

## Summary of the Dissertation

# Change and Development of Political Attitude:

## Comparative Analysis of Political Efficacy

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### Objective of this study and its contributions:

This study investigates determinant factors of political efficacy and its effects on political participation. Political efficacy is defined as 'the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact on the political process' (Campbell et al., 1954: 187). It is generally acknowledged that political efficacy consists of two dimensions: (1) internal efficacy referring to those feelings of personal competence that permit one 'to understand and to participate effectively in politics' (Craig et al., 1990:290); and (2) external efficacy referring to a belief in the responsiveness of political bodies and actors to citizen demands so that citizens may feel influential (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972). Given the ideal of democracy that people govern, political efficacy is deeply related to citizens' perception how well their democratic system works.

Among the studies of political attitudes, political efficacy has been one of the mostly examined attitudes. This is because political efficacy has been considered to be an important determinant of voting behavior but also to be related with citizens' support for democratic system. For example, political efficacy was one of important indicators of political culture, which sustain democratic system (Almond and Verba 1963). Normative theorists also have stressed that political efficacy is one of the most important attitudes of democratic citizens to be facilitated (Pateman 1970).

Despite its importance, there are three remaining problems in studies of political efficacy. First, lack of validity of efficacy measures has plagued the empirical analysis of political efficacy. Although many studies attempted to develop new valid and reliable efficacy measurement, a widely accepted coherent measurement has not yet existed. Such less coherent measures make it difficult to compare results across studies and understanding the cause and effect of political efficacy. In particular, none of the study has yet tested validity of political efficacy measurement in Japanese survey.

The second problem is the previous mixed empirical results concerning determinant factors of political efficacy and its effect on participation. For example, its empirical results often differ between the studies with different cases. Especially, studies using Asian countries (e.g., Japan and South Korea) reported some deviating results from the previous studies conducted mostly in Western democracies. In particular, the Asian studies show no significant effect of socio economic status and the others, which have been demonstrated as important factor of political efficacy. However, it has not been still answered why such difference in empirical results exist between Asian and the Western countries. To answer this question would also contribute to a better understanding of detailed mechanism how political efficacy is developed and operates in citizens' decision process.

Third, there is a controversy on the fundamental conceptualization of political efficacy. It has not been cleared whether political efficacy, in particular internal efficacy, can be developed in short period of time by an external impact. On one hand, some studies, such as political culture and political socialization studies, argued that political efficacy is developed in early stage of life, and it is not easily changed after the period. In particular, much of studies suggested that internal efficacy, referring to citizens belief whether they have ability to understand and participate in politics, is a long-termed and relatively stable attitudes. On the

other hand, normative theorists have stressed that direct participation in political process can improve the level of political efficacy in a short period. Despite some attempts, empirical results are still mixed and its assumed causal mechanism is also theoretically challenged.

It is an important question in particular for non-Western democracies whether external factors can enhance political efficacy since such countries suffer from a low level of efficacy. For example, Japanese internal efficacy is known to be at a considerably low level compared to the Western democracies, while other political attitudes, such as political interests and knowledge, show a similar level. For these countries, it is important to know what exactly determines the level of political efficacy. Simultaneously, it will be also relevant for political culture and its stability since political efficacy has been considered as one of its elements (Almond and Verba 1963).

The first half parts of the thesis addresses first and second problem presented above (ch.2 - ch.5). In the second chapter, the study examines validity of political efficacy measurement used in Japan and South Korea. In the chapters 3 to 5, the study revisited the theories of political efficacy that previous studies has developed. More concretely, the study retests the relationships between political efficacy and the suggested factors by comparing three democracies, United States, Japan, and South Korea (ch.3). In the same manner, the effect of political efficacy on diverse political participation is examined (ch.4). By using a comparative dataset with an equivalent survey questionnaire, the study could distinguish the general effects from country specific effects. Additionally, the study also discusses the possible national level factors which interact with the mechanisms assumed in the previous theories. In addition to the three countries above, comparative studies using 27 democratic countries taken from CSES (Comparative Studies of Electoral System) dataset are also analyzed for the sake of external validity (ch.5).

The second half of the thesis address the third problem, whether and how political efficacy can be altered. In chapter 6, hypothesis from participatory democratic theory is examined by focusing on Japanese referenda held in a large amount of municipalities between 2000 and 2005. Situation of Japanese municipal referenda can be considered as a natural experiment to identify the causal effect of citizens' direct participation on the level of efficacy. In addition to the referenda, the chapter 7 examines the effect of participation in social movements on political efficacy by focusing on the student movements in Japan in the 1960s. Finally, the chapter 8 examines the impact of election outcome on political efficacy. Although previous studies have demonstrated the effect of election outcomes on political efficacy, there are also some exceptional empirical results which are not consistent. Moreover, the previous studies have not considered the effect of government turnover, one of the important consequences of elections. Current study analyzes the effect of election outcomes including government turnover on efficacy by focusing on the 2009 election in Japan, which caused the first complete government turnover in the post-war Japan.

