Proposed Title for the Module: The EVS approach to the explanation of attitudes towards beginning and end of life (EVS-MORALBOUNDS)

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<tr>
<td>Principal Applicant</td>
<td>Edurne Bartolomé Peral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer/Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>University of Deusto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address for Correspondence</td>
<td>Av Universidades 24, 48007 Bilbao (Spain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>+34944139003 ext 2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Edurne.bartolome@deusto.es">Edurne.bartolome@deusto.es</a></td>
</tr>
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Relevance and rationale:

Since 1980, the European Values Study (EVS) has been tracking the effect of social modernization and human development (including political, scientific, and technological changes) which have transformed human value priorities. Examples of important changes in value priorities are the decline of church impact on morality as a consequence of massive secularization and individualization. The shift to value patterns that enhance self-determination and claims for minorities’ rights and equality, together with the advances in medicine and the structural aging of our societies have led to a rising relevance of the so-called Beginning- and End-of-Life Issues. Issues such as medically assisted reproduction and dying, triage of life-threatened patients, abortion and suicide, raise moral and political questions that present specific characteristics and variations in the context of modernization, laws, policies and welfare systems. Within this framework, the EVS is an important and reliable source of information, documenting where moral orientations of Europeans stand, and providing repeated cross-sectional high quality data for the last 4 decades. The European Social Survey (ESS) is a well-established infrastructure, measuring stability and change of values and attitudes for the last 20 years. However, the domain of life and death ethics has never been addressed in their questionnaires. We believe that a CRONOS module focusing on such a highly topical subject constitutes a unique opportunity to build a strong synergy between EVS and ESS.

Medical progress has led to the development of technologies interfering in biological processes of procreation, expanding childbearing possibilities to individuals and social groups previously excluded from parenting. The current trend in Europe to postpone parenthood, linked to career preferences of women has increased the social relevance of medical assistance to procreation. The use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies has greatly increased over recent decades, raising new moral questions and triggering debates on conditions for eligibility for techniques such as in-vitro fertilization or surrogacy to realize their parenting choices.

At the end of life, growing demand for autonomous dying raises public awareness of practices of assisted dying and puts pressure on parliaments and governments to regulate medical practices. Therefore, it is relevant to track Europeans’ attitudes towards assisted dying and to understand how they are shaped by contextual differences. Individually, attitudes are linked to religious and value orientations and, in some societies, progressive and conservative movements are making these moral questions conflictual.
Including attitudes towards beginning and end of life allows us to compare acceptance levels within and across societies, to identify existing (euthanasia, abortion, assisted insemination/IVF) and new (surrogacy, triage) measures and to link them with other domains addressed in the ESS, namely the Basic Human Values model. Our approach follows a strategy that links human development, human values, and striving for autonomy with attitudes towards boundary questions of life and death.

The theory would be therefore operationalized by items from the ESS core and EVS: Attitudes towards beginning and end of life will be explained by individual factors, namely human values, locus of control, interpersonal and institutional trust (additionally including health system and government from EVS), religiosity and religious denomination, normative beliefs in the domain of familism and gender norms, and moral permissiveness.

**THE EVS-ESS APPROACH ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS BEGINNING AND END OF LIFE**

- 4 Human Values: Self-direction, hedonism and stimulation (Openness to Change) (ESS core)
- 3 Human Values: Security, Tradition and Conformism (Conservation) (ESS core)
- 2 Human Values: Power and Achievement (Self-enhancement) (ESS core)
- 1 Human Values: Universalism and benevolence (Self-transcendence) (ESS Core)
- 5 Locus of control (EVS)
- 6 Interpersonal and Institutional trust (ESS core/EVS)
- 7 Secularization Religiosity (ESS core/EVS)
- 8 Familism: Gender roles Conservatism (EVS)
- 9 Moral permissiveness: Homosexuality (ESS core/EVS)
- Controls: Family/social network, education, SES, Subjective health, age, gender (ESS core)

**Suitability for CRONOS-2:**

The module focuses on the comparative analysis of the relationship between basic human values and moral attitudes toward boundary morality issues, combining for the first time items from ESS and EVS. The EVS items presented in this proposal have unprecedented longitudinal and geographical coverage. They have been tested systematically, some of them for decades, in more than 40 countries, and have been baseline questions for the analysis of value orientations on morality issues in social sciences.

