



Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Young People's Political Participation

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Foreword

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the BSc Psychology degree, Reykjavik University, this thesis is presented in the style of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Abstract

Political efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of adults' political participation, but it has been less studied among young people. General self-efficacy has been considered a possible causal factor for young people to engage in politics. These constructs, in addition to young people's participation in the so called "social media revolutions" (SMR), an Internet phenomenon in Iceland, were examined. An online survey was posted on social media and emailed to students at a large university in Iceland. A total of 459 participants (60.7% female, 39.3% male) between the ages of 18 and 31 ($M = 23.9$, $SD = 3.5$) completed the survey. Both general and political efficacy were associated with political participation, but mediation analysis revealed that the relationship between general self-efficacy and political participation was mediated through political efficacy. Logistic regression analysis showed that political efficacy predicted SMR-participation, but general self-efficacy did not. Furthermore, SMR-participants participated more actively in politics than did non-participants. The results underline the importance of political efficacy for political participation among young people, but indicate that the effects of general self-efficacy are minimal.

Keywords: Political efficacy, general self-efficacy, political participation, young adults, social media

Útdráttur

Pólítísk sjálfstíltrú er einn af sterkustu forspárþáttum stjórnmálaþátttöku á meðal fullorðinna, en það samband hefur verið minna rannsakað á meðal ungs fólks. Almenn sjálfstíltrú hefur verið talin mögulegur áhrifaþáttur á stjórnmálaþátttöku ungs fólks. Þessi hugtök, auk þátttöku í „byltingum“ á samfélagsmiðlum á Íslandi, voru rannsökuð. Könnun var send út á samfélagsmiðlum og til nemenda íslensks háskóla. Samtals tóku 459 manns þátt (60.7% konur, 39.3% karlar) á aldrinum 18 – 31 ára ($M = 23.9$, $SD = 3.5$). Niðurstöðurnar sýndu að bæði pólítísk og almenn sjálfstíltrú höfðu tengsl við stjórnmálaþátttöku, en sambandi almennrar sjálfstíltrúar og stjórnmálaþátttöku var miðlað í gegnum pólítíska sjálfstíltrú. Aðhvarfsgreining hlutfalla sýndi að pólítísk sjálfstíltrú spáði fyrir um þátttöku í samfélagsmiðlabyltingum, en ekki almenn sjálfstíltrú. Þátttakendur í samfélagsmiðlabyltingum tóku virkari þátt í stjórnmálum en aðrir. Niðurstöðurnar undirstrika mikilvægi pólítískrar sjálfstíltrúar í samhengi við stjórnmálaþátttöku, en gefa til kynna að áhrif almennrar sjálfstíltrúar séu lítil.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Young People's Political Participation

There is a growing consensus among researchers that psychological factors are at least as relevant as sociological and economic elements in study of political behavior (Blais & St-Vincent, 2011; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Gallego & Oberski, 2012). Self-efficacy, an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform successfully, can be general or specific to a task or situation (Bandura, 1977, 1982). Political efficacy, self-efficacy specific to the political context, is one of the most widely studied psychological constructs in relations to political participation (Morrell, 2003) and is one of the strongest predictors of adults' political participation (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorly, 2001; Guyton, 1988). Psychological researchers of political behavior (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Littvay, Weith, & Dawes, 2011; Solhaug, 2006) have criticized political scientist for relying merely on political efficacy in research on political participation, and not including self-efficacy in general, which relevant to all domains of behavior (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). Yet, some researchers have theorized that general self-efficacy is a necessary foundation for adolescents and young adults to participate in politics (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Solhaug, 2006). This thesis aimed to contribute to the growing literature on self-efficacy beliefs and political participation by examining the political behavior of young Icelanders, ages 18 – 31. The self-efficacy literature will be reviewed, before moving on to how Iceland might offer an interesting opportunity to study political efficacy among young people.

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

Scholars distinguish between internal and external political efficacy (Morrell, 2003; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Internal political efficacy refers to one's own competence to understand and participate in politics, to bring change into society through personal engagement and using one's own resources and capabilities. External political efficacy refers

to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands. Both dimensions significantly predict political participation (Zimmerman, 1989). However, internal political efficacy has been found to be static across time, while the external dimension seems to be affected by extraneous factors, for example it seems to evolve as people's trust in institutions changes (Harder, 2008; Niemi et al., 1991). Most studies on political efficacy include both measures (Morrell, 2003).

Considerable amount of research has been devoted to affirm political efficacy's validity (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, 2009; Niemi et al., 1991; Zimmerman, 1989). In a validation study by Morrell (2003), internal and external political efficacy were found to be distinct constructs from related measures, like political interest and participation. A distinction can be made between political efficacy and political interest, in that the former is change-oriented, while the latter refers to one's interest and knowledge in political and societal issues, regardless of activities engaged in to influence those issues (Cohen et al., 2001). Political efficacy has also been found to be related to self-placement on the left-right scale, with respondents to the extreme left and right showing higher levels of efficacy than moderates (Caprara et al., 2009). Moreover, campaign activity, simply voting (Finkel, 1985, 1987) and identifying with governing parties rather than opposition parties has been found to enhance political efficacy (Clarke & Acock, 1989; Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986).

Adolescence and young adulthood might be a critical period for political efficacy to develop, as studies suggest that adults who participated in community and civic engagement as adolescents are more likely to remain involved in societal issues (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Yates & Youniss, 1998). However, few studies have been published on political efficacy in young people. Diemer and Rapa (2016) found internal political efficacy to correlate with both conventional and unconventional political participation among adolescents. In a study on

secondary school students, Levy (2013) found interest in politics to be one of the strongest predictors of political efficacy, and that it could also be increased with civil education.

