondents, the moderators helped respondents to critically evaluate the reasons behind the failure and to identify ways of overcoming these obstacles in the future. Similar to the reflection about personal strengths and successes in the Self-Efficacy treatment, the Collective Efficacy treatment incorporated the reflection on community achievements and potential.
4.2.3 Combined

In the third group, cognitive therapy and a civic brainstorming session were combined. The therapy preceded the civic treatment because it was essential to prime the respondents’ personal efficacy before they were exposed to the information on community efficacy. An alternative design (civic education before cognitive therapy) would also be appropriate if the researcher is interested in the effect of community potency on individual self-evaluation, but this dynamic is beyond the scope of this study. The design allowed me to decompose the effects of political information on civic engagement and to detect if cognitive training provides a mediating mechanism through which civic education works.

4.2.4 Control

The control group had no cognitive or information intervention. I restrained from administering a placebo treatment because in this case it would be hard to develop a single placebo for both therapy and education treatments (as they were administered in different formats and ways). A separate design concern involving the control group was the between-group variation in the length of the experiment. However, the within-group variation in survey length was surprisingly high, and the length of the survey does not predict treatment outcomes or experimental compliance.

4.3 Outcome Variables

To differentiate between intended and actual behavior, I collected attitudinal (self-reported) and behavioral (observed by experimenters) responses. All attitudinal outcomes were measured immediately at the end of the survey component and before the discussion. For the collective efficacy and combined groups, I recorded the behavioral outcome after the group discussion. Because of logistic constraints, it was problematic to record the responses to attitudinal measures right after the group discussion, and thus I had to measure them right before, as the last eight questions of the questionnaire. Thus, attitudinal outcomes specifically detect the difference between the treatment effect induced by cognitive therapy, videos, and their combination. At the same time, additional caution is required when interpreting my behavioral measure since it is impossible to distinguish between the separate
effect of group discussion and educational videos.

For the attitudinal measures of civic engagement, I suggest a set of activities that are available in the region, that are non-military (do not allude to the civil conflict in Donbas), non-polarizing, and have relatively low engagement costs: volunteering as an electoral observer, joining an activist group to promote a recycling campaign, joining a political party, and organizing a civic council. The activities are widespread and the information on their implementation is available publicly. The willingness to join these activities is measured with a simple four-point Likert scale from “definitely not” to “definitely yes”, with the direction of the scale randomized across individuals. I condense the responses to a set of binary variables (with “1” referring to the willingness to join the activity) to make the interpretation of the logit regression results more intuitive and construct a simple index that captures the intensity of civic response from 0 (definitely restraining from any activity) to 12 (strong willingness to participate in all suggested activities)\(^2\).

For political engagement, I measure respondents’ willingness to run for office in a home-owners’ association or in civic, regional, or national parliament. I use the same four-point Likert scale to measure their responses and condense the responses to a set of binary variables. I do not ask about their intention to vote — a frequent proxy for political engagement — for three reasons. First, the voting ritual in the region is contentious. Pisano (Forthcoming) provides an excellent explanation of why voting in Eastern Ukraine is perceived as a ritualized theater rather than as a meaningful tool of political representation. Second, having intention to vote in the questionnaire could contaminate other responses, as respondents might have perceived the survey as a screening tool right before the beginning of the 2019 presidential campaign. Third, narrowing political engagement to voting diverts our attention from those activities that imply more committed forms of political participation (Ekman et al. (2016)).

Given that respondents were extremely skeptical of politics, I worried about their reported attitudes being distorted or falsified, for several reasons. First, respondents tend to report what they believe to be a social norm, and this bias will be reflected in their

\(^2\)I separately measure political and civic engagement. A principal component analysis confirms that respondents differentiate between civic and political activities. I use two inverse-weighted indexes as an alternative to a simple weighted mean and they yield compatible results.
experimental responses (Boas et al. (2018)). In the case of Eastern Ukraine, a social norm would be to express extreme skepticism in politics and avoid political information. Second, I anticipated the respondents to be anxious about the potential disclosure of their responses. Although the experiment was completely anonymous, most respondents were still wary about their true anonymity being maintained and believed that the data would be “stored somewhere”.

