COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZING FOR ALL HAZARDS: TRANSLATION OF SECURITY IN LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

by

REBECCA M. RICE

B.S., Northern Arizona University, 2013

M.A., University of Montana, 2015

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has been approved for the Department of Communication.

Bryan Taylor

Jody Jahn

Matt Koschmann

Hamilton Bean

Lori Peek

Date

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Collaborative Organizing for All Hazards: Translation of Security in Local Emergency Management

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Abstract

Local emergency management organizations face evolving challenges in order to prepare their communities and protect against threats. First, after 9/11, these organizations face increasing pressure to collaborate across local first responder, health, human services, and nonprofit organizations. Second, post-9/11 consolidation of emergency management organizations under the Department of Homeland Security elevated security threats as a US national priority that should also be addressed at the local level. In addition, local emergency management organizations now face escalating natural disasters and withdrawal of federal support as these disasters become more expensive. Given this context, this dissertation examines the communicative processes and practices of local emergency management collaborations. Using the lens of translation, which highlights that, in order to organize, meaning must be transformed and abstracted into discursive texts, this dissertation argues that emergency management collaborations face unique challenges. First, they must communicatively negotiate their shared mission across multiple, local organizations (a process I term horizontal translation), and second, they must communicate their compliance to US federal agencies (a process I term vertical translation).

In order to explore the achievement of interorganizational collaboration in emergency management, I conducted 182 hours of participant observation, 30 semistructured interviews, and document analysis. My data analysis answers questions about processes of horizontal and

vertical translation in emergency management collaboration, along with questions about how authority is accomplished in interactions in these collaborations. This study ultimately finds that first response organizations are elevated in the creation of hierarchy in these collaborations, and that first responders bids for authority are bolstered by their knowledge of federal systems.

Emergency management collaborations face unique challenges that have been overlooked in the collaboration literature, especially due to the need to negotiate an interorganizational hierarchy through informal member talk. Additionally, this study adds to a growing interest in organizational communication in how authority is accomplished (rather than pregiven by organizational positions) in the ability to successfully define the organization's (in this case, the collaboration's) trajectory. Finally, this study emphasizes that definition of security threats is negotiated and transformed at the organizational level by member talk and action in everyday practices.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY ACRONYMS

CP	Command Post *The site where incident command is located during administration of an ongoing incident*
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EEMG	Emergency Events Management Group, pseudonym *Campus/city/county emergency management collaboration*
EMO	Emergency management organization
EMOC	Emergency management organization collaboration
EOC	Emergency Operations Center *The site that supports incident response. Facilitates external coordination, and secures additional resources for incident command*
ESF	Emergency Support Function *Resources grouped into functional categories under NIMS in order to organize and provide assistance to incident response. (E.g., ESF 1 is 'transportation,' and can provide support in transportation safety and infrastructure recovery).*
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOEM	Foothills Office of Emergency Management, pseudonym *OEM (see entry below) of a populous county that includes wildland areas*
ICS	Incident Command System *Federally-provided structure for how agencies interact on-scene at an incident*
MOEM	Metropolitan Office of Emergency Management, pseudonym *OEM (see entry below) of a large metropolitan area*
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding *An understanding between two government entities to provide support to each other, usually in the form of resource sharing, during emergencies*
NIMS	National Incident Management System *US-wide template for use by organizations working together during incidents. ICS is a key feature of NIMS, which falls under the NIMS goal of "command and management" during incidents.*
OEM	Office of Emergency Management

An office that develops and coordinates an all-hazards emergency management program

THIRA — Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
A FEMA initiative to get local communities to assess threats and hazards to their community, along with the likelihood and impact level of each threat

UASI — Urban Area Security Initiative
A DHS grant program that provides funds to populated urban areas in the US to plan and prevent against acts of terrorism

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is considered a truism in American society that the 9/11 terror attacks "changed everything." This myth of total, universal rupture has been debunked – for example, by noting how the post-9/11 convergence of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology in U.S. government was underway *before* those attacks (Dunmire, 2009). However, there is no doubt that this event caused a profound shift in security organizations, especially in the spheres of aviation safety, bioterror, and law enforcement (Birkland, 2004). Specifically, the missions, structures, and policies of these organizations were transformed as a new regime emerged within US society: that of *homeland security*. Related high-profile changes for the public included new airport screening procedures, and urgent discussions about threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, dirty bombs, and airborne bioterror agents (Birkland, 2004).

These debates led to high-profile organizational changes across security spheres. At the national level, mergers and reorganization created the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which joined 22 government agencies under a new cabinet-level designation ("Creation of the Department of Homeland Security," 2011). The term "homeland security," now commonplace in American discourse, was a new designation in 2002, borrowed from a Pentagon report in the 1990s that suggested creating a director of "homeland defense." Adoption of this term reflected the shock of September 11th—which, as President George W. Bush emphasized, was a rare domestic attack that shattered the familiar history of US wars conducted on "foreign soil" (Bush, 2001). As a result, policymakers promoted the need to secure local communities from newly-feared terrorist threats (Becker, 2002). In this process, a new discursive economy developed, and transformed the political and place-based meanings of "security" in American society (e.g., as both a federal and local matter). Related issues touched on fundamental themes

of organizational identity, jurisdiction, and mission. Who was responsible for achieving security in this new environment, where and when? Initially, at least, public attention focused on the effectiveness of federal institutions. DHS, for example, was characterized as "chaotic and disorganized" by those working there (Hall, 2004), and the new security screening program by TSA was critiqued by travelers as invasive (Ahlers, 2013) and unreliable (Costello & Johnson, 2015). At the same time, the depicted threat of terrorism evolved in response to continued domestic attacks such as the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing (Cooper, 2013), the 2015 San Bernardino shooting (Ford, 2015), and the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting (Alvarez, Pérez-Peña, & Hauser, 2018). In this process, initial focus on organized terror cells gave way to concern about semi-autonomous nodes in loose terrorist networks, and the threat of self-radicalized, "lone wolf" terrorists.

While changes in national security have (understandably) received attention in mainstream news media, that coverage often overlooks the trickledown effect of these reorganizations at the level of local communities. This lack of interest is occasionally ruptured by reports on related trends, such as the militarization of local policing, stemming from new federal programs that redistribute surplus weapons, materials, and training (M. Salter, 2014). These programs have become controversial, as community members link them to escalated (and unnecessary) use of force by police in their conduct of operations such as drug raids (Sanburn, 2014).

Thus, while the term security has traditionally connoted the state's protection of its cherished assets and capabilities against foreign threats (Cavelty & Mauer, 2010), homeland security has muddled this distinction with the idea that "all terrorism is local" (Chenoweth & Clarke, 2010) – implying that its manifestations can and should detected by *local* actors.

"National" security has increasingly become a local concern, especially as US agencies focus on disrupting international terrorism by identifying and pre-empting emergent threats (e.g., Bush, 2009). In this development, local resources have been framed as a potential asset to the pursuit of national security. One example here includes strategies that work to "return terrorism to the 'Criminal Domain' through a disciplining—'squeeze, tighten, and isolate' is the phrase used—of diffuse and global terrorist cells in order to 'localize the threat,' that is, to quarantine that which is ostensibly beyond the criminal domain" (Puar, 2007, p. 51). As a result, local law enforcement and other agencies have been co-opted to serve as first responders to *national* security threats.

DHS has subsequently allocated funding for support of local security efforts, especially through the creation of DHS grants, which serve to support "preparedness efforts" that create "a secure and resilient nation." Emphasizing that responsibility for achieving this goal lies beyond the federal government, DHS argues that "delivering core capabilities requires the combined effort of the whole community, rather than the exclusive effort of any single organization or level of government" ("Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)," 2013). Since the creation of this grant program in 2008, local, county, and state organizations have received more than $40 billion in federal assistance to upgrade equipment, infrastructure, training, and preparedness plan (Brill, 2016). Partly due to the coincidence of this funding with the development of the Great Recession, revenue-strapped local governments have been highly motivated to pursue it.

One key organizational unit that has received this money includes Offices of Emergency Management (OEMs). Traditionally, OEMs exist to protect communities by designing and implementing preparedness and response programs that help citizens cope with the local impacts of weather-related hazards and other kinds of natural disasters. In the US, most populous

counties have some type of OEM, typically involving representatives of relevant city, county, and state agencies, who collaborate to assess and prioritize hazards posed to the community, and develop plans for successful response (Blanchard, 2007). OEM's thus form an interesting site for the study of post 9/11 security meanings. As noted above, for example, these groups are now expected to participate in identifying, evaluating and responding to *terrorist* threats. The purpose of this study, subsequently, is to focus on emergency management organizations (henceforth abbreviated EMO's[1]), in order to investigate their communicative dynamics in the new homeland security regime.

These dynamics have evolved as, following 9/11, DHS created a new system for emergency management in the U.S., termed the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The Presidential Directive that established this system declared that in order to "prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government shall establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management" (Bush, 2003). Under the newly created DHS, which absorbed several entities including the existing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), local EMO's were subsequently required to adopt NIMS in order to receive federal funding and assistance. NIMS was created to standardize emergency management and response, so that federal personnel from across the country could integrate seamlessly into a local response during a large-scale emergency. Naturally, this turn toward top-down standardization of local emergency management is of interest to organizational communication scholarship.

[1] I use the acronym EMO, rather than OEM, because OEM's are a particular type of emergency management organization, and emergency management organizations more broadly are of interest to this study (including one of the field sites, which is not an OEM but still takes on emergency management tasks).

In this project, I seek to understand how these local EMO's communicatively *accommodate, negotiate*, and *resist* the imposition of federal security meanings and organizational structures in their everyday work. The conflation of local emergency management with national security directives post-9/11 poses an interesting case study with many communicative dimensions, as emergency managers adapt and *translate* (i.e., recode in local discourses) these security directives—along with the meaning of security itself—to fit perceived local needs, achieve status and recognition, and receive federal resources.

This study is fueled by a growing scholarly interest in the relationship between communication and security. In the field of Security Studies, international relations scholars have approached this intersection through post-Cold War developments in interpretivist epistemology and constructionist theory. As a result, they have increasingly oriented to "security" not as an objective or universal condition, but – particularly under Securitization Theory –as a *practice* that requires strategic deployment of a speaker's capital in order to gain audience acceptance for the framing of some phenomenon *as* a security issue, moving it from the realm of "normal politics" to receive "extraordinary treatment" (Wæver, 1995). Viewed from a scholarly perspective, the case of EMO's is attractive because it contributes to related understandings of the communicative construction of security. More specifically, however, this project seeks to highlight how "security" functions as *a practice of organizational communication* – that is, one performed in organizational contexts that shape and define the meaning of this powerful term through everyday member interaction. Arguably, scholarly discussions of securitization have left organizational context undertheorized, as cases of securitization often focus instead on singular, powerful rhetors who are able to define security policy due to their elite positioning (e.g. Balzacq, 2005; Huysmans, 2008; Williams, 2003). Calls for communication scholars to engage

with security note that it is primarily *institutional* discourses – performed *within* and *between* organizations – that sustain security regimes (B. C. Taylor, Bean, O'Gorman, & Rice, 2017). Additionally, an organizational communication perspective recasts *authority*—not as given by a speaker's organizational position, but as achieved in interactions among security actors (J. R. Taylor & Every, 2014). An organizational communication perspective, then, can highlight how everyday interactions performed within and between organizations alternately constitute and transform broader discourses of security. In this view, federal discourses of security are constantly re-shaped and re-created at the level of local emergency management.

This type of study is also important because the everyday, mundane interactions of security workers have larger ethical implications. The bureaucratization of security, for example, can hide related decisions and policies from accountability – for example, the ways in which Cold War-era development of nuclear weapons was precluded from public deliberation by the discourses of military, political, and scientific elites (e.g. Cohn, 1987; Schiappa, 1989; B. C. Taylor, 1993). This historical trend continues through the seemingly-endless, borderless conflict associated with the US-led Global War on Terror (Bean, 2009a; Niva, 2013).

In this chapter, I provide context for studying emergency management communication by tracing the historical development of this professional field, leading up to its present day structuring under NIMS. Next, I highlight the communicative challenges and opportunities these groups face, arising from their needs for interorganizational collaboration and standardization.

A Brief History of Emergency Management Organization

Emergency management is broadly defined as the profession that prepares for, manages, and responds to disasters. While responsibility for emergency management at the federal level technically exists under FEMA, emergency management is also a state and county-level activity.

At the county level, OEMs are tasked with creating plans, coordinating, and responding to large-scale emergencies, hazards and disasters, including floods, tornadoes, and toxic spills (Haddow, Bullock, & Coppola, 2011). At this level, a disaster is considered any event that exceeds emergency management capabilities to effectively respond, resolve, and recover from immediate threats posed to public health and safety. Emergency management networks can thus include coalitions of federal, state, regional, and local government personnel, nonprofits, and private businesses. Ideally, such networks form a flexible resource that can be creatively activated, configured, and deployed to respond to unique situations.

The Creation of NIMS

The local conduct of emergency management has become more standardized than ever before under NIMS. However, this organizational structure was not created from scratch after 9/11. Instead, the policies formalized by the creation of DHS historically have their roots in diverse spheres such as US wildland firefighting, the Department of Defense, insurance corporations, and flood management planning. The institutionalization of emergency management in the US has thus involved an evolving relationship with cultural conceptions of security and risk, depending on national priorities.

Government management of emergency situations is not new, and related efforts have led to the development of the *Incident Command System* (ICS), an organizational system now implemented nationwide under NIMS. The history of ICS indicates a relationship between local emergency management and doctrines of *natural hazard mitigation*, which hold that humans can (and should) "manage" natural risks. However, the development of ICS has also been influenced by the interests of defense contractors, leading it to partly display military-style organization (e.g., communication systems favoring top-down, unilateral "command and control"). Under

NIMS, ICS directs emergency managers to adopt a fixed-yet-scalable hierarchy in setting up immediate, on-scene response. This hierarchy includes pre-given functional roles deemed necessary for effective response. In theory, any first responder should be able to fill any role position they are qualified for in the ICS chart, and to know what their duties and relationships are in relation to other actors on the scene.

ICS originated as a practice of wildland firefighting. As development increased in the Western United States during the 20th century, humans faced new natural hazards, especially wildland fire. In response, the federal government attempted to craft a plan for coping with these new dangers. In 1910, the "Big Blowup" of fires burned nearly three million acres in the Western United States in only two days. As a result, the US Forest Service implemented policies of aggressive fire control; for example, the 1935 "10 AM policy" declared that all forest fires should be put out by 10:00 AM the morning they ignite. The Forest Service subsequently committed to waging a "war" against fire, a metaphor that made fire an "enemy" to be fought with "weapons," including smokejumpers, planes, and suppression chemicals. Fire was considered a "menace," especially to the timber industry, and almost all causes of fire were viewed as preventable (Silcox, 1910). All fire responses were treated similarly, with the ultimate goal of suppression. At this time, the link between emergency response and traditional security work was nascent, but emerging. Starting in the 1880s, for example, U.S. Army soldiers were responsible for fighting fires in national parks (Hampton, 1971). These early examples of blending civilian and military capabilities indicated a belief that actors located across institutional sectors could collaborate to "manage" risk.

This trend continued. In 1934, the Flood Control Act gave the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the authority to create public safety projects. During World War II, over 2000 Forest

Service employees enlisted in the military, while at home, the agency's fire watch towers along the West coast were appropriated to support warning of impending air attacks (The Forest History Society, n.d.). After World War II, this connection strengthened as private contractors cut from the Department of Defense budget sought other civilian markets. One of these contractors, Aerospace Corporation, was hired by the U.S. Forest Service to study command and control systems within wildland firefighting (Stambler & Barbera, 2011). This move indicates how the Forest Service believed that military-style organization and communication could improve disaster response practices. In 1970, California experienced another bad fire season, and the U.S. Forest Service assessed the efforts of local responders, finding that confusion about terminology and operating procedures undermined operations by firefighting teams.

Aerospace Corporation subsequently led a new project called FIRESCOPE, a research and development team that developed a single system to improve operations. The charter of the FIRESCOPE program states that its goal was to create uniform operations procedures, exemplified by the Incident Command System, which was designed to ensure coordinated actions during a fire. Prior to 1970, firefighters had been using a system called the "Large Fire Organization Model," which had been criticized for its lack of central command, despite being developed by military veterans after WWII. Alternately, the ICS system adopted a preferred "management model," built around the strategic imperatives of command, planning, operations, logistics, and finance (Stambler & Barbera, 2011). The development of ICS in wildland firefighting thus indicates a relationship between civilian management of natural risks and military values and structures applied to human-caused threats.

Professionalization of Emergency Management

For a time, the history of ICS continued independent of the history of emergency management, as that enterprise was originally considered separate from wildland firefighting. As a result, the history of emergency management depicts a discursive regime that sensitively responds to changing political climates and official definitions of security threats. Specifically, emergency management developed out of civil defense programs developed during the Cold War. In this period, local and state civil defense directors –who were usually retired military personnel—sought to educate and prepare their communities concerning strategies for surviving the dangers of a nuclear attack (e.g., radioactive fallout). They received little support from the government, but were among the first actors to perform a role resembling emergency management in the US, serving as an liaison between national-level risk managers and local communities (Haddow et al., 2011).

As the Cold War continued, a proliferation of related agencies at the state and local levels led to fragmentation in emergency response. In response, during the 1970s state governors joined together to campaign for consolidation of emergency management activities within a single agency ("FEMA History," n.d.). In 1978, the Three Mile Island nuclear power reactor accident occurred, escalating the apparent urgency of consolidation, and bringing public attention to the lack of both federal and local preparedness for severe hazards. In 1979, U.S. President Jimmy Carter issued an executive order to consolidate emergency preparedness activities, establishing the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA History," n.d.). FEMA subsequently enrolled existing federal agencies and programs, including those for fire prevention, flood insurance, federal emergency broadcasting, and Defense Civil Preparedness. Initially, FEMA struggled to successfully combine these dramatically different programs. The first director, John

Macy, sought to unify the agency's competing missions by emphasizing the similarities between natural hazards and civil defense, leading to his proposal of an "all-hazards" approach emphasizing the values of providing *direction, control*, and *warning* as needed in all emergencies ("FEMA History," n.d.). This idea that generic emergency response plans (e.g., templates and protocols) can be used to cope with any unforeseen emergency, regardless of cause, continues to be part of FEMA's legacy. Currently, for example, the all-hazards approach continues to emphasize the need for *preparedness* for both natural disasters and acts of terrorism (e.g., Office of the Inspector General, 2009).

Under the Reagan administration, FEMA's priorities realigned to emphasize preparedness for nuclear attack. This shift reduced the authority of states in national security activities and state directors saw a decrease in funding (Haddow et al., 2011). FEMA subsequently positioned itself as the lead agency in organizing societal recovery in the event of a nuclear attack, and even became a key player in mitigating threats to public safety posed by nuclear weapons development. There were fewer high profile natural disasters during this time, and as a result, earthquake, hurricane, and flood responses were deemed lower priorities.

This trend shifted again in the 1990s, when Hurricane Andrew struck Florida in 1992, and the response from FEMA was deemed inadequate. In 1993, James Witt became director of FEMA. Witt was the first director with emergency management experience as a state program director. He worked to restore trust and change the culture of FEMA. As the Cold War ended, FEMA redirected resources toward natural disaster relief ("FEMA History," n.d.).

The Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995 again recast FEMA's priorities, strengthening the idea that emergency managers should be focused on preparation for "risk" – that is, continuously assessing a wide range of evolving probabilities related to the categorical occurrence of

undesirable events, and pre-empting their manifestation. This framing meant that terrorist attacks should also fall into FEMA's purview (Haddow et al., 2011). To summarize, our review to this point indicates how the focus in emergency response on *natural hazards* and *human-caused risks* has shifted back and forth, based on national need and political pressure—especially when the federal response to a given event has been deemed inadequate.

Creation of DHS after 9/11

The impetus to universalize emergency response was strengthened by the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks. Similar to firefighting self-studies that led to the creation of ICS, the official *9/11 Commission Report* found that a lack of coordination among security organizations was in part responsible for the attacks—for example, as key information reported about the terrorists taking flight lessons was not shared or acted upon. The paradigm of Incident Command, however, was found to be largely successful—for example, in the New York City Fire Department's (FDNY) performance as the lead responding agency in the World Trade Center attacks. The 9/11 commission subsequently judged that communications priorities and the directives of incident command still were not fully integrated among agencies (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, Kean, & Hamilton, 2004). The commission also suggested that all preparedness and response agencies could improve preparedness by "institutionalizing imagination," or routinizing the exercise of projecting new threats to security (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States et al., 2004, p. 344).

In response to 9/11, President George W. Bush created DHS. DHS joined together 22 federal agencies under a cabinet-level organization. In the reorganization, FEMA was assigned oversight of the function of public preparedness. FEMA programs were disassembled and spread

among various parts of DHS, with most resources now dedicated to threats of terrorism. Post 9/11, spending on defense and homeland security increased by 50% in the next 3 years (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States et al., 2004). In 2004, as a result of the 9/11 Commission's findings, DHS launched multiple new programs to prepare for emergencies. NIMS was implemented as "a consistent nationwide template" to enable multiple organizations to work together to prevent and respond to incidents of all sizes and complexities (*National Incident Management System*, 2008). However, NIMS is not the only part of this system.

NIMS is designed to ensure that all levels of government can work together to respond to emergencies. Ideally, it facilitates successful response to incidents of all sizes, "including but not limited to natural hazards, terrorist activities, and other manmade disasters" ("National Incident Management System," 2008, p. 5). NIMS subsequently defines emergency management as all the activities necessary to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents of any type. The design and implementation of NIMS reflect several key ideals, including that it provides a consistent – but not inflexible -- format, and that the Incident Command System facilitates the scaling of response beyond the immediate field level. NIMS is thus intended to standardize organizational structures among all US jurisdictions so that responders are "speaking the same language" (*National Incident Management System*, 2008). In order to incentivize adaptation of NIMS, Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (which establishes NIMS) requires that all federal departments use NIMS to demonstrate required levels of preparedness (Bush, 2003).