Although self-efficacy theory emphasizes specificity, aggregation of all previous successes and failures in different domains generates into general self-efficacy (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). For young people, this may refer to their overall success in the social, physical or academic domains (Condon & Holleque, 2013). When facing a novel situation, people rely on this general self-efficacy, which is developed outside of that particular domain and relevant to all domains of behavior (Condon & Holleque, 2013). General self-efficacy is therefore important for novice in any new situation, and researchers have theorized that it should be especially important for young people to engage in politics. Two studies have shown general efficacy to be associated with young people's political participation (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Solhaug, 2006). However, the relationship, albeit significant, was rather weak. Political efficacy, on the other hand, as mentioned previously, has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of political participation. The rationale of this study, was therefore that while general self-efficacy was expected to be associated with political participation, the relationship should be mediated through political efficacy. More formally, the hypotheses were as follows:

H1: General self-efficacy will be associated with political participation.

H2: Political efficacy will be associated with political participation.

H3: The effects of general self-efficacy on political participation will be mediated by political efficacy.

Iceland is no exception to the trend in declining political participation of young people (Fieldhouse, Tranmer, & Russell, 2007; Sigmundsdottir, 2015). However, in 2015, a number of "social media revolutions" (SMR) occurred on sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Hardardottir, 2015), most of them promoting gender equality. This is in line with research

which suggests that young people world-wide have an inclination towards unconventional political participation, on the expense of the conventional form (Busse, Hashem-Wangler, & Tholen, 2015; Martin, 2012). Yet, young people's Internet use has been found to facilitate both forms of political participation, and political efficacy (Bakker & Vreese, 2011; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Lee, 2006). It is reasonable to assume that SMR-participation is influenced by self-efficacy beliefs, as most of the SMRs included daring acts. For example, in the "Free the Nipple" campaign, young women published pictures of their breasts online to protest gender double standards and cyber bullying (Arnadottir, 2015). Personality traits such as extraversion and openness have been found to contribute to political efficacy (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009). General self-efficacy has been found to correlate negatively with internalizing behaviors, like anxiety and depression (Scholz, Gutiérrez Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002) and more importantly, highly efficacious individuals take on more demanding tasks (Bandura, 1997, as referred to in Scholz et al., 2002). It was therefore hypothesized that, both political efficacy and general self-efficacy would be associated SMR-participation. Lastly, it was hypothesized that SMR-participants engaged more actively in politics than non-participants.

H4: General self-efficacy will be associated with SMR-participation.

H5: Political efficacy will be associated with SMR-participation.

H6: SMR-participants will score higher on political participation than non-participants.

Method

Participants

A total of 459 participants (60.7% female, 39.3% male) between the ages of 18 and 31 ($M = 23.9$, $SD = 3.5$) completed an online survey. The total number of respondents was 531, but 72 participants were excluded from the analysis as they did not meet the age criteria. Most of the included participants were currently pursuing a bachelor degree (41.0%, $n = 187$)

or in upper secondary school (21.1%, $n = 96$). The majority of respondents lived in the capital region (76.5%, $n = 351$), while 18.3% ($n = 84$) reported living in the countryside and 5.2% ($n = 24$) were living abroad. The study used convenience sampling. Participants were recruited by sending out an online survey using Google Forms. The survey was posted on two Icelandic Facebook groups, aimed at young women (BeautyTips, members ≈ 32.500) and young men (SjomlaTips, members ≈ 13.000). Permissions were obtained from the administrators of both groups. The survey was also sent via email to students of Reykjavik University, and the author posted the survey on his personal Facebook profile.

Measures

The questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix B, was in Icelandic and composed in consultation with the supervisor. The questionnaire received approval from Reykjavik University's ethics committee and was announced to the Icelandic Data Protection Authority. An informed consent was presented at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix A). Along with using a number of established scales, the survey included questions on participation in social media revolutions, views towards equality, political views, and so on.

Political efficacy. Internal and external political efficacy were measured using scales by Niemi et al. (1991). The internal political efficacy scale included questions such as "I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics," and "I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most people". The scale was found to be highly reliable (4 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). The external political efficacy scale included two items, "People like me have no say in what the government does," and "I don't think public officials care much what people like me think". The scale was found to have good reliability (2 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$). Answers were on a 5-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In order for the scales to both load positively, the external political efficacy scale was recoded and reversed.

General self-efficacy. General self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE-6) as refined by Romppel et al. (2013). It included questions like “If someone opposes me, I can find means to get what I want,” and “It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals”. Participants were asked how well the aforementioned statements described them on a 4-point Likert scale. The scale was found to have a good reliability (6 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$).

Political participation. This measure was constructed in accordance with studies on political participation (e.g., Busse et al., 2015; Dalton, 2008). Participants were asked to mark “Yes” or “No” to whether they had participated in the following activities in the last 12 months: signed a petition, protested, participated in political discussions online, and contacted an official. Participants were also asked whether they were registered members of a political party, had worked for a party or a particular candidate without being paid, and whether they would vote if elections were tomorrow. “Yes” was coded as 1 and “No” as 0. The items were summed up to represent a global score of political participation. Thus, this scale had a lowest possible score of 0 and a highest score of 8 (8 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$).

Psychological involvement in politics. This scale was composed in line with guidelines by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995). Participants were asked how the following statements described them, on a five-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”: “I'm interested in politics,” “I keep up with political news,” and “I discuss political issues with friends and family”. The scale was found to be highly reliable (3 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$).

