Defining Disaster upon Disaster

Why Risk Prevention and Disaster Response So Often Fail

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> The world of policy requires both formal reasoning for much of the machinery of governance but also a more organic connection to, and recognition of, human beings.
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> —David Haines as quoted in J. Pajo and T. Powers,
> "The Anthropology of Policy Emerges"[1]

The chapters that make up the following volume attempt something curious. They propose to describe and advance the rectification of something that is essentially a cipher—the gap that exists between what experts know about risk and disaster and what of that knowledge makes its way into the directives of establishments presiding over the problem and the operations of people on the ground dealing with it.

The issue is not unique. The same sort of gap exists in almost every domain that deals with any and every human predicament. The same sort of disjunction prevails between what researchers unearth in the field of health and what enters canons of medical management and actual practice of medical practice. A similar disjunction occurs in the field of food and nutrition. Up-to-date erudition on what constitutes well-rounded and wholesome nourishment only sluggishly creeps into dietary protocols and onto plates. An identical chasm transpires between what is known, what is endorsed, and what is enacted in the realms of environment, hydrology, education, transportation, and more. All such fields display a rift, and a pernicious one, between what experts recognize and what gets into the governing mandates and executed undertakings.

In the sphere discussed in the volume, that of the perils that menace human communities and the catastrophes that befall them, the gap between knowledge, policy, and practice has led, and is increasingly leading to, dire consequences. That gap has resulted in advancing people's

vulnerability rather than diminishing it, it has engendered a furtherance in the number and sorts of hazards that human communities face rather than dispatching them, and it has augmented the miasma surrounding a people's recovery from calamity rather than alleviating it. In some instances, the gap has been responsible for creating endless hardship: it has magnified poverty, enabled disenfranchisement, and led to the founding of enduring recovery ghettos. Indeed, it has engendered what those in the risk and disaster field commonly voice: "First there is the disaster; then comes the real disaster."

Addressing the gap between what is known about hazards and disasters and what enters policy and programs would be important enough considering the circumstances that have prevailed more or less consistently around the world until recently. However, the chasm bears particular and snowballing importance now. The sorts and the scope of both hazards and naturally triggered and technological calamities that people face today have proliferated in the past few decades and with harrowing impact. Because there is little sign that this newfangled exigency will lessen rather than further advance, attending to the breach between what experts comprehend about risks and catastrophes and what gets put into guidelines and operations at this time carries great relevance. It not only bears on present alarming happenstance, but also bears on the imminent future (Hoffman 2016a, 8–9; 2016b).

The corpus of erudition about hazards and calamities is not small. Over the past sixty years, scholars have acquired a great deal of knowledge about every kind of cataclysm and the risks leading to them through systematic research across multiple disciplines. Illuminated have been the causes of mishaps, the quagmires of recovery in the short and long runs, and the increasingly frequent displacement of affected people along with their necessitated resettlement. Yet little has been accomplished in terms of risk reduction; the problem has instead turned into risk creation. Nor has much been accomplished to lessen the brunt of disasters when they happen; indeed, their calamitous clout has amplified. In the meantime, on top of the previously garnered realizations, three new and critical understandings concerning risk and disaster have emerged, each with considerable study behind it. One is that the ever-more-frequent disasters of both geophysical and technological origin across the planet along with increasing conditions of vulnerability are being driven by disturbing contemporary economic, political, and social forces. The second is that both the old and the new sets of disaster-driving factors are merging with further aberrant and exacerbating components, including global warming, coastward migration, and urban densification (Hoffman 2016a, 2017). The third is the now almost totally accepted comprehension that there is no such thing

as a natural disaster. All catastrophes are human caused at one level or another. Even seismologists, climatologists, and engineers have come to accept this realization. There may be natural triggers to disasters, but it is what humans choose, do, make, alter, or ignore that results in a calamity's occurrence, including those erroneously called "natural" as well as those deemed "technological"—that is, disasters that are the consequence of flawed human manufacture. No matter if the happening is an earthquake, flood, volcanic eruption, cyclone, wildfire, drought, nuclear meltdown, oil spill, or other pollutant, the underlying determinant is social. We ourselves are creating the hazards and the calamities.