### **More detailed description of each chapter:**

The chapter 2 examined validity of the existing political efficacy measurement of Japan and South Korea. While Japan also introduced political efficacy measurement to the national election survey since 1970s, existing studies have not examined its validity yet. This resulted in missing coherence of measurement usage among different studies, which, in turn, leads to make it difficult to compare the empirical results of different studies. Given those problems, the study examines the validity of the efficacy measurement in Japan and South Korea using representative election survey data of both countries, Japan Election Study (JES) and Korean Election Survey. Analyzing 10 survey data of the JES project from 1976 to 2010, the study

demonstrates which question items should be used (or not be used) to measure internal/external efficacy. It also analyzed in the same manner three Korean election survey data, which contain very similar efficacy items to Japanese ones. Analysis of both countries leads to a comparable result, which confirms the items' validity and its results as robust. In addition, the study indicates that effect of efficacy on participation can diminish when one uses a combined measurement of both internal and external items. This is because each efficacy has different mechanism and effect on political participation.

In the chapters 3 and 4, the study reexamines the existing theories of political efficacy. Number of previous studies suggested some theoretical relationship, which however was not found in some empirical studies, in particular in the studies about non-Western democracies. Being faced with such cases, many researchers considered them as exceptional cases due to cultural differences. Moreover, due to the diverse usage of efficacy measurement across studies, it was not clear whether those differences do indeed exist or it is merely an artifact due to the measurement. To overcome those problems, the study compares three democratic countries by using original survey data collected at the Keio University. The survey utilizes an identical survey questionnaire in three countries. That is, this study could set up an identical statistical model based on the same efficacy measurement.

The chapter 3 tested the relationships between efficacy and its potential determinants as suggested in previous studies. By comparing three democracies, the study demonstrates the common effect in all three countries and country specific effect. The study also identified the factor behind the country specific effect by considering national characteristics, such as institutions, national economy, and other political environments. More concretely, two common factors for internal efficacy are identified: high education level and experience of participation in associations. As mentioned before, positive effect of direct political/social participation on political efficacy is stressed by normative theorists such as participatory democracy theories. The effect of association participation is in line with the argument. Additionally, it is worth to note that the effect of association is much larger than the other factors. Both Japan's and South Korea's low level of internal efficacy can be here clearly attributed to their low level of association participation. Further, there are three common factors for external efficacy: trusting or supporting a government and having a party to support. The effect of party support on political efficacy is even stronger if the party is at power and/or has more seats in the parliament. Given the results, external efficacy is affected whether a citizen has representatives, i.e., parties or politicians, and whether the representatives possess a power to influence the political decision.

The chapter 4 examines the effect of internal and external efficacy on diverse political participation. Especially, the study focuses on how different combinations of two efficacy levels exert an impact on different kinds of political participation. According to Gamson (1968), the combination of high internal efficacy and low external efficacy is the optimum condition for being mobilized to non-electoral political participation, such as demonstration. Analysis results support Gamson hypothesis only in South Korea but not in Japan and United States. In Japan and United States, internal efficacy is crucial for unconventional participation while external efficacy play an only limited role. In Korea, however, propensity for using unconventional modes of participation is the highest in those who has high internal and low external efficacy just as Gamson expected. Citizens' recognition and environment of unconventional participation can explain the result. Some previous studies claimed that unconventional participation, such as signing petitions or participating in demonstrations, have become one of the major channels of expressing public voice in matured democracies (e.g., Norris et al. 2005). Accordingly, in those countries, demonstration is one of the alternative choices just like the conventional modes of participation, and does not indicate disaffection with political system or traditional participation channels any more. This could explain why Japan and United States do not support the Gamson hypothesis since both countries are mature and stable democracies. In contrast, South Korea is a relatively new democracy as well as experienced autocratic regimes for a long period before becoming fully democratized. It is possible that citizens's recognition on unconventional

participation is still strongly related to express their rejection of the regime. That is why Gamson hypothesis is supported in South Korea. The result of the chapter shows how national context change the effect of efficacy on political participation.

For the sake of external validity, the chapter 5 analyzed 27 countries by using survey data collected by the CSES (Comparative Studies of Electoral System). The study focuses on the factors at the national and the individual level. At the national level, the study focuses on three factors that form “channels” to link citizens and the political realms: electoral systems, decentralization, and corruption. At the individual level, the study concentrate on socioeconomic status (SES), which is crucial for efficacy. The results of this study partially confirm the effects of the electoral system on external efficacy. It demonstrates that electoral disproportionality decreases political efficacy. The effects of disproportionality will be larger for small party supporters. In addition, the contradictory effect of the PR system exists. More exactly, multiparty system and coalition government can have different effects on external efficacy. Coalition governments can reduce external efficacy, while the number of parties can promote it, which is the dilemma of PR system.

