

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences - One Health Seminar

Global Public Health: Vaccines and Aid around the World

Date: 5 May 2022 (Thursday)

Time: 3:30 pm – 5:00pm (HKT)

Moderator: Dr Nicholas Thomas, Department of Asian and International Studies, Associate Professor, City University of Hong Kong

Topic	Speaker
Revisiting Collectivism during COVID-19: An East/West Comparison of Vaccination and Compliance Behaviours	Dr. Edmund Cheng, Associate Professor, Department of Public Policy, City University of Hong Kong
Abstract Conventional wisdom holds that personal behaviour in the West is driven by individualism, because personal rights are a core value in the West, whilst the East is more collective-orientated. We challenge this view by arguing that a collective defence mechanism has driven attitudes towards vaccination and protective behaviour in the West during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysing a probability-based Internet survey of six jurisdictions and more than 6,000 valid samples in 2021, we find that the level of collectivism in the West has been higher than in the East during the COVID19 pandemic. We suggest that a collective defence orientation in the West has created a higher probability of vaccine uptake and a greater willingness to persuade others to take the vaccine. Yet, the engagement in personal and social protective behaviours, such as wearing masks, social distancing, and staying at home varies. We discuss the possible mechanisms behind our findings.	
Biography Dr. Edmund CHENG Edmund W. Cheng is an associate professor in the Department of Public Policy at City University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on contentious politics, political communication, risk governance, and research methods. His recent work has appeared in <i>British Journal of Social Psychology</i> , <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> , <i>Journal of Medical Internet Research</i> , <i>Political Communication</i> , <i>Sociological Methodology</i> and <i>The China Quarterly</i> .	
Topic	Speaker
Where's the Money From? Attitudes toward Donor Countries and Aid-Funded Public Health Programs in the Arab World (With Renu Singh)	Dr Scott Williamson, Assistant Professor, Department of Social and Political Sciences, Bocconi University

Abstract

Public health programs in developing countries are often funded by foreign aid. How does the identity of the donor shape domestic support for these programs? Existing research suggests that citizens of aid-recipient countries prefer programs funded by aid over those funded by their own governments, particularly if they view the latter as corrupt and ineffective. However, these studies have been implemented in contexts where major donors tend to be viewed favorably. We extend this literature by analyzing attitudes toward aid-funded health programs in the Arab world, where Western donors are often polarizing and disliked. A survey experiment conducted in Egypt provides some evidence that respondents approve less of public health programs when they are funded by the US or French development agencies instead of the Egyptian government. We find that this effect is driven by distrust of Western donors' motives. Descriptive survey data from the Arab Barometer reinforces the experimental findings by illustrating the importance of anti-Americanism and perceptions of donor motives in heightening opposition to aid. This study contributes to a growing literature on public opinion toward foreign aid in recipient countries and has practical implications for the implementation of aid-funded public health programs in developing countries.

Biography**Dr. Scott Williamson**

Scott Williamson is an assistant professor of social and political sciences at Bocconi University. His research addresses the politics of the Middle East, with a focus on authoritarianism, migration, and public opinion. Scott's work has been published in academic journals including the American Political Science Review, Comparative Political Studies, and the Journal of Peace Research, in addition to outlets such as the Washington Post and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Topic	Speaker
Public Support for Global Vaccine Distribution: Evidence from Germany, Italy, and the United States	Dr Renu Singh, Scholar, O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University

Abstract

A key issue in international politics has been how to equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccines during the pandemic. However, we know relatively little about public opinion on this issue in developed countries with large supplies of vaccines. In this study I run representative surveys in Germany, Italy, and the United States during COVID-19 to analyze where the public stands on this issue and how their opinions may be shifted to be more supportive of equitable vaccine distribution internationally. The results show that the public holds relatively nuanced views, with high levels of support for technology transfers and knowledge sharing but much less for limiting domestic vaccine supplies to send more abroad. A survey experiment also provides some evidence that framing equitable distribution as advantageous for ending the pandemic is more likely to increase support for supplying vaccines abroad than framing it as an issue of fairness. While the equitable distribution of vaccines is necessary to address the spread of COVID-19, global health institutions have struggled to achieve this goal, in large part because of domestic politics

surrounding the issue. As such, this study provides useful insights that may help to address this political challenge.

Biography

Dr. Renu Singh

Renu Singh is a scholar at the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University and an incoming faculty member and research fellow at Bocconi University. Her research focuses on the politics and policy of public health and sustainability. Renu has published or had her work accepted at *BMJ Global Health*, the *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, and *The Conversation*, among others.