Yet, time and again, little cognizance amplifying risk exposure, disaster causation, or how disasters unfold to favorable or unfavorable circumstance seems to get through to today's burgeoning governmental and nongovernmental operatives or doers on the ground. And the word "burgeoning" is hardly accurate. The numbers of governmental agencies from international to national to regional and especially the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with hazards and calamities everywhere have mushroomed almost beyond count. The disaster industry, if we can call it such, today ranks among the fastest growing in the world. Although without question many individuals in positions of authority or engaged in on-site operations in dire situations are well-meaning and well-versed, far too many lack familiarity with the basic components and erudition dealing with the problem. Many are political or career-ladder appointees who have little background in hazards and calamities. Some are well-intended neophytes. Others are benign or not-so-benign opportunists: scores of compelling needy people and heaps of alluring money are involved. Admittedly, the informative literature is extensive. It is also somewhat scattered. Still, comprehensive texts and pertinent journals abound, as do many knowledgeable consultants. In consequence, for example, despite the well-known fact that very few aspects concerning one disaster are transferrable to another, what often emerges are ill-suited cookie-cutter approaches and unfitting stratagems derived from such mis-garnered dockets known as "best practices" and "lessons learned." All told, the upshot has been, as White et al. note, we are at a state of "knowing better and losing even more" (2001, 81).

A Growing Alarm

We are not the first to address the dismaying and increasingly dangerous rift between what is known about risk and disaster and what gets into policy and practice. Warnings about the problem have long existed, but

have recently spread. In their article "The Disaster-Knowledge Matrix—Reframing and Evaluating the Knowledge Challenges in Disaster Risk Reduction," Spiekermann et al. (2015) also address the difficulties in integrating research-based knowledge into the policies and practices surrounding disaster scenarios. They access what they perceive as the core barriers in the exchange and implementation of knowledge concerning risk and catastrophe and introduce a means to identify factors hindering the conveyance of information. Their inventory somewhat parallels ours, although theirs is more focused on mechanism. Correspondingly, in his chapter in the book *Disaster Research and the Second Environmental Crisis* (2019, 161), James K. Mitchell directly asks, "Why can't we do better?" He notes that most efforts to contravene risk and disaster up to present have focused on four diverse, but not well-amalgamated themes: (1) improving scientific knowledge and technical intervention, (2) instituting legal restraints on unwanted actions, (3) buttressing existing societal arrangements for reducing vulnerabilities, and (4) developing incentives to accomplish mitigation in combination with bringing in underrepresented groups. He proposes a strategy of empowerment based on uniting all participants in a collective endeavor. Wilson (2006) in his article, "Beyond the Technocrat? The Professional Exert in Development Practice," details how the common understandings of professional and governmental roles lead to missing the crucial point of engagements with other actors. He calls for open spaces and a community of practice. David Mosse, a professor of anthropology at the University of London who has also worked as a social development advisor for several NGOs asks in his chapter in *Development and Change* (2004, 639–671) if good policy is impossible to implement. He observes that most agencies are shaped by the exigencies of their organizations and the need for joint associations rather than by enacting efficacious policy. Strategies are further formed to solidify political support, therefore, making the link between research, policy, and action problematic. White and Haughton (2017, 412–419) note how decision makers in both process and practices of hazard management skew their protocols toward current concerns and, in so doing, shape future guidelines in conformity to current circumstance, thereby impeding new and changing input. Long-term considerations accordingly become located in so-called hazard-scapes, in which risks are fixed and difficult for future generations to reverse. They refer to the practice as the "tyranny of the present." Serafini (2017), speaking of the failures of recovery after the Italian earthquakes of 2016 and 2017, reaffirmed that a common cause of the rift lies with many layers of bureaucracy, each charged with a different aspect of risk and disaster. All progress in consequence duly

ends up in a complete stalemate. Noting similar paroxysms in what he calls adversarial countries, Kelman (2012) points the blame of not integrating programs to action on the manifold failures of disaster diplomacy. He cites the double edge of dealing on the one hand with power brokers and on the other with the fear of scrutiny, all combined with internal prejudice, misgivings, and mistrust in governing institutions. Finally, Brondo (2015) calls for the much overdue amalgamation of practitioners within germane academic departments as the means of improving understandings and efficacious initiatives.

