Citizen Perceptions of Public Policy Success: A Cross-National Analysis

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Citizen Perceptions of Public Policy Success: A Cross-National Analysis

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Prepared for presentation at the 2015 Midwest Public Affairs Conference
Milwaukee, WI, July 9-11, 2015

A special thank you to Dr. David J. Houston for guiding this research
Research Questions

• Across countries, what attitudes do citizens hold about governmental performance?

• What individual-level and country-level attributes correlate with perceptions of governmental performance across countries?
Explanations of Citizen Perceptions of Governmental Performance

*Individual-level:*

- **Socio-cultural explanations**
  - Perceptions of governmental performance are the product of socialization and social experiences

- **Socio-psychological explanations**
  - Perceptions of governmental performance are the result of personality traits

- **Attitude towards government**
  - Perceptions of governmental performance are influenced by diffuse support for government
Explanations of Citizens Perceptions of Governmental Performance (cont’d)

Country-level:

• Economic conditions
  – Stronger economic conditions lead to higher levels of perceived performance

• Quality of government
  – Higher levels of procedural fairness, professionalism, and integrity lead to higher levels of perceived performance

• Inequality
  – Higher levels of economic inequality lead to lower levels of perceived performance
Data and Methods

• International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 2006: “Role of Government IV”
  – Samples drawn from 21 North American and European nations

• Model citizen perceptions of government performance using multi-level (or hierarchical linear) regression

• Dependent variable
  – Index of Governmental Policy Success
Dependent Variable


1) Very unsuccessful
2) Quite unsuccessful
3) Neither successful nor unsuccessful
4) Quite successful
5) Very successful
Individual-level Correlates

• Socio-cultural
  – Age
  – Male
  – Education high
  – Education low
  – Government employee
  – Left political party
  – Right political party
  – In-party affiliation
Individual-level Correlates (cont’d)

• Socio-psychological
  – Interpersonal trust
  – Internal political efficacy
  – External political efficacy

• Attitude towards government
  – Low corruption among politicians
Country-level Correlates

• Economic indicators
  – GDP per capita (World Bank)
  – Unemployment (World Bank)
  – Inflation (World Bank)

• Quality of government
  – Government effectiveness (World Bank)
  – Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International)

• Inequality
  – GINI index (Solt 2009)
Findings. Figure 1. Mean of the Governmental Policy Success Index by Country
Table 1. Multilevel Regression Model: Governmental Policy Success Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual-level correlates</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-cultural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.0014*</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.0707***</td>
<td>0.0128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education low</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
<td>0.0158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education high</strong></td>
<td>0.0471***</td>
<td>0.0178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employee</td>
<td>0.0050</td>
<td>0.0158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left political party affiliation</td>
<td>-0.0771**</td>
<td>0.0281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right political party affiliation</td>
<td>-0.0308</td>
<td>0.0361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-party affiliation</strong></td>
<td>0.2318***</td>
<td>0.0303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-psychological</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal trust</td>
<td>0.0340**</td>
<td>0.0035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal political efficacy</td>
<td>-0.0041</td>
<td>0.0061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External political efficacy</strong></td>
<td>0.0745***</td>
<td>0.0072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude towards government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low corruption among politicians</td>
<td>0.2860***</td>
<td>0.0255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ 0.10; ** p ≤ 0.05; *** p ≤ 0.01
Table 2. Multilevel Regression Model: Governmental Policy Success Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country-level correlates</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>-0.0248*</td>
<td>0.0132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government effectiveness</td>
<td>0.2053***</td>
<td>0.0631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GINI index</td>
<td>-0.0032</td>
<td>0.0093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.1435***</td>
<td>0.0544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood function</td>
<td>-17,121.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level-1 N</td>
<td>14,968</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level-2 N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p ≤ 0.10; ** p ≤ 0.05; *** p ≤ 0.01
Summary

• The findings indicate the utility of cross-national research on this topic

• People’s attitudes toward governmental policy success are preconditioned by their background, personality traits, political attitudes, and perception of government as a whole

• Across country variation is largely a function of the quality of public institutions in a country and to a lesser extent prevailing economic conditions
Thank you!