Thus, it was essential to develop a behavioral measure that would be discrete enough as to not be perceived as a response (Young (2018)). To do so, I developed an informational leaflet in collaboration with local civic activists. The leaflet features a set of communal activities potentially available in the region (such as enrolling in an energy-saving program for one’s residential building from a local NGO or participating in a historical conservation program). The description was followed by an easily accessible action plan with steps the respondents would need to undertake to benefit from these programs. The leaflets were left on a separate table and subjects could take the leaflets on their way out from the experimental site. They were not asked about the exact number of leaflets taken\(^3\), but my research assistants recorded it in a discrete way.

5 Data Analysis

5.1 Model Estimation

I estimate the intent-to-treat effect on the behavioral outcome with a generalized linear model:

\[
Y_{i,j} = \gamma_1 \times Self_i + \gamma_2 \times Collective_i + \gamma_3 \times Combined_i + X_i \lambda + \mu_j + \epsilon_{i,j}
\]

Where \(Y_{i,j}\) is an estimated intent-to-treat effect, measured with OLS, binomial logistic,
and ordered logistic regressions; Personal, Collective and Combined are treatment indicators of Self-Efficacy, Collective Efficacy, and Combined treatments; $X_i$ is a vector of covariates that includes gender, language, education, age, and socioeconomic status; $\mu_j$ is a block randomization dummy; and $\epsilon_{i,j}$ is a disturbance term. Since the de-facto probability of assignment to treatment varies by block (from 0.199 to 0.295), I use inverse probability weights (IPW) in all model specifications. The standard errors are robust in all specifications.

5.2 Increased Efficacy and Political Skepticism

I start by examining the direct effect of the three experimental conditions on respondents' interest in civic and political engagement. The first outcome column in Table 1 refers to the behavioral measure — the number of leaflets with community projects information that respondents took after the experiment. On average, the Combined treatment produced the largest increase in the number of taken leaflets (increasing the control mean of 2.8 leaflets per person to almost 4 leaflets per person, the effect is significant at the 0.01 level). Collective Efficacy also increased the number of requested leaflets (a 0.99 increase in the number of leaflets, significant at the 0.01 level). Self-Efficacy delivered a weaker, yet still positive, result (a 0.77 increase in the average number of taken leaflets), however the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for the false discovery rate suggests that this treatment is only marginally significant (at the 0.1, not 0.05, level). Civic activism is presented as a cumulative rating that accounts for the intensity of willingness to become involved in the four civic activities, where “0” stands for a definite rejection, “6” for a middle point and “12” for a definite interest in all of them. The treatments yield marginally significant mixed results on this outcome. Finally, political engagement is measured as a similar cumulative rating that shows that on average, all treatments suppressed the willingness to run for office, with the strongest negative effect exhibited by self-efficacy improvement.

$I also use randomization inference to test the skeptical sharp null hypothesis of no effect for any unit for all dependent variables. The estimates are adjusted for the blocked random assignment (i.e., the simulated randomizations occur within blocks). Every procedure performs 10,000 simulations of possible ATEs. Both methods yield compatible results, confirming a strong positive effect of all treatments on the behavioral measure that is unlikely to occur by chance, and null or negative effects on attitudinal measures.
Table 1: Individual Efficacy and Civic and Political Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sharing Information</th>
<th>Civic Activism</th>
<th>Running for Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
<td>−0.41*</td>
<td>−0.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy</td>
<td>0.99***</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
<td>−0.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>1.05***</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>−0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.41)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.48***</td>
<td>1.15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Mean</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Range</td>
<td>[0.50]</td>
<td>[0.12]</td>
<td>[0.12]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Model 1 is estimated with an OLS regression, the outcome is measured with the number of taken leaflets. Models 2 and 3 are estimated with ordered logistic regressions, outcomes reflect willingness to join civic or political activities. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Covariates include gender, language, education, age, and socioeconomic status.