Within NIMS, there are multiple levels of standardized organization. At the field-level, ICS is used to organize on-site management (i.e., among first responders). ICS protocols subsequently dictate who is in charge on the scene (the Incident Commander), and enable the scalability of response based on the size of the emergency. According to NIMS, all emergency-

related responses, even by one police officer making a single, routine traffic stop, are technically using ICS, because in that situation, the police officer serves as the Incident Commander. If this situation were to escalate (e.g., if the traffic stop reveals a vehicle's unsafe transport of hazardous materials), more people would be brought in to staff standardized response roles. These roles include the *Liaison Officer*, who serves as the point of contact for other organizations and levels of government; the *Planning Section Chief*, who creates plans for incident response; and the *Logistics Section Chief*, who is responsible for ordering resources and providing support for first responders). The below chart (figure 1.1) demonstrates the value that ICS places on achieving orderly response through the standardization of responder roles. In addition to the previously-mentioned value of scalability, ICS also promotes the concepts of *management by objectives* (i.e., the use of goals that orient all responders to use tactics and strategies that support these goals while managing the incident), and *span of control* (i.e., each person on the chart should have no more than five direct reporting subordinates).

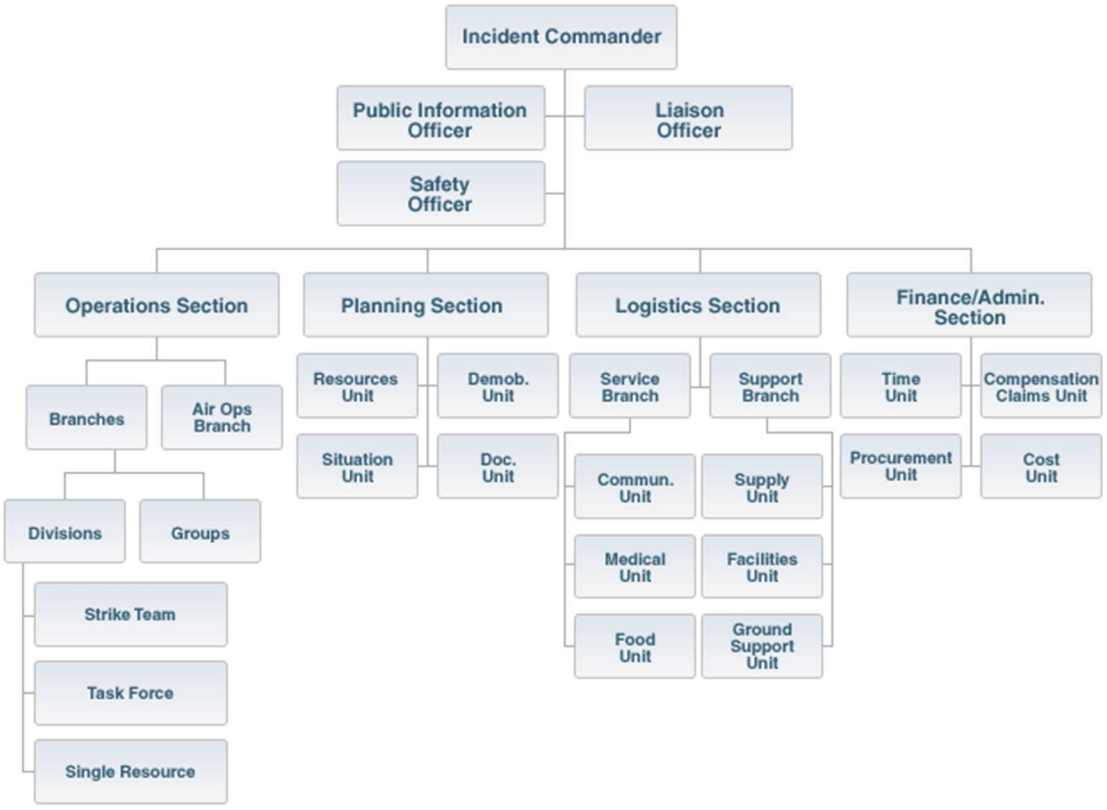

Figure 1.1. The Incident Command System organization chart. Under ICS, first responders can fill roles they are qualified for, and should expect to understand how the role functions in incident response, regardless of location, size, and experience with other responders on scene. Adapted from "ICS Organization," FEMA, fema.gov.

In addition, under the National Response Framework (NRF), NIMS specifies the roles of *emergency managers* (as opposed to the responders in the field). Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), which tend to be run out of Offices of Emergency Management (OEMs), are spaces that provide support for the ICS group by assessing damage, providing information to stakeholders and responders, and dispatching needed resources to on-scene responders. This group of people is not located on the scene, but they relieve some of the burdens of disaster response by coordinating with external groups to locate, acquire, and deliver resources (*National Incident Management System*, 2008). The groups studied in this project include one OEM, which staffs the respective county EOC, and one ICS Command Post.

After NIMS Implementation

Initially, all of these new organizational tools seemed like a good way to standardize emergency management. However, within the first two years after DHS was founded, the organization faced public critique. Criticism of DHS and FEMA came to a head during the Hurricane Katrina response in 2005, which has broadly been viewed as a federal failure to mobilize emergency response quickly, contributing to 1,833 deaths and $108 billion in damage ("Hurricane Katrina Statistics Fast Facts," n.d.). As Hurricane Katrina moved over New Orleans and water levels rose, multiple government agencies were slow to mobilize resources. Exacerbating this situation, the Louisiana state government did not immediately declare a formal state of emergency, which would have triggered involvement by the federal government. As a result, the federal government took several days to become involved, and emergency management personnel failed to stabilize the situation, a crucial requirement for delivering resources (Schneider, 2005). Under the newly created DHS, with its substantial focus directed toward terrorism, the disaster of Hurricane Katrina called into question the department's ability to coordinate its related agencies and programs, and highlighted problems associated with clarity of authority.

Post-Katrina, David Paulison became the FEMA administrator, and imposed a more top-down approach, in which more federal requirements for planning were imposed on local emergency managers as a *condition* of their receiving federal funds. In this new system, during a major disaster the federal government would take a more active role, rather than merely support state efforts. FEMA subsequently created the National Response Framework, which gave the federal government more responsibilities, and specified more local responsibilities. However, many counties in the US are still not "fully" compliant with NIMS -- for example, in

implementing only select parts of NIMS, in only having certain preparedness plans, or in lacking the resources to fully comply (Jensen, 2011). This pendular swing among EMO's between the priorities of preparing for both natural hazards and terrorism will likely continue as existing structures respond to new incidents, producing new outcomes subject to public and regulatory evaluation.

National events continue to shape the trajectory of emergency management. More recently, the 2017 US Atlantic hurricane season led to renewed focus on natural disasters, and a new focus on community mitigation and resilience. This shift occurred in part because response to these hurricanes was so costly—FEMA spent approximately $200 million per day on relief and recovery efforts (Associated Press, 2017). As ten hurricanes formed in the Atlantic in ten weeks, the federal government scrambled to respond adequately and was most notably criticized for response to Hurricane Maria, which hit Puerto Rico in September. In the subsequently released FEMA Strategic Plan, 2018-2022, FEMA encouraged a shift toward a "culture of preparedness," casting more responsibility on individuals to be prepared—by having flood insurance, engaging in hazard mitigation, and by understanding their role in the response. As the 2018 report says, "we need to help individuals and families understand their personal roles in preparing for disasters and taking action – they are our true first responders" (Long, 2018, p. 3). The 2018 strategic plan also minimizes FEMA's role in resilience, instead focusing on the need for strong social ties within communities in order to recover from disasters. In other words, as natural disasters get bigger and more expensive (due to human-caused climate change, which is not mentioned in the strategic plan), FEMA is acknowledging that the agency cannot lead every response and recovery effort, and encouraging local communities to be more self-sufficient.

To summarize discussion to this point, the post-9/11 paradigm of emergency management has shifted from prioritizing *natural* disasters to include *all* manner of disasters, with a new emphasis on human-caused terrorist attacks. With this change in mind, it is worth considering how official meanings of security are adapted in local contexts charged with implementing these new mandates and directives. For example, the inclusion of terrorist attacks in EMO missions suggests that these "foreign" threats may be addressed in the same manner as natural disasters (e.g., in related routines of monitoring conditions and alerting stakeholders).

Applied here, an organizational communication approach is thus useful because it foregrounds concerns of *everyday practice* and *process*—complicating official assumptions that federal mandates can necessarily, directly, or automatically lead to swift changes in affected organizational cultures (Lewis, 2011). Instead, an organizational perspective can ask how these national changes are accommodated, negotiated, and resisted in communication performed at the local level.

Communicative Challenges to Emergency Management

Emergency management is a constantly shifting and critiqued mode of organizing. As the above discussion has established, emergency management often comes under public scrutiny after a major event overwhelms one or more of its response systems. As a result, practitioners and scholars alike have identified many challenges posed to successful emergency management. Unsurprisingly, official recommendations for improvement often focus on communication practices (especially information sharing). Beyond that sometimes-superficial expression of concern, however, organizational communication scholars can help address a growing concern in this field: collaboration.

As indicated in the above account, emergency management practitioners and

organizational structures are historically tied to defense and military institutions. This history comes to bear on EMO structures and cultures, especially as practitioners experience a tension between the imperatives of "command and control" and maintaining network flexibility. The command and control model favors hierarchical organization. Despite scholarly critique of ICS for being too rigid, practitioners tend to support this aspect of emergency response, believing that it creates a reliable hierarchy that orders actors' participation (Moynihan, 2009). In endorsing this 'vertical' focus, however, ICS has been criticized for ignoring the 'horizontal' importance of interorganizational relationships—including, for example, the spontaneity and improvisation that can be required in responding to emergencies, and the potential for conflict among organizations as their members mobilize to populate this hierarchy (Waugh & Streib, 2006). Despite these critiques, arguably, there remains a valid need for centralized response among EMO's – especially during large-scale response efforts. Practitioners have noted, for example, that "gradual processes of interorganizational consensus building and mutual adjustment take too long" (Moynihan, 2009, p. 898).

Nonetheless, these organizations also have persistent needs for spontaneity and flexible response. Scholars have noted that threats to U.S. national security are unstable and constantly changing. As a result, adaptability and accommodation, rather than hierarchy, are needed to respond to the evolving security environment (Wise, 2002). Scholars have subsequently noted the irony of tasking *bureaucratic* organizations with developing capability for flexible response. For example, Kapucu, Arslan, and Demiroz (2010) argue that

> high performance in managing disasters and emergencies requires an [organizational] ability to assess and adapt capacity rapidly, restore or enhance disrupted or inadequate communications, utilize uncharacteristically flexible decision making, and expand

> coordination and trust of emergency response agencies despite the hurly-burly of the response/recovery efforts. These requirements are [often awkwardly] superimposed on conventional bureaucratic systems that rely on relatively rigid plans, exact decision protocols, and formal relationships that assume uninterrupted communications (pp. 452–53).

Here, Kapucu et al. (2010) note the seeming contradictions between traditional organizational structures and required responses during emergencies. This problem is compounded by the imperative of *interorganizational collaboration* promoted in post- 9/11 reforms —a move that means even more organizations and stakeholder groups will coordinate during a response effort.

Here, the 9/11 commission itself condemned a failure of security organizations to collaborate as one of the key issues that inadvertently contributed to the success of the 9/11 terror plot (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States et al., 2004a). This recommendation came after revelations that the CIA had been tracking the movements of two of the suspected 9/11 hijackers, but had not communicated this information to the FBI. This finding was summarized as a "failure to connect the dots" among US intelligence agencies (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States et al., 2004a). This failure has led to policy changes –including, for example, that all US security agencies must now share the same "watch lists" of suspected terrorists (Brill, 2016). It has also led to changing relationships between local governments and the federal government—for example, in the launch of DHS Data Fusion Centers and Urban Area Security Initiatives, where officials can meet and share relevant information about threats in their area. All of this reorganization indicates the institutional elevation of *collaboration* as a strategy to create security. In addition to collaborating across levels of government, high-profile response failures (e.g., around Hurricane

Katrina) have punctuated the need for state agencies to collaborate with nonprofits and for-profit businesses, which could be useful due to their agile responsiveness (Schneider, 2005). Collaboration has subsequently been depicted as a key principle of successful local emergency management, but it is also strongly incentivized by the promise of receiving FEMA support (Blanchard, 2007). According FEMA's "Emergency Management Supplement" document, for example, collaboration is built on "broad and sincere relationships among individuals and organizations to encourage trust, advocate a team atmosphere, build consensus, and facilitate communication" (Blanchard, 2007, p. 4). Emergency management personnel are thus directed to build robust relationships in order to work together successfully during emergencies in their locale.

While this directive focuses on the ways communication can be used to build key relationships, emergency management also faces communicative challenges that can be classified as more transmission-focused. That is, a perennial concern in emergency management involves key actors acquiring and circulating the right information to key responders during emergencies. While popular opinion may hold that more communication is an inherent good, scholars caution that it does not guarantee successful response in emergency management. Instead, responders report benefitting from clearer and more reliable communication of "core" information deemed critical to their response efforts (Comfort, Ko, & Zagorecki, 2004). However, organizational variation in collaborative willingness and capability can create challenges for ideal information-sharing. There is a need for responders to develop common understanding, for example, but their low levels of familiarity and trust can limit their capacity to create shared meaning (Kapucu, Arslan, & Collins, 2010). As demonstrated by organizational turmoil following the creation of DHS, communication must go beyond mere information-

sharing, to created shared terminologies, cultures, and expectations for decision-making (Waugh, 2003). Collaborative emergency management does require clear, effective communication, but its performance must transcend instrumental concerns to establish trusting relationships.

As if all this wasn't enough of a challenge, local emergency managers cannot just make response decisions in whatever way they please. Especially in the post-9/11 era, emergency management practitioners need to "follow the money"—and the money comes from DHS. Thus, the funding of security has become high-priority—albeit in some creative ways. As Chip Fulghum, DHS's financial officer puts it, "right after 9/11, the spigot got turned on and a fire hose of money poured out. Much of it was badly monitored and much of it was for stuff that just didn't work" (Brill, 2016). DHS grants in the early years after 9/11 paid for many local emergency response upgrades—if emergency managers were willing to comply with DHS systems, most notably NIMS. However, compliance is partly in the eye of the beholder, and local and regional implementation of NIMS still varies dramatically, given cities' and counties' unique resources and motivations (Jensen, 2011). Jensen's (2011) research, for example, demonstrates that county emergency management personnel make sense of their NIMS implementation behavior using different communicative frames – including rationalizing their modification of NIMS protocols to suit county needs. Local emergency management must thus adapt to nesting within the federal enterprise of homeland security. Decisions by practitioners about which DHS directives to adopt—and how—can quickly lead to organizing questions that implicate communicative explanations.

To reiterate, emergency management must negotiate some key organizational communication dialectics, including command/control versus flexibility, and relationship-building versus transmitting information. In addition, EMO's generate multiple levels of

government oversight, and interacting with the federal government requires them to both adopt and adapt broader discourses of homeland security. This study is subsequently interested in how local EMO's alternately *translate, accommodate, negotiate*, and *resist* federal directives in order to suit the unique needs of their communities. As demonstrated in the above literature review, scholarly examination of these challenges tends to occur in the field of public administration. While I agree with many of these findings, adopting an organizational communication perspective creates the opportunity to interrogate how EMO members make sense of their work – and particularly how their organizational contexts influence their response to communicative challenges.

Preview of Chapters

Next, I review existing literature that informs the theoretical agenda of this study (Chapter Two) and discuss the methods used (Chapter Three). In Chapter Two, I introduce the concept of translation, which emphasizes that meaning is necessarily gained, lost, and transformed as conversations and texts are transformed by medium and context. In these transformations, I argue, organizational communication scholarship also highlights that the *authority* to translate various texts and conversations is achieved in interactions among organizational members. I also introduce *securitization theory*, which depicts security as an intersubjective artifact of communication practices, and make the case for security as a distinctly *organizational* practice, influenced by organizational contexts and routines. Finally, I review literature concerning interorganizational collaboration, and ultimately make the argument that EMOC's engage in *translation* of federal directives to suit them for local community and professional needs, while also translating various member interests and identities into a dominant, local framework for the collaboration. In Chapter Three, subsequently, I introduce the

methods used order to study EMOC's. I make the argument that ethnographic research beneficially depicts how these collaborations are formed, and how their members make sense of this work.

Chapters Four and Five present the data analysis. In Chapter Four, I explore practitioner ideas of collaboration, by analyzing local practices of horizontal translation. This chapter seeks to understand how local emergency management members reconcile and negotiate different identities, priorities, and missions in order to create collaborative emergency response. In Chapter Five, I analyze practitioner understandings of federal directives in their collaborative work. This chapter will examine how EMOC members reference DHS/FEMA guidelines in their everyday talk, and how they enact their implementation of these directives, and, in the process, grant both local members/texts and FEMA directives authority in interaction. Chapter Six discusses the implications of these findings and present the conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter introduced a particular, post-9/11 organizational world, one devoted to understanding and responding to threats posed to local communities. Potentially, studying this world activates many different theoretical discussions. In this chapter, I focus on theorizing the challenge of successful interorganizational collaboration in EMO's, and the requirement to translate federal guidelines and organizing systems like NIMS. Doing so, I argue, can help us to understand how EMO practitioners deal with challenges posed to successful interagency collaboration (a concept I label *horizontal translation*), along with a federal government mandate to incorporate NIMS/ICS into local emergency management (a concept I label *vertical translation*). In this chapter, I will provide an overview of key related claims and issues. First, I review organizational communication perspectives on interorganizational collaboration. Next, I consider how organizing *texts* play a vital role in these collaborations – particularly in their attempts to establish *authority*—before turning to the importance of *translating* these texts into organizational practices. This review draws from both organizational communication studies—particularly from the "Communication as Constitutive of Organizations" (CCO) perspective—and critical security studies. Recently, the latter field has recently adopted both a "securitization" perspective emphasizing that security-related meaning is defined in speech acts, and a "practice turn" emphasizing the concrete, situated performance of security acts (indeed, this turn has informed both areas of study). Considered together, these two perspectives form the framework for this project, which focuses on *translation* as a *distinctive communicative practice used in emergency management organization collaborations (hereafter, EMOC's) to achieve authority*.

Interorganizational Collaboration and Communication

Within the post-9/11 culture of U.S. security actors, one regularly hears calls by the federal government for displays of "more cooperation"—both between security spheres (e.g., military conflict and counter-terrorism), and between organizational sectors, including nonprofits and for-profit businesses (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, Kean, & Hamilton, 2004b). Additionally, criticism of prior federal emergency relief efforts (e.g., in Hurricane Katrina) has noted that non-governmental organizations may compensate for the inefficiency of government agencies (Butts, Acton, & Marcum, 2012). These two trends are no less apparent in the field of emergency management (EM). However, as these organizations respond, they must negotiate their historical ties to bureaucratic and military structures (Grey, 2009). In this process, they face significant challenges that deviate from conventional images of collaboration focused on *nonhierarchical*, *flexible*, and *voluntary* relationships (L. K. Lewis, 2006).

A related issue significant for this study is that collaboration in EM requires the interpretation and incorporation of federal directives into local contexts, composed of diverse stakeholders with varying levels of experience in and commitment to cooperation. This process unfolds as multiple organizational representatives communicatively negotiate the *significance* and *implications* of these directives. Traditionally, collaboration is defined by Barbara Gray (1989) as the joining of organizational stakeholders who voice their opinions on a shared problem to create mutual solutions that no single organization could solve on its own. This cooperative relationship among organizations is not something that could be purchased (as in a supplier relationship) or forced by hierarchical mechanisms of control (Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002).

Distinctively, organizational communication scholars view collaboration as *constituted* by communication. Briefly, this view holds that collaboration cannot be ontologically separated from the communication that creates it. Lewis (2006), for example, proposes a model of collaboration that takes into account communication *contexts* (e.g., external pressures and traditions), *inputs* (including personal motivations), *processes* (including the creation of collaborative identity and goals), and *outputs* (including goal achievement). This model depicts communication as accomplishing each of these steps, as participants negotiate their motivations, identities, and goals as premises for their development of guiding structures and cultures. Similarly, collaboration is *itself* made sense of by members as they communicatively enact a "collaborative spirit"—that is, through discussing the benefits of collaborating, they affirm their commitment to its reproduction (Heath & Sias, 1999). Collaboration is thus not simply a preexisting structure that is imposed on emergency management (although DHS might wish this were so). Instead, it occurs when participants make sense of their actions *as collaborative*, communicatively "buy in" to collaborating, and create communicative processes that join their organizations together.

Potentially, this organizational communication perspective diverges from practitioners' conventional beliefs about collaboration. For example, while "getting everyone to the table" may seem like an inherent good, and is often cited as an aspiration of collaborating organizations, problems inevitably arise when involving multiple stakeholders (e.g., due to their incompatible framings of problems, and rigid preferences for solutions). For collaboration to be effective, further, it should be able to exert demonstrable influence over its chosen "problem domain" (i.e., it should produce both changed and shared viewpoints among participants). Here, Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer (2012) have argued that collaborations create the most value for their

members when emerging *conversations* and *texts* facilitate the creation of *collective agency*. In this view, collective agency occurs when a partnership produces an "authoritative text" that can attract capital and marshal member consent to emerging contexts, including definitions of the situation, agendas for problem-solving, and procedural rules. *Authoritative texts* are considered to be abstracted conversation which, once removed from their immediate authors and situations, become the basis for future conversations—a topic returned to in the subsequent section. Moving away from the insufficient image of gathering around tables, then, Koschmann (2016) argues that successful collaborative communication must produce particular outcomes, including knowledge, authority (a concept returned to later), shared identity, and collective agency.

