

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:

COVID-19 in Small Tourism Dependent Caribbean Islands

Working Group Description:

This Working Group aims to examine the discourses and imagined futures surrounding economic impacts and political responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in small, tourism-dependent Caribbean islands. With the reliance on tourism and other external sources for economic viability, COVID-19 will have strong and lasting impacts on Caribbean futures. It is important for scholars to study how COVID-19 affects the region and beyond, and to propose possible frameworks for sustainability and resilience as rapid responses to the situation.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. COVID-19 and its Implications for Coloniality and Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How does COVID-19 impact self-determination discourses in the Caribbean? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How does (neo)colonialism facilitate or prevent countries from establishing their policy responses to COVID-19? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How does the Caribbean debt crisis shape the COVID-19 response? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: Given (neo)colonialism's role in shaping climate vulnerability, how does COVID-19 facilitate or disrupt disaster preparedness in tourism dependent Caribbean islands?
2. Directives, Restrictions, and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What policies has each territory and country put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: Are there relationships between the policies implemented and the i) types of governance, ii) demographics, and iii) socio-economic conditions of the countries and territories that implement them?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 3</u>: Who were the COVID-19 pandemic curfews imposed on, and who, if anyone, benefited from them? How did Caribbean leaders communicate with communities about the lockdown and how did communities receive the news and respond?
3. COVID-19 and Tourism in the Caribbean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: In what ways does sovereignty, or a lack thereof, affect how tourism is prioritized in tourism dependent Caribbean countries and territories? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How is the dominant tourism model in the Caribbean being advanced by some and critiqued by others as a result of the pandemic, and to what end? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: What strategies are proponents of change using to shift their communities away from the dominant tourism model? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: Who is deemed essential in tourism-dependent Caribbean economies? How are these frontline workers impacted by COVID-19?
4. COVID-19 and Science Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What are the impacts of virtual teaching and learning in the Caribbean? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How does accessibility to the internet and other digital media affect how students engage with the educational system amidst the pandemic? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How are educators leveraging community-based approaches and new pedagogies in addition to or as a supplement to virtual learning?
5. COVID-19 and its Impact on Caribbean Arts and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How does art help Caribbean communities and their diasporas cope with new and already-existing realities, and how can it help them reimagine different futures? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How has COVID-19 impacted art production and sales? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How are Caribbean artists thematically exploring COVID-19? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: What are the different uses that art has or can have during a pandemic in small Caribbean islands? • <u>Research Question 5</u>: How has COVID-19 impacted carnival and other annually-celebrated festivities across the region?
6. Caribbean Food Security and Agriculture in the Age of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How does race affect access to food and agriculture in Caribbean countries? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How does COVID-19 impact agriculture and food security in the region?
7. COVID-19 and Caribbean Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How can tourism affect public health in small tourism dependent Caribbean countries? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How does COVID-19 exacerbate racial, ethnic, and other health disparities in the region? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How is mental health affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and forced quarantine practices?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 4</u>: How is COVID-19 affecting suicide, depression, and anxiety rates?
8. Gender, Sexuality, and COVID-19 in the Caribbean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What is the gendered impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How are women differentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How are Caribbean LGBTQ+ communities differentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: How has COVID-19 impacted the accessibility of childcare in the Caribbean? • <u>Research Question 5</u>: How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted sexual relations and safer sex practices in Caribbean communities?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

It is crucial that scholars do not participate in extractionary research processes that decenter the value of the peoples, their stories, and living conditions in any given Caribbean Island.

Our ethical and methodological considerations grapple with the implications of coloniality, neoliberalism, and anti-Blackness on the production of knowledge generally and in relation to the pandemic. It is critical to incorporate questions of equity in funding as the existing schemas of difference favor academics with connections to the Global North and other positionalities of privilege. This Working Group emphasizes the intrinsic value in non-conventional Black and Indigenous ways of thinking, knowledge production, and community healing. We also urge scholars to trace the origins of COVID-19's disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, including those in the Caribbean.

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

The Caribbean's colonial past and present should be central to our understanding of the region's vulnerability. We recommend embracing approaches such as World-System Theory and (Post)Colonial Theory, which help explain COVID-19 related phenomena in the Caribbean. We also find it imperative that scholars consider the value that art, the Caribbean diaspora, and locally-established social movements have in fighting the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, racial, economic, and gender analyses should be centered in studies that seek to understand how Caribbean countries and territories formulate and (re)imagine medical, social, political, and economic responses pre- and post-pandemic. Finally, we encourage scholarly examinations of COVID-19 in the Caribbean to be attentive to Critical Disability Theory. Researchers should aim to produce comparative research that highlights issues of accessibility, communication, and governmental and community proactivity during and after the pandemic. Those who wish to study COVID-19 in the region should prioritize mixed methods research with either a transformative or postpositivist worldview. Scholars should also study the power dynamics at play in the humanitarian aid offered by NGOs and other seemingly well-meaning groups.

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