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participation*

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Resilience, self-efficacy and political participation

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Abstract:

The large gap in political participation between well-educated and wealthy citizens on the one hand and less educated and poorer citizens, on the other hand, has in recent years gained new attention. Several authors argue that unequal participation leads to unequal political representation and responsiveness and results in policy decisions that are tilted against the interests of disadvantaged groups, thus further increasing inequality. This paper takes a different starting point by turning the old question why people do not participate in politics around and asking why people participate. We hypothesize that enduring engagement with politics requires individuals to be resilient in the face of frustration and to possess strong, perhaps even delusional, efficacy beliefs. Using data from the German GESIS Panel we demonstrate positive correlations between individual resilience, internal and external efficacy, and political participation. We conclude by pointing to the possibility that resilience and efficacy beliefs help privileged groups to overcome collective action problems to achieve disproportionate influence on political decisions and point to avenues for further research.

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1. Introduction

Socio-economic gradients on political participation characterize most advanced democracies. A central determinant of non-voting seems to be the lack of political interest and motivation among the poor and less educated. The lower participation rates of disadvantaged groups must also be assumed to have adverse effects on the responsiveness of parliaments and political office-holders to their interests: Why cater for the interests of groups that are not going to vote for you (or anyone else)? The lack of responsiveness to the interests and preferences of disadvantaged groups makes decisions for political programs that could improve their situation unlikely, thus completing the vicious circle (see Gilens, 2005, Bartels, 2009, Schäfer, 2017).

This paper seeks to clarify a mechanism behind the well-known relationship between socio-economic disadvantage on the one hand and political non-participation on the other hand. In this sense, it attempts to answer an age-old question: why in a democracy with universal suffrage, do the poor not soak the rich (Iversen, 2006: 826)? We theorize that psychological dispositions that are strongly associated with educational and economic success also enable some people to deal with the many frustrations associated with political participation and engagement more easily than others. Our empirical results underline the plausibility of our theoretical conjectures.

In the following section, we explain why we expect resilience and self-efficacy beliefs to help citizens endure and overcome political frustration and, thereby, positively affect political participation. In the third section, we present our research design and the data used to empirically test the plausibility of our theory. In section four, we present our results: resilience is positively linked to electoral participation as well as internal and external political efficacy. Finally, we conclude that the relationship between individual motivation

and effective political action may be viewed as a public goods problem, in which disadvantaged groups fail to achieve the adequate political representation of their interests.

2. Resilience, self-efficacy and political participation

Discussions of the income-participation gap, which is significant in almost all developed democracies, typically focus on the question why people who possess full political participation rights fail to make use of them. Famously, the Civic Voluntarism Model by Brady, Verba and Schlozman (Brady, Verba et al., 1995) suggests three possible causes: people may chose not to participate “because they can’t”, “because they don’t want to” or “because nobody asked”. Regarding electoral participation, obstacles such as complicated registration procedures, long waiting times at polling stations and active voter suppression are significant in the United States, but less important in European states, where the income-participation gap nonetheless persists (Schäfer, 2015). In seeking to account for the lower participation rates of lower-income and less educated groups, we thus focus on resilience and self-efficacy as a central determinant, coming back to the role of networks and mobilization in our conclusions.

Reluctance to make use of one’s formally guaranteed participation rights must appear puzzling from the perspective of a political scientist who has turned a passionate interest in politics into a profession. From the perspective of someone suffering multiple disadvantages, however, the question must rather be asked the other way around: “Why participate?” Carpenter and Foos quote Pamela, a patient at a clinic for the uninsured in Alabama: “I don’t talk about politics... and I don’t talk about UFOs. They [both] seem crazy to me.” Asked if she is registered to vote, she replies “Why would I do that?” (Carpenter and Foos, 2017). To Pamela, voting simply does not occur as an option. And why should it? After all, trying to fully understand arguments for and against a political decision and all of its possible

implications requires a lot of mental energy and produces an over-complex picture in which the much-desired easy solutions are hard to find. What is more, engaging in politics is often unsatisfying, if not frustrating: (apparently) brilliant ideas and bold programs are compromised on and watered down until they are hardly recognizable. More often than not, people will feel that they are on the losing side of such negotiations. Finally, at least electoral participation must be viewed as pointless: as the voting paradox teaches us, everyone should be aware that the probability of their own vote being the pivotal one is minimal.¹

