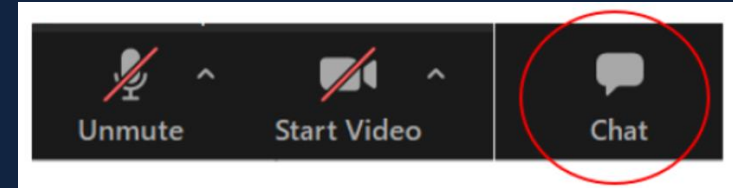


Virtual Meeting Tips & Best Practices

Rules of Engagement



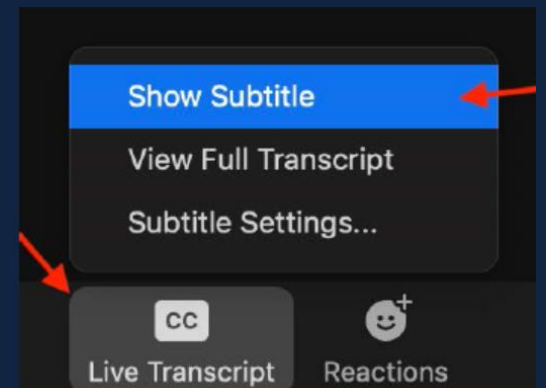
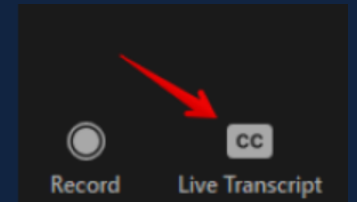
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Double Trouble: Reigniting Civic Engagement through Pandemics and Disasters

June 22, 2023

Office of Research and Evaluation



Welcome & Introductions

Andrea Robles, PhD

Research and Evaluation Manager, AmeriCorps



To support AmeriCorps' mission, the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE):



**Identifies
national service
and
volunteering
trends**



**Conducts
research and
builds scholarship
on civic
engagement**



**Measures
national service
impact**



**Promotes
evidence-
based models
and program
expansion**

**Knowledge and evidence can be used to improve the service
experience, and strengthen organizations and communities**

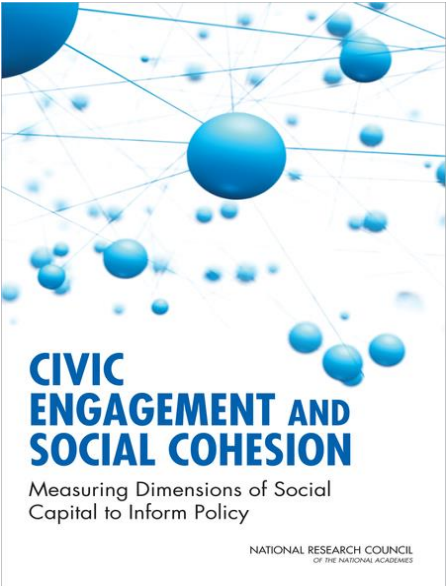
Conducts research and builds scholarship on civic engagement

**National level
civic engagement
and volunteering**

United States®
Census
Bureau

In 2002,
AmeriCorps
sponsors a
volunteering
supplement in the
Current Population
Survey

