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:

Hawai'i-Pacific Participatory Feminist, Anti-Racist, and Indigenous-Centered Responses to COVID-19

Working Group Description:

Our Working Group focuses on developing participatory, feminist, anti-racist, and Indigenous-centered strategies to address the interconnected crises related to COVID-19 in the Hawai'i-Pacific Region. The aims of the group are to build participatory processes for bringing the concerns, needs, and knowledge of marginalized groups to the center within COVID-19 response and recovery policies while also supporting longer term organizing work on gender, racial and economic justice, and self-determination. The Working Group aims to connect research, policy, and community organizing. The aim of our CONVERGE research agenda paper has been to assess and draw lessons on participatory, democratic, and direct organizing processes relevant to building feminist, anti-racist, and Indigenous-centered responses to COVID-19.

Decades of Indigenous, anti-racist, feminist, and queer writing and activism have called attention to the violence and power relations immanent to relationships with the state broadly (Morgensen 2011), as well as specifically in relation to public health and pandemic response policies (e.g. Geary 2014; Dworkin 2005). Pandemics as well as responses to them critically chart settler colonial, racist, and eugenicist State policies, as evidenced through white-initiated genocide and unethical medical practices associated with research and vaccines (e.g. Stern 2011). Multiple and intersecting oppressions on the basis of race, sexuality, gender, class, and other differences mean that Black, Indigenous, women, and LGBTQI people of color are disproportionately affected by crises and disasters (Brown, 2019; Dwyer, 2018; Moriatry, 2020; Parkinson, 2018), experiencing increased care burdens, gender-based and sexual violence as well as ongoing structural violence and discrimination across multiple spheres (Crenshaw, 1991; Dwyer, 2018; Parkinson, 2018; Moriatry, 2020; Alemezzadri, 2020).

In the Hawai'i-Pacific context, enduringly present histories help to contextualize the high-rates of COVID-19 being experienced by Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (Kaholokula 2020). Such histories include the killing of Native Hawaiians through introduced disease and dispossession alongside multiple colonial and racializing laws in the name of controlling disease, managing hygiene' and disciplining racialized Native and immigrant populations (e.g. Wong 2020; Herman 2010; Kern 2010).

Amidst awareness of these links between pandemics and State violence, Black, Indigenous and many other liberation movements have also highlighted the agency, resiliency and resourcefulness of Black, Indigenous and communities of color across global South and North using direct social action, mutual aid and other forms of community mobilization in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Jun and Lance 2020; Ghiabi 2020; Mutual Aid Disaster Relief; della Porta 2020). These examples demonstrate the complex and situated relationships between and within different communities to State power, and to health and well-being.

It is within the context of COVID-19 related widening inequalities as well as encouraging expression of mutual aid and organizing that we have turned to look at literatures on dismantling multiple oppressions through participatory methods with a focus on the Hawai'i-Pacific context. However, we expect that other activist-scholars may find the questions and tactics outlined useful in conceptual, ethical, methodological, and empirical issues in their own fields of research and action.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

As we have begun to outline, research on participatory and democratic processes in relation to crises and pandemics necessarily raises questions about the relationships of various groups and citizens to the state, which is often seen as the primary respondent to crises (Van der Walle and Turoff 2007). And yet, as Van der Walle and Turoff (2007) highlight, it is actually the "public" which has always played a primary role in response to crises and debates about state power in times of pandemic are far from settled (Weust 2020; European Journal). In any case, publics and groups may, at some point, be required to navigate relationships with the state in relation to the COVID-19 crisis, raising important questions for organizers and scholars. In our context, for example, organizing for Native Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty has often explicitly focused on moving beyond a state-centric paradigm or obtaining state recognition (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2011) in favor of directly (re)building relationships with land and community toward reparation and liberation.

In the current moment, questions arise as to how and how much to participate in state processes to make visible the impacts on marginalized communities, and with what risks and pitfalls? One risk identified by Baccaro and Papadakis has been that groups involved in closer collaboration with the state hold views that tend to be "systematically closer" to the views of that government than those who remain outside of state processes (2008: 2-3). They find that some of the most impactful organizing has often happened when groups maintain a "credible exit option" from institutional participation and maintain a strong ability mobilize their constituents (2008: 2-3). Many liberation movements have indeed foregone engagement in so-called participatory processes, instead focusing on building communicative power or the ability to reach the wider public with their causes (Baccaro and Papadakis 2008). Thinking through evolving relationships with state power in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic thus raises important questions for scholar-activists who may be concerned about leveraging greater resources for those being marginalized, as ever, in state response and recovery processes but also aware and weary of narrow and potentially entrapping opportunities for change. In our context, questions that arise for us relate to how the militarized, settler state may be consolidating power during this time and what potentials and pitfalls feminist and other groups face in pushing the state to consider the needs of marginalized people. The table below summarizes some different options and tactics in this vein.