In addition, collaboration does not merely influence the organizations that choose to participate. Instead, institutional theory, with its focus on field-level dynamics that embed individual organizations, has been used to depict how interorganizational collaborations can also influence their respective fields. Lawrence et al. (2002), for example, use proto-institutional theory to explain how collaborations come to exert influence over fields. In this view, proto-institutions are composed of innovative roles, practices, and technologies that can spread and become influential across a field, inducing repetitive, self-sustaining social practices in other organizations (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Lawrence et al. (2002) argue that inasmuch as collaborations are often framed as sites of innovation, they are uniquely poised to spread proto-institutions.

Collaborations must be both embedded and invested in their field to create proto-institutions. Member organizations must have high levels of involvement with other participating organizations, and actively exchange information with them (Lawrence et al., 2002). Institutional theory thus adds to understandings of collaboration by noting that the impact generated is not

one-directional—collaborations themselves can exert influence over member organizations and other stakeholders. As a result, this theory seeks to understand how collaborations can actively engage and change contextual (i.e., field) conditions. Thus, localized organizational collaborations are an interesting site to study security-related meanings and practices, as they have the potential to influence a broad range of security organizations. Nonetheless, EMOC's face unique challenges and opportunities in this process, as discussed in the next section.

Collaborative Emergency Management Networks

Studies of collaboration in EM networks have primarily adopted a post-positivist, network analysis perspective, based on the assumption that participating organizations are fixed and discrete entities, composed of various elements such as "nodes," "ties," and "flows." This view fails to consider the actual communicative processes through which organizational interests are expressed by network members, subsequently making their collaboration *meaningful*. Nonetheless, some scholars have emphasized the importance of members' developing strong relationships among their networked organizations for increasing community resilience (Harris & Doerfel, 2017). Others have stressed that successful networks require effective communication and the development of trust among participating organizations (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2017). A final finding here is that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping collaborations, as the varying social capital of collaborative members impacts their network formation (Johnson, Goerdel, Lovrich, & Pierce, 2015). Network analysis can thus create insight into who is involved in emergency response and the structural features of their relations. A more interpretive perspective on practices, however, focuses on the procedures and routines by which shared meanings develop among the participants in these EMO's. These elements may include

influential images of participant relationships, types of work performed, perceived challenges, and ideal outcomes.

Potentially, investigating the *meaning* of collaboration between EMO's is compelling because of the existing tension between their traditional "command and control" styles of leadership, and the emerging ideal of flexible and nonhierarchical collaboration. During large-scale disasters, for example, ensuing chaos may render preexisting structures difficult to follow, leading them to be abandoned (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2017). This image of EMOC's as flexible and fluctuating appears –at least initially–to contradict DHS-mandated ICS structures. For example, network analysis has highlighted the differences between planned collaborative structures and their actual enactment during a disaster (Kapucu & Hu, 2016). This tension between pre-planned and improvisational organizing has plagued EM for years and is frequently revisited by stakeholders following high-profile disasters (Waugh & Streib, 2006). One indication of this tension is how, as a profession, EM has typically promoted *voluntary* collaboration among participants —especially for smaller counties that may not have the resources to respond to a disaster themselves and must rely instead on the benevolence of existing nonprofits and businesses in their community (Waugh, 1994).

Nonetheless, after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, some critics called for a return to the command and control model, with greater centralization of federal power under DHS and FEMA (Waugh & Streib, 2006). While the above discussion has stressed, generally, that ideal collaboration is considered voluntary and involves flattened power differences (Lewis, 2006), EMOC's are an unusual case, then, partly because collaboration is *both* mandated *and* implicates different levels of government oversight. Studying this case, as a result, requires moving beyond a network analysis perspective to ask instead *how* organizational members view their

collaborations, and create related meanings that facilitate their negotiation of ambiguity and conflict.

As noted above, the legacy of security organizing itself poses a challenge to the attainment of collaborative ideals. Historically, its related structures and cultures tend to be hierarchical, (para-)military, secretive, and competitive (Bean, 2009b). Within related institutional networks, the timely and exclusive possession of knowledge about security threats can enhance a security organization's status, leading it to engage in protracted battles with nominal allies over issues of jurisdiction and mission. Security organizations also experience conflict related to questions of authority and professional expertise (e.g., in the assessment of collected intelligence; Bigo, 2008). Additionally, different levels of clearance among the members of security organizations may impede their information sharing in post-9/11 collaborations (e.g., data fusion centers). Local community officials, for example, complain about not being fully looped into institutional networks concerning relevant intelligence (Monahan & Regan, 2012). As a result, communicative tensions existing at the local level of EMOC's are routinely acknowledged but remain underexplored.

This tension also exists in part because of the broader structure of US federalism. Here, the imposition of NIMS poses a vexing contradiction for local EMO's. Specifically, their adoption of that system serves to standardize their response, yet the federal government also seeks to *empower* local authorities to lead disaster response. Indeed, one of the tenets of NIMS (encoded in its National Response Framework), is that emergency response should be handled first at the lowest level of government. The form of emergency response rises as needed to involve first local, then county, then state, and then finally, federal resources ("Emergency Management Institute," n.d.). As Clarke and Chenoweth (2006) aptly summarize

> The federal system deflects national security initiatives: the decentralized federalism in the United States appears to be capable of refracting and diffusing even the most profound security initiatives. Given these institutional constraints, any effective national security strategy is contingent on local actions. National security policy will be reconstructed from the bottom up: the local arena is where national homeland security policies are adapted to local needs (p. 102).

In this way, the conduct of "security" in emergency management is *both* federally mandated *and* continuously deferred to local authorities (e.g., as the responsibility to achieve community preparedness).

To summarize, collaboration in EMOC's is not as simple as multiple organizations voluntarily or automatically "coming together" to create a transcendent outcome. Instead, collaboration is an evolving improvisation that balances the imperatives of standardization and conformity with those of flexibility and localized decision-making. A communicative perspective on organizational securitization practices can thus dislodge traditional assumptions in the emergency management literature, which tends to frame collaboration as predictably achieved among coherent organizations operating with clear objectives. Instead, I engage collaboration in this study as a complicated and messy accomplishment, one that is contingent on participants' constitution of the collaboration itself. The related struggle over meanings can be understood by adopting a communicative framework, particularly one that focuses on local *conversations* and abstracted *texts*, as discussed in the next section.

Texts and Organizing

An organizational communication perspective is inherently interested in the dynamics surrounding the translation of mandates imposed on EMOC's. The field's literature has already

advanced the concept of translation due to related interest in organizing *texts,* and how texts are drawn on in conversation in order to achieve *authority*. As mentioned previously, success in collaboration is viewed here as being tied to actors' ability to create an "authoritative text"—that is, their related conversations and collaborative activities must "scale up" to stand in for the collaboration itself. In particular, scholarship conducted in the "Communicative Constitution of Organization" (CCO) tradition has emphasized *the dialectic of conversations and texts* that animates translation. This focus can enhance our understanding of how EMOC members create intersubjective meanings for their work by drawing upon both existing and emerging discourses of security. Specifically, it illuminates how local communities and EM professionals routinely negotiate, accommodate, and transform federal requirements to suit their unique needs, and accomplish authority in their local interactions.

Simply put, CCO argues that communication creates *organization* itself. Drawing on a wide range of influences (e.g., ethnomethodology and actor-network theory), CCO scholars focus on *organizing* as an ongoing process, rather than o*rganizations* as fixed, and pre-existing entities. In this view, organizations are called into being by both human and nonhuman actors, as they exercise their agency and practical knowledge to inspire, command, and coordinate the collective achievement of asserted objectives. As Kuhn and Ashcraft (2003) explain, "communication is a fundamentally pragmatic process concerned with the *accomplishment* of social action, in which contextualized actors use symbols and make interpretations to form relationships that are both mediated by, and productive of, subjective and intersubjective reifications" (p. 42, emphasis added). Among CCO scholars, this leads to the reframing of organizations as manifested *in* and *through* communication, rather than viewing communication as a variable existing *within* organizations. This shift in organizational communication research

has led to several "schools" of thought emerging within CCO, including the "Montreal School," which focuses on how organizing emerges in micro-level talk.

Scholars identified with the Montreal School are particularly interested in the *text/conversation* relationship. In their work, conversations are depicted as emergent, everyday activities through which speakers orient to and coordinate with each other in immediate situations. Texts are records of such conversations, which become abstracted from those situations (i.e., in the form of written documents, but, also for CCO, as memory traces recollected by speakers in subsequent interactions). Once removed from specific interactions, texts thus become the basis for future conversation. CCO is rooted in the assumption that language is a tool used by social actors to develop shared accounts of their actions, and the world they co-inhabit. Communication, then, involves continuous adjustment between speakers, as each guesses at the other's meanings and motives and attempt to resolve uncertainty by creating binding agreements. In their seminal book, Taylor and Van Every (2000) also draw on critical theory, arguing that texts can *colonize* conversation. Texts thus orient interactions *and* interpellate identities, such that organizational members are always both using and being shaped by language in their conversations.

Taken together, these two strands of thought advance the text/conversation dialectic. In this view, everyday talk (conversation) constitutes organizations by "scaling up" related agreements toward abstract records that are preserved and elevated through repetition to serve as authoritative precedents that guide future conversations.

However, CCO scholars are not the only figures who view texts as creating the possibility of coordinating activities across organizational members. For example, the institutional ethnographer Dorothy Smith (2001) argues that texts form "the ruling relations," or

the order of relations that are objectified by organizational members out of local practices and coordinated activities across time. Smith gives the example of mega-chain businesses, which must find a way to reproduce their offered products and services in different locations across time (e.g., hotel chains). Texts are essential to this kind of standardization and create the possibility for organizations to exist as coherent, consistent and abstract entities, beyond their immediate enactment in specific, localized practices and relationships. However, the local also plays a key role in organizing—as "somehow the objectified and translocal character of the ruling relations is [consistently] accomplished in the local actualities of people's work and work settings" (Smith, 2001, p. 162). As texts are read (Smith defines texts as written), they are placed in an active relationship with the local, becoming a point of reference for organizational members, who use their interpretations of texts to structure and interpret their work activities. As Smith (2001) points out, texts enter into local practices and have the ability to *control* and *coordinate* local conversations.

As organizational actors reference texts in conversation, then, texts can be used to achieve *authority* (Kahn & Kram, 1994). Traditionally, organizational communication scholarship has variously framed authority as the ability to *make decisions* in an organization, the *performance* of differential status, and/or the ability to *author* the organization (Benoit□Barné & Fox, 2017). Specifically, CCO scholars have embraced the latter position, defining authority, not as a pregiven status anchored in organizational position or hierarchy, but as the ability to commandingly inscribe the organization's shared purpose and identity in ongoing activity through communication (J. R. Taylor & Every, 2014). This perspective reframes authority as the ability to speak on the organization's behalf, to define its trajectory, and to enact that definition. Unlike a hierarchical view, in this view, authority is distributed among members of the

organization and is established in interaction when an account of the organization is accepted (Benoit□Barné & Fox, 2017). Authority, then, is always intersubjectively created, and occurs when the audience adopts the account of the organization as shared—even if this acceptance occurs subconsciously (Koschmann & Burk, 2016). Authority thus contains both local and dislocal elements, as authority is spoken locally but makes present multiple beings (i.e., texts) that are not physically present in the conversation. Studies of authority that use CCO are interested in *processes* of authority, asking "what allows this agent to make a difference in a given situation" (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009, p. 12).

While authority can certainly stem from invoking texts to support efforts to speak *as* one's organization, collaborations present additional challenges (and other potential sources of authority) to speakers. For example, we might ask whether—and how—one speaks for the collaboration. How does such speech invoke seemingly "outside" influences, including institutional texts? Here, CCO scholars have emphasized that collaborations, because of their lack of pregiven hierarchy, present a challenge to members' conventional establishment of authority (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Koschmann & Burk, 2016, J. R. Taylor & Van Every, 2014). For example, Koschmann and Burke (2016), in their study of the management of shared space in governmental laboratories, argue that collaborations must overcome existing authority structures (i.e., authoritative texts that influence various organizational participants) in order to create a *shared* and *emergent* understanding of authority. Koschmann and Burke argue that authority in collaboration exists not only in the ability to author texts that develop a definitive image of the collaboration, but also in the ability to "de-author" the formal hierarchies that predate the collaboration (i.e., in the form of the individual organizations that must come together to collaborate) in order to develop informal, local consensus.

Importantly for this study, the relationship between hierarchy and authority is not mutually exclusive in EMOC's. That is, in EMOC's, multiple organizations may work together to overcome *internal* authority structures; nonetheless, EMOC's are also accountable to *external* authority structures, including state and federal oversight. These potential sources of authority and influence can be framed as *institutional texts*. Taking a communicative view of authority does not take for granted that these federal organizations and structures innately *possess* authority—instead, these structures are variously adopted and adapted by EMOC members in order to author the logics of their local interaction.

This study thus takes an interest in the *struggle* over competing authority in local EMOC's. As Kuhn (2008) argues, authority involves ongoing struggle, conducted by speakers in interaction, for authorship, including in their performance of counternarratives and de-authoring. Institutional texts are thus a key part of this struggle, and interact with local authority moves. Rather than viewing authority as purely horizontally constructed among member organizations, then, this study is also interested in the *vertical* dimensions of this struggle, which interact with the struggle to resolve the local nature of authority in EMOC's. In other words, in bids for authority, EMOC members do not simply speak on behalf of the collaboration, they also speak on behalf of the collaboration *in order to author* the relationship between the collaboration and institutional texts. These institutional texts do not come to stand in for the organization as a whole (i.e., speakers do not simply claim authority by 'speaking' the institutional texts of DHS/FEMA), instead these texts are *adapted* by speakers. The influence of multiple texts on the collaboration, then, goes beyond the CCO focus on how texts come to have authority in organizations. In order to understand this struggle, I turn now to discuss the concept of *translation*.

Translation of Organizing Texts

CCO theorizing frames translation as a necessary part of the process through which conversations become texts. Here, translation is viewed as "the inductive stitching together of a multiverse of communicative practices that scale up to compose an organization" (Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, & Taylor, 2013, p. 177). Translation occurs in the transformation of medium and form—that is, it involves both losses of distinctions, and "new readings that conform to the realities of the new situation and its favored ways of making sense" (Brummans et al., 2013, p. 177). In translation, potential understandings of ongoing interaction are both subtracted from and added to organizational repertoires, as communicative practices are stitched together and then scale up to the textual level. In this process, translation always leads to a disintegration of some existing meaning and the creation of new nuances of meaning to fit new contexts. In other words, because texts are distanciated from their speakers, they can be used to coordinate practice in new contexts—however, these texts are always imperfectly adapted in the next context. Like Smith's (2001) discussion of the interaction between text and local worker, conversations *interpret texts* in ways that are more concerned with situational utility than eternal fidelity.

Translation thus occurs in multiple activities that constitute organizing and pervade an organization's network of practices. Brummans et al. (2013) identify four potential forms of translation that occur in processes of organizing: 1) the need to translate various practices into a *network of complementary practices* that are mutually committed to the logic of the organizational worldview; 2) the translation of these practices into a single, representative collectivity (the organization) that is *verbally represented*; 3) the translation of localized practices by which the organization becomes a *text* that can be used to disseminate the organization's intentions more widely; and 4) the translation whereby the organization becomes

an actor, capable of making itself present and representing the collectivity's purpose in future conversations. Together, these four activities serve to author the organization, enunciate the organization's purposes, and translate that purpose back into local practices. The concept of translation thus emphasizes that the abstraction of conversation necessarily *changes* the meanings of immediate discourses, and similarly, that the use of texts as resources for conversation may or may not sustain their authority.

Additionally, leading CCO scholar Francois Cooren (2001) has argued that translation is key to the ongoing constitution of *interorganizational* contexts. Specifically, Cooren studied negotiation conducted among the members of coalitions managing shared use of a natural resource, the Great Whale River, located in Nunavik, Quebec. Cooren argues that translation animates coalition building, as actors associate their respective expressions of interest to achieve a common purpose. Translation is thus key to organizational sensemaking, serving as the process by which someone or something becomes inserted into the evolving narrative schema of another actor. Cooren gives the example of coalition groups citing public opinion as a reason to cancel a particular initiative. As he explains, "the fact that the mobilization of public opinion finally leads to the cancellation of the project *counts* as the fact that the group succeeds in canceling the project. In their quest, which consists of canceling a given project, they are able to translate the mobilization of public opinion into their *own action*" (Cooren, 2001, p. 237, emphasis added). Cooren's point here is that the actions of multiple actors are often necessary to create coalition action, but that storytellers *center* themselves as-if *authoring* (and not merely reporting) the action. That narrative also serves to align the efforts of members as they work toward the organization's goals. Through translation, conversations become seemingly *coherent* texts, as

translated narratives are authorized and scaled up to structure organizational, or, in this case, interorganizational, relationships.

This phenomenon is relevant to EMOC's, partly because within high-risk organizations, translation from texts back to everyday practice is essential, as key texts tell organizational members how to behave safely and create organizational reliability (Jahn, 2016). For example, Beverly Sauer's (2003) study of technical documentation cycles after industrial mining accidents finds multiple points of rhetorical transformation, where information is developed from one modality to another, and re-represented to a different audience (e.g., from oral accounts to written reports). Sauer argues that the rhetoric of risk documentation and investigation efforts typically seeks to reconcile diverse views of accidents, often privileging technical knowledge over embodied practices and knowledge of workers. Sauer is particularly interested in how critical knowledge may be rendered invisible in *written* documentation; however, she also notes that local knowledge and practices may be vital in transforming technical documents and safety rules back into practice. Even as texts seem to silence local experience, they "must also command miners to utilize non-textual knowledge and experiences outside the frame of rational knowledge, institutional control, and generalized expert systems" (Sauer, 2003, p. 203). Practices, then, are manifestations of translation, which draw on *both* texts and localized, experiential knowledge to enact safety rules in concrete situations.

In sum, a communicative perspective on translation highlights that transformation of meaning occurs across levels of abstraction and changes in context. Security studies has also taken a recent interest in the concept of translation, especially as it relates to the translation of security threats from the global to local level, discussed next. A communicative take on

translation of security threats highlights that everyday *practices* that occur at the *local* and *organizational* level have the potential to transform security-related meanings.

Securitization and Translation as Practice

Within the context of security work, translation has also been a key framework for study, stemming from securitization theory in security studies. Briefly, this tradition advances the claim that the term "security" does not just reflect material reality, but is *a speech act* whose situated performance *constitutes* highly consequential social and political reality. In a related development, recent reframing of security as *practice* emphasizes the discursive and nondiscursive shaping of security meanings that takes place within organizational contexts. Considered together, these developments enhance our understanding of how translation occurs in organizational and security-related practices.

Securitization as a speech act

Security studies scholars have traditionally drawn on International Relations theory to define security as a state-level response to international threats involving the use of military force (Cavelty & Mauer, 2010). This definition evolved in the late 20th century as security studies adopted constructivist, poststructuralist, and other critical perspectives. Related researchers questioned the field's state-centrism, and its traditions of defining "referent objects" requiring protection (e.g., borders and state sovereignty), and preferred responses (e.g., use of military force). Krause and Williams (1997) attribute this shift in part to neoliberal globalization, which has created important effects such as undermining state sovereignty, stimulating migration and diaspora flows, and exacerbating ethnic and cultural identity politics (Huysmans, 2000). In response, individuals have been encouraged to achieve security by their own means – if not literally at their own expense, through the purchase of related goods and services (Andrejevic,

2006) from private security providers, who operate across civilian and military sectors (Krause & Williams, 1997). By problematizing the processes by which security claims are designed and enacted by speakers, and received by audiences, interdisciplinary conceptions of security are increasingly compatible with the concerns of communication studies (B. C. Taylor et al., 2017).

In the past two decades, security scholars have followed the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences to consider discourse as a central means of creating meaningful social and political worlds. Here, the exemplary object is *securitization theory*, developed by the so-called "Copenhagen School" of security studies. Securitization theory argues that "security" is an intersubjective condition created largely through speech acts. This shift draws on J. L. Austin's idea of *performative utterances*, highlighting that the naming of security does not simply describe objectively existing threats. Instead, naming something *as* a security threat performs an action that, potentially, leads audiences to transform the status of that object. In this process, the object is relocated from the realm of "normal politics" (e.g., traditional rights and freedoms) and is subjected to "extraordinary treatment" (e.g., the suspension of those rights, which facilitates various applications of discipline, punishment and control) (Wæver, 1995). As Buzan et al. (1998) write, "In this approach, the meaning of ["security"] . . . lies in its *usage* and is not something we can define analytically or philosophically according to what would be 'best.' The meaning lies not in what people consciously think the concept means but in how they *implicitly use it in some ways and not others*" (p. 24, emphasis added).

In securitization theory, security is thus a term that can be attached to a broad range of "referent objects" – objects designated as *of concern,* due to their perceived value and vulnerability to existential threat (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998). Here, something or someone *becomes* a security issue when "it can be argued that this issue is more important than other

issues and should take absolute priority" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24). Buzan et al. (1998) specify that referent objects may be found in five 'widening' spheres of security: *state, political, societal, economic*, and *environmental*. In this view, *attempts* to frame something as a security threat "count" as security threats, so long as relevant audiences accept these moves. For example, Buzan (1991) argues that groups can establish the integrity of their political systems, the stability of economic markets, and the maintenance of cultural traditions all as "security" goals, if related rhetoric activates audience identification with these objects, and plausibly projects the imminence of existential threats. In this process, "new" security threats are produced, including migration (Huysmans, 2000), climate change (Anderson, n.d.), and poverty (Tripp, Ferree, & Ewig, 2013). For Buzan et al. (1998), this motivated proliferation of threats by speakers is often premature and opportunistic – producing undesirable financial, ethical, and political consequences. As a result, they advocate for responsible "desecuritizing" of issues as needed – that is, reassigning the treatment of designated threats to the realm of deliberative politics, so that they are no longer bracketed out as exceptional.