Political trust. Political trust has been defined as the confidence in a nation's institutions and government (Newton, 2007). Participants were asked to rate their trust in the following, from 1 (low) to 5 (high): Icelandic parliament, police, justice system, government, and political parties. The scale had a good reliability (5 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Political knowledge. Three multiple-choice questions measured knowledge of Icelandic politics. The questions asked about which party received the largest share of votes in the elections of 2013, which political party the prime minister belonged to, and, how many members the Icelandic parliament has. Each question had four alternatives and also a choice of “I don’t know”. Incorrect answers were coded as 0 and correct as 1. Possible scores ranged from 0 (no correct) to 3 (all correct), with a mean of 2.09 ($SD = 0.93$).

Political orientation. Participants were asked to place themselves on a scale in terms of their self-described political orientation, from 0 (left) to 10 (right), with 5 in the center. This method has been found to be a reliable and valid measure of political orientation (Ingelhart and Klingemann (1976), as referred to in Thorisdottir, Jost, Liviatan, & Shrout, 2007).

Social media “revolutions”. Participants were asked whether they had participated in any of the following social media “revolutions” (SMR): Free The Nipple, ég er ekki tabú, út með það, drusluákall, 6dagsleikinn, konur tala, þöggun, or any other campaign. A dichotomous variable was computed, with participants who did not participate in any SMR coded as 0, and those who did as 1.

Student council participation. Participants were asked whether they had participated in the activities of student councils while during elementary school, high school or university. Three options were offered, “not at all”, “yes, somewhat,” and “yes, a lot”.

Research Design and Procedure

Bivariate correlation analysis were used to test hypotheses 1 and 2. For hypothesis 3, two mediation models were tested using the *PROCESS* extension for SPSS written by Hayes (2013). The models examined whether the effects of general self-efficacy were mediated by internal political efficacy (Model 1) and external political efficacy (Model 2). Other variables with significant associations with self-efficacy variables and political participation were

entered as covariates in the model. Indirect effects were assessed using BCa bootstrapped confidence intervals based on 1000 samples. Results were further corroborated with the Sobel test. Independent samples t-tests were conducted in order to address hypotheses 4-6. The results for hypotheses 4-5 were further substantiated by logistic regression analysis, controlling for gender and age.

Results

It was hypothesized that general self-efficacy (hypothesis 1) and both internal and external political efficacy (hypothesis 2), would be associated with political participation. Descriptive statistics and correlations are displayed in Table 2. There was a positive association among all self-efficacy variables and political participation. A strong association was observed for internal political efficacy and political participation, $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$, while it was smaller, yet significant, for general self-efficacy, $r = 0.33, p < 0.01$ and general self-efficacy $r = 0.15, p < 0.01$.

Mediation Analysis

Regression analysis further substantiated hypothesis 1, as the total effect¹ of general self-efficacy on political participation was small, yet significant, $b = 0.62, p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the effects of general self-efficacy would be mediated through political efficacy. Two competing mediation models were constructed, one with internal political efficacy as the mediator (Model 1) and one with external political efficacy as the mediator (Model 2). The models are depicted in Figure 1. For the fully constructed models, see table 1. In the first step of the analysis, only the three aforementioned variables were included. In the second step, in addition to age and gender, variables with significant

¹ Total effect refers to the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, without including the mediator in the model (Field, 2013). Direct effect is the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, controlling for the mediator. Indirect effect is the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, through the mediator.

associations with the self-efficacy variables and political participation in Table 2 were entered as covariates. Those variables were political trust, political knowledge, psychological involvement, student council participation, and political orientation. The confidence interval for the indirect effect in the two models is a BCa bootstrapped CI based on a 1000 samples.

Model 1: Internal political efficacy as mediator. Before including covariates, the model explained 26.94% in the variance of political participation ($R^2 = .27$). There was a significant indirect effect of general self-efficacy on political participation through internal political efficacy, $b = 0.76$, *BCa CI* [0.50 – 1.02]. This represents a relatively large effect size, $K^2 = 0.18$, 95% *BCa CI* [0.12 – 0.24]. After including covariates, the model explained 45.02% of the variance in political participation ($R^2 = .45$), and the total effect of general self-efficacy became insignificant, $b = 0.03$, $p = 0.86$. The statistically significant covariates were psychological involvement, $b = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$, student council participation, $b = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$, and political orientation, $b = -0.20$, $p < 0.001$. However, the results indicated that the indirect effect through internal political efficacy remained significant, event after adjusting for the covariates, $b = 0.14$, *BCa CI* [0.05 – 0.30]. The results were confirmed by the Sobel test, $z' = 2.61$, $p < 0.01$.

Model 2: External political efficacy as mediator. In the first step of the analysis, before adjusting for covariates, the model explained 11.96% of the variance in political participation ($R^2 = .12$). The indirect effect of general self-efficacy on political participation through external political efficacy was significant, $b = 0.21$, *BCa CI* [0.07 – 0.36]. This represents a small effect size, $K^2 = 0.05$, *BCa CI* [0.02 – 0.09]. After including the covariates in the model, the model explained 45.43% of the variance in political participation ($R^2 = .45$). The same covariates were significant as in Model 1, in addition to age, which was significant in Model 2, $b = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$. The indirect effect of general self-efficacy on political participation remained significant according to the bootstrap confidence interval, $b = 0.05$,

BCa CI [0.01 – 0.14], but the Sobel test indicated it was non-significant, $z' = 1.59$, $p = .12$.

These results were ambiguous, but according to (Field, 2013), the bootstrap confidence interval is more reliable when there is a disagreement among the two.

