

REDUCING THE TRAUMA: ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN
DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Despite careful planning and preparation, natural disasters leave behind destruction and trauma in their wake. The Federal Government established the National Response Framework as a resource to help communities prepare for, recover from, and respond to these situations. Conflicts arise as a direct result of disasters as well as an indirect consequence. Using Galveston, TX as a case study because of its repeated experience with recovery from hurricanes, qualitative interviews were conducted to explore what is being done to help with conflicts that cause additional trauma. Alternative dispute resolution skills such as conflict styles, active listening, and reframing and summarizing are explored as a means of reducing the traumas amplified by conflicts that are revealed during a disaster.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters strike various areas of the world every day and can affect people both directly and indirectly. Humans are able to respond to these events, and over time, have become more adept at planning for them, which has an impact on how we are then able to rebuild after disasters occur. The United States has consistently focused on issues of disaster and emergency preparedness, as well as relief efforts (Baron, 2008; McLoughlin, 1985; Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006). The government has developed guidelines regarding who should be responsible for managing relief efforts and how to respond to disasters—which primarily manifests in organizations like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross. Both FEMA and the Red Cross are nationally recognized disaster relief agencies that provide enormous help to communities who are reeling from the effects of a natural disaster. Particularly in areas that are prone to being hit by natural disasters, local communities also take their own steps for emergency preparedness and management in order to help minimize trauma and damage.

Though careful preparedness and preparation is important, it does not necessarily mean a community will be ready when disaster does strike—or that the trauma will be any less intense. The focus of disaster relief is often put on organizations that handle the ins and outs of getting city structures back up and running again. This is an important process but it does not necessarily address the intricacies of what humans experience during and after disaster situations. The unexpected nature of disasters can also highlight existing conflicts or problems that may not have been visible before. This sudden

revelation of conflict situations can exacerbate the problem, causing additional trauma or blocks on the way to recovery. In order to be more effective with handling and helping communities recover from disasters, the human experience of disaster trauma must be addressed. Alternative dispute resolution provides an opportunity to focus on the human experience as it is happening, rather than structures that current emergency management systems already address.

Professionals trained in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) fields have the ability to contribute positively to disaster situations; particularly, to help address the conflicts that arise as a result of trauma and the human experience. As a field, ADR can help sort out communication issues, as well as facilitate understanding of processes to those in need of help and communicate victims' needs to those who want to help. Much of the research about ADR professionals in disaster relief situations discusses the need and benefit of mediators in the recovery process (Rubin 2008); however, there is also research that discusses the necessity to navigate complex infrastructures in post disaster situations in order to address urgent issues that involve “shelter, food, health, environmental cleanup, transportation, communication...[and] people's emotions” (Volpe, 2008) Despite the acknowledgement that community infrastructures are damaged and emotions are heightened during and post disaster, we do not have a strong understanding of the role ADR can play to actually help navigate these complexities. Mediation, facilitated dialogues and negotiations for compensation are all systems where it seems obvious to insert ADR professionals (Gross, 2008). What has not been addressed is the examination of what broad role ADR can play in increasing access to relief aid efforts immediately following the disaster—and, if the dissemination of information and

aid is more effective and accessible, could that possibly provide a means for reducing additional trauma during disaster situations?

This study contributes to filling this void in current research, as it is specifically looks at how ADR can help in the midst of a disaster and access to relief, versus the post disaster claims, awards, and management that is more widely explored. Through in-depth interviews with public officials in Galveston, TX, I develop a more clear understanding of when and where communication or processes tend to break down during a disaster. During aid and relief efforts, communication and the organization of various forms of aid present complex and confusing challenges for disaster victims. Based on these experiences, this paper examines how ADR techniques can help reduce the amount of stress that occurs when there is a breakdown in the planned response of a community through increased effective communication, relationship building and attention to emotional frames. Though there are limitations to this study, as it considers a coastal community and interviews were primarily done with public officials, without including residents who have no assigned or elected responsibilities for relief and aid efforts, it provides information that is helpful to begin the introduction of ADR into disaster management trainings and practice.

I first describe the methods I used to conduct this project, as well as how and why particular individuals were chosen to participate in the interviews. Then, I introduce the concepts of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Emergency Management. Both of these concepts have their own backgrounds, philosophies, and structures that are important to understand separately before their potential to work together to contribute to disaster response efforts will be explored. I will discuss the disaster management

arrangements in Galveston, TX, focusing on conversations with city officials about trainings and response to disaster situations. The city of Galveston is located on Galveston Island off the south east coast of Texas in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2008, Hurricane Ike hit the area especially hard, and because of that it became a primary focus of my investigation. The discussion looks at how to make the concepts of ADR and Emergency Management work together to benefit communities and the conclusion finds compelling evidence that an introduction of ADR skills training could be helpful, though additional research is necessary before developing a training that would be comprehensive.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

To gain a better understanding about the process of disaster relief efforts, this study uses one-on-one phone interviews with public officials in Galveston, TX. Seven different offices (ranging from local to federal levels) had one or more participants in the study. Offices were selected based on research around structures for local disaster relief efforts, as well as federal or non-profit agencies that become involved when a national disaster is declared. I also reached out to additional offices based on recommendations of the public officials I had already interviewed. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour with offers to follow up with additional questions.

I used qualitative interviews as the primary research method for this project, because I was searching for experiential information, including how effective people felt particular efforts and procedures have been. Qualitative methods offer an opportunity to have a more in-depth conversation about the participant's experiences, as well as allow the opportunity to explore themes and emotions. During each interview, several concepts were discussed, including: preparation efforts, challenges with relief efforts and with receiving aid, rebuilding processes, and conflict management steps. After completing the interviews, I used issue-focused analysis to determine how alternative dispute resolution theory and skills training could address any of the negative experiences or structures present in disaster relief efforts (Weiss, 1994).

I recorded the audio from the interviews with the participants' permission and then transcribed to explore themes and to review the information gathered about the processes and preparation efforts of public officials. The opportunity was provided for

participants to remain anonymous, and any names of participants, as well as organizations they work for have been changed. Because this study focuses on the early stages of information gathering about particular processes, removing identifying information is not crucial to understanding how these processes work. Individuals are not identified with particular comments, though all of their comments help build the story described in this study.

According to Ackerman (2008), it is incredibly important to consider local knowledge in assessing needs and compiling solutions in post-disaster situations. I chose Galveston, TX, as there are several emergency management organizations that help with relief efforts and planning (the Galveston County Office of Emergency Management and the City of Galveston Emergency Management Office) and personal connections in the community. I wanted to focus on interviews with members of the local community, though it ended up being entirely composed of public officials. It was challenging to find those who were citizens only who could find the time and desire to participate in the study. The lack of range in interviewee positions within the community was disappointing and provides a particular focus to this study. It also opens the door for additional research areas and continuation of the project. Though many of the participants are also long time residents of Galveston Island, it is important to explore the experiences of residents (who are not also officials) before moving forward with any specific training opportunities for volunteer or public officials.

In future studies, it will be important to explore more about the communication between public officials and residents in times of non-disaster, as well as revisit the process for communication in times of disaster or relief efforts. This field of response and

management of emergency situations is a constantly changing one that evolves as people have more experience. As many alternative dispute resolution skills also aim to create neutrality and fairness when it comes to access of processes, it is also important to explore the population of the island in times of non-disaster to serve as a baseline when measuring experiences during a disaster situation. Through the interviews it was also pointed out that the exploration of the effects a disaster has on the surrounding cities would be another avenue to explore in terms of how alternative dispute resolution could help with those relationships as well.

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

The nature of this study is interdisciplinary, as it attempts to bring together concepts from two areas: alternative dispute resolution and emergency management. In order to promote a basic understanding of both fields, the literature review is divided into two separate sections, addressing each in turn. To begin, the concept of what conflict means is defined, as well as (broadly) the field of alternative dispute resolution. This is followed by a discussion of several tools and skills commonly used in alternative dispute resolution efforts, all of which were chosen as a result of information gathered in the interview portion of this study.

