

The book is engagingly written and strikes a nice balance between being accessible to smart lay readers and speaking to a scholarly audience. Although the occasional regression table and discussion of *p*-values may puzzle readers unfamiliar with quantitative methods, this is a book that one could reasonably assign to an advanced undergraduate class on health politics or public opinion. At the same time, it is unmistakably a work of serious academic research.

My chief criticism of *Stable Condition* is that Hopkins continues the questionable tradition of studying overall favorability toward the ACA (also known as the “health reform bill...signed into law in 2010” in surveys) while knowing full well that this evaluation has little relationship with how Americans feel about the actual policies included in the legislation (pp. 59–60). This isn’t to say that a person’s overall impression of the ACA as a political symbol is not worth understanding, but I wish the book had given more attention to specific health policy beliefs as important dependent variables. After all, the notion of the ACA as a unified whole to be preserved or repealed has

become more and more disconnected from real policy decisions as time has passed, with the ability of states (and, in some cases, voters themselves) to decide on Medicaid expansion as a stand-alone issue, the repeal of the hated individual mandate in 2017, and the expansion of ACA marketplace premium subsidies initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic and extended by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. Hopkins considers aggregate predictors of vote shares in favor of Medicaid-expansion ballot initiatives in Maine and Oklahoma (chap. 4) but only as a test of self-interest arguments about the ACA. Otherwise, the book is focused on understanding holistic evaluations of the law to the exclusion of more specific beliefs.

The good news is that Hopkins has demonstrated a solid model for future research on public opinion on all sorts of policy issues, whether related to the ACA or not. I recommend this book not only to my colleagues in the health politics and policy spheres but also to anyone seeking a better understanding of American public opinion on public policy.

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## COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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### Voicing Politics: How Language Shapes Public

**Opinion.** By Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. 232p. \$120.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.  
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*Voicing Politics*, by Efrén Pérez and Margit Tavits, offers readers something remarkable in two respects—one intended and one presumably unintended. The authors bring their respective bodies of expertise in political psychology (Pérez), comparative politics (Tavits), and the politics of racial, ethnic, and gender identities (both) to shed light on the narrow but profound matter of how the language one speaks may shape or constrain one’s worldview and one’s opinions on politics and policy. It is, on the whole, an impressive work that pushes the authors’ research agendas forward substantially. Although *Voicing Politics* deserves to be read by those with an interest in its core topics—language and politics, comparative public opinion, and identity politics—it also merits a far wider audience as an exemplar of rigorous, yet accessible, social-scientific writing. Pérez and Tavits offer a master class in the iterative process of multimethod research and how to write a book that weaves together a set of individual studies into a coherent narrative. Dissertation advisers take note: this book makes an excellent gift for graduating doctoral students

about to be lectured by publishers on the difference between a dissertation and a book manuscript!

Pérez and Tavits grapple deftly with a topic that could be viewed as having niche appeal but that deserves appreciation by a broad audience. Their introduction and first chapter assume no special expertise beyond perhaps a social or behavioral science orientation. Recognizing that most readers will have little background in linguistics or cognitive psychology, they motivate interest through an exciting general-interest science writing style while also managing to catch us up to speed as scholars. Nonlinguists—even those who speak multiple languages—may not appreciate just how widely languages vary in grammatical structures and prominent features such as gendering and time/tense. As an early example, the authors note the tendency of English speakers to use a transitive construction for accidental actions (“*Jeremy spilled the coffee*”), whereas Spanish speakers more often use a passive sentence construction, even omitting the agent (“*The coffee got spilled*”). One can imagine the potential implications for politics, where the interplay of individual agency, relative power, and institutional constraints forms the basis for much of what we understand or wish to understand.

The theoretical foundations of the book, laid out in the first chapters, derive from the marriage of the linguistic and political behavior literatures, particularly Dan Slobin’s “thinking for speaking” (“Thinking for Speaking,” *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 1987)—whereby one’s language shapes the mental associations on which one relies not simply to

describe but also to attend to and reason about one's environment—and John Zaller's "belief sampling" (*The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, 1992), which holds that temporarily salient "considerations" that happen to be top of mind for low-information members of the public guide their responses to public opinion surveys. The resulting *language-opinion hypothesis* at the heart of the book articulates a natural, yet profound, implication of these two theories: the language in which one communicates should condition the relative accessibility of certain considerations over others and manifest in detectable cross-language differences in expressed political opinions. This hypothesis drives the book's investigations fruitfully, with empirical results of earlier studies raising new questions subsequently examined through further research.