What Is Addressed in the Following Chapters

By pulling together contributions from individuals who have been deeply involved in policymaking with those who have extensive experience as practitioners as well as with academic researchers, we attempt in this volume to formulate a comprehensive examination of the chasm that exists between what is known about hazards and events, what gets into dictums, and what gets enacted. Our intent is to offer a triptych that reflects all three aspects in relation to the others. Introduced in the chapters are many concerns that are well established and many that are not, among them the factors that drive vulnerability and disaster construction; the frequent efforts of global and national forums to establish guidelines along with their constant revisitation; the tribulations faced by field personnel confronted with critical needs versus roadblocks; the effects of global warming; the complexity of resettlement; gender; the importance of local people's perceptions and ideology, including their chimeras and delusions. A summary of the book's chapters follows. Further description appears in introductions to the three parts.

Part I of the book, entitled "Illuminating the Fissures: Suppositions, Execution, Agendas, Realities, and Execution," is directed toward an exposition of the problematic fissures between knowledge, policy, and practice from the point of view of people who have both shaped programs and tried to enact them.

This part begins with a chapter outlining the scope of the disjunction and stating many of its manifold, and often covet, facets. Although he is an academic, Roberto E. Barrios has nonetheless directly worked in a number of risk, disaster, and recovery situations. His chapter "Unwieldy Disaster: Engaging the Multiple Gaps and Connections That Make Catastrophes" sets forward many of the basic causal components that debar the integration and realization of information disaster experts have amassed. The chapter further shows how anthropological research methods and

theories, a theme that we return to in the book's conclusion, helps explain why disasters not only often persist but also end up distending human and economic costs. Barrios stresses that what is required to bridge the chasm is a combination of understanding human behavior as expressed in each particular cultural circumstance, amalgamated to expert knowledge, material agency, governance practice, and very importantly, a measure of imagination. Barrios also presents the philosophical background that separates the various players involved in the disjunction.

The second chapter, "Advocacy and Accomplishment: Contrasting Challenges to Successful Disaster Risk Management," written by Terry Jeggle, a highly experienced and informed international practitioner, takes the examination of the rift directly to the practitioner's dilemma. Despite the many guiding international mandates and conferences that have asked the many factions immersed in the risk and disaster conglomerate to share information, few have executed efforts to minimize the quandary or share their ken. He points out that there exists no acknowledgment within any international charter that indicates a condition or undertaking in one place transfers, or is applicable, to another. Jeggle asserts that competent disaster risk management advances effectively only when both effort and leadership are localized. He further discusses the advocacy aspect of international, national, and local institutions and outlines the history of directives guiding them, including the United Nations' (UN's) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990 to 1999), the Yokohama Plan, and the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (2000 to 2015) and outlines how terminology shapes perceptions, roles, contexts, and agendas.

In "Natural Hazard Events into Disasters: The Gap between Knowledge, Policy, and Practice as It Affects the Built Environment," Stephen Bender, from his original background in architecture to his many years as an international hazard and catastrophe executor, takes a sweeping look at sovereign states, multilateral development banks (MDBs), NGOs, and the international community. He examines how each defines, shapes, and operates within various vectors of the disaster field: risk reduction, risk management, climate change adaptation, emergency assistance, and post-disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction. The various agencies involved, he maintains, know very well who is vulnerable and why, what can be done, and who will benefit from their policies and practices. What he discloses about them, however, are the covert issues of power, prestige, and funding among and within these organizations. Bender chronicles how certain concerns arise to claim dominance, which they are, and how they eclipse others. As a result, discontinuities, often deliberate, not only result in total downfall but also lead to it.