Defining Conflict

To better understand how alternative dispute resolution as a process aligns with the efforts of emergency management professionals, there should be a working definition of conflict. According to Pruitt and Kim (2004), conflict is more than just an overt confrontation between parties. In fact, conflict is “a difference within a person or between two or more people that touches them in a significant way” (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006, p. 12). LeBaron and Pillay (2006) continue to explain that the differences that are perceived as challenges are what actually cause conflict situations. This definition is particularly important for this context, because it includes ideas of difference, as well as the emotional component of conflict. The first step in understanding a conflict is to consider what separates the parties, and how their individual identities influence the way they approach and engage in the conflict. This understanding also sheds light on how the

conflict may have escalated, as well as what barriers might be in the way of finding resolution.

McCorkle and Reese (2015) also discuss the different common causes of conflict: communication/communication style, emotions, values, structures, information, and culture (p. 91-92). The categories they created are not absolutely the only types of causes of conflict, nor does a conflict have to fall into only one of these types. However, each category can provide a lens through which to consider a particular conflict or contentious situation, which may lead to insight and understanding that was not previously visible. For example, miscommunication could occur because of: the presence of strong emotions, different value systems, different cultural frames or backgrounds, or even due to various means of communication being unclear. That does not necessarily mean that miscommunication is always a part of conflict, just that conflict can be influenced by a multitude of factors that do not have to include poor communication skills in general.

Augsburger (1992) points out another example of the complexity of discovering the cause of a conflict situation by explaining that, “emotion-talk differs greatly from culture to culture” (p. 123). He also explains how “we classify our emotional experiences by cultural values” and even points out that because of that, “there may be as many ways of feeling as there are of thinking and talking” (Augsburger, 1992, p. 123). In this sense, emotions can be just as different as language; making it difficult to understand one another if you have no prior experience or knowledge. In fact, “language is always more than a vehicle for communication” (Lederach, 1995, p. 75-76). Language is a window into how people make sense of their experiences and their expressions of conflict—oftentimes “keeping with cultural patterns and ways of operating” (Lederach, 1995, p.

76). Thus, we have a situation that is emotionally charged and misunderstood—making the potential for conflict increase. This does not mean that if there is misunderstanding there is always conflict; just that conflict is often rooted in what is important to us, meaning there is often lots of emotional energy.

Culture is another complex and broad means of describing the root of a conflict. Culture is so inherent in the way that we conduct ourselves, that it is paramount that it also be considered when searching for means of finding common ground or even an agreement. Lederach (1995) discusses a social constructionist view of conflict that explains how social meaning drives the attachment of meaning and interpretation to actions and events (p. 8). “From this starting point, conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge, and knowledge is rooted in culture” (Lederach, 1995, p. 8). Avruch (1998) furthers this with the assertion that the “chances for miscommunication, misperception, and...conflict increase” when we share experiences and values that are principal to our self-understanding, and when we encounter those who have varied perspectives to our own (p. 65). In order to build strong resolutions, these connections must be recognized (and taken into account) when developing methods to resolve conflict. Understanding conflict and resolution processes may be tricky, but trained practitioners can help make conflict situations more manageable if they understand possible conflict roots, or sources of difference.

Understanding Alternative Dispute Resolution

What should we do with this understanding of conflict? Resolution of conflict is often the end goal of conflict situations, and as it has been pointed out: without consideration of the root of the conflict, that can be quite challenging. There may be

different interpretations of what complete resolution looks like, but in general, even if a conflict may have productive qualities, there is a desire for it to come to an end. In particular, an ending that will satisfy the needs or challenges that led to the conflict when it began. Academic professionals have been researching how to understand what conflict is and how to find resolution for decades. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is a concept that encompasses more than just the desire to resolve a conflict successfully. ADR also considers the skills, understandings, and practices that go into the resolution of a conflict situation; particularly, a resolution that is found through a less traditional method than the current criminal justice system or law. Another important distinction of ADR is the attentiveness to “parties’ subjective positions and validat[ion] of their emotions” (Tsur, 2008, p. 373). This attention to potential causes or exacerbating factors of a dispute distinguishes the practices of ADR from the traditional justice system.

There are certainly more specific and organized methods of resolving a conflict situation that vary, based on your precise dispute, and your preference for resolving it. There are retributive, restorative, and transitional justice methods, as well as mediation, negotiation, litigation, and arbitration—to name a few of the most well known structured methods. Alternative dispute resolution focuses more on the methods that are less formalized (mediation, negotiation) and the skills that are often associated with them: summarizing, active listening, reframing negatively charged comments, using affective statements, or even just hearing what is said and reflecting it back to those in conflict.

As mediation and negotiation are two of the most common methods I have discovered in research pertaining to disaster relief contexts (Gross, 2008; Mnookin, 1998; Rubin, 2008; Tsur, 2008), it seems appropriate to provide a basic understanding of what

each process is used for. Lederach (1995) distinguishes mediation as a process that “can and should facilitate the articulation of legitimate needs and interests of all concerned into fair, practical, and mutually acceptable conditions” (p. 14). Often in the United States, mediators are also seen as neutral and impartial parties who offer a safe space for the conflicting parties to not only find a mutual agreement, but to also be heard. Negotiation, according to Lederach, only becomes a possibility “when the needs and interests of all those involved and affected by the conflict are legitimated and articulated” (1995, p. 14). Process-wise, in the United States, this will often take the form of advocacy and confrontation around basic needs and interests of each particular side (Lederach, 1995). In general, these understandings are sufficient to help set the stage for understanding that though these processes have the potential for success in many types of conflict situations, their more formalized structure may not be the most appropriate for skill building to deal with potential conflicts during relief efforts.

Tools

Though there are many tools and skills that can (and are) utilized when considering a conflict situation, the ones I feel it is important to consider for the purposes of this study are: the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), active listening skills, and summarizing and reframing. Each of these helps serve the purpose of not only identifying or discovering the cause of a conflict, but acknowledging the emotions or investment in that cause and validating it’s presence in the situation. Though these are not at all comprehensive in terms of how ADR training could be beneficial during a conflict situation, each of them serves a purpose that can be utilized under less formal and more hectic situations.

Conflict Styles/Conflict Mode Instrument

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument can be helpful on a personal level for those who work in public or leadership positions (in this case a city official or relief worker), and it can also shed light on those with whom they are working. This instrument is used as a means of understanding your own behavior in a conflict situation. There is a short assessment that the participant must take and then there are five different conflict styles that attempt to explain more about how we react to conflict. The five different styles are: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. In Figure 1, each of these is presented in relation to one another and in relation to the presence of assertiveness and cooperativeness, which typically characterizes each style. Every person is not just one style or another, though each of us probably has a tendency to lean more towards one style than others. There may also be situations in which we adapt different styles, based on what it is we are in conflict about or how involved we are in a particular conflict.

Competing is a style that is considered to be both assertive and uncooperative, as shown in Figure 1. This style is characterized by those who approach conflicts head on and with a 'win/loss' mentality, valuing their perspective over the perspective of the person they are in conflict with (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). This is one of the extreme ends of the spectrum, and can be helpful in drawing out particular aspects of the confrontation or even problematic if there is a need for understanding of a different perspective.

Collaborating is also highly assertive, but unlike competing, is also highly cooperative, according to the TKI. Someone with a conflict style that tends towards

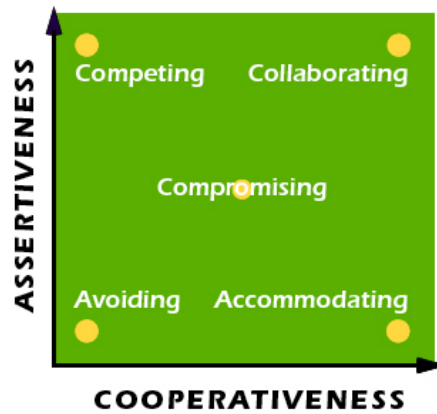


Figure 1: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009)

collaborating would spend time looking into the particular conflict (and it's cause), while also considering the other parties involved and what might be the best solution for them (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). There can be creative solutions formed through collaboration, and as the name suggests, people with this conflict style aim to find the solution that works for both parties (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009).

