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:

Policy Frameworks and Impacts on the Epidemiology of COVID-19

Working Group Description:

This Working Group is dedicated to describing and comparing social distancing policies used to combat COVID-19 and documenting changes in its epidemiology in a number of countries. It will tease out how these complex policies, alone or in combination, shaped the course of the infection within each jurisdiction. The group aims to produce contextually relevant narratives to further highlight contributing factors for the success or non-success of the policies and provide relevant points of comparison.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Epidemiological effects of social distancing policies.	• Research Question 1: What public physical distancing policies were implemented to combat SARS-CoV-2 and how did they influence the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2? • Research Question 2: Why were these policies developed within each jurisdiction? • Research Question 3: What contextual factors influenced the development and timing of these policies within jurisdictions? • Research Question 4: What contextual factors influenced the effectiveness of these policies?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

We will conduct a comparative analysis of COVID-19 social distancing policies implemented in a variety of countries, their nuances and timing, and other relevant contextual factors that affect infections, deaths, and compliance with policies to inform possible second and third waves of this pandemic and for future pandemic planning. Distancing policies (e.g., school closures, quarantine orders, etc.), relevant demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, prevalence of comorbidities, vulnerable employment), country-level factors

(e.g., type of government, financing model for healthcare), and epidemiological data (e.g., number of cases, number of deaths) will be entered into a common database to allow for comparison across cases and contexts. ***There is no current database that houses all of the relevant factors in order to perform the complex analyses needed to properly inform policy making***. Sources of information will include publicly available governmental and non-governmental websites, news articles, government reports, and peer-reviewed journals, along with key informant interviews. ***Models using real data will be built to analyze and visually represent findings within and across jurisdictions. Narrative case reports will also be developed. Findings will be shared publicly to expedite knowledge translation.***

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This COVID-19 Working Group effort was supported by the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) network and the CONVERGE facility at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder (NSF Award #1841338). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF, SSEER, or CONVERGE.