VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DISASTERS:

A STUDY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Published in Violence Against Women 5 (7) 1999: 742-68

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ABSTRACT

While data are limited, field reports indicate that reported violence against women increases in communities hit by environmental disasters. Seventy-seven Canadian and U.S. domestic violence programs participated in a study of organizational readiness, impact, and response employing a mail survey and open-ended telephone interviewing. Low levels of in-house emergency preparedness were found, but also strong interest in increasing disaster readiness. Those programs most severely impacted by disasters reported increased service demands, as long as one year after the event, and decreased organizational resources. Strategies are suggested for more fully engaging women's services in community-based disaster mitigation, planning, and response.

Now strongly developed as a major subdiscipline in the field, the sociology of gender can hardly be said to have a presence among our colleagues in disaster social science. This alienation has strongly influenced theoretical and applied knowledge about the social experience of disaster. Because the social location of the observer shapes knowledge claims, including the knowledge we have about disasters, the absence of these specifically female experiences in the sociology of disaster is a real loss.

A quarter-century of research now documents gendered social structure and process in intimate relationships, households and family life, the state, formal and informal economies, complex organizations, and popular culture (Lorber, 1994; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Epstein, l988; Hess & Ferree, 1987). This work, however, clearly fails to influence most sociologists in the developed world who study emergency communication, family preparedness and response, economic effects and recovery, emergency management professions, community and organizational planning and response, or disaster mitigation (see Fothergill,1996 for a review of gender in disaster studies). Particularly in dominant U.S. paradigm, a determinedly "gender neutral" analysis of disaster renders invisible the profoundly gendered social structure of the communities, organizations, households, and intimate relationships within which disastrous events actually unfold. Indeed, even women as disaster subjects are generally invisible, beyond the now-routine inclusion of "sex" as a demographic variable in disaster survey research.

Gender relations in disaster are more visible in disaster vulnerability theory written from the developing world (Bolin, Jackson & Crist, 1998). Vulnerability theory emerges, not from functionalist sociology, but from the study of development processes in

postcolonial societies, where disasters take their largest human toll and mortality statistics dramatically portray women's vulnerability (Ikeda, 1995). Gender relations are integral rather than incidental when vulnerability theorists examine slow-onset disasters like drought and famine (see Vaughan, 1987; Schroeder, l987). Gender and development theory (e.g., Tinker, 1990) and disaster response training materials based on these ideas (e.g., Eade & Williams, 1995) highlight the social relations of gender in national and global development; to the degree that disasters are largely social products of global development patterns, gender equality is a central concern (Anderson,1994; Anderson &Woodrow, 1989; Fernando & Fernando, 1997). Writing in this tradition, vulnerability theorists locate "natural" disaster in the interaction of physical hazards and forces with social structure and power relations in everyday life (among others, see Maskrey, 1989; Hewitt, l983; Oliver-Smith, 1986; Blaikie et al., 1994). In this view, gendered household economies, lending institutions, relief organizations, and kinship relations are embedded social practices at the core of disaster vulnerability. Not sex or gender alone, but gender inequality is at the core of women's vulnerability, for example in the gender politics of household recovery (Blaikie et al.,1994, 67):

> Within the household and family, successfully securing resources in potentially disastrous times depends upon the implicit bargaining strength of its members. . . Women tend to lose these conflicts for scarce resources, and are affected by who eats first, the share of available food, and lack of access to cash earned by other family members . . .The range of resources controlled by women, and employment opportunities open to them, tends to be more limited.

An emerging feminist disaster sociology, based largely on studies conducted in the developed world, now examines how disasters unfold and are made meaningful "through women's eyes" (see Phillips, 1990; Morrow & Enarson,1996; contributors to Enarson & Morrow, 1998). The material conditions of women's everyday lives—which include domestic labor, caregiving, and vulnerability to sexual and domestic violence—afford women an angle of vision not otherwise knowable. Standpoint theory, as developed by Nancy Hartsock (1983), Dorothy Smith (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and others, does not suggest a single, unitary female stance or exclusive truth claims, as the experiences of women across racial, ethnic, economic, sexual, and cultural divides are manifestly diverse. But the knowledge earned by women, forged by oppression into a social group at once highly vulnerable to disaster and marginalized in emergency management, cannot be captured without attention to gender relations in disaster theory and practice. That we have not yet heard the voices of women disaster subjects, understood calamitous events and processes through their everyday experience, documented their disaster decisions and survival strategies, or addressed their interests and needs in disaster practice and policy reflects, not their irrelevance, but our failure to ask the right questions (for a gendered research agenda, see Enarson, l998; Bolin, Jackson, & Crist, 1998).

