

Zachary Esses Johnson, J.D., M.P.P., M.Sc.

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Professional Summary

Comparative political economist, methodologist and doctoral researcher focused on tax policy and politics in Europe and North America. I am particularly interested in how property taxes shape political behavior, housing, and labor markets.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy (ABD), Political Science University of Virginia <i>Concentration: Political Economy & Quantitative Methods</i>	2023–2028 (expected)
Master of Public Policy University of Southern California <i>Sol Price School of Public Policy</i>	2021–2023
Master of Science, Behavioural Science London School of Economics and Political Science	2020–2021
Juris Doctor University of British Columbia <i>Called to the Bar of British Columbia (2018)</i>	2014–2017
Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, Political Science University of Manitoba	2011–2014

Research Experience

Co-Creator and Lead Quantitative Methodologist Karsh Institute for Democracy, University of Virginia <i>Democracy and Capitalism Index Project</i>	2024–Present
- Co-created and served as lead quantitative methodologist for a publicly and privately funded, 170+ country Global Capitalism Index, overseeing design, construction, validation, and public launch. - Designed the full measurement framework quantifying institutional quality across economic freedom, property rights, rule of law, regulatory quality, and market efficiency. - Selected coverage for the Global Capitalism includes: American Association for the Advancement of Science (USA); WealthBriefing (United Kingdom); Bild der Wissenschaft (Germany); La Libre (Belgium); FuW (Switzerland); Revue Economique de France (France); Africanews (Republic of Congo)	
Research Assistant , University of Virginia	2023–Present
Research Assistant , University of Southern California	2021–2023

Dissertation Working Papers

Research program: Property Tax, Housing, and Migration

Property Tax Changes and Residential Migration: Political and Economic Repercussions in the United States. Zach Esses Johnson.

Priced Out: How Council Tax Reform Mobilized England's Local Electorate. Zach Esses Johnson.

Voice of the People: Why Property Tax Abolishment in Sweden Maintained the Mobility Status Quo. Zach Esses Johnson

Papers Under Review

The Misattribution of Exit: Why Migration to Red States is not Partisan Sorting. David

Leblang, Zach Esses Johnson.

Sequential Confirmatory Factor Analysis: A Novel Approach to Latent Variable Measurement

Novel statistical method for index construction and measurement validation applicable to country risk and institutional scoring. [Paper]

Completed Research

Roberts, Thomas Villalobos, **Zachary Esses Johnson**, Scott C. Miller, Hannah Knox Tucker, Michael J. Lenox, Sidney M. Milkis, Katharine Shadlock. 2026. "The Global Capitalism Index: A Multidimensional Index for Measuring Market Systems," Democracy and Capitalism Lab, Karsh Institute of Democracy and Institute for Business and Society, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia.

Data, Software & Methodological Contributions

Roberts, Thomas Villalobos, **Zachary Esses Johnson**, Scott C. Miller, Hannah Knox Tucker, Michael J. Lenox, Sidney M. Milkis, Katharine Shadlock, Meghana Annamaneni, Eliza Bentley, Grace Higgins, Arya Kumar, Sebastian Nabatoff. 2026. "Global Capitalism Index [Country-Year] Dataset 2025," Democracy and Capitalism Lab, Karsh Institute of Democracy and Institute for Business and Society, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia.

scfa: Two-stage estimator for hierarchical Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Available as both an R package and a Python package.

MPCA: Measurement-error-corrected composite PCA indices with uncertainty propagation. Available as both an R package and a Python package.

countyplus/county-py: R and Python packages for importing U.S. county-level data (2003–2019) covering all 50 states and 78 economic and demographic variables. Original raw data collected by Ding and Zhao (2024).

Conference & Workshop Presentations

International Conference on Real Estate Development & Management (Accepted) <i>Ankara, Türkiye</i>	2027
Swedish Political Science Association <i>Västerås, Sweden</i>	2026
International Political Economy Society <i>New Haven, Connecticut</i>	2026
KTH Royal Institute of Technology: Workshop on Rent Control and Housing Policy <i>Stockholm, Sweden</i>	2026
International Schumpeter Society <i>Strasbourg, France</i>	2026
Midwest Political Science Association <i>Chicago, Illinois</i>	2025, 2026
UVA Computational Research Exhibition <i>Charlottesville, Virginia</i>	2026
Southern Political Science Association <i>San Juan, Puerto Rico</i>	2025
AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting <i>Washington, District of Columbia</i>	2022 (two papers)

Teaching Experience

Co-Instructor, Regression Analysis/R Computing , University of Virginia	2025–Present
Teaching Assistant , University of Virginia <i>Introduction to Comparative Politics; Introduction to International Relations, Politics of India and Pakistan</i>	2024–Present

Teaching Assistant, University of Southern California
Public Financial Management and Budgeting, International Politics

2021–2023

Awards & Fellowships

Institute for Humane Studies Fellowship	2026
Award Winner, UVA Research Computing Poster Exhibition	2026
GSASC Research Grant Award , University of Virginia	2026
Travel Grants , University of Virginia	2024–2026
Bob Biller Award for Best Capstone Project , University of Southern California Finalist	2023
Sol Price School of Public Policy Scholarship , University of Southern California	2021
Research Award , University of Manitoba	2015

Academic Service

Discussant , Swedish Political Science Association	2026
Discussant , Midwest Political Science Association	2026
Doctoral Student Mentor , University of Virginia	2024–2026
Editorial Assistant , <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>	2023–2025

Professional Experience

Associate Lawyer , Legacy Tax + Trust Lawyers	2018–2019
Articling Student , DLA Piper LLP	2017–2018

Affiliations

Housing and Urban Finance Lab , McIntire School of Commerce	2025–Present
Karsh Institute for Democracy , University of Virginia	2025–Present
Democracy and Capitalism Lab , University of Virginia	2024–Present
Miller Center for Public Affairs , University of Virginia	2024–2025

Languages

English (Native); Swedish (A2); German (A2); French (A2)