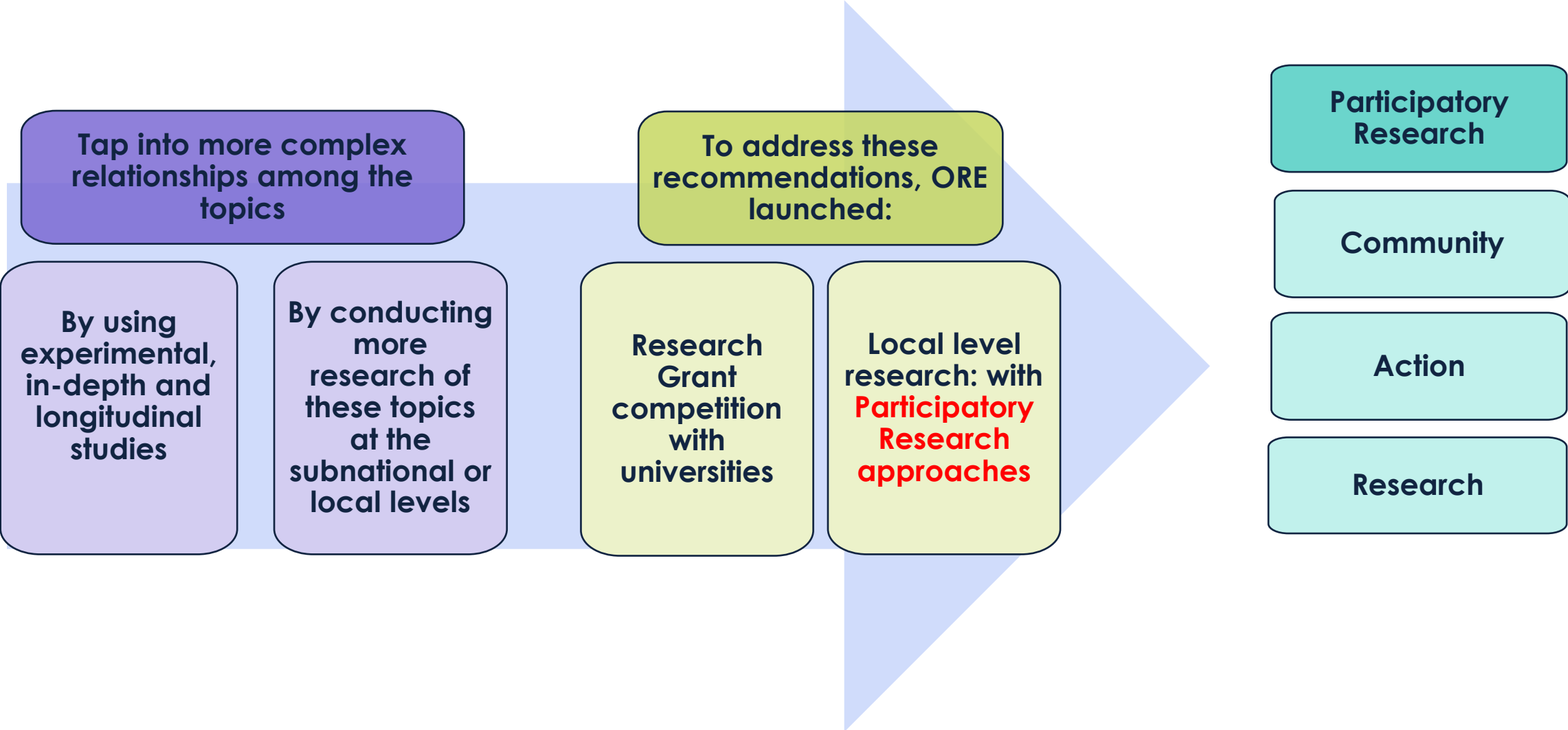
**National
Academies of
Science (NAS)**



**Recommendations:
Use different
measurement
approaches to
improve the
understanding of
civic engagement,
social cohesion
and social capital**