Avoiding is the opposite of collaborating. People with an avoiding conflict style tend to fall on the lower ends of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Avoiding can take many different forms—postponing a conversation, withdrawing from the conversation, or sidestepping an issue—and indicates that the person does not pursue either their own or any other parties' interests in a conflict situation (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). Those who fall into this category are typically difficult to work with in a conflict situation; however, it can be incredibly helpful if there is no time or space to deal with the conflict immediately. Continuing to avoid even after there is a more appropriate time or space to consider or address the conflict is where things may become a bit more challenging and harmful.

Accommodating tends to include those who are unassertive, but very high on the cooperative end of the scale. This often looks like someone who is incredibly interested in the perspectives and wants of the other person (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). Often this can mean that the person who is accommodating does not insert their perspective at all into the conversation and they may end up yielding or agreeing to something they are uncomfortable with, merely to ensure that things are able to move forward to be resolved (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). This can be helpful if someone is not particularly passionate or knowledgeable about a particular subject area, and it can also be quite problematic if an issue is unresolved due to constant yielding. Accommodating is the complete opposite of competing.

Compromising falls into a more moderate area of both cooperativeness and assertiveness. Oftentimes those who have a tendency towards compromising will look for a quick solution that will satisfy both sides; which could include each side giving something up in exchange for whatever it is that they want most (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009). This does not explore the various options each side might have (cooperativeness) and also may fall short of determining what one person wants (assertiveness); however, it can be a fairly efficient way to move forward with each side getting something that they would want, even if it does not maximize the potential for satisfaction on both sides (Thomas & Kilmann, 2009).

Active Listening

Another ADR skill that is widely utilized and could be helpful in the context of disaster relief efforts is active listening. The ability to listen is one that is taken for granted, and oftentimes people assume that listening is an automatic process that can

happen without any real effort or concentration (Conflict Research Consortium, 1998; McCorkle & Reese, 2015). In fact, “listening is a mental skill requiring attentiveness and energy” (McCorkle & Reese, 2015, p. 42). Many times, people can: become distracted with other thoughts or feelings, find themselves preoccupied with a response to something that was said, or allow themselves to be caught up in noises or movements happening around the speaker (McCorkle & Reese, 2015). This provides a challenge, because if you allow these things to happen, thinking that you are in fact listening, you may miss something important shared by the speaker. Active listening is more structured and does not focus on the listener; so much as it does the speaker and really hearing or understanding what is being said.

McCorkle and Reese (2015) assert that “listening is a complex undertaking” and that there are six different components to listening: hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding (p. 42). These are all very important, because active listening is about letting someone know that they have been heard. Often, this is done through reflecting what someone has said back to them (and receiving confirmation for what you reflect), while also interpreting what you have heard to attempt to acknowledge various emotions the speaker is experiencing (Conflict Research Consortium, 1998).

All six of the components listed above are important, because without really *hearing* what someone has said, it can be difficult to *understand* or *remember* what has been heard. If there is no recollection of what has been heard, it would be difficult to make *interpretations* about the comments and to *evaluate* them in terms of what someone is feeling. If none of the above components have been completed, there is no way to

reflect what someone has said back to them in a *response* to the situation. If someone feels heard, they are more likely to continue sharing other details and it could help avoid misunderstandings that stem from assumptions without hearing (Conflict Research Consortium, 1998). It is more likely that issues will be resolved quickly if someone feels as though their concerns have been heard and are being worked on.

Summarizing and Reframing

Oftentimes when people are faced with conflict, it can be very difficult to prevent any emotions from coloring stories or interpretations of events. It can also be difficult, as a listener, to keep track of what has been said and what is pertinent to the conflict.

Summarizing can be an important tool when it comes to checking in about what was heard, as well as keeping track of what has been said. It can be particularly helpful to use summarizing tools when there are several details being explained. Clearly summarizing does not have to include every detail, and it can instead be thought of as paraphrasing what one has heard. However, in summarizing, it is helpful to also use reframing as a means to change things that may be “negatively phrased” into something more neutral and descriptive (McCorkle & Reese, 2015, p. 50). Reframing is another way of “summariz[ing] a substantive issue” and really focuses on replacing negative labeling with either the positive quality that the person might prefer, or something more neutral or general as a means of getting more information (McCorkle & Reese, 2015, p. 50-51). Specifically, “reframing offers an important tool to mitigate the harm that occurs when [people] engage in defensive communication or negative labeling” (McCorkle & Reese, 2015, p. 51). Sometimes in order to move forward the best strategy is to attempt to

neutralize whatever is agitating a person so that communication can continue in a way that makes it easier for them to be heard.

CHAPTER IV

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The second part of the literature review for this study is the field of emergency management. This section of the literature review explores defining emergency management as a field and the development of organizations and procedures that exist today. The roles of the Local, State, and Federal governments are explored, in addition to the explanation of basic structures of preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response and recovery as each relates to emergency management systems.

What is Emergency Management?

Disasters strike communities at any and all times. Many people live in places that are more often hit by natural disasters (or are at least more aware it is a possibility); however, regardless of this preparation, disasters create a sense of fear and panic when they hit. These situations often become states of emergency (local or federal), and in many cases it takes collaborative efforts from near and far to get many communities on the road to recovery. This process is commonly known as disaster relief, as it comes after the effects of the disaster have hit. Governments (local, state, and federal) attempt to make plans for how things will be handled *before* disaster strikes. This practice is known as emergency management, and includes proactive efforts to protect against disasters, disaster relief efforts, and recovery efforts in its breadth. “Emergency management is a broader set of functions that go beyond search and rescue, emergency medical services, temporary shelter and feeding, and restoring lifelines” (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006, p. 131). Emergency management, with all its various facets, seems to include one key thing that establishes a strong foundation, and that is: collaboration

(McLoughlin, 1985; O’Leary & Bingham, 2009; Olson, 2000; Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006).

Since the 1940s and 1950s, the field of emergency management has become much more collaborative (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006). In 1950, the government passed the Disaster Relief Act of 1950, which was the first time a permanent source of funding was established for disaster relief and aid (HUD USER, 2015). Prior to that time, there were various acts passed that attempted to provide assistance to communities and individuals suffering from the aftermath of a natural disaster, but there was nothing that established a permanent intervention from the Federal government. This change, and several amendments that followed allowed for money from the Federal government to be utilized in relief and rebuilding efforts for things like emergency housing, individual assistance (federal surplus supplies), and repairing local government buildings and properties (HUD USER, 2015). The Disaster Relief Act of 1950 was further amended between 1970 and 1974, placing “emphasis on assistance to individuals and hazard mitigation” (HUD USER, 2015). There was more emphasis on what is now known as emergency management in these amendments as well. The Federal government was given the responsibility of handling disasters, and there were policies established to help secure individual assistance and define what an emergency is and what is considered to be a disaster (HUD USER, 2015).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) became a prominent leader on the scene on disaster relief in 1979, when the agency was given the task of “coordinating federal disaster policy including preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016). “Its missions were to provide that single point of contact for state and local governments,” as a means of “optimiz[ing]

the use of emergency preparedness and response resources” (McLoughlin, 1985, p. 166). After its establishment in 1979, FEMA needed a means of putting all aspects of emergency management together in a way that allowed each of them to be utilized to help with the success of the others. In order to coordinate the varied attentions needed for pre-disaster, disaster, and post-disaster, the Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS) was created (McLoughlin, 1985). The system was developed not just to ensure that all components of preparing for and recovering from a disaster were considered, but also to continue to ensure the system was maintained and adjusted as new methods were learned (McLoughlin, 1985).