When people do turn out to vote, the election result is likely to become another source of frustration to many of them. As the literature on political losing shows, people who have voted for the losing party tend to subsequently have lower trust in government, while electoral winners gain trust (Anderson and Tverdova, 2001, Anderson and LoTempio, 2002). While winners and losers are more difficult to distinguish in multi-party systems with coalition governments than in the majoritarian US system, election results are certainly associated with disappointment and frustration for some share of the electorate. Summarizing results from different countries, Peter Esaiasson nonetheless finds that the overall effect of elections on political support is positive, with – on average – winners gaining trust and losers maintaining the original level of support (Esaiasson, 2011).

When despite multiple frustrations and despite the apparent insignificance of their contribution, people continue to be interested and engaged in politics, they must possess special properties or resources. We assume that political disappointments and frustrations have a differential effect on motivation, depending on individual dispositions. More

¹ See Downs (1957). There is of course a large literature on the voting paradox that suggests a number of explanations for why people still turn out to vote (e.g. Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1974).

specifically, we hypothesize that lasting political activity depends upon individual resilience to frustration and upon strong and perhaps even delusional belief in the efficacy of one's actions. As research from developmental and clinical psychology implies, resilience and self-efficacy beliefs are unequally distributed in the population and associated with educational success and consequently, income (Zajacova, Lynch et al., 2005; Kunzler, Chmitorz et al. 2018). In other words: if people who suffer from economical disadvantages and who are less educated lack political motivation and are less likely to participate, this may be because they lack resilience and self-efficacy beliefs in face of the frustrations associated with political action.

Given the strong covariance between resilience, self-efficacy, education and income, causality is of course a difficult issue here. Referring to longitudinal research in the field, developmental psychology assumes that resilience and self-efficacy are determinants of educational success and income rather than the other way around (Masten, Cutuli et al. 2014; Masten, Dejardins et al. 2010; Masten 2001). Yet at the same time, it is plausible to assume that 'success breeds success' in that experienced success reinforces self-efficacy beliefs and perceived resilience, thus paving the way for future success. Repeated experiences of failure, impotence, incompetence and humiliation, by contrast, are likely to undermine self-efficacy and resilience, and consequently success, at any age. Keeping the alternative causal directionalities in mind, we expect the effects of resilience and self-efficacy on political motivation and participation to be at least partly mediated by education and income.

Before we present our empirical data and analyses, however, some conceptual clarification is required: What is resilience? Resilience is often described, and today commonly known through popular science as "the ability to bounce back" (Zolli and Healy, 2013). The metaphor captures the concept behind it nicely. Resilience describes the capacity of an entity

(a control system, a group, an individual) to retain or regain functioning in face of stress, adversity or even trauma (Bonanno and Mancini 2001; Kalisch, Müller and Tüscher 2015). Resilience may not be mistaken for robustness or viewed as an armor that prevents any damage. Instead, it is a disposition, or as conceptualized in more modern, neurobiologically reasoned accounts, a number of mechanisms, that enable dealing with, recovery and even growth despite adversity (Kalisch, Muller et al. 2015). Resilience has been discussed as a property of very different objects: computer systems (Laprie, 2008), authoritarian regimes (Nathan, 2003) or pre-modern clans (Curtis, 2016). The origin of the concept, however, is in developmental psychology where resilience denotes an individual disposition, or rather a process, that is positively associated with educational and economic success and negatively associated with mental illness (Bonanno and Diminich 2013; Kalisch, Muller et al. 2015; Werner 1993). We stick with the psychological concept here and focus on the individual rather than systemic level, although resilience mechanisms on both levels may in fact be remarkably similar. In individuals, resilience is not an exceptional quality, but remarkably common (Bonanno 2004). A resilient person does experience frustration, hurt and grief, but can retain mental health and normal functioning through periods of even extreme stress and suffering. There are of course limits to resilience and traumas no human being can survive without lasting damages. However, resilience does help people deal with typical challenges of life (e.g. temporary unemployment, divorce, relocation) and daily hassles.