To help produce more accurate knowledge about the social impacts of disaster, this study investigated 'first responders' in grassroots organizations serving women at risk of violence. I examined domestic violence as a specifically gendered form of disaster vulnerability, drawing on the lived experience and knowledge, not of individual battered

women, but of advocates whose work positioned them to anticipate and mitigate the effects of environmental disasters on battered women. Asking generally how sudden-onset disasters impact organizations serving those at risk of the "daily disaster" of domestic violence, the study specifically investigated five key questions: how salient community hazards were to domestic violence agencies; how well integrated these agencies were in local emergency management networks; patterns in organizational preparedness; direct and indirect program impacts of community disasters; and postdisaster changes in organizational capacities and preparedness. As reported through survey responses, telephone interviews, and face-to-face interviews, the hard-won knowledge of battered women's advocates, grounded in a political culture of feminist opposition to violence against women, challenged the gender-neutral paradigm of disaster social science.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DISASTERS

Women's disaster vulnerability is often taken to derive simplistically from poverty. Impoverished living conditions certainly place people at greater risk in disasters, but such factors as household structure, marital status, age and physical ability, citizenship status, race and ethnicity, and language interact with economic status to produce inequitable conditions disadvantaging women (Wiest et al., 1994). Less well understood is how real or threatened male violence puts girls and women at risk in disaster contexts.<s>1Domestic violence is a social fact contributing to the specifically gendered vulnerability of women to disaster. Women subject to violence "behind closed doors" are an at-risk population of women whose vulnerability is less visible than that of women in

poverty, refugees, single mothers, widows, senior or disabled women. Indeed, violence against women in intimate relations crosses these and other social lines, impacting an estimated one in four women in the U.S. and Canada and as many as 60 percent in parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia (United Nations Social Statistics and Indicators, 1995, 160).

Sexual and domestic violence have been identified as issues for women refugees and displaced persons in temporary camps (League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1991; Wiest et al., 1994), but domestic violence in other disaster contexts is largely unexplored. Some field reports suggest that abuse increases as a result of disaster, as in this account of a major Australian flood in l990: "Human relations were laid bare and the strengths and weaknesses in relationships came more sharply into focus. Thus, socially isolated women became more isolated, domestic violence increased, and the core of relationships with family, friends and spouses were exposed" (Dobson, 1994, 11). Increased violence was also noted anecdotally in field reports from the Philippines after the Mt. Pinatubo eruption (Delica, 1998) and after the Exxon Valdez oil spill (Palinkas et al., 1993).

Some data suggest domestic violence increased after the Loma Prieta earthquake, the 1993 Missouri floods, and Miami's Hurricane Andrew though no controlled population surveys have been conducted on the topic. The director of a Santa Cruz battered women's shelter reported an increase of 50% in requests for temporary restraining orders after the Loma Prieta earthquake; observing that housing shortages were restricting women's ability to leave violent relationships, she urged that "when the community considers

replacement housing issues, battered women should not be overlooked" (United Way of Santa Cruz County, 1990, 201). Five months after the earthquake, a United Way survey of over 300 service providers ranked "protective services for women, children, and elderly" sixth among 41 community services least available to residents (United Way of Santa Cruz County, 1990, 25).

Following the l993 Midwest flooding, the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence notified Governor Mel Carnahan that "flood-related increases in the demand for domestic violence services by battered women, many with dependent children, had created a critical shortage of resources needed to secure support and safety for these families" (Constance & Coble, 1995,1). The average state turn-away rate at shelters rose 111% over the preceding year. An existing federal grant was subsequently modified and the Coalition administered capacity-building grants to 35 flood-affected programs in an innovative response to both substance abuse and domestic violence during flood recovery. The final report notes that while these programs were expected to shelter an estimated 660 flood survivors who were also victims of domestic violence (220 mothers, 440 children), eventually over 3,400 flood-impacted women and children were taken in over the 12-month period, meeting a need more than 400 percent higher than predicted (Constance & Coble, 1995, 19).

In Miami, Morrow (1997) reported on a range of stress factors testing or "stretching the bonds" supporting family members through Hurricane Andrew. Spousal abuse calls to the local community helpline increased by 50% (Laudisio, 1993) and over one-third of 1400 surveyed residents reported that someone in their home had lost verbal or physical

control in the two months since the hurricane (Centers for Disease Control, 1992). Requests for protection orders also increased but follow a pre-disaster pattern of increased applications in Dade County's new domestic violence court (Morrow, 1997, 158).

Perceived changes in the incidence of domestic violence have been investigated in one study. A team of U.S. researchers (Wilson, Phillips, & Neal, 1998) examined local perceptions of domestic violence and subsequent organizational responses following the Loma Prieta earthquake, a tornado in Lancaster, Texas, and Hurricane Andrew in Dade County. Their findings suggest that the degree to which communities identify domestic violence as an issue and are organized to respond to it before a disaster strongly impacts the nature and scale of community response to battered women after the event.

Far from conclusive, these preliminary data suggest that women may be at greater risk of violence when, in the aftermath of disaster, a decidedly "un-therapeutic community" emerges at the household level (Olson & Drury, l997). Women in volatile relationships may bear the brunt of disaster losses long into the recovery period, as in the following account from "Andrea," a young woman still living in a South Dade County women's shelter more than six months after Hurricane Andrew (Morrow & Enarson, 1996):

> And of course the shock of just losing things that got broke in the hurricane—my husband went crazy. He couldn't take the pressure—being used to everything, and then coming down to no eating, because we could not find food . . . I'm not even working•of course the school where I was working got destroyed, it was in Cutler Ridge. And my husband, of course he wasn't working because his business got

> destroyed. And it was just terrible . . . I found a job about six months later at the Keys, pumping gas. At this point, my husband's like, just berserk. He was fighting me. I'm trying to work at a gas station pumping gas. Then, luckily, the school didn't get hit that bad, I said, well, maybe I can substitute . . . So I was subbing during the day, two hours rest in between, pumping gas at night from five until nine—and a husband sitting home that was too great and too grand to work for a little $7 or $10 an hour. And then he was beating me up, taking my money—there was just so much going on that I just couldn't—he was really going berserk. I was getting beat up pretty bad.