Despite the lively debates about morality issues in European societies, the political discourse is predominantly based on principles and values, and lacking in insights into the nuanced attitudes of the public about the morality dimensions of beginning- end-of-life issues. For many European countries, the EVS is the only source of representative data with its most reliable cross-national single items included in a large battery of justifiability questions. Studies
based on these measures show that there are strong cross-national differences in acceptance across Europe. The existing measures from EVS provide preliminary evidence for the relevance of predictors (e.g. religiosity/secularization, gender roles, confidence in healthcare) to explain attitudes and cross-national differences. The interest has been not only political or ethical, but also theoretical, understanding morality attitudes from a cross-national social science perspective.

EVS-MORALBOUNDS Cronos2 module would

- Introduce an adequate cross-national effort of mapping differences in morality attitudes and values and their determinants, and provide highly relevant policy knowledge for future decision making in European welfare states.
- Provide evidence about the nuances within the attitudes of the public in different cultural contexts related to these moral issues,
- Add systematic comparative evidence to the existing eclectic knowledge bridging previously separated lines of research (beginning and end of life).
- Explain attitudes as consequences of individuals’ contextual settings and personal traits.
- Link items of the EVS core questionnaire to items from the ESS core questionnaire, especially on Basic Human Values. The module thereby addresses diverse fields of the social sciences such as religious studies, value research, gender and family studies, and health research.
- Offer respondents the possibility of expressing their views on sensitive issues in a private mode of data collection

Research team:

**Edurne Bartolomé Peral** is senior lecturer and researcher, University of Deusto (Spain), Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. Her research focuses on values and political attitudes. She is Program director of EVS in Spain, chair of the EVS theory group and member of the Steering group. He has also been member of the Spanish National ESS Committee.

**Alice Ramos** is research fellow, ICS-Lisbon University. Her research deals with the articulation between individual and cultural values, and the methodology of cross-national studies. She is National Coordinator of the European Social Survey-ERIC, Project Director, member of the Executive Group and the Steering Committee of the European Values Study.

**Pascal Siegers** is acting head, Data Archive for the Social Sciences at GESIS–Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences and head of National Surveys and Research Data Center at GESIS. He has been head of ALLBUS Research Data Centre and chair of the Research Data Infrastructure Committee at the Council for Social and Economic Data.

**Gergely Rosta** is associate professor for Sociology, Pázmány-Péter Catholic University in Hungary. He has been Visiting professor and research associate at the Institute of Sociology,
University of Münster. He is Program Director for Hungary of EVS and member of the Steering group.

Natalia Soboleva is Senior Research Fellow, Ronald F. Inglehart Laboratory for Comparative Social Research and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management. She is Program Director for Russia of EVS and member of the theory group and Steering group.

**Feasibility of implementation:**

Our theoretical framework combines ESS core variables with traditional EVS variables on morality, justification, control over life, gender roles, secularism and institutional trust. Matching EVS and ESS variables will allow a systematic and comprehensive analysis on moral autonomy and attitudes towards beginning and end of life.

**Dependent variables**

Source EVS: Abortion, euthanasia, suicide, IVF, surrogacy and triage.

Some of these variables are key justification items taken from the EVS questionnaire. The strength of these questions is that they stem from an item battery that has been used a lot during the last 4 decades; moreover, these are the most important questions on moral attitudes in comparative research. We added two new items that have not been tested yet. Firstly, surrogacy, due to the growing interest both in the academia as in the political sphere. Secondly, triage, that is, under conditions of scarcity, a medical doctor deciding to withdraw or withhold treatment for a very sick or old person to save the life of a healthier or younger patient. This practice has been highly controversial and discussed during the worst moments of the COVID pandemic. For this battery, we suggest to randomize the order.

