

Final Project Report for National Science Foundation Award 2032523 – 8/5/22

Project Title: **RAPID: Community Cooperation in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.**

PD/PI Name: **Frederick D Weil, Principal Investigator**

Recipient Organization: **Louisiana State University**

Project/Grant Period: **06/15/2020-05/31/2022**

Accomplishments

What are the major goals of the project?

We examine how communities respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic with collective resources (social capital, civic engagement, etc.), while taking unequal vulnerabilities into account. The pandemic presents communities a major new challenge compared to other disasters, and they are responding with novel strategies. Thus, we examine what new forms of cooperation people develop when the pandemic turns traditional in-person cooperation itself into a source of threat, namely, the risk of infection. To examine these questions, we employ undergraduate students to conduct in-depth, qualitative interviews in the general public, and we interview community leaders in New Orleans, a city with much experience in dealing with disasters.

What was accomplished under these goals and objectives?

We collected 442 hour-long in-depth interviews, conducted by LSU undergraduates with people they know. The diversity of these students at a major state university contributes to the diversity of the sample. See Table 1 and Figure 1 for descriptions of this sample. We also conducted about 25 interviews with community leaders, mostly in New Orleans, totaling over 30 hours of interviews. We have transcribed all of these interviews, totaling over 10,000 pages of transcript. See Exhibits 1 and 2 for our interview protocols. Overall, we employed 118 LSU undergraduates to do interviewing and transcription; 141 additional undergraduates did interviewing for class credit, for a total of 259 undergraduate participants. In addition to our core team of 2 graduate students and one Columbia University undergraduate, four additional graduate students have worked closely on the project, and a half dozen of the undergraduates worked especially intensively on the project.

We have been analyzing the over 10,000 pages of interviews, beginning with mark-up of the transcripts and continuing with analysis in Atlas.ti, qualitative data analysis software. Our initial coding has produced over 80 themes; and several initial outputs of quotes from the transcripts amounts to over 500 pages each. This coding work is ongoing. See exhibit 3 for preliminary themes identified. Our core team has taken the lead on this. In summer 2021, we assembled a sub-team of

Black students, one graduate student and four undergraduates, to mark-up themes relevant to the Black community. During the 2021-22 academic year, we assembled another sub-team of undergraduates to mark up themes relevant to gender. And in the summer of 2022, we assembled another team to mark up general themes. In addition, we have assembled 1,500 news clippings and press releases, which we are also analyzing for themes. We are also collecting survey results from Gallup, Pew, the SEAN archive, the Northwestern CoronaData survey, among others, with over 700 pages of charts in our collection.

Our preliminary analysis of race differences in community response to Covid has produced a striking picture, which we presented this July at a plenary session of the Researchers Meeting of the 2022 Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop. Our interviews reflected the vulnerability of American Blacks to Covid and other public health issues, as well as long-standing distrust of health-care providers, in light of a history of mistreatment. However, notably, we also found profound sources of strength and resilience in strong attachment and mutual support with community, family, and faith organizations. The Black Lives Matter movement and protests also provided a source of strength and support. While there was some disagreement among our Black interviewees about tactics, there was virtually universal support for the movement as a whole. Our presentation slides and notes are attached to this report.

Our interviews with New Orleans leaders is producing several potentially interesting themes. For instance, there is a tradition in disaster research of identifying "emergent" organizations that respond to recovery needs. In New Orleans, there is a stratum of earlier emergent organizations that were founded after Hurricane Katrina and have become meso-level organizations between established or institutionalized and newly emergent organizations. They are currently doing an excellent job of providing resources to the communities, but they have become critical of both the larger institutional and the new start-up organizations. Moreover, this meso sector has been partnering with hyperlocal community actors, drawing resources in from major high-level government or nonprofit sectors, and passing them on to community actors for fine-grained distribution, in a process I've begun calling "from the firehose to the capillaries." These patterns are likely to have important implications for our understanding of disaster response.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

This project provides many opportunities for training and professional development. Two dissertation-level graduate students are in the core team, and they are learning about primary data collection, project management, qualitative data analysis, and writing up results for presentation and publication. Four more early-stage graduate students are also on the broader research team. They are learning similar skills, and leadership of sub-teams. One of our graduate students, Samantha Ramey, took the lead in presenting our results at the plenary session of the Researchers Meeting of the 2022 Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop. Overall, we employed 118 LSU undergraduates under the grant to do interviewing and transcription; 141 additional undergraduates did interviewing for class credit, for a total of 259 undergraduate participants. A half dozen of the undergraduates worked especially intensively on the project.

Have the results been disseminated to communities of interest? If so, please provide details.

Our team has presented two papers at the Researchers Meeting of the Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop in Broomfield, CO (Weil, Garretson, Fan, and Qi, 2021, "Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Anxiety, Isolation, Dispute, and Support," and Weil, Ramey, Garretson, Fan, and Qi, 2022, "Racial Differences in Response to Covid-19: Solidarity, Vulnerability, and Social Justice"). My co-authors are three graduate students and an undergraduate student. I project that future papers from this project will include further graduate and undergraduate students. We are currently analyzing data in preparation for journal submissions on the themes of: Race differences in Covid response, Economic effects of Covid; Changes in social relations during the Covid pandemic; and Political and ideological factors in community Covid response.

Products

Journals or Juried Conference Papers

- Weil, Frederick D., Oliver Garretson, Jiabin Fan, and Alison Qi. 2021. "Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic: Anxiety, Isolation, Dispute, and Support." Paper presented at the Researchers Meeting of the 2021 Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop, Broomfield, Colorado.
- Weil, Frederick D., Samantha Ramey, Oliver Garretson, Jiabin Fan, and Alison Qi. 2022. "Racial Differences in Response to Covid-19: Solidarity, Vulnerability, and Social Justice." Paper presented in Plenary session at the Researchers Meeting of the 2022 Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop, July 13-14, 2022, Broomfield, Colorado.