

Research Statement: Chadley R. Hollas

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Hello! Thank you for your interest in my research. My research examines how tourism reshapes livelihoods, work, and rural communities, with particular attention paid to the tension between opportunity and precarity. I approach tourism as a lived practice embedded in everyday life, both a source of resilience and a site of systemic vulnerability. Therefore, I integrate theoretical inquiry with applied research that foregrounds the lived experiences of workers and residents.

My research trajectory began with my master's thesis at Texas A&M University, where I investigated host identity formation in volunteer tourism in Guatemala. Using photo-elicitation interviews with smallholder coffee farmers, I examined how intimate encounters with volunteer tourists shaped host self-concepts and role identities (Hollas et al., 2022). This work, rooted in symbolic interactionism and identity theory, underscores the value of methods that center host perspectives and highlights the intimate, relational dimensions of tourism encounters. Building from this foundation, my doctoral dissertation shifts the inquiry from identity formation to livelihood precarity, integrating social structural and psychological theories to better understand how tourism (re)shapes rural communities.

My research combines theoretical curiosity, ethnographic depth, and quantitative rigor to contribute to three interconnected areas:

- 1. The Dynamics of Tourism Work and Livelihoods**
- 2. Agritourism as a Pathway to Resilient Food Systems**
- 3. Tourism Governance and the Distribution of Opportunity**

Across these domains, I aim to advance theory while also generating insights useful to policymakers, communities, and the tourism industry.

1. The Dynamics of Tourism Work and Livelihoods

Tourism is celebrated for generating jobs, yet its labor systems often reproduce precarity, that is, instability, insufficient wages, and informal conditions that expose workers to vulnerability. My dissertation investigates how tourism labor restructures rural livelihoods in the Andean highlands of Ecuador and the community's response to it. Using ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and survey research, I analyze the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of precarity among tourism workers. This use of mixed methods reflects my broader philosophy of allowing research questions to guide methods.

This work reframes precarity as a structural condition of neoliberal tourism development rather than an individual psychological vulnerability. Building on Blustein et al. (2024), Bourdieu (1998), and Butler (2004), I show how precarity is embedded in labor systems that merge tourism with subsistence agriculture, cultural performance, and informal exchange. I am developing a Precarity in Tourism Scale, grounded in qualitative data and adapted to informal,

community-based, and developing world contexts where existing measures (e.g., Allan et al., 2025) fail. This tool will allow comparative studies of tourism labor across global contexts.

This area of my research contributes to tourism studies, sociology of work, and development studies by clarifying how tourism both enables new livelihood pathways and entrenches systemic vulnerability.

2. Agritourism as a Pathway to Resilient Food Systems

A second area of my research posits agritourism as a pathway to rural resilience and sustainable food systems. In the United States, I have led and co-authored several USDA- and NSF-funded projects that provide national-level data and practitioner resources on agritourism.

Key contributions include:

- National survey research: I co-authored the first large-scale survey of U.S. agritourism operators, identifying profitability drivers, barriers to access, and regional variations (Hollas et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2023).
- Policy frameworks: My work on agritourism safety and liability highlights the need for regional support systems (Hollas et al., 2024; Schmidt et al., 2023; Schmidt et al., in press).
- Applied outputs: Beyond journals, I have produced fact sheets, extension curricula, and webinars that are used by farmers, state agencies, and producer organizations to support rural tourism development.

This research positions agritourism as an opportunity to sustain vibrant rural communities, to strengthen food systems, and create connections between agricultural heritage and visitor experiences. My co-authored book chapter for the *Routledge Handbook on Food and Cultural Heritage* (2025) further situates agritourism within foodways and agricultural heritage.

My agritourism research also demonstrates sustained leadership in cross-sector collaboration and long-term project management. I have overseen several multi-year, grant-funded initiatives that progressed from raw data analysis to peer-reviewed publications, practitioner resources, and the launch of a global network of agritourism practitioners. This network has become a platform for advancing comparative research and applied knowledge, and it reflects the value I place on translating scholarship into sustained impact across academic and practitioner communities.

3. Tourism Governance and the Distribution of Opportunity

Tourism outcomes depend on governance systems that mediate development and determine its beneficiaries. This area of my research explores how destinations adapt to global challenges, including socioeconomic and socioecological change, shifting visitor behaviors, and spatial inequalities. In this area of work, my colleagues and I have proposed an extension of the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (Castillo-Vizuite et al., 2024) to account for diverse community contexts. I have also examined, alongside colleagues, questions of spatial equity, evaluating how tourism development clusters across regions and demonstrating that agritourism can distribute benefits more equitably to rural and peripheral areas (Schmidt et al.,

2023). Borrowing from spatial analysis coursework in the Department of Geography at the University of Georgia, this question of spatial equity is an area I have equipped myself to explore more completely as my research moves forward.

Methods and Interdisciplinary Orientation

My research is interdisciplinary, drawing primarily from sociology, psychology, geography, and development studies. Methodologically, I combine qualitative approaches such as ethnography, participant-centered interviews, and discourse analysis, alongside quantitative approaches such as structural equation modeling. I also lean on emerging approaches, including, for example, organizational psychology to examine group dynamics (Hollas et al., 2023) and spatial analysis to study patterns of tourism development (Schmidt et al., 2023).

This variety of methodological and disciplinary approaches reflects my priority for collaborative, community-engaged research that bridges institutions, disciplines, and practitioner audiences. They also equip me to develop and teach social research methods curricula while helping students understand how to apply these tools to real-world problems.

Future Research

Borrowing on my dissertation's qualitative data, I plan to undertake projects that more directly explore livelihood transitions: how individuals, households, or communities move into, through, or out of tourism work, what pushes or pulls act in these processes, and how identity, social networks, and governance shape these transitions. Such work will allow me to investigate not just static snapshots of precarity, but trajectories over time (e.g. seasonal shifts, crises, policy changes).

In parallel, I will further develop and validate my Precarity in Tourism Scale to better capture both structural elements (e.g. instability of employment, labor market segmentation, regulatory/institutional protections, governance regimes) and psychosocial dimensions (workers' perceptions of insecurity, stress, agency, emotional solidarity, dignity). My goal is for the scale not only to be reliable and valid across multiple contexts, but also to offer insight into levers for policy, such as through fair employment regulations, social protections, labor rights, and inclusive governance structures.

Continuing my agritourism research, I aim to investigate how food system linkages and agricultural adaptation strategies are reshaped by tourism, particularly under conditions of socioeconomic and socioecological stress. For example, I am currently leading a project to better understand technological adoption as a resilience strategy for agritourism operators. This work will build stronger conceptual bridges between tourism studies, agrifood scholarship, and sustainability science.

I intend to integrate these lines in comparative and mixed-methods projects. I also plan to continue to use national- and regional-level data to explore these questions. Partnerships with local governments, tourism boards, and the private sector will help me gather this data but also provide an opportunity to translate findings into viable policy.

Broader Impact

My research philosophy emphasizes collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and accessibility. I see scholarship as strongest when it is co-created with the communities most affected by tourism and made accessible to them. Alongside peer-reviewed articles, I have disseminated my findings through practitioner reports, webinars, and toolkits to ensure accessibility and relevance. I aim to make my research accessible whenever possible. Equally, I view mentoring and teaching as integral to research impact. I engage students in collaborative projects, encourage creativity in methods, and emphasize the transferability of skills across tourism and allied fields.

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