Adam Koons is an anthropologist who has spent his entire career as an in-the-field relief agent. His work has taken him to countless countries on almost every continent and almost every sort of fateful situation. He has worked in the context of environmental to technological catastrophes, conflict arenas, and in refugee and resettlement camps. Key to his direct and immediate endeavor has been the rights-based approach derived from the Sphere Minimum Standards directives, a protocol shared among such agencies as the UN-led Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the 190-member consortium of United States–based NGOs, and many other international groups. Although axioms exist, in "Humanitarian Response: Ideals Meet Reality," he finds there almost always remains a disparity between what should happen and what does happen. The challenge lies in the interstice between the ideal and the real-time decision making that by exigency ensues in crisis situations. Both axioms and actions bear implications in terms of ethics, politics, sociocultural desires, and ongoing relief operations.

In "Disaster Theory Versus Practice? It Is a Long Rocky Road: A Practitioner's View from the Ground," Jane Murphy Thomas takes the investigation of the knowledge, policy, practice chasm into a detailed description of several actual recovery projects. Within the portrayals, she deciphers why some of the programs succeeded and others did not. Thomas illuminates barriers, describes the many actors involved along with their positions and roles, then tells when and how the players nurture the project or constrain it. The projects take place in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Each project has a differing overseeing agency. In her exposé Thomas earmarks cultural issues, organizational behavior, matters of expedience, the muddled meaning of the term "expert," and, as with other chapters, power and politics.

Part II of the book, "Situations and Expositions: Plights, Problems, and Quandaries," moves the discussion of the rift away from agent and operative to an exposition of outstanding plights, problems, and quandaries that vex the disaster scenario. Some of particulars (e.g., gender) that this part addresses have long been known, and some are newly compounding (e.g., climate change and the increasing predicament of displacement). The types of calamities cited are both of quick-onset, albeit that is a misnomer—all have long developing chronologies—and those slow in arrival and recognition. Some are unexpected, and some predictable and chronic. Different aspects of the gap are unmasked again in each chapter in this part of the book.

To begin, Shirley J. Fiske and Elizabeth Marino take on the mounting disaster imbroglio of climate change." They point out that enmeshed within climate change are both slow- and quick-onset occurrences and that

both sorts of events contribute to the expansion of devastation. Climate change, in contract to other risks and occurrences, brings up distinct, and often political, chasms between erudition, policy, and action because the scholarship itself may be endorsed or denied. The fundamental dilemma, as the authors point out, is that the acuteness of the catastrophe is largely invisible. The onset of the alteration is by and large incremental. Sometimes it is marked by punctuated events, and other times it creeps up in a continuous way. The fracture between knowledge, policy, and any sort of mitigation, therefore, comes down to local definition and acceptance of the situation. Acceptance depends on several sources: insiders, outsiders, region, state, country, and globe. The authors set forth the social construction of climate events such as floods, hurricanes, wildfires, and rising sea levels, even though to the communities they seem to be forces of nature. They detail how climate change calamities in actuality occur, as with other disasters, in historical and socioeconomic contexts of power, social stratification, income, resource, and social network disparities, although once again outsider agencies often little heed the genuine causations.

Brenda D. Phillips addresses the perennial disaster quandary of gender and its role in the disparity between exhortation, instruction, and implementation in her chapter, "Disrupting Gendered Outcomes: Addressing Disaster Vulnerability through Stakeholder Participation." The matter of gender has no boundary in the risk and disaster amalgam. It crops up at every level and in every facet from original hazard to final recovery, if there is such. To say that the elements embroiled within the gender conundrum are myriad, complex, and clamorous is understating the subject. As Phillips indicates, the neglectful and reprehensible treatment of women both leading to and subsequent to a catastrophe appears an intractable scourge. Despite years of recognition and concerted effort, the mistreatment and disparities of gender within the material, legal, economic, political, and ideological realms of disaster continue. In her all-encompassing survey, Phillips illuminates the totality of predicaments and, in so doing, unveils the pervasive schisms that remain largely unabated between what is known about gender within risk and catastrophe and what does, and mostly does not, happen. The chapter brings up a number of global situations and sets forth what achievements have taken place. She includes a number of new contributions to the topic, including the recent inclusion of men and the predicaments they endure.