Securitization literature thus creates an opening to consider security as *communicatively* created—that is, ideas of security are not reflections of real, physical threats but are discursively constructed. Nonetheless, scholars have offered numerous critiques of securitization theory, along with suggestions about how to advance its agenda. Here, communication studies is well-positioned to participate in this project because of the field's focus on rhetorical, discursive, and interactional processes. For example, scholars have critiqued securitization theory for insufficiently developing the role of the audience in evaluating and responding to a speech act. Here, scholars have cited failure to acknowledge the importance of *multiple* audiences, and insufficient discussion about *how* audiences come to accept securitization acts (M. B. Salter,

2008). Taylor (2010), for example, has demonstrated how rhetorical contingencies of *voice* and *persona* mediate audience reception of official proposals to modernize U.S. nuclear weapons.

Here, Buzan et al. (1998) argue that securitization occurs when the speech act "achieve(s) sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed" (p. 25). In other words, securitization occurs when the audience accepts a speaker's assertion that the apparent severity and imminence of a threat justify its enclosure in a "state of exception," where standard rights and protections are suspended. Salter (2008), however, notes that different types of audiences – including popular, elite, technocratic, and scientific – adhere to different rules, norms, and practices. Depending on a speaker's effectiveness in invoking and associating those elements, securitization can thus be successful in one context and unsuccessful in another (M. B. Salter, 2008). For these and other reasons, critics continue to call for more empirical studies of the interaction between securitizing actors and their audiences (Balzacq, Léonard, & Ruzicka, 2016).

Adding to these critiques, I emphasize how securitization research has neglected the importance of *technical*, *professional* and *practitioner audiences*. That is, in and through their everyday activities, *organizational members* often constitute audiences for securitization. As Salter (2008) notes, "the same securitizing speech acts may be framed differently within the professional team and in front of an audience. Among themselves, [security] agents may speak in one way, but use other ways to conform to the expectations of a popular audience — and there are some that are always totally excluded from the securitizing process" (p. 327). A communicative study of *organizational* securitization can thus increase understanding of the audience adaptation that occurs in securitizing speech acts.

Secondly, scholars have questioned assumptions in securitization theory concerning who gets to speak, and on what authority. Wæver (1995), for example, argues that "security is [commonly] articulated only from a specific place, in an institutional voice, by elites" (p. 57). For the Copenhagen School, to "speak" security, actors must have a formal right to claim the threat and to treat it with extraordinary means – implying that those actors possess forms of capital that influence the audience to at least attribute presumption to their arguments. Securitization theory can thus be used to examine how marginalized groups become silenced, partly through being disqualified to produce these speech acts (Hansen, 2000; McDonald, 2008).

Such questioning, however, has mostly failed to move beyond consideration of *elite policymakers* to investigate *everyday situated acts of communication*. Related studies include Dunn Cavelty's (2007) examination of how US policymakers frame cyber threats and Higgott's (2004) argument that the George W. Bush administration securitized economic policy following 9/11. Other empirical studies at least concede the role of organizations in securitization -- for example, Ackleson's (2005) analysis of the U.S.-Mexico border controversy, which indirectly considers the work of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Border Patrol. Nonetheless, that study primarily focuses on "high-level reports" and other public documents and speeches concerning immigration policy (p. 171). Securitization theory thus shares with communication scholarship a growing interest in how authorship and intersubjectivity can be developed to justify the institutional use of force (Balzacq, 2005). However, securitization frequently misses the fact that securitizing serves to *organize* people and resources around defining and responding to an apparent threat. As a result, securitization does not always stem solely from public communication between a single speaker and an audience – indeed, this process is typically shadowed by complex interactions within and between government agencies,

private corporations, non-governmental organizations, and international governmental organizations, who serve both as the stakeholders and contracted agents of securitization. Buzan et al. (1998) partly concede this condition, noting that "in some cases securitization has become institutionalized. Constant drama does not have to be present, because it is implicitly assumed that when we talk of this…we are by definition in the area of urgency" (p. 27). This quote suggests that security meanings can become *institutionalized* when they are relocated from the explicit and immediate drama of a public performance to the more mundane arena of *organization*s. Here, related decisions are interpreted and enacted by formal groups, who draw upon their distinctive knowledges, practices, identities, cultures, jurisdictions, and missions. The next section explores how securitization theory has been expanded to consider security as organizational practice, and how *translation* is a critical practice that changes security meanings.

Securitization as organizational practice

Security scholars have critiqued securitization theory for its focus on singular, discrete speech acts— arguing that instead, such acts are situated in the context of both *previous utterances* and *ongoing, daily practices* that all interact to shape and alter the meaning of security. This turn towards valuing practices performed in context is displayed in both securitization theory and organizational communication, and thus contributes to their compatibility. The convergence of these areas of interest can legitimate organizations as sites of communicative action that constitute security threats, and enhance scholarly ability to consider the positioning of both speakers and audiences.

Increasingly, securitization scholars are now considering the complex processes that create authority and expertise required to perform securitizing moves. In part, this move draws on a recent, interdisciplinary "practice turn." Here, scholars study socially embedded activities,

in order to understand how these activities create social worlds. Practice theory eschews the dualism of actors and structures, instead focusing on "organized forms of doing and saying and the relations established therein" (Bueger, 2016, p. 126).

Practice theory draws on several influences. Arguably three of the most important include, first, Anthony Giddens' (1979) Structuration Theory, which depicts structure and agency as mutually constitutive. A second key source is Bourdieu's (1977) conception of the relations between *habitus* (i.e., an actor's embodied propensity to act in a particular fashion), *doxa* (i.e., fundamental beliefs shared by group members which facilitate their performance of common action) and *fields* (i.e., institutional and professional networks) (see Bueger, 2016, and especially Bigo, 2008). Finally, conceptions of socio-material relations have influenced practice theory. These include Actor-Network Theory and Assemblage Theory, which emphasize productive configurations of human and nonhuman actors (Bueger, 2016). In general, related scholarship focuses on concrete bodily actions (i.e., actors' doings and sayings), practical knowledge (e.g., understanding how to follow a rule successfully), and how objects (things) are used in particular contexts (e.g., to conduct a ritual). The ethos of complexity and indeterminacy in this work is concisely stated by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011): "relations of mutual constitution do not imply equal relations. Rather, these are relations of power, laden with asymmetrical capacities for action, differential access to resources, and conflicting interests and norms" (p. 1242).

For organizational scholars, the focus on practice beneficially highlights processes and routines that lead to the production of seemingly fixed organizations (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). An organizational communication perspective expands upon this idea. Kuhn and Ashcraft (2003) argue, for example, that organizational practices are "always and already discursive: They

are created, maintained, activated, and transformed only in and through discursive practices" (p. 43). That is, all practices have a communicative element. Communication scholars can subsequently depict how organizational knowledge and values are constituted, not only through speech acts, but also through gestures, appearances, and behaviors (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). In the following section, I will connect these insights to related work developed in securitization and organizational communication scholarship to establish the argument that securitization occurs in *practices of translation* during processes of organizing.

Cultivating a practice turn in the study of securitization complements an organizational communication perspective in several ways: First, a focus on practice emphasizes how the authority to speak security emerges in and through organizational processes (e.g., of attributing agency). For Bigo (2008), reframing security as a practice shifts the central question about security from *what* it is to *who* is authorized (i.e., has the symbolic power) to assert a security threat. Bigo (2008) emphasizes that the institutional practice of naming a security threat is characterized by multiple struggles, interactions, contradictory goals, and interests. In this view, securitization is an *apparatus* developed in relationships among professionals, whose activities variously draw upon scientific discourses of risk, regulatory decisions, and administrative measures. Bigo (2008) subsequently encourages security scholars to see security as defined in *struggles* conducted between state and non-state actors that occur at least partly through organizing practices. This framework connects securitization theory and organizational communication by highlighting how speech acts and other mundane practices interact to shape distinctively *organizational* meanings of security. In this view, the power to create security meaning is neither uniform nor inherent to any single actor; instead, it is more diffuse and contingent. Such meaning circulates, compounds, and contradicts itself within professional fields

of security work.

In addition, a focus on practice highlights that securitizing occurs in mundane organizing routines in addition to public speech acts. For example, Balzacq et al. (2016) argue that "paying attention to the . . . [contexts] of government ensures that securitization theory *also* considers the conditions under which regimes of practices emerge and are reformed or dismantled" (p. 497). We may assume that such conditions—including traditions, preferences, and formulas—are at least partly organizational in nature and that they serve to *routinize* securitization as a *practice*. As a result, organizational practices *accomplish* and *express* security in ways that are at least complementary—and perhaps even identical—to discursive speech acts.

Examining security as an organizational practice also highlights the *ethical* implications of security as a meaningful accomplishment. For example, Anna Leander's (2005) discussion of private security and military contractors demonstrates that, despite the apparent constraints of official directives, those organizations exercise considerable discretion in interpreting those directives for clients, and carrying out their implications. For example, as private military contractors provide valued intelligence gathering and analysis services to state and corporate clients, they become increasingly involved in authoring the very discourses that regulate their activity. As a result, notes Leander (2005), "they provide a growing share of the information that forms the basis of decisions on whether or not something is a security concern" (p. 813). That is, by gathering information and *translating* it into assertions of threat, private military contractors inflect security discourses in ways that advance their interests (e.g., by defining threats as apparently requiring militarized, market-based, and corporate-provided solutions). Similarly, Huysmans (2011) argues that mundane securitizing practices are increasingly displacing official speech acts. Here, the focus is on how surveillance has become increasingly integrated into the

technological forms and practices of everyday life (e.g., through official use of profiling algorithms, and covert collection of data). As a result, Huysmans argues, scholars should critique these mundane acts of associating and dispersing security practices to sustain securitization as an authorized and legitimate exigency.

The recurring theme in these examples is that, through their everyday practices of organizing, security professionals contribute to the shaping of broader ethical and political discourses of security. This work is often performed behind the scenes, as demonstrated in Niva's (2013) critique of "networked warfare" conducted in the US in its Global War on Terror. That critique shows how, through their use of informal networks of intelligence and military personnel, U.S. officials have reduced the scale of decision-making around drone strikes (i.e., in terms of the people involved), and have dispersed and obscured related accountability (i.e., thus inhibiting potential public awareness and protest).

To summarize my argument thus far, adopting an organizational perspective on securitization is useful because it foregrounds how organizing practices and security discourses interact and shape each other. This argument need not rely only on the literature of security studies. In the field of organizational studies, we see parallel developments. For example, Christopher Grey's historical studies of Bletchley Park (the famous British codebreaking site used during World War II) characterize that organization as both knowledge-intensive (Grey & Sturdy, 2009) and cultivating a culture of secrecy (Grey, 2014). In this body of work, Grey makes a case for integrating the agendas of security studies and organization studies, demonstrating that security is often a central problematic for organizations, and that the modern pursuit of security increasingly occurs in organizational activities.

Security as translational practice

As noted above, the concept of *translation* of securitizing discourses is especially relevant to EMOC's (Stritzel, 2014). Here, we benefit from Stritzel's cultivation of a surprisingly neglected claim: That security initiatives developed by national officials depend for their success upon the understanding and consent of a vast network of regional and local community actors. These actors form not only a crucial audience for interpreting related federal discourse; they also display considerable agency in their own right, as they reconcile abstract and unilaterally imposed "official" meanings with the distinctive texture of shared meanings and practices. Within the context of EM, local authorities play an important bridging role in reconciling the discourse of their communities with the discourse of federal officials. This "vertical" dimension to their work (i.e., in which the national becomes "embedded" in the local) is further complicated by the "horizontal" work that they must perform in coordinating the interests of related stakeholders to create successful response plans. In this process, EMOC's become a "noisy" context in which various professional and security discourses (e.g., of public health, first responders, etc.) interact and compete with each other. Somehow, this competition typically resolves in a discourse displaying sufficient authority and legitimacy to compel the consent of local, regional, and national stakeholders.

As Stritzel (2014) suggests, EMOC's can create shared goals through the practice of translation. Security-related translation in this context, however, faces several challenges, including the need to establish the legitimacy of locally-performed actions for stakeholders and regulators. As Stritzel (2014) demonstrates, the translation of a security threat from one context to another can be challenging, because all security threats are produced in specific temporal and spatial contexts. This means that security can never generate a 'pure' or universally-endorsed

translation, because "there is never any 'perfect equivalence' between source and translated text" (p. 57). Despite this impossibility, oversight groups like DHS typically seek and expect uniform adaption of security guidelines from the communities subject to their authority (e.g., in the consistent prioritization of counterterrorism across US locales, despite differing risk levels based on factors such as demographic diversity). This requirement is demonstrated by NIMS, which dictates a standardized system of threat response meant to be transferable within and across agencies and jurisdictions.

Within organizational contexts of securitization, further, an actor's relationship with their field may also *motivate* them to translate threats and mandates in ways that are professionally advantageous. Eski (2016) has demonstrated this phenomenon in his ethnography of port security workers, who frequently discuss terrorism and other security threats. Typically, this talk is used pragmatically to assess the probability of threats , but it also performs a ritualized function of centering otherwise taken-for-granted port work as *significant* within the macro-level discourse of the Global War on Terror.

In EMOC's, then, professional concerns and identities can play a role in the communicative creation of security meanings. However, there are also *financial* advantages to translating federal directives to serve the local level. For example, Monahan and Palmer's (2009) review of DHS Data Fusion Centers asserts that "the primary goal of fusion centers is to engage in intelligence-sharing for counter-terrorism purposes. However, they have been used for a variety of other purposes, such as basic policing, spying on social movement organizations, or restricting legal public activities such as taking photographs" (p. 617). As Fusion Centers are housed in local police departments, these departments may translate directives emphasizing an anti-terror mission to create a local focus on "all crime." While it facilitates "mission creep," this

kind of translation serves local communities by enabling their appropriation of law enforcement resources (e.g., funding, equipment, and training) they could not otherwise afford to access. As these examples demonstrate, professional identity and resource-based concerns influence local translation practices of broad federal discourses of security. The text-conversation dialectic emphasizes that translation is necessarily imperfect. Texts (like DHS initiatives) inform and influence conversation, while local conversations themselves can scale up to become organizing texts.

Translation and Authority in EMOC's

This study of local emergency management collaborations uniquely configures CCO scholarship concerning texts and authority with securitization theory, emphasizing how both are concerned with the practical translation of security threats. Here, both CCO and securitization theory recognize that texts [Stritzel (2014) uses the term macrodiscourses] inform and influence local organizing. For its part, securitization theory highlights how translations of global security threats can be *communicatively constructed* by local actors to create professional advantages, position this work as important, and marshal resources. A CCO perspective on translation, however, specifies the multiple processes through which translation occurs across levels of abstraction (from conversations to texts and vice versa). Additionally, CCO emphasizes that translation occurs in everyday *practices* of organizing. In this way, CCO highlights how, beyond official statements and rhetoric, local organizational actors make *everyday decisions* in order to accomplish their work, and, in doing so, necessarily (if unintentionally) alter and adapt institutional texts.

Additionally, adopting a CCO perspective emphasizes the importance of *authority* in these translations. CCO offers a richer account of authority as *an emergent accomplishment* –

one that serves our study of the increasingly collaborative work that is conducted within and across security organizations. Reframing authority, not as given based on members' positions in organizational hierarchies but as the demonstrated ability to author the organization, opens up possibilities for understanding how security meaning is *intersubjectively* achieved in interactions *among* security organizations and their respective members. In using CCO, this project thus asks *what texts* come to matter in conversations, as speakers attempt to author the dominant account of their security collaboration. Institutional texts (e.g., NIMS), then, are one artifact in EMOC's creation of authority, a process that must be negotiated in the context of local needs, and various organizational missions and interests. A CCO interest in *authority* can thus deepen current understandings of translation in security work by emphasizing how successful translation of texts *also* authors organizational trajectory and identity. In other words, translation is the site of communicative practice wherein texts of the national and international (in this case, Homeland Security directives) intersect with those of the local (in this case, the struggle to unique, situated collaborations).

Conversely, CCO assumes that enacting authority is a uniquely challenging process for interorganizational collaborations, due to their lack of traditional hierarchical structures. This idealized view of collaboration, however, fails to account for the distinctively hierarchical nature of security work, which creates a tension for local EMOC's simultaneously engaged in the "horizontal" negotiation of participants' agendas. EMOC's are thus a compelling case that can enhance understanding of the organizational dynamics surrounding translation, because this translation necessarily occurs *vertically* between federal and local governments, and *horizontally* across local participants.

In this view, EMOC members must resolve questions concerning the local identity and structure of their collaboration, and, through conversation, create a dominant, abstracted account of their local mission. This claim leads to this study's first research question:

> *RQ1: How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate their respective interests and agendas in order to create successful collaboration (i.e., engage in horizontal translation)?*

Further, EMOC translation of federal directives (including NIMS/ICS) may display "vernacular" securitization, as local actors employ familiar cultural and professional vocabularies and dialects to generate plausible and compelling texts that authorize their local organization. This challenge to leads to the following research question:

> *RQ2: How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate the significance and implications of federal mandates and models for their collaboration (e.g., engage in vertical translation)?*

The study proposed here takes a uniquely *communicative* stance on the organizational translation and authorization of security meanings. Drawing from securitization theory, it holds that security is intersubjectively given meaning in practices. Additionally, it invokes the growing interdisciplinary consensus that organizations are a vital site of securitization. Drawing from CCO, I assert that the organizational authoring of security meaning is shaped by cultural and institutional discourses of security that affect related organizational forms, processes, and cultures. Arguably, this connection has been overlooked by securitization scholars as they focus on by elite actors and discrete events. Instead, I maintain that collaboration is *itself* an organizational form that creates challenges for securitization, especially as related collaboration activates competing authorships tied to various organizational affiliations and resources.

EMOC's thus require the communicative cultivation of coordination across local entities—a process I will call *horizontal translation*—and with oversight groups (e.g., FEMA)—a process I term *vertical translation.* This project thus seeks to study the process by which securitization is communicatively *authored* and *translated* across both dimensions of emergency management organizational collaboration. This focus leads to a third research question that centers the role of authority in horizontal and vertical translation:

RQ3: How do horizontal and vertical processes of translation serve to develop authority within EMOCs?

Chapter Three introduces two interorganizational collaborations as the sites of study in this dissertation, along with the research methods used to study them. I proceed in Chapters Four and Five to present findings from this study that respond to these three research questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

As I have argued in Chapters One and Two, Emergency Management Organizations (EMO's) have become significant players in the post-9/11 development and execution of preparedness and response activities, related to both natural hazards and human-caused threats. This study subsequently investigates how local emergency management professionals communicatively construct, adapt, and change meanings about their security-related work. Specifically, this study is concerned with how related activities of collaboration incorporate federal mandates and framing, and invoke the interests and vernaculars of local communities, security-related professions, and agency-related roles.

An ethnographically informed analysis of these groups can provide insight into challenges posed to emergency management collaboration and communicative responses. Such an approach, I maintain, accesses the actual communication of group members, and permits us to understand how their everyday practices shape and alter relevant security meanings. While immersed in these sites, I was able to trace how meanings of this work emerged in and through interactions of texts (e.g., used in FEMA-mandated training courses) and conversations (e.g., real-time deliberation conducted by members concerning what constitutes a significant threat). As developed below, data collection included fieldnotes drawn from participant observation at related EMOC meetings and focused on participants' use of texts to collaborate to accomplish preparedness and emergency response. Other data included semi-structured interviews and organizational documents.

This chapter contains four main sections. First, I establish the value of using ethnographic methods to study this site. Next, I discuss the field site itself. The third section introduces my

three types of empirical data and considers my position in the field as a researcher. Finally, I describe my methods of data analysis.

Analysis of Collaborative Translation

Communication issues at stake in this study include the meanings of security and the situated work done by emergency managers to create these meanings. Specifically, I am concerned with how security professionals make sense of their work and communicate about it in ways that frame their organizing as both authoritative and legitimate. For this reason, I conducted an ethnographic study using participant observation and field-based interviews with participants in two overlapping emergency management groups. Ethnographic methods tend to involve long-term immersion in a field site that is conducted to make sense of the scene. The ethnographer records field notes about observations to produce thick descriptions of the scene, which emphasize the contextual nature of participant sensemaking (Tracy, 2012). The idea of securitization thus opens space for ethnographers, who can strive to study *how the organization of security is accomplished in and through communication.* Key here is that Wæver's (1995) original idea of the securitizing "actor" has been complicated by subsequent findings that securitization is innately tied to the communicative negotiation of professional and organizational identities (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008). Thus, I make the case that securitizing speech acts are accomplished not merely in communication from one elite speaker to a mass audience, but also in workplace interactions, formal bureaucratic processes (Leander, 2005), and professional struggles for symbolic and material resources, conducted among organizational members (Brewis & Godfrey, 2017). For this reason, organizational communication scholars can use ethnography to understand how organizational members practically accomplish security-related meanings.

Additionally, the use of ethnography can enhance knowledge of emergency management organization collaborations (EMOC's), because much of the extant literature has relied on network analysis to understand the structure of relationships developed among these collaborations. Here, Berthod, Grothe-Hammer, and Sydow (2017) argue that organizational scholars have focused more on characterizing the size and structure of interorganizational networks and less on the practices and processes that lead to the creation and maintenance of these networks. As a result, we see growing calls for ethnographic studies of interorganizational phenomena. These calls acknowledge that work arrangements in globalization span organizational boundaries now more than ever before.

However, Berthod, Grothe-Hammer, and Sydow (2018) recognize that "site multiplicity" can pose challenges in conducting this type of data collection. Nonetheless, these authors argue that related studies help us to "understand more readily how such relations come to be in terms of governance, content, and level of analysis, i.e., how relations are enacted, nurtured, or controlled, and how they become the object of change and purposeful management" (Berthod et al., 2018, p. 216). In other words, network analysis focuses on collaboration structure as it exists "out there" instead of considering collaboration as a process that organizational members enact *for themselves*. Alternately, the ethnographic approach to emergency management networks foregrounds the production and transformation of collaboration in the everyday practices of its participants. Recent scholarship has created openings for this work—for example, in calling for emergency management networks to be made up of "strong" relationships among participants (e.g., Harris & Doerfel, 2017; Kapucu & Demiroz, 2017)—a call that nonetheless begs the question of *how* exactly network participants are to develop such relationships. An ethnographic approach can thus illuminate the practices and processes through which such relationships are

formed, leading participants to attribute particular meanings to the network and its accomplishment of securitization.