Power and Control in Disasters

Like other complex social events, disasters do not have a single or one-dimensional impact on women in volatile relationships. Paradoxically, a family home destroyed by fire may loosen the ties binding women to violent partners; disaster relief money can buy a bus ticket out of town for women ready to leave; and responding to catastrophe may reduce abuse temporarily. More than simply victims, battered women develop survival skills to protect themselves and their children which have not yet been investigated in disaster contexts.

But it is important for disaster planners to understand how the dynamic of domestic violence may compromise battered women's safety in the aftermath of disaster and their access to relief and recovery resources. Not "stress" but the cycle of violence is at issue. Subject to a vicious cycle of power and control, battered women live in a world of increasingly narrow social networks with abusers who keep them isolated, restrict their

transportation and employment opportunities, and control household resources (see Walker, 1984; Pagelow, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Like their physical and emotional health, their sense of self-worth and efficacy diminishes in the face of continued violence.

Living through fear and intimidation on a daily basis, battered women are already in emotional crisis before disaster. Attending to preparedness or evacuation warnings, stabilizing their life in a disaster-stricken neighborhood, or accessing recovery resources may be impossible tasks. For women and children who have left violent relationships for a safe home, motel, shelter, or transition home, mandatory evacuation following an industrial accident or in advance of wild fire is a second-order evacuation. When evacuation from the women's shelter is necessary, designated evacuation centers may not protect their privacy or ensure their safety, especially in small communities.

Relationship stress factors certainly increase when families struggle to replace lost possessions, housing, jobs, and peace of mind. Men emotionally invested in the role of family provider and protector may well struggle with feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty, as researchers reported in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew (Always, Belgrave, & Smith, 1998). A counselor working with men after the Loma Prieta earthquake observed that "many men used the quake as a way to get themselves back into an old relationship" (Commission for the Prevention of Violence, 1990). Severe weather events like mudslide or blizzard isolate women at home in unsafe environments without working telephones or accessible roads; contact with crisis counselors may be cut off and court-ordered protection unavailable when major disasters disrupt or destroy lifeline

services, including law enforcement agencies.

When the dust clears or the waters recede, women coping with physical and/or emotional abuse must access bureaucratic disaster relief systems and compete with other impacted residents for housing, child care, employment, education, transportation, and health services. Relief funds may be more available to the abuser at home than to women living in shelter. Arguably the most vital lifeline for battered women, affordable housing is likely to decline after disaster, when cheap housing on hazard-prone land is damaged or destroyed.

Not yet identified as a special-risk population, battered women and their children are at special risk during and after disaster. Local domestic violence programs are vital resources for women like "Andrea," whose story began above:

> We were on our way from the Keys here to Homestead in this beat-up car that we did have running a little bit when he jumped on me . . .You can go miles and miles and don't find anything—no gas, no food, no nothing. But finally, like I'd say about six months later, Homestead got one gas station, so we made it there and I was able to call the police, and I ended up here at the shelter . . . I didn't have any clothes, because I was fleeing for my life. I came here with one shoe, ended up going to the emergency room . . . He really went crazy. Before, I would get beat up maybe once a month if I was lucky. Afterwards it was like every other day . . . I was getting tired of it, but I was scared to leave him, because where was I going to go? Who did I know?. . . But then, after the hurricane it all got worse . . . It was really rough for a female. I ran across a lot of women suffering too with their children—husbands

beating them up and leaving them. It was pretty bad.

THE SHELTER STUDY: METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

I report here on a comparative survey of disaster preparedness, impacts, and response in domestic violence programs in Canada and the United States. This was an action research project designed both to contribute to disaster theory and to elicit knowledge for antiviolence programs organizing around disaster issues.<s>2The findings also had policy implications for emergency management planning and formed the basis for action-oriented guidelines for emergency planners and women's shelters (Enarson, 1997).

The unit of analysis was battered women's programs in the United States and Canada, including shelters or transition houses as well as administrative coalitions. A purposive sample of domestic violence programs was defined, in two stages, and surveyed by mail and/or telephone between April and November, l997. In the first stage, all statewide and provincial associations or coalitions were mailed a 23-item survey which included both closed- and open-ended questions; usable surveys were returned from 16 of 51 states and the District of Columbia in the U.S. and from 5 of 11 provinces in Canada (N=21).<s>3Respondents from these umbrella organizations were then asked to provide contact information for telephone interviews with member shelters they identified as either particularly at-risk or previously disaster-impacted; telephone interviews were conducted with 21 of these shelters, selecting for geographic diversity and direct disaster experience. In addition, all shelter-providing members of the British Columbia/Yukon Society of Transition Houses were surveyed by mail, with a response rate of 46% (N=35).

The methodology resulted in a sample of 77 domestic violence shelters, transition houses, and state or provincial coalition offices.<s>4The majority provide on-site shelter, though some smaller programs rely on a network of safe homes, motels, or other local shelters to house their clients. Both "disaster-knowledgeable" and "disaster-impacted" programs were identified and analyzed separately. Forty-one programs reported general knowledge of area disasters and were classified "disaster-knowledgeable" while 36 lacked even general experience with regional events. In the sample as a whole, 25 programs reported direct service impacts from past disasters and were considered "disaster-impacted;" although they may have general knowledge of area disasters, the remaining 52 programs reported no direct service impacts from a particular event. The British Columbia/Yukon case study (35 of 77 respondents) weights the sample toward the experiences of small West Coast communities.