At first glance, these results contradict much of what we know about the role of efficacy in political engagement and the connection between behavioral and attitudinal measures. Behavioral and attitudinal measures frequently go in different directions (Boas et al. (2018)) – thus we strive to obtain both – but a positive direction for behavioral measures and negative direction for attitudinal measures are a rare phenomenon.

A closer look, however, confirms the expectations about the counterintuitive dynamics of efficacy and engagement in the context of extreme political skepticism, abstention, and recent experiences with political violence. First, the improved sense of efficacy implies a better rationalization of actions and intentions. Given the context of Eastern Ukraine, induced efficacy might dissuade individuals from political participation, because the existing options of political and civic engagement are fruitless and dissatisfactory. I elaborate on this point in the next section on specific civic and political activities (see Table 2).

The behavioral outcome measures the interest in requesting additional information to be shared with friends and neighbors. Essentially, it creates an opportunity to establish a new civic structure independent of discredited institutions of political representation, based on independent social network of peers. This finding is consistent with ethnographic evidence on the preference for “creative” non-conventional ways of civic engagement among political skeptics in the US (Bennett et al. (2013)). A similar technique is preferred by Russian nonsystemic opposition activists — developing a new political opportunity structure on
the fruitful soil of existing social connections and ties instead of integrating into state-affiliated institutions of political representation (Smyth & Soboleva (2016)).

Three primary conclusions from the main experimental results are that self-efficacy and collective efficacy change individual propensity towards civic and political activism in a manner similar to internal and external political efficacy; that the potency resulting from the combination of personal and collective efficacy yields the strongest positive effect on interest in community development information; and that attitudinal measures in the context of widespread political skepticism might be prone to anti-politics prejudice and diverge from their less costly equivalents. To disentangle the specific effect of non-political efficacy on political and civic components of engagement, I proceed with examining civic and political activities separately (Table 2).

5.3 Civic vs. Political Engagement

A separate consideration of eight different engagement opportunities shows that increased individual and collective efficacy made respondents more conscious of the expected value of political participation. Essentially, the findings expose which of the political and civic activities are more socially approved than others. Consistent with our knowledge of the state of civic and regional institutional development in Ukraine, the evidence suggests that higher individual efficacy leads to increased skepticism in all activities related to local and regional elections. For a typical respondent (a Russian-speaking 40-year-old female with middle income and higher education) an increase in self-efficacy would suppress the desire to join a party (–4 pp), to form an electoral commission (–4.7 pp), and to run for office as a civic or regional deputy (–3.4 pp and -3.3 pp respectively). This negative shift demonstrates how the low level of trust in local and regional authorities prevents individuals from further political engagement. Indeed, when presented with a list of eight last names, only 61% of respondents were able to correctly identify their city head, 26% recognized the head of regional parliament, and 27% identified the head of regional administration. Not surprisingly, individuals with higher personal efficacy avoid these positions as they consider them potentially powerless. Self-Efficacy suppressed mostly those positions that emphasize individual involvement in non-efficacious political institutions.
Collective efficacy did not affect civic engagement, potentially meaning that collective efficacy activated a facet of political efficacy. Political engagement measures yield mixed results. Respondents with induced collective efficacy expressed skepticism in running for a civic deputy position and responded with a positive change to the idea of running for office in national parliament (an increase equivalent to a change from 22% to 26% of the probability of running for women and from 39% to 45% for men, other things being equal).

Finally, the Combined treatment also showed that respondents perceived as efficacious only a position in national parliament with a lightly higher change than in the third group. At the same time, the combination of individual and collective efficacy led respondents to avoid some activities on the intersection between individual and collective efforts: recycling campaign (from 81% to 77% for women and from 75% to 71% for men), electoral commission (-5 pp) and regional parliament (–2.7 pp for women and –3.5 pp for men).

Altogether, the highest political office — serving as a deputy in national parliament — is the only activity that respondents considered worth pursuing after the induced sense of collective or combined efficacy. Neither treatment changed, on average, the desire to establish a civic council or establish a homeowners association (OSBB stands for “the Community of Residential Housing Owners”). These two activities are apparently the least politically contentious and are not affected by changes in self-evaluation.