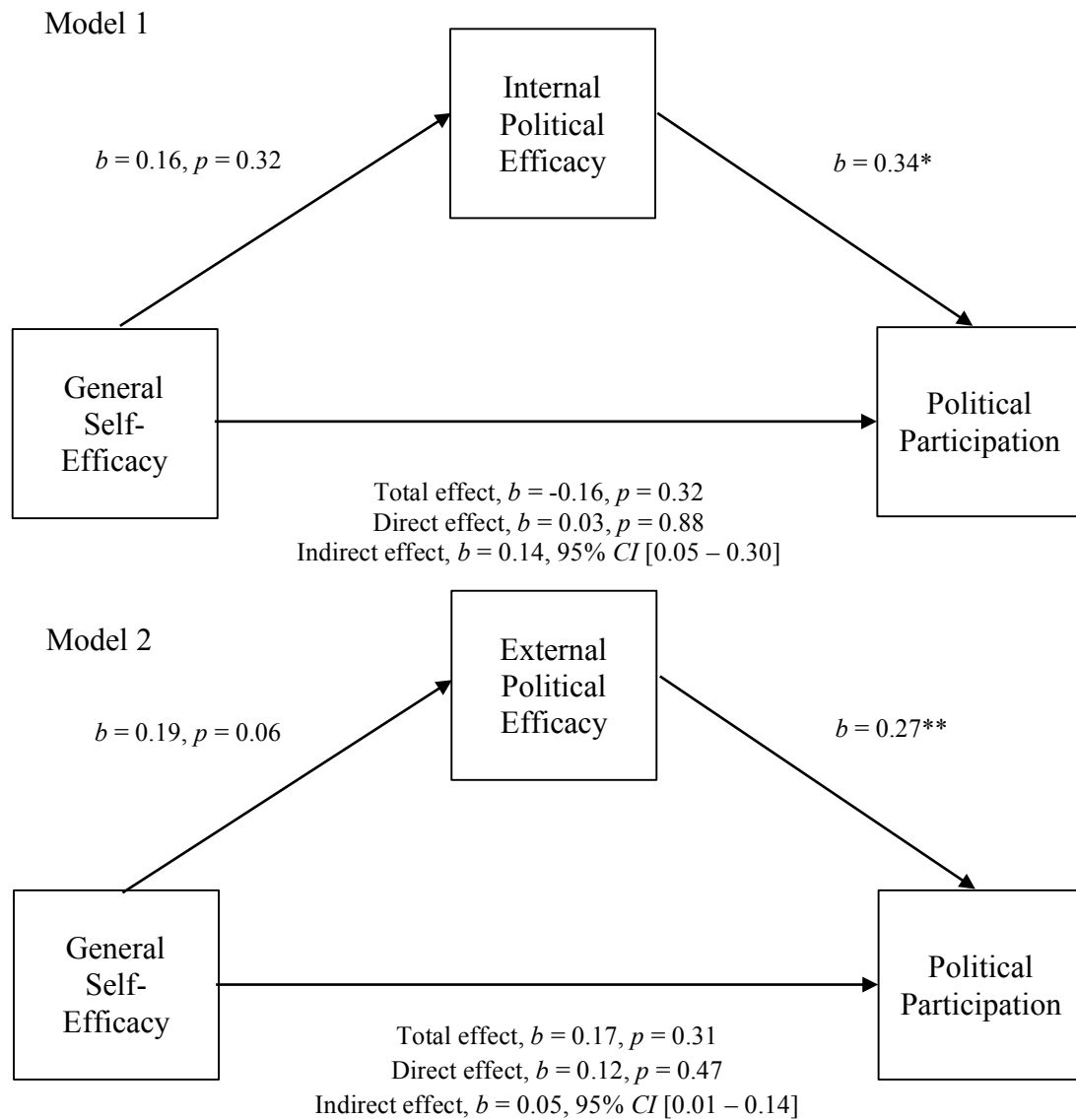


Figure 1. Model of general self-efficacy as a predictor of political participation, mediated by internal political efficacy (Model 1) and external political efficacy (Model 2). Covariates included age, gender, political trust, political knowledge, psychological involvement, student council participation, and political orientation.

* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

Table 1

Full Regression and Mediation Models With Political Participation as the Dependent Variable

| | Model 1: | | Model 2: | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Internal Political Efficacy | | External Political Efficacy | |
| | <i>b</i> (SE) | | <i>b</i> (SE) | |
| | Step 1 ^a | Step 2 ^b | Step 1 ^a | Step 2 ^b |
| Internal/External Political Efficacy | 1.02 (0.08)** | 0.34 (0.11)* | 0.62 (0.09)** | -0.27 (0.89)** |
| General Self-Efficacy | -0.14 (0.18) | 0.03 (0.17) | 0.42 (0.19)* | 0.12 (0.17) |
| <i>Covariates</i> | | | | |
| Gender | | -0.09 (0.16) | | -0.14 (0.16) |
| Age | | 0.04 (0.02) ^t | | 0.05 (0.02)* |
| Psychological involvement | | 0.69 (0.10)** | | 0.84 (0.08)** |
| Political knowledge | | 0.20 (0.10) ^t | | 0.16 (0.10) ^t |
| Political trust | | 0.07 (0.02) | | -0.02 (0.02) |
| Student council participation | | 0.36 (0.10)** | | 0.35 (0.10)** |
| Political orientation | | -0.20 (0.03)** | | -0.18 (0.03)** |
| Constant | 0.44 (0.55) | -2.11 (0.88)* | 0.12 (0.63) | -2.24 (0.88)* |
| <i>Mediation statistics</i> | | | | |
| Sobel test | $z' = 6.36^{**}$ | $z' = 2.61^{**}$ | $z' = 2.95^{**}$ | $z' = 1.59$ |
| Indirect effect | $b = 0.76$ | $b = 0.14$ | $b = 0.21$ | $b = 0.05$ |
| [BCa CI] | [0.50 – 1.02] | [0.05 – 0.30] | [0.07 – 0.36] | [0.01 – 0.14] |
| R^2 | 0.27 | 0.45 | 0.12 | 0.45 |

^aStep 1 examined the effects of general self-efficacy (independent variable) and internal (Model 1) or external (Model 2) political efficacy (the mediators) on political participation.