As risk situations and disaster impacts burgeon across an increasingly populated globe, the displacement of people and the need for the resettlement has escalated. The question is, Where can people go as land disappears and perils loom? What happens when whole communities or ethnic

groups want to move together as one, and not as individuals? Anthony Oliver-Smith who has worked more than forty years in the two arenas implicated in the mushrooming predicament, disaster and development and forced displacement, addresses the growing quandary in his chapter, "Resettlement for Disaster Risk Reduction: Global Knowledge, Local Application." As the quagmire widens, so does the resistance on the part of those who must move and those who must accept newcomers. The gap between what is, in essence, an unchartered situation and old policies and solutions looms especially large. Oliver-Smith's chapter reviews the history of resettlement, then examines the contradictory confluence of environmental disruption and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). He lays out the construction of global opinion about the matter, reports on progress and problematic outcomes, and illustrates with germane case studies.

Ryo Morimoto's chapter, "From Nuclear Things to Things Nuclear: Minding the Gap at the Knowledge-Policy-Practice Nexus in Post-Fallout Fukushima," zeros in on another contemporary development, in this case a peril that has sprung up only in recent decades but carries with it annihilating ramifications. His focus is specifically on the latest incident in what has, unfortunately, become a litany of happenings. In his chapter, Morimoto resurrects two older phrases that he finds more applicable than ever. One is "missing expertise" (Rajan 2002), and the other is "a new species of trouble" (Erikson 1994). Morimoto's particular concern is the contamination of and, especially, the vexation of decontamination in a land where the event of contamination itself violated cultural code. He argues that the gap surrounding this peril does not arise from unsuccessful coordination of knowledge, policy, and practice nor from lack of common language or clear communication. The rift lies, he claims, beyond the reach of the simple knowledge-policy-practice collaborations. It is ethnography, the key method of anthropology, he argues, that reveals what decontamination consists of for the locals undergoing the interminable catastrophe of the Fukushima meltdown. He reminds us again of another implicit understanding about disasters: The distribution of risk and vulnerability in society is uneven.

Mark Schuller's chapter, "'Haitians Need to Be Patient': Notes on Policy Advocacy in Washington Following Haiti's Earthquake," sheds light on yet another modern occurrence in what Morimoto in his chapter calls the nexus of disaster and its growing place in the disparity. That occurrence is the rise of today's clamorous advocacy. Schuller's discourse centers on Haiti, a country on the western part of the island of Hispaniola. As a nation, Haiti has become almost eponymous for every predicament noted in this book. The event Schuller details is the devastating Haitian earthquake of 2010 and its grievous continuing post-disaster recovery.

Through his personal participation in a solidarity effort championed by a number of local NGOs directly dealing with the plight of the islanders, he enumerates the actions, obstacles, and frustrations of the advocacy effort as it progresses all the way from its home site to Washington, DC. He describes the mandates of the nonexpert, non-knowledgeable politicians who nevertheless hold sway over programs and funding and tells how the money goes to military and for-profit firms he decries as Beltway bandits for their great influence over protocols, contracts, and aid distribution. He recounts the process and players, the official representatives, the lobbying, and tells of the formation of helpful support groups. His revelatory chronicle discloses the roles played by language difficulties, socioeconomic status, and trust.

Part III of the book, "Revamping Apparatus and Outcome," turns to whether solutions or perspectives exist that might offer an integrative bridge between accumulated knowledge about risk reduction and calamity and the tangled web that has so often led to their suppression.

