

ONE PERSON'S VULNERABILITY MAY BE DISASTER FOR ANOTHER

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Lately we are learning a lot about the vulnerability of places and people to the effects of climate change in coastal areas whether it be through sea level rise, tropical and extra-tropical storms, nuisance flooding, rain bombs or prolonged rain events such as that which occurred in South Carolina last fall. In order to plan for adaptation we can assess community vulnerability through measures such as proximity to surface water, elevation, and income, yet, do these really get at the impacts that specific communities may face given a complexity of history, culture, politics, demographics, community age, homeownership status and environmental factors? Current research projects such as A Community-wide Public Health Risk Assessment of Vulnerable Water Infrastructure in Coastal Cities (also presented at the 2016 Social Coast Forum) will rely on municipal officials and employees, local business owners and public health officials to identify those in danger when experiencing environmental hazards. But are we truly assessing a disproportionate burden that some communities experience when faced with both acute and chronic risks from climate change impacts, such as vulnerable public water infrastructure? Discussing how others have identified marginalized communities, invited them to the table and weighted indices to account for unique climate justice-related vulnerability will benefit researchers as they identify coastal climate impacts and extend that information to municipal governments for community planning and emergency response.