As expected, most respondents reported no or relatively minor disaster events (e.g., minor flooding, localized toxic spill). However, the survey also included 13 programs severely impacted in the l990s by major flooding in the U.S. Midwest and Quebec, cross-border flooding in the Red River Valley of Manitoba and North Dakota, a southern California earthquake, and Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki. Drawing on site visits, participant-observation with the North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services, telephone interviews, and media accounts, I pay particular attention to the April 1997 Red River Valley flood. This event resulted in major flooding in Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks, Minnesota as well as two rural communities south of Winnipeg, and put the provincial capital on evacuation alert for weeks.

Sample size precluded a systematic comparative analysis between disaster and domestic violence planning and response in the two countries; however, no obvious patterns of difference were noted. While survey results cannot be generalized to all shelters in either the United States or Canada, the study provides baseline data and identifies emergent issues.

DISASTER READINESS IN BATTERED WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

"What we give them is all that they have," one worker remembered thinking after a fire in the shelter. As battered women's shelters are not generally recognized as priority facilities housing and serving an especially vulnerable population, their self-reliance through disaster preparedness is critical. Yet, with some exceptions, the survey suggested very low levels of awareness and preparedness.

Hazard Awareness And Risk Assessment

As expected, programs with direct regional experience of prior disasters indicated a higher awareness than other programs of locally hazardous conditions or occurrences, citing risks ranging from avalanche, gas explosions or hazardous materials transportation accidents to wild fire, flooding, tornado and earthquake. Few reported regularly receiving any official information on disaster preparation, depending solely on mass media; rural programs were somewhat more likely to receive direct communication, e.g. annual flood response plans from city officials.

Few programs reported participating in local, regional, or provincial disaster planning groups. Among the 36 programs without prior experience of regional disasters, four participate in local emergency networks; the great majority (31 of 36) were either not

certain or reported that their facility was not specifically included in local disaster plans (e.g. for priority evacuation assistance, communications, or emergency power). Programs with some prior regional disaster experience were also unlikely to participate in local planning efforts (4 of 41). More disaster-experienced programs did report being included in local response plans (13 of 41 programs, or 32%), resulting in some instances in "stronger relationships with emergency managers" (9 of 41, or 22%).

Battered women's shelters are special-care facilities housing extraordinarily vulnerable women and children. How safe are they? Overall, most responding shelters reported their physical facilities to be "relatively safe." Many, however, are located in older buildings affordable to women's services or are centrally located in communities built up in hazardous coastal or flood plain areas. A number of British Columbia programs located in a known earthquake zone reported that their facility was "relatively safe," adding paranthetically "not safe in the event of earthquake." Assessing the structural integrity of shelters requires worst-case scenario planning, specialized knowledge, and adequate funding for analysis and follow-up renovation.

Shelter Preparedness

Disaster planning is not a priority for domestic violence programs preoccupied with meeting the challenge of "securing basic needs for women and children, e.g. safety, housing, etc." As one shelter worker identified the major obstacles to disaster planning in her program: "Time and money. Demand for our services is very high and no increases in funding are like cuts to us."

[Table 1 about here]

As Table l indicates, fewer than half of the programs reported taking any concrete actions. Disaster-impacted programs generally reported higher levels of preparedness, as might be expected. However, six of 25 impacted programs (24%) and 19 of 52 non-impacted programs (37%) reported having taken no steps toward emergency preparedness.

Preparedness measures that were reported tended toward the routine (e.g. minor flooding) or contained accident (e.g. house fire) rather than the catastrophic (major earthquake), although a shelter might be at risk of all three. Eighty percent of the programs surveyed in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory, a region at risk of flooding, mudslide, transportation accidents, severe weather events, and earthquake in major metropolitan areas, reported taking either no action (12 of 35) or only minimal steps (16 of 35). Among these are six programs which each sheltered between 500-600 women and children during the last fiscal year. Many shelters store extra food and water on site, and have routine fire prevention procedures in place. More complex evacuation plans were rarely indicated, although battered women may well not be able to safely access designated relief centers or evacuation sites.

Among the factors inhibiting internal preparedness were lack of past disaster experience, low levels of hazard awareness, lack of information about preparedness, and organizational constraints. Lack of knowledge about regional emergency planning and lack of community leadership were also cited. Insensitivity to domestic violence issues may frustrate the initiative of some programs, as in this account from an earthquake-zone transition home:

> I called earthquake readiness at city hall and we didn't have a big enough group to warrant a meeting. They wanted us to organize our block or neighbors. I don't have that time and worry about safety issues. Besides, we live in an upscale neighborhood that doesn't like us very much.

Other programs reported having written disaster plans, protocols for emergency transport of clients and, in one Canadian case, earthquake survival kits for transition house residents. Factors facilitating disaster readiness included a regional subculture of preparedness, prior disaster knowledge, government mandate, leadership from the state or provincial coalition, personal contacts and emergency advisories. For example, state-mandated disaster planning for Texas shelters, monitored by the state domestic violence coalition, is a form of institutionalized preparedness inspired by a regional disaster subculture. Flood-prone Missouri established a state-level Flood Partnership including the domestic violence coalition in advance of the slowly-developing disaster along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Preparedness was often facilitated by personal networks in rural communities. For example, the emergency team in one North Dakota town includes both the shelter manager and her police-officer husband, resulting in a highly prepared local anti-violence center. In a rural British Columbian program, one active shelter worker is also a provincial Emergency Social Services volunteer. A First Nations program nearby reported receiving disaster information from their local band which was involved in community disaster planning.