The psychological literature lists a number of resilience factors, among them social networks, communication skills, self-efficacy, confidence, optimism, and perseverance (Kalisch, Muller et al., 2015; Peters, Leadbeater et al., 2015). Again, causality is difficult to determine here, as mental illness resulting from a lack of resilience is likely to impede on all of these resilience factors. Among these resilience factors, self-efficacy is particularly interesting for us, as, in

light of the considerations above, it seems likely to have direct implications for political behavior. Put briefly, self-efficacy describes the belief that one's actions and decisions have effects on the course of one's own life and on others. Individuals with strong self-efficacy believe that success is in their own hands rather than determined by forces beyond their control and that they have at least some capacity to change the world they live in. This belief may well be delusional, as many factors that determine success and happiness are in fact beyond the individual's control, but it constitutes a strong motivation for action.

Low resilience and self-efficacy are also risk factors for mental illness. The negative effects of poor mental health on political participation are also well known. Christopher Ojeda has shown that even short, isolated episodes of depression in adolescence reduce the propensity to vote over the life-span (Ojeda, 2015). Grit, or perseverance, by contrast, seems to be positively related to voting: Hillygus et al. show that persons who score high on grit are more likely to vote and that individuals in whom a 'gritty mindset' is invoked are more willing to endure long waiting times at polling stations (Hillygus, Holbein et al., 2015).

Hillygus, Holbein et al. mention the similarity between the concepts of grit and resilience and grit, but take grit to be the more general concept. We, in contrast, regard grit as a resilience factor and thus resilience as the more general concept. As we are interested in motivation for participation rather than mere perseverance in overcoming obstacles to voting (as Hillygus et al. are), we believe resilience and self-efficacy to have more explanatory potential for our research questions.

While resilience has a negative effect on depression and may thus be expected to have a mediated positive effect on participation, we are even more interested in the non-clinical, more direct effect of resilience. We assume that even in individuals without clinical

symptoms, a lack of resilience makes it more difficult to cope with feelings of frustration and perceived futility and undermine attempts at political participation.

As noted before, self-efficacy is both known to be a resilience factor and likely be positively affected by resilience, with the exact causal relationship difficult to determine. At the same time, self-efficacy may be viewed as even more relevant to (political) action than resilience. It seems probable that general self-efficacy beliefs translate into beliefs in political efficacy, which have long been studied as a determinant for political participation (for an overview, see Vetter 1997). The broad literature on political efficacy distinguishes between internal and external political efficacy and typically measures them separately. Internal political efficacy concerns the extent to which individuals feel competent in their political judgments: Do they perceive politics to be excessively complex and beyond their grasp? Or do they trust their abilities and find it easy to form opinions on political matters? Reichert shows that internal political efficacy allows citizens to translate their political knowledge and latent interest into effective political participation (Reichert, 2016). External political efficacy concerns the perceived responsiveness of politicians to one's own interests and opinions: Are politicians only interested in votes or do they really want to improve things? Are they interested in what people think and want? The relationship between external political efficacy and political participation has been shown to be a reciprocal one: People who believe that their political actions matter are more likely to participate, and people who have participated (i.e. voted) in the past tend to have stronger beliefs in their external political efficacy (Finkel, 1985). In sum, internal and external political efficacy thus nicely capture political motivation as a central determinant of political participation in the Civic Voluntarism Model (Brady, Verba et al., 1995, see above).

