

Motivations for political activism

[Politics](#)



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This assignment will explore the development of the revised hypothesis from Assignment 1 " Motivations for Political Activism" and will determine the operationalization of the study to be conducted in Assignment 3. Firstly, the new hypothesis will be presented with the delineation of variables (independent, dependent and antecedent). Secondly, the definition of terms used within the hypothesis will be elaborated upon. Thirdly, an explanation and analysis of the steps taken to operationalize the hypothesis will be conducted. This includes an examination of variable delineation, and a survey process methodology. Finally, the fourth component of the assignment will provide the sample Survey questionnaire, consisting of the introductory statement and finally the survey questions.

The intention of this study originated under the premise that a positive correlation would be found, via a literature review, between the levels of responsibility (family, jobs, home ownership etc.) and tendency to engage in political activism. As noted in Assignment 1 " Motivations for Political Activism", the antithesis of this claim was found. In addition to this, numerous alternative motivations for political activism were discovered. Given the subject area in which this study will be conducted (Simon Fraser University) it is highly likely that a discrepancy will arise due to the lack of diversity of respondents. It is for this reason that the revised hypothesis will consider a distinct feature of the university environment demographic in the antecedent variable- education.

The hypothesis thus reads as follows: In the SFU university environment, individuals who are educated about their personal rights and freedoms (antecedent variable) results in an weakened sense of political efficacy

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(independent variable), which effectively increases the likelihood of political activism (dependent variable).

Essentially, I am suggesting that the more knowledge of political rights and freedoms that a person has, the more likely he/she will become unsatisfied with government efficacy and as a result he/she will become more committed to political activism. This hypothesis is largely different than the one determined at the end of " Motivations for Political Activism" which suggests that an increase in education will result in an increase in political activism. After consideration, this hypothesis seemed too broad to purposefully capture any significant trends. Therefore the revised hypothesis has been provided to mitigate for this concern.

The definitions of terms used in the revised hypothesis have also been modified from their original forms. Firstly, the term political activism in this study refers to the acts of civil protest and civil disobedience only, as opposed to the former definition in " Motivations for Political Activism", which includes a much wider range of political activism. This change was made to simplify the analysis, given the breadth of this survey. In addition and more specifically, acts of civil protest and civil disobedience require a given motive and physical action beyond simpler acts of activism, such as signing a petition. This factor will allow us to narrow in on the individuals who are actually feeling strongly propelled for political action, and not simply the individuals who engage because it is convenient to do so. This is important as I am specifically studying the causes of political activism. On the other hand, more drastic means of political activism, such as illegal protest or rioting, were exempt as it is probable that the reasons in which people

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become involved in extreme political activism is far more complex than this study can feasibly manage.

Secondly, the term political efficacy in this study is defined as on one's own belief that their government is assiduous, effective and legitimate with the protection of their rights and freedoms and that their government provides adequate representation of their needs. In a more general sense, political efficacy relates to the level of trust one has in their government. Scholars have defined this term as referring to beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics¹, however this study relies on the former definition as a means of facilitating the breadth of the assignment by narrowing down the subject field.

Thirdly, the antecedent variable, education of rights and freedoms, is not exclusive to that of the academic nature. Any form of politically relevant influence outside of academia is relevant. For example, on the SFU campus a number of politically active associations provide education to students and staff. In addition, any education provided by politically predisposed environments on a given person, such as family or a given person's personal life experience is also relevant. S

The questions of the survey were strategically chosen to maximize the potential for proving or disproving the hypothesis as opposed to rendering the hypothesis insignificant, which is not an unlikely possibility.

Notwithstanding, an insignificant hypothesis will provide for informative results nonetheless. Appendix I exposes the possible outcomes that may arise from the survey questions (see Appendix I - Possible Outcomes, page

10). These outcomes were considered at great breadth while selecting the survey questions.

Question one of the survey deals with the antecedent variable, which attempts to determine the degree of knowledge the respondent has on the topic of rights and freedoms. The second question deals with the independent variable, which considers how the respondent feels regarding the effectiveness of government and the dependent variable is examined in the third survey question, which asks how often the respondent engages in political activism. These three questions will explore the possible outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Category in Appendix II being the hypothesis and the null hypothesis (see Appendix 2- Categorization of Possible Outcomes, page 11).

Questions four through seven will explore the possible outcomes of the 3rd Category in Appendix II, the insignificance of the hypothesis. The handwritten components of these questions will attempt to reveal the possible alternative variables to be considered for future studies if the hypothesis does in fact prove to be insignificant. A4 and B4 of the 4th Category, as per Appendix II, will not be considered in the survey; the likelihood of such results is doubtful. They shall not be considered for analysis in the survey as they are contradictory and thus, far beyond the capacity of this research project.

Finally, it is noteworthy to mention that political efficacy may also be used as an intervening variable between knowledge of rights and freedoms and political activism; however doing so would suggest that I am studying the relationship between knowledge of rights and freedoms as the independent

variable and political activism as the dependent variable, which is not the case. Also, spuriousness for this study must be considered; political efficacy is being tested to have an impact on political activism, however, political activism may consequently affect political efficacy. Question 8 of the survey has been added to mitigate for this potential discrepancy.

The students will be contacted in person at the Simon Fraser University Burnaby campus. Ten interviews will be conducted around the political science department, ten interviews near the Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group, and twenty interviews in casual meeting places. The purpose is to attempt to include a relatively equal number of people who may be otherwise statistically underrepresented. I am not attempting to achieve a microcosm of the Canadian population, but rather I am trying to seek out as many individuals who are affected by the dependent variable (political activism) as those who are not. Furthermore, the respondents will not be verbally asked the survey questions. They will be given the survey to complete without my knowledge of their direct answers. The objective in doing so is to maximize anonymity whilst ensuring honest and un-intimidated responses.