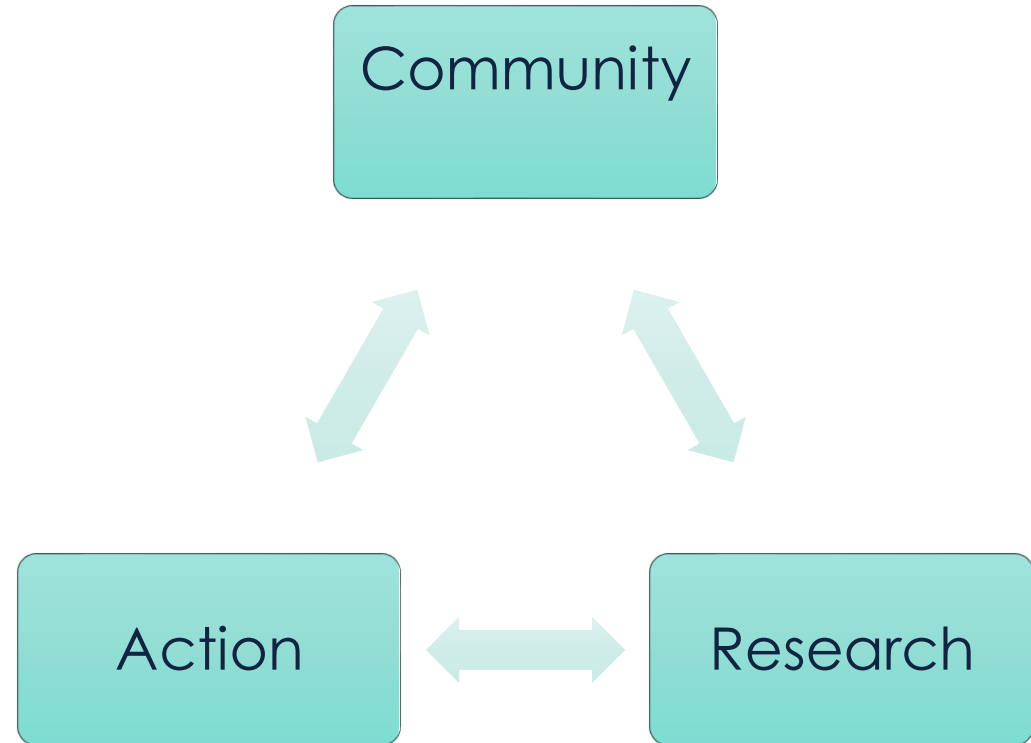


Different measurement approaches...



Why does this participatory research suit AmeriCorps?

Mission: To improve lives,
strengthen communities,
and foster civic
engagement through
service and volunteering



Today's speakers:

- Megha Patel, PhD, Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE), research analyst, AmeriCorps
- JoAnn Burbridge, Community Partner
- Dr. Denaë King, Texas Southern University
- Dr. Suzanne Pritzker, University of Houston
- Matthew Robbins, Research Assistant
- Joetta Stevenson, Community Partner
- **Reflections:** Katrina French, Disaster Services Specialist, Disaster Services Unit, AmeriCorps
- **Q&A Facilitator:** Emily McDonald, ORE, research analyst, AmeriCorps

Setting the Stage

Megha Patel, PhD

Research Analyst, AmeriCorps



Reigniting Civic Life Series

<https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/webinars>

March 15, 2023

What is Civic
Engagement?
Exploring New
Paradigms

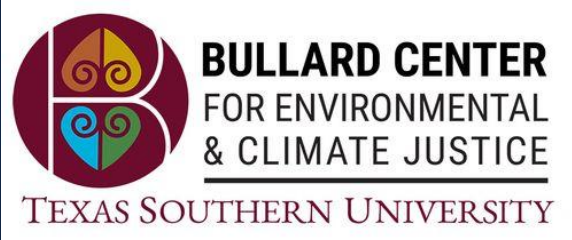
April 26, 2023

Community-
Based Research
as a Vehicle for
Civic
Engagement
and Community
Impact

June 8, 2023

Leveraging
Transformative
Resources to
Meet
Community
Needs and Ignite
a Lifetime of
Civic
Engagement

Building Connection During a Time of Disconnect



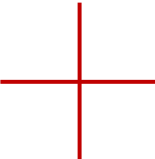
Building Connection During a Time of Disconnect

Jo Ann Burbridge, Community Partner
Dr. Denae King, Texas Southern University
Dr. Suzanne Pritzker, University of Houston
Matthew Robbins, Graduate Research Assistant
Joetta Stevenson, Co-Researcher


Two universities **partnering** with three communities

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
GRADUATE COLLEGE of SOCIAL WORK

TSU
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
GRADUATE COLLEGE of SOCIAL WORK



BULLARD CENTER
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
& CLIMATE JUSTICE
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY



Photo: May-Ying Lam for The Texas Tribune

How did COVID shape the way community members experience **civic engagement**?

What **facilitators** and **barriers** to civic engagement did they experience?

How did **prior natural disaster experiences** shape civic engagement during COVID?