Figure 1 specifies our causal model and the expected relationships between resilience, self-efficacy, political efficacy and political participation, as well as the moderating effect of socioeconomic status (SES) measured via education and income. In the next section we probe the plausibility of our theoretical assumptions.

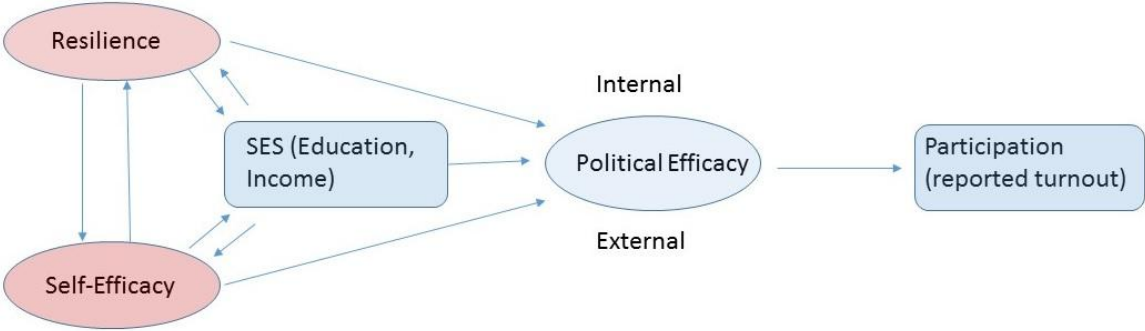


Figure 1: Causal model

3. Research design: Measuring and correlating resilience, self-efficacy and participation

To analyze the relationship between resilience and self-efficacy on political participation and opinions, we use data from the German GESIS Panel, an off-line recruited mixed-mode access panel representative of the adult, German-speaking population in Germany (Bosnjak, Dannwolf et al., 2017, GESIS, 2017). It was launched in 2014 and at that time included about 4,900 panelists. Since then, waves of the survey have been conducted every two months. The panelists can participate either off-line (via paper questionnaire) or on-line. 62 percent of panelists use the latter option. The face-to-face recruitment of respondents and options for respondents to participate either on- or offline make the GESIS panel a high quality longitudinal survey which is broadly representative of the on- and offline population between the ages of 16 and 75 (Blom, Gathmann et al., 2015). We draw on data from different waves of the panel.

The instrument we employ to measure resilience is a proxy for the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS, see: Smith, Dalen et al., 2008, Chmitorz, Wenzel et al., 2018). The BRS measures resilient outcomes, i.e. experienced resilience, rather than resilience factors, as some other scales do. It constitutes a parsimonious, one-dimensional measurement that can easily be employed as part of larger surveys. Our measurement is an index comprised of two of the six items included in the complete scale. These two items read as follows:

“I have a hard time making it through stressful events”

“I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life.”²

Using data from the Gutenberg Brain Study, a large register-based survey conducted in the German city of Mainz, we test the validity of our proxy by correlating an index of just these two items with the full BRS showing that the two are indeed highly correlated at $r = 0.89$.

To measure self-efficacy, we refer to a set of three highly correlated items. These items measure the absence of self-efficacy beliefs rather than self-efficacy as such, a disposition one might describe as “fatalism”. In rejecting these statements, participants express the belief that they have control over their own life and thus the assumption of self-efficacy. The respective items read as follows:

“My path of life is determined by powers I cannot influence.”

“As everything comes the way does anyway, it does not matter what I do.”

“A lot in my life depends on fate.”

2 The original question wording in German reads as follows: „Es fällt mir schwer stressige Situationen durchzustehen“ and „Ich brauche tendenziell lange, um über Rückschläge in meinem Leben hinwegzukommen.“

As central dependent variables, we analyze political participation in elections (reported turnout) and political efficacy. We measure internal and external political efficacy with indices created from four standard items.

