

Who dissents? Self efficacy and opposition action after state-sponsored election violence

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Abstract

Reactions to acts of state-sponsored election violence vary greatly across individuals and over time. This article develops a theory that the psychological characteristic of self efficacy moderates citizens' reactions to state-sponsored election violence. I use data from an original survey and in-depth qualitative interviews with opposition supporters in Zimbabwe to illustrate and test this hypothesis. I find that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of intention to take action in support of the opposition after violence and is related to the emotional reactions that citizens have after violent events. Opposition supporters who are higher in self efficacy are also particularly likely to take action after more severe violent events. Self efficacy is a better predictor of reactions to repression than other prominent explanations in the literature including strength of party identification.

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1 Introduction

In March 2008, Zimbabweans went to the polls. Economic mismanagement had given many reason to vote against the incumbent regime despite a large police presence at the polling stations and a history of electoral intimidation and violence during elections. In the days after the election, the results were not announced and police were deployed in the streets, leading opposition voters to fear that the government was rigging the results. During this period, voters sent messages to the BBC ([BBC News, 2008](#)):

“Police have already been deployed on the streets in Harare and are telling people not to assemble, to keep quiet. I have never been this afraid before.”

“People talked freely - even in the voting queues - of their discontent at Mugabe rule. They openly said they would vote for change...”

“...people will burst with anger and probably demonstrate or become violent.”

The reactions of voters to the same series of political events are highly diverse. Fear, indifference, and anger are all common reactions by citizens to threats of punishment by the state for political action or speech. What explains this heterogeneity in voter reactions to state-sponsored election violence? More generally, when violence is used to coercively shift the outcome of an election, when does it have its intended effect?

Pre-election state repression is an important and understudied form of election violence. Governments are the most common perpetrators of pre- and post-election violence ([Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski, 2014](#); [Taylor, Pevehouse and Straus, 2017](#)). [Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski \(2014\)](#) define government-sponsored election violence as “events in which incumbent leaders and ruling party agents employ or threaten violence against the political opposition or potential voters before, during or after elections” (150). State-sponsored election violence can be considered as a type of repression wielded with the specific goal of influencing the outcome of an election. Given the state’s outside coercive power, this form of election violence may have particularly negative effects on the quality of democracy.

More generally, there is little existing research on the consequences of election violence. Much of the theoretical and empirical research in the field has sought to assess when and where election violence will occur, rather than what effects it has on political preferences and

behavior (Wilkinson, 2004; Bratton, 2008; Hafner-Burton, Hyde and Jablonski, 2014). There are several important exceptions. Recent studies analyze correlations between election violence and turnout (Bekoe and Burchard, 2017), ruling party vote share (Young, 2016), and political attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (Linke, 2013; Söderström, 2017). Yet, little of this research is based on methodologies that enable estimates of causal relationships between violence and subsequent behavior. In addition, it has typically sought to estimate the total average effect of election violence, rather than identifying the conditions in which violence has different effects.

The existing literature on election violence has theorized that the strength of party affiliation should shape how easily voters can be swayed by violence. Several influential models have argued that election violence should have the largest effect on the behavior of swing voters (Robinson and Torvik, 2009; Collier and Hoeffler, 2009), although there seems to be little empirical support for this prediction (Mares and Young, 2016). Other recent work has shown that pre-election violence in Zimbabwe has a bigger effect on electoral outcomes in relatively poor parts of Zimbabwe (Young, 2016). This article examines whether individual psychological differences condition reactions to election violence. It draws inspiration from existing research on the psychological effects on exposure to other types of violence (Bauer et al., 2016) and on the psychological determinants of political participation in established democracies (Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk, 2009; Gerber et al., 2011) and non-democratic regimes (Pearlman, 2016; Aytac, Schiumerini and Stokes, 2017; Young, Forthcoming).

This article explores the role of the psychological characteristic of self efficacy in shaping citizens' reactions to state-sponsored election violence. General self efficacy represents confidence in one's ability to control one's environment, particularly in difficult situations. It is thought to be formed early in life and subsequently shape the emotional and behavioral reactions to threats. This analysis draws on an original survey experiment carried out with 671 opposition supporters in Zimbabwe to test how self efficacy conditions reactions to scenarios describing state-sponsored election violence that vary in how severe, credible, and relevant the violence is. The results show that people who are higher in self efficacy say they would react more angrily (as opposed to fearfully) after state-sponsored violence, and are more likely to continue expressing support for the opposition party. These effects are particularly strong for more severe forms of

violence. They are robust to controls for a number of individual characteristics that are correlated with self efficacy, including socioeconomic status, education, and even past political activism and exposure to violence. Qualitative interviews with 41 opposition supporters and activists in Zimbabwe illustrate how citizens with positive views of their own capacity to cope in violent situations react more angrily and proactively to it.

Ultimately, this paper makes an early contribution to our understanding of the role of individual psychological characteristics in explaining political behavior in repressive regimes. It suggests that even conditional on actual capacity to cope in the face of a coercive threat, subjective perceptions of coping capacity can explain whether an opposition supporter persists or relents to the demands of a repressive state. These findings add to the growing body of research on the political psychology of violence. The heterogeneity in how citizens react to state-sponsored election violence in this analysis may help explain why previous estimates of the effect of repression have produced such mixed results (Davenport, 2007).

2 Theoretical Framework

Why might reactions to repressive threats vary across individuals? Most of the literature on election violence has so far focused on two explanations: strength of party identification and socioeconomic status. In this section I outline these existing explanations and draw on research in psychology and American political psychology to argue that individual psychological characteristics may also condition reactions to state-sponsored election violence.

2.1 Existing explanations: Strength of party identification and socioeconomic status

First, the existing literature has largely argued or assumed that strength of party identification should condition the effects of election violence on voter choice or turnout. Influential models by Collier and Vicente (2012) and Robinson and Torvik (2009) argue that violence is more effective against swing voters. Collier and Vicente (2012), for example, presents a model that differentiates between hard-core supporters and “soft-base” supporters. By assumption, soft-base supporters have a weaker partisan preference such that they can be dissuaded from voting by the threat of

violence and also choose not to turn out when the party they support uses violence.¹ Many of these theories view the threat of violence as a negative inducement and draw on the political economy literature on clientelism, much of which has also argued that inducements should be targeted on swing voters (Stokes, 2005; Stokes et al., 2013). On the other hand, other models of electoral violence have assumed that violence primarily or only affects the core supporters of a party's opponent (Chaturvedi, 2005).

