

MY410 Week 9 Seminar

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Systematic review and meta-analysis



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Economic Inequality and Political Responsiveness: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Do political outcomes respond more strongly to the preferences of the rich? In an age of rising inequality, this question has become increasingly salient. Yet, although an influential literature has emerged, no systematic account exists either of the severity of differentials in political responsiveness, the potential drivers of those differentials, or the variation across democracies. This article fills that gap. We analyze 1,163 estimates of responsiveness from 25 studies and find that, although this research collectively suggests that political outcomes better reflect the preferences of the rich, results vary considerably across models and studies. The divergence in results is partly driven by partisanship and the model specification, while we find no significant variation across either policy domains or general/specific measures of political outcomes. Finally, and against theoretical expectations, published research suggests that differentials in responsiveness are weaker in the United States compared to other developed democracies. The article contributes to our understanding of differential responsiveness by clarifying the main debates and findings in the literature, identifying issues and gaps, and pointing to fruitful avenues for future research.

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Lecture takeaways: Measurement and operationalization

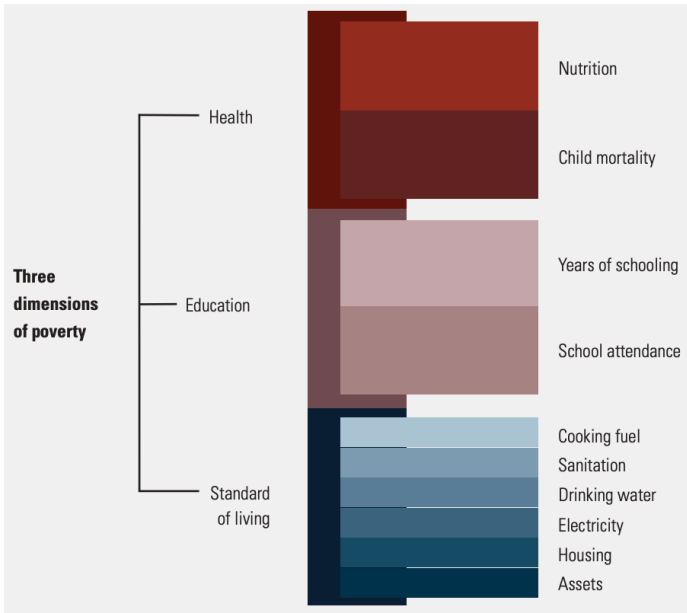
- ▶ Many empirical studies involve the construction of indicators to abstract concepts.
- ▶ The decisions to create indicators are justified with reference to theory, literatures (prior studies), interlocutors, and pragmatic concerns.
- ▶ The measures you choose will often determine the answers you get.
- ▶ A good measure has high validity and reliability.
 - Validity (accurate): Does the measure capture what one seeks to capture?
 - Reliability (precise): Does the measure generate consistent results every time?

Measuring poverty and conceptualization

Each conceptualization of poverty implies different underlying theoretical perspectives and aims at answering a different question.

- ▶ Monetary approach (World Bank) – do people have enough money?
- ▶ Capability approach (Amartya Sen) – do people have the range of capabilities they need to adequately function in the world?
- ▶ Social exclusion approach – are people excluded from full participation in society?
- ▶ Participatory approach – do people think they are poor?

Aggregation of different poverty indicators



Aggregation of different poverty indicators

| DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY | INDICATOR | SDG AREA | DEPRIVED IF... | WEIGHT |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--|--------|
| Health | Nutrition ¹ | SDG 2 | Any person under 70 years of age for whom there is nutritional information is undernourished. | 1/6 |
| | Child mortality ² | SDG 3 | Any child has died in the family in the five-year period preceding the survey. | 1/6 |
| Education | Years of schooling | SDG 4 | No household member aged 10 years or older has completed six years of schooling. | 1/6 |
| | School attendance ³ | SDG 4 | Any school-aged child ⁴ is not attending school up to the age at which he/she would complete class 8. | 1/6 |
| Living Standards | Cooking fuel | SDG 7 | A household cooks with dung, agricultural crop, shrubs, wood, charcoal or coal. | 1/18 |
| | Sanitation ⁴ | SDG 11 | The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to SDG guidelines) or it is improved but shared with other households. | 1/18 |
| | Drinking water ⁵ | SDG 6 | The household does not have access to improved drinking water (according to SDG guidelines) or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home, roundtrip. | 1/18 |
| | Electricity | SDG 7 | The household has no electricity. | 1/18 |
| | Housing ⁶ | SDG 11 | The household has inadequate housing: the floor is of natural materials or the roof or walls are of rudimentary materials. | 1/18 |
| | Assets | SDG 1 | The household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike, or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck. | 1/18 |

Exercise: Create a women empowerment index (WEI)

- ▶ Conceptualization: Concepts and definition? Any theoretical foundation? For what end? Why?
- ▶ Measurement: Key indicators of empowerment? Validity and reliability.
- ▶ Aggregation: How will you bring together and weight the different attributes?
- ▶ Context: Where, when, and why?
- ▶ Data sources and collection?
- ▶ Political and policy implications?
 - How do you reach a consensus about the above?
 - What influence, if any, the funding agency might have in your research? Any other stakeholders that can influence your research?
 - How do you make sure your index helps with policy making?

Suggested data sources

▶ International organizations

- WHO (<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>)
- UN (<http://data.un.org/>)
- ILO (<http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>)
- World Bank (<http://data.worldbank.org/>)

▶ Cross-national surveys

- European Social Survey (<https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>)
- World Values Survey (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>)
- Afrobarometer (<http://www.afrobarometer.org/>)
- Demographic & Health Surveys (<https://dhsprogram.com/data/>)

Additional references

- ▶ Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2021. "GDP Is the Wrong Tool for Measuring What Matters." *Scientific American*.
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gdp-is-the-wrong-tool-for-measuring-what-matters/> (November 29, 2021).