In the years that followed amendments continued to be made, largely in an effort to work out gaps that were discovered as hurricanes and other disasters hit various parts of the United States. In 2002, FEMA became a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the passing of The Homeland Security Act (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016). In 2006, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, uncovering yet more areas of necessary improvement in the emergency response systems. FEMA’s mission was redefined and the organization was given greater autonomy in its authority of emergency management (HUD USER, 2015). The National Recovery Framework was developed in 2011, so that FEMA could provide better coordination of pre-disaster preparation and post-disaster recovery (HUD USER, 2015). Though many additional changes were made throughout history, an important part of this brief history of emergency management in the United States is that these policies are living—constantly changing and adapting when their structures are found to be lacking. Many efforts have been made to invest in the planning for disaster emergencies, in hopes

that when disasters hit, communities will be more prepared and (hopefully) less devastated by the disaster (Bea, 2004). Collaboration seems to be the focus of implementation of preparedness programs, particularly when it comes to the role of FEMA in relation to the local and state governments (McLoughlin, 1985).

Local, State, and Federal Structures

There are essentially three governmental structures that all communities depend upon when disaster strikes: Local, State, and Federal. All three of these agencies play important roles in the planning and recovery processes, though each is meant to have separate areas of expertise, as to better address needs that arise during a disaster (preparation, response, and recovery). Olson (2000) refers to disasters as sort of “exogenous shocks” that require response by all political systems (p. 265). Indeed, it seems as though there is a kind of ‘convergence’ upon communities that have been struck by disaster, from those who wish to offer assistance (Fritz & Mathewson, 1956). This could be completely chaotic without the structures that have been established to help deal with different people and organizations who are invested in helping the response and recovery processes that occur during and after a natural (or manmade) disaster.

Disasters are always considered to occur at the local level, as communities are first impacted before there is any national attention or involvement (FEMA, n.d., 3.4). It is up to the local government officials to provide warning for these events when possible (hurricanes, tornados, or slow rising floods), as well as to coordinate and manage all “assets used in the response and recovery efforts” (FEMA, n.d., 3.4). This would include resources from non-profit organizations, surrounding communities, and any aid from the State or Federal governments. There are local Offices of Emergency Management, that

help promote awareness, coordinate planning and preparedness, aid in communication, and organize response efforts through their own resources and any others collected from the State or Federal governments (City of Galveston, 2015). If a disaster situation exhausts all the resources of the local government, officials are tasked with reaching out to the State for additional resources (FEMA, n.d., 3.5).

Some states provide preparedness planning documents and trainings for local governments to take part in, as a means of giving them the resources for who to contact and what processes to go through, in the event of an unexpected disaster or for communities that are rarely hit (Texas Department of Public Safety, 2016). Though these are not intended to be all encompassing, it helps ensure local governments have gone through particular resources and procedures before asking for additional help. When a local government official reaches out to the State for resources to aid in disaster relief, there are a number of things that the State (and the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC)) is ultimately responsible for: monitoring the situation, reviewing local procedures and efforts, determining if State resources are enough to help the local government and community recover, and proclaiming a state of emergency or applying for Federal assistance (FEMA, n.d., 3.6). States are ultimately responsible for response and recovery efforts if the declared ‘state of emergency’ is not recognized by the Federal government as one that necessitates Federal resources.

If the State does not have the resources to help the local government, the Federal government is tapped for assistance. The agency within the Federal government responsible for coordination, activation, and implementation of these resources is FEMA (FEMA, n.d., 3.7). FEMA is responsible for “the federal government's role in preparing

for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016). The “States work with FEMA to access Federal programs and support” during times of disaster and recovery (FEMA, n.d., 3.7). In order for FEMA to offer assistance to the local and State governments, the Governor of the state must petition the President for a declaration of Emergency or Major Disaster—once the declaration can be made, FEMA can begin to work through local offices with that particular state/region (FEMA, n.d., 3.13). The process for recovery and filling out all the paperwork can take years to complete, which is why it is imperative for communities to do as much preparation for disasters as is possible. Many of these steps are accounted for in current emergency management systems (Bea, 2004).

Components of Emergency Management

As FEMA is the central point-of-contact for local and state governments while dealing with any and all emergency management, they are responsible for the overall vision of what emergency management truly encompasses: 1) hazard mitigation, 2) disaster preparedness, 3) disaster response, and 4) disaster recovery (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006, p. 131). Each of these components addresses a particular area of emergency management that is necessary to understand. *Mitigation* refers to any “activities that reduce the degree of long-term risk to human life and property from...disasters” (McLoughlin, 1985, p. 166). *Preparedness* encompasses all training and planning done via local, State, or Federal means, as well as any non-profit organizations (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006, p. 131). It also includes any pre-established communication systems or other “operational capabilities for responding to a disaster” (McLoughlin, 1985, p. 166).

Response includes activities that attempt to limit damage and stabilize the community during the course of (or immediately following) a disaster (McLoughlin, 1985, p. 166). This could include search and rescue operations, shelter, emergency medical attention, or evacuation (McLoughlin, 1985). *Recovery* refers to all activities that help restore “lifelines and basic services” (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006, p. 131). These efforts involve both short term and long term efforts to remove the effects of a disaster (debris removal, housing, building restoration, etc.) from the community which it devastated. Though some parts of the focus of emergency management come before a disaster ever hits, there is still so much to consider and take care of when faced with the aftermath of natural disasters.

National Incident Management System

In 2003, shortly after FEMA became a part of the Department of Homeland Security, there was a Presidential Directive issued that a National Incident Management System (NIMS) be developed (*National Incident Management System*, 2008, p. 3). This system was to act as a template for management of all domestic incidents—in particular, to act as a proactive means of guiding all types of agencies and departments “to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents” (*National Incident Management System*, 2008, p. 1). The goal of this type of program was not to be a specific plan for management of resources or incidents, but to define what core principles and processes should guide “effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management” (*National Incident Management System*, 2008, p. 3). NIMS also recognizes the roles and goals of local, state, tribal, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector as important players in preparedness, response,

recovery, and mitigation when it comes to disruptive and dangerous incidents (*National Incident Management System*, 2008). NIMS has become an important part of the National efforts for emergency response, as it provides guidance and uniform definition of concepts as defined by the Federal Government and its role in emergency management as a whole system.

Under the umbrella of NIMS exists the *National Response Framework* (NRF). While NIMS provides the overarching concepts, roles, and principles that inform management of incidents, the NRF provides the actual “structures and mechanisms for national level policy for incident management” (*National Incident Management System*, 2008, p. 1). This framework is “always in effect and elements can be implemented at any time” (*National Response Framework*, 2013, p. 1). There are five mission areas of preparedness in the NRF: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery (*National Response Framework*, 2013). Though the framework provides structures for incident management (focusing on saving lives, protecting the environment and properties, as well as reestablishing access to basic human needs) is not meant to be a ‘one size fits all’ plan that is followed (*National Response Framework*, 2013). Instead, NRF is meant to acknowledge that there are tiers of response needed in order to respond to incidents of all sizes, beginning first with the organization or structure deemed capable at the most local level (*National Response Framework*, 2013, p. 1). The NRF encourages entire communities to collaborate and strengthen planning, response, and recovery efforts (Department of Homeland Security, 2016).

Other Resources and Assistance

There has been quite a bit of criticism on FEMA and emergency management systems in general since Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Shores of the United States (particularly in New Orleans, LA) in the fall of 2005. The disaster response as a whole was considered to be inadequate, and the relief efforts seemed to be uncoordinated (Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006). Because of this, there has been increased emphasis on planning and community readiness, as well as training opportunities for disaster relief. Though there are firefighters, emergency medical professionals, and police officers who are all called upon to respond in emergency situations, there are always shortages of help when it comes to dealing with the aftermath of a disaster. Communities have been encouraged to play a larger role in prevention, response, and recovery as well. One of these programs is Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). These are local programs aimed at educating “citizens about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area” (Galveston County CERT, 2010). The trainings include “basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations” (Galveston County CERT, 2010). This allows citizens to become more actively prepared to help their communities during and after a disaster hits.