Urgent warnings clearly motivated some programs to last-minute readiness (e.g., relocating valuable supplies and equipment, backing up computer files, making ad-hoc

evacuation plans) but effective emergency preparedness takes time. Shelter staff and volunteers in Grand Forks joined the fight to sandbag their town and prepared their own homes and the program office. Evacuated by siren in the middle of the night when the Red River crested higher than predicted, they were unable to help women and children in shelter:

> Our shelter was full, so we had people in motels. But we had no time to even find out where those people went, everybody was just—gone . . . Our focus was on finding these people, and some of them, we don't know what happened to them, whether they went back to where they came from, whether it was another state . . .One person we did relocate to another shelter in a nearby town. It was different for us because we didn't really have any time to prepare for anything . . . Monday came and the whole town was gone.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS IN DISASTERS: DOING MORE WITH LESS

Domestic violence workers know how vulnerable battered women are in the aftermath of disaster, as this shelter worker in rural North Dakota explained:

> So many victims of battery have been isolated from the normal networks of support—family, job, things like that . . . Now here's this person that's holding on, just barely holding on—the disaster hits. It's not just them, but everybody around them, they scatter. The little bit of sorts of support that's been helping that victim hold it together is gone, and in fact they may be forced into a situation, which we

saw here, of ending up in the home of the family of the abuser and actually having more to deal with, with less support than they've ever had before. I mean, it just mushrooms, the stress level of that victim.

But does violence against women demonstrably increase after disaster? This remains a question with no simple answer—if not simply the wrong question. Simple causal effects, for example on employment rates or migration patterns, are difficult to attribute to events as complex, diffuse and long-lasting as major environmental or technological disasters. Social service agencies rarely have record-keeping systems in place which identify disaster-relevant calls, or monitor disaster-related calls over time. Researchers rely on indicators like police calls, protection orders or crisis line calls which may be distorted in severely disrupted areas lacking functioning telephones, courts, or responding police officers.

Disaster-impacted programs in this study generally indicated declining service demand during the impact period, citing obvious access barriers for women trying to reach the center and a perceived reduction of tension while "the family pulled together," or was at least distracted by the immediate crisis.

Thirteen of the 25 impacted programs also reported significantly disrupted services due to a major community disaster. Nine of these 13 severely impacted programs reported increased demand (e.g. crisis calls, counseling, shelter); program representatives from Florida, Hawaii, Missouri, California, and North Dakota reported increased service demand from six months to a year later. Both on-going cases and new clients accessed their services. For example, after Hurricane Iniki the shelter manager reported increased

services to new cultural groups who were made aware of the shelter by volunteers at the local disaster assistance center. Missouri women's shelters sought funding to respond to the "ongoing escalation of demands for services, which included a new source of referrals from 'flood workers' doing crisis intervention in previously unserved areas and very hard-hit areas."

Hit by flooding in late April, crisis calls to the Grand Forks program rose by 21% and counseling of on-going clients by 59% between July l996 and July l997; 18% more protection orders were processed by the center in August l997 than in August 1996. Staff also reported more referrals from emergency rooms, suggesting a rise in physical assaults.

Upriver in Fargo, where the local domestic violence program provides crisis intervention but not shelter, the director reported a 15% increase in protection orders processed over the same period the preceding year, reflecting both the community stress of preparing for an expected flood and their response to Grand Forks families evacuated to the Fargo area. A second sister shelter in rural North Dakota reported an increase of 15% in domestic violence crisis calls. Downriver in Canada, border communities and Winnipeggers anxiously watched floodwaters coming their way. Many residents sandbagged extensively and then evacuated, although only two small rural communities in the area eventually flooded. Regional programs reported no increase in service demand either immediately or six months after the crisis.

On balance, programs reported more postdisaster calls from known clients than first-time crisis callers, suggesting that women already in volatile relationships are those most

at risk. When their own support systems are disrupted or destroyed, women and children already traumatized by violence must cope with new losses and may be forced to remain in, or return to, unsafe living conditions with violent partners. A shelter worker described such a case:

> One woman had gotten a protection order right before the flood and then when the evacuation was taking place, she really didn't have . . . basically, she had no family around here, her support system was very small. And so, because of that, she contacted him . . . She felt like she was forced into the situation and then things got bad and she had to get out of that situation so it created even more problems.

Another shelter worker noted that designated disaster relief centers or shelters may not protect battered women:

> And the Red Cross shelters, those type of shelters, are not safe for them. Their other courses of action tend to be neighbors, friends, family members—who are logical places for the perpetrator of that violence upon them to look . . . They're just going to put two and two together and say 'OK, well where is she going to go?' And so I think this really shows that we need to have a plan of action ahead of time to say, you know, if something happens and our shelter's unavailable, is there another shelter, across the state even, where we could transfer her? Because they're there for a reason. It's specifically because they're in danger.

Declining Resources

Hurricane Iniki left the shelter in Kauai without power for six weeks and no backup generator; payrolls were delayed by damage to the shelter's administrative agency. Until

she protested, the director reported that abusers violating protection orders received only citations due to damage to the jail. In the wake of flooding in Saguenay, Quebec, shelter staff reported: “Everything actually came to a standstill. The police services were overworked and stretched. There were no phones, no electricity, no water. All the energy was spent fending off the most immediate problems and responding to essential needs. It required great flexibility on the part of the staff." Floodwaters in Grand Forks left “slippery, slimy, smelly mud” and destroyed the center’s costly office equipment. The staff of 14 women shared one room and two phones for three months in a small temporary office on the University of North Dakota campus. Six months later, they learned that the office space they had nearly completed renovating was now to be on the wrong side of a new dike, displacing them again.