At the same time that activist-scholars have queried state-community relations, key questions from literature on participatory processes also specifically questioned how 'community' and the 'public' are defined and deployed. For all the mobilization of the language of community through terms such as 'community engagement' and 'community-led', there is usually less reflection on how these terms are defined and who they include (Wilkinson et al 2017). Indeed, there have multiple critiques of the concept of 'community' from queer, feminist perspectives (Joseph 2002) yet such terms remain pervasive in health work (Wilkinson

et al 2017) and in state responses to the health and economic consequences of COVID-19. Wilkinson et al. (2017), drawing on experiences from the Ebola crisis, have suggested that rather than obscure uncomfortable power relations in the name of 'community,' it is useful to make sociopolitical orders and relationships explicitly visible by identifying the interests of different parties, relationships between them and the influences on them:

> it is not that 'communities' can stop epidemics and build trust; it is that understanding social dynamics is essential to designing robust interventions and should be a priority in public health and emergency planning. A critical step is to begin with a more realistic account of local social relationships (Wilkinson et al 2017).

Such a realistic account, we suggest, would also include making visible elite power and elite communities privileged by the settler state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as it would help visibilize groups being marginalized. Finally, while we are aware of the slipperiness of concepts of community, we would also wish to retain what Black feminist scholars such as Akqugo Emejulu and others have valued about the creation of collective spaces: that for women of color especially, local organizing and the "creation of spaces of collective affirmation and solidarity is radical politics" (in Archer 2018). In other words, spaces of community are fraught, infused with power, and vital. In reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic and response in our different contexts, we are led to ask: *What processes and practices can be used to make visible power relations within communities as we build affirmative, reflexive, and accountable collective spaces for organizing in relation to COVID-19 and beyond?*

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

Tactical Repertoire for Feminist, Anti-Racist, and Indigenous-Centered Responses to COVID-19				
Overview of Tactic/Method	**Description**	**Goal/Potential**	**Dilemmas/Drawbacks**	**Application in the COVID-19 Context**
Participatory Policymaking	Facilitate the inclusion of individuals or groups in the design of policies via consultative or participative means and to achieve accountability, transparency, and active citizenship.	Represent citizens and marginalized groups, achieve concrete policy changes.	Lack of willingness on the part of institutions to engage, co-optation, and work with 'usual suspects.'	Could be used to influence and advocate in relation to funding and priorities.
Participatory Social Impact Analysis	The goal of Social Impact Analysis is to determine the likely winners and losers from the direct and indirect effects of policy reform.	Can help to track the effects and gaps in government policies.	Lack of willingness on the part of institutions to engage. Can be difficult to fund and time-consuming to undertake.	Could be helpful to tracking impact of government policies, before, during and after implementation.
Community-Based Monitoring Systems (CBMS)	A collaborative effort to collect, analyze, and verify information on given issues of local/community level.	May represent a tool for asserting Indigenous and form of Indigenous governance (Wilson et al 2018).	Can become technocratic and superficial, may not include all community members.	Could be established to track implementation of funding and policies in relation to COVID-19.

Participatory Social and Gender Budgeting	Analyzes government budgets from multiple social perspectives and advocates for increased funding for social programs.	Allocate greater resources to social services and services for marginalized communities.	Can be technocratic and does not necessarily shift underlying power relations/decision-making processes.	Could be used to track implementation of funds, along with disaggregated data.
Direct Social Action/Mutual Aid	A range direct actions wherein communities identify and work together to meet needs.	Can bypass traditional state power structures to some extent and empower grassroots leadership.	Not immune from power relations. Duplication of efforts.	Already happening in a range of areas.
Artivism/Creative	Uses art and creative means to reach public audiences.	Can inspire interest and foster awareness of issues.	May not directly influence decisions-makers. Effects difficult to track, measure, and monitor over time.	Coordinated campaigns on issues of importance.
Communications	Using social media and other means of communication to reach multiple audiences.	Builds networks and relationships beyond locales; can influence public opinion.	May not directly influence decisions-makers. Effects difficult to track, measure, and monitor over time.	Coordinated campaigns on issues of importance. Building relationships with specific audiences and movement building on key issues.
Political Education and Leadership Development	Longer-term organizing strategy to build awareness and grow leaders.	Aimed at building longer-term change.	Investment and timeline.	Growing leaders to demand and create broader structural change.