^bStep 2 included the independent variable, mediating variables, and covariates.

* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed). ^t $p < 0.1$ (2-tailed).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Among Variables

| | Mean | SD | Range | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1. Political Participation | 3.38 | 2.04 | 0-8 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Internal Political Efficacy | 3.32 | 1.06 | 1-5 | .52** | - | | | | | | | |
| 3. External Political Efficacy | 3.19 | 1.05 | 1-5 | .33** | .29** | - | | | | | | |
| 4. General Self-Efficacy | 3.10 | 0.47 | 1-4 | .15** | .34** | .15** | - | | | | | |
| 5. Political Trust | 2.08 | 1.08 | 0-5 | -.02 | .06 | .28** | .08 | - | | | | |
| 6. Political Knowledge | 2.09 | 0.93 | 0-3 | .37** | .47** | .30** | .10* | .09 | - | | | |
| 7. Psychological Involvement | 3.54 | 1.21 | 1-5 | .61** | .75** | .33** | .20** | .09 | .55** | - | | |
| 8. SMR-participation | 0.28 | 0.45 | 0-1 | .33** | .17** | .14** | .06 | -.12* | .11* | .19** | - | |
| 9. Student Council Participation | 2.01 | 0.79 | 1-3 | .27** | .20** | .17** | .20** | .05 | .10* | .23** | .26** | - |
| 10. Left-Right Political Orientation | 4.49 | 2.61 | 0-10 | -.18** | .13** | .06 | .15** | .38** | .12** | .07 | -.16** | -.01 |
| 11. Political Extremism ¹ | 2.21 | 1.47 | 0-5 | .19** | .17** | .11** | .03 | .04 | .14** | .24** | .05 | -.09* |

* $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).¹ Higher values indicate self-placement closer to the extremes of the left and the right, while lower values indicate self-placement closer to the center.

Comparison between SMR-participants and non-participants

Hypothesis 4-5 proposed that both general and political efficacy would be associated with SMR-participation. Hypothesis 6 proposed that SMR-participants would participate more actively in politics than non-participants. These hypotheses were tested using independent samples *t*-tests. A total of 28% ($n = 117$) of respondents reported having participated in at least one SMR (33.2% of females, 23.2% of males). Means and standard deviations of outcomes on the three self-efficacy beliefs and political participation are displayed in Table 3, by whether or not participants reported having participated in a SMR. SMR-participants scored higher on internal political efficacy than non-participants, and an independent samples *t*-test revealed that the difference was significant, $t(415) = -3.41, p < 0.001$. The same applied for external political efficacy, as SMR-participants scored higher than non-participants, $t(416) = -2.88, p < 0.01$. However, SMR and non-SMR participants did not differ significantly on general self-efficacy, $t(414) = -1.16, p = 0.25$. SMR-participants scored significantly higher on political participation than non-participants, $t(412) = -6.54, p < 0.001$.

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Divided by Participation in Social Media
Revolutions*

| | Participated in a SMR: | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | Yes | No |
| | Mean (<i>SD</i>) | Mean (<i>SD</i>) |
| Internal Political Efficacy | 3.61 (1.08) | 3.22 (0.96) |
| External Political Efficacy | 3.41 (0.93) | 3.09 (1.06) |
| General Self-Efficacy | 3.16 (0.42) | 3.10 (0.48) |
| Political Participation | 4.37 (2.12) | 2.91 (1.81) |

Note. The possible range for internal and external political efficacy was 1-5, for general self-efficacy 1-4, and for political participation 0-8.

The results for hypotheses 4-5 were substantiated by constructing four logistic regression models with SMR-participation as the dependent variable. Model 1 included age and gender as the predictor variables, with age being a significant predictor, $b = -0.13$, $p < 0.05$. General self-efficacy was not a significant predictor (Model 2). External political efficacy was a significant predictor of SMR-participation in Model 3, $b = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$, but that relationship became non-significant after including internal political efficacy in Model 4, which was a significant predictor, $b = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$. Furthermore, men were more politically efficacious than women, $b = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$ (men coded as 2, women = 1).

Table 4

Logistic Regression Analysis on the Effects of Self-Efficacy Beliefs on SMR-participation

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | |
|------------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| | <i>b</i> | OR | <i>b</i> | OR | <i>b</i> | OR | <i>b</i> | OR |
| | | (95% CI) | | (95% CI) | | (95% CI) | | (95% CI) |
| Gender | 0.43 | 1.54 | 0.46* | 1.56 | 0.47* | 1.61 | 0.60* | 1.83 |
| | | (0.98-2.44) | | (1.00-2.51) | | (1.00-2.56) | | (1.13-2.95) |
| Age | -0.13** | 0.87 | -0.13** | 0.87 | -0.14** | 0.87 | -0.15** | 0.86 |
| | | (0.82-0.94) | | (0.82-0.94) | | (0.82-0.93) | | (0.80-0.92) |
| GSE ¹ | | | 0.34 | 1.41 | 0.26 | 1.29 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| | | | | (0.86-2.30) | | (0.79-2.13) | | (0.60-1.70) |
| EPE ² | | | | | 0.31** | 1.37 | 0.21 | 1.23 |
| | | | | | | (1.09-1.71) | | (0.98-1.56) |
| IPE ³ | | | | | | | 0.16** | 1.51 |
| | | | | | | | | (1.18-1.95) |
| Constant | 1.97 | | 0.88 | | 0.17 | | 0.16 | |
| R^2 | 0.05 | | 0.05 | | 0.07 | | 0.09 | |

Note. OR = odds ratios; CI = confidence interval.