The context of our research: Houston, during COVID

Three communities identified as at high risk for COVID spread, directly impacted by prior natural disasters

3 years after Hurricane Harvey:

- 154,000 homes flooded
- 100+ deaths
- \$125 billion in damages
- Impacted communities still working to recover

Study interrupted by Winter Storm Uri:

- 130,000 homes damaged
- 43+ deaths
- 4.5 million TX homes and businesses lost power
- 49% of Texans lost running water for 2+ days

Our approach: Community-based, **participatory action** research

By the community

Co-researchers worked alongside university team to develop plan

3 communities

9 co-researchers

2 languages

With the community

Co-researchers recruited participants, and facilitated *virtual* focus groups & interviews, between Jan & May 2021

128 participants

20 focus groups

9 interviews with key informants

For the community

Co-researchers conducted preliminary analyses and developed recommendations

5 thematic categories highlight civic experiences

9 highlight challenges and opportunities

3 highlight civic influences of natural disasters

Working with Co-Researchers – Successes and Challenges

- Technology access
- Virtual Relationship Building
 - Building rapport – how do we build trust and better understand communities?
 - Used co-researchers' knowledge of their communities
- Technology/Coordination/Scheduling
 - Participants not having access to a computer/mobile phone
 - Created Zoom tutorial

Perspectives of a Co-Researcher

- Role in community
- Co-researcher training
- Recruitment process
- Connection in a time of disconnect
- Takeaways from findings

COVID Study Findings

- Facilitators and Barriers of Civic Engagement During COVID
- Disaster-Related Findings



Community members' perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

COVID Fear and Stress

"COVID really stops, cause **you don't want to get sick or anybody else sick** and stuff. That's what shut us away from everybody."

"I think with the pandemic, **it's putting a strain on everything**. It has affected my community involvement...it has impacted it so much and **it's stressful** and I try not to let it stress me out."

"Life has changed a lot. **It changed our life**, we are asking God that this ends soon so we can continue our lives like normal, all of us. I believe and wish it, we are all wishing the same."

Responses to COVID Precautions

"Not being able to come together and be as one group, physically greeting, seeing faces, hugging people. I think **I miss that the most, being able to greet and hug** someone, someone I haven't seen."

"**Let's use the drive-ins, the theaters**. Let's use the basketball courts, let's use the schools, let's use the first floor of parking garages, let's use parking lots of grocery stores, let's use sports stadiums at colleges and universities. Let's use apartment complexes and they have community centers, let's use the churches, indoor theaters with 6 feet."

"We are all grown and we make choices...So if you want to wear a mask and I don't, of course you are not hearing what we are enforcing, but I can't make you do that. I can't make you care... **if people don't care, you just can't make them care.**"

Community members' perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

Information Access During COVID

"It is much easier to participate when one has access to all methods of communication, all social media. Spreading that information by all those methods like Facebook or WhatsApp or Zoom...to give us the opportunity to participate."

"It has definitely been challenging for the senior citizens. Living with mom, she is **not very technology advanced**. She has not participated in any of those Zoom calls or anything."

"It has to be something written for those of us who aren't on the internet to look at Facebook everyday."

"It's like we are out of the loop all the time... We never in the loop...Nobody ever communicates with us on this side. So, we basically never really reached out to over here."

Trustworthiness of COVID Information

"I am so distrustful in how they disseminate the information about the problem, to where I'm really distrustful about them even having, how they gonna disseminate the information about the solutions."

"The vaccine, it's trash, they just completely dropped the ball...Too many avenues for information, so it is kind of hard to focus on the information when I got 5 different channels telling it to me. If we can just figure out how to disseminate information through one hub per se, it just seems like it will go a lot easier."

Community members' perspectives on facilitators and barriers to civic engagement during COVID

Unmet Community Needs

"You locked down the city. You taken the playgrounds away, you taken the clubs away, you have taken the restaurants away. You know **you have done all this, what is the next plan to service us** with all of this shot, since we have the shot now? ...How are you giving it to us?"

"**We are over-shadowed by other communities** because they are getting everything in their communities: parks and water distributions and vaccines and you know COVID test, and we don't have that in our community."