The analysis provides two additional insights to our understanding of the interplay between individual efficacy, political context, and civic and political engagement. First, that efficacious individuals are capable of critical thinking, and evaluate political positions and civic activities based on their expected value. Thus, individuals with higher efficacy are willing to refrain from unpromising activities because their success expectancy is low (Durik et al. (2015)). In the Ukrainian case, most of the available tools of civic and political participation — except office in the national parliament — are considered ineffectual, and individuals with improved collective or individual efficacy are less tolerant to pursuing futile endeavors.

Second, there is a connection between type of efficacy and specific demands implied by civic or political opportunity. The induction of self-efficacy, independently or as a part of the combined condition, suppresses the desire to become involved in civic activism or
lower-level political office, while the induction of collective efficacy, independently or as a part of the combined treatment, is connected to political activism.

Table 2: Efficacy and Willingness to Join a Civic/Political Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recycling campaign</th>
<th>Joining a party</th>
<th>Electoral observer</th>
<th>Founding a council</th>
<th>OSBB association</th>
<th>Civic deputy</th>
<th>Regional deputy</th>
<th>State deputy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>−0.20***</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.16*</td>
<td>−0.18**</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.21***</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>−0.20***</td>
<td>−0.03</td>
<td>−0.21***</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>−0.15*</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.67***</td>
<td>−0.25</td>
<td>−0.26</td>
<td>−1.03***</td>
<td>−1.14***</td>
<td>−0.99***</td>
<td>−0.56***</td>
<td>−0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariates</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Mean</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Range</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
<td>[0.1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Models are estimated with binomial logistic regressions, outcomes reflect willingness to join an activity or to run for office/leadership. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.
Covariates include gender, language, education, age, and socioeconomic status.

5.4 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects: Skeptics by Choice, Skeptics by Ignorance

If the negative effect of increased individual and collective efficacy on civic and political engagement is indeed explained by the mismatch between increased expectation from one’s individual and group agency and the poor past performance of political institutions, those who have fewer specific expectations about regarding political and civic institutions will differ from advanced political users. Even in the context of extreme political skepticism, the variation within skeptical groups might be described as a gradient between poorly informed skeptics by ignorance and too-well-informed skeptics by choice. As Seligson & Carrión (2002) suggest, the effect of political skepticism on political engagement might be curvilinear, with a healthy level of critical thinking in the middle and unhealthy variants of political frustration in the ends of the political spectrum. Skeptics by choice are fastidious to the quality of political and civic engagement and exhibit a negative response to improved efficacy. Skeptics by ignorance, on the other hand, positively respond to the manipulation of individual and collective efficacy, since they have vague a priori expectations surrounding
the quality of these institutions.

To test these expectations, we look at the heterogeneous treatment effects introduced by individual political standing with respect to potential civic and political engagement. Skeptics by choice in Ukraine are currently represented by those who supported Euromaidan. They are generally more knowledgeable than average (31.6% of Euromaidan supporters are able to correctly match politicians’ last names with their respective political positions in the political knowledge test; compared to the sample average of 19%) and have a higher sense of political control over authorities. At the same time, higher engagement in protest activities did not create institutionalized structures of political influence (Worschech (2017)). The hopes and aspirations of Euromaidan sympathizers peaked during the revolution but were frustrated by the lack of elite renewal and the delay in the spread of rule of law and anticlientelism reforms (Matsiyevsky (2018)). Five years after the event, they have exhausted opportunities for engagement and are aware of the ceiling of their political potential.

Skeptics by ignorance, on the other hand, have little information on the nuances of civic engagement and demonstrate lower interest in politics. I approximate this category by those who abstained from voting in the last three elections (the 2014 presidential elections, the 2014 parliamentary elections, and the 2015 regional/local elections). Abstainers have lower levels of political knowledge (less than 7% of them pass the political knowledge test) and lack established habits of political engagement (Gerber et al. (2003)). Not voting in the last three elections is associated with a lack of experience in electoral observation, civil association membership, protest, and social movement activism (all negative associations are significant at the 0.001 level). Finally, I use those who voted for any political candidate in the last three elections as a reference category, since we cannot predict their exact degree of skepticism.