The American Red Cross is well known in the United States for their role in disaster relief efforts. According to their website, the American Red Cross responds to more emergencies than any other agency (governmental and nongovernmental), with an average of responding to an emergency every 8 minutes, equaling over 65,000 emergencies per year (American Red Cross, 2016). The American Red Cross considers their organization to be one that goes where they are needed, providing overnight

evacuation or temporary shelters, comfort kits (basic personal supplies), emergency clean up (rakes, trash bags, shovels, tarps, and other clean up materials), health and mental health contacts, as well as meals and water (American Red Cross, 2016). Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) circulate in post disaster areas, aiding in supply distribution, information, and comfort for those who are dealing with the confusion and loss from disaster situations (American Red Cross, 2016). The majority of responders from the American Red Cross are trained volunteers (over 95%), who are located all over the country and ready to deploy within hours when called upon to help communities rebuild (American Red Cross, 2016). Having those who are trained and willing to help with response is an invaluable addition to all the aid and response provided for by emergency plans, or even the local, State, or Federal governments.

CHAPTER V

CASE STUDY: GALVESTON, TEXAS

Galveston Island is a small island located in the Gulf of Mexico, just off the southeast coast of Texas. The island has been hit hard by hurricanes throughout the course of history, and has gone through many emergency management procedures in order to prepare for and recover from these disasters. I chose this area to study, because of its history with storms and disasters, as well as the amount of emergency management awareness and the recent disaster that was dealt with (Hurricane Ike in 2008). Though I primarily spoke with city officials who elected to remain anonymous, I was able to learn a great deal about the way relief aid is managed on the small island. Though more investigative research should be done regarding population and experiences of those who live in the community, there is important information in the interviews regarding the type of preparation and training that emergency responders and officials receive.

History

The city was named for Bernardo de Gálvez, a Spanish colonial and governor; the Bay was named first in 1786, followed shortly after by the Island and the city itself (Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015; McComb, 2010). In 1839, Galveston Island was incorporated into Texas. At this time, the island was also the most active port west of New Orleans, LA, making it the largest city in the state (Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015). In 1900, all the promise and prosperity of the island would change forever. On September 8, 1900, the coast was hit with what has become known as “The Great Storm;” a hurricane so ferocious, it destroyed 1/3 of the island and has since been known as the most deadly disaster ever to strike the United States (Galveston, Texas

History & Heritage, 2015). The storm was estimated to be a category 4 hurricane with winds of 145 miles per hour which killed almost 8,000 people (McComb, 2010; Roth, 2010). Following this storm and its destruction, the entire city was raised 8 feet, except at the seawall, where it was raised 17 feet (Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015). This proved to be a positive move, as the city was far less affected in 1915 (less than 10 killed) when another major hurricane hit (Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015; Roth, 2010). In spite of investments, the island never recovered as a major port and has since become a resort town and vacation destination.

Hurricanes

“A hurricane is a type of storm called a tropical cyclone, which forms over tropical or subtropical waters” (National Ocean Service, 2016). Tropical storms typically do not have winds that exceed 39 mph thus, when the storm’s winds reach 74 mph, they are no longer considered tropical storms and are instead called hurricanes (National Ocean Service, 2016). Based on the sustained speed of the storm’s winds, hurricanes are given a rating of 1-5 (also known as a category), with 5 indicating a greater probability of damage from the higher speed of the winds (National Ocean Service, 2016). According to a Texas Hurricane History report prepared for the National Weather Service, Galveston Island has been hit with over 15 hurricanes, ranging from category 1-category 4 (National Hurricane Center, n.d.; Roth, 2010). As noted in the history of the island (Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015), the most deadly of these hurricanes happened in 1900. While the new seawall provides incredible protection for the city, damages continue to occur to the structures when a heavy storm hits. According to one of the interview participants, “flood waters can often be the most dangerous part of the hurricane,” both in

reference to the quick rise of water and the mold or mildew that follows it's recession.

The recovery process after hurricanes lasts much longer than many people realize (Banks, 2015).

Current Population

The possible presence of hurricanes, along with their destruction (despite the protective wall), causes people to continue to leave the island during evacuation, often making the decision to never move back (Banks, 2015; Galveston, Texas History & Heritage, 2015). In 2006, two years before the most recent hurricane (Ike), Galveston's population was 57,023 (Population in the U.S., 2015). In 2010, two years after Hurricane Ike hit, the population had dropped to 47,836 (Population in the U.S., 2015). According to the same resources gathered through the U.S. Census Bureau, it looks as though the population is slowly climbing again (48,733 in 2013), though the impacts of losing roughly 10,000 people has influenced the culture and economy of the city (United States Census Bureau, 2013; Kever, 2011). Kever (2011) quoted the current mayor at that time saying he felt that the population would "again top 50,000 within two years," but as of 2013, the population was still under 49,000 (Population in the U.S., 2015). Important to note here is that there were demographic changes reflected in race as well as within numbers (Kever, 2011). This is not explored in this particular paper, as I focused on the trainings and tools currently utilized by public officials. However, this is important to review in terms of accessibility to aid, as well as cultural consciousness when it comes to dealing with any conflicts that are a result of severe loss and destruction. Demographic breakdowns and further interviews could shed light on the ways in which each population

is addressed during conflict. The economic impacts of population loss also reflect the challenges of providing extra training for conflict resolution skills and practices.

Current Emergency Management Processes

After speaking with various county and city officials, all of whom work under the umbrella of emergency response and management, it is clear that Galveston's location and past experiences with natural disasters make them aware of the various procedures that need to be considered. According to everyone I was able to speak to, planning is the key to success or even safety during and after a hurricane hits. There seems to be quite a bit of work done on the front end to deal with the aftermath of a storm. One example was talked about extensively in an interview, where it was shared that debris removal is a service that is negotiated for before a disaster ever strikes or is anticipated. There are negotiations with various companies to find the one who will come in and take care of general trash removal, as well as debris from houses, vehicles, refrigerators, washers, dryers, etc.

One of the county officials also spoke extensively about the need for emphasis on communication throughout the process because there are so many little things that come up that can either be prevented in the future, or be resolved on the spot through more effective communication. Several of the other city and county officials mentioned the short trainings they were required to complete, but for the most part, there was a focus on using instincts to make decisions and help where necessary, when necessary. The 'all hands on deck' approach came up several times, with emphasis that although there are plans and procedures in place, there is an expectation that everyone will be flexible and fill in where needed.

In Galveston, the Mayor is the decision maker for the city, and the County Judge becomes the decision maker for the county during times of disaster. Once the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identify a tropical storm as a hurricane (and landfall predictions are made), the emergency management plans go into effect. Galveston has several plans to help the city prepare (i.e. Emergency Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plans), as well as places where citizens can find information (i.e. Emergency Management Facebook page, City Emergency Management webpage, and County Emergency Management webpage). Within these plans, there are instructions for both city officials and citizens to help prepare for the storm and stay safe. These instructions include making buildings and structures storm ready by: putting up protective shutters, turning off gas, sandbagging doors, picking up items from the floor in case of flooding, removing valuable items, stocking up on food and water, etc. Evacuation is not always recommended or required, but that is also a possibility as the storm approaches. One interviewee mentioned that evacuation has to be called for soon enough so that all “city essentials” (those who have to stay on the island through the storm) have time to get their own homes or families storm ready before they have to be back and somewhere safe to wait out the storm.

Following the storm, the focus is on: rescue, emergency response for those who stayed, debris removal, distribution of resources and aid, and restoring the infrastructure of the city (including working utilities) so that people who evacuated may return to their homes. One of the interviews mentioned that nonprofit organizations were incredibly helpful at this stage of recovery as they were able to help organize temporary shelters, distribution of resources, and even sometimes rebuilding. This person felt that the

involvement from the American Red Cross is “invaluable,” though they by no means replace the rest of the emergency response process. According to one city official, each aid station is also managed by an official from the city to “run the distribution of aid and to deal with any conflicts that may arise.” (This was not mentioned by other officials and will be addressed in the following section.)

