

EDITORIAL: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE TO THREAT

The articles in this issue represent a range in substantive focus, from stress in the wilderness, to hail-produced poverty, to response to earthquake predictions. They also represent all social units – the individual, the family, organizations, and society as a whole. Some of the articles deal with anticipated disaster, while others treat the consequences of large-scale disasters. Taken as a whole, these authors demonstrate that there is much to be learned from a broadened perspective on human aspects of hazards and disasters. Their work also suggests that there is a whole new generation of scholars who are applying their basic social science skills to the analysis of human stress in actual or potential emergencies.

Nielsen comes up with some surprises. Even in a wilderness setting most persons seem not to respond negatively to crowding. Some of the findings presented by Hutton are both unexpected and sobering. They suggest that perhaps many of the time-honored propositions about human behavior in warning situations repeated over and over in the literature may be weak reeds upon which to lean preparedness planning.

Bolin's work on long-term family recovery from natural disaster represents a style and model which many disaster researchers would do well to emulate. He describes a well-developed theoretical model for explaining family recovery and then puts it to empirical test using data from the Rapid City, South Dakota, flash flood of 1972.

The Trainer and Bolin paper is a rare contribution. In only a few instances in the past have researchers been able to conduct simultaneous research in two countries focusing on the same topic and using nearly identical methodology. There is much to be learned from their experience as well as their findings.

The Burgess paper takes a large step forward in our developing understanding of how organizations anticipate and respond to sudden changes in their environments. Her conceptual framework is intriguing and merits empirical testing.

In their article, Gillespie and Perry demonstrate how a careful analytical approach using a systems model, combined with an emergent norm approach, can lead to a classification of the processes and consequences of mass convergence on the scene of disaster impact.

The article by Farhar introduces an approach which is rare in the disaster literature. She treats the question, "What influences the response of the public to a new technology which offers hope for a disaster reduction in the losses from severe storms or other disaster agents?" The three case studies she presents suggests that the question has general relevance for disaster preparedness and that the answers will be quite complex.

Gimenez took on a very difficult task and carried it off in a scholarly fashion. She asked, "What can we learn from the 'experiment' in China with the developing science of earthquake prediction?" As will be seen, securing information on the events in China was most difficult. She uses, with care, data from all available sources, paints a fascinating account of events and processes in China, and then offers observations about how Western societies may wish to restructure earthquake prediction and hazard mitigation practices.

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