Susanna M. Hoffman's chapter, "The Scope and Importance of Anthropology and Its Core Concept of Culture in Closing the Disaster Knowledge to Policy and Practice Gap," circles back to Barrios's initial presentation. She advances that anthropology's deep cultural perspective, and with it the inclusion of local, indigenous proficiency, can operate as a mechanism for consolidating scholarly information, externally imposed guidelines, and, ultimately, the production of effective aid. She proposes, as increasingly have others, that integrating a people's own mastery and appreciations along with the other contributing vectors achieves better outcomes in reducing vulnerability and accomplishing restoration. Anthropology's frame of reference incorporates a people's long-garnered understanding of their surroundings along with the ways they have traditionally managed upheavals. It incorporates what they perceive as dangers, and what they want outcomes to be. Their perceptions and desires are not necessarily the same as outsiders'. More importantly, it includes understandings of complex, many-layered, guiding customs a people may share, the disregard of which has caused many risk reduction and disaster recovery programs to flounder. How is space perceived? Who has the actual prescriptive authority to stay or go? How is property inherited and what does its legacy mean? Hoffman recounts a host of details that impact efforts but often are neglected. It is the lack of fusing deep culture, indeed allowing such customs to dictate, that has commonly led to not only to one disaster but also to disaster upon disaster.

After first noting how anthropologists today routinely chronicle the human impact of disasters, the chapter coauthored by Katherine E. Browne, Elizabeth Marino, Heather Lazrus, and Keely Maxwell directly

specifies the misalignments between institutions offering aid and communities receiving it and makes precisely and squarely explicit "what is known" about disasters from anthropology's most critical insights. In their chapter, "Engaged: Applying the Anthropology of Disaster to Practitioner Settings and Policy Creation," they earmark the obstacles faced in enabling practitioners and policies to recognize gained knowledge and offer, as no other presentation in this book does, a point-by-point set of recommendations for integrating risk and disaster knowledge into policy and practice. To do this, they ask three questions: (1) What is expressly and currently known about the causes of disaster, reducing impact, and managing impacted communities when calamities occur? (2) What in detail are departures that separate academic work on disasters and practitioner work? (3) And finally, what suggestions can be offered to span and eliminate the chasm? The authors come from a broad spectrum of practicing and academic anthropologists. They cover their topics in bullet point clarity, discussing such points as convergence of outsiders, shunning self-help, the drawbacks of privatization, the flaws of an extraordinary versus normal perspective, divergent measures of success, language and framing use in order to convey advice and more, and conclude with citing instances where academic and practitioner approaches are united.

The final chapter of the volume turns the discourse toward the future and reminds the reader that the time ahead matters. In her chapter "Future Matter Matters: Disasters as a (Potential) Vehicle for Social Change—It Is About Time," Ann Bergman asks if risk and disasters themselves can provide the vehicle for social change. In giving her chapter the subtitle "It Is About Time," she presents a double entendre. The problems of risk and disaster have gone on too long and their impacts even now influence what is coming. Bergman delves into a discussion of utopia versus dystopia in the context of past and looming calamity. She muses about whether dangers and disasters are the new normal, and if so, whether they have agency and provide opportunity. In all these questions, she directs the reader toward an understanding of sustainability.

Further Factors

While together the chapters in *Disaster Upon Disaster* cover a far-reaching panoply of factors involved in the chasm between risk and disaster knowledge, policy, and practice, still more factors exist. Some of them are crucial enough to bear mention.

The first among them straddles a double line, sometimes overt but mostly covert, often said as a facetious characterization but largely

deeply believed. It is the seemingly implacable judgement among many policymakers and practitioners that any insight emanating from the academic or scholarly community is the product of someone "airy-fairy" or "ivory tower" and is, therefore, without merit. One colleague practitioner deemed the it "the wall of scorn." Those adhering to the attitude treat academics as if they have never faced "reality" or, at least, the reality that policymakers and practitioners must deal with. Therefore, they know nothing about the nitty-gritty of hazard mitigation or disaster entanglement. Such a posture ignores that, in fact, most academics in the field of risk and disaster engage in situ in assessing actual hazardous situations and have participated in post-event tumult. Some have even been victims (Hoffman 1999). Their research by its very nature takes them to such settings. Those who study risk and disaster have as well typically looked at countless cases of vulnerability and calamity, enough to see the existence of overarching patterns that augment understanding and pinpoint unique distinctions. They can see beyond a singular crisis to the whole collective. Many consult with a wide variety of diverse organizations and speak at conferences attended by all sorts of personages, including governing officials, heads of agencies, and other experts, all of which gives them particular ability in potentially closing the gap between various factions.

