

Peacock, Morrow, and Gladwin – “Hurricane Andrew”

The authors start by rejecting the notion of community as a single autonomous household and for the idea that community is a network of interacting social systems. By approaching community this way, coordination and conflict become central network processes. The resulting competition in this network produces differential access to resources.

Disaster is defined as the failure of the community to adapt to an event. This could even be due to the failure to distribute technology capable of withstanding such an event. In this framework, recovery becomes the process where community attempts to re-establish social networks. Households with differing amounts of social capital negotiate in their network to mobilize resources and services resulting in dissimilar outcomes.

Finally the authors depicted the US market based recovery approach. Pre-impact forces, such as socio-economic status, race, gender, and culture, are often at play during recovery and reconstruction. This results in many pre-impact failures being rebuilt into the environment as communities are not able to access resources to influence their recovery.

Blocker, Rochford, and Sherkat – “Political Responses to Natural Hazards”

This article explored social and political activities arising in response to natural hazards. The authors adopted the social movement framework usually applied after man-made events to natural hazards. They concluded that the difference between the responses is reducing. I came away with two ideas. The first is that social construction of the power of nature is changing. People are coming to believe that nature is becoming a force that should be under the control of humans. Governments are blamed when nature is not controlled. Second, that protest is directly related to both self-interest and solidarity.

Nakagawa and Shaw – “Social Capital: A Missing Link to Disaster Recovery

The authors used social capital to explore why some communities have better recovery programs than others. They argued that disaster management focuses on the physical part of the vulnerability and social aspects are often missing. Disaster recovery is not only about building houses but the reconstruction of the whole community as a safer place, in fact a development opportunity. In both the Kobe and Gujarat case studies, communities with social capital are found to be efficient in rescue and relief. I wondered how culture, government capacity, and an active NGO sector would interact with social capital change to change recovery response.

Morrow – “Targeting Households at Risk for Storms”

This article had a slightly different focus than the first because most people experience a storm as a household. Morrow suggested bringing the disenfranchised into the process. She argued that disaster mitigation and response planning which pays attention to those with the fewest resources at the household level (financial, human / personal, family and social networks, and political) will not only be more humane, but also cost-effective. Morrow also suggested using community vulnerability inventories to learn where at-risk people are concentrated. This could be difficult as communities are often heterogeneous.

Anderson – “Vulnerability to Disaster and Sustainable Development”

Anderson begin describing how the understanding of vulnerability reached the point where we now acknowledge disasters are part of the human system. And as such, they can be predicted and mitigated and choices can be made to reduced vulnerability. She went on to explain how current development practices have increased vulnerability and how that vulnerability impacts sustainability. Finally, Anderson laid out a framework to assess vulnerability by researching possible hazards, exposure, sources of hazards, and the dynamic of change on the system.