The heterogeneous treatment effects confirm our expectations (Table 3). Euromaidan supporters demonstrate consistent and negative reactions to all treatments. They are especially unwilling to consider existing civic engagement opportunities after the priming of collective efficacy and political activism after combined treatment. The control rate of civic engagement is 97.7%, after the manipulation with collective efficacy, their interest in civic engagement drops by 10 percentage points. Similar transformation happens with
## Table 3: Conditional Average Treatment Effect: Political Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Engagement If</th>
<th>Political Engagement If</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>0.11 0.09 0.15 −0.25*** −0.17** −0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.14) (0.17) (0.14) (0.09) (0.09) (0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy</td>
<td>0.09 −0.29* 0.21 0.05 −0.22** 0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.14) (0.16) (0.14) (0.09) (0.09) (0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>0.05 −0.08 0.10 −0.06 −0.18** 0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.14) (0.14) (0.09) (0.09) (0.09) (0.09)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted</td>
<td>2.17**** 0.32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.40) (0.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy x Voted</td>
<td>−0.77 0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.54) (0.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective x Voted</td>
<td>−0.94* −0.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.50) (0.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined x Voted</td>
<td>−0.79 −0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.50) (0.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstained</td>
<td>−1.01*** −0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.20) (0.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy x Abstained</td>
<td>−0.34 −0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.28) (0.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective x Abstained</td>
<td>0.91*** 0.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.29) (0.18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined x Abstained</td>
<td>0.27 0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.28) (0.19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported EM</td>
<td>1.60*** 0.93***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.40) (0.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy x Supported EM</td>
<td>−1.25*** −0.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.47) (0.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective x Supported EM</td>
<td>−1.87*** −0.45***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.46) (0.21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined x Supported EM</td>
<td>−1.27*** −0.73***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.47) (0.20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.97**** 2.60*** 2.12*** 0.20*** 0.31*** 0.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.10) (0.12) (0.10) (0.07) (0.06) (0.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Models are estimated with binomial logistic regressions, outcomes reflect willingness to join any civic activity. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.
their participation in political activities (the pre-treatment probability to engage in any political activity is 74%, and it drops to 57.5% after self-efficacy is primed).

On the other hand, abstainers positively reacted to collective efficacy, which increased their interest in civic engagement. In a control group, their average desire to join any civic activity was 83.1%, and after the induction of collective efficacy it reached the normal control rate of 90%. Their control probability of reporting willingness to run for any office was 56% (still lower than the mean in this group), and it increased to 65.8% after receiving the treatment. The manipulation of self-efficacy did not have an effect as a separate condition or a part of the combined treatment, apparently exposing the lower levels of collective efficacy in the abstainers’ group.

Although these interactions are observational, the observed statistical differences in CATEs are important, since they capture the potential macrolevel implications of increased individual efficacy for societal fragmentation\(^5\). Macrolevel studies name political polarization among the most stubborn impediments to democratic consolidation. If the increase in collective efficacy across various social groups affects their political participation differently, a large-scale civic engagement campaign might have a polarizing effect on Ukrainian society, and further research is needed to evaluate the scope of the treatment effect heterogeneity.

### 5.5 Alternative Explanations

There are at least three competing alternative explanations behind the specific combination of positive behavioral and negative attitudinal outcomes.

The first alternative explanation refers to preference falsification (Kuran (1995)). When politics is socially disapproved of, an improved sense of efficacy results in higher susceptibility to social pressure and higher avoidance of political engagement - an activity that is socially undesirable in the Eastern Ukrainian political context. It is important to note that respondents were not aware of the recording of the results of the behavioral outcome, as we never directly asked them about the number of leaflets they took, while they expected the results of the attitudinal survey to be “stored somewhere” and, potentially, might have

\(^5\)All interactions are also tested with an F-test distribution simulation to assess whether the difference in CATEs could have occurred by chance.
suspected these results to be shared with political parties or local bosses (a widely shared concern that I tried to address while implementing the experiment). In this context, the behavioral measure might be the only measure that was not falsified.