There further abides a widespread and unfortunately persistent assumption among many engaged in the risk and disaster enterprise that the only solution to hazards and calamity lies with physical solutions, as in building levees, heightening tsunami walls, and thinning forests. Unfortunately, the public has been long inculcated in the same belief. As a consequence, most funding and authorized programs go toward tangible fixes, not social ones. That the fundamental cause of risk and disaster is exposure and requires social remedies, goes ignored. As a consequence, physical scientists and engineers, and not social scientists, are given primary, and frequently singular, consideration in addressing any malady. As the first several chapters in the book makes clear, authorities also tend to favor economic interests, such as development, tourism, and industry, over matters of mitigation, although these same priorities are themselves leading causes of the burgeoning disaster expansion.

To cap off the conundrum, policymakers and agencies also often do not see the entire discipline of hazard and disaster research as being all that credible. In this, the fault also lies with the scholars of the field. Hazard and disaster knowledge is scattered among a number of disciplines and researchers from the various bailiwicks have yet to coalesce their topics into a single specialty. While some experts attempt to integrate their subject matter with others, some do not. Similarly, the few universities that house disaster centers and give degrees in the subject again by and large

advance only the one vector, generally the social one, and neglect the others. Within the fostering universities, as well, the subject of catastrophe is still considered to be marginal and is treated as such. It is also true that the study of risk and disaster itself has yet to develop the three criteria that would establish it as a recognized and accredited field. The subject lacks a unifying set of theories. Although it rightly embraces a diverse set of approaches, each is rather territorially espoused and advanced by a particular discipline, with little, albeit growing, crossover. In addition, while the body of literature necessary to give credence to a field is rapidly growing, it, too, lacks integration. Lastly, over the unfolding of the field, the academics involved have switched the focus of their study in a seemingly erratic manner. Concern has peregrinated from events to recoveries, victims to survivors, extent risks to risk reduction, risk reduction to risk construction, vulnerability to exposure, mitigation to resilience. Some scholars currently even eschew the word "disaster" and admonish others not to use it. The wavering theme and parade of mutating vocabulary have rendered scholars flighty to policymakers and aid establishments and have implied a feckless nature to their knowledge.

Rarely has yet a further contributor to the rift between knowledge, policy, and practice caught much attention, that is, the taking into account certain veiled aspects within the realm of policy and practice. Without a doubt true kindness exists among many disaster management and relief administrations and organizations, and certainly among their staff, but what is often not acknowledged is that the aura of solicitude they frequently procure and the actions they take under that posture involve hidden considerations that work to obstruct outside input. In almost every hazard or disaster situation, one or two organizations and/or practitioners emerge to attain, and then continue to bear, the designation of holding particular sympathy toward the suffering. What is often overlooked is that frequently when such an organization acquires veneration, at the same time, it garners power. Once achieving the esteem of exemplary compassion, the organization then readily gains determination of programs and protocols (Barrios 2017). That, in turn, creates the phenomena of drawing sympathy back to itself, redoubling its cull of rewards, notoriety, money, continuity, and, again, power. The establishment that gains the mantel of sympathy, and with the funds and repute achieved, is often able to create monuments to itself, construct and name buildings bearing its name, and propagate legends lauding its magnanimity. Frequently, it further acquires official, or semi-official, status as chief among organizations, thereby diminishing the import and thrust of other entities. When a particular agency gains the sway of sympathy, the disjunction between expert knowledge and the agency's practices rigidifies. Agencies with the

power of sympathy tend to discount expert opinion as being extraneous to their proven success. They also more readily adopt cookie-cutter and best-practices platforms despite their having little or no relevance. Since their prestige as well often allows them access to many locales and situations, they become overextended and find easy answers more adroit. Dominating governmental or private establishments also secure influence over the framing of disaster: what happened, how long it lasts, and what constitutes actual injury. Often they promote dogmas of progress and betterment to justify their actions. It should be noted, however, that in many cases the victims also cultivate and wield the dynamics of sympathy.

