

Spring 2021 Newsletter

Dear alumni and friends,

Greetings from the [Department of Political Science](#) in the College of Arts and Sciences. I hope you and your family have continued to stay safe and well. As the vaccine rollout continues, it is finally time to plan and think ahead. We are looking forward to the resumption of in-person classes at Stony Brook University in the fall. Teaching remotely has gotten us through the pandemic, but I think faculty and students are looking forward to a zoom-free semester!

The political world does not stop, not even for a pandemic. Faculty in the Department of Political Science have continued to keep up with ongoing events through their research on politics in the US and elsewhere. I wanted to share some of these findings with you, including some interesting research evidence on the ways in which Americans' reactions to the pandemic have become entangled with politics.

I hope you enjoy reading about the work of our highly productive faculty.

Be safe and well,

Leonie Huddy, PhD

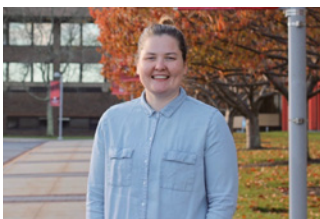
Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science



How the Rise of Right-Wing Political Parties Undermines Support for the EU

"Nationalism, Patriotism, and Support for the European Union"

By Leonie Huddy, Alessandro Del Ponte (PhD '19), and Caitlin Davies ('20)



At a time when nationalism seems ascendant internationally, Department Chair Leonie Huddy and PhD alumnus Alessandro Del Ponte ('19) and Caitlin Davies ('20) ask whether nationalism is helping to undermine the European Union (EU).

To answer this question, the authors differentiate two distinct forms of national allegiance: nationalism, defined as a chauvinistic preference for one's country over others, and patriotism, defined as positive love for one's country. Huddy and colleagues examine the distinct effects of patriotism and nationalism on support for the EU and find that EU support is boosted by patriotism but undermined by nationalism.

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In their research, the existence of a right-wing nationalist party, such as the National Rally in France or the Swedish Democrats in Sweden, increases nationalistic opposition to the EU. Right-wing nationalistic political parties gain support from citizens with strong nationalist tendencies by vehemently opposing immigration and denouncing free trade agreements. They then translate nationalism into EU opposition, eroding support for the EU among their nationalistic supporters. The success of right-wing parties in turning strong nationalists against the EU is shown in Figure 1. Nationalists strongly oppose the EU in countries with a right-wing nationalist party but are far less opposed to the EU in countries without such a political party.

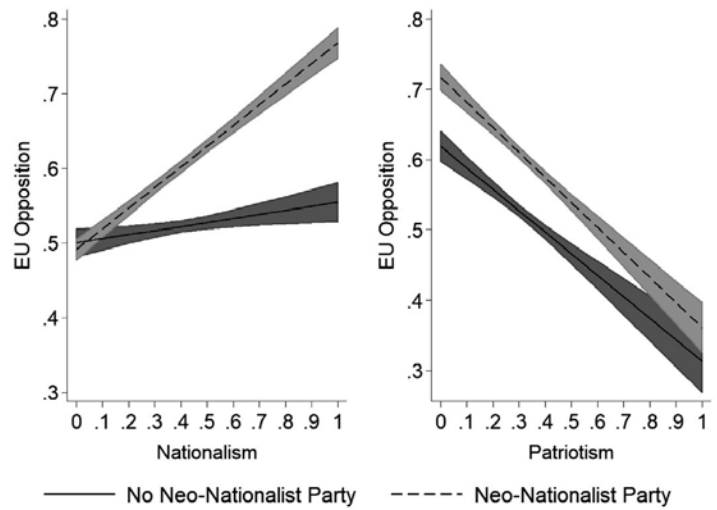
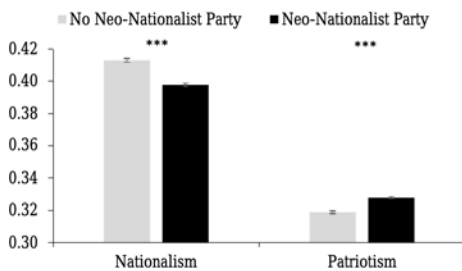


Figure 1. Opposition to the EU among those low and high in nationalism and patriotism. The effects of nationalism and patriotism among those living in a country with a nationalist, right-wing party are represented by the dotted line. Their effects among those in countries without a right-wing party are shown by the continuous line.