Internal political efficacy:

“Politics is too complicated to understand what it really is about.” (inversely coded)

“I find it easy to form an opinion about political topics.”

External political efficacy:

“Most politicians are only interested in votes, not in people’s opinions.” (inversely coded)

“Politicians do not care about what people like me think.” (inversely coded)

As further control variables, we include a respondent’s gender as well as their age. Turnout is measured as participation (1) or non-participation (0) in the last federal election in Germany. Education is measured on a four-point scale ranging from the lowest tier of the German schooling system (“Hauptschule”) to completed university education (at least a bachelor’s degree from a university or university of applied sciences). Income is measured on a 15-point scale where respondents were asked to sort themselves into the relevant income bracket. Internal and external efficacy are mean scores of the above-mentioned questions which respondents could answer based on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). We recoded the component variables so that higher values indicated higher levels of efficacy. The approach we use to calculate resilience was similar. We took the mean of the answers to the items presented above and normalized to the unit interval. On these items, respondent gave answers on a ten-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (10). Again, higher levels indicate higher levels of efficacy or resilience, respectively.

The variable self-efficacy contains factor scores from a confirmatory factor analysis of the three relevant items described above.

Based on the considerations above, we assume both resilience and self-efficacy to have effects on political participation and attitudes. However, this effect may be difficult to pin down as resilience and self-efficacy are at the same time strongly associated with other central determinants of political behavior, in particular income and education. As noted before, the direction of causality is controversial here. While developmental psychology assumes that resilience affects educational success and income, we do not rule out that (reported) resilience increases through experiences of success and self-efficacy. For the case of electoral turnout, by contrast, the causality can only plausibly be described as uni-directional, with low resilience leading to a lower probability of turnout. However, the effect is likely to be partly mediated by education and income.

4. Results: How resilience and self-efficacy affect participation and opinions

In the following, we will analyze how resilience and self-efficacy relate to turnout and both internal and external political efficacy. Table 1 sets the stage by presenting the results of OLS-regressions of turnout, education and income on resilience and self-efficacy. These correlations confirm our initial theoretical assumptions (cf. Figure 1).

Table 1: Effects of Resilience and Self-Efficacy on Turnout, Education and Income

	Turnout b/se	Education b/se	Income b/se
Resilience	1.004 (0.376)**	0.357 (0.126)**	2.343 (0.410)***
Self-Efficacy	1.986 (0.605)**	1.033 (0.175)***	2.847 (0.610)***
Age	0.026 (0.006)***	-0.011 (0.002)***	0.067 (0.006)***
Gender (female)	-0.263 (0.167)	-0.051 (0.053)	-2.723 (0.183)***
Constant	0.588 (0.344)	2.847 (0.117)***	3.937 (0.413)***
Pseudo-R ²	0.045		
R ²		0.051	0.210
N	1649	1774	1676

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Data: Gesis Panel v22.

Logit-Regression (Turnout) and OLS-Regression (Income and Education) with robust standard errors.

Table 2 documents the correlation between resilience and self-efficacy on the one hand and turnout on the other hand. As expected, resilience and self-efficacy also correlate positively with income and education. These findings are in line with our theoretical assumptions that resilience influences turnout and that it does so through socio-economic status as well political efficacy. We now turn to the latter.

Tables 2 and 3 show how resilience and self-efficacy correlate with internal and external political efficacy, which is known to be a strong determinant of political participation (Pollock III, 1983).³ The strong correlation between resilience and self-efficacy on the one hand and education, income and participation on the other, as well as the assumed temporal

3 It is important to note that resilience is not just simply a different way of measuring personality. We see that even controlling for the Big 5, as a standard measure of individual personality, and political ideology (self-positioning on a left-right scale), both resilience and self-efficacy retain a statistically and substantially significant correlation with internal and external efficacy (appendix).

sequence in their development is reason for us to estimate models, presented in the next two tables, both with and without controlling for education and income. All models control for age and gender, which cannot possibly be affected by resilience but might affect resilience.

