Impact of Literacy Rates on Democratic Desire

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Impact of Literacy on Desire for Democracy

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Introduction
- There has been a global shift recently away from democracy and towards authoritarian forms of government.
- Data-driven foreign policy and nongovernmental efforts may be capable of aiding global democratization efforts.
- To determine where to focus those efforts, what factors might prove to be reliably predictive of democratic support or political participation?

Background
- Survey respondents’ understanding of democracy varies widely and greatly influences support for democratic values.
- The context in which respondents develop their idea of democracy “conditions” how they understand democracy.
- Previous studies show conflicting evidence on whether higher education predicts greater support for democratic governance.

What is Democratic Desire?
- Democratic desire is the desire to be governed democratically
- Enlightened democratic desire is the desire of one who understands democratic values to be governed democratically

Methods
- Independent variable: literacy rate
  - Used to estimate level of education
- First dependent variable: democratic desire
  - A response value of 0 indicates that the respondent has no desire at all to be governed by a democracy.
  - A response value of 1.0 indicates that the respondent either has no desire at all to be governed by a democracy or entirely lacks an enlightened understanding of democracy.
- Second dependent variable: enlightened democratic desire
  - A response value of 0 indicates that the respondent either has no desire at all to be governed by a democracy or entirely lacks an enlightened understanding of democracy.
  - A response value of 1.0 indicates that the respondent either has a very strong desire to be governed democratically and holds an enlightened understanding of democracy.
- To control for whether education was received in a democratic or nondemocratic country, tests of hypotheses III and IV divided countries into democracies (n=117) and nondemocracies (n=73).

Four Hypotheses

I
Countries with higher literacy rates will report stronger democratic desire.

II
Countries with higher literacy rates will report stronger enlightened democratic desire.

III
The relationship between higher literacy rates and stronger democratic desire will be stronger in democratic countries compared to nondemocracies.

IV
A relationship between higher literacy rates and stronger enlightened democratic desire will be stronger in democratic countries compared to nondemocracies.

Results

Hypothesis I
- There is a weak positive relationship (r=0.23) between literacy and democratic desire generally.
- This relationship is not statistically significant (p=0.057) and is likely due to chance.

Hypothesis II
- There is a moderate, positive relationship (r=0.43) between literacy and enlightened democratic desire.
- This relationship is statistically significant (p=0.00022) and unlikely to be due to chance.

Hypothesis III
- In countries governed democratically, there is a moderate, positive relationship (r=0.5) between literacy and democratic desire (see Fig. 1). This relationship is statistically significant (p=0.00057).
- In countries governed by nondemocratic regimes, there is a moderate negative correlation (r=-0.2) between literacy and democratic desire (see Fig. 2), although this relationship is statistically insignificant (p=0.29).

Hypothesis IV
- In countries governed democratically, there is a moderately strong (r=0.62), statistically significant (p=0.00001) relationship between literacy and enlightened democratic desire (see Fig. 3).
- In countries governed by nondemocratic regimes, there is a moderate, negative relationship (r=-0.21) between literacy and enlightened democratic desire (see Fig. 4). Again, this negative relationship is statistically insignificant (p=0.29).

Conclusion
- There is a clear difference between democracies and nondemocracies in the relationship between literacy and democratic desire.
- The role of regime type in respondents’ enlightened desire for democracy is more significant than its role in respondents’ simple democratic desire.
- There exists a significant, strong, and positive relationship between literacy rates and enlightened democratic desire in democratic countries. This relationship is not reflected in nondemocratic countries.