Less visible but more long-lasting are indirect losses sustained by women’s services and other social service agencies. While programs with strong community support reported media attention, financial help from local women’s groups, increased donations and access to government disaster-response funds, they also noted that this “sympathy factor” was short-lived. Program services and resources were also taxed well outside the area of immediate impact, as this North Dakota administrator reported:

> [We’re] talking about a very large percentage of the state population being affected by this evacuation and flood. We’re talking about them going across the state and moving in with other family members. We’ve got small communities that increased by, some of them, 200 extra people. And what we’re going to see, I’m afraid, is other families where there’s been, maybe, low-level violence, who are not on the [Red River] side of

> the state. But a month or two down the line, unless those [Grand Forks] families are moving back out and back into their home, the stress levels and the impact that has and the increase in violence there . . . And we're also seeing, and I've already heard it from some of the programs, funding sources that have been helpful for these programs are saying 'Gee, we don't have it now because we had to use it for the disaster. I'm sorry.' So the long-term effects are going to be statewide.

The director of the flooded Grand Forks program predicted that relief funds from private and public sources will meet half of their estimated $100,000 losses. Six months after the crisis, they were threatened with the loss of $60,000 in community block development grant monies diverted to "flood relief," prompting a staff member to protest to a reporter (Black, 1997, 2A): "We feel we <u>are</u> flood relief. We're that one piece of hope and now that's being taken away." She appealed publicly for different priorities in the recovery process (Black, 1997, 2A):

> The first priority should be the needs of citizens—their food, shelter, and safety. There has probably never been a more critical time for human needs—when we really need to pull together as a community. But human needs really aren't a priority now.

Programs also reported indirect funding losses due to canceled or delayed fundraisers, especially impacting U.S. programs with limited public funding. Like others in their area, the Fargo program was advised by United Way that their funding would be reduced in order to help (other) "flood victims," motivating them to conduct a planned "business breakfast" just two weeks after the flood:

> We lost three weeks of preparation for this event. It was an $11,300 gross—and I had no doubt that had we not lost that it would have been between $15,000 and $20,000, because we had people directly working on that who were front-line fighting the flood, who could have lost their homes.

Other indirect impacts included absenteeism ("staff were scattered all over the countryside") and staff overload. Only one program, located on the Gulf Coast of Texas where severe weather is common, reported personnel guidelines in place specifying leave and salary policies for disaster-impacted staff. A program director responsible for a hot line in the wake of the Red River flood observed:

> The question is, then, who's manning the fort? . . . [I]t ends up putting other staff members in crisis, and especially when you're talking shelter programs. It's fine to say 'you need to do what you need to do,' but you also then need to have the backup on the hotlines. . . . It's really important to plan for <u>that.</u>

Like other special-care facilities, battered women's shelters must respond to women in crisis unconditionally. But disasters disrupt other resources shelters utilize to serve endangered women, e.g. local hotels, motels, and safe homes, public transportation, legal and law enforcement assistance, housing and social services. Nearby sister programs may not be able to offer effective help and program volunteers and board members often at least temporarily withdraw their labor. Disrupted courts and overburdened police officers not only put women at risk but increase demand on stressed shelter workers; six months after the Red River crested in Grand Forks, staff reported it was still a "huge struggle" and a long drive to a different courthouse to get protection orders signed.

New Disaster Work

Disasters mean hard work for residents, emergency responders, local governments•and women's advocates. Asked how their program was changed by disaster, most respondents cited increased workload, including more case management, more information and referrals calls and media contacts, increased liaison with other community agencies, and more fundraising. Programs not directly hit reported organizing to provide shelter, collect and distribute money, resupply office materials, and share other resources with impacted programs. Where feasible, sister shelters expanded their mission beyond abuse to include housing evacuated families and relief workers (e.g. nurses caring for premature infants from an evacuated hospital). New children's support groups and other services were developed by nearby programs to serve displaced "disaster families" in addition to women made homeless by abuse.

One California program responded to the Northridge earthquake by distributing free emergency kits and flyers in conjunction with their regular public education programs. In Redondo Beach, the agency received a government grant one year after the earthquake for services to quake-impacted shelter residents; this 18-month project also integrated emergency preparedness materials into "life information materials" to help stabilized residents "get on with their lives in the future." In Florida, support groups initiated after Hurricane Andrew reportedly continued five years later for disaster-impacted battered women.

Battered women's networks provided leadership and resources to impacted programs. The Missouri coalition initiated and administered a federally-funded project to assist

member programs facing substantially higher demands from area women for emergency shelter, counseling and other services. The Florida state coalition conducted emergency preparedness training for members and disaster plans were distributed to member programs. In North Dakota, coalition staff as well as individual program staff wrote press releases, responded to media requests, and in other ways publicized resources available to flood-impacted women and their families outside the immediate Grand Forks area. Significantly, they were unsuccessful in their effort to include the coalition among the "primary agencies" in a resource guide for the statewide flood hotline, reflecting and reinforcing the invisibility of violence against women. The coalition later added addressing disaster issues to their list of annual goals, identifying emergency managers as professionals to whom they planned to offer domestic violence training.