The empirical literature on election violence has tended to focus on identifying which voters experience violence, rather than the effect of violence on different types of voters. However, several empirical analyses have interpreted the higher incidence of election violence among voters with different preferences as evidence that violence is more effective in shaping the behavior of those voters. Bhasin and Gandhi (2013) shows that state repression is more likely to be targeted on opposition activists during the pre-election period than average citizens, interpreting this as evidence that "incumbents find it more effective to repress electoral challengers" (620). Gutiérrez-Romero (2014) also finds evidence that during the 2008 Kenya election violence core supporters of the main parties' opponents were more likely to experience election violence in areas where each party was expected to win.² Mares and Young (2016), using data from the fifth round of the Afrobarometer, find that swing voters are more likely to be afraid of election violence in just two out of the ten countries in Africa with the highest fear of election violence. In short, much of the literature on election violence suggests that its effectiveness should depend on the strength of party identification of its targets, but so far the evidence base for this expectation is quite weak.

Finally, several scholars have argued that demographic characteristics might make voters more vulnerable to election violence. These studies have identified gender, poverty, and education as characteristics that might make voters more or less likely to resist in the face of election violence. For example, Bratton (2008) argues that "people with limited education may be unaware of individual political rights and therefore possess weak defenses against intimidation" (5). Mares and Young (2016), again using the Afrobarometer data, find that poorer voters are significantly

¹Instead of modeling the threat of violence as negative utility, Robinson and Torvik (2009) assume that violence is costless and simply takes swing voters or core supporters of the incumbent's opponent out of the electorate. The higher relative effectiveness of violence to economic transfers for swing voters comes from the expectation that swing voters will be expensive to buy off with transfers.

²The preponderance of the evidence on positive inducements also suggests that core supporters are more likely to be targeted in many contexts (Stokes et al., 2013; Mares and Young, 2016).

more likely to be afraid of election violence in seven out of the ten countries with the highest incidence of fear. These analysis, however, are unable to separate increased incidence of election violence from increased fear of violence conditional on the existence of a threat. Young (2016) uses data from Zimbabwe to show that the poor are more likely to stop voting or stating support for the opposition after state-sponsored election violence. She theorizes that the effect of violence on the voting behavior of the poor could be larger for both physical or psychological reasons. Physically, the poor have less money to invest in the prevention or mitigation of violence, such as flight or healthcare, and may suffer more from the inability to work due to injury. Psychologically, she argues that the poor may be more likely to react to the threat of violence with fear.

2.2 Self efficacy and variation in reactions to violent threats

In this article, I argue that the psychological characteristics of voters may create important variation in how voters respond to the threat of election violence. Specifically, I focus on the characteristic of general self efficacy, defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997). Experiments that manipulate efficacy beliefs suggest that it has important positive effects on individuals’ abilities to cope with negative situations (Bandura, Reese and Adams, 1982; Cervone and Peake, 1986).³

Bandura and others have argued that self efficacy is causally linked to political participation. Bandura (1997) argues that the effects of self efficacy will differ depending on the type of social system that the individual is in (20-21). In responsive environments, self efficacy should be linked to “productive engagement” and “self-development”. In non-responsive environments, he theorizes that while low self-efficacy individuals will fall into patterns of apathy and resignation in which they “quickly give up when their efforts fail to produce results”, high self-efficacy individuals will “intensify their efforts and, if necessary, try to change inequitable social practices” (21). In the political realm, this implies that high self-efficacy individuals should engage in different forms of political participation in different types of political systems: in responsive systems, high self-efficacy individuals should be more likely to participate in democratic politics,

³These studies have used a range of methods to manipulate self efficacy. Some have used techniques like modeling efficacious behavior (Bandura, Reese and Adams, 1982), while others have used the idea of anchoring based on arbitrary reference points to influence respondents’ self-assessments (Cervone and Peake, 1986).

while in non-responsive systems, they should be pushed towards protest and social activism.

There is correlational and qualitative evidence in support of these predictions. [Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk \(2009\)](#) show using data from the ANES that American voters who have higher perceptions of their personal efficacy are more likely to feel angry rather than fearful in response to policy threats, and that this anger in turn boosts participation in politics. General self efficacy has been linked to higher participation in several types of political action in democracy, including participation in political campaigns ([Rudolph, Gangl and Stevens, 2000](#)) and calling in on radio shows ([Newhagen, 1994](#)). In non-democratic settings, some scholars have found that self efficacy is related to lower levels of participation in regime-sanctioned political acts like rubber-stamp elections ([Bahry and Silver, 1990](#); [Chen and Zhong, 2002](#)), and higher levels of participation in protest ([Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008](#); [Tausch et al., 2011](#)).

One mechanism that may link self efficacy to higher participation in anti-regime politics in repressive environments is its effect on the emotional reactions that individuals have to threats. Self efficacy theorists argue that self efficacy is fundamentally linked to anxiety because individuals who have low evaluations of their own coping abilities are more likely to view adverse events as threats that they should be afraid of than as challenges that they can overcome ([Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1988, 1997](#)). In other words, threats are “relational” in that they are defined by the gap between “perceived coping capabilities and potentially hurtful aspects of the environment” ([Bandura, 1997](#), 140). People who perceive themselves as less efficacious are more likely to react fearfully to a threatening stimuli ([Bandura, Reese and Adams, 1982](#); [Gamson, 1968](#)). Those with high self efficacy, on the other hand, are more likely to assess that they have the capacity to face a challenge and therefore react with anger and action ([Bandura, 1977](#)).

The propensity for self efficacy to influence emotional reactions to repressive threats is important because emotions have been shown to have causal effects on political perceptions and behavior. In related work, I find using field and lab-in-the-field experiments that the emotions of anger and fear have a strong causal effect on individuals’ propensities to take part in pro-opposition politics in Zimbabwe (self-citation). This research draws on a related body of research in psychology theorizing that emotions systematically affect how individuals perceive and process information ([Lerner and Keltner, 2000](#)). In particular, past experimental studies have

found that fear makes individuals risk averse and increases estimations of the probability of negative personal events (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Lerner et al., 2003). These findings suggest that the effects of negative emotions like fear may be an important mediator in the relationship between self efficacy and risky political participation.