Site of Study

The site for this study consisted of two EMOC's—one county-level office of emergency management (which will be referred to as FOEM), and the Emergency Events Management Group (hereafter, EEMG), an EMOC that includes representatives of a particular city, its surrounding county, and its local university campus. The county-level OEM, *Foothills Office of Emergency Management* (FOEM)[2], has five full-time employees tasked with coordinating the activities of other county and Foothills City employees (e.g., first responders, county departments), during emergencies. As noted in previous chapters, county OEMs are accountable to FEMA/DHS partly because of their funding streams—during a large-scale emergency, FEMA may reimburse up to 75% of OEM response expenses, and it is taken for granted that counties will seek that reimbursement, rather than absorb those expenses in their own budgets. However, as previously mentioned, this reimbursement is tied to their adoption of NIMS during those efforts.

FOEM is based in a county composed of several smaller cities and suburban towns, along with expansive mountain and grassland areas. As a result, the FOEM's website indicates its primary concern with four natural hazards (flood, wildfire, drought, and tornado), and includes terrorism and pandemic much further down on its list of concerns. FOEM is particularly concerned with flooding because of near-catastrophic levels of flooding that threatened the county in 2013. Staff members refer to this event as "the flood," and count their response to it as an example of their success, but also as an event that generated hard and important lessons—

[2] Organization and participant names are pseudonyms.

including the need for achieving greater buy-in from collaboration members as a prerequisite for effective coordination. Additionally, Foothills County municipalities are typically threatened each summer by wildfires, in a state where several large fires can and often do burn simultaneously, leaving counties to scramble for shared resources.

During a crisis, FOEM subsequently staffs its emergency operations center (EOC) using a wide variety of people, ranging from civilian volunteers to sheriff's office employees, and other county and city employees. The county's EOC sits on an elevated hill by a small airport, located in Foothills City, which serves as the county seat. The EOC serves as a central space for emergency management practitioners to gather during an unfolding incident, adjacent to the everyday offices of the FOEM employees. The EOC room consists of two long tables that are lined with computers and telephones, each one assigned to 1 of the 29 role inhabitants staffing its Emergency Support Functions (ESFs[3]). Emergency Support Functions are roles that FEMA has deemed important to support incident response—ESFs do everything from volunteer and donation management to acting as liaisons to police and fire departments to damage assessment. FOEM is particularly proud of this relatively elaborate infrastructure—NIMS requires OEMs to staff a minimum of 15 ESF positions to help coordinate with responders in the field during emergencies. Foothills County has 29 ESFs because, as the Emergency Manager jokes, "We're special" (fieldnote). The EOC space offers a broad panoramic view of the foothill. This design is functional as much as aesthetic: the EOC provides a vantage point to view almost any wildfire burning near the city.

[3] ESFs are 'subject matter experts' who provide support, coordination, and resource ordering that helps the staff of the 'on the ground' operation at the Incident Command Post. ESF functions include fire, public safety, and public health. go

ESF position-holders attend regular monthly meetings—each time, packing the EOC as they sit at desks and on top of counters to accommodate the overflow. In these events, the EMOC participants like to talk about what makes their OEM different, and often express to me their belief that they are more collaborative than OEM's in surrounding counties. The staff display a competitive spirit about this belief—for example, frequently bragging about how "we get resources first" because the staff is skilled at quickly ordering them (fieldnote). The EOC is often bustling and noisy during these meetings—there is an AC vent overhead that members refer to as "the plane," often yelling at each other to speak up as they share monthly updates because it is hard to hear. A small gong on a shelf in the corner is used to focus the group when side conversations get too loud (struck by the EOC manager)—and to gather people for briefings when the EOC is activated. If the gong is struck, people tend to stop their conversations immediately, although they may continue quietly talking on the phone, and the garbled sound of ongoing radio conversations in the field often disturbs the briefings until people remember to turn them down. The FOEM staff typically display enthusiasm for these meetings—partly because the emergency manager, Ben, is a former firefighter, and thus possesses credibility born of familiarity. The first time I met him, I was interviewing the deputy emergency manager, Sophia, at the central conference table, and Ben emerged from his office holding a foam axe, plastic crown, and wrestling belt, which he shoved into a supply closet in the EOC. As he explained, it's best to keep the monthly meetings interesting. In order to create a better idea of who participates in FOEM monthly meetings, Table 3.1 contains a count of typical attendance of a FOEM meeting, recorded in my fieldnotes in June of 2018. As demonstrated, while many organizations are involved in this collaboration, law enforcement tends to have the biggest presence in the meetings in the form of the county sheriff's office.

Table 3.1. FOEM Meeting Attendance by Organization.

Foothills County Sheriff's Office	11
FOEM Staff	5
National Weather Service	3
Volunteers	5
State OEM	1
Housing and Human Services	1
Geographic Information Services	1

The second, nested collaboration, EEMG, is an EMOC spearheaded by the police department of a large state, public university (hereafter, known as *Foothills University*), with the main campus located in Foothills City. EEMG is a distinct EMOC, but its members also tie themselves to the FOEM as their local designated OEM, and follow its related policies. That is, in the event of an emergency that threatens the university campus, EEMG sets up a Command Post under the ICS structure. Simultaneously, however, the FOEM will activate their EOC, and call in county employees and other collaborators as needed to support the EEMG's field operations. However, EEMG members also set up their command post for many *planned* events on campus, including appearances of controversial speakers, concerts, and football games. In most cases, activation of the EEMG command post does not warrant activation of the FOEM EOC, except in the case of extremely high profile (and thus risky) events (for example, there was a preemptive activation of the EOC to support the command post when a presidential candidate came to visit the campus).

This command post (CP) operates in a condemned science lab building on the university campus. The site has several broken windows, circuitous, dark hallways, and piles of cast-off retro office furniture. The group has cobbled together desks from the building's offices to fill a large central meeting room. As in the EOC, this command post[4] consists of labeled computers and spaces for staff populating the ICS-mandated role hierarchy—these positions include operations (which focuses on what law enforcement officers are doing in the field), logistics (which orders supplies, food, and other needed materials for the response), and liaisons to various other groups (including university departments, private security companies who have been hired for event security, and a cyber intelligence unit). During operations, monitors placed on one of the room's walls stream video feeds from 16-24 surveillance cameras set by police around the campus—including fixed building cameras and iPhone cameras that an EEMG member sets up on university building roofs before events. Typically, the EEMG activates this command post approximately once a month for planned events on the campus and during every university football game. During these events, dispatch call takers, police officers, private security personnel, and at least one city fire chief staff the command post, acting as liaisons to staff serving in the field at the event. Rooms down the hall contain a rotating supply of food (donuts, barbecue sandwiches, and industrial-sized pots of coffee form the standard menu); the cyber division, which conducts event surveillance; and lines of cables needed to power every electronic device in the command post—fed out an open window to a nearby power supply.

[4] It is worth reiterating here that a command post is the local site of field operations during an incident, while an EOC is a more remote site that indirectly *supports* ground operations by gathering resources and acting as a liaison to other stakeholders. This command post uses ICS positions but also adapts some ESF positions (which tend to exist in EOCs, not command posts).

When considered together, these two connected sites create an important opportunity to study how EMOC personnel discursively interpret and enact their work. While these collaborations are subject to the same federal training and rules, they make different choices in translating, accommodating, and—in some cases—rejecting those frameworks. Studying two separate sites provides the opportunity to compare translations of the same NIMS structures into different contexts (e.g., each site has chosen to organize its activated response structure in different ways—one as a Command Post, the other as an EOC). The sites are uniquely concerned with conducting horizontal translations—that is, soliciting, interpreting, prioritizing, and reconciling the distinctive needs of member organizations. However, there is overlap in representation between the two collaborations (some people belong to both groups), and there is also collaboration between the collaborations. During a large-scale incident on the college campus it is expected that FOEM would activate and provide support to EEMG. Thus, horizontal translation is also occurring among the two groups as they pass ideas back and forth. Because the two chosen sites are distinct yet interconnected, they provide an opportunity to see differences in vertical translation of federal directives and horizontal translation of local challenges.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over two time periods: first, in the Fall of 2015 for a pilot study, and then again between Summer 2017 and Fall 2018. Data collection employed the tools of participant observation, semistructured interviews, and textual analysis, all of which I will elaborate on below.

Participant observation

The majority of my data collection involved participant observation. In total, I observed 182 hours of EMOC activity, leading to the writing of 194 pages of single spaced thick

description fieldnotes. Related events included monthly meetings, pre-scheduled "activations" during public events, and exercises, which train participants in responding to possible unplanned events. I did not observe an unscheduled activation during a critical incident. In Foothills County, the EOC was not activated at all during my primary observation time frame, and had been most recently activated about a year before I began observing, when a wildfire started near one of its large population centers. However, not being on site for a "real emergency" did not mean I did not seen any unplanned incidents. During several prescheduled activations, unforeseen incidents occurred, creating immediate threats to public safety. In these cases, unpredictable reality infiltrated preplanned exercises and simulations.

In the field, I adopted an *observer-as-participant* role (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010) in the beginning of my observations, as I very rarely intervened in the scene. During this stage, members often stopped to explain to me what was happening, and I asked many questions about what they were doing, and why. The acronym use of the two groups posed a unique challenge to initial observations, as so many acronyms were thrown around by members I often found myself with no idea of what was going on. In the beginning, participants also marked me as an observer, sometimes verbally. For example, one police officer told me I could not attend a meeting that included him because "I wouldn't know what they were talking about anyway." This comment indicates that, at that time, that participant viewed me as an outsider, and that some EMOC members may associate legitimacy with the possession of particular knowledge about unfolding communication.

Over time, however, I became a more "useful" observer to my participants in ways that made me more of a participant (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010)—even though this presented fieldwork dilemmas. As I learned to "talk the talk" of emergency management, I noticed that it was easier

to understand, and even predict, how members would react to unfolding events and to each other. With this understanding came an increased perception of my legitimacy and usefulness. For example, sometimes when I sat and observed in the command post, which featured an entire wall of surveillance video streams, participants would ask me if I had seen anything that they were looking for on those feeds. At one home football game there were reports of a man trying to jump the fence into the football stadium. After the man's third attempt to jump the fence, EEMG participants started trying to move the remote-controlled cameras to find him, and told me to be on the lookout for a man fitting the description they provided. However, such events were rare. More commonly, I became a participant by attending trainings, becoming certified in various ICS courses, and volunteering during EMOC exercises.

In observing the scenes described above (e.g., command posts, EOCs, FOEM meetings), I documented how members collaboratively invoked and translated federal imperatives, and how they subsequently framed security concerns as part of their work. My observation took participant *practices* as the unit of observation, and I sought to understand how participants engaged in two types of *translation* in their daily practices.

First, to understand *horizontal* translation, I observed those communication practices that members deemed "collaborative" in their ongoing interaction, and documented evidence that indicated how these designations invoked particular ideals of collaboration. Here, I took as a starting point the idea that translation occurs in *the transformation of semiotic form* (Brummans et al., 2013; Sauer, 2003). In the case of translation performed at the local level, I focused my observation on communicative practices that appeared to co-orient different members to the same organizational worldview (e.g., shared risks), and inserted multiple members' actions into a shared interorganizational account (Cooren, 2001). This observation focused on how horizontal

translation formed a critical process in the constitution of collaborative texts (Lewis, 2006). Observation of the coordination of complementary practices aligned with Brummans et al.'s (2013) translation schema, which depicts networks of practices co-oriented around a shared object of interest, and members verbally representing the organization to define their collective identity. Observation of horizontal translation during collaboration, then, focused on communicative "scaling up" of local practices to a form a collectivity that could be subsequently distanciated and used to create procedures and standardization about local response (Brummans et al., 2013).

Conversely, to observe *vertical* translation, I focused on moments when members called on federal (i.e., institutional) texts in local conversations. While the Brummans et al. (2013) schema for translation focuses on four translations that scale *up* in level of abstraction, this study also focuses on how abstracted texts scale back *down*. This set of observations focused on EMOC member practices—for example, the routine of filling out ICS forms during an incident, where the template is altered by participants in writing and conversations to fill out the form. In observing these routine practices, I was specifically interested in noticing explicit translations of the texts (Stritzel, 2011)—for example, in the following rationalization for compliance: "You need to fill out the form—ok? Just do it. FEMA reimburses up to 75%, but they don't usually, right? Fill out the forms, take the time" (fieldnote). Also, Sauer (2003) notes that translation occurs as procedures transform into training, which is then used (or not) in daily practices—in other words, translation also occurs in form as people move general rules into the realm of the specific. In some cases, for example, EMOC members invoked their discretion and explicitly rejected FEMA guidelines, often using phrases such as "We don't really do this" (fieldnote).

I was also interested in implicit, embodied translations (Sauer, 2003), in which participants did not explain their adaptations, but still engaged in translations by following or altering protocols, often as they changed the medium of these texts (e.g., going from written forms to spoken instructions). In this transfer of medium, translation among EMOC's can occur by highlighting some aspects of the procedure dictated by FEMA, for example, while minimizing other guidelines. I followed up on these observations by asking questions about the practices observed in the field during informal interviews. I asked participants about procedures they discussed during meetings – including how they believed that discussion had altered initial or existing understandings to create a new understandings of application. In a volunteer training I observed, for example, FOEM members learned how to fill out a resource request form (ICS 214). In addition to the form itself, members used a handout, prepared by FOEM staff, that simplified the form into 5-10 questions to complete a resource order (e.g., "what kind of resource?", "when is it needed?"). During a lull in this meeting, I asked the resource ordering unit leader where the second handout came from, and he said that FOEM had made it to simplify the form and give volunteers a script for when they're on the phone with personnel who are placing resource orders. This is perhaps because FOEM resource ordering is completed by a group of volunteers and is staffed by 4-6 people throughout the incident—and, as some of the volunteers at this meeting told me, many people don't come to meetings very often and might need help "brushing up" on the ordering procedure (fieldnote). In this translation, some aspects of resource ordering were highlighted, while other procedures were deemed less important (in that they were not reiterated on the question script).

Lastly, observation focused on what members *securitized,* or how they translated events within their domain into Homeland Security concerns, thus linking their local work to

institutional texts. Here, I looked for potential concerns that members marked out as exceptional and as concerning because they appeared to pose some existential threat to a valued "referent object" (e.g., "public safety"). Drawing on theory, performances of securitization display qualities of heightened urgency, and depict the consequences of not addressing a given threat as being dire. As Buzan et al. (1998) argue, securitization need not invoke the term security explicitly; instead, the "grammar" of security includes concern expressed about an existential threat, a need for heightened attention, and prioritized action. In some cases, related discussion may explicitly and directly use the term "security" (e.g., "we need to *secure* the perimeter"; fieldnote), while other cases may indirectly prioritize an action by projecting the undesirable consequences of inaction (e.g., "If that guy manages to jump the fence—we're done. Who knows what he's doing"; fieldnote).

Semistructured interviews

During my pilot study in this site, I interviewed 12 participants. During the period from June 2017 to September 2018, I expanded that number to 30 people total. Table 3.2 displays a breakdown of participants' occupations and agency affiliations. Table 3.4 displays a breakdown of participants between the two collaborations (EEMG and FOEM), based on their *primary* affiliation (which I asked them for in interviews). Of my interview participants, 13 were women and 17 were men. All were white. Interviews lasted between 37 minutes and 1 hour and 24 minutes, and were digitally recorded (after obtaining interviewee informed consent) for later transcription. Interviews were semistructured, with the overall aim of talking to members about their views of collaboration, DHS/FEMA guidelines, and their preparedness and response activities (see Appendix A for a list of interview questions).

Table 3.2. Participants by Organizational Affiliation

Police	7
Sheriff's office	5
Geographic Information Systems	1
Public Health	3
EMO Staff	6
Nonprofit/Volunteer	5
Other	3

Table 3.3. Participants by Collaboration Affiliation.

EEMG	17
FOEM	13

I used a general interview guide with planned questions that could be improvised upon, moved around, dropped, or added to, based on how participants responded (Kvale, 1996). These questions will include initial, open-ended questions (for example, "Tell me how you got involved in the county emergency management group?" and "How does this differ from your normal job?"). I also started with a "grand tour" question by asking participants for background on what their collaborative group does (Tracy, 2012). These questions are non-threatening and invite members to feel relatively confident about their knowledge levels, helping to put them at ease. My first group of interview questions focused on collaboration. These questions were designed to solicit responses that will inform RQ1: "*How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate their respective interests and agendas in order to create successful collaboration (i.e.,*

engage in horizontal translation)?" Additional questions probed how members characterized their existing collaboration (e.g., "How does (your organization) use collaboration and how is this different than your normal work?"), and explored if members perceive changes in their collaboration (e.g., "How has collaboration changed over time for FOEM?"). These questions were designed to explore the relationship between changes in practice and ideas of collaboration.

Next, I used several questions inspired by the *Critical Incident Technique* (Flanagan, 1954). This technique was developed to facilitate assessments of U.S. Air Force pilot candidates by asking evaluators about the specific ways in which someone fits the standards for a good pilot (or not). This technique involves first asking participants what goal they are working toward and then asking them about critical incidents that deviated from the norm in ways that supported or failed to support their achievement of that goal (Flanagan, 1954). In my interviews, the critical incident technique is used to understand EMOC's uses of DHS/FEMA guidelines, to understand how practices of translation change over time. These questions were used to answer RQ2: "*How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate the significance and implications of federal mandates and structures for their collaboration?"* Concerning DHS/FEMA mandates, I first asked, "Why do you use DHS/FEMA guidelines like the incident command system (ICS)?" Next, I prompted participants by asking "Can you tell me about a time ICS worked well for you?" and "Can you tell me about a time ICS was not helpful?" These questions tended to produce more concrete data than merely asking participants for general assessments of DHS/FEMA mandates. The Critical Incident Technique is thus useful because it asks members to tell stories that illustrate their viewpoints and indicate their implicit values, by inviting them to self-select the incidents that are deemed critical. These questions provided insight into translations participants made to institutional texts.

Additionally, questions about learning how to use ICS and how to work with FEMA were used to partially answer RQ3, "*How do horizontal and vertical processes of translation serve to develop authority within EMOCs?*". Questions about DHS guidelines were designed to delve into how practices of translation are connected to *authority* by focusing on organizational practices and who *authors* these organizational practices. For example, I asked participants "What does your job consist of during an EOC activation? What tasks do you have to do every time?". Follow up questions asked about the *origin* of these practices, for example, "I've noticed that EEMG does an hourly briefing during activations—where did that idea come from? Why do an hourly briefing?" These interview questions complemented field-based observations of routine practices that I noticed, giving participants a chance to explain the origin of these practices and the logic behind them. In explanations of their practices, participants also talked about who had *authored* these practices, and what texts promoted these practices and thus were accepted as having authority.

Site artifacts

Emergency management collaborations produce a considerable amount of written exchange – both in hard-copy paper and electronic, screen-based forms. As a result, I collected many written artifacts during my research, including training materials, planning materials for events and possible emergencies, ICS forms, meeting agendas, and presentation scripts. In this study, I examined these artifacts as texts used as resources by participants during their conversations. These texts can represent local conversations that scale to become local texts (within EMOC's) or translations of DHS/FEMA texts that members develop in local conversations. I collected several types of local documents, including "Hazards Annex" presentation slide decks, which outline how a FOEM would respond to a given hazard. I also

collected federal documents (e.g., ICS training materials) and others that were co-created by national and local agencies (e.g., Incident Action Plans—or IAPs—which are an ICS form that gets filled out at the local level when an incident occurs). In addition to collecting these texts, I also recorded invocations of them in my field notes (see section above on observation). Doing so enabled me to understand how texts are referenced and transformed by participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010).

In general, I view these physical texts as both resources for, and referents of, human communication (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010), and I focused on how participants make these texts meaningful in their conversations (e.g., to accommodate their felt needs for compliance, validation, and control).

Analysis

This study takes practices that facilitate translation as the key unit of observation and analysis. After starting with open-ended observation about collaboration in the research sites, I started to note repeated translations that together created shared accounts of the collaboration, and of the role of federal mandates and structures in the collaboration. I noticed that these translations were tied to repeated practices—for example, translations of ICS were tied to the repeated practices of ICS trainings, exercises, and monthly meetings. I focused observation on the performance of these practices. In field interviews, I began to ask participants about the practices either during their performance or immediately afterward. I started to ask participants where practices originated, or how they had changed over time. I also solicited more in-depth reflection on the development of and changes in practice with interview questions.

During coding, data analysis used three main coding steps borrowed from Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory. This process included open coding of data or line-by-line

coding that seeks to answer the question “What is going on here?” These codes captured the essence of the activities occurring in the data. Open coding was done in NVIVO data analysis software and yielded 113 codes. Next, I used axial coding, comparing codes to codes to flesh out the depth and breadth of categories. Finally, I used selective coding that related subordinate codes to one another to build grounded theory. In selective coding, the researcher looks for a key central themes, around which other themes can be interrelated. Glaser and Strauss suggest trying out multiple central themes in the search for an explanatory framework. After axial coding, which occurred in September of 2018, I also returned to the field to collect more data in the form of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014), or more concentrated data collection that seeks to supplement data in categories that were not as fully developed, with a focus on key practices. Axial and selective coding will be discussed in the introduction to each data analysis chapter as well.

While Glaser and Strauss initially recommend a pure grounded theory approach that builds theory without considering prior literature until after coding occurs, researchers have noted since that time that entering the field with an empty head is impossible. During coding, Tracy (2012) proposes an iterative approach, which occurs when the researcher moves back and forth between the coding process and already existing theory. Using an iterative approach, along with personal memos, I recorded my working theories and interests throughout data collection and coding (Tracy, 2012). This approach involved making notes of possible significant practices and comparing these developing ideas to other conversations occurring within the same time frame.