**Independent variables**

It is expected that those that have a higher self perception of control over life will have attitudes towards the beginning and end of life that express internal/individual control, while those that believe that life events are determined by faith or by external factors express less openness to the influence of self-determination in such moral decisions. The perception of self control will be measured by the indicator of locus of control.
Religion is a key element to understand peoples' orientations towards beginning and end of life matters. There is no single approach and each religion has its own rules: for instance, although the Vatican rejects assisted reproduction, Protestants can practise it; according to traditional Christian views, beginning at conception, the embryo has moral status as a human being, and thus most assisted reproductive technologies are forbidden. People with stronger religious beliefs and living in a religious context, that consider that birth and death depend only on God's will are expected to reject actions that put such decisions in the hands of people, whether they are medical doctors, or the single individual. Moreover, previous research has shown that Protestants and people living in Protestant countries have more favourable attitudes toward euthanasia, for instance, than do Catholics and people living in Catholic countries. Since the link between religiosity and life and death ethics is very strong it is very likely similar effects will be found on the other ethical domains under analysis.

The type of family and their social function, and the role of women within the family and in society, are both indicators of familism; it is expected that more conservative attitudes in these spheres will predict lower levels of justifiability of human interventions at the beginning and end of life. Accordingly, it is plausible to find cross-national differences, namely between societies holding more traditional values and those endorsing more egalitarian values.

There is empirical evidence that positive ‘Subjective well-being’ preceded diverse positive personal and social outcomes. People with higher levels of mental and physical health are more likely to evidence greater self-control, to live a longer life, to be less self-centered or selfish and to be relatively more cooperative, prosocial, charitable, and “other-centered”. Although theoretically the concept of SWB does not include the perception of health, we believe that this is an important dimension and our proposal is to extend the concept of SWB and join ESS variables of happiness, life satisfaction and perception of health in a single index.

Source: EVS

Locus of control (EVS variable since 1981)

EVS_v38 - Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, and other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use the scale to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?

Scale: 0-none at all to 10 a great deal

Religiosity

Importance of God (EVS variable since 1981)

EVS_v63 - How important is God in your life? Please use this card to indicate - 10 means very important and 1 means not at all important.

Scale: 0-not at all important to 10 very important
Familism

For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

EVS_v72 - When a mother works for pay, the children suffer (New EVS variable in 2017)

EVS_v73 - A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children (EVS variable since 1990)

EVS_v75 - A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family (New EVS variable in 2017)

Scale (originally 4-point): 1- Strongly agree; 2-Agree; 3- Neither agree nor disagree; 4-Disagree; 5-Strongly disagree

EVS_v81 - When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women (EVS variable since 1990)

EVS_v83 - It is a duty towards society to have children (EVS variable since 2008)

Scale: 1- Strongly agree; 2-Agree; 3- Neither agree nor disagree; 4-Disagree; 5-Strongly disagree

Trust in institutions

Trust in institutions is an important measure to address the slippery slope argument. This states that individuals who belong to more vulnerable groups and that live in countries with low responsive healthcare systems have more fear that euthanasia will be abused. Presuming that there is a positive correlation between trust (subjective perception) and responsiveness (objective measure) of the health care system, we can put forward the hypothesis that those with higher levels of social and institutional trust in institutions, in general, and healthcare system, in particular, have less fear of institutional abuse and malpractice. Accordingly, those who believe in the system’s responsiveness also tend to have a more positive attitude towards, for instance, euthanasia.

The ESS core has a battery for measuring trust in institutions. We propose to add two items from the EVS that are a relevant complement considering the nature of the Dependent Variable (the new variables are adapted to the ESS scale).

Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?

EVS_v126 - Health care system (EVS variable since 1999)

EVS_v131 - Government (EVS variable since 2008)

Scale: 0-no trust at all important to 10 complete trust
Source: ESS

Human Values; Trust in Institutions; Interpersonal trust; religious denomination and attendance; level of religiosity; religious socialisation; moral permissiveness (homosexuals); control variables (sex; gender; level of education; political orientation; well-being).