Past experimental and correlational research suggests that self efficacy may play an important role in shaping how individuals feel and behave in the face of potential threats. Lab experiments have found that increased situational self efficacy causes lower anxiety and behavioral agitation (Sanderson, Rapee and Barlow, 1989; Litt, Nye and Shafer, 1993, 1995). Observationally, past studies with veterans show that pre-deployment measures of (low) self efficacy and related personality traits like psychopathy and negativity are related to whether or not soldiers in Vietnam, peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia, or settlers in Israel exposed to an intense period of bombing experience PTSD (Schnurr, Friedman and Rosenberg, 1993; Bramsen, Dirkzwager and Van der Ploeg, 2000; Hobfoll et al., 2007). Bramsen, Dirkzwager and Van der Ploeg (2000) surmise that this relationship may be driven by a causal process in which peacekeepers with high self efficacy “appraise certain situations as more dangerous and threatening than peacekeepers with lower [self efficacy] scores... Consequently, they may experience higher levels of anxiety, which place a greater demand on their capacity for working through the experience. In the aftermath of trauma, some personality traits may predispose individuals to engage in less successful coping strategies” (1118).

To summarize, theory from psychology suggests that individuals with higher self efficacy should be more likely to engage in pro-opposition action after state-sponsored election violence (Prediction 1). If self efficacy shapes the affective responses that individuals have to threats, high self-efficacy individuals should be more likely to respond to state-sponsored violence with anger relative to fear (Prediction 2). Finally, the effect of self-efficacy should be larger the more severe the threat is (Prediction 3).

Although I focus on general self efficacy in this article, it is worth noting that there are other personality traits that could also influence political behavior. Ultimately, distinguishing the independent effect of self efficacy from other psychological traits such as the “big five” personality traits is beyond the scope of this research. Instead, I aim to focus attention broadly on the role

of psychological characteristics in reactions to repression. This approach reflects the state of the political science literature on participation in pro-opposition actions in repressive environments, which has largely focused on ideology and demographic characteristics to explain variation in how voters respond. It also reflects findings from psychology that general self efficacy, locus of control, self-esteem, and neuroticism may be indicators of a common core construct (Judge et al., 2002).

It is, however, important to differentiate general self efficacy from two other related concepts. First, self efficacy is not optimism. General self efficacy is a perception of personal coping ability rather than an assessment of the likelihood of a particular outcome. Unrealistic optimism is about outcome expectations, often regarding events that are out of the individual's control. Although optimism over outcomes can be beneficial (Scheier and Carver, 1993), and seems to be strategically deployed in situations in which it would help rather than hurt performance (Sweeny, Carroll and Shepperd, 2006), it can also lead to greater disappointment and a lack of preparedness for negative events (Shepperd et al., 2015). General self efficacy may be conceptualized as the degree of optimism or pessimism that an individual exhibits in their assessments of personal behaviors that are in the individual's control.

Second, I focus on general self efficacy, a relatively stable personality trait, rather than domain-specific perceived efficacy such as "internal political efficacy" (Iyengar, 1980; Morrell, 2003). Measures of political efficacy are likely to reflect perceptions of the responsiveness of the system as well as one's own personal capacities.⁴ Political efficacy measures are also more likely than general self efficacy to reflect actual differences in political skills, a key concern when assessing the relationship between efficacy beliefs and political participation because actual abilities are a key confounding factor. Similarly, although several theorists have argued that "collective efficacy", or the perceived capacity of a group to succeed in its goals, are a more important determinant of collective action than personal self efficacy (Bandura, 2000), I opt not to focus on this concept because I believe it introduces conceptual and empirical problems. Conceptually, it assumes a level of engagement with a specific organization that is not applicable

⁴For instance, internal political efficacy is often measured with survey questions like "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" on a four-point agree-disagree scale. Agreement on this question requires that respondents both believe that the political system is responsive to citizens and that they are personally efficacious (Morrell, 2003).

in many settings. Empirically, as with political efficacy, collective efficacy is likely to strongly reflect actual rather than perceived organizational skills.

3 Research Design

I use a mixed methods research design to provide an initial test of whether self efficacy has a causal effect on how citizens react to state-sponsored election violence. The analysis draws on in-depth qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis of survey data, including a survey experiment.

3.1 Quantitative analysis

For the quantitative test, I carried out an experiment embedded in a survey of 671 Zimbabwean opposition supporters and activists in 2015. A survey experiment is a useful methodology for testing the causal relationships outlined in the previous section for several reasons. First, it enables me to measure self-efficacy “pre-treatment”, meaning before citizens have been exposed to the particular cases of election violence that I am studying. This is important because exposure to violence and participation in activism are likely to also affect self efficacy beliefs, so a simple correlation between self efficacy, activism, and violence exposure could reflect a number of multi-directional causal relationships. Similarly, by randomly assigning participants into repression scenarios, I can shut down the potential for respondents to select in to exposure to repression, another key confounding factor in a correlational analysis. Finally, it enables me to carefully measure not just the behavioral responses to violence but some of the psychological processes such as emotional responses that might underlie them. Of course, a survey experimental methodology is not without drawbacks. This method relies on respondents to report how they would hypothetically feel and act in different scenarios. To the extent that they high self efficacy people systematically misjudge or misreport their reactions, estimates of the effect of self efficacy could be biased.

In the survey, I randomly assign each participant to react to two scenarios that describes acts of state-sponsored election violence. Each participant evaluated two different state-sponsored election violence scenarios. This analysis is performed on stacked data that includes each scenario

separately, for a total of two observations for each of the 671 participants, with standard errors clustered by participant, for a total sample of around 1300 observations (scenarios). In each scenario, the participant was given information about the proximity in time to the next election, the level of activism of the victim, the location, the severity of violence, and the source of the information on the state-sponsored election violence event. The scenario script read as follows, with the randomized components in italics:

Imagine that it is one *day / month / year* before the next election. You have just heard that an opposition *parliamentary candidate / council candidate / organizer / voter / voter that you know* in a community in *Mashonaland / Harare / Matabeleland* has been *threatened / beaten / abducted / killed* by government forces. You received this news from *a friend / an opposition activist / a ZANU-PF activist* in your area.