These examples of disaster response demonstrate the broad range of new "disaster work" undertaken by domestic violence programs.<s>5Many would like to do more, as indicated in Table 2 (below). Interestingly, organizational disaster experience does not always substantially increase readiness to act, suggesting that emergency managers should target women's services with and without first-hand disaster knowledge.

[Table 2 about here]

These data suggest that disaster-impacted domestic violence programs will be especially open to dialogue about how they are involved in area response plans, providing staff training, and attending relevant meetings. Less interest was reported in developing formal protocols for coordinated emergency response or having the structural integrity of facilities evaluated, generally because of assumed costs. Emergency managers will find

this high degree of potential disaster readiness encouraging.

The survey also revealed some frustration that emergency managers fail to recognize the resources of local battered women's shelters, for example the possible use of shelter space, stored water and food, trained staff with experience placing homeless families and operating crisis lines. These are resources which can augment community capacity to respond to disaster but are currently underutilized.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This research highlighted two related issues: first, the low salience of disaster planning in the majority of U.S. and Canadian domestic violence programs surveyed; and second, the contradiction between increased demands and reduced resources in disaster-hit shelters responding to battered women.

Women facing both personal abuse and community disaster have unique and compelling needs, met largely in the United States and Canada through grassroots women's organizations operating safe homes, shelters, and transition homes. This study suggests that emergency planning is not currently a priority for these programs, which were further constrained by lack of information, funding, and staff time from significantly preparing their facilities, staff, or residents for disaster.<s>6Few programs participate in area-wide emergency planning groups, although small communities may include them. Overall, programs impacted directly by disaster reported more steps toward emergency preparedness and expressed more interest in increasing their readiness.<s>7 Those programs most hard-hit also reported rising service demand, including substantially increased crisis work as long as six to twelve months after the event.

Escalating or renewed violence in already violent relationships, lack of alternative housing and other support services in disrupted communities, and referrals from disaster outreach workers help account for increased service demand. The shelters surveyed responded creatively and flexibly to this workload and undertook new forms of "disaster work" with reduced resources. Paradoxically, a major community disaster may strain agency resources but also make violence against women more visible and inspire outreach to previously underserved women

New policy and planning issues emerge when we consider disasters from the standpoint of women's services providing women an unparalleled knowledge of violence against women. Emergency practitioners accustomed to partnering with groups like interfaith relief agencies, food banks, and corporate leaders also need to work with grassroots women's centers representing battered women, new immigrant and indigenous women, single mothers, low-income senior women and other vulnerable populations. Disaster-resistant facilities for domestic violence programs are essential, as are alternate evacuation sites affording safe shelter to women already displaced by abuse from their own homes. Preparedness programs designed for cohesive neighborhoods should also include those insecurely housed in disaster-prone environments, including women and children residing in battered women's shelters. Mental health, social service, and relief workers in the field need adequate training about domestic violence issues and an understanding of how power and control issues in disaster contexts impact women. Programs struggling to meet existing needs with limited or declining resources cannot

move toward disaster readiness; funding priorities in emergency response organizations and agencies funding antiviolence programs must reflect and support the needs of women at risk of violence in disaster.

Battered women's programs can increase their disaster-readiness and offer leadership to communities organizing around disaster. Structural disaster mitigation measures such as diking, zoning, or seismic retrofitting are essential; but nonstructural mitigation steps such as community planning networks engaging those most vulnerable to disaster are no less important (Maskrey, 1989; Berke et al., 1993). Disaster reduction entails the "full, day-to-day participation of ordinary people and their popular organizations in the struggle to enlarge choice and reduce vulnerability. This participation must be asserted and protected as a right" (Blaikie et al.,1994, 238).

A sustained research agenda will help answer questions important to women and men living through disaster. Research support is needed to investigate sexual and domestic violence in disaster contexts as a matter of public health, both nationally and internationally. Documenting the incidence and circumstances of disaster-induced violence against women and how women respond individually and collectively will support better assessments of community capacity and vulnerability.

Staff, volunteers and residents in women's shelters and coalitions must be active partners in disaster research and emergency planning. Working through groups forged in opposition to gender violence, the material conditions of work with and for battered women provide shelter workers an essential feminist standpoint for knowledge and social action. "The truth," writes Nancy Hartsock, " is, to a large extent, what the dominant

groups can make true" (1997, 96). Battered women's programs and other agencies serving marginalized groups achieve knowledge contrary to dominant truths and entrenched practices. Their hard-won knowledge is an essential basis for emergency planning which effectively advances the safety of vulnerable populations.

Not yet on the radar screen of most emergency managers, a strong battered women's movement articulating women's needs and interests before, during, and after disaster is a vital resource in disaster-resilient communities. Like other vulnerable populations, women living with violence need services but also a seat at the table when communities plan for disaster and rebuild their futures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was generously supported by grants from the B.C. Institute Against Family Violence and the Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action Centre, both of Vancouver, B.C. My thanks to Jill Hightower and Yasmin Jiwani for their unwavering support, and to Victoria Constance, Ruth Harding, Andrea Kowaz, Sue Meuschke, and Greta Smith. Maryvon Delano⬟ provided both French translation and skillful French research assistance. An exceptionally thoughtful critique by journal reviewers was very useful. My thanks to Tracy Porteous of the B.C. Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs for sharing this passion and for her efforts in British Columbia. Above all, I am indebted to the many busy women who shared their experiences and ideas, especially Bonnie Palecek and member programs of the North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services.