The Mayor is also responsible for reaching out to the state for aid or grants, and the Governor is then responsible for requesting aid from the Federal Government. Several officials mentioned that there are running lists kept during relief efforts, which address things that were overlooked or not prepared for. These unexpected events that are considered to have been preventable are then part of the emergency review process and integrated into the response and management processes for future events. In the rebuilding process, there are also various organizations that volunteer their time and energies to help with construction of new homes or city buildings. Though there are formal and informal trainings for those who most commonly deal with response in disasters, several officials noted that the unexpected is often considered wise to expect. There are no formal requirements for conflict resolution in general, though there are negotiation requirements (primarily in the context of hostage negotiations), as well as general emergency response training as mandated by the Federal Government. Despite these trainings, all of the interviewees felt that it was important to rely on people in the community, as they tend to gravitate towards their natural skill sets and “come together to rebuild what has been taken” from them in the storm.

Hurricane Ike

Hurricane Ike began as a tropical storm on September 1, 2008, turning into a category 1 hurricane on September 3rd and a category 2 hurricane on September 6th (Weather Underground, 2008). The hurricane made landfall on September 13, 2008, first hitting the north end of Galveston Island (Erdman, 2013). That landfall was followed by a 10-15 foot storm surge, overtaking the western end of the island, Galveston Bay (Erdman, 2013). Virtually every structure on the Bolivar Peninsula (north east of Galveston Island) was washed away during the almost 20 foot storm surge (Erdman, 2013). Winds of up to 110 miles per hour were sustained, and at its girth, “hurricane force winds spanned 120 miles and tropical storm force winds covered a 275 mile range” (Banks, 2015). The floodwaters ranged from 10 to 20 feet across Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula, making it “one of the most devastating storms in modern American history” (Banks, 2015). Though thousands of people evacuated before the storm, over 2,000 people still had to be rescued from both the Texas and Louisiana coastal areas (Banks, 2015), as many people decided that the storm, ‘only’ a category 2, would not be entirely devastating or dangerous (Horswell, 2008). In one of the interviews, a public official shared that through the 12 hours they waited out the storm on the island, they were inundated with calls from those who stayed and had changed their minds about being evacuated. This person described that there were “heightened emotions” because there was nothing that could be done to help these people aside from “offering advice about how to wait the storm out” until help could come. The interview went on to explain that there was no way of following up with them again once the phone lines went out, or even sending help at that time—it was “a terrible and helpless experience to hear the fear

in their voices and wonder if everyone would make it through the storm alive.” In fact, not everyone was able to be saved. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found 74 deaths that were directly or possibly related to Hurricane Ike” (Banks, 2013). Forty-seven of those deaths were determined to be caused by injuries, including carbon monoxide poisoning and drowning (Banks, 2015).

Along with deaths, there was other incredible damage, including: the destruction of homes and other building structures, the collection of debris into floating masses, totaled cars swept away by wind and water, loss of personal mementos, vegetation debris, and loss of power or communication (Banks, 2015; Goddard & Firth, 2008; Horswell, 2008). In all the interviews conducted for this study, and in news articles from 2015, the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Ike is still being dealt with today. In one interview, the delay was attributed to the sheer amount of damage that was done, and that implementation of safety, response, and clean up procedures took much longer than expected. Another interview discussed the delay in funding from the Federal Government (due to interpretations of what various rules are and how much is deserved), which meant that there were delays in rebuilding after the water subsided and the debris was cleared. This same interview mentioned that the “State of Texas is just not equipped to handle the recovery part of things” which it took on after FEMA and other non profit organizations were no longer involved directly in recovery efforts.

Proactive Efforts

Though there were multiple challenges in response after Ike hit Galveston, one decision prior to the storm making landfall was to put all vehicles inside the convention center, which was on higher ground, including emergency medical vehicles, law

enforcement vehicles, fire trucks, garbage trucks, and tow trucks. This ensured that the vehicles were protected and able to be used to either help clear the roads after the floodwaters subsided, or help rescue citizens. This had not necessarily been done for past storms, and as a result all of those types of vehicles were all previously damaged, putting the city in a bind until surrounding communities could spare vehicles or until the city was able to replace the ones that were lost. The change in practice prior to Ike was beneficial for the city and made it easier for recovery to begin after the storm.

Changes like the ones made to protect emergency and recovery vehicles happened because the relief efforts are documented; both in terms of what is going well, and what needs to be improved for future storms. The challenge of not having back up generators was one of the issues that were documented in 2008 as something to adjust for in the future. All city facilities now (2016) have back up generators that are ready in case of an emergency, and can help ensure there is access to power and clean water more quickly after a storm. Within the same interview that discussed the changes for procedures with city vehicles and back up generators, it was also pointed out that prior to Ike, there was a lack of documentation of property—particularly with regard to city owned facilities. This person remarked that the lack of documentation is one reason recovery is taking much longer. Because it was unclear exactly what was damaged or was discovered missing, it is more difficult to have all of these things replaced as quickly.

Debris removal is contracted with outside companies prior to any storms hitting Galveston. This proactive contract is due to past experiences of taking time to make bids with different companies, which delayed debris removal, putting unnecessary health risks on citizens and delaying the recovery process with something that could have been taken

care of ahead of time. Because this was fixed prior to Ike, in the wake of the storm, debris removal was able to begin as soon as roads were cleared and emergency responders were able to declare the island (and the bridge connecting Galveston Island to the mainland) safe enough for people to come back to.

Costs and Aftermath

As mentioned in the discussion of the impacts of Hurricane Ike, the damage done in the Galveston area was immense. Even after more than seven years, the island is still recovering from the hurricane. The devastation of structures and systems was extreme, yet in spite of it all; there was an overwhelming positivity in the interviews, along with strong expressions of pain. The devastation was more than physical and emotional. Financially, “damage in Texas alone cost \$29.5 billion” (Banks, 2015). According to a FEMA report, part of those financial costs included housing damages in which, over 60% of the \$3.4 billion in housing damages/losses were not covered by insurance, leading to several families left to manage without anything more than tarps to live under for more than three years after the storm (Banks, 2015). This type of story was reiterated in interviews with several of the city officials, citing that many families were also “living apart for up to a year” after the storm hit. Mention of these challenges came up in several of the interviews, emphasizing the stress many public officials felt when dealing with the hurt in the community, as well as within their own families.

Throughout the interviews, several of the questions focused on what was going on during and after the storm, as well as what sort of conflicts arose during the process of recovery. Interestingly, all of the officials made comments about how much people are drawn together during a disaster. One interview agreed with the idea of a heightened

sense of community, but felt it had more to do with collective goals, saying that, “If people are working on a common goal, the potential for conflict drops dramatically.” This same person also emphasized that that sense of peace only lasted the first couple weeks or month, after which, frustrations were raised and issues came to the surface. According to this interview, the public was upset with various insurance issues (not paying for damages to homes), as well as access in general to resources that would help with rebuilding.

Within the interviews, other challenges in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike were revealed: access to power and clean water, removal of dead bodies, removal of debris, treatment for those who were ill or injured as a result of the hurricane, access to those still on the island who might need help, organization of those who wanted to help, communicating with the people who evacuated about returning to their homes, and general care for the emergency responders who spent more than seven days on duty at a time.

Utilities

Power and clean water challenges were some of the first ones addressed, although one interview mentioned that as an animal shelter posed a significant problem to this efficiency, as it was also without power and water and several officials wanted the shelter to receive a generator before other spaces in the city. Even though *no* city buildings had back up generators, there were questions about who should have access to generators first: the people who managed to stay in their homes (for clean water), city buildings, or the animal shelter, which had no back up generator. One person expressed frustration with the city, feeling as though the animals should have been evacuated to begin with, so

that there would not have been a conflict about who to help first. Clean water and removal of toxic debris or dead bodies was a high priority, as this had the potential to make others sick as they were waiting to be rescued or helped. Many of these decisions had to be made on the spot by the Mayor or County Judge.