The opposite alternative explanation considers the Hawthorne effect. The only present authorities at the experimental site were experimenters themselves, and respondents might have felt obliged to take more leaflets if they spent more time with experimenters. This assumption does not hold, however, because the length of the experiment does not predict the number of taken leaflets, and we do not see a significant gap between the groups with and without group discussion (in the former, respondents actively communicated with moderators most of the time, while in the cognitive therapy group they were mostly working alone on the efficacy induction tasks).

The third option refers to the internal validity of behavioral and attitudinal measures of civic and political engagement. The behavioral outcome captures respondents’ inclination towards civic engagement, as the information in the leaflets was exclusively non-political (subjects were told that the leaflets featured helpful insights on new community development projects). Recording an unreported behavioral outcome for political engagement would facilitate the comparison of behavioral and attitudinal measures.

Future research can shed light on these findings by including a wider range of behavioral measures. In a less politically sensitive context, it would be useful to simultaneously manipulate all facets of efficacy. Finally, future research should address the other side of democratic consolidation — politicians and civil servants — testing their response to the change of efficacies.

6 Discussion

This paper makes five empirical contributions to the experimental study of civic education and engagement.

First, the main empirical contribution of the analysis is showing that enhanced self-efficacy and collective efficacy do not necessarily translate to better political and civic engagement. An improved sense of individual agency does not directly translate into a wider range of civic activities or more time invested in civic practices. Research on self-
evaluation should explicitly put the hypothesized link between improved agency and higher willingness to join civic activities in a political context.

Second, I show that not all political skeptics are created equal. For those who are more competent and knowledgeable, the priming of both collective and individual efficacy suppresses the desire to participate in political and civic activities — similar to the findings on diminishing participation of educated citizens in authoritarian regimes or failing democracies (Norris (2011), Welzel & Alvarez (2014), Croke et al. (2016)).

Third, different facets of efficacy are associated with different forms of civic or political engagement. Civic activities (joining a political party, participating in an electoral commission as an observer) are more responsive to the manipulation of self-efficacy, and a change in attitudes towards more politically-demanding activities (running for civic or national office) requires the priming of collective efficacy.

Fourth, the analysis shows that in a political context of skepticism, respondents prefer an opportunity to establish a new civic activity over joining already established structures of political opportunity such as civic councils or a local political office.

Finally, civic education campaigns that manipulate individual efficacy do indeed exert a causal impact on political and civic behavior — and the direction of these effects is apparently a function of the political context and individual political preferences, among other factors.

The broader implications of this research extend to the study of political skepticism and abstention; the literature on comparative democratization; and the research on civic education. My findings suggest that to counteract political skepticism in a regime with low political capacity, a successful civic education program should avoid associations with the state or any official authorities. The lack of trust in political institutions will provoke further disengagement from civic life and stir up suspicions of political manipulation. Also, experimental studies of political engagement would gain from paying closer attention to the meanings that individuals assign to political institutions of representation and acknowledging that some respondents might consider democratic institutions as illegitimate, contested, or more responsive to markets and elites than to average citizens (Berman (2017)).

The paper also contributes to the literature on comparative democratization, showing
that a large-scale induction of collective efficacy might generate heterogeneous political outcomes. While in some countries this heterogeneity benefits the political opposition and less efficacious social groups (Grossman et al. (2017)), in other political contexts the long-term change in political power after the treatment is less obvious. Improved self-efficacy alone might have a limited positive effect among the least engaged groups but will not have a lasting effect on those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations.

Finally, previous research on civic education programs encourages tailoring political information based on the specific political needs that citizens fulfill, assuming that citizens who run for office or are involved in actual policy-making should know more than those who are less committed to public service (Lupia (2015)). This paper shows that in some contexts, civic educators might want to leave well-informed citizens alone, especially if the supply side of politics is of a worse quality than the demand side aspires to have. Increasing the sense of efficacy without an adequate change in the quality of democratic institutions will lead to further political frustration. Civic education campaigns that do not account for these dynamics might create polarizing side-effects for democratic consolidation.

