

TEACHING BEYOND OPPRESSION

How Centering Stories of Resistance Increases Political Efficacy

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RESEARCH QUESTION

Do learning assessments that focus on stories of resistance increase students' trust in government and political efficacy?

Internal & External Political Efficacy

The discipline of political science recognizes two types of political efficacy: internal and external. Internal efficacy refers to the belief that we know how to participate in government. External efficacy refers to the belief that politicians and government officials are responsive to the will of the people.

EQUITY-MINDED APPROACH

The inspiration for this research project came from Dr. Lisa Brock's presentation on equity-minded pedagogy at the 2022 University of Wisconsin Faculty College retreat in Elkhart, WI.

During her presentation, Dr. Brock discussed some of the common pitfalls of teaching oppressive history: namely, too often we as instructors disproportionately focus on stories of oppression without equally voicing stories of resistance. When we do not acknowledge stories of resistance, we run the risk of politically demobilizing students, we make political change seem unattainable, and we inadvertently signal that history is best learned through the perspective of oppressors.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

In Fall 2022, students enrolled in POL 205 "Women in Politics" were recruited to participate in an experimental study (N=70). Students were evenly and randomly assigned to control and treatment groups.

Control Group

Students wrote three essays focusing on data analysis and information recall.

Treatment Group

Students wrote three essays reflecting on stories of political resistance, mobilization, and revolution.

METHODOLOGY

In a standard pre-test post-test experimental design, students reported their level of agreement with the following questions on an ordinal four-point scale which was then transformed into a summative scale:

External Political Efficacy (Scale 2-8)

- About how often do you trust the government to do the right thing?
- Thinking about elected officials in D.C., about how many would you say are corrupt?

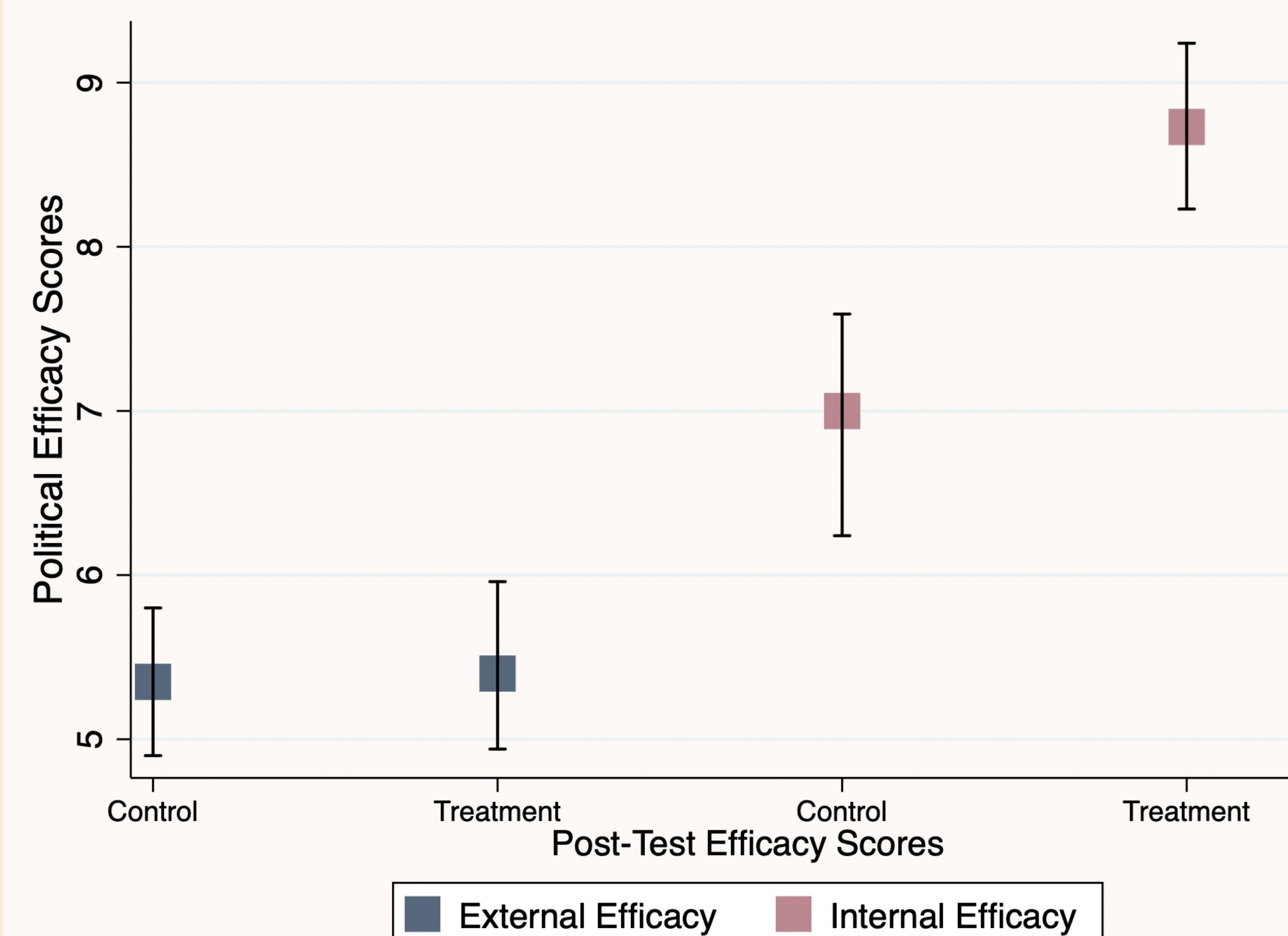
Internal Political Efficacy (Scale 3-12)

- I consider myself well-qualified to participate in government
- There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
- Under our current form of government, the people have the final say about what happens in this country.

HYPOTHESIS

H₁: External and internal efficacy scores will increase among students when course content and assessments are framed through stories of resistance.

TREATMENT EFFECT



FINDINGS

- Both external and internal efficacy increased throughout the semester regardless of treatment.
- H₁ was partially supported with the treatment group exhibiting significantly higher ($p \leq .05$) internal efficacy scores while there was no statistically significant difference with respect to external efficacy scores.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) in two major ways. First, within the discipline of political science, very few SOTL publications have investigated whether the frame of course content is correlated to attitudes and beliefs about civic participation and political efficacy.

Second, this research demonstrates a direct linkage between exposure to resistance narrative and trust in government. The findings from this research suggest that pedagogical narrative and perspective may play a pivotal role in shaping students' political engagement and attitudes.