¹ General self-efficacy, ² External political efficacy, ³ Internal political efficacy.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that general self-efficacy and political efficacy would be associated with young people's political participation, and that the effects of general self-efficacy would be mediated by political efficacy (hypotheses 1-3). The results of the present study supported those hypotheses. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that both general and political efficacy would be associated with participation in social media "revolutions" (SMR) (hypotheses 4-5). However, while political efficacy was found to predict SMR- participation, general self-efficacy did not. Lastly, it was hypothesized that SMR-participants would score higher on political participation than non-participants (hypothesis 6), which was supported.

General Self-Efficacy and Political Participation

In new situations, people rely on their general self-efficacy, i.e. their estimated capacity to work successfully across life situations (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). In that framework, political participation should be no different from any other new challenge for young people. The present study is at least the third study to find general self-efficacy to be related to young people's political participation (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Solhaug, 2006), although this study has the benefit of including more forms of political participation besides voting. The present findings must, however, be evaluated in the light of the somehow ambiguous results after covariates had been included in the mediation models.

Political Efficacy and Political Participation

The results confirm that political efficacy is a strong predictor of political participation (e.g., Blais & St-Vincent, 2011; Cohen et al., 2001; Guyton, 1988). That pattern therefore appears to hold across age groups. Political efficacy has been found to be an important mediator between personality traits and political participation (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009) and critical thinking and political participation (Guyton, 1988). In this study, it mediated the relationship between general self-efficacy and political participation. That

underlines the importance of context specific self-efficacy over general self-efficacy, even in “novel” situations (Bandura, 1977, 1982; Bosscher & Smit, 1998). However, it might be, at least in this sample, that politics are not such a novel situation to young people, as researchers of general self-efficacy have argued (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Solhaug, 2006). General self-efficacy is of little aid, if individuals already feel confident in the political arena. This is evident in the relatively high means of participation, political knowledge, and, psychological involvement, the young people in this study exhibited.

Nevertheless, the present results contradict a study by Condon and Holleque (2013), in which general self-efficacy remained a significant predictor of young voters turnout after controlling for internal political efficacy. Methodological differences may be the cause, as Condon and Holleque controlled for socioeconomic status. They found that young people with poor socioeconomic background relied more on their general self-efficacy when deciding to vote, while their more affluent counterparts relied on their political efficacy. Studies on political efficacy in adults have produced similar results (Cohen et al., 2001). The level of education was high in the present sample, with most participants currently attending university. Education enhances political efficacy (Levy, 2013), and it might therefore be that the participants already had a developed sense of political efficacy, making the reliance on general self-efficacy, in the context of political participation, unnecessary.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Participation in Social Media “Revolutions”

It was argued that Iceland might provide an interesting opportunity to study political efficacy due to the social media “revolutions” of 2015. To the authors best knowledge, this is the first empirical investigation conducted on this new phenomenon. Most of the social media “revolutions” involved exposing acts, such as publishing a picture of one’s breast, disclosing a mental illness, or showing support to victims of sexual abuse by posting updates like “I am a slut” (Hardardottir, 2015). General self-efficacy did not encourage the daring acts of SMR-

participation. General self-efficacy has been found to be related to higher positive affect, life satisfaction, and a positive orientation towards the future, and lower levels negative affect, and anger (Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2005). It might therefore be, that highly self-efficacious young people do not experience as much anger or perceived injustice as do SMR-participants; and if they do, they are optimistic about improvement without direct action. Underpinning this claim, general self-efficacy was associated with right-wing political orientation in this study, which has been associated with resistance of change and acceptance of inequality (Thorisdottir et al., 2007).

Political efficacy was related to engagement in the exposing acts of the SMRs. That is in accordance with previous studies which suggest that political efficacy enhances behaviors like protests among adolescents (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Even though protesting and SMR-participation are not analogous, they may share similar causes, like perceived inequality in society (Diemer & Rapa, 2016) or anger (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007). Anger is associated with approach inclination and intentions to take action (Averill, 1983), and might have played a mediating role in the relationship observed between political efficacy and SMR-participation in the present study. Anger and perceived inequality and as a cause of various forms of participation should be a topic of future research.

SMR-Participation and Political Participation

SMR-participants participated more actively in politics than non-participants. This somehow contradicts previous research, which have indicated that young people are abandoning traditional political participation for unconventional participation (Busse et al., 2015; Martin, 2012). The measure of political participation in the present study used elements of both so called conventional (e.g., voting, party membership) and unconventional forms (e.g., protesting, boycotting). There is no universally accepted definition of political participation, but according to a definition by Verba et al. (1995), it refers to any “activity

that has the intent or effect of influencing government action (p. 38).” In that view, active political participation is one-dimensional. The present findings suggest, in fact, that young people who are active in one domain of political or civil participation are more likely to participate in another.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study relied on a convenience sample, not a randomly selected sample, as is most often feasible. However, in this case, convenience sampling can be considered a strength, as it was important to reach a fairly high number of participants who had participated in SMR. The group size reached, 28%, is well suited for meaningful comparison between groups. Furthermore, participation in SMRs was surprisingly even among the genders. One of the oversights of this study was not collecting data on the socioeconomic status of respondents, which previous studies have shown to influence political efficacy (Bekkers, 2005; Cohen et al., 2001; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009).