7 Conclusion

This paper addresses the puzzling relationship between individual efficacy and political disengagement. Extensive research suggests that efficacious citizens are better prepared to use democratic institutions and exercise control over authorities. Weak democracies worldwide use civic education to enhance participation through the improvement of individual efficacy. However, other evidence demonstrates that better educated and efficacious people might still abstain from politics if they believe that available political institutions are futile or illegitimate.

This paper examines this puzzle with the results from an original large-scale field experiment on civic participation in Eastern Ukraine. The experiment uses directed cognitive therapy to randomly increase self-efficacy, collective efficacy, or a combination of both, and traces the effect of this manipulation on a wide range of civic and political activities: the willingness to share information on new community development projects with friends and
family; join a recycling campaign, a political party, or an electoral commission; to establish a civic council; or to run for office in local, civic, regional, or national parliament. The results show that the treatments increased the willingness to seek additional information or to run for office in national parliament and suppressed or did not affect the reported willingness to join other activities.

The analysis of heterogeneous treatment effects shows that the improvement of individual sense of agency increases the likelihood of civic and political engagement for the least sophisticated political groups - those who usually abstain from civic and political participation. In turn, politically sophisticated citizens reacted to the priming of their sense of efficacy by withdrawing from civic and political activity. The results strongly suggest that self-efficacy and collective efficacy change individual propensity towards civic and political activism, but the exact direction of this effect depends on the specific value assigned to suggested activities and on individual expectations from available institutions of representation. These insights shed light on the failures behind civic education campaigns in those societies with widespread dissatisfaction in democracy. Improved self-efficacy has a limited positive effect among the least engaged groups but negatively affects those citizens whose experience with democratic outcomes falls short of expectations.

The main take-away of the study is that increased individual efficacy is not a panacea for civic and political engagement. An induction of efficacy generates heterogeneous political outcomes and leads to political frustration unless it is accompanied by an adequate change in the quality of democratic institutions. Civic education campaigns that do not account for these dynamics might cause adverse effects for democratic consolidation.


## Appendix

### Table 4: Summary Statistics: Outcome Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Pctl(25)</th>
<th>Pctl(75)</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets Taken</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>3.473</td>
<td>5.154</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling campaign</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.769</td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a party</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.491</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral observation</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil council</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSBB Association</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic deputy</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.367</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional deputy</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.459</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State deputy</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: Summary Statistics: Socio-Demographic Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Pctl(25)</th>
<th>Pctl(75)</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.494</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>40.301</td>
<td>15.976</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian Speaker</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.370</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (Primary School to Doctorate)</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>3.226</td>
<td>0.955</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Status</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>2.237</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports Euromaidan</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.409</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voted in Previous Elections</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


References


URL: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8ihJxcZ4t4-T2cxbk5jak9rUmM/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8ihJxcZ4t4-T2cxbk5jak9rUmM/view)


URL: [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/opinion/europe-center-left-.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/opinion/europe-center-left-.html)


Commission, N. E. (2015), ‘Information on the number of voters who received election ballots at polling stations (vidomosti shchodo kilkosti vybortsiv, yaki otrymaly vyborchi byuletieni na vyborchykh dilnytsyakh).’.

URL: [http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/](http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/)
**URL:** http://www.jstor.org/stable/586303


**URL:** http://www.jstor.org/stable/43555086


URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-008-9081-x


Flanagan, C. (2009), Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and Agendas (Routledge International Handbooks), Routledge, chapter Young people’s civic engagement and political development, pp. 293–329.


Klingemann, H.-D. (2014), *The civic culture transformed: from allegiant to assertive citizens*, Cambridge University Press, chapter Dissatisfied Democrats: Democratic Matura-


**URL:** [https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9687-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9687-2)


Lupia, A. (2015), *Uninformed: Why People Seem to Know So Little about Politics and What We Can Do about It*, OXFORD UNIV PR.


**URL:** http://www.jstor.org/stable/3521695

**URL:** http://www.jstor.org/stable/4500184

**URL:** https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-015-1079-2


**URL:** https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1737-7

Pisano, J. (Forthcoming), *Political Theatre in Russia and Ukraine*.


