

Government authority and legitimacy in the age of a pandemic

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Proposal for ESS 10 COVID-19 module

Scientists are developing best practices for treating and managing COVID-19, but the effectiveness of those public health measures will depend on public compliance. In the early stages of the pandemic, governments used aggressive measures such as stay-at-home orders, business closures, curfews, digital monitoring and restrictions on movement and assembly. Many of these measures were controversial and some people actively resisted what they believed were unnecessary examples of government overreach. The success of future measures will depend on public support, so we propose a module that studies support for government policies for fighting a pandemic.

Our first two items tap into some of the most difficult policy trade-offs when fighting a pandemic: prioritizing health vs. the economy and prioritizing government power vs. privacy. Many of the most aggressive government policies enacted considerable economic pain in the interest of protecting public health. Most policy decisions are about balancing winners and losers, but the pandemic policies amplify those stakes on a large scale. Relatedly, governments claim they need extensive (and often unprecedented) power to monitor, surveil and track the public, in order to enforce compliance with public health measures and to conduct contact tracing for people who test positive for COVID-19. However, liberal democratic societies across Europe also value individual liberty, which may be threatened by these measures. Balancing government power and individual liberty is always a challenge, but the pandemic raises the stakes.

Our next set of items asks about mobility. International migration has been one of the most contested political issues across Europe in recent years. Many argued that mobility was essential for the modern world, but the pandemic halted travel and migration in an unprecedented way. Asking for views about mobility in light of the pandemic will bring new insight to questions that have motivated scholars for years. We ask about international and domestic mobility, because fears of COVID-19 spreading from dense cities to suburbs and the countryside raised many questions about the salient borders in society.

Our final question asks about trust in pandemic-related recommendations of different elites: local government, national government, the EU and the WHO. This provides insight on who might be seen as the more legitimate sources of authority for dealing with future stages of COVID-19 or other pandemics.

The module would have clear practical benefits. Our module would provide unprecedented information on European public opinion about COVID-19 policies. The questions could be combined with individual and contextual-level data elsewhere in the ESS to show what types of people were more satisfied with COVID-19 policies and the priorities they have for fighting the pandemic. This would be useful for national, state and local governments as well as international organizations as they plan to engage the public in extended battles against COVID-19 as well as future pandemics.

In addition, our module would provide valuable items for core debates in multiple social science disciplines. Right now there is growing interest in what shapes reaction to COVID-19 policies and why different people view policies in different ways. Scholars are fielding their own scattershot surveys around the world, but including our module in the ESS would provide clean cross-national data that would quickly become the standard reference.

ESS is the perfect outlet for our module because of its broad reach. The ESS has large sample sizes across a wide range of European countries. The core ESS survey includes extensive individual-level items that can be used to examine how attitudes about pandemic policies vary among different subgroups within as well as across countries. The ESS can be linked to a wide range of contextual data, which will allow scholars to see how attitudes vary across space according to different COVID-19 policies, health outcomes, economic outcomes, to name a few options.

Our proposal also picks up on several themes that should interest scholars who regularly use the ESS. For example, there is a longstanding interest in the politics of economic and social inequality in Europe, who is viewed as more deserving of government support, and what the priorities should be for contemporary societies. Our module intersects with many of those debates by asking about the priorities when fighting a pandemic and the extent to which different societal groups should be privileged (or not).

Another well-developed part of the ESS is the items about evaluating government and democracy. Our module builds on those questions and could connect those baseline evaluations to evaluations of the specific pandemic policies. This would enrich use of our module by placing it in context with how respondents view their government in general.

Our proposal also matches well with analyses of the other special modules for ESS 10. The module 'Understandings and Evaluations of Democracy' is concerned with similar themes as our COVID module: what powers should democratic government have, to what extent are citizens willing to tradeoff democratic freedoms for other perceived benefits like health or stability. The module 'Digital Social Contacts in Work and Family Life' is also related, as we ask questions about the extent to which governments should be able to use digital technologies to fight the pandemic.

Our team is well-qualified to deliver the items and publish high-impact work with the results. We have all published extensively with secondary data (including the ESS) as well as with custom surveys we designed ourselves. As a team, we have been fielding surveys in Germany and the United States on similar topics as the ones we propose in this module. We will use insights from those findings to fine-tune the questions with the ESS team.

In short, our module would provide valuable information about how European publics react to pandemic policies. Understanding these opinion dynamics will be essential for governments and other agencies in their struggle to get broad compliance for public health measures. Understanding these opinion dynamics will also be essential for understanding the future of European democracies.

Five items

When developing strategies to fight the covid-19 pandemic, governments must make difficult decisions between competing priorities.

1. In your opinion, when fighting a pandemic is it more important to prioritize public health or economic activity?

(0) Public health 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Economic activity (10)

2. In your opinion, when fighting a pandemic is it more important for governments to monitor and surveil the public or for the public to maintain privacy?

(0) Government power 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Privacy (10)

3. In your opinion, when fighting a pandemic, how important is it to close international borders?

(0) Extremely unimportant 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Extremely important (10)

4. In your opinion, when fighting a pandemic, how important is it to restrict people's movement to their local municipality?