To enhance the validity of my findings, I used member checks. Member checks involve the presentation of results back to participants to see if the findings resonate with their naturally-

occurring frames of meaning (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). This step involved presenting my findings in more of a plain language, with less of a focus on theoretical contributions and more of a focus on the multiple security rationales and definitions found in the scene. Additionally, because this research is ethnographic, I used thick description in my findings, drawing on field notes as evidence that is also used to describe the scene in ways that resonate with readers, making the scene feel believable and rich (Tracy, 2012). I also crystallized findings by considering both field notes and interviews to look for strains of consensus, while still acknowledging that perspectives are necessarily partial and incomplete (Tracy, 2012). Using a combination of grounded theory and iterative analysis, along with member checks and crystallization, I analyzed my data.

Preview of Analysis Chapters

The next two chapters present my data. Chapter Four examines practices of horizontal translation. Chapter Five discusses vertical translation of federal directives and trainings. Chapter Six presents analysis of the major themes in this data, and how this study contributes to literature related to interorganizational collaboration, authority, and securitization.

CHAPTER FOUR: HORIZONTAL TRANSLATION IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COLLABORATION

I turn now to focus on two interorganizational collaborations working to achieve community preparedness, planning, and response in the face of "all hazards"—including both natural disasters and human-caused security threats. The first collaboration was named Foothills Office of Emergency Management (or, FOEM for short). The second was named Events and Emergency Management Group (EEMG)[5]. This chapter provides the first of two analyses focused on communicative translations produced by the members of these collaborations. Specifically, this chapter seeks to answer RQ1, "*How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate their respective interests and agendas to create successful collaboration (i.e., engage in horizontal translation)?"* Importantly, *authoring* of the collaborative mission is also embedded in horizontal translation. As a result, this chapter also initiates my response to RQ3, "*How do horizontal and vertical processes of translation serve to develop authority within EMOCs?"* I return to this question in Chapter Five as well.

This chapter explores how the members of these two collaborations asserted and negotiated their goals to create a dominant account of what their collaboration did. My analysis of related fieldnotes, interviews, and organizational texts led me to identify three distinct aspects of this process. *First*, members prioritized the goals and activities of *first responders* (i.e., police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel) over other interests held by participating

[5] While these two collaborations have different names, they work very closely together—FOEM runs the emergency operations center (EOC) that would provide support and resource ordering for the EEMG command post (CP), which handles on-the-ground response when incidents occur relating to the university community. These two collaborations, then, ran different monthly meetings, but were also nested within a single collaboration, with many members participating in both collaborations. This chapter will differentiate the narratives of the groups when appropriate, but many of the stories are shared across both groups as well.

agencies. *Second*, they told *stories* of their collaborations' past successes, establishing in this process precedents that justified their current arrangements. *Finally*, they performed *respect* for the authority of particular members, normalizing a particular logic by which competing interests could be organized as a hierarchical collaboration. Together, these practices facilitated the translation of distinctive, multiple – and potentially conflicting -- member interests and activities into a (seemingly) consensual authored account of emergency management organizational collaboration (EMOC).

As a result, these findings enrich our understanding of how collaboration is authored among its members at the local level, including through translations that prioritize and deprioritize member interests to create the image of a coherent, orderly enterprise characterized by a shared mission. As I have argued in previous chapters, studying communicative practices can shed light on *how* translation actually occurs in organizing—an area that has been underspecified in prior literature. This chapter begins by recounting how my engagement with this data led me to develop three themes of horizontal translation, before proceeding to introduce these themes and their corresponding practices. Considered together, these themes demonstrate how everyday practices that translate members' multiple identities can create a hegemonic logic of EMOC that prioritizes the interests of first responders.

Emergence of Themes

This chapter focuses on three themes concerning practices of horizontal translation by EMOC members that make their collaboration work. These concentrations emerged during the process of coding. After conducting level-one, open coding, which focused on the *what* of the scene, I noticed that members spent a great deal of time explaining—both to me and each other—what their collaboration did and did not do. In addition to these accounts of mission and

function, the members frequently revisited high profile incidents in which the EMOC had responded to urgent threats. These previous incidents were often recounted during meetings, and members noted to each other what about those responses had worked. In addition, members told stories about how their collaboration had changed over time. These stories typically reached a distinct conclusion: that the level of collaboration among participants in this EMOC was uniquely high. Finally, in explaining what the collaboration did and did not do, members produced accounts of what different subgroups of members were like, and how their interests differed. I noticed these accounts in interviews, and then recognized their ties to similar events occurring in other contexts, including hazard identification, trainings, exercises, and meetings.

Working from these open-level codes, I started to ask what these accounts of collaboration had in common, and how they affected the members' sense of their respective identities and interests. During selective coding, I looked *around* each practice, to see what previous events these accounts responded to, and how others reacted to their performance. Initially, I identified six themes that expressed the horizontal translation of local emergency management (Table 4.1). However, in this initial phase of selective coding, I found that the purposes of the practices in each category tended to overlap. For example, my identified theme of *conflict* occurred both in stories of past incidents, and in accounts that prioritized first response. From this initial categorization, I pared the themes down into three broader forms of horizontal translation practiced in EMOCs: the prioritization of first response, the narration of past success, and the performance of respect for member authority. Table 4.2 defines the three themes and provides examples of practices that fit into each mature theme.

Table 4.1: Phase One Coding of Member Translations

Stories of past incidents	Members told stories of prior incidents in the county, especially stories of large-scale, successful response.
Prioritizing first response	Members talked about first response priorities as *the* priorities of the EMOC
Reasons to collaborate	Members talked about why they collaborated, including the need to prepare for future incidents, and because the collaboration was the best in the state. They also discussed the advantages of knowing other members, sharing space with them, and having so many experts in the same room.
Respecting authority of others	Members talked about the need to respect who has the authority during different types of incidents.
Stories of the county as a special collaboration	Members critiqued other counties and pointed out that collaboration was unusually valued in Foothills County.
Descriptions of conflict among members	Members talked about egos, differences among members, clashes, distrust, and confusion caused during prior incidents.

Table 4.2: Phase Two Coding of Member Translations

Recounting past collaborative success	Members told the story of the county as *uniquely* successful in responding to prior incidents, despite being a county that faced increased risk from a variety of hazards. Members talked about improvements made over time within the collaboration, and the need for continued improvement.
Characterizing and differentiating participant identities	Members discussed differences among members, prioritizing first responder-like organizations versus human service organizations. Members clashed as they discussed priorities and trained together.
Performing respect for authority	Members talked about respecting authority based on expertise, including the need to "stay in your lane," and to check in with other members during collaborative response.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will first *depict* these themes through vignettes that illustrate how the logic of these translational practices was taken up in the collaboration. I will then *analyze* these vignettes, supplementing them with accounts of members' sensemaking excerpted from related interviews. Finally, I will consider how these translations work to prioritize and negotiate member interests, ultimately making a coherent collaboration possible for its multiple, local participants.

Theme One: Characterizing and Differentiating Participant Identities

To a significant extent, EMOC members talked about what their collaboration did and did not do by *characterizing* different members of their collaboration (e.g., selecting, emphasizing, and interpreting their salient qualities). During these explanations, members repeatedly prioritized *life-safety* or *first responder* (i.e., police, fire, and paramedic) functions of the EMOC. This selective prioritization was, in turn, complemented by accounts that minimized other

functions of the EMOCs, including cultivating long-term disaster recovery, providing human services, ensuring public health, and integrating nonprofit missions such as providing shelter and raising donations.

The practices that composed this category are significant, partly because offices of emergency management are *not* inherently first response operations. Instead, among their many other functions, EMOCs *support* first responders in the field during emergencies by ordering resources and acting as a liaison to many local groups. However, EMOC's are often staffed by members with first response experience. The FOEM, for example, was led by a former firefighter, and the EEMG was run out of a campus police station. Given these structural influences, it is perhaps not surprising that members translated the multiple identities and interests of EMOC members into a dominant account that prioritized first response activities. What was surprising, however, was the extent to which health and nonprofit agency members that I interviewed also seemed to buy into this account. Here, related practices among participants included *identifying hazards*, *instructing others* during training scenarios, and *informally characterizing* other members in everyday talk. These practices were primarily performed *by* first responders *for* other members of nonprofit organizations and health agencies—in other words, first responders often presented ideas of different member identities in their own bids for authority. Those other members generally acted as a receptive audience, and their responses reinforced member differences by effectively deferring (and occasionally disavowing) the priority of health and nonprofit missions. These practices led to the consistent translation of multiple identities and interests into an account that suggested the colonization of EMOC culture by a particular subgroup—first responders.

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Vignette: Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

During one FOEM meeting I observed, Ben (the FOEM emergency manager) told the group that it was time for them to complete an exercise known as the HIRA (the Hazards Identification and Risk Assessment). FOEM completed this activity once every two years, and the goal was for members to rate the likelihood of various hazards occurring for the county, and how damaging those hazards might prove. In the former case, the group expressed these beliefs by using a scale of 1-5, with a score of 1 representing "very unlikely" and 5 "very likely." In the second case, they used a similar scale, with a score of 1 representing "isolated damage," and 5 "widespread damage,"

To facilitate the group's discussion, Ben projected the HIRA document onto a screen visible for all assembled. He began to move through its list of hazards and asked members to shout out their ratings. He started with "wildfire." Police officers sitting on the counters of the kitchenette in the back of the EOC called out that, for them, fire was a 5 in terms of likelihood. "What about damage?" Ben asked. Someone seated behind their ESF computer called out a 4. Someone else called out a 5. Members then sat back in their office chairs, as-if these ratings were obvious. Ben typed in "5" for likelihood and "5" for damage in the document. The next hazard listed was "flood." Some people laughed — I think the severe impact of the recent 2013 flood was still so present for that it felt ironic to rank it. Again, people called out high ratings of 4 and 5.

And then came the next hazard: "flu." What, Ben questioned the group, was the likely impact of this hazard? A representative from the sheriff's office, sitting at the center conference table, offered a dismissive "Meh." Other sheriff's office members shrugged. Someone suggested a 2 as a rating for likelihood. Ben typed in a "2" into the box on the form. "Hold on!" someone

from the public health department called out to the table of sheriff's office members. "The flu happens yearly!" Other agency members, however, seemed unconvinced, and none of them jumped in to support the claim. Another public health agency member said the flu should be a 5 in terms of likelihood. Again, the contingent at the sheriff's office table collectively shrugged. Without comment, but as a minor concession, Ben subsequently changed the "2" to a "3" in the document.

In the end, the group assigned its highest ratings for both probability and damage to a particular cluster of hazards, including flood, wildfire, and severe winter storm. This pattern was repeated across multiple contexts. In all cases, getting the EMOCs to think about public health threats seemed to be an uphill battle for those agency participants. Most emergency preparedness exercises, for example, depicted scenarios of wildland fire. As Dan, the Mountain U planning chief told me, public health agency members had been pushing for years for EEMG to conduct a public health exercise, which they finally got more than two years into my time observing the EMOCs. However, even here, the county decided to do an anthrax exercise, instead of a flu exercise, suggesting that members were more excited by that scenario's bioterrorism aspects than the mundane need to dispense antibiotics. Still, public health collaborators expressed satisfaction that the county was at least starting to think about health issues.

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Understanding why the flu was dismissed as a key concern in this example requires an understanding of how EMOC members defined their mission partly through defining each other. By consistently asserting and differentiating the identities of various members and groups involved, the two EMOCs facilitated a dominant ranking of priorities. In this process, members

characterized each other in ways that created a hierarchy of organizations involved and of their corresponding missions. I observed members valuing these relative priorities on multiple occasions—including in explicit discussions during ICS trainings (three observations). Similarly, during the three hazard and risk identifications I observed, public health concerns were broached in only one. Finally, in the seven meetings I attended that were devoted to the tasks of planning and conducting exercises, all of the related exercises (except for the anthrax scenario) were fire-related. For the EMOC members, this consistent ordering of identities and missions did not appear to be detrimental to their operations. Instead, it facilitated successful collaboration by strategically categorizing participants, asserting a moral and political hierarchy among those categories, and pre-structuring their decision making and member interactions.

Facilitating strategic categorization of participants

Interpreting each other's identities was not an innocent practice of sensemaking among the EMOC members. Instead, this practice also attributed qualities to individual members based on the perceived qualities of their affiliated organization. In doing so, these descriptions helped members to interrelate, but also attributed desirable qualities to some groups more than others. For example, many members described others in the EMOCs as having a "first responder personality." This type of personality was associated with being action-oriented, wanting to help the public, having a big ego, and being "type A"—meaning that these participants tended to want things to go their way, which sometimes led to clashes with other members (fieldnote). This characterization likely derived from the relatively high number of members who came from the sheriff's department, local police departments, and county fire protection districts. However, again, these members did not act as actual first responders *during* incidents—as members of an emergency management collaboration, *all* members were sidelined. Instead, they acted as

support to first responders by helping to order resources and create situational awareness for people in the field. Despite this distinction, many fire and police associated members described their "type A first response" personalities proudly in interviews. As one police officer told me during a command post, "The ego is good, because you need people who will run toward a burning building, while most other people would run away from it" (fieldnote). This characterization was also an ongoing joke between members, especially during monthly meetings. It was not uncommon for first responders to tell jokes about what the group as a whole was like—take-charge, type A, and always wanting things to go their way. These jokes assumed that the first responder personality was dominant and—despite its flaws—something participants should own. The first responder ego and its inflexibility, then, were tied to attributions of the EMOC's success—even as these unilateral (and even paramilitary traits) seemed counterintuitive to egalitarian images of collaboration.

Conversely, nonprofit organization members, and health and human services members, were described – both by themselves and first responders — as being more feeling- and public-good oriented participants. As Melissa from Foothills County Health and Human Services explained to me,

> I think some emergency management offices are very...ICS... NIMS. I would say militant, just that military structure. Social workers are different. We're the touchy-feely ones. After you get, I try to get emergency managers to come around to that way of thinking, because I say you can think about getting people out of harm's way, getting them evacuated, but after that, what are you gonna do with them? Now, you're talking about social work.

> Convincing people that they need to stay out of your way,
>
> helping them find resources, that's all social work (interview).

As indicated by this account, Melissa saw the empathic and cooperative sides of her work as an asset that complemented the more "militant" side of emergency management. Indeed, Melissa was proud to be a social worker in the FOEM collaboration, and was viewed by other members as an expert about human services programs, as well as other program requirements such as long-term recovery and cost reimbursement. When I asked others about these specializations during interviews, they often deferred to Melissa, saying that they didn't know enough about them, but that Melissa would know what to tell me (fieldnote). Conversely, Melissa claimed not to have expertise in ICS, but she did have respect for what the first responder members focused on during incidents. She also seemed to affirm the assumption that emergency management was inherently focused on first response, instead of on what came next—the long-term recovery of affected community members and institutions. Again, Melissa and other human services members did not appear to view this characterization as a problem, and Melissa instead claimed "recovery" as the domain of the health and human services workers. However, as she did so, Melissa also accepted the dominant authored account of the collaboration as first-response oriented. Nonetheless, other members used this characterization of human services workers as relatively emotional in ways that diminished the priority of their agencies' interests.

In addition to being 'touchy-feely,' nonprofits in particular were described as relatively unpredictable and impulsive – as letting their drive to help others get in the way of the broader mission of the EMOC. Here, it was relevant that a local group known as Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) had previously served to bring different local nonprofits together to

collaborate with FOEM. However, this collaboration between the FOEM and VOAD members did not always run smoothly – an impression emphasized in FOEM member stories concerning what VOAD members would do to gain access to emergency scenes.

Here, FOEM was very concerned about controlling access to disaster sites—members often referenced past incidents from around the world where people had posed as members of nonprofit groups, for example, in order to access and loot damaged homes after Hurricane Katrina (fieldnote). To illustrate, during one ICS training session, Liam paused on a slide about initial response to incidents, and asked the group why they ought to secure the scene quickly. People called back from their tables that "everyone wants to see the show" during an emergency, and that "self-deployment" is a big problem for managing disaster response (fieldnote). While this concern included the general public self-deploying to help, along with reporters who wanted to see the story up close, FOEM was also particularly wary about which nonprofit groups responded to incidents, and characterized them as potentially "overzealous" – and thus uncooperative and untrustworthy. For example, one FOEM volunteer named William said, "You know the Red Cross and Salvation Army—the real issue is when you get the faith-based organizations, they don't play nice with ICS. They're there to help, human needs, and you know they'll play nice when they can, but if they feel they aren't being played nice with, they'll skirt and go around, to do what they feel they're being called to do" (interview). In other words, if FOEM didn't call the faith-based organizations and give them specific assignments, they might show up anyway and try to help—potentially getting "in the way" of first responders, replicating efforts in one area when other areas actually need more help, or entering the scene with unauthorized and untrustworthy people (fieldnote).

Here, William describes some nonprofits as being more trustworthy than others. This statement seems even more significant when we consider that William was also the chair of the Foothills County VOAD, but chose not to advocate for *all* nonprofits in his characterizations. William had often clashed with Ben, the FOEM Emergency Manager, over the involvement of nonprofit groups in incident response. William and I often sat near each other at monthly FOEM meetings at the back table in the EOC, along with other VOAD members, including the Red Cross, amateur radio club, and medical reserve corps. William made numerous side comments in meetings about how nonprofits were overlooked, and how many FOEM members didn't even know about the nonprofit capabilities they could draw on during an emergency. Based on the amount of eye-rolling I saw exchanged across the table, others seemed to agree (fieldnote). Even as he advocated for these groups to be more involved, then, William tended to characterize some nonprofits as difficult to control because of their headstrong commitment to their missions, which were not a top priority for FOEM during a disaster. This characterization framed nonprofits as a destabilizing factor that should – at best –be contained during disaster response. Instead of being equal partners, the groups could even be seen as threatening because their "calling" did not line up with the mission of the EMOCs. William himself aligned himself with the EMOC mission by citing his own expertise frequently in meetings—he often prefaced comments in the meetings by noting that he had been involved in disaster response in other states, and in national events like hurricanes. Even in his efforts to compensate for first-responder-centrism, then, William centered that very mission over that of nonprofit groups, instead of taking the opportunity to de-author this account and advocate for all nonprofit groups and their priorities.

As they described member differences, other volunteers told additional stories of mistrust between nonprofits and the emergency management office. FOEM members did not deny that this relationship was complicated, especially with the VOAD. As Ben, the Foothills Emergency Manager explained:

> I'll tell you our experience, it started out very competitive. 'You guys are from the government, we hate you.' That was the first thing out of their [VOADs] mouth. 'You wanna control everything, you're not the boss of us.' This is like the first meeting, I was like 'Okay...first of all, thanks for sharing. I don't recall coming in the room and telling you I want to control anything.' And they were like 'Well we're just telling you.' 'Got it, what do you need?' 'Well, we just need you to stay out of the way.' I said 'Okay. No worries, just gonna hang out, watch your meetings.' They're talking, all the sudden they're like, 'Well, we need to get into the residences.' I knew where this was going. At some point, they're gonna want information, and access and those are the things that I control. So we got to the point where I said 'Yeah I can get you access,' and all the sudden we're not competing, we're compromising. And before you know it we were beyond that (interview).

Ben's performance of this account involved leaning back in his chair, crossing his arms, and using a whiny voice to describe VOAD's persona, all while reenacting himself as the calm, rational and virtuous person in the meeting who kept his cool, even as the volunteers attacked

FOEM. As previously mentioned, the EMOCs were particularly concerned with controlling emergency scenes. William, the VOAD leader, talked several times about the issue of providing access to volunteer groups. He told me during ICS training that FOEM never called volunteers, even though they were available and they wanted to help, because FOEM wanted control, and wanted to appear to be able to handle it without them (fieldnote). Ben, on the other hand, painted volunteers as irrational and even childish in their need for autonomy. While members viewed the association of first response groups with being type A and action-oriented positively, the self-starting, human services missions of health and nonprofit groups were framed as uncooperative and unreliable. Talking about what other members were 'like,' then, went far beyond mundane sense making and relationship building. It was also political in its effects.

Asserting a moral and political hierarchy among categories

Because categorizations of participants framed nonprofit and health groups as emotional and occasionally frivolous, these characterizations elevated certain group interests as more important. Describing members, then, was linked to a moral/political hierarchy — or *ranking* — among members of the EMOC.

As discussed, these strategic categorizations subordinated human services and nonprofits in relation to the core mission of the EMOC, which was defined as *immediate response*. As Rachel, from the sheriff's office, explained, the sheriff's office saw "life safety" as their main priority (interview). The trope of life safety was repeatedly mentioned in the EMOC meetings—often in a call and response format. In meetings devoted to prepping for exercises, Ben or Liam would ask other members "What's our number one priority?" Invariably, they would call back "Life safety!"

Indeed, every event plan for EEMG started with a list of incident priorities, and "life safety" was always priority number one (fieldnote). This view seemed to be derived from the three key goals that ICS laid out for offices of emergency management. During all ICS trainings that I observed, course instructors (often including Ben himself, along with the rest of the FOEM and EEMG staff members) tended to start class sessions by discussing the three priorities taught by the ICS system: life safety, incident stabilization, and protection of property. In that official account, life safety was defined as *rescuing people in danger, treating injuries*, and *minimizing fatalities*. By implicitly relegating nonprofit and human service missions to support status, these missions were affectively deprioritized. This deprioritization was accomplished by characterizing health and nonprofit groups as peripheral, secondary facilitators —a communicative move that was circulated through depictions of what these groups did (or were likely to do). Conversely, these members very well could have attempted to link human services and nonprofits to life safety goals, although none took this opportunity—or the opportunity to rearrange the moral hierarchy to include other goals.

