POLITICAL EFFICACY, PARTICIPATION & DEVELOPMENT

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OUTLINE

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3. Conceptualizing political efficacy
4. Measuring political efficacy
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6. Can states build efficacy?
MOTIVATION

What role can people play in development?

• Through democracy?

• Through foreign aid?

• Through information?

• Through decentralization?
MOTIVATION

What role can people play in development?

- Through democracy?
- Through foreign aid?
- Through information?
- Through decentralization?

But... mixed evidence.

And actually getting people to participate is hard!
VOTER TURNOUT

Mexico, 2012
Voters 65%
Non-voters 35%

United States, 2012
Voters 54%
Non-voters 46%

India, 2009
Voters 56%
Non-voters 44%
WHY DON’T PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?

- Rajasthan, India: 57% of respondents surveyed believed they would be ignored if they contacted a government or political leader. (Krishna 2011)

- Andhra Pradesh, India: 87% of respondents surveyed agreed with the statement ``People like me don't have any influence over what the government does. (Krishna 2011)

- Mexico: on a scale from 1-7, how much do you agree or disagree with the statement: ``Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think."
  - Over 50% of population in 2010 strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.
WHY DON’T PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?

Perhaps people lack political efficacy:

- An individual’s belief that he or she can influence the political system (Campbell 1954)
- Fundamental in democracy
- Over 50 years of political science research, beliefs in political efficacy consistently associated with political participation
Political efficacy: I believe I can influence the political system

Political participation (So I therefore make an effort to participate)

Gov’t is more accountable (has to respond to increased pressure)
CONCEPTUALIZING POLITICAL EFFICACY

- **Definition (again):** An individual’s belief that he or she can influence the political system

- **Internal political efficacy:** the belief that one has the skills and resources needed to influence the political system

- **External political efficacy:** the belief that government and its leaders are responsive to one’s influence
CONCEPTUALIZING POLITICAL EFFICACY

Belongs to a family of self-efficacy beliefs:

• Have to do with how effective we think we are – in general – at achieving our goals or realizing our desires.

• These beliefs come from: interactions with our environment, how successful we've been in the past, etc.

• These beliefs affect: what we are/are not likely to do, how much we are willing to persevere, etc.
MEASURING POLITICAL EFFICACY

External efficacy:

• People like me can influence what the government does.
• Elected officials care about the opinions of people like me.

Internal efficacy:

• I consider myself qualified to contribute to the politics of the country.
• Compared with most other people, I consider myself a person who is well-informed about the politics of our country.
MEASURING POLITICAL EFFICACY

Alternate internal political efficacy scale:

• For each of the following statements, please rate how confident you are in your ability to carry out the action described:
  
  • Influence the policy priorities of the political party you feel closest to.
  
  • Inform others about the political platform of the political party whose beliefs and policies you agree with most
  
  • Contact the member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing your district
  
  • Find out how your representatives in Congress are voting on issues that are important to you
IS MORE POLITICAL EFFICACY ALWAYS A GOOD THING?

- We don’t want people to trust political institutions if institutions aren’t good (e.g. Mobuto)
- We don’t want people to feel politically efficacious when they are not
WHERE DOES POLITICAL EFFICACY COME FROM?

- **Information** – people who are more knowledgeable about politics are more efficacious
- **Mobilization** – contact with political campaigns can make people feel more efficacious
- **Participation in politics (yes, this is cyclical)** – especially if this participation is rewarding
  
  ![Political efficacy Participation](image)

- **Negative campaigning (attack ads, mudslinging, etc.)** – tends to be bad for all democratic attitudes and beliefs, including efficacy
- **Social class**
**EFFICACY & THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT**

**Political efficacy:** I believe I can influence the political system

**Political participation** (So I therefore make an effort to participate)

**Gov’t is more accountable** (has to respond to increased pressure)

- If we want people to participate for democratic accountability, they have to think that their participation matters

- Connection to Acemoglu and Robinson: “mobilization and organization”
IF POLITICAL EFFICACY IS SO GREAT, CAN WE BUILD IT? CAN STATES?

• If some forms of political participation can spur beliefs about efficacy, can the state structure politics in a way that encourages these kinds of efficacy-building interactions?

• For example, my research shows that elections may be important for increasing individuals' efficacy
ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

Probability of strongly disagreeing and strongly agreeing with:
'Those who govern this country are really interested in what people like me think'

- Strongly disagree: 27% at 33 months, 22% at 24 months, 10% at 12 months, 7% at 6 months, 0% at 1 month
- Strongly agree: 7% at 33 months, 22% at 24 months, 27% at 12 months, 40% at 6 months, 50% at 1 month

Months from election

Probability of Response
ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL EFFICACY

Probability of strongly disagreeing and strongly agreeing with the statement: 'I feel that I understand the most important political issues of this country'

Months from election

Probability of Response

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

0.00 0.05 0.10 0.15 0.20 0.25 0.30

0.00 0.05 0.10 0.15 0.20 0.25 0.30

Probability of Response

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree
IF POLITICAL EFFICACY IS SO GREAT, CAN WE BUILD IT? CAN STATES?

- Next step: **What kinds of experiences change people's political efficacy, and what effect does this change have on their participation?**
IF POLITICAL EFFICACY IS SO GREAT, CAN WE BUILD IT? CAN STATES?

Example from Mali (Gottlieb 2013)

• Tries to raise people’s expectations for government performance by informing them about what local and national governments are responsible for and capable of doing.

• Finds that people report higher expectations for government, and vote more based on performance than on the basis of gifts or kinship.

So, can we raise people’s expectations of themselves, such that they are more likely to participate in politics and hold governments accountable?
IN SUM…

• Political participation necessary for the functioning of democratic government, which is one way in which people can hold their governments accountable and influence development

• One possible barrier to this is people's belief that they cannot influence government or politics, which we can conceptualize and measure as political efficacy

• People may develop this belief over years of failed attempts at trying to change the system, or through negative information they have learned about the system

• Yet, positive experiences (e.g., elections) may change these beliefs for the better