This study also demonstrates the importance of political transparency. A lack of transparency (i.e., corruption) negatively influences on the level of efficacy in a direct way. Simultaneously, it reduces the effect of education on the efficacy level. In most cases, education and efficacy has positive relationship, but a high level of corruption can reduce the effect and even reverse the relation from positive to negative. Since those who have a high educational level tend to be more sensitive to corruption issues, it can strongly decrease their external efficacy. This study also confirms that high inequality at the national level strengthen the relationship of income and efficacy. Contrary to the hypothesis, decentralization has no effects on efficacy.

The chapter 6 examines the effect of direct democracy on political efficacy. A controversy exists whether direct democracy enhances the political efficacy of citizens. Earlier theorists of participatory democracy have suggested that direct democracy serves as a school of democracy and, therefore, has educative effects on citizens, such as promoting political efficacy. Numerous empirical studies have investigated whether the popular vote, one of the representative forms of direct democracy, has such an educative effect. Their results are, however, inconsistent. While many studies have found that popular vote procedures, such as initiative and referendum, increase political efficacy, some recent investigations have claimed that neither the causal mechanisms nor the empirical findings are convincing.

The inconsistent results can be attributed to at least two problems: employing cross-sectional data and the heterogeneity of the issues of the popular vote. First, the existing research ignores the heterogeneity of the substantive topic on which popular votes were held. If the effect of the substantive topic on efficacy is not independent from that of direct democracy, the uncontrolled heterogeneity of substantive topics should lead at least to inefficient estimates of the interested causal effects. Second, most previous studies have utilized cross-sectional data rather than panel data. Consequently, one can never be sure about the causal direction of the effect. This study closes this gap by examining the effect of direct democracy on political efficacy in a more systematic and controlled way. More concretely, it utilizes the Japanese case. In the first decade of this century, more than 400 Japanese municipalities held a popular vote for the first time since the Japanese national government promoted municipal merger. Therefore, the Japanese case provides multiple popular votes on comparable substantive topics, which corresponds to a homogeneous treatment. To examine the causal effect, this study further employs panel data covering the corresponding period before and after the votes at stake. The results of this study confirm the effect of the popular vote on internal efficacy. The finding can be considered as robust not only because of its research design which mimic natural experiment but also because the effects of the popular vote were consistently confirmed in two different periods. This study contributes to the academic debate on the hypothesis that direct democracy enhances citizen political efficacy by overcoming the methodological deficits of existing empirical studies.

The chapter 7 examines the effect of participation in social movement on political efficacy. Previous

studies suggested that those who experience social movement during political socialization periods are more likely to participate in politics and possess specific political ideology as well. However, there are controversies over the effect, in particular its magnitude and duration. Further, not many study investigated the effect of social movement participation on political efficacy. Given the argument of the normative theory that participation itself improve the level of efficacy and the fact that social movement generation shows a higher level of participation, it is reasonable to assume that participating social movement has positive impact on efficacy. To examine the hypothesis, the current study utilizes Japanese case with special focus on the generation for which the student movements in 1960s play a central role. By /analyzing 12 survey data covering from the 1976 to 2010 collected by JES (Japanese Election Studies), the study demonstrates that the student movement generation, who experiences student movement during their political socialization period, possesses a higher internal efficacy level even after the socialization period than other generations. The results of the study is in line with the arguments of normative theorists who stress the importance of participatory experience to enhance efficacy. Simultaneously, the result is surprising since the social movement at that time was unconventional participation, sometimes which includes radical and violent activities. The result implies that an important factor behind internal efficacy is direct participation per se regardless of its legitimacy.

Chapter 8 scrutinized relations between election outcomes and political efficacy by analyzing a 2009 Japanese election. Multiple studies have investigated the relationship between election results and citizens' political efficacy. However, their results are not clear-cut; some studies claim that being on the winning side increases political efficacy, while others report there is no effect. The previous studies however suffer from several problems, which could possibly cause the inconsistent findings: aggregate-level data analysis, different possible definitions of winning, possible individual-level and election-level heterogeneity. To overcome these problems, this study reconsider the concept of efficacy based on a more broader psychological concept and analyzes a panel dataset collected at the 2009 Japanese Lower House election which brought a historic government turnover.

The analyses results showed that election outcomes can affect both external and internal efficacy, but in different manners. First, winning in an election had direct positive impact on external efficacy. However, to increase external efficacy, both of two types of winning were required: winning at the local district level and the national level. Only either one of winning did not increase voters' external efficacy. This result is in line with the findings presented in chapter 3 and 5, which is that determinants of external efficacy are not only to have a representative but also their relative power in political realm to achieve their pledges. Second, internal efficacy of those who supported the opposition party for a long time were significantly improved by the party's winning in the election. This result indicates that a relatively deep psychological involvement is required to change internal efficacy. In short, being in the political majority increased the level of internal efficacy of citizens who had been in the political minority for a long time. This result indicates that a relatively deep psychological involvement is required to change internal efficacy. This condition may have caused some of inconsistent findings of election outcome effects in the past empirical studies.