In addition, it warrants mentioning that most authorities and agencies direct their policies and programs to what they deem as "communities." Yet the very use of the term "community" can worsen the gap in integrating scholarly expertise and especially in seeing that expert insight reaches an entire populace. "Community" is a word that has sliding definitions. In many cases community is more concept than fact. The word may or may not apply to a composite of survivors or vulnerable and, even if to some degree applicable, it may or may not include all relevant persons. Unquestioned, as it usually is, the term, and the assumption it implies, can connote both a broad sweep of inclusiveness and all-round effectiveness. Most often, in truth, it means the program reached some of the germane persons, such as its minor functionaries or ad hoc groups, but in truth did not make inroads to reach the entire body. In many instances, the use of the term "community" may only provide the persuasive wording of a funding proposal. Most anthropologists as a rule have dealt with authentic communities, where interaction among those involved takes place on a constant and continuous basis. But in most situations today, certainly those of major risk and calamity, community operates perhaps more like a metaphor borrowed from physics; the potential of collectivity into an actual community among a group of people may be there but is largely underlying. The fact of community becomes kinetic only when it is triggered by something such as a catastrophe, and probably last but for a short while. The thought that people compose a community may, thus, be a false instrument of policy and programs and leave the meaningful spread of knowledge and information sidelined in its wake.

Dismayingly, most programs, be they by government or other agency, still also revolve around relief as opposed to risk reduction or creation. The concern with relief, as opposed to prevention, is deeply rooted in history (Dauber 2012) and, despite knowledge particularly concerning risk and exposure, continues to affect the focus and ideology of most authorities and agencies. The notion that the vulnerable are responsible for their own condition is also deeply rooted and rebuffs considerable wisdom to

the contrary. Both antiquated notions are thankfully undergoing a slow but steady reassessment via the current popularity of resiliency studies.

Policymakers and practitioners, and for that matter scholars, may also experience program amnesia, but it may not be deliberate. Over time most agencies, officials, and practitioners undergo a great deal of turnover, taking along with it the chronicle of dangers and dilemmas. The forgetting, however, may also be purposeful, such that faulty programs are used again to promote hidden agendas or because they reflect inertia. Between policymakers, researchers, and locals, there also occurs issues of translation along with other failures of communication. Each separate entity in the complex of risk and disaster, might use different terminology or interpret words or intent differently. In fact, failures of communication are endemic to the entire conundrum. Again, these may be guileless snags, but they may also occur from calculated mishap.

One final point: Disaster agencies in their policies, along with practitioners and their actions and academics in their analyses, have tended to be decidedly Western-centric in all their considerations concerning risk and disaster. The orientation is somewhat ingrained because, at the bottom line, the very ideas of risk, recovery, and resilience are themselves Western notions. In every situation concerning surrounding hazards, programs to be implemented, and on-the-ground practice, whether these take place among a Western society people or non-Western, all persons involved need to assess the circumstance in a culturally relative and local manner. That includes what the people assess as a risk, define as a disaster, and how they calculate what constitutes recovery. Still more crucial is the inclusion of what knowledge the people themselves have about their surroundings and their perils before assaying, enacting, or installing any judgments, programs, or protocols.

Currently, the gap between risk and disaster knowledge and what enters the directives of policy and the actions of practitioners pervasively continues. With the explorations as to why detailed in this volume, along with the increasing insights of others addressing the issue, the hope of an integrated endeavor moves nearer.

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Note

1. Epigraph: Pajo and Powers 2017, 11.

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