Table 2: Effects of Resilience and Self-Efficacy on Internal Political Efficacy

	Internal Political Efficacy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(4)
Resilience	0.859 (0.126) ^{***}	0.725 (0.130) ^{***}			0.411 (0.177) [*]
Self-Efficacy			1.044 (0.225) ^{***}	0.821 (0.232) ^{***}	0.765 (0.248) ^{**}
Age	0.010 (0.002) ^{***}	0.013 (0.002) ^{***}	0.007 (0.002) ^{**}	0.011 (0.002) ^{***}	0.012 (0.002) ^{***}
Gender (female)	-0.609 (0.051) ^{***}	-0.588 (0.056) ^{***}	-0.623 (0.064) ^{***}	-0.659 (0.069) ^{***}	-0.652 (0.072) ^{***}
Income		0.006 (0.008)		-0.006 (0.009)	-0.010 (0.010)
Education		0.250 (0.026) ^{***}		0.252 (0.032) ^{***}	0.259 (0.033) ^{***}
Constant	3.698 (0.123) ^{***}	2.975 (0.147) ^{***}	4.326 (0.112) ^{***}	3.573 (0.154) ^{***}	3.266 (0.191) ^{***}
R ²	0.075	0.114	0.073	0.115	0.123
N	2999	2735	1845	1705	1562

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Data: Gesis Panel v22.

OLS-Regression with robust standard errors.

As discussed above, internal efficacy captures the perceived ability to understand politics, to take informed decisions and to engage in political action and discussion. The first column in table 2 shows that resilience is significantly positively correlated with internal efficacy; that correlation is only slightly reduced by controlling for income and education (column 2).

Not surprisingly, the partial correlation of generalized self-efficacy beliefs and (internal) political efficacy is also positive and statistically significant. The coefficient is somewhat reduced by controlling for income and education, but still existent and statistically significant in the fourth model. This finding conforms with our expectation that the effect of resilience

may be partially mediated through education and income. The final model (column 5) includes both resilience and self-efficacy, whose partial correlations with the dependent variable are reduced due to the correlation between the two independent variables. The explained variation is similar in models with resilience (column 2) and self-efficacy (column 4) and only slightly improved in the complete model. Case numbers are smaller in models 3-5, as items used to capture self-efficacy were used only once in an early wave of the panel.

Table 3: Effects of Resilience and Self-Efficacy on External Political Efficacy

	External Political Efficacy				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Resilience	0.768 (0.124) ^{***}	0.521 (0.126) ^{***}			0.498 (0.169) ^{**}
Self-Efficacy			1.450 (0.232) ^{***}	1.074 (0.236) ^{***}	0.870 (0.245) ^{***}
Age	-0.013 (0.002) ^{***}	-0.009 (0.002) ^{***}	-0.015 (0.002) ^{***}	-0.011 (0.003) ^{***}	-0.012 (0.003) ^{***}
Gender (female)	-0.120 (0.056) [*]	-0.058 (0.061)	-0.062 (0.070)	-0.012 (0.076)	-0.022 (0.078)
Income		0.012 (0.008)		0.013 (0.010)	0.010 (0.011)
Education		0.341 (0.028) ^{***}		0.325 (0.035) ^{***}	0.319 (0.036) ^{***}
Constant	2.940 (0.125) ^{***}	1.921 (0.147) ^{***}	3.455 (0.122) ^{***}	2.343 (0.163) ^{***}	2.088 (0.193) ^{***}
R ²	0.031	0.094	0.042	0.102	0.107
N	2971	2709	1825	1687	1544

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Data: Gesis Panel v22.

OLS-Regression with robust standard errors.