Although the implications of the language-opinion hypothesis are limitless, some are especially consequential for political psychology, behavior, and the institutional arrangements that emerge over time from these micro-foundations. The second and third chapters of *Voicing Politics* focus on variability in the genderedness of languages. Does speaking a genderless language prime one to place less importance on human gender differences than speaking a more rigidly gendered language? To evaluate this hypothesis, the authors begin with two experiments in Estonia, in which bilingual speakers of Russian and Estonian are randomly assigned to be surveyed in one of these two languages. The first experiment is conducted on 1,200 participants, with a follow-up replication and extension conducted on 262 respondents. They find small but statistically distinguishable differences in expressed support for certain gender stereotypes, with those speaking Russian (gendered) slightly more likely than those speaking Estonian (genderless) to lend credibility, for example, to the notion that women are more emotional and men more rational. The authors view this as a likely mechanism through which language may affect respondent judgments about policies promoting gender equality and the suitability of women to hold public positions traditionally reserved for men. Their follow-up study involved just 262 respondents, but the results mostly hold up (detectable nonzero effects).

The internal validity of the first two gender studies is complemented by a successful attempt to establish external validity through a large observational study based on a trusted worldwide survey of 170,000 respondents across 90 countries. Next, the authors refine their investigation, inquiring whether the discovered language effects are not simply grammatical but also lexical; that is, do the words themselves affect opinions? This study is more subtle but has greater policy implications than the first because it relates to practical linguistic changes that we may choose to embrace. Although it focuses on the introduction of gender-neutral pronouns in Swede, it will resonate with English speakers as well: When we consciously use

gender-neutral pronouns such as the individual "they" or professional labels such as "representative" instead of congressman and congresswoman, might this actually shift perception and public opinion on matters of gender equity and LGBTQ rights, or is it simply a symbolic gesture to please the like-minded? To gather evidence, the authors again proceed through a sequence of studies, including a small pilot study, a larger replication study, and an online survey to rule out social desirability effects. Over and over throughout the book, Pérez and Tavits demonstrate an incredible commitment to subjecting results to various checks, poking and prodding their findings for possible holes. Their perseverance should stand as a model for our students and to all of us who may be too easily satisfied by one suggestive study.

In later chapters, the human stakes remain high. The authors examine the possible impact of speaking futured versus futureless languages, asking whether the degree of separation between *now* and *later* might have an impact on concern about long-term threats such as climate change. Their broad language-opinion hypothesis leads the authors to expect that those forced to conceptually separate today from tomorrow in communicating through a futured language will perceive future threats as more temporally distant, whereas those speaking a futureless language should be less likely to experience a salient distinction between present and future, with crucial implications for their opinions on proposed policies. Two experimental studies and a large-scale survey build more support for their claims. Next, they take on ethnic divisions and the impact of speaking a majority versus minority tongue within a country, finding evidence that speaking marginalized languages may sensitize one to the distinct experiences of ethnic minorities and to the divisions that disadvantage them. Pérez and Tavits push this line of inquiry further in their final substantive chapter, asking whether majority-language speakers enjoy a "language premium" when expressing political opinions. Carrying out experiments on bilingual Spanish and English speakers in the United States, they examine whether such speakers can more quickly retrieve public affairs knowledge from memory when speaking English, the majority tongue, because they are more likely to have consumed such information in English. The experimental manipulation no longer works through the mechanism of grammar or lexicon but rather through the relative social status of *the language as a whole*. More specifically, bilingual speakers in the United States build more mental associations regarding public policy and politics through English-language sources. If the *linguistic tags* that help us retrieve ideas from memory are encoded in English, it should be easier to access and articulate them when speaking English. In two experiments and a large-scale survey, they find evidence supporting a modest but meaningful language premium.