Conclusions

As interest in psychological aspects of political behavior continues to grow (Blais & St-Vincent, 2011), self-efficacy beliefs and related self-constructs should be of primary interest. In conclusion, the present study emphasizes the importance of political efficacy for young people's political participation. As studies suggest that political efficacy can be enhanced through voting (Finkel, 1985) and civil education (Levy, 2013), that knowledge could be applied in school setting to counter the declining political participation of young people (Fieldhouse et al., 2007). The study does suggest that general self-efficacy contributes to political participation, but less than previous researchers have argued (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Solhaug, 2006). The Icelandic social media “revolutions” are an interesting phenomenon which deserve further research attention. The present findings bring up questions on the nature of the phenomenon, and suggest that SMR-participation is essentially

political. This is further supported by the fact that SMR-participants participated more actively in politics than non-participants. Participation in societal and political issues might therefore be a one-dimensional construct, and conventional and unconventional participation should not be viewed as opposites, but much, as two sides of the same coin.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Byltingar á samfélagsmiðlum og stjórnmálapátttaka ungs fólks

Eftirfarandi könnun er liður í rannsókn á þátttöku og viðhorfum ungs fólks á aldrinum 18-30 ára til samfélagsmiðlabyltinga og þátttöku í stjórnmálum. Ætla má að það taki um 5-10 mínútur að svara könnuninni. Við biðjum þig að svara spurningunum eftir bestu getu en þér ber þó hvorki skylda til að svara einstökum spurningum eða listanum í heild. Þér er frjálst að hætta hvenær sem er.

Könnunin er í nokkrum hlutum sem innihalda spurningar sem lúta að þátttöku þinni og viðhorfa til samfélagsmiðlabyltinga, stjórnmálapátttöku, trausti til stofnana, trú á eigin getu, þekkingu á stjórnmálum og bakgrunni þínum.

Þátttaka þín er nafnlaus og ekki verður hægt að rekja svör til einstaka þátttakenda.

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Ábyrgðaraðili er Hulda Þórisdóttir, lektor við Háskóla Íslands.

Appendix B

Full Questionnaire

Byltingar á samfélagsmiðlum og stjórnmálaþátttaka ungs fólks

1. Tókst þú þátt í einhverri af eftirfarandi samfélagsmiðlabyltingum ársins 2015 með því að birta myndir eða frásagnir á netinu?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Já | Nei |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| #FreeTheNipple | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #égerekkítábú | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #útmeða | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #drusluákall | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #6dagsleikinn | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #konurtala | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| #þöggun | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| annað framtak | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2. Almennt séð, hversu jákvætt eða neikvætt er viðhorf þitt til samfélagsmiðlabyltinga ársins 2015?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Mjög jákvætt
☐ Frekar jákvætt
☐ Hvorki jákvætt né neikvætt
☐ Frekar neikvætt
☐ Mjög neikvætt

Hversu sammála eða ósammála ertu eftirfarandi fullyrðingu?

3. Samfélagsmiðlabyltingar ársins 2015 juku áhuga minn á stjórnmálum.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Mjög sammála
☐ Frekar sammála
☐ Hvorki sammála né ósammála
☐ Frekar ósammála
☐ Mjög ósammála

4. Á síðastliðnum tólf mánuðum, hefur þú ...

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Já | Nei |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| skrifað undir undirskrifalista? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| sniðgengið, eða vísitandi keypt, vissar vörur af pólitískum, siðferðislegum eða umhverfisástæðum? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| tekið þátt í mótmælum? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| tekið þátt í umræðum um stjórnámál eða samfélagsmál á netinu (t.d. á Facebook eða Twitter)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| haft samband við, eða reynt að hafa samband við, stjórnálamann eða annan embættismann til þess að koma á framfæri skoðunum þínum? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5. Hverjar af eftirfarandi staðhæfingum eiga við um þig?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Já | Nei |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Ég myndi kjósa í alþingiskosningum ef þær færu fram á morgun | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég er meðlimur í stjórnálaflokki | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég hef starfað innan stjórnálaflokks eða fyrir tiltekinn frambjóðanda án þess að fá greitt fyrir | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

6. Hvar á skalanum 0 til 10, þar sem 0 er til vinstri og 10 til hægri, myndir þú staðsetja stjórnálaskoðanir þínar?

Mark only one oval.

| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| vinstri | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | hægri |

Hversu sammála eða ósammála ert þú eftirfarandi fullyrðingu?

7. Ójöfnuður* er óumflýjanlegur í samfélagi manna og hvetur fólk til athafna

*Ójöfnuður vísar í það að sumir hafi það betra en aðrir, hvort heldur fjárhagslega eða njóti annarra forréttinda

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Mjög sammála
☐ Frekar sammála
☐ Hvorki sammála né ósammála
☐ Frekar ósammála
☐ Mjög ósammála

8. Hversu sammála eða ósammála ert þú eftirfarandi fullyrðingum?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Mjög ósammála | Frekar ósammála | Hvorki sammála né ósammála | Frekar sammála | Mjög sammála |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Launamunur á Íslandi er of mikill | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég upplifi reiði vegna ójöfnaðar í íslensku samfélagi í dag | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. Þegar þú tekur alla þætti til greina, hvað finnst þér eiga best við um stöðu kvenna og karla í íslensku samfélagi?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Karlar hafa mun sterkari stöðu
- ☐ Karlar hafa nokkuð sterkari stöðu
- ☐ Karlar og konur hafa jafn sterka stöðu
- ☐ Konur hafa nokkuð sterkari stöðu
- ☐ Konur hafa mun sterkari stöðu

10. Hve vel eða illa eiga eftirfarandi staðhæfingar við um þig?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Mjög illa | Frekar illa | Hvorki vel né illa | Frekar vel | Mjög vel |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Ég hef áhuga á stjórnmálum | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég fylgist með fréttum af stjórnmálum | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég ræði við vini og fjölskyldu um stjórnmál | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