To conduct tests of whether people react in systematically different ways to different types of violence, I coded five continuous variables out of the various scenario characteristics:

- Time to Election: takes a value of 1 (year), 2 (month), or 3 (day)
- Victim Activism: takes a value of 0 (voter, friend), 1 (organizer), 2 (council candidate), or 3 (parliamentary candidate)
- Same Province: takes a value of 1 if the scenario takes place in the province where the respondent live
- Violence Severity: takes a value of 1 (threatened), 2 (beaten), 3 (abducted), and 4 (killed)
- Information Credibility: takes a value of 1 (a ZANU-PF activist), 2 (an opposition activist), or 3 (a friend)

After each scenario, the participant was asked to estimate how likely it was that they would attend an opposition rally in their area, how angry they would feel, and how afraid they would feel after the described event. All outcomes were measured on a four- or five-point scale. In the case of the rally attendance question, this was described as a likelihood scale ranging from “not at all likely” to “sure”, while in the case of the emotional responses, it was a scale of emotional intensity ranging from “not at all” to “extremely” angry or afraid.

I measured self-efficacy with a 10-question scale developed by [Jerusalem and Schwarzer \(1995\)](#). The following ten individual measures are combined into an index using principal

components analysis and then standardized:

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
3. I am certain that I can accomplish my goals.
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I can handle unforeseen situations.
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can find several solutions.
9. If I am in trouble, I can think of a good solution.
10. I can handle whatever comes my way.

This scale has been validated in cross-cultural studies spanning 14 (Schwarzer, 1999) or 25 different contexts (Scholz et al., 2002).⁵ Self-efficacy was measured early in the survey, before the repression scenarios were described.

I also measured demographic characteristics that might be correlated with both self efficacy and reactions to repression such as gender, age, and assets, and other explanations for heterogeneity in reactions to repression including socioeconomic status and strength of party affiliation. At the end of the survey, to avoid priming, I measured past exposure to repression and past participation in opposition activism.

Ultimately, although this analysis is based on an experiment the effect of self efficacy is still endogenous. Social cognitive theorists argue that self efficacy beliefs develop primarily from “enactive mastery experiences” (Bandura, 1997, 79). As a result, self efficacy could be positively related to socioeconomic status, particularly education, and other personal characteristics that enable someone to experience mastery, particularly early in life. It is also possible that positive experiences with political activism would increase self efficacy, and that past exposure to violence could increase or decrease it. Table D.1 in the Appendix shows that, in line with the literature on self efficacy in other contexts, self efficacy is positively correlated with age and education. In addition, self efficacy is highly positively correlated with closeness to party and past exposure to

⁵I modified the answer categories based on pre-testing in Zimbabwe such that the answers were recorded on a five-point agreement scale rather than a four-point scale from not at all true to exactly true.

violence. To separate out the effect of self efficacy from the effect of these potential confounding factors, I include them in the analysis as controls. In specifications where I am interested in identifying the marginal effect of variation in the experimental treatments for people at varying levels of self efficacy, I also include the interaction of these confounding factors and the scenario characteristics.

To carry out this study, I recruited and trained a team of Zimbabwean surveyors through the NGO Voice for Democracy (VfD), which conducts research on human rights abuses and organizes communities to prevent and respond to political violence. VfD's existing networks and local knowledge were crucial for this study to be carried out safely as the research team could leverage existing social ties to recruit participants and establish trust. Data was collected using handheld tablets with a survey that was pre-programmed using Open Data Kit (ODK). All interviews were carried out in the local language of Shona. VfD recruited opposition supporters and activists into the study in six different violence-affected areas in Zimbabwe such that approximately half of the participants are based in rural areas and half in urban areas.

This recruitment strategy produced a mix of opposition activists and sympathizers. The surveyors started by interviewing the activists who were working as VfD mobilizers so that they understood the sensitive content of the study, and then asked them to recruit opposition supporters, including those who were afraid to openly participate in opposition politics. Ultimately, 15% of the sample reports that they have not attended an opposition rally, and 41% report that they have not volunteered for an opposition party, suggesting that the participant pool has a mix of activists and sympathizers.⁶

This sample is not representative of opposition supporters in Zimbabwe, but it can be compared to a representative sample to get a sense of how the results might generalize. Table 1 presents a breakdown of how the sample compares on demographic measures to opposition supporters in the nationally representative Afrobarometer survey. The average age and education level of our sample is quite comparable to the Afrobarometer sample, with an average age of 38 and median education of high school. Our sample is significantly poorer and more urban than the Afrobarometer opposition supporters.

Two additional notes about the data are in order. First, it is important to note that an

⁶These statistics are based on individuals who did not receive the emotion induction treatment.

Table 1: Comparison of sample to a nationally representative sample of opposition supporters

	Author's Sample			Afrobarometer Sample ⁷		
	Mean	Standard Error	N	Mean	Standard Error	N
Age	37.84	0.52	670	37.74	0.46	857
Education	1.72	0.03	669	1.66	0.03	857
Female	0.52	0.02	671	0.46	0.02	857
Subjective Poverty: Food	3.59	0.03	668	2.20	0.04	857
Subjective Poverty: Income	4.12	0.02	669	3.20	0.05	856
Urban	0.47	0.02	671	0.36	0.02	857

additional experiment was carried out during the course of this study, the results of which are written up in (self citation). Assignment to that treatment, an emotion induction exercise, was independent of assignment to the repression scenarios. However, in all of the analyses that follow, I include a control for treatment assignment in the emotion induction experiment. Second, after data collection I discovered that one surveyor administered the self efficacy battery later in the survey. All results presented in this write-up include that surveyor's data, but Appendix F show that they are robust to dropping those observations.

3.2 Qualitative interviews

The qualitative interviews were conducted with 41 opposition sympathizers, supporters, activists, and leaders between 2015 and 2016 in Zimbabwe. The full list of anonymized interviews is included in Appendix A.

These interviews were conducted by two researchers whom I trained on a semi-structured interview protocol and focus group discussion guide. Although they worked from a set of guiding questions, they were given initial training and on-the-job guidance on how to probe to elicit additional details and concrete examples. Interviews were audio recorded, and the same researchers transcribed and translated the audio files before they were destroyed.