City Personnel

One official mentioned that police officers and city officials were faced with significant pushback from those who had evacuated and wanted to have immediate access back on the island to assess the damages and/or losses to property. This was not only described as potentially unsafe, but also challenging to organize. Relief organizations were unanimously illustrated as helpful throughout the interviews, but also a puzzle that required organization and follow up from city officials. “Coordination issues” were mentioned in the interviews surrounding “official vs. unofficial” organizations and groups who wanted to help.

Another result of the storm was the way personnel were spread thin (physically and emotionally). Many of those who were considered essential city personnel were working around the clock for up to one week at a time with no breaks. There were considered to be no limits on what any one of them could take on, and one person discussed that there was no adequate training to prepare a person to deal with it all—particularly since there was no follow up for emotional distress or stress management for several months after the disaster hit. This person felt that it was “really difficult to do your job well when you are also stressed, worried, sick, tired and reeling from the loss of your home, and seeing all that damage to your community.”

Scams and Crime

The strain on personnel did not only create organization issues, it provided increased opportunity for crimes to occur. There was repeated reference in the interviews to individuals who went door-to-door, promising fast and cheap renovations on homes that were damaged. These people would ask for ‘down payments’ in general and for initial supply purchases, but never returned to do any work at all. They were specifically targeting those who were desperate for assistance, and because of all the chaos of recovery, there was no real way to track them down or expect speedy follow up through law enforcement (who were already stretched thin). Looting of empty homes or businesses was also difficult to monitor and prevent with law enforcement needing to focus on other things to help make sure the community was safe.

Temporary Housing

Beyond resources that include food, clean water, power, or first aid supplies, there is a strong need for temporary housing for those who are still on the island or who return to find their homes destroyed. In several of the interviews, the necessity of having shelters for those who did not evacuate was one of the first priorities for city officials or volunteers to set up. One interview discussed the challenges of finding a space on the island that could accommodate that (with all the damage), as well as the challenge of having someone with proper training to run the shelter. When asked to explain what kind of training they felt would be appropriate, this person responded that, “any sort of training that would help organize things, deal with any issues that came up, and be able to make decisions independently that would benefit the community.” After elaborating further, it seemed that this training was not something that was prepared for (or given),

and instead untrained volunteers are often the ones who step up in these situations out of a desire to contribute in a positive and meaningful way. Following Ike, there were several “issues” that cropped up, but each was attributed to so many people living in a small space, with limited (or no) access to their homes, harboring feelings of anger, frustration, grief, and fear.

Though shelters do not directly help in the rebuilding process, they do provide an opportunity to facilitate access to that through giving people somewhere safe to stay while that process is underway. With regard to the actual rebuilding that happened after Ike, one person became emotional when telling the story of how Home Depot employees came from all over the country to help keep the store open later, provide expertise for rebuilding questions, and even help with various other decisions. These employees reportedly slept in sleeping bags in the store, some spending weeks in Galveston, committed to making the rebuilding process a bit less foreign.

Additional Resources and Aid

One part of the recovery efforts mentioned consistently throughout the interviews was the overwhelming gratitude to those who came to Galveston Island to offer help. These stories seemed to out number the negative experiences many people had with various scams or looting, as the organizations that came to the island were a strong positive presence throughout the beginning of the recovery process. The American Red Cross and United Way set up Points of Distribution (PODs) throughout the city to try and make sure that there was access to aid in different areas. When asked whether any challenges arose around accessibility of aid and resources, one of the interviews mentioned that there was a public official designated to each area of the community to

help settle various conflicts regarding aid. This was something that was not mentioned in any of the other interviews when the same question was asked, and attempts to follow up about it did not shed any additional light on how these conflicts were dealt with, or if there even was someone who was there to do so. Despite the lack of clarity around that particular issue, some details were shared about how long it would take to get resources to those still on the island following the storm. According to one interview, “it takes a minimum of 2-3 days to bring resources” onto the island after a disaster and “1-2 days to distribute those resources” to the people who are in need. In the same interview, it was said that better communication overall would be helpful for ensuring resources were distributed properly (throughout all areas) and swiftly to those in need. Another person observed that having resources delivered to a centralized location was helpful, but it was also “one more thing” for the city to think about, as they are considered responsible for dispersal of all aid and resources.

Though not a detailed or completely comprehensive idea of the post disaster impacts on the community of Galveston, the idea of strong involvement and support, access to aid, and efficient restoration of safety, echo strongly in each decision made (or action taken) to help the city rebuild.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Though the interviews shed light on the process of disaster management from a more singular perspective, it is helpful to learn more about where more research should be done and what other pieces are missing to truly develop a comprehensive plan for integrating alternative dispute resolution skills. Through these conversations, it is clear that conflicts do occur during the process of disaster relief. Though this may not be surprising, it does provide an opportunity to consider ways that could help, with minimal effort or change to processes that work. As discussed by many scholars who have studied emergency management processes, collaboration of various perspectives and skills is the key to a successful plan and process (McLoughlin, 1985; O'Leary & Bingham, 2009; Olson, 2000; Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006).

Conflict in Natural Disasters

Disasters bring to light a variety of emotions. Those who are in leadership positions, those who wear multiple hats in the community, and those who are solely members of the general public all feel *something* when disaster strikes (or in its aftermath). Along with emotions comes the potential for conflict and miscommunication. Fisher and Ury (1991), discuss the role emotions can play in our decision making process and actions:

...people get angry, depressed, fearful, hostile, frustrated, and offended. They have egos that are easily threatened. They see the world from their own personal vantage point, and they frequently confuse their perceptions with reality. Routinely, they fail to interpret what you say in the way you intended and do not mean what you understood them to say...failing to deal with others sensitively as human beings prone to human reactions can be disastrous.... (Fisher & Ury, 1991, p. 19).

Though I do not agree that the issue is always that a person fails to understand or interpret what you say in the correct manner, there is merit in understanding how miscommunication can occur. Here, Fisher and Ury (1991) do an excellent job of summarizing potential sources of conflict as it pertains to emotional influences. Through these interviews, there was mention of emotions running high for those who lived on the island, as well as for those who arrived solely with intentions of helping the community rebuild. The interviews also reveal, subtly, that these emotions do not always make the rebuilding process an easy or uncomplicated one. While this does not mean that all conflicts in a disaster relief process are related to emotions, they can be influenced by them in ways that create small 'road blocks' or possible complications if left unacknowledged.

Strong communication was also consistently regarded as a highly essential skill for efficient and successful disaster relief efforts and general emergency management. In particular, a need for increased communication, as well as understanding (an important and often taken for granted part of effective communication) was mentioned several times. Using communication as a means of creating a stronger capacity for understanding one another could potentially help with misunderstandings about what someone may need versus what they want at a particular time. Being able to distinguish between the two could decrease misunderstandings when it comes to aid access, uncomfortable situations, or inevitable delays that come with recovery processes. Another aspect of communication that came up in the interviews dealt with records of successful relief efforts and areas for improvement. Without written communication, there would be significant loss 'institutionally' should someone ever move out of one career before

another disaster strikes. There is also a greater potential for similar challenges to arise during relief efforts, regardless of whether or not being proactive would have eliminated them.

Disaster situations also emphasize the need for training and preparation. Though there are programs that focus on emergency management processes and evaluation, there is not necessarily an emphasis placed on interpersonal issues or interactions during times of disaster or a state of emergency. Training for handling gray areas and unexpected issues that may not be a part of a person's job description is a vast area and virtually impossible to prepare for. However, there were several comments made during the interviews that referred to the extra challenges that occur when proper tools are not given to those who are making decisions and interacting with the general population. If there are trainings that address what is needed to clear debris, to reestablish safety in a community, or to seed additional aid from a state or federal organization, why not have one that addresses how to deal with frightened or upset co-workers or citizens or how to ascertain that?

How can ADR aid Disaster Relief Efforts?