NOTES

1. Reporting on domestic and sexual violence in conflict-torn Yugoslavia and Albania, Sarah Maguire (1998) notes that current antiviolence research and programmes assume a stable society. She argues that declining reports of abuse during periods of intense conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina suggest that "committing domestic violence is a choice, not an inevitability." (p. 65)

2. Made possible financially by anti-violence organizations in the U.S. and Canada (see Acknowledgements), the study helped support a grant proposal for projects enhancing emergency preparedness in antiviolence women's services in British Columbia. The findings were also used to develop disaster planning guidelines for shelters, coalitions, and emergency practitioners; these were made available to emergency practitioners electronically, and distributed to participants in a regional conference on violence against women in disasters and related topics ("Women and Disaster: Exploring the Issues"). The two-day conference, held in Vancouver in April, 1998, was sponsored by the Justice Institute of British Columbia and the B.C. Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs. Most participants were provincial emergency social service volunteers, emergency management professionals, and B.C. antiviolence women's service representatives. Written proceedings of the conference include invited speeches by antiviolence specialists and action recommendations regarding violence against women andn other topics. For information about copies of the planning guidelines or the conference proceedings, contact: Dr. Elaine Enarson, c/o Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre,

University of British Columbia, 2206 East Mall, Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z3.

3. The responding sample was weighted toward programs located in regions more often hit by recurrent natural disasters such as hurricanes. The low response rate from statewide and provincial coalitions seems likely to reflect the low salience of natural hazards and emergency planning at large, and in non-governmental organizations particularly. In narrative comments on surveys and telephone remarks, coalition directors tended to minimize the significance to member agencies of disruptions in vital administrative services provided by the coalition, and therefore, to minimize hazards facing their own agency. It seems likely that program representatives with recent regional experience, past personal disaster experience, and/or high levels of involvement in local emergency planning were more likely than others to respond to the original mail survey.

4. Coalition surveys and telephone conversations elicited responses related to that administrative agency's experience rather than to the disaster experiences of member programs in the coalition. This distinction was maintained throughout the analysis to avoid double counting a single event described both by coalition staff and member programs.

5. These organizational responses from within the antiviolence women's community fall, for the most part, within the range of what disaster researchers have termed "established" organizations (Dynes, 1974) which respond through familiar structures to regular tasks after disasters, for example the North Dakota coalition's post-flood goal of offering domestic violence training to emergency managers. As community-based, nonbureaucratic, advocacy and direct service organizations offer critical services to

highly vulnerable populations, more longitudinal and comparative research of their disaster readiness and disaster experiences is needed. See Enarson and Morrow's (1998a) study of Women Will Rebuild, a feminist coalition which emerged in Miami after Hurricane Andrew to address the needs of women and children, including domestic violence services.

6. Examining preparedness in a sample of 25 Southern California child care centers, researchers Ellen Junn and Diana Wright Guerin (1996) drew similar conclusions about organizations serving infants and children. Their project produced draft legislation requiring licensed child care centers and family day care homes to complete a checklist on emergency preparedness. The researchers credited opposition from state regulatory agencies and political conservatives for weakening an earlier draft mandating specific emergency preparedness measures.

7. How first-hand disaster experience impacts the readiness and ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to take specific disaster mitigation steps has long interested disaster researchers. A recent case study (Olson, Olson, & Gawronski, 1998) illustrated how the "window of opportunity" created by an earthquake made disaster readiness more salient and facilitated specific mitigation steps in the community. The study also highlighted the politics of coalition-building around disaster recovery and mitigation, and the inherently political process of hazard mitigation, concluding that it is "a community's political system that decides authoritatively who will get how much life safety and who will pay for it" (p. 175, original italics). Battered women's advocates would add that this local political system is shaped by gender as well as by economic and

racial power and privilege.

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Table l

Program Preparedness

Action taken	Non-impacted programs (n=52)		Impacted programs (n=25)	
Structural protection like earthquake bracing or hurricane shutters?	8	15%	4	16%
Stockpiled emergency food, water batteries, radios?	13	25%	10	40%
Emergency drills with staff?	17	33%	5	20%
Evacuation plans for shelter residents?	23	44%	11	44%
Disaster training for staff?	6	12%	5	20%

Note: Includes programs with and without shelters, and coalition offices

Table 2

Program Interest in Preparedness

Action Considered	Impacted programs (n=52)	Non-impacted programs (n=25)
Attending area meetings on disaster preparedness	25 (48%)	16 (64%)
Ensuring that facility is included in existing evacuation and emergency response plans	33 (63%)	18 (72%)
Requesting technical evaluation of facility security	14 (27%)	7 (28%)
Providing staff training on preparedness and response	27 (52%)	17 (68%)
Establishing protocols for emergency response with other relevant agencies in our area	28 (54%)	15 (60%)
Developing an emergency plan for our organization	33 (63%)	15 (60%)

Note: Includes programs with and without shelters, and coalition offices

BIO (outdated)

Elaine Enarson is an American sociologist researching gender relations in disasters, currently in affiliation with the Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre of the University of British Columbia. Co-editor with Betty Hearn Morrow of the international reader The Gendered Terrain of Disaster: Through Women's Eyes (Greenwood 1998), she has studied women's experiences during Hurricane Andrew, disaster and domestic violence, and women and disaster housing. Her current research investigates women's disaster work in the 1997 Red River Valley flood. She is a past coordinator of the Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence, and of the women's studies program at the University of Nevada, Reno.