Note. Nationalism is higher and patriotism is lower in country-years without a neo-nationalist party. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, and *** = $p < .001$.

One of the main takeaway points from this research is that political rhetoric matters! In the authors' analyses, the positive effects of patriotism on EU support are larger than the negative effects of nationalism. This helps to explain the resilience of pro-Europe political parties in recent national elections. It remains to be seen, however, whether pro-Europe sentiment will prevail over the decade's rising nationalistic tide. In the end, the future of the EU may depend on the actions and rhetoric of mainstream political parties: any erosion of pro-EU norms or adoption of anti-immigration nationalistic rhetoric is likely to tilt the scales against the EU and in nationalism's favor.

If you'd like to read more on this article click [here](#).



How Authoritarianism and Education Lead to Support for Right-Wing Populism

"Authoritarianism, Education and Support for Right-Wing Populism"

By Stanley Feldman



During a time when former President Donald Trump spoke frequently of a liberal “fake news” media, the Brexit movement in the UK led to the country leaving the European Union, and democratic norms are under threat in many countries it is important to try to understand

where support for right-wing populism comes from. Professor Feldman seeks to find that out in his latest research looking at the relationship between authoritarianism and right-wing populism and the effect that education has on those who have higher or lower levels of authoritarianism.

His research concludes that support for right-wing populism comes, to a significant degree, from people who hold authoritarian values. Additionally, he finds that those in the US who hold authoritarian values are extremely anti-immigration and believe immigrants and foreigners are a threat to America’s culture. If immigrants do come to the country, they want them to adhere to traditional American norms and customs. Authoritarianism becomes a significant factor in a nation’s politics when people think that social norms are under threat or that social cohesion is weakening. This is exactly what is happening in many countries as a result of social change and increases in immigration.

Professor Feldman shows that authoritarianism is strongly associated with support for anti-democratic statements such as “Having a strong

leader in government is good for the United States even if the leader bends the rules to get things done” and “What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil and take us back to our true path.” These are exactly the sentiments that make right-wing populism attractive to many people, allowing political leaders to undermine democracy.

Education does have modest effects on the relationship between authoritarianism and right-wing populism. On the one hand, people with higher levels of education are less likely to hold authoritarian values. Among those who are high in authoritarianism however, those with greater education are just as likely to exhibit support for right-wing populism as are people with much less education. It is only among people low in authoritarianism that education is linked to less support for right-wing populism.

If you’d like to read more you can find Professor Feldman’s chapter in the first edition of *The Psychology of Populism: The Tribal Challenge to Liberal Democracy* [here](#).



How COVID-19 played a part on American Polarization and its role in citizen's public opinion

"Affective Polarization, Local Contexts and Public Opinion in America"

By Yanna Krupnikov & John Barry Ryan, Co-Authored with James N. Druckman, Samara Klar, and Matthew Levendusky

Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, many lives were forced to change when the world stopped. However late last year, Professor Yanna Krupnikov and Associate Professor John Barry Ryan, along with co-authors, were able to see how Americans' partisan feelings shaped their opinions about the pandemic.

They focus on polarization between American political parties and the growing distrust many citizens have towards the opposing party. Among those who were very hostile to the opposing party, they found large partisan differences; Republicans who were hostile to the opposing party, for example, were less concerned about COVID-19, less likely to change their behavior, and less likely to support policies to stop the spread of the virus. However, among the bulk of the public – who are less hostile to the opposing party or are indifferent towards the opposing party – the partisan gaps were much smaller. Within this group, Republicans and Democrats reacted to COVID in similar ways. The researchers also noticed that the partisan differences largely disappeared even among the highly polarized in areas where there were a lot of COVID cases -- suggesting partisan responses to events are most likely when there are no actual consequences to be faced.