Participants for these interviews were primarily recruited through the researchers' networks and referrals. Both interviewers had preexisting personal ties to opposition organizers through their own political activism or research. For lower-level supporters, the recruitment process was more formal, with several constituencies in Harare and nearby rural areas selected to recruit a few opposition supporters into small group discussions. The sample involves opposition politicians,

activists, organizers, and supporters.

4 Repression and activism in Zimbabwe

Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has held regular, contested elections but these have not resulted in any peaceful transitions of power between parties, in part because of the ruling party's use of election violence. The ruling party ZANU-PF grew out of the independence struggle and enjoyed popular support in the 1980s that diminished in the 1990s in part due to a severe structural adjustment program (LeBas, 2011).

ZANU-PF has relied heavily on repression to suppress dissent at multiple points in its history. Shortly after independence in the 1980s, ZANU-PF deployed the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade of its armed forces into the Matabeleland region, purportedly to significantly increase its use of repression to silence dissent in the year 2000. According to independent observers affiliated with the Catholic church, as many as 20,000 citizens were killed by the ZANU-PF government during this period (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), 1997). Although electoral competition dropped from 1980 to the late 1990s (Sithole and Makumbe, 1997), in 1999 an opposition party called the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) grew out of the country's major trade union and began to pose a credible threat to the regime. Shortly after the unexpected defeat of ZANU-PF's proposed constitution in a referendum, a new wave of violence against opposition supporters and organizers began. In addition, the government began tacitly encouraging independence war veterans to invade white commercial farms and stopped protecting the farmers, who had been an important source of funding and mobilization during the referendum (LeBas, 2006).

Since 2000, repressive violence by the ruling party targeting opposition supporters and organizers has taken a number of forms. In 2001 the government initiated a national youth training program that created a nationwide militia for the party. These militia set up bases around the country and began using more sophisticated forms of torture (Reeler, 2003; Sachikonye, 2011). Party agents, youth wing members, members of the association of independence war veterans, soldiers, and traditional leaders have all played a role in organizing intimidation campaigns around recent elections (Bratton and Masunungure, 2008).

Violence reached a peak during the 2008 elections, which took place in a context of hyperinflation, deindustrialization, and the collapse of public services. Before the first round, violence began to escalate. As the votes in the March 2008 election came in, it became clear that ZANU-PF had lost its parliamentary majority and the office of the presidency. At this point, “the party-state launched a terror campaign of a scope and intensity never before seen in Zimbabwe” (Bratton and Masunungure, 2008, 51). This campaign was centrally controlled under the leadership of the Defense Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa (HRW, 2008). Violence during this period was marked by public assault and killings, and the increasing use of graphic forms of torture. Sachikonye noted that the “widespread but calculated use of torture as an instrument to punish the opposition and cause fear amongst its ranks” by the police, military, and militias (2011, p88).

In response, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai pulled out of the run-off election scheduled for July 2008. Negotiations brokered by the international community between the government and the opposition MDC led to the formation of a coalition government with the long-serving president and ruling party leader Robert Mugabe remaining as president and Tsvangirai serving as prime minister. Although economic conditions in the country improved dramatically under the coalition agreement, entry into government in February 2009 was the beginning of the MDC’s loss of popular support (Bratton and Masunungure, 2012; Booysen, 2012). The MDC, focused on skirmishes over parliamentary procedures and largely dismissive of polls showing that they had lost support, ran an anemic campaign in 2013 (Zamchiya, 2013). By contrast, the ZANU-PF 2013 campaign was “slick, well-funded, united and peaceful” (Tendi, 2013). ZANU-PF won by large margins at the presidential and parliamentary levels.

Post-2013, both ZANU-PF and the MDC fell into succession battles. In 2014 President Mugabe fired his vice president and potential successor Joice Mujuru, purged her supporters from national and regional posts, and promoted his unpopular wife Grace Mugabe to a powerful position as head of the ZANU-PF women’s league (Freedom House, 2015). At the same time, the MDC’s defeat “catalysed and consolidated sentiment against Tsvangirai who had now lost three presidential elections” (ICG, 2014, 10). A faction led by core members of the MDC leadership split off, creating a third MDC in addition to an earlier regional faction that had split in 2005 (ICG, 2014).

As a result of both ruling party and opposition members being expelled from their parties, a series of by-elections for parliamentary seats were held in 2015 around the time of the fieldwork for this study. The main opposition party boycotted these elections, leaving ZANU-PF to compete against some of its former members who ran as independents and several smaller opposition parties. In cases where the ruling party candidate faced a credible challenge, such as from one of its former members running as independents, the elections were preceded with threats and attacks on candidates as well as efforts to monitor, buy off and intimidate voters. Low-level violence occurred sporadically, and was primarily perpetrated by and against members of the same party as part of factional struggles (Zimbabwe Peace Project, June 2015). It is in this context of a long history of repressive violence and political activism, as well as growing dissatisfaction with both the ruling party and the opposition, that this study took place.

5 Self-efficacy and reactions to repression

5.1 Quantitative evidence

In this section I describe the results of a test of whether self-efficacy affects how individuals react to repression. As discussed in Section 3, I carry out this test using a survey experiment carried out with a group of opposition supporters in Zimbabwe. A survey experimental methodology enables me to obtain a pre-treatment measure of self-efficacy, to ensure that the independent variable of exposure to violent events is orthogonal to personal characteristics, and to observe both post-repression action and emotions. One drawback of this approach, however, is that the independent and dependent variables are hypothetical, meaning that the results should be interpreted with the potential for social desirability bias in mind.

In addition to self-efficacy, I include control variables measuring closeness to party, gender, education, age, two assets indices, community fixed effects, and fixed effects indicating the treatment assignment of subjects in a separate (and independently assigned) experiment that was carried out in the course of the survey. All continuous variables are standardized.

Table 2 presents the results of a first analysis of the correlations between self-efficacy and other personal characteristics and these substantive outcomes. This analysis tests whether self-

efficacy is correlated with an overall higher propensity to react to state-sponsored election violence with more anger relative to fear, and to attend an opposition rally after the violent event. The first specification in Columns 1 and 4 only includes fixed effects for the respondent's community, the surveyor that conducted the survey, and assignment into an emotion induction treatment as part of a separate experiment conducted earlier in the survey. The second specification adds other individual demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, and two assets indices. It also adds a measure of the strength of the respondent's party affiliation, Closeness to Party, to test the existing explanation from the literature that swing voters should be most likely to stop taking action in support of the opposition after election violence. The final specification adds two additional measures of past political experiences: past participation in pro-opposition activism, and past exposure to state-sponsored election violence.