Additionally, FOEM members frequently expressed that they did not *want* to be involved in providing health and human services, because those were not the most appealing parts of emergency management. During one Incident Command System (ICS) training session, for example, tensions ran high between first responder members and health and nonprofit members. Ben, the county Emergency Manager, took the opportunity to break up the monotony of taking notes on PowerPoint slides in the darkened room by pausing on a slide to say "Incident command doesn't wanna be in charge of mass care, I wanna be in charge of the flash, bang, *hut hut hut* stuff [he mimed holding a gun and kicking down a door]. Do you wanna manage the sheltering of 30,000 people?" Several members called out "No!" Others in the room, especially

the table of wildland firefighters taking the training, laughed as Ben ran across the room pretending to be a SWAT team member. Even the nonprofit members I was sharing a table with nodded and rolled their eyes, as if to say that this was what the first responders were like in their experience. Ben said this as a way to remind people that the FOEM should stick to (in his view) its life-saving mission in its response, and let mass care and sheltering members take that task on separately, afterwards. In this way, as I observed their discussion of both sets of challenges, it became clear that FOEM members saw human services missions as less glamorous and exciting, and therefore something that should be done by supporting members, while core members focused on the exciting life-safety goals.

That the leader of the EMOC is himself a first responder seemed to contribute to its structure and culture of valuing first response. The separation of sheltering and human services missions was also apparent in use of *space:* the EOC, which housed the 27 emergency support functions positions during any emergency, did reserve a space for sheltering, mass care, and nonprofit groups. However, in practice these groups were housed in the more remote Disaster Assistance Center—an enclosed tent set up for human services workers to use during an emergency. These members video-conferenced in to hourly briefings with the rest of FOEM instead of being present in the room (fieldnote).

Not surprisingly, these categorization schemes led to some hurt feelings on the part of human services and volunteer groups. At the same time, these groups seemed to accept the hierarchy that had been put in place. For example, nonprofit and human services workers themselves would point out when human service priorities were outside the scope of the EMOC mission. Julian, who was a Red Cross member, for example, characterized *other* nonprofits as

having superfluous priorities. When I asked him how to make collaboration work across different interests, he responded:

> With sensitivity, like if you were more of a wildlife habitat person you wanna protect wildlife habitat, don't interject too much on dam safety, or dam design, or bridge design. And yet, bridge design affects habitat, so you have to get the engineers to think about habitat. Yeah, so there are interfaces, but are they peripheral or really significant? (interview).

By describing environmental interests in this case as "peripheral," Julian demonstrates that the hierarchy of EMOC priorities is focused on the instrumental aspects of response, rather than 'broader' concerns, including environmental preservation, long-term recovery, and human services. In this way, nonprofit and human services members seemed to accept this ranking, and responded by framing their own contributions as instrumental in ways that fit with this prioritization. Melissa, from Housing and Human Services, was not afraid to point out that other members of FOEM did not want to be involved with projects like sheltering, reimbursement and long-term recovery. Instead, she claimed that for these reasons, human services agencies had "an important role, even if it was a supporting role" because they could help with tasks that FOEM did not want to work on (fieldnote). Instead of reframing human services to be *as important* as first response, Melissa and other nonprofit/human service members accepted that their work was supportive of the first response mission. Members mostly seemed to accept the characterizations of the health and nonprofit groups, and as a result, accepted that corresponding missions were not the top priority for EMOCs. According to this account, nonprofit and health groups were relatively emotional, overzealous, and interested in superfluous concerns that were not part of

initial response. As a result, the EMOC needed to control and contain these, in part by deprioritizing their missions and ensuring that it stayed focused on first responder priorities. By casting nonprofit and health groups as supporters, members also asserted a moral/political hierarchy among categories that allowed for a shared account of what the collaborative priorities ought to be.

Prestructuring decision-making and member interaction

Finally, by prioritizing some group interests over others, EMOC participants served to pre-structure their decision making. That is, this practice created group member assumptions and patterns of interaction that served to facilitate their selection of some decision options over others. EMOC's, of course, are particularly predisposed to perform this practice. This is because managing the urgent and chaotic nature of their "real" task environment *requires* the execution of established protocols. EMOC members, in other words, typically do not have the luxury of extended time for conducting sensemaking and deliberation during emergencies.

The example of the HIRA – discussed above—demonstrates this pattern. On the surface, there appears to be no reason why the flu should necessarily be ranked less than fires and floods as a hazard posed to the community. However, through my interpretation of member accounts, it became clear that first responder priorities had risen to the top. As a result, in member interactions, decision-making tended repeatedly set first response priorities as top priorities. Members did this in part by describing nonprofits and human services as supporters that could provide resources that supported the core mission of the EMOCs. As Amy, a Foothills County Community Services employee said,

> I look at VOAD as an amazing resource. They are a capacity builder. As a steward of taxpayer dollars in Foothills County, I

> want to connect the county with the resources that are free before OEM has to spend the money on any of those same resources. And also, I would say, more importantly, it's more important for people to feel like they are contributing to the relief (interview).

By explaining that volunteer groups were "resources," Amy moved these groups out of full participation with the OEM—instead, they were an option that *could* be called on by the core members, but didn't *have* to be.

This prestructuring of participant interaction could also be seen in a wide variety of scenarios and exercises that EMOC members used to think through emergency situations. For example, during one ICS training, class participants were asked to work in groups to respond to a variety of scenarios. Outside of the structure of the EOC, the more informal classroom setting encouraged tension, as class participants tried to negotiate what "should" be done to respond to a variety of possible incidents.

In one such event, I was sitting with a group that had been given a scenario of a fire breaking out at an elementary school. The table for this activity consisted of two nonprofit volunteers (William, along with a Salvation Army volunteer named Penelope), one wildland firefighter (Molly), and me. We read through the handout about our scenario as a table, which told us that the fire was of unknown origin and could have been caused by a bomb. As a result, we were instructed to consider our range of available resources, and to prioritize our sequence of responses. Penelope and William started talking about the need to order crisis counselors to the school, and to create a point for parent-child reunification (neither of these resources were listed in the scenario). Molly, the wildland firefighter, pushed back, saying that we should order construction equipment (which *was* listed in the scenario) to start clearing the scene to look for

any injured people trapped inside (i.e., as conforming to priority one: life safety), and to establish the cause of the fire and put it out (priority two: incident stabilization). William was adamant that we needed to get counselors on the scene right away. Molly instead suggested we order school buses to take the kids home, and that crisis counselors could always be ordered later. William pointed out again and again that the scenario was that the hypothetical fire started around 10:00 AM, and that we couldn't just put kids on the school bus to go home to empty houses, especially after such a traumatic event. Penelope was less confident in her knowledge of ICS and kept rereading our training materials. We made almost no progress. Eventually Molly started filling out a practice resource order form on behalf of the group, prioritizing her preference for the construction equipment. William and Penelope kept talking about the need for counselors, while Molly kept repeating that we could order that later.

When it came time to debrief after the scenario, Sophia, the deputy director of FOEM, told me that she felt our interaction had illustrated the way nonprofit people thought. She had come around to talk to our table during this exercise, and said that "Realistically, the Command Post isn't doing reunification and counseling. What they're concerned about is the responders." This comment effectively served to discipline the nonprofit members of our table. When I talked to Sophia during a break in the course later, she laughed at how concerned about counseling William and Penelope were, saying that they were "people focused" (fieldnote).

In this interaction, the relative legitimacy of first responder interests was further reinforced by other members. After each group completed the resource-ordering scenario, they shared what they were planning to order with the full class. The table of wildland firefighters, who obviously had the most experience in this area, went so far as to explain what types of construction equipment and fire trucks would be the most useful. Another table focused on

ordering bomb detecting equipment in case the fire had been caused by an explosive. Both of these tables got little feedback, implying the acceptability of these answers. However, when our table's group presented its plan, Sophia and other instructors paused to indirectly educate us by pointing out what was 'realistic' in these preferred response scenarios. Training, then, went beyond mere rehearsal of procedure and was also a place to instantiate dominant values and structures of the collaboration. By pressing members to think about what was 'realistic' in the scenarios, leaders asked them to accept the given hierarchy of priorities and to agree to these values *before* a real emergency occurred.

Describing and differentiating participants in the EMOC's was thus not just about navigating and understanding who was in the collaboration. It was also a way to facilitate 'success' by authoring understood priorities for the group. Categorization of members, then, was strategic and was linked to a hierarchy among types of members, which then informed member interactions and decisions.

Theme Two: Recalling Past Success

In addition to characterizing members in ways that ordered the EMOCs' priorities, EMOC members also told stories of past success in their collaborations. Here, related practices served to achieve particular outcomes. First, they confirmed the shared mission of their collaboration. Second, they attributed the causes of this success to Foothills County's celebrated, unique characteristics—particularly its collaborative culture. Finally, they recounted past events in a way that affirmed the preferred hierarchy of the group. Typically, these practices took place during group meetings and trainings, where members told shared stories of lessons learned from prior incidents. In turn, leaders of the collaborations—especially emergency management office staff—often returned to these narratives during trainings to reinforce preferred images of

emergency management procedure. Members matched these stories of past success with other stories about the county, and they repeated them in interviews and other contexts. Interestingly, this practice included recounting incidents for which they had not been present. In repeating and circulating these stories, members typically expressed pride about their collaboration, and offered reasons why they and others should keep participating. In this way, stories of past success facilitated horizontal translation by mining the group's past for models of collaboration that participants could (and should) continue to use in the present.

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Vignette: The Flood

One of the most commonly mentioned past incidents in these EMOC's was simply called "The Flood." In the late summer of 2013, the county (and many surrounding counties) experienced an extended period of heavy rain, which produced an extraordinary (i.e., projected to occur only once every 500 years) levels of flooding. The flooding claimed at least eight lives, completely erased one small town, destroyed over 1800 homes, and damaged $4 billion in property (Aguilar, 2018). However, stories of the flood told by members of both EMOCs were largely positive, and focused on the successful response by their organizations. Below is an example of how the flood was talked about in FOEM monthly meetings.

Ben wraps up the meeting by reminding the group that on this day 5 years ago, the first raindrops were falling in Foothills City. He says that around 3 PM people started to think "this could be an issue," and by 5 PM people were drifting into the EOC. Anthony (a volunteer) adds that by 8 PM "we knew this wasn't 'the silly college students tubing down the creek'" [level of

risk] anymore—that we could lose lives tonight. As Sophia[6]*, the deputy director, told me in an interview, "we never want to use the word 'only' when it comes to lives lost, but we lost four lives the [first] night of the flood, and that was because of the collaboration level." Ben has already mentioned during this meeting that September's flooding could be "rough" because of the burn scars from the 2011 wildfire, which destroyed undergrowth that would otherwise retain rain water runoff in surface soil. Chris from National Weather Service also updated the group with the weather expectations for the next month, and told us that precipitation would be coming in the next couple of weeks. I am reminded that during the last meeting I attended, an OEM staff member jokingly told everyone "not to leave town," because September was a bad month for fires and rain. I sense from meetings and from interviews that members find the flood enjoyable to reminisce about. They like to share their experience of working in the EOC, and how the place becomes filled with energy when you get 50 or 60 people in here. As long as I have been doing fieldwork, FOEM members have been telling me "Just you wait" until you see the EOC activated—they think this will be exciting for me, and describe the energy as humming when everyone is working on an incident. As Dylan from the Sheriff's Office told me, during an incident, "everyone is on their best behavior" and working together. At the same time, Rachel (a fellow sheriff's officer) told me that people can clash—they get tired during the 12-hour operational periods and tempers can really start to flare. Rachel didn't seem upset about this, though. As she and several others explained to me in interviews, people clash because they care.*

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[6] During the course of my fieldwork, FOEM had 2 deputy directors—Sophia, and then later Michael, a staff member who was promoted. Both will be referred to as the FOEM deputy director.

As stories like this demonstrate, referencing of past incidents served to promoted models for what successful collaboration ought to look like in the future. Stories of past success helped to create successful collaboration for the EMOCs by confirming its mission, attributing causes of success to internal sources, and interpreting past events as precedents for the structure and character of future interaction.

Confirming the collaborative mission

As is often the case with organizational narratives, stories of past success in these EMOC's indirectly taught members what incidents they should be paying attention to. Significantly, success stories were most often told about incidents involving first-responder concerns of lifesaving. Stories of the flood's danger were by far the most common within the group—the flood came up in 12 interviews and was mentioned in four observed meetings. Beyond that, members told numerous stories of wildland fire response (six interviews, three observed meetings), and stories of potential and averted active shooter situations (nine interviews, five meetings, three other observations). This last group of stories was most common among EEMG members, because of their affiliation with the university in Foothills City. Nonetheless, FOEM members also talked about active shootings and their concern for working effectively with EEMG to respond to an event of this size. In contrast, past responses to public health threats were mentioned in only three interviews (all recounted by members of public health agencies), and observed in only one meeting. This storytelling pattern affirmed that immediate, life-threatening incidents were the primary concern for Foothills County emergency managers. They modeled the core mission of these collaborations as responding to fire, flood, and security concerns.

In this way, storytelling confirmed that the EMOCs had an important, exciting mission. By telling stories about the *frequency* of events, members seemed to be communicating to others that their work was important, ongoing, and never ending because emergencies were inevitable. However, this inevitability was also framed as exciting. Related stories suggested that members needed to remain strong collaborative participants to be ready for these exhilarating – but also challenging – incidents. For example, Caitlin, a representative from the adjacent Lincoln County OEM (but who often trained with Foothills County), described the importance of EMOCs to the region in this way:

> A lot of times you see a horrific incident on TV, then you go out with the rest of your day, you think that won't happen to your community. And it's like, 'well did you know we're one of the most hazard-prone communities in the country for wildland urban interface?' For people that have worked here for 20 years, they see us, and they're like 'oh gosh, this is important!' (interview).

Stories of past events thus transmitted what Caitlin and other participants seemed to accept as innate local knowledge: the county was at a higher risk for natural disasters, and wildfires in particular. Stories reminded members of this unique challenge and positioned the collaborative mission as responding to this heightened risk. However, as discussed above, members did not necessarily frame the county's vulnerability as a negative condition; instead, they viewed this hazard with enthusiasm—stories of the county as hazard prone were often accompanied by members laughing, smiling, and shaking their heads in response. Members promised me several times during fieldwork that I would enjoy seeing the EOC activated—even though this would mean a serious emergency was taking place (fieldnote). During exercises,

other members would often walk by and ask me if I was "having fun" (members seemed to put pressure on themselves to make sure that I as an observer was enjoying myself) and when I said yes, they would often promise me that during "the real deal," the EOC would "really be humming" (fieldnote). Members repeatedly framed emergencies as fun in their storytelling—when inviting others to exercises or command post activations, for example, members would ask others if they wanted to "join the fun" (fieldnote). On the other hand, events that passed without incident were labeled "boring" by EEMG members (fieldnote). Even I became swept up in the idea of seeing a "real" emergency unfold, and could feel the adrenaline when near emergency situations occurred during observations, including the stress-filled two hours in which EEMG had to evacuate the university football stadium due to lightning strikes (discussed below). As Sophia, deputy director of FOEM, told me once, "I don't want there to be an emergency, but if there is one, I wanna be there" (fieldnote). Stories of past incidents, then, also displayed an action bias that aligned with the first-responder mentality.

Similarly, even members who were positioned as peripheral to the dominant fire and flood mission invoked this priority in their storytelling, and in doing so accepted dominant accounts of the EMOCs' missions. For example, Joe, a Foothills County Public Health employee, took pride in past fire responses:

> Every time the EOC has ever been activated it's incredibly impressive. Sunshine Fire, Hygiene Fire, Wagon Wheel fire. We've had five fires [in the last several years, and] none of those fires have grown to be an incident really beyond one day. A lot of that has to do with relationships within the [FOEM], with the state, with the county. We've—the Cold Springs Fire and the Sunshine

> Fire—there were air resources already ordered and available within the first couple hours of those responses, which is incredible, it doesn't happen across the state. The ability to acquire resources that quickly does not happen, within any other jurisdiction in the state (interview).

In circular fashion, this type of storytelling affirmed that the county was uniquely capable of success, and that preserving this capability would ensure that FOEM would continue to experience success. In addition to affirming the mission of responding to wildland fires, Joe's recollection of past incidents demonstrated how storytelling also instructed members concerning *how* they should fulfill their mission—in this case, by being prepared and ordering resources quickly. Storytelling, then, seemed to reinforce specific values in response and specific best practices for members. Ironically, this positive framing of resource acquisition obscured the ethical issue of competition conducted among adjacent counties experiencing the same emergencies (e.g., during a multi-county wildland fire). Here, even though emergency management principles encourage collaboration across locales, FOEM members were not shy about prioritizing the interests of Foothills County.

As suggested above, storytelling about past success communicated to EMOC participants that their collaboration prioritized some missions (i.e., responding to high profile, life-threatening emergencies), while viewing others as peripheral (e.g., public health concerns). This selective ranking of priorities was echoed in other group contexts and practices. For example, most of the EMOC's *emergency exercises* focused on wildland fire scenarios or mass shooting scenarios. In the EEMG, where stories of mass shooting concerns were common, there was even a suggestion that *all* event management activities should be run as a mass shooting plan. That is, members

toyed with the idea that because mass shootings were such a concern, and because they were often initiated as – or accompanied by – other types of emergencies, *all* events they managed should be planned as if they *could potentially* end up responding to a mass shooting during that event (fieldnote). This idea involved having firefighters on standby in case there was a need for mass casualty response and staffing police with rifles on the roof during stadium events and at critical points of entry. In this way, storytelling practices aligned with other practices that perpetuated the shared first responder mission. It is unsurprising, given this prioritizing of first response, that fires and mass shootings, which correlate with firefighter and police department control of incident, had hegemonic status in storytelling among members. Related stories reminded members that their mission was to respond to exciting emergencies and that their mission was important because of the inevitability of these emergencies. However, only *certain* incidents circulated in stories among EMOC members. For example, even though Foothills County experienced both a Smallpox outbreak and a Meningitis outbreak in the late 2000s, these were serious situations that I only heard about in two interviews with public health members. Storytelling practices, then, supported a specific mission for the EMOCs that prioritized certain incidents as the most likely and most important.

Attributing causes of success to internal sources

Members also told stories that explained their success by positioning the county as uniquely collaborative and downplaying conflict among collaborative partners. Doing so served to gloss over tensions between various groups, framing these tensions as existing only in the past. The "uniqueness" of the county, then, was in part that its EMOC members were seen as willing and able to transcend their potential for basic conflict. Jake, a campus police officer, attributed this lack of conflict to the frequency of events, saying:

> We've had, we have, you're looking at a county that is a bit unique. We just came out of an after action meeting after [a political speaker held an event in Foothills City], and what we're continuing to identify is that the collaboration levels in this county doesn't exist everywhere. We get comments from other agencies consistently that there doesn't seem to be lines of segregation between your agencies, you view each other as coworkers, and that is true. We do a lot of things that bureaucracy doesn't get in the way, because we do it so often. So the collaboration has been allowed to grow (interview).

Stories of past successes framed the county as uniquely collaborative, in part because the county was uniquely hazardous. However, members did not claim that the collaboration had *always* been conflict-free. Stories of past conflict were usually told with humor, and to explain that the group's unique spirit of collaboration had always triumphed and – as a result – grown. Anthony, a FOEM volunteer who had been involved with the collaboration for almost 20 years, noted that:

> The big fight came years ago with firefighters and sheriff's deputies. The sheriff's deputy typically got there first [to a fire], because it was volunteer agencies that slowed the firefighter response time. So the deputy sheriff is there, and the firefighters show up, and the deputy sheriff said 'Okay, I'm in charge,' And eventually the firefighters said 'Okay, what do you want us to do,' and they [firefighters] didn't do their thing [without being told]. It

> was that pissy, and so they had to work through all that kind of stuff. Moving away from that type of thing to the things we're talking about today, like at the end of exercises, it's like 'Really? That's all we've got to worry about?' We're doing pretty darn good, we've come a long way, from turf wars, to now we're arguing over using whiteboards versus sticky notes (interview).

Indirectly, this story acknowledged several ongoing conflicts in the FOEM collaboration. Members still disagreed on what improvements needed to be made to existing procedures, and Anthony's trivializing reference to whiteboards versus sticky notes glossed over the more significant conflicts I observed about how to improve emergency response after training exercises.

For example, I observed an ongoing conflict between FOEM's Situational Awareness Unit – which was assigned to take stock of an unfolding incident and send information about the incident out to the rest of the EOC, first responders, and policy groups – and the Damage Assessment Unit, which was sent into the field to assess damages from the incident. In practice, however, the Situational Awareness Unit volunteers often asked for and disseminated information about damage to structures in their reports. During one exercise, the Damage Assessment worker, Stephanie, became increasingly frustrated at the Situational Awareness department for apparently taking her job. She ended up withdrawing and sitting behind her computer station, not doing anything unless a FOEM team member explicitly asked her to, because, as she put it, there was no point in her being there (fieldnote). Clearly, conflicts extended beyond what office supplies to use, and Anthony himself was an ironic storyteller here because he often meddled in other groups' business within the EOC, causing frustration among

some members (fieldnote). Secondly, Anthony's story made the assumption that volunteers slowed down the response time of the professional first responders (e.g., in his characterization of the fire departments)—which was yet another characterization that contributed to the devaluing of volunteers, and to conflict between volunteers and FOEM.

However, Anthony and many others placed this conflict firmly in the past, telling stories that explained how far the collaboration had come since those events. When I asked Michael, the now-deputy director, about times that collaboration had been challenging, he responded:

> Oh, for sure the flood, because a lot of that collaboration hadn't happened, even sheltering, there were a lot of hurt feelings, and cross words, because Red Cross thought they should be doing one thing and OEM thought something else. And because they didn't have a conversation ahead of time, they didn't know each other. I think, it just didn't go well. Now, we know each other. We can have a constructive conversation and come to some sort of agreement, if you don't know someone, you're less likely to be nice. Especially during stress (interview).

Stories of past incidents also drew on the member buy-in created by responding together to a major emergency—in this case, the flood. Again, Michael's account mentions conflict with nonprofits (a conflict that could be characterized as ongoing, at least according to interviews with those members), but places this as a past lesson learned due to the intensity of that event. This story could also be seen as teaching members something about practice by encouraging relationship building before emergencies. In this way, storytelling worked to delegitimate the

ongoing, open conduct of conflict among participants by suggesting that it had already been resolved.