After conducting all of the interviews and pinpointing particular themes within identified and potential conflict situation, there are definite ways that ADR training and skills can help aid in disaster relief efforts. Considering emotional influences, the necessity of strong communication and understanding, as well as an increased knowledge base of additional challenges, ADR skills have the capacity to create change that may move relief efforts forward. If city officials are able to utilize skills and information from trainings regarding different conflict styles, active listening, as well as, summarizing and

reframing, there is a greater likelihood that the concerns raised in the interviews will be either lessened or eliminated. Though no skill or training comes with guarantees, ADR skills can be adapted to various situations and provide basic knowledge of human nature.

The Thomas-Kilamann Conflict Mode Instrument provides the opportunity for those who work closely in relief efforts to learn more about what their default modes are when dealing with conflict situations. While it is helpful to understand more than just your most prominent conflict style, it is also important to understand and consider how you might react in situations where there is little time to digest what is going on around you before making a decision. With practice, it is also possible to use other conflict styles enough to make it less challenging to use different ones as situations may call for them. If it is particularly important that the person you are speaking with (e.g., citizen in need of aid) receive additional aid immediately, but you have orders not to do so, what sort of style might be best? Understanding that avoiding will not make the issue disappear under these circumstances can help a city official or responder know what other skill could be useful in resolving the issue. Not everyone needs to be an expert on all five of the conflict modes; however, there is a greater potential for speedy solutions when each of them is understood.

Active listening addresses concerns about the influence of emotions, as well as increasing the possibility of understanding through effective communication. As described, active listening focuses on letting someone *know* they have been heard, rather than adding to the fire of *needing* to be heard. If active listening skills are taught and practiced in everyday life, not only might there be an increase in productive conversations personally and professionally, it will make it easier to use the skill in

stressful situations that may not afford the time to hear an entire story or its repetitions. When emotions are high, there is a propensity for miscommunication because people often feel as though they have been misinterpreted or they are not listening to someone else because they feel unheard (Fisher & Ury, 1991). Active listening places emphasis on *not* providing answers or explanations before confirming with someone that you heard what they said and acknowledgement of the emotions that are being expressed (explicitly and implicitly). Following this process of using summarization to recognize what someone is saying and feeling, there is also an opportunity to ask clarifying questions so that understanding happens on both sides. Once it has been confirmed that what was said was also heard then any advice or information can be absorbed with a more open mind. Continued practice of this particular skill can make it more reflexive and genuine in nature.

Summarizing and reframing are tools that function in a similar manner to active listening; however, these tools also provide an opportunity to remove any language or emotions that may be negatively overwhelming (e.g., anger, frustration, grief, fear) from the conversation. Being able to do this, while still granting what is important to someone can be difficult. Complex as it may be, if practiced, it can be used under circumstances where efficiency is important. By not repeating back negative language to someone who is upset, and instead focusing on what is important to them, there can be a shift in mindset that mirrors the conversation. This is also a quick way to ascertain what is important to this person and what task or aid should be focused on in order to navigate a hard situation. The emphasis here is not to disregard that something is incomprehensible

or incredibly hard, it is to agree that perhaps the circumstances may not be altered, but that there are possible next steps to be taken.

These skills should certainly be implemented through training sessions, though perhaps this list is not exhaustive of appropriate ADR skills. In order for that determination to be made, there should be additional research done surrounding potential areas of increased conflict during disaster relief processes. Here I was able to interview those who worked for the city, county, or emergency management and response organizations. From the information gathered during these interviews, training sessions for various ADR skills do indeed have the capability to create positive strides for increased effectiveness and efficiency in access to aid in post disaster situations. As with any new skill, practice is essential to heightened ability. Though it seems unlikely a training or practice session would occur every month, quarterly reminders would be beneficial throughout the learning process.

Capacity Building and Collaboration

All of the above skills contribute to enhanced capacity for understanding and communication. Capacity is built from the ground up, and ADR skills, if utilized for more than just disaster relief circumstances, provide opportunities for proactive community building which leads to an increased potential for positive collaboration among organizations and individual peoples. Collaboration equals the key to success when it comes to emergency management and disaster relief (McLoughlin, 1985; Waugh Jr. & Streib, 2006). Without the ability to rely on one another and to look to others for information or support, relief efforts would take even longer, prolonging recovery and increasing trauma within communities. ADR skills trainings allow for the focus to return

to the people who are experiencing these traumas rather than merely the situation itself. Responding to both people and situations is essential in effective and efficient disaster relief and recovery. These skills are helpful in establishing a stronger human connection and can be implemented seamlessly while also carrying out any other responsibilities that a city official or recovery volunteer may need to attend to.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

While it is clear that there is no formal—or informal—training taking place that includes skills used in alternative dispute resolution, there are many avenues through which it should be explored. Through these interviews, I was provided with a look at one piece of the puzzle when it comes to aid accessibility and potential conflicts that surface when attempting to provide and utilize these opportunities. Public officials are expected to handle many of the aspects of coordination of outside/local agencies, disaster relief in general, public safety, and communication with little or no training on how to deal with things when conflicts happen. Though many people in these roles may recognize the value in ADR skills (as they naturally gravitate towards such skills), having formal training allows for a greater awareness and effort to utilize these skills.

This study has been beneficial in taking the first step to understanding where things might break down and—when developing a specific training program—what skills could be helpful for public officials. These skills could provide means and opportunities to smooth out situations that may escalate if not handled with more awareness of where conflict may stem from and how different people handle conflicts differently. By understanding this, and using the information on a regular basis, it is possible that conflicts could be dealt with more quickly and handled more perceptively—hopefully increasing the ability to get people what they may need to get back on their feet. Having strong ADR skills is also imperative for public officials, as they often help navigate things prior to the disaster—or things that have nothing to do with the disaster at all. These skills can help establish some of the trust before disaster strikes, which can lead to

stronger relationships and more effective handling of conflicts once the system breaks down. With this sort of training, because it is skills based, it is imperative that there are ongoing in-service or education opportunities. In order to see the day-to-day benefits that would impact and empower relationship building, there would have to be someone who could encourage people to use the skills on a regular basis and who could help work through challenges people face when implementing new programs or skills.

Within this study, it was revealed that there are so many ways that providing basic training for officials would benefit the community as a whole. As helpful as these tools can be, more research needs to be done to understand in what ways ADR skills and practices can be most effective overall, how to adapt for different communities with different needs, and even how to fund such a program. In an expansion of this project, it would be important speak with residents who do not hold any sort of office or relief position. For example, if there is inequity in terms of access to aid, that may not be resolved by knowing different conflict styles or how to reframe a situation. Discovering new facets of where things break down may include a similar process to that of emergency management as a whole: preventative measures help ensure that things can be addressed more effectively during a disaster (skills trainings or awareness/behavior adjustments), yet there is still always a necessity to review how the implementation of these skills go and to make adjustments for the future.

The nature of various disasters should also be explored more thoroughly. Disasters caused by humans and those caused by nature do not seem to be viewed the same way. Human initiated disaster situations (shootings, hostage situations, etc.) have more of an emphasis on emotional trauma; while those caused by nature (hurricanes,

tornados, flooding, etc.) have a strong emphasis on physical rebuilding and recovery.

Who takes care of the emotional side during natural disasters and how readily available are these services? While alternative dispute resolution is not an answer to that question, it does have the capacity work in ways that would not exacerbate these traumas.

Finally, while I learned that public officials are all incredibly busy before, during, and after disaster situations, they may not always have the time or resources to spend energy seeking out conflicts surrounding access to disaster relief resources. That lack of capacity means that it is even more imperative to have these skills so they can prepare for and address conflicts related to disasters with a different kind of awareness, whether they are seeking them out or not. The more people who have experience and knowledge with utilizing these skills, the more likely it is that they will be implemented and can become a means of reducing trauma that comes with the impact and aftermath of a natural disaster. More people can be reached more effectively and efficiently if those involved in relief can give victims what they are searching for—even if what is being offered is not an exact detail or anything tangible. As with emergency management, it takes a team, rather than just one person to carry out and address all means of helping those affected recover.

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