How were the researchers able to reach these findings? In 2019, before COVID had taken place, they had conducted a survey measuring people's feelings towards the opposing party for a different project. When COVID struck, they conducted another survey contacting these same individuals. These pre-COVID measures of respondents' feelings towards the parties allow them to show it is the attitudes towards the parties that affects their opinions about the

pandemic and not the other way around. If you'd like to know more on what methods were used and the conclusions found click [here](#).

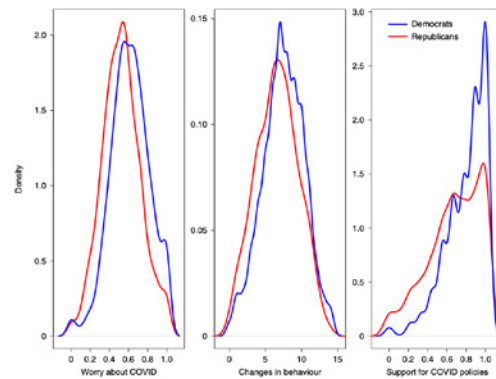


Fig. 1 | COVID-19 attitudes and behaviours, by party. Kernel density plots for the three dependent variables. For worry about COVID-19, Republican n=733 and Democratic n=1,387; for changes in behaviour, Republican n=735 and Democratic n=1,389; for support for COVID-19 policies, Republican n=734 and Democratic n=1,388.



Alumni Spotlight – Taking Policy to the Global Stage

Diana Acosta ('07) – MAPP



Diana Acosta is an MA in Public Policy (MAPP) alum, currently the Director for Public Health Partnerships for Merck & Co. She is the former Deputy Division Chief of the Empowerment and Inclusion Division at the U.S. Agency for

International Development (USAID). At USAID Acosta advocated for marginalized communities across the world and ensured that their human rights were protected and promoted. Acosta now works with global health organizations and partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Africa CDC on vaccine distribution policies to ensure that lower- and middle-income countries and vulnerable communities have access to vaccines across the world.

Why did you decide to leave USAID to work at Merck Pharmaceuticals?

I was in the Foreign Service for a little under 10 years. I was working across public policies in all of my previous jobs. We ensured that multilateral partners and governments were in conversations that ensured human rights and access to social services for often vulnerable populations. A lot of times the private sector was not in those conversations, and sometimes were consulted as an afterthought in the project creation space. In order for us to get a global development strategy that works, and is sustainable, we have to bring in the private sector from the beginning as their expertise and contributions are sorely needed to eradicate poverty and advanced global health. So that's why I decided at the time to look for an opportunity that would allow me to be in that space, and that's why I joined Merck.

What MAPP courses or skills aided you in your current and/or former positions?

It gave me a great foundation. I remember in the MAPP program we had a discussion in one of my classes about using taxes and creating revenue to finance the services that the government provided for its constituents. A couple of years ago I was in Afghanistan and that's exactly what I did. I helped the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance create a sugar tax - just like New York City did when I was working at the mayor's office level- to then in turn pay for health services for Afghani citizens. The skills you learn from your Stony Brook MAPP education allows you to be more successful, in a different job or in a different field, because you have a good foundation in how public policy works.

What made you continue your education to get a master's degree?

I had fallen in love with public health and wanted to pursue a career that helped shape policies for better health outcomes. I felt that the MAPP program was perfect, because it gave me exactly the foundation and flexibility that I needed, that I then used when I moved to a federal government job. I understood the basics of laws and creating policies, all of that was so vital in my success throughout my career. I tailored the MAPP program as my own. I wanted to ensure that although I was getting my Masters in Public Policy, my capstone project and my internships would be very much focused on public health policy, and specifically New York City health disparities. I think that was the amazing part of the MAPP program; you can tailor it to ensure that it fits not only your interest, but also where you want to take your career, and that's exactly what I did and I have to say that it was the perfect program for me.

Why do you think those who are interested in MAPP should enroll in the program?

There is public policy in everything. I can't even understate that. Things that might seem simple to someone is really a complicated process that involves various actors. I'm a New York City girl, I'm from the Bronx. I remember when I moved back to the Bronx I was riled up about suffering once more with the alternate side street parking.

We're curious: where does a policy such as moving cars from one side of the street to the other come from?