The relationship between resilience and self-efficacy on the one hand and external political efficacy on the other hand, shown in Table 3, are quite similar. Individuals who score high on resilience and self-efficacy are more likely to assume that politicians care about and are responsive to their views. As for internal efficacy, the partial correlations are again somewhat reduced by controlling for income and education, but remain significant even in the complete model (column 5).

In sum, our analyses show that resilience and self-efficacy, as general determinants of motivation, are linked to political motivation (measured through political efficacy), and consequently, to political participation (measured through electoral turnout). We thus conclude that these dispositions apparently help individuals face the ‘daily hassle’ that politics

often constitutes and to maintain confidence in conflict resolution and stay politically engaged.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Taking Brady, Verba and Schlozman's Civic Voluntarism Model as a starting point, this paper has focused on the lack of motivation as a factor for political non-participation. While it is a well-known fact that citizens with low socio-economic status are less likely to participate in politics, the mechanisms that lead from disadvantage to non-participation are less clear. To clarify why people with low education and income are typically less motivated to participate in politics, we have theorized the effects of resilience and self-efficacy on electoral turnout and political efficacy.

In our empirical analysis, we found that resilience and self-efficacy indeed correlate positively with political efficacy and participation, meaning that the lack of these dispositions is a relevant explanatory factor for non-motivation and non-participation. We assume that respective effects may be even stronger in countries with lower average turnout rates, in which voting norms are weaker than in Germany. Far from meaning to pathologize political non-participation, we believe that a better understanding of the evolution of more or less permanent psychological dispositions for political (in-)action can help us explain the perpetuation of social and political inequalities.

More specifically, one might view the political participation of societal groups and the mobilization of support for political programs and decisions as a kind of public good problem. Such a perspective adds to an explanation for the notoriously stronger political influence of privileged groups compared to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Mancur Olson has famously described the production of public goods as a multi-player prisoners' dilemma in

which every player's choice of the dominant strategy leads to the failure to produce or erosion of public goods (Olson, 1965). If members of a group not only have incentives to avoid contributions to a collective good, but also feel that their contribution is irrelevant to its production and frustrated by past failures to produce collective goods, the group will – in game-theoretical terminology – stay trapped in the sub-optimal equilibrium. If, by contrast, members of a group (erroneously) assume their own contribution to be crucial to the production of the collective good and resilient in the face of failures and frustration, the group is more likely to escape the prisoner dilemma's inferior equilibrium and succeed in producing the collective good. This public-goods perspective on unequal political participation and responsiveness obviously ignores the existence of cross-cutting cleavages, the possible discrepancies between preferences and considered interests and the influence of powerful lobby groups and 'big money' on politics. Nonetheless, the higher resilience and stronger sense of self-efficacy of privileged groups have at least some potential to explain their higher participation rates *and* stronger political influence as a societal group.

If it is possible at all, overcoming the negative effects of low resilience and self-efficacy on educational success, income and political participation is a difficult task. Given that these traits are at least partly determined early in life, we should critically assess the education system and welfare state programs for ways in which they might undermine individual resilience, which is clearly beyond the scope of this paper (for attempts in this direction, see Hall and Lamont, 2013). Our main point for now was to indicate the ways in which differences in general motivation result in unequal motivation to participate in politics and to provide one possible answer to the question why people 'don't want to participate in politics'.

Having presented evidence for the role of resilience and self-efficacy as part of the mechanism that translates socio-economic into political disadvantage and non-participation,

we believe that further interdisciplinary research is in order. Because items measuring psychological concepts such as resilience and items including political question rarely if ever co-occur in one survey, we had to rely on two items as proxy of the BRS, consisting originally of six items. The inclusion of a standardized measure for resilience, such as the BRS, in large-scale and preferably cross-national surveys would enable a better comparative assessment of this relationship as well as an analysis of the mediating effects of contextual factors such as inequality, the welfare state and political institutions.

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