

Research Statement

Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson stated, “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate – to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” Earning my PhD in Public Administration and Policy will help me achieve this goal by allowing me to establish myself professionally as a subject-matter expert, contribute to the body of knowledge in my field, and serve as an educator and public administrator. My degree will empower me to have a significant and lasting impact on my local community and beyond through effective and timely research that will be beneficial to both my career as an academic and practitioners.

There are two primary areas of interest within my research agenda: emergency management and social justice. Emergency management is the study of disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Borrowing elements from subjects such as public administration, political science, sociology, geography, engineering, and more, emergency management aims to study natural and manmade disasters through a comprehensive approach. The study of emergency management is important because we are under constant threat from natural and manmade disasters. Catastrophes such as wildfires, severe flooding, earthquakes, and domestic and foreign terrorism can devastate societies. My research interests focus on overall emergency management, mitigating the impact of disasters, and addressing the needs vulnerable populations.

The second area within my research agenda is social justice, with an emphasis on equity. This area of interest addresses institutional inequities such as disparities in wealth, health, education, and resources. This area of research is important because there are numerous groups that are affected by the lack of social justice and equity; furthermore, they lack opportunities and resources to advance their positions and face discrimination at the hands of the society that oppresses them. Social justice research is vital because fair treatment is a basic human right, yet issues – wicked problems – are so intertwined that much research and policy change are needed to begin solving them. Promoting equity through disaster planning and response is an important goal in the field of emergency management, which will allow me to explore these two research areas individually as well as in collaboration. Other research interests include civic engagement/public participation, economics, ethics, intergovernmental relations, organizational leadership, and public policy. Additionally, two research questions I am considering are listed below:

- How does collaboration between higher education institutions and multisectoral stakeholders affect the negative short-term implications of the coronavirus pandemic on college students?
- How can false alarms and desensitization be overcome to promote resilience within vulnerable populations?

My current research, which incorporates both emergency management and social justice, is being completed for my dissertation. I am working on a project that explores the evacuation behaviors and risk perceptions of college students that are presented with coastal disasters. The research considers college students as an often-overlooked vulnerable population and explores factors that inhibit their ability to respond during natural disasters such as hurricanes and flooding. The present research is based on college students in coastal communities, but after completion, it can be extended to other type of

natural and manmade disasters, vulnerable populations, and regions. The research is being supported through Virginia Sea Grant.

I also have recently participated in a few COVID-based research projects. The first of which resulted in a journal article titled *The Compound Threat of COVID-19 and Hazards: Public Management and Policy Issues from a Stakeholder Perspective*. This article was completed during Fall 2020, and it was accepted for publication in December 2020. Research for this project was collected during Summer 2020 – the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research was drawn from the CONVERGE COVID-19 Hurricane Preparedness Working Group Workshops, a series of six workshops with emergency management academics and professionals on sheltering and evacuation during compound hurricane-pandemic events, which I assisted with. The initial research was funded through National Science Foundation Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) Network and the University of Colorado Boulder Natural Hazards Center.

I also participated in research on transportation logistics during hurricane evacuations under the coronavirus pandemic. Through the project, we created a WebApp to show visual data on demand, vulnerability, and evacuation infrastructure and hosted a focus group to collect feedback and input on how transportation logistics will change during compound events. The ODU Social Science Research Center Life in Hampton Roads Survey and the ODU Virginia Modeling, Analysis, and Simulation Center and Social Science Research Center Hurricane Florence Survey provided background for the project. The CONVERGE COVID-19 Hurricane Preparedness Working Group Workshops were also used. The research was funded by the University of Colorado Natural Hazards Center Quick Response Grant Program.

Finally, I am the first author on an article titled *Changing Logistics of Evacuation Transportation in Hazardous Settings During COVID-19* (2021). This article is a follow-up to the transportation logistics project and discusses topics such as vulnerable populations and technological needs under the pandemic. The article was recently accepted for publication in the *Natural Hazards Review*. Other COVID-19 publications I have coauthored include *Changing Vulnerability for Hurricane Evacuation During a Pandemic: Issues and Anticipated Responses in the Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2021).

My short-term research goals are to continue working on my individual intersectional emergency management and social justice research project; collaborate with students and faculty from ODU and other institutions; attend and present at national conferences, and publish peer-reviewed journal articles to share my findings with other scholars. My long-term research goals are to conduct and present groundbreaking research as a tenure-track faculty member at a research university. I would also like to begin presenting at and attending international conferences to share my work on a global scale. Over the next few years, I hope to further establish a name for myself professionally, network with academics and practitioners within my field, and continue to collaborate with scholars from other institutions and disciplines to become a well-rounded and respected researcher.