Table 2 shows that self-efficacy has a strong and consistent relationship with both the emotional reactions that respondents report they would have after election violence, and their reported propensities to attend an opposition rally. A one standard deviation increase in self-efficacy is associated with a 0.17 to 0.18 standard deviation increase in the amount of anger relative to fear that the respondent reports that they would feel after the violent event. Similarly, a one standard deviation increase in self-efficacy is associated with a 0.23 to 0.25 standard deviation increase in the propensity to attend an opposition rally after the violent event – a clear act of defiance that state-sponsored election violence is designed to prevent.

The effect of self-efficacy is large in magnitude when compared with other individual characteristics, including closeness to party. Substantively, the coefficient on self-efficacy is as large or larger than the effect of other important individual-level variables that theory predicts should explain opposition support after election violence. First, the effect of self efficacy is as large or larger than the effect of closeness to party. Respondents who are one standard deviation higher on a four-point scale measuring how close they feel to an opposition party are 0.16 standard deviations lower in their propensity to attend an opposition rally. They are also 0.16 standard deviations higher in terms of the intensity of anger relative to fear that they say they would experience after the violence. These results provide support to the existing view that voters who care more about seeing their party win should be less likely to give up after violence. However,

Table 2: Individual correlates of anger relative to fear and opposition rally propensity after state-sponsored election violence

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Anger - Fear			Rally Propensity		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Self-Efficacy	0.18*** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.04)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)
Closeness to Party		0.16*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)		0.16*** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)
Education		0.07* (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)		0.05 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)
Female		-0.17** (0.07)	-0.18** (0.07)		-0.18*** (0.06)	-0.16** (0.06)
Age		0.12 (0.17)	0.10 (0.17)		0.20 (0.16)	0.09 (0.16)
Age ²		-0.06 (0.17)	-0.05 (0.18)		-0.16 (0.15)	-0.06 (0.16)
Urban Assets		-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)		-0.07 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
Rural Assets		-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)		0.002 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)
Activism Experience			0.06 (0.04)			0.21*** (0.04)
Violence Exposure			-0.03 (0.03)			0.0001 (0.04)
Constant	0.47*** (0.14)	0.51*** (0.15)	0.49*** (0.16)	0.37** (0.18)	0.34* (0.18)	0.36** (0.18)
Community FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Surveyor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emotion Induction FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	1,330	1,314	1,312	1,332	1,316	1,314
R ²	0.11	0.14	0.15	0.28	0.31	0.35

Standard errors clustered by respondent in parentheses.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Coefficients are estimated using OLS. The unit of analysis is the scenario, such that each respondent appears twice in the dataset. The outcome in columns 1-3 is the standardized difference between the amounts of anger and fear that the respondent says they would feel in a given scenario on a five-point scale. The outcome in Columns 4-6 is the respondent's propensity to attend an opposition rally after a given scenario on a standardized five-point likelihood scale. All continuous independent variables are also standardized.

it is notable that self-efficacy seems equally if not more important in explaining post-violence behavior, even conditional on intensity of support for the opposition.

Furthermore, the effect of self efficacy is stronger and larger than the effect of other demographic characteristics, including age and gender. There is a well-documented negative association between gender and political participation, particularly in its higher risk or more contentious forms (Barnes et al., 1979; Inglehart et al., 2003). There is also a large literature documenting the strong correlation between education and political participation (Almond and Verba, 1963; Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995). Recent research in Zimbabwe has also shown that education makes voters less likely to participate in non-competitive elections – a form of dissent in this electoral autocracy (Croke et al., 2016). Finally, if political activism is path dependent, then we should expect that past activism experience should have a strong positive relationship with current propensity to take action. In fact, the effect of a one standard deviation increase in self-efficacy is larger in magnitude than the effect of gender, and equal to or larger than one standard deviation increases in both education and past activism experience. This is also in line with past research suggesting that self-efficacy is predictive of angry responses to policy threats and political participation in the US (Newhagen, 1994; Rudolph, Gangl and Stevens, 2000; Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk, 2009), and participation in dissent in non-democratic regimes (Bahry and Silver, 1990; Chen and Zhong, 2002; Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008; Tausch et al., 2011).

The effect of self-efficacy is also highly robust to the inclusion of other important control variables. Self-efficacy is related in logical ways with education and age. Appendix Table D.1 shows that self-efficacy is positively correlated with education and age, both of which are in line with psychological theory suggesting that self-efficacy develops over time through mastery experiences. However, controlling for these factors and other demographic measures such as assets and gender do not reduce the magnitude or significance of the correlation with self-efficacy. Even controlling for past experience with activism or past exposure to state-sponsored election violence – both of which could plausibly be part of the mechanism linking self-efficacy to higher political participation or angrier emotional reactions – does not attenuate the effect. While this analysis is not causal, the existence of this strong correlation even conditional on the most

plausible confounding variables provides some confidence that it is not being driven by an obvious omitted variable bias.

Overall, the results presented in Table 2 provide strong support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Next, I test whether the effects of self efficacy are stronger for more severe forms of violence (Hypothesis 3). For this analysis, I use variation in the scenarios to examine whether certain types of state-sponsored election violence are more or less likely to reduce opposition, and whether high self-efficacy opposition supporters react to differently to characteristics of state-sponsored election violence.

As described in Section 3, I coded five continuous variables out of the various scenario characteristics (Violence Severity, Victim Activism, Same Province, Time to Election, and Information Credibility). Each of these is a three or four category ordered scale analyzed here as a continuous variable. Figure E.1 in Appendix ?? plots the coefficients from an analysis of the treatments as categorical variables. Table 3 presents the continuous versions of each of these scenario characteristics in the first specification, and then adds the interaction of self efficacy and Violence Severity, which is the main test of hypothesis 3, in the second specification. The third and fourth specifications add other controls, including the interactions of Violence Severity with Closeness to Party, Education, Past Activism, and Violence Exposure.