The book concludes with a review of the substantial progress the authors have accomplished on their research problem and the implications for real-world politics and policy. They point the way forward for other intrepid souls who wish to delve into related questions, offering a generous appendix with many details related to research design and statistical analysis.

**Everyday Practices of State Building in Ethiopia: Power, Scale and Performativity.** By Davide Chinigò. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 272p. \$110.00 cloth. doi:10.1017/S1537592723002220

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In a new book, *Everyday Practices of State Building in Ethiopia*, Davide Chinigò argues that social change drives state formation in ways that are consequential for politics, economic change, and, particularly, changes in social identity formation. These intertwining themes are highly relevant to Ethiopia, a country with a constitution that seemingly privileges certain identities (ethnic groups) while the political system has remained mostly authoritarian and party- and state-led. Chinigò's analysis focuses on state formation and social change by bringing in the "mundane practices that describe how people live alongside and despite the constraining power of state policies, and development programmes, when their claims for recognition are dismissed or remain unacknowledged" (p. 3). The acquiescence, resistance, and negotiation of these relationships help shape a new form of state power.

Chinigò's work is both a theoretical and an empirical exercise, although his contributions are perhaps more substantial in the empirical sense. He shapes his argument by responding to three influential approaches to state building in the Ethiopianist literature, each of which illuminates some parts of everyday politics and obscures others. For instance, the center-periphery approach is crucial to highlighting those voices in Ethiopian history that are neglected and understudied, but it tends to freeze the analysis in time and to trap actors in relationships of power that are not as simple as the powerful versus the powerless (p. 8). Similarly, the developmental state framework picks up on a central vision of the modern state in Ethiopia, one that draws from the experiences of socio-economic transformation in East Asia. Finally, Chinigò considers the political culture line of argument, which sees much of what is consequential in Ethiopian politics as the result of distinct historical and sociological foundations.

In place of these approaches, Chinigò draws from Judith Butler's seminal works on performativity (including *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 1993) to point out the ways that much of our politics takes place through "knowable effects" that are performed, institutionalized, and "reiterated." It is the reiterated

practices of power, rather than the structures per se, that matter. This is particularly true for the discussions of group mobilization for development tasks in Ethiopia, where we see that institutions or even laws do not matter as much as the way that the state targets and mobilizes the citizenry to particular reforms and tasks. Chinigò also focuses on how state power, and its use of repressive techniques, then creates political subjects both in the creative and generative sense. The agency of citizens in responding to state power emerges from this attention.

All this foregrounds the most exciting and significant contribution of this work, which is Chinigò's development of the cases. Demonstrating the power of qualitatively rich data to tackle variation in political context and outcome, the case studies focus on five regions of the country and several distinct topics central to the state-building project. These topics include the politics of land resettlement, decentralization and land registration, agricultural commercialization, small business development, and industrialization. Each chapter has a discussion of the histories of these political questions and introduces compelling data to point to the everyday negotiations around various political reforms and processes. For instance, the discussion of mass political mobilization and subvillage structures is threaded throughout the chapters, with examples from the Oromia region focused on the *gott*, *shanee*, model farmer (MF) programs, and the "one to five" networks. Chinigò notes that "they [beneficiaries] could rarely avoid enrolling in state promoted schemes for fear of losing tenuous opportunities" (p. 151), yet in all cases, these schemes and programs rarely yielded the economic opportunities recipients were promised or hoped for. The beneficiaries therefore performed participation and compliance while creatively pursuing their own objectives. In the case of the peri-urban entrepreneurship programs, this involved using the access to microcredit for individually productive activities outside the sanctioned and preferred collective entrepreneurship forms.

Similarly, the discussion of the rural land resettlement program points to the subversion and risk-diversification strategies of rural farmers, virtually all of whom had kept connections to and eventually returned to their original land shortly after initiation of a government-sponsored land resettlement program. Land resettlement and land titling did little to resolve fundamental land insecurity issues in these communities yet had the potential to create greater social conflict as ethnic groups were moved or land was reallocated or marked for title. For instance, participants were required to participate in land registration in the Oromia region but, in the end, "had too little incentive to obtain accurate land measurement. They wanted to avoid border disputes with their neighbors" and avoid contact with government administrators (p. 108). These forms of creative subversion of government activities in a state that is generally understood to be an effectively