

CALL FOR PAPER

Special Issue of Frontiers in Public health **

COVID-19 - Social Science Research during a Pandemic

Editors

Dr. Paul Russell Ward, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

Dr. Paul Bissell, University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, United Kingdom

Dr. Samantha B Meyer, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Canada

Dr. Hailay Abrha Gesesew, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

Dr. Pande Putu Januraga, Department of Public Health and Preventive
Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Udayana University, Denpasar, Indonesia

Dr. Dukjin Chang, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea

Dr. Macarena C Garcia, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),
Atlanta, United States

Dr. Linda Lombi, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, we have witnessed a huge number of epidemiological, clinical and laboratory studies which are helping policy makers to understand how best to manage the current and future clinical and public health responses. In addition to impacting on infection and mortality rates due to COVID-19, government responses to reducing viral spread and 'flattening the curve' have meant huge impacts on social and economic life across the globe. We now need research on the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 to assist policy makers to understand the impact of current interventions and plan future policy to mitigate unintended consequences of pandemic responses. Different governments have responded in different ways (itself requiring research into the relative effectiveness and impacts of different responses), but social disruptions include closing down parts of the economy and increasing unemployment, forcing some people into 'social isolation', restricting freedom of movement, closing schools/universities/workplaces, reducing democratic decision making of governments and generally disrupting the 'social order' of the pre-COVID-19 world.

The goal of this Research Topic is to bring together a broad range of social science perspectives to understand the social, cultural and economic impacts of COVID-19. Some papers may provide empirical evidence on the impacts of particular government policies, others may provide theoretical insights into why certain social change has occurred and others may provide comparative analyses across different countries. We welcome papers from social sciences including, but not limited to, sociology, anthropology, economics, social policy, political science and human geography.

Papers do not need to be standard articles reporting on empirical findings, they can also include theoretical analyses, opinion pieces, comparative policy analyses and media analyses. Whilst certainly not exhaustive, research areas could include:

- **Political economy of health** - How have different governments have dealt with issues of health vs wealth? Measures such as physical distancing, and closing places where crowds congregate have an economic impact through closed business, reduced spending, increased unemployment etc. What are the long-term impacts of different government responses in terms of the pandemic and economic crisis?
- **Risk society (and digital risk society)** - How does a global pandemic lead to a re-shaping of ideas around 'risk society'? Papers may explore the underpinning reasons for panic buying and if/how that was sustained and what impact it has in vulnerable groups unable to stockpile. On a theoretical level, what are the links between risk, catastrophe and panic in relation to COVID-19? What/who are the 'symbols of risk' for passing on COVID-19 and do they feed into judgement, blame and stigma? Does the idea of physical distancing cement notions of other humans as carriers of risk, and thus in need of distancing in the future? Does the communicable nature of viruses and the focus on physical distancing lead to fear/loathing of the 'other'?

- **Democracy** - Since different governments have introduced different types of controls and emergency measures to try to flatten the curve of the pandemic, what are the social, political and ethical impacts of such measures on freedom and democracy?
- **Individualism** - Papers could include the current and future impact of physical distancing and social isolation on social bonds, trust and solidarity - the ways in which the current and future restrictions impact social interactions. Will the post-COVID-19 world be more individualistic as a result of the fear of the 'other'? Is this a temporary way of 'othering' based on panic and perceived heightened threats? Do we 'other' everyone apart from those we live with?
- **Trust** - Papers could explore questions about the impact of COVID-19 on public trust in institutions/individuals such as science/scientists, governments/politicians, media/journalists, and indeed on other humans (friends, neighbours, work colleagues and strangers in the street). Has COVID-19 changed public perceptions in 'developed countries' of problems that may previously have been thought about as 'developing country problems' - also links to racism and xenophobia?
- **Uncertainty and fear** - How do different social groups respond to the liquid fear, panic and uncertainty brought during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Keywords: COVID-19, Public Health, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Science, coronavirus

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Manuscript Deadline : 27th October 2020

How to apply: <https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/14039/covid-19---social-science-research-during-a-pandemic>