Before discussing the interaction terms, I will briefly describe how the scenario characteristics themselves affect opposition supporters' emotions responses to violence and propensities to act in support of the opposition. In general, opposition supporters seem fairly non-responsive to variation in the timing and targeting of pre-election violence. The amount of anger relative to fear that they say they would feel, and their propensity to take action, largely do not vary with the amount of time before the election, the level of activism of the victim, whether the violence occurs in their home province, and the credibility of the source.

Opposition supporters are quite sensitive, however, to the severity of the violence. Table 3 shows that a one unit increase on the four-point scale of violence severity is associated with a statistically significant 0.12-0.13 standard deviation decrease in reported propensity to attend an opposition rally. Although we find no difference in the relative amount of anger to fear that respondents say they would feel after more severe violence, Appendix Table E.2 shows that

Table 3: Variation by characteristics of repression scenarios

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Anger - Fear				Propensity to Act			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Time to Election	-0.05*	-0.05**	-0.04*	-0.04	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Victim Activism	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.001	-0.01	-0.003
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Same Province	0.12	0.11	0.09	0.09	-0.05	-0.06	-0.10	-0.11*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Violence Severity	0.002	-0.002	-0.01	-0.01	-0.12***	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.12***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Source Credibility	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Self Efficacy		0.18***	0.13***	0.14***		0.25***	0.21***	0.21***
		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Self Efficacy X Violence Severity		-0.05**	-0.03	-0.04		0.05**	0.07**	0.06**
		(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)		(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Closeness to Party			0.16***	0.15***			0.16***	0.14***
			(0.04)	(0.04)			(0.04)	(0.04)
Closeness to Party X Violence Severity			-0.05	-0.05			-0.05*	-0.05**
			(0.03)	(0.03)			(0.02)	(0.02)
Constant	0.29**	0.43***	0.49***	0.50***	0.18	0.39**	0.38**	0.42**
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.18)
Surveyor FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emotion Induction FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Demographic Controls			✓	✓			✓	✓
Education × Violence Severity			✓	✓			✓	✓
Past Activism × Violence Severity				✓				✓
Violence Exposure × Violence Severity				✓				✓
Observations	1,336	1,330	1,314	1,312	1,338	1,332	1,316	1,314
R ²	0.09	0.12	0.15	0.16	0.25	0.30	0.33	0.37

Standard errors clustered by respondent in parentheses.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Coefficients are estimated using OLS. The unit of analysis is the scenario. The outcome in columns 1-4 is the standardized difference between the amounts of anger and fear that the respondent says they would feel in a given scenario on a four-point intensity scale. The outcome in Columns 5-8 is the respondent's propensity to attend an opposition rally after a given scenario on a standardized five-point likelihood scale. Other demographic controls added in Columns 3-4 and 7-8 include gender, age, age², education, and the urban and rural assets indices.

respondents believe they would feel significantly more anger and significantly more fear after more severe acts of violence.

Does self efficacy moderate this effect? In Section 2 we hypothesized that the mobilizing effects of self efficacy would be even stronger at higher levels of violence. Table 3 shows mixed support for this hypothesis. The interaction term Self Efficacy X Violence Severity is positive and statistically significant in Columns 5-8, suggesting that behaviorally, the demobilizing effects of more severe violence are significantly smaller for higher self efficacy people. However, there is no evidence that higher self efficacy people react more angrily to more severe forms of violence.

How does self efficacy compare to the dominant explanation in the literature, closeness to party? This analysis shows no evidence that people who are closer to the opposition are more likely to persist in the face of more severe violence. In fact, the interaction term Closeness to Party X Violence Severity is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that more ideologically aligned opposition supporters are actually more likely to back down in the face of severe threats, once we've controlled for self efficacy.

Overall, this analysis provides clear support for the predictions outlined in Section 2: people who are high in self-efficacy are more likely to engage in political activism after state-sponsored election violence (Hypothesis 1), and more likely to respond to state-sponsored election violence with anger rather than fear (Hypothesis 2). It also provides partial support for the prediction that the effects self efficacy would be larger for more severe forms of violence (Hypothesis 3). The effect of self efficacy cannot be explained by the most likely confounding factors, including education, past activism, past exposure to violence, or strength of affiliation with the opposition. By contrast, I find somewhat weaker but still convincing evidence for the dominant explanation in the literature, focused on strength of party identification. Voters who are more closely aligned with the opposition are angrier and more likely to attend a rally after violence, though this variable may explain slightly less of the variation in emotions and activism than self efficacy. In addition, if anything, voters who say they are closer to the opposition are even more likely to reduce their action in support of the opposition after more severe violence than those who are less close.

5.2 Qualitative evidence

Next, I turn to the 41 qualitative interviews that I carried out with a similar subject pool in Zimbabwe to illustrate how self efficacy might affect reactions to state-sponsored election violence in a more realistic setting. The interviews suggest that higher self efficacy helps activists maintain a cool decision-making process, even in situations that many find frightening.

Several activists described confidence in their abilities to deal with violent situations in ways that touch on elements of domain-specific self-efficacy. One opposition candidate argued that one element in risk is “how you deal with violent situations,” and particularly one’s “defensive instincts” including “being reasonable and mature and adult and doing all those things, and also having those qualities of being able to talk to aggressive people, police or all that sort of thing, and knowing how far you can push.” Overall, this candidate assessed that “if you’re reasonably confident that you’re good at that, well, you’ve got to deal with risks better” (Interview, opposition candidate, 7/6/2016). Another described his approach to dealing with violence in his community as a kind of standard operating procedure that “people of [his] caliber” could successfully implement (Interview, Highfield opposition organizer, 5/23/2015). These quotes illustrate how general self-efficacy can translate into domain-specific beliefs about the ability to handle violent situations in ways that result in lower fear.

Evidence from qualitative interviews also suggests that activists and non-activists vary greatly in their emotional reactions to repression. One activist described “a base level of fear” that is “vague” and not always founded in an accurate assessment of the state’s capacity to repress (Interview, social movement activist, 7/10/2016). Many opposition supporters, particularly those who had not personally survived violence but had primarily been secondarily exposed through the stories of neighbors, videos, or rumors, described specific violent events that influence their perceptions of the risk of repression. Several described a relatively recent violent event, the abduction of a social movement activist named Itai Dzamara in March 2015 from a local barbershop. Given that numerous other activists have been abducted by the current regime, the prevalence of this particular event in the minds of opposition supporters suggests that more recent events may induce more fear and have a particularly large positive effect on risk assessments. Particularly severe or gruesome events, including types of violence that seem to be quite rare in

Zimbabwe, also featured prominently in explanations of why they feared for their own safety. Several supporters described forced amputations that they had heard about or seen video of in great detail (Interview, Highfield opposition mobilizer, 5/23/2015; Interview, opposition youth activist, 7/7/2016; Interview, opposition party organizer, 7/11/2016; Interview, opposition party mobilizer, 8/3/2016).