Contributors:

Shea Charles
Kealoha Fox
Khara Jabola-Carolus
Amanda Shaw
Tanya Smith-Johnson
The Hawaiʻi Feminist COVID-19 Response Team

References:

Archer, N. "This story rarely gets told": 10 years of women's resistance to austerity across Europe" https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/10-years-womens-resistance-to-austerity-europe/

Baccaro, L., & Papadakis, K. (2008). *The promise and perils of participatory policy making*. International Labour Office.

Birkeland, J (1999) "'Community participation' in urban project assessment (an ecofeminist analysis)", with 'commentaries by Bronwyn Hayward and Paul Selman and a reply by the author, in Brian Martin (ed.), Technology and Public Participation (Wollongong, Australia: Science and Technology Studies, University of Wollongong, 1999), pp. 113-142.

Herman, R. D. K. (2001). Out of sight, out of mind, out of power: leprosy, race, and colonization in Hawai'i. *Journal of Historical Geography*, *27*(3), 319-337.

Kern, E. (2010). Sugarcane and lepers: Health policy and the colonization of Hawaii (1860-1900). *Penn History Review*, *17*(2), 5.

Della Porta, D. (2020) "Social movements in times of pandemic: another world is needed." https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/social-movements-times-pandemic-another-world-needed/

Dworkin, S. L. (2005). Who is epidemiologically fathomable in the HIV/AIDS epidemic? Gender, sexuality, and intersectionality in public health. *Culture, health & sexuality*, *7*(6), 615-623

European Journal of Psychoanalysis. "Coronavirus and philosophers." http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/?fbclid=IwAR1wyD5z7iP8MjqXkJXDifNaZ7qBZSavluXT53aNMWiwJfFTOzoGf_2sCL8

Geary, A. (2014). *Antiblack racism and the AIDS epidemic: State intimacies*. Springer.

Ghiabi, M. (2020). "Mutual Aid and Solidarity in Iran during the COVID-19 Pandemic." https://merip.org/2020/04/mutual-aid-and-solidarity-in-iran-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

Goodyear-Kaopua, N. (2011). Kuleana Lahui: Collective responsibility for Hawaiian nationhood in activists' praxis. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action*.

Joseph, M. (2002). *Against the romance of community*. University of Minnesota Press.

Jun, N., & Lance, M. (2020). Anarchist Responses to a Pandemic: The COVID-19 Crisis as a Case Study in Mutual Aid.

Marston, C., Renedo, A., & Miles, S. (2020). Community participation is crucial in a pandemic. *The Lancet*, *395*(10238), 1676-1678.

Morgensen, S. L. (2011). The biopolitics of settler colonialism: Right here, right now. *Settler Colonial Studies*, *1*(1), 52-76.

Mizuo, A. (2020) Racial Disparities Emerge in HPD Enforcement Of Stay-At-Home Violations, 29 June 2020, Hawai'I Public Radio. https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/post/racial-disparities-emerge-hpd-enforcement-stay-home-violations

Mutual Aid Disaster Relief. "Collective Care Is Our Best Weapon against COVID-19." https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/collective-care/

Van de Walle, B. A., & Turoff, M. (2007). Emergency response information systems: Emerging trends and technologies. *Communications of the ACM*, *50*(3), 29-31.

Wilkinson, A., Parker, M., Martineau, F., & Leach, M. (2017). Engaging 'communities': anthropological insights from the West African Ebola epidemic. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, *372*(1721), 20160305.

Wilson, N. J., Mutter, E., Inkster, J., & Satterfield, T. (2018). Community-based monitoring as the practice of Indigenous governance: A case study of Indigenous-led water quality monitoring in the Yukon River Basin. *Journal of environmental management*, *210*, 290-298.

Wong, K. (2020) "A Lesson From COVID-19: A History of Racism and Disease in Hawai'i." https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/a-lesson-from-covid-19-a-history-of-racism-and-disease-in-hawaii/

Wuest, J. (2020) "The State of Biopower In The Age Of The Coronavirus" https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/the-state-of-biopower-in-the-age-of-the-coronavirus/