Dissemination plans:

We expect EVS-MORALBOUNDS-Cronos2 findings to be disseminated throughout all current active EVS and ESS channels, website and social media. In addition, informative videos will be posted through YouTube channels hosted by some EVS member teams. It will have a strong appeal for practitioners outside of the academic sector as European countries are increasingly trying to regulate aspects of assisted dying and assisted reproduction. This includes (a) macro level agents who may want to develop national guidelines or regulations, (b) meso-level agents who want to develop policy at the level of health care institutions, and (c) civil society organizations, such as churches and NGOs. We thus expect the EVS-MORALBOUNDS-Cronos2 module to be relevant and timely to a range of academic audiences and practitioners from very diverse domains: sociology, public health, political science, psychology, gender studies, geriatrics and gerontology, medical ethics, and paediatrics.

From the research team and other EVS researchers we plan on:

- Three Europe-wide comparative papers based on Cronos2 data covering life-and-death issues as a dependent variable, attitudes towards assisted dying and attitudes towards assisted reproduction respectively
- One paper focussing on basic human values shaping attitudes towards assisted dying in Europe from a moral autonomy perspective.
- One paper testing the moral autonomy approach for attitudes towards assisted reproduction and abortion.
- EVS book (Brill series)
- Papers from EVS members on the effect of different value domains on justification attitudes
- Papers from EVS members on evolution on attitudes towards beginning and end of life (EVS-Cronos)
References:


Dr. Edurne Bartolomé Peral. University of Deusto, Fac. Social and Human Sciences AV Universidades 24; Edurne.bartolome@deusto.es

Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations and Humanities, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain.


01/01/2002 – 30/10/2002 Research Fellow Spanish Center for Sociological Research (CIS)
01/09/2007 –31/08/2010 Post-Doctoral Researcher. Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology-University of Deusto

EDUCATION:
1998: Degree in Sociology, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain
2001: Degree in Political Science, University of the Basque Country, Bilbao
2002: Fellowship “Young Researchers in Social Science” in the NATIONAL CENTER FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH (CIS)
2008: PhD in Political Science. University of Deusto

Research Projects

Principal investigator. Research project funded by the Ministry of Science and innovation (Spain). “Fronteras de la vida: Cambio social and cambio de valores en torno al principio y a fin de la vida (Frontvida):2020-2003. Contract number: PID2019-106882RB-I00

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


Coromina, L., Bartolomé Peral, E. (2020): “Comparing Alignment and Multiple Group CFA for Analysing political Trust in Europe During the Crisis”. In Methodology european journal of research methods for the behavioral and social sciences. Vol. 16(1), 21–40


Dr. Alice Ramos  PhD in Sociology, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon (ICS-ULisboa).

Current position
Research Fellow, ICS-ULisboa.

Present professional activities
- National Coordinator of the European Social Survey-ERIC
- Project Director, Vice-chair of the Methodological Group, member of the Executive Group and the Steering Committee of the European Values Study
- Principal Investigator of CLAVE – The development of values on children and early adolescents (PTDC/SOC-SOC/30635/2017)
- Coordinator of the line of Data Production of the infrastructure PASSDA (Production and Archive of Social Science Data)

Research Interests

1) Prejudice and discrimination; the impact of values on discriminatory attitudes; the development of values and prejudiced attitudes during childhood and adolescence; attitudes towards immigrants and immigration.