Although it doesn't seem like it at first, there is a public health need for this policy. If they don't clean the streets, trash will overflow in New York City which would then lead to increase in mice. If there are more mice in the streets, that creates a public health risk. Everything I learned about public policy in the MAPP program was highlighted in this example. Something that to me seemed so small, like alternate side street parking, ended up being this complex system of public health and safety that New York City had implemented years ago, which started as a traffic flow issue, that today is still in place and beneficial, although understandably quite frustrating. The MAPP degree allows you to really understand history, data, stakeholders and processes for decision making, and how to change them. Ultimately, I feel that MAPP students and graduates are change makers. We understand the system and we know how to change it from the inside out. So, if you want to be a changemaker, I'd say to go through with the program.

What opportunities did MAPP provide to get you where you are today?

At the time I got an internship at the public advocate's office in New York City, I wanted to marry my love for public health with public policy. I was working on background research on access to Plan B- also known as the morning after pill- for adolescents with proper ID. That research allowed for better understanding of the need, the access to care, and concerns around availability and usage. I wanted to ensure that reproductive health access was available for those who needed

it the most. It led me to do something within the field that I love, within a subject matter that was super important to me, and it gave me the experience that I needed to finish the MAPP program and catapult my career into Global Health. Once I left the public advocate's office, I did a graduate fellowship program working for the Pan American Health Organization, which is the Latin American arm of the World Health Organization, and getting access to reproductive health for young women was part of my portfolio. That internship program really opened my eyes to the topics I loved and was passionate about, that became my springboard for my future career choices.

What advice would you give to those who just started the MAPP program?

Make it your own. Whether it's something that you heard about formally through a course or a topic that you want to learn more about, reach out to your professors, mentors and alumni as you navigate your career aspirations. It might mean a little extra research on a topic that sparked something in your heart, and that spark might end up becoming your future career move. That spark may help find a job that you ultimately love.



Alumnus Jason ("Jay") Rose '09 Recipient of the Chancellor's Award

Jason Rose is a political science lecturer who has taught at Stony Brook University for the past 10 years. He is the recipient of the 2020-2021 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching.

What aspects of your teaching do you think led you to receive this award?

Getting students to think deeply about what they believe, what they think they believe in, and getting them to revisit time and again what those beliefs are and to make them more powerful. I try to help students get closer to the truth of things and I think they appreciate that I make them think about the good arguments on all sides. I constantly have students come into my office hours telling me that they never thought about an issue that way.

Is there anyone or any one thing that inspires you to wake up every morning and teach, if so who or what is that?

It's really because I was a Stony Brook alum, I can't emphasize that enough. Frank Myers, Charles Taber (former SBU political science professor), and Helmut Norpoth taught me so much.

My first political science class was with Frank Myers, and he would argue the opposite point of view of his own political affiliation. While Helmut spoke about the importance of data, and would always say "data, not dogma is what should be driving any of your analysis." What that meant was that if you fancy yourself a political conservative or liberal, it should not be driving your analysis, data should. These ideas were instilled in me as an undergraduate. I was so grateful to have my mind blown by my instructors and that's my same desire for my students to have their minds completely blown also. Now I make arguments in class for policies and points of view that I don't necessarily

agree with, but I want those arguments to be understood by students who oppose them.

Looking into the future what are the next steps for you, what else would you like to accomplish within or outside of your teaching career?

I can't ever have a life where I am not teaching, I don't think I'll ever even retire. I will teach until the day I die, that's how much I love it. It is the most rewarding and fulfilling thing I get to do. When students feel that I've influenced them in a positive way, there is nothing more rewarding than that.



We are very proud of our distinguished faculty and the successes of our undergraduate, Master's, and PhD students. I do not need to tell you, however, that we face tough times ahead. The coming year will be a challenge on many fronts. The Department of Political Science depends on our alumni and friends to offer scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students, recruit excellent students, as well as maintain faculty and graduate student attendance at national and international research conferences. We are especially concerned about providing financial support to undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom will face new obstacles as they pursue their education in the coming years. I hope you'll consider investing in our students and faculty by making a [gift](#) today or speaking with Christopher Scarpati, Director of Development, at (631) 632-1202 or Christopher.Scarpati@stonybrook.edu.

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