



Exploring the role of Adaptive Capacity on Democratic Performance

Government and Nonprofit Organizations in the Pandemic

<https://www.adaptivedemocracy.net/>

About the Project

The transnational research project partnership comprises Principal Investigators from four participating countries. They are:

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The research integrates organizational, sociological, and democratic theories in a unique manner to analyze and report recommendations for practice that improves adaptive capacity, democratic legitimacy, and ultimately stronger public health participation and outcomes for diverse publics across unique societies.

diverse publics across unique societies

Contributions

- Incorporation of democratic participation of marginalized or included-out populations within a model of organizational adaptive capacity
- Integration of both internal and external factors as drivers and constraints of organizations adaptive capacity within a single study

Reducing
inequalities and
vulnerabilities

+

Fostering democratic
governance and
political participation

=

*Democratic
Performance*



Defining Our Terms

Adaptive Capacity

An ability to adjust strategies, resources, structure and culture of an organization to mitigate potential negative performance outcomes or improve performance outcomes.

Democratic Performance

The extent to which organizations individually and collectively reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities and fostering democratic governance and political participation.

Research Questions

What health, social and economic wellbeing inequalities both real and perceived emerged for vulnerable populations during COVID-19 pandemic and why did they emerge? (RQ1)

How did single and collaborative organizational (government, nonprofit) adaptive capacities affect (in)equitable outcomes for vulnerable population? (RQ2)

How did single and collaborative adaptive capacities affect policy compliance and behavior for vulnerable populations? (RQ3)

What digital tools will facilitate a sustained international and domestic collaboration to enhance global and local action to reduce inequities, increase inclusion in decision-making, and strengthen trust and universal policy compliance? (RQ4)

Multiple embedded case study design using qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis tools



Atlanta



Manchester



Montreal



Warsaw

Methodology

RQ1: Emerging Inequalities During COVID-19

- General population survey
 - 1200 nationwide, plus oversample in focal metropolitan area
 - Vendor: Pure Spectrum.
 - Status: Survey now in the field.
- Vulnerable population survey
 - Abbreviated instrument conducted in-person with organizational clients/service recipients
- Survey characteristics
 - Built on a baseline instrument tested in Quebec (2012/2014) and Canada (2017)
 - 600 batteries of questions that address objects of political support across levels of government,
 - Plus, new questions on COVID-era responsiveness, adaptive capacity, and democratic performance

RQ2 and RQ3: Effects of Adaptive Capacity

Organizational leader and staff interviews with 10+ government and nonprofit organizations in each metropolitan area

Question areas:

- Outcome performance
- Process performance
- Democratic performance
- Leadership motivation and behavior
- Organizational culture, learning, innovativeness, and responsiveness
- Collaboration/partnership characteristics, culture, learning, innovativeness, and responsiveness

RQ 2 and RQ3: Areas of Focus

Food
Security

Domestic
Violence

Mental
Health

Substance
Abuse

RQ2 and RQ3: Emerging Themes

- Pandemic provided opportunity for growth and program expansion through new funding availability, but also required creative cash flow management
- Need for change in delivery of goods and services to protect health of clients and employees
- Changing availability of volunteers, required changes in paid staff roles
- High turnover, and need for cross-training staff due to illness-related absences
- New partnerships formed through informal communities of practice networks
- Demonstration of technology poverty for organizational employees and clients

Current and Forthcoming Outputs

1. Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States
 - Panel with papers presented from each country team: “Public Perceptions of the Handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Confidence in Government Authorities, Institutions, and Democracy in the US, UK, Poland, and Canada”
 - Panel: “Civic Society Performance and Networking During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Inductive Evidence from Civil Society Organization Managers in the US, UK, Poland, and Canada”
2. Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Orlando, Florida, United States
 - Paper: “Formal and Informal Adaptive Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector: A Multicase Study of Four Global Cities during the Covid-19 Pandemic”
3. Symposium in *PS: Political Science & Politics* (proposed)
4. Book (in development)

Partnership Assessment

Working Well	Challenges
Communication (e.g. Slack)	Different start dates for grant in each country
Flexible and innovative leveraging of resources to meet in person	Need for budget sharing authority across country teams to achieve comparative research aims
Cross-disciplinary dialogue	Different timelines and procedures for procurement (budget sharing authority can help to allow for single procurement of a vendor)
Team building	Different expectations and requirements for ethics review
Mutual respect	Adapting data collection tools to fit each country context



Questions and Contact

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