

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

Puerto Ricans and COVID-19

Working Group Description:

This Working Group uses an interdisciplinary perspective in understanding the impact of social determinants of health on COVID-19 related outcomes among Puerto Ricans on the archipelago and the continental U.S., and the effects of multiple compounding disasters. The compounding disasters, the residents of the archipelago of Puerto Rico have and are experiencing include the economic debt crisis, Hurricanes Irma and Maria, recent earthquakes, and the COVID-19 global pandemic. Moreover, Puerto Ricans of the diaspora are also affected by collective, historical, and social trauma of these disaster events.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Inequality and Social Determinants of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What aspects of the <u>social environment</u> (e.g., discrimination, poverty, public education) the <u>physical environment</u> (e.g., place of residence, housing conditions, power sources, and built environment), and <u>health services</u> (e.g., access to quality of care) are linked to testing and positive cases of COVID-19 in Puerto Rico?
2. Risk and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the risk and resilience factors that influence the mental and behavioral health and well-being of Puerto Ricans during the pandemic? What are the dynamic changes in Puerto Ricans' experiences, perspectives, coping strategies, mental health, and well-being throughout the pandemic?

<p>3. The Impact of Multiple Compounding Disasters: Recent and Historical</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the pandemic exacerbating the economic and debt crisis in Puerto Rico? • How is systemic racism and classism, and their corresponding intersections, exacerbating inequities throughout the pandemic? • How have the recent hurricanes, earthquakes, and COVID-19 (the dire trio) affected Puerto Rico’s residents mental health and well-being?
<p>4. Health Care and Health Care Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current availability and access to testing for COVID-19 in Puerto Rico, especially for historically marginalized communities (e.g., rural , older adults, LGBTQI)? • What public health measures (e.g., health literacy and dissemination efforts) have been implemented to reduce and prevent spread of COVID-19 in Puerto Rico? • How have health care workforce shortages (e.g., physicians, nurses, home health aides) affected the needs of historically marginalized populations (e.g., older adults, disabled, HIV+, children) in Puerto Rico? • What role have community-based approaches (e.g., community-based organizations, brigades, mutual aid) played in building community capacity for COVID-19 resources (e.g., testing, treatment, and information) in Puerto Rico?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

(1) When conducting research on the Puerto Rican population, it is crucial for researchers to reflect on their positionality (i.e., the positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study and the identities of the respondents) with respect to knowledge production and the benefits that the researcher receives as a result of doing this work; (2) We consider it unethical for researchers to conduct research on marginalized populations while taking no concrete actions to eliminate the disparities present in the population; (3) For researchers in the continental U.S. that desire to employ a study of the Puerto Rican population, we strongly suggest that they first identify research efforts already being done on the archipelago; and partner with organizations and researchers in Puerto Rico who are often less likely to receive federal funding for research programs; (4) A guiding conceptual and theoretical framework should consider more fully the role of colonization and structural racism over the island’s history and an individual’s life-course; the increased potential harm that occurs when Puerto Ricans encounter multiple disasters (human and natural); and recognize multiple and compounding forms of social disadvantage (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, and social class).

Other Frameworks, Considerations for Collaboration, and/or Resources:

Critical Race Theory (CRT)/LatCrit Theory

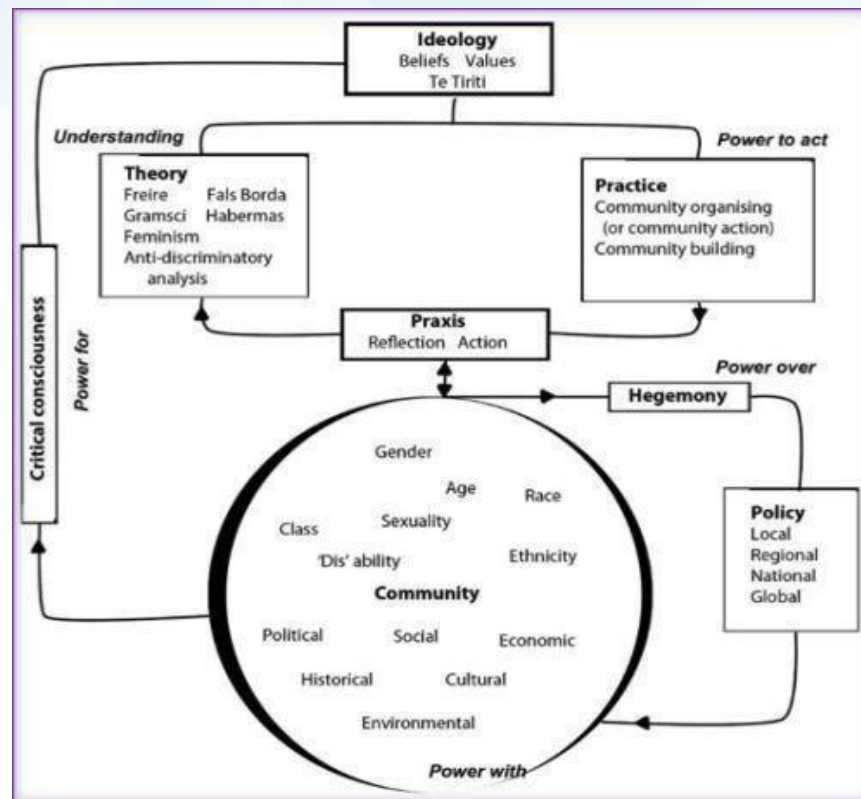
CRT is a framework that centers race, racism, and seeks to challenge racial inequality and White supremacy. Based in critical legal scholarship, the five tenets of CRT are: (1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; (2) a commitment to social justice; (3) the challenge to dominant ideology; (4) centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

LatCrit Theory

LatCrit explores “how Critical Race Theory might be expanded beyond the limitations of the Black/White paradigm to incorporate a richer, more contextualized analysis of the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of white supremacy, particularly as it impacts Latinas/os in their individual and collective struggles for self-understanding and social justice” (Iglesias, 2001, p.178).

Ledwith Model of Critical Praxis: The Model of Critical Praxis is a “[r]adical practice [that] has a transformative agenda [with] an intention to bring about social change that is based on a fair, just and

sustainable world. In this respect, it locates the roots of inequality in the structures and processes of society, not in personal or community pathology” (Ledwith 2011, p.14).



Contributors:

Catherine García (Working Group Lead), PhD, Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tatiana E. Bustos, Community Psychology, Michigan State University

Heather R. Farmer, PhD, Department of Population Health Sciences, Duke University

Marc A. Garcia, PhD, Department of Sociology and Institute for Ethnic Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Adriana Garriga-López, PhD, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Kalamazoo College

Anna Hayward, PhD, School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University

Olga F. Jarrín, PhD, RN, School of Nursing, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Matthew Manierre, PhD, Department of Sociology, Clarkson University

Gabriella Meltzer, School of Global Public Health, New York University

Diana Montoya-Williams, MD, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Fernando Rivera, PhD, Department of Sociology, University of Central Florida

Carlos Rodriguez-Diaz, PhD, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University

Mellie Torres, PhD, IRADAC, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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