"We couldn't get the sites in our community. **They didn't value the fact that we were bringing to them, specific information** about, uhh, about people not having transportation. People needed a walk up site, in addition to a drive up site."

"The way the world is now, **that doesn't really work for our community, because our community is a technology desert**. Y'all talk about food deserts, we're a technology desert. We have technology within our homes and some of the people, but is more or less still the cellphones."

"With the floods and all the things that come to this city"

"Why is my community hit harder than this community or that community? And **why don't I have the resources to help my community heal or grow?** Why don't I have that as other communities do? ...Why are communities of color treated differently than other communities?"



Photo: Staff Photographer Houston Chronicle

"Why they can't get together and come through our neighborhood? I mean our neighborhood is one of the worst flood neighborhoods... And **they make all these promises the last six years and nothing happens...**If I call the city, they just add it to the list. I mean how long is the list?"

"Let me say that we haven't fully recovered from Ike or Harvey. You still have people who are still suffering from Ike and haven't got the services they needed as far back as Ike. So, Harvey just made it worse, so not receiving the services and the help before the pandemic. The pandemic just slowed it that farther down because the process changed.... the aid has just gotten that further behind. So, we were behind in the beginning before, and we that much farther behind now."



Photo: May-Ying Lam for The Texas Tribune

"The people are there anyways if there is COVID or if there is no COVID"

"If we were to get another hurricane, I don't think nothing catastrophic would change. People would still be willing to go out and help. I think people would still be willing to volunteer their time. People would still be willing to give what they can to those in need depending on their situation, because of **how we are when these things and events occur.**"



Photo: David Phillip/AP

"When you got somethin' like COVID which I don't understand as being a natural disaster, you reduce me not in my nature but you reduce me to my survival instincts, now. And even though I want to help you, I'm afraid to do so because **I'm afraid that helping you may hurt me.**"

"It opened our eyes to how far we had got away from each other because we started checking back on each other. Instead of like I say, coming home, running in your house, and shutting the door, that loneliness and that apart from each other, the ice and the snow and the broken pipes and the lights out **kinda brought us back together to reality that we do need each other.**"

Community Partnership

- Experience with the study
- Using preliminary findings
 - Community COVID testing and vaccination
 - Future funding



Photo: Lucio Vasquez Houston Public Media

Takeaways

- Overall great experience
- Challenges occurred since this was a new experiment for all
- Obtained rich research which has the potential to impact the three underserved communities positively



AmeriCorps Reflection

Katrina French

Disaster Services Specialist,
Disaster Services Unit



Disaster Services Unit

Mission

The DSU leads the agency's engagement across the disaster services cycle with federal, state, local, nonprofit, and other partners. The DSU's role as the central hub for the agency's disaster-related activities ensures that AmeriCorps engagement in this area is appropriate, consistent, and coordinated.

Functions

- Training and Technical Assistance
- Coordinates the agency's Disaster Services Strategy
- Disaster Services Operational Command and Coordination



AmeriCorps

Q&A Panel Facilitator

Emily McDonald, PhD
Research Analyst, AmeriCorps



Q & A Panel Discussion:

- [Megha Patel, PhD](#), Research Analyst, AmeriCorps
- [Suzanne Pritzker, PhD](#), University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work
- [Matthew Robbins](#), University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, Graduate Research Assistant
- [Joetta Stevenson](#), Fifth Ward Super Neighborhood #55, President
- [Denae King, PhD](#), Texas Southern University
- [JoAnn Burbridge](#), Sunnyside Community Redevelopment Organization, Board Member
- [Andrea Robles, PhD](#), Research and Evaluation Manager, AmeriCorps
- [Katrina French](#), Disaster Services Specialist, Disaster Services Unit, AmeriCorps

Thank you for attending today's webinar

The recording and support materials will be provided in the next two weeks at:

<https://www.americorps.gov/webinar/double-trouble-reigniting-civic-engagement-through-pandemics-disasters>

To inquire about the work presented in this webinar, please reach out to
Evaluation@cns.gov