At the same time, however, many opposition activists described feeling anger after violence, and subsequently using that anger to spur political action. One opposition youth activist described how the anger that he feels over political violence “sort of activates something [so] that I say go and send some angels, whatever is going to happen, whatever action that has to be taken, at least if the person has to die let him die enjoying. I mean something has to happen. People have suffered for quite some time and looking at all those sufferings, it just activates that desire because you are no longer doing it for yourself but for everybody” (Interview youth activist, 07/07/2016). Another opposition organizer described how the 2008 violence was actually what made her get involved in opposition politics: “[before 2008] I was just inactive but in Zimbabwe, not concerned about the politics of Zimbabwe. So when I heard about 2008 election results. I learnt that there was a lot of rigging, torture, intimidations, harassments, then I realized that I had to take action in support [of the opposition]” (Interview, opposition party organizer, 7/11/2016).

Other activists described their efforts to shape the emotional reactions of opposition supporters to episodes of violence. The same activist who described “a base level of fear” compared fearful perceptions of the Zimbabwean state’s capacity to repress to those of the Gestapo, arguing that “after World War II they realized that the Gestapo were nowhere near as effective as they thought it was” (Interview, social movement activist, 7/10/2016). These comments suggest that activists are aware of the effects of fear on perceptions of risk. A number of activists described opposition supporters as “cowards” (Interview, opposition youth activist, 7/7/2016), who “run away unnecessarily” in “most cases” (Interview, opposition youth organizer, 7/27/2016).

Mobilizers described several different tactics to reduce the fear of other opposition supporters and encourage them to take action. Some mobilizers described trying to use information about risks to reduce fear. One described how when police presence induced fear in opposition supporters who attended an opposition rally, he tried to reduce it by spreading information

relevant to the risk of police brutality such as the fact that the event had been permitted (Interview, opposition youth activist, 7/7/2016). Others described “amplifying their [opposition supporters’] anger... such that his anger or her anger exceeds their fear, then they act” (Interview, opposition youth activist, 7/7/2016), or calling on people to “revenge” (Interview, opposition youth organizer, 7/27/2016). Others describe reducing fear by gradually ramping up activism in ways that build participants’ confidence in their ability to bring about social change.

Finally, the qualitative interviews revealed that opposition activists and supporters perceive that intimidation is targeted by the state on groups of people who are perceived as more prone to fear reactions. Some interviewees argued that women are targeted with threats for this reason: “they target women... knowing if they threaten them they will dance to their tune for the sake of safeguarding their families” (Focus group, Mudzi opposition supporter, 5/18/2015). Others argued that the state does not try to intimidate activists because they are less vulnerable to fear. One activist in a high-density area of Harare recounted his reaction to “if they know that you are an MDC activist, they come to you carefully or they tend to use other tricks to reach you. So if you are not a political activist, they always gather you when holding their meetings and other programs that they partake in in this area and threaten those subjects. But, people of my caliber, who openly engage in our activism, it takes time for them to provoke us” (Focus group, Highfield opposition activist, 5/23/2015).

In short, qualitative interviews with opposition activists and supporters illustrate the range of emotional reactions that people have to repressive violence, and suggest that activists may be more prone to anger reactions due to their confidence in their abilities to cope in violent situations. In turn, fear and anger seem to shape behavior in predictable ways. Indeed, opposition activists show considerable awareness of the effects of various emotions, and put in place strategies to shape the reactions of opposition supporters away from fear and towards anger.

6 Conclusion

This paper married insights from recent advances in the psychology of personality and political participation in the US and the effect of emotions on high-risk activism to explore the role of self-efficacy in political behavior in repressive elections. Methodologically, it brought together

qualitative and quantitative evidence by drawing on primary research with opposition supporters and activists in Zimbabwe, including 41 participants in in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions and 671 participants in a quantitative survey and survey experiment.

This analysis produces several important findings. First, self-efficacy has a significant effect on how citizens react to state-sponsored election violence. Analysis of a survey experiment shows that high self-efficacy individuals are more likely to say that they would feel more anger relative to fear after repression events, and more likely to say that they would continue to take political action after repression, particularly after more severe forms of violence. Qualitative interviews illustrate how citizens with positive views of their own capacity to cope with repression react more angrily and proactively to it. Over the longer term, I find strong positive correlations between education, past activism, past exposure to repression, and current self-efficacy. While this analysis is more suggestive due to the fact that self-efficacy and all three of these hypothesized determinants are likely mutually reinforcing, it is consistent with the theoretical predictions that past opportunities for individuals to experience “mastery” in different domains leads to lasting increases in their perceptions of their personal efficacy. Qualitative interviews illustrate how these causal processes might work, and also shed light on how even past exposure to state-sponsored violence may lead individuals to increase their beliefs about their capacities to endure in difficult situations.

As an early contribution to the study of personality differences and high-risk activism, these findings should be extended and tested more rigorously in future research. This research provides preliminary evidence that variation in personal psychology plays an important role, and future studies should attempt to more finely pinpoint which specific traits have the most explanatory power. An important theoretical extension would look more holistically at a range of personal characteristics, including the Big 5 personality traits, and possibly at their genetic underpinnings, in addition to self-efficacy. Empirically, this research showed that self-efficacy is correlated with reactions to election violence scenarios and formative past experiences, and illustrated how causal processes might underly these correlations using qualitative interviews. Future work should apply quantitative research methods that can causally identify the role of self-efficacy on reactions to repression, and of formative life experiences on personal psychology

over the longer term.

This article adds to our understanding of the conditions in which state-sponsored election violence is likely to reduce the political participation of opposition supporters. A recent analysis of the effects of election violence on turnout concluded: “For practitioners–policymakers and nongovernmental organizations working on elections–the lack of consensus on how voters respond makes it difficult to overcome electoral violence” (Bekoe and Burchard, 2017, 89).

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