(0) Extremely unimportant 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Extremely important (10)

5. To what extent do you trust advice of the following actors on how to deal with the covid-19 pandemic? [your local government/national government/the European Union/the World Health Organization]

(0) Completely distrust 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Completely trust (10)

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Selected positions / education

As of 08/20	Full Professor, University of Mannheim, Department of Sociology
04/15 – 07/20	Full Professor, University of Bamberg, Department of Political Science
05/11 – 04/16	WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Head of the Emmy-Noether research group
05/2007	PhD Political Science, University of Zurich, summa cum laude

Current research projects

- “Political and religious extremism: Measuring and explaining explicit and implicit attitudes”, (German Research Foundation, ca.440’000 Euro)
- “How are the main social conflict structures in Germany changing?” (Bavarian Research Institute for Digital Transformation, ca.730’000 Euro)
- “Immigration, Integration, and Naturalization: New Immigrants, Policy Decisions and Citizens’ Responses”, (German Research Foundation, ca.300’000 Euro),
- “Climate Change Impacts on Migration and Urbanization” (Leibniz Association, Collaborative Excellence Program, ca.900’000 Euro)

Selected recent publications

- Marc Helbling (2020): “Attitudes Towards Climate Change Migrants”, *Climatic Change* 160(1): 89-102.
- Marc Helbling and Daniel Meierrieks (2020): “Transnational Terrorism and Restrictive Immigration Policies”, *Journal of Peace Research* (forthcoming).
- Marc Helbling and Richard Traummüller (2020): “What is Islamophobia? Disentangling Citizens’ Feelings Towards Ethnicity, Religion and Religiosity Using a Survey Experiment”, *British Journal of Political Science* (forthcoming)
- Marc Helbling and Sebastian Jungkuntz (2020): “Social Divides in the Age of Globalization”, *West European Politics* 43(6): 1187-1210.
- Marc Helbling and David Leblang (2019): “Controlling immigration? How regulations affect migration flows”, *European Journal of Political Research* 58(1): 248-269.

CV Rahsaan Maxwell

Selected positions / education

As of 07/20	Full Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Political Science
07/13 – 06/20	Associate Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Political Science
08/08 – 06/13	Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Political Science
05/2008	PhD Political Science, University of California, Berkeley

Current research projects

- “COVID-19 and Public Opinion in the US and Europe”
- “Immigration, Integration, and Naturalization: New Immigrants, Policy Decisions and Citizens’ Responses”, (German Research Foundation, ca.300’000 Euro),
- “The Causes and Consequences of Mobility”

Selected recent publications

- Rahsaan Maxwell. 2020. “Geographic divides and cosmopolitanism: Evidence from Switzerland” *Comparative Political Studies* (forthcoming)
- Rahsaan Maxwell. 2019. “Cosmopolitan immigration attitudes in large European cities: Contextual or compositional effects?” *American Political Science Review* 113(2): 456-474.
- Rahsaan Maxwell. 2017. “Occupations, National Identity, and Immigrant Integration” *Comparative Political Studies* 50(2): 232-263.
- Rahsaan Maxwell and Erik Bleich. 2014. “What Makes Muslims Feel French?” *Social Forces* 93(1): 155-179.
- Rahsaan Maxwell. 2013. “The geographic context of political attitudes among migrant-origin individuals in Europe.” *World Politics* 65(1): 116-55.

Selected service

- *American Journal of Political Science* - Editorial Board (2019—present)
- *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* - Deputy Editor (2018—present)
- American Political Science Association - European Politics and Society Section Chair (2021-23), European Politics and Society Division Chair (2019-21)

CV Richard Traunmüller

Selected positions / education

Since 02/20	Professor of Empirical Democracy Research, University of Mannheim
01/19 – 02/20	Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Mannheim
10/14 – 01/19	Assistant Professor of Empirical Democracy Research, Goethe University Frankfurt
10/13-10/14	Research Fellow, University of Essex
08/2011	PhD Political Science, University of Konstanz, summa cum laude

Current research projects

- “The Rural-Urban Divide in Europe (RUDE)”, (NORFACE, ca. 1’347’000 Euro)
- “Immigration, Integration, and Naturalization: New Immigrants, Policy Decisions and Citizens’ Responses”, (German Research Foundation, ca.300’000 Euro),
- “Global Preferences for Hate Speech Regulation”, (Facebook Research, ca. 98’880 Euro)
- “Political Conflict Regulation and Social Cohesion”, (German Ministry of Education and Research, Research Institute Social Cohesion, ca.358’500 Euro)

Selected recent publications

- Plümper, Thomas and Richard Traunmüller (2020): The Sensitivity of Sensitivity Analysis. *Political Science Research & Methods* 8(1): 149-159.
- Traunmüller, Richard, Sara Kijewski, and Markus Freitag (2019): The Silent Victims of Wartime Sexual Violence. Evidence from a List Experiment in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63(9): 2015-2042.
- Helbling, Marc and Richard Traunmüller, Richard (2018): What is Islamophobia? Disentangling Citizens’ Feelings Toward Ethnicity, Religion, and Religiosity Using a Survey Experiment. *British Journal of Political Science*. Online First: DOI: 10.1017/S0007123418000054
- Claassen, Christopher and Richard Traunmüller (2018): Improving and Validating Survey Estimates of Religious Demography Using Bayesian Multilevel Models with Poststratification. *Sociological Methods & Research*. Online First: DOI: 10.1177/0049124118769086