2) Methodology of cross-national studies: survey techniques; questionnaire design and testing; statistical techniques of comparative and longitudinal data analysis

Relevant publications
Dr. Pascal Siegers, GESIS Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften
Unter Sachsenhausen 6-8 50667 Köln, Office: 0221 47694 419, pascal.siegers@gesis.org

12/2020-07/2021 Acting head of the Data Archive for the Social Sciences at GESIS – Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences

10/2014-today Head of National Surveys and Research Data Center German General Social Survey at GESIS – Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences

LATEST DEGREES

10/2008-07/2011 Doctorate in Social Sciences at University of Cologne

09/2005-09/2005 French German Diploma in Social Sciences from Institut d’Études Politiques de (SciencesPo) Bordeaux an University of Stuttgart

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


Friedrich, Tanja, and Pascal Siegers. 2016. "The Ofness and Aboutness of Survey Data: Improved Indexing of Social Science Questionnaires." In Analysis of Large and Complex
Data, edited by A. Wilhelm, and H. Kestler, Studies in Classification, Data Analysis, and Knowledge Organization, 629-638. Springer. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-25226-1_54.


Gergely Rosta  Associate Professor of Sociology, Pázmány Péter Catholic University  
Institute of Sociology  
Mikszáth K. tér 1.  
H-1088 Budapest  
Hungary

Phone: +36 70 344 1646
Email: rosta.gergely.laszlo@gmail.com  
rosta.gergely@btk.ppke.hu

Education:
Phd in Sociology  
Corvinus University of Budapest  
Thesis: Religiosity, Political Attitudes and Secularization in Western Europe in 1981-1999  
2005

Master of Economy  
University of Economics of Budapest  
Thesis: Measuring Religiosity in the Light of the Dimensions  
1996

Scientific employment history:
Associate professor  
Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Institute of Sociology  
since 2008

Visiting professor  
University of Münster, Institute of Sociology  
2018-2019

Research associate  
University of Münster, Cluster of Excellence „Religion and Politics”  
2009-2017

Selected funded research:
„The transmission of religion across generations: a comparative international study of continuities and discontinuities in family socialization”. International research project funded by the John Templeton Foundation. Hungarian Principal Investigator  
2019-2022

European Values Study 2017 in Hungary. Research project funded by the Hungarian National Bank. Principal Investigator  
2017-2018

„Religious Change in Hungary” Research project funded by the National Office for Research, Development and Innovation. Principal Investigator  
2016-2020
Selected publications:

- Inglehart, Ronald; Miller, Jon; Dennis, Michael; Jwo, Stephanie; Rosta, Gergely (2021): Religion’s Sudden Decline, Revisited. https://cps.isr.umich.edu/news/religions-sudden-decline-revisited/
- Voicu, Bogdan; Bartolome Peral, Edurne; Rusu, Horatiu; Rosta, Gergely; Comșa, Mircea; Vasile, Octavian-Marian; Coromina, Lluis; Tufis, Claudiu (2020): COVID-19 and orientations towards solidarity: the cases of Spain, Hungary, and Romania. European Societies 23:sup1, 887-904.
- Pollack, Detlef; Rosta, Gergely (2015): Religion in der Moderne: Ein internationaler Vergleich. New York / Frankfurt am Main, Németország: Campus Verlag
Natalia Soboleva  Senior Research Fellow. Ronald F. Inglehart Laboratory for Comparative Social Research HSE University

Senior Lecturer. Graduate School of Business HSE University, Myasnitskaya 20, Moscow, Russia 101000. Mobile: +7 916 5402435. E-mail: natsobol@gmail.com, nsoboleva@hse.ru.

Education

2013  PhD (Candidate of Sciences) in Economic Sociology and Demography
2008  MA in “Applied Methods of Sociological Analysis of Markets”, Department of Sociology, HSE University
2006  BA in economic sociology, Department of Sociology, HSE University

Academic employment history

2014 - 2019  Research fellow, Laboratory for comparative social research, HSE University
2020 - present  Senior research fellow, R.F. Inglehart Laboratory for Comparative Social Research, HSE University
2016 - present  Senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Business Higher School of Economics

Research interests: gender role attitudes, work values, life and job satisfaction, labor market, subjective well-being, comparative research

Academic activities

European Values Study – Program director for Russia (since 2016), Theory Group (since 2020), Standing Group (since 2020)

European Values Study - Brill Series – member of Editorial Board (since 2019)

Funded research:


Selected publications

   https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-019-00152-4