11. Voru stjórnmál rædd á þínu heimili þegar þú varst að alast upp?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Mjög oft
- ☐ Frekar oft
- ☐ Nokkuð oft
- ☐ Sjaldan
- ☐ Nánast aldrei

12. Á skalanum 1 til 5, þar sem 1 er mjög lítið og 5 mjög mikið, hve mikið traust berðu til eftirfarandi stofnana?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Alþingis | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lögreglunnar | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Dómskerfisins | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ríkisstjórnarinnar | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stjórnmálaflokka | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

13. Hversu sammála eða ósammála ertu eftirfarandi fullyrðingum?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Mjög ósammála | Frekar ósammála | Hvorki sammála né ósammála | Frekar sammála | Mjög sammála |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mér finnst ég vera hæf(ur) til þess að taka þátt í stjórnámálum | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mér finnst ég hafa nokkuð góðan skilning á helstu viðfangsefnum stjórn mála landsins | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég held að ég gæti staðið mig jafn vel í opinberu embætti og hver annar | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mér finnst ég vera upplýstari um stjórn mál en flestir aðrir | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

14. Hve sammála eða ósammála ertu eftirfarandi fullyrðingum?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Mjög ósammála | Frekar ósammála | Hvorki sammála né ósammála | Frekar sammála | Mjög sammála |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Fólk eins og ég hefur engin áhrif á stjórnvöld | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég held að stjórnmalamönnum sé sama um hvað fólk eins og mér finnst | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

15. Ef alþingiskosningar væru haldnar á morgun, hvaða flokk eða lista myndir þú kjósa?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ A - Björt framtíð
☐ B - Framsóknarflokkurinn
☐ D - Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn
☐ S - Samfylkingin
☐ V - Vinstihreyfingin - grænt framboð
☐ Þ - Píratar
☐ Annan flokk/lista
☐ Veit ekki
☐ Myndi skila auðu
☐ Myndi ekki kjósa

Eftirfarandi spurningar kanna þekkingu þína á stjórnámálum. Svараðu spurningunum heiðarlega og eftir bestu getu.

16. Hvaða flokkur fékk flest atkvæði í alþingiskosningum 2013?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Framsóknarflokkurinn
- ☐ Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn
- ☐ Samfylkingin
- ☐ Píratar
- ☐ Veit ekki

17. Í hvaða flokki er forsætisráðherra?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Framsóknarflokknunum
- ☐ Sjálfstæðisflokknunum
- ☐ Samfylkingunni
- ☐ Vinstri grænum
- ☐ Veit ekki

18. Hvað sitja margir þingmenn á Alþingi?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 54
- ☐ 60
- ☐ 63
- ☐ 67
- ☐ Veit ekki

19. Hversu vel eða illa eiga eftirfarandi staðhæfingar við um þig?

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Á alls ekki við um mig | Á varla við um mig | Á nokkuð við um mig | Á mjög vel við um mig |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ef einhver stillir sér upp á móti mér finn ég yfirleitt leiðir til að ná mínu fram | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mér finnst auðvelt að setja mér markmið og standa við þau | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég er viss um að ég geti tekist á við óvænta atburði | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Þökk sé því hvað ég er úrræðagóð(ur) kann ég að höndla ófyirséðar aðstæður | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég get haldið ró minni þegar ég stend frammi fyrir erfiðleikum því ég get treyst á hæfni mína til að bjarga mér | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ég get yfirleitt tekist á við þær áskoranir sem ég stend frammi fyrir | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Að lokum koma nokkrar spurningar er varða bakgrunn þinn og hagi.

20. Hvers kyns ert þú (eða samsvarar þig mest með)?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ karl
- ☐ kona
- ☐ Other:

21. Hvaða ár er þú fædd(ur)?

Skrifaðu ártalið inn í tölustöfum.

.....

22. Tókst þú þátt í starfi nemendafélaga þegar þú varst í grunn-, framhalds- eða háskóla?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Já, tók mikinn þátt
- ☐ Já, tók nokkurn þátt
- ☐ Nei, tók ekki þátt

23. Hvert af eftirfarandi lýsir best búsetuformi þínu?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Ég bý í eigin húsnæði
- ☐ Ég bý í leiguhúsnæði
- ☐ Ég bý í foreldrahúsum eða leigulaust
- ☐ Annað/á ekki við

24. Hvar býrð þú?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Höfuðborgarsvæðinu
- ☐ Landsbyggðinni
- ☐ Erlendis

25. Hvaða menntun hefur þú lokið eða leggur stund á núna?*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Lauk ekki grunnskóla
- ☐ Lauk grunnskólaprófi
- ☐ Er í mennta-/framhalds- eða iðnskóla
- ☐ Hef lokið prófi frá mennta-/framhalds- eða iðnskóla
- ☐ Er í háskólanámi á grunnstigi (BA, BS, BEd o.s.frv.)
- ☐ Hef lokið grunngráðu úr háskóla (BA, BS, BEd o.s.frv.)
- ☐ Er í háskólanámi á framhaldsstigi (MA, MS, MEd eða doktorsnámi)
- ☐ Hef lokið háskólanámi á framhaldsstigi (MA, MS, MEd eða doktorsnámi)
- ☐ Other:

26. Hvað af eftirfarandi lýsir atvinnustöðu þinni best?*Veldu allt það sem við á.**Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Ég er í námi
- ☐ Ég er í fullri vinnu
- ☐ Ég er í hlutastarfi
- ☐ Ég er atvinnulaus
- ☐ Ég er öryrki
-