In my own observations of the EMOCs, storytelling tended to gloss over problems within a given response to create a shared story of success. While stories of success can promote member learning (for example, about local practices like the Red Cross adaptation of shelters), stories can also conceal needs for continued improvement and member disagreement. One story that seemed to demonstrate this was the story members told about lightning strikes that had occurred at a college football game in Foothills City.

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I observed a college football game in late October from the Command Post. Sporting events aren't typically considered emergency incidents, but members of EEMG and FOEM explained to me that it's better to be activated during a big event, in case something occurs that turns it into an emergency. Right before this football game, an EEMG member saw on the Doppler radar that lightning strikes were occurring dangerously close to the stadium—within several miles of it—and, as he pointed out, the bleachers were metal. Out of concern for fans, EEMG members ordered the evacuation of the stadium. As this order unfolded, however, one member of the college athletics department, who was located in the stadium announcer booth, was using the PA system to tell event goers to return to their seats. This confusion caused gridlock in the small entry and exit portals to the stadium. The participants in the command post erupted in frustration—"Why can't we get this guy on the phone?" the incident commander yelled. It was true—the stadium announcer was not picking up his cell phone. After 30 minutes of confusion, with fans shoving each other to get through the entryways, the command post made the decision to tell people to return to their seats. This wasn't their ideal plan, but, as Liam, the planning

chief told me, it was better to have fans safe, instead of crushing each other, leading to fights and injuries. In a later interview, I asked James, the university police chief, what he made of the incident. He said that the university's athletics department had different priorities than everyone else in the command post—they didn't send a key decision-maker to sit in the command post, they were busy elsewhere. As a result, they were difficult to communicate with. He said "I think we've got it figured out now," and that athletics would send a representative with more decision-making power in the future.

A year later, during another football game, there were lightning strikes close to the stadium. Again, the EEMG ordered the evacuation of the stadium. Again, the stadium announcer told fans to stay in their seats, leading to gridlock in the stadium entrances.

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Translations performed among the members of these EMOC's, thus, needed to tell a coherent story—one that had the potential to minimize disagreements documented in other stories of prior incidents. Additionally, stories of success were a point of pride for members, and served as an incentive for them to keep collaborating. As a result, negative stories were not as frequently told or were framed as problems that had already been solved. This pattern raised the concern that it inhibited opportunities for members to learn from past mistakes. In the dominant authored accounts of the organizational history and trajectory, members glossed over continued struggles and disagreements in favor of emphasizing cohesion.

To summarize, storytelling about past events had the potential to integrate ongoing aspirations and potential hurt feelings among ranking member organizations into a preferred hierarchy of priorities. As mentioned, nonprofit and health workers seemed not to mind that their

specific roles were deprioritized by these collaborations. Stories of past success also affirmed their first response priorities—and additionally framed the collaboration as successful, harmonious, and beyond serious conflict among members. By attributing success to the collaboration internally, members affirmed that it was working and that *getting along* and *getting on the same page* led to success. As success was related to members' positive relationships, the stories encouraged members to continue having good relationships with each other. This storytelling, then, offered solace and reassurance that countered the divisiveness and hierarchy potentially present in other practices of horizontal translation.

Interpreting past events as precedents for future action

Through storytelling, members shared lessons about how to manage emergencies in practice. In doing so, they taught other members that remembering the county's uniqueness was key to response. For example, many people talked about the challenge of emergency management in a county that had rural and urban areas. Foothills County possessed an expanse of wildland urban interface, where fires are a common risk. To FOEM, the people living in these mountain communities created a unique challenge to response, because they were self-sufficient and suspicious of the county government. These residents were less likely to follow evacuation orders, but also less likely to ask for the county's help. FOEM members often joked about these communities—they said that residents were likely to answer the door carrying a shotgun (fieldnote). At the same time, stories conveyed respect for these communities and a duty to treat those communities differently. For example, William, a nonprofit volunteer, explained that "as far as Foothills City goes—we're unique. I think you've found out already. County individuals, at least the originals, are very self-sufficient. If you go up into the mountains, you'll see that with the little mountain communities. They bind together easily. The state has home rule. And that

helps sometimes, and it hurts sometimes. Because everybody wants to be independent" (interview). Home rule, as William mentions, is a unique law to the state, which grants counties that ability to pass laws as they see fit. This uniqueness spurred the group's feelings of pride and independence—because the state was a home rule state, the county saw itself as unique in its authority.

In addition to feelings of pride about this independence, as William mentions, many EMOC members mentioned the unique challenges that this culture posed to doing emergency management in Foothills County, and what they had learned about how to make things work for the county. Melissa, from the county Health and Human Services department, explained:

> The mountains are a completely different culture. So sheltering in the mountains is different, offering resources in the mountains is different. It's hesitance to take the resources, and it's, they want to help each other in the mountains. There's a lot that they want to do that doesn't fit into that box. So for example, Red Cross shelter cannot accept homemade food, they have to have a kitchen in the shelter to prepare meals. In mountain towns, if you're not affected, you cook. You bring food to other people, to the firefighters, food to the shelter. If the Red Cross person says "we can't take that," you're offending them, because that's their way of showing they care. So you have to say thank you, and take it, and then figure out what you're gonna do with it. Or, the plan that we came up with is, if this is the building, this half is the shelter, this half is the community room. So, if people wanna bring food, they can put it in the community room, people from the shelter can walk

> out into the community room and eat. It's sort of the workaround (interview).

This particular story was tied to nonprofit and health roles in emergency management (e.g., sheltering). As will be discussed in Chapter Five, EMOC members go through extensive FEMA training; however, most of this training is focused on first response, and especially wildland firefighting, scenarios. While member storytelling confirmed this hierarchy, it was also an opportunity to share human services lessons—which were often not present in the formal trainings. Stories preserved and perpetuated lessons learned from past incidents, and reminded EMOC members to consider the uniqueness of the county and remain adaptable to fit the county's needs.

In sum, stories didn't just tell members how to orient toward each other, they also told members how to orient toward emergency management problems. As many members told me, it is one thing to know standard procedures during an emergency, and another to actually know how to implement the procedures. Stories got into the specifics of this 'how.'

Theme Three: Performing Respect for Authority

Finally, EMOC members explained that *respecting authority* was critical to making their local collaborations work. While collaborating during emergencies was seen as challenging, members said that as long as one knew who was in charge and who had expertise in a given problem domain, it was possible to keep collaborating through 12-hour operational periods, exhaustion, stress, and escalating crises. This norm of respecting hierarchy and procedure is significant for this analysis, because it creates additional constraints on conditions that have been depicted in the two previous themes. Those two discussions established how the exclusive valuing of first-responder interests, and the narration of past success that appeared to confirm the

appropriateness of that valuing, facilitated the creation and maintenance of a particular structure and culture in these EMOC's. Specifically, those practices contributed to a horizontal translation of participant interests which resolved an arbitrary hierarchy favoring first-responders. Because "authority" is associated with hierarchically superior interests in EMOC's, establishing a norm of "respect for authority" served to further stabilize these patterns by discouraging reflection on, and challenge to, that arrangement. In other words, EMOC members saw authority as pregiven based on a person's position in the hierarchy. However, we can see that this authority was produced and sustained in interactions that established the dominant priorities and mission of the EMOC.

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Vignette: Standing up to check in

Every October, FOEM members conduct a "Mass Coronal Ejection Exercise." No one can define it very well, but the exercise simulates what the county would do if a solar flare disrupted local infrastructures of electricity and communication. If this happened, the county might conceivably be without power, internet, and internet-based technologies for 6 months or more—which is the point of the exercise. To complicate this scenario, the group decides to exercise as if a wildfire breaks out during this time of no power, so that members must practice responding to the incident without making phone calls or using the internet.

This was my first exercise as a participant—I had joined the "Situational Awareness" group of FOEM. This group is charged with gathering relevant information about the incident and sharing it with all other members. Relevant details here included the location of the command post, who is in charge, how many casualties had occurred, how many structures had been damaged, and what was the weather forecast. This information was gathered every hour

during the hourly briefings. This information was then typed up, and posted in the group's shared software, WebEOC, and also on a whiteboard in the hallway of the EOC.

Before the exercise, Ben reminded everyone to check in with each other—and that if we didn't know something, just ask. I spent the exercise walking between the EOC (which had over 50 people in it) and checking WebEOC on the Situational Awareness computers, talking to the Situational Awareness Section Leader, and taking information from both sources outside to be recorded on the whiteboard in the hallway. Before the exercise started, the section leader told me to carry a notepad with me at all times. I asked her why, and she said "People will yell things at you and then run away." This turned out to be excellent advice, as numerous FOEM members walked by me while I was updating the whiteboard and called updates out to me: the Command Post had changed location, structures had been destroyed, a truck had flipped over on the highway. At one point, someone walked by and called out that shelters were being opened for some purpose, but I didn't understand if the shelters were for people without power, or people who had been displaced by the fire, so I didn't know what to add to the whiteboard. When the situational awareness section chief walked by, I asked her who the shelters were for. She started to answer, but then seemed to rethink our exchange as a teachable moment, and told me it was better to check in with Julian (Red Cross volunteer). I went back into the EOC to ask him before writing it on the whiteboard.

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Performing respect for authority included the routine practice of "checking in" with others in the group when problems fell into their domain of expertise. Standing up to check in was reinforced in trainings and meetings, as FOEM and EEMG staff would often claim that this was the point of having shared space. Being in the same room as everyone else was considered so important, it

was often the first thing members said to me when I asked them to define collaboration in interviews. In addition, EMOC members used their meetings and exercises as opportunities to learn each other's' roles, so that during incidents members would know who did what and who they should check in with. This occurred both through formal introductions (FOEM, for example, had different organizations present to the group about what they did during emergencies at each monthly meeting) and informal lobbying. During two ICS trainings, I observed nonprofit members taking their group introduction time (a moment where everyone else simply said their name and organizational affiliation before the meetings began) to describe what the volunteer agencies did and what they could help with. Finally, this theme was reinforced through the shared group motto "stay in your lane." I heard roles described as "lanes" at least 14 times in observation and interviews. Telling members to respect authority translated multiple roles and interests into a shared understanding of who needed to be checked in with, and when. However, authority was once again often tied to first responders in the group. This was because, functionally, authority here was associated with the capability to order resources. Because the scenarios emphasized events that created urgent needs for first responders, it was not surprising that this capability was typically deployed in the service of that priority. Performing respect for authority thus functioned to define (unequal) roles in the groups (i.e., who could request and order resources) and prestructure dispute resolution among members (e.g., how resource requests should be prioritized and sequenced).

Defining roles

First, members discussed the need to understand each other's roles in order to eliminate redundancy – and thus inefficiency and ineffectiveness -- during emergency response. Both first responders and human service/nonprofit members bought into the need for members to have

clear roles, and tied this to an instrumentally effective response. Here, roles were tied to the values of efficiency and reduced risk. As Amy, from Foothills County Community Services explained:

> You need structure to have organization. In order for people not to duplicate services and not to duplicate risk, you need people to understand where they are in the pecking order, and also which lane they're gonna be in. Wildland firefighting is in this lane, police are in this lane, yes they talk to each other, but they have individual mandates (interview).

The idea of predefining roles thus seemed to imply that because time was of the essence during responses, there was no time for participants to negotiate who was going to do what—instead, members should understand their roles clearly ahead of time. In three interviews, police officers in particular told me that a significant threat posed to emergency management was that people *with ICS training* would "self-deploy" to the scene of an incident, when doing so actually made them part of the hazard because they could get in the way of other members. Beyond nonprofit groups self-deploying, then, even people with the technical knowhow needed to respond could be a threat if they did not understand their role. Not knowing one's role, then, was tied to creating increased risk for the collaboration as a whole.

Additionally, as Amy mentions above, members emphasized that defining roles ahead of time meant knowing where members fit in the pecking order of decision making during emergencies. The motto "stay in your lane" emphasized this point, and was repeated frequently, especially during trainings. Melissa, from Housing and Human Services, viewed the motto

positively, partly as a way to protect her from being overextended in her participation with FOEM. As she noted:

> One thing that I loved that our human services director said from day one was 'These are your swim lanes, Melissa. This is what your scope is, and sometimes you're gonna swim out of your lane, but I want you to swim back in as fast as you can.' When you have ESFs [emergency support functions], I think it defines those lanes. And, yes, people are gonna cross lanes sometimes, but it helps. I am a big proponent of roles and responsibilities. If a person knows those, they know how to work with someone else, because they know theirs (interview).

Similarly, Sophia, the deputy director of FOEM, explained that defining roles could be a challenge because

> You [emergency management offices] tend to attract the type of people who are trained throughout their entire careers to make decisions and take action now. And so if they call each other, sometimes you get two people who are very comfortable making their own decisions, both trying to make the same decision, and maybe they don't agree. And that complicates the collaboration piece. If they both respect each other's authority, that's the key to relationships, keeping to your own lane, knowing when it's your call and when it's not (interview).

As members tied roles to making important decisions, they noted that it was important to know when you had the authority to make a decision and when you did not. Sophia tied this need back into the "first responder personality" challenge previously mentioned—because members wanted to take charge, they needed to stay in their lanes and only take charge when they had the authority to do so.

However, even as members reminded each other to "stay in their lane," they also emphasized that the Emergency Operations Center was set up to *disrupt* these lanes and promote spontaneous collaboration. Ben, the Foothills County Emergency Manager, often told members to get up and walk around while they were in the EOC. As they did this, members stopped to talk with each other, share needs, and ask for clarification. As seen in the above vignette, members encouraged each other to check in. During my first exercise in the Situational Awareness Unit, I was sent to check in with the emergency manager, a member of the support staff, the geographic services unit, a dispatcher, and a Red Cross member. Similarly, other Situational Awareness Unit staff, the OEM deputy director, and someone from the dispatch center all checked in with me (fieldnote). In this sense, EMOC members seemed to want to have it both ways—they reminded each other to know their roles and not move outside of those roles. At the same time, members emphasized that the EOC and the Command Post created a collaborative space, which was essential to sharing resources and information. As long as members acted within their role, it was okay to check in with each other, but members also reminded each other not to get overly involved in areas where they did not have authority.

For example, another Situational Awareness Unit volunteer, Patty, seemed to take "checking in" too far during a FOEM monthly meeting about the coronal mass ejection exercise. Dan, an FOEM staff member and the head of the Situational Awareness group, asked a

representative from each ESF to share what their concerns were regarding the exercise, and how they planned to deal with the lack of electricity and internet during the exercise. As each group shared their thoughts, Patty interrupted almost everyone to ask if they had considered other challenges their group might face. She told the law enforcement group that they should consider that printers wouldn't work, she questioned the public information officers about how they would get information out, and she suggested that the volunteer and donation management group work more closely with community watch groups (e.g., Blockwatch). The more she probed others, the more clearly the tone of the room turned toward annoyance, and people started rolling their eyes whenever she raised her hand. The volunteer and donation management group spokesperson cut her off and said that working with community groups "wasn't their job," it was a job for the VOAD. Patty shot back "but you do volunteers, and these are volunteer groups." The volunteer and donation management group repeated that this wasn't their job. Dan tried to get the group back on track by asking clarifying questions himself. That Dan's questions were seen as acceptable indicated that FOEM staff members – and we should recall here that Dan represented a first-responder-agency-- occupied a higher place on the hierarchy than Patty, who was a volunteer. Other members reinforced who should stay in their lane during this meeting by starting to ignore Patty, or arguing that she didn't understand their roles well enough to make these suggestions (fieldnote). In other words, Patty's bid for authority in this situation was rejected, while Dan's was accepted because of his role.

In addition to knowing your role, members often described the need to understand who was in charge, and when. Sophia, the Deputy Director of OEM, gave an example of resource ordering, saying

> We got two resource requests during Flagstaff Fire, for fifty fire

> trucks each. Well, this is a huge amount because we had a big fire and depleted resources. We easily could have divided that ourselves [FOEM], but we don't make the assumption. We got policy group involved, we said, 'Okay tactically how do you want to divide this?' One team took the big ones, one took the little ones because they were in the mountains and that was easier[7]. And so we always default to that. Mostly that comes down to the training. The training of those folks involves a lot of definition of those authorities, so they have very clear direction on who has the authority. We also do it when we train our ESFs, a lot of times they'll default to us because maybe they don't always work in a disaster. So sometimes it feels safer for them to ask 'What should I do?' So we're very clear that we don't have the authority to make that decision, but, what we can do is advise them. And so we can give them all the information they need to make the decision, and they make it (interview).

Sophia framed this event as empowering in her interview. Nonetheless, her account also highlights *who* is ranked highly by EMOC collaborations—in this case, the policymakers (who typically represented first-responder agencies). Additionally, FOEM staff claimed to facilitate decision-making, but they also had a say in *what* information was relevant to decision making, which helped to frame the decision. Staying in your lane, then, seemed to go beyond the pretext of merely eliminating redundancy, and also had the potential to tell members where they fit in

[7] Smaller firetrucks are easier to drive on winding mountain roads, according to some wildland firefighters I talked to.

the hierarchy of the collaboration. One additional way that the hierarchy was reinforced was by linking authority to resource ordering—knowing when "it's your call" was often tied to being the one to foot the bill, as seen in the next function.

Prestructuring dispute resolution

In addition to defining roles, members prestructured dispute resolution by linking authority to certain practices, and the practice of resource ordering in particular. Ultimately, for members, the group that had a financial stake in the incident was the group with authority. Resource ordering was an essential practice for members—and one that they prided themselves on. Typically, FOEM conducted "single point ordering." Under federal guidelines, resource mobilization can occur either through calling around to find local suppliers directly from the incident command post, or through calling the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which can then facilitate ordering of all supplies and personnel. In Foothills County, the EOC did the resource ordering. During ICS training, FOEM staff claimed that this was because the EOC was so good at ordering resources quickly (fieldnote). Knowing who could order resources seemed to be important and was emphasized as part of ICS training. For example, during one scenario in ICS training, the trainers deliberately acted as EOC members who did *not* have the authority to order resources, according to ICS doctrine. They placed fake resource ordering phone calls to see if participants would take the orders or catch that this was not allowed, and tell the callers that they did not have the authority to order resources. When a fellow volunteer remembered that the "fake caller," who was posing as a facilities manager, did not have the authority to call her and order a generator, she was praised by the trainers for catching the mistake (fieldnote).

Because resource ordering was tied to authority, members often talked about needing to know who was "footing the bill" to understand who was in charge. In this way, disputes about

authority could be quickly solved by understanding who had financial responsibility. Dylan, a Foothills County Sheriff's Officer, explained the system to me:

> So let's take a wildland fire. The fire protection district responds first. We have it broken down into type five, four, three, two, one. Type five is the smallest incident, non-invasive, single agency, type one is the largest, multi-agency. So the first agency will go and start managing the incident. So we'll go, and we'll say how can we help you? And you're gonna go, "Well the fire is within our capabilities right now," or, "We're gonna need some air resources." So we can go help and get air resources, and pay for it from the sheriff's office… if we start working together, it's a type four incident. And then at some point, and it usually comes back to cost containment, complexity of the incident, and the capacity of what the fire protection district has, which includes money. At some point the first district says, "This is getting too costly, we know the fire's gonna take off," so we transition to the sheriff's, which is a type three incident. So when it becomes type three, then we're gonna start managing the incident, but still use all the fire protection there. Likewise, when it's getting too costly for us, we transition to the state [a type two incident], and then the federal government [a type one incident] (interview).

Of course, if disputes for authority were resolved by considering who had financial responsibility, nonprofit and human services groups were once again left without much power.

Issues like sheltering, donation management, grief counseling, and temporary housing services were not framed as central to the EMOCs' missions, so they rarely became the issues that members grappled for power over. Instead, "bigger" resource concerns, especially as they related to the immediate emergency response, got linked to issues of authority, especially by FOEM staff, firefighting agencies, and police officers. While this segregation of participant concerns might have conceivably contributed to the priority of nonprofit and health-related concerns (i.e., by placing their resources outside of competition), that was not so in this case. Instead, the outcome of this arrangement was that they were never deemed sufficiently important to be advanced as a source of dispute. They were presumed able to function within existing procedure.

In this way, tying resource ordering to authority prestructured dispute resolution in ways that continued to benefit the first-responder organizations. Performing respect for authority translated multiple member interests into a shared frame that collaboration worked best when roles were defined, and conflict was minimized during emergency response. Members framed this as a shared value and foreclosed the possibility that flexible, inclusive, and emergent decision-making (i.e., what might ideally be considered 'collaborative') could benefit the group.

Horizontal Translation in Emergency Management Collaboration

Considered together, these three themes conceptualize the practice of horizontal translation in EMOCs, and demonstrate how through translation, these collaborations oriented toward particular images of shared priorities and activities. However, these practices of translation also involved successful bids for authority among certain members, who, in interaction, foreclosed other forms of structure and culture for the collaboration, including different valuing of threats, rankings, and types of participation.

How did this process occur? First, practices of translation foreclosed other definitions of priorities in emergency management. Through translation, members oriented to a shared concept of "life safety" that prioritized certain groups, ideas, and activities as the core mission of the collaboration. The prioritization of first responder identities and missions was not necessarily the only focus an EMOC could take on. Public health threats, for example, fell within the purview of other security and emergency management organizations, including DHS and FEMA. The EMOC ranking likelihood and impact of threats, for example, certainly glossed over the reality that 80,000 Americans died from the flu in 2017 (CDC, 2018), versus approximately 3,500 deaths caused by wildfires (US Fire Administration, 2018). EMOC priorities, then, were collaboratively negotiated, and rarely – if ever -- reflected the simple probability of risks posed to the community.

Similarly, this horizontal translation focused on first response instead of seemingly more holistic concepts of security and risk management. The human security school of thought, for example, broadens the concept of security to consider various threats posed to economic livelihood, cultures, and the environment (Liotta, 2002). Members who focused on these broader concerns, however, were marginalized by stories of past group success, which did not focus on these concerns, and by characterizations of members, which framed these concerns as falling outside the scope of the collaborative mission. Accounts of what other members were "like" were not value-neutral, and did not just serve the purpose of depicting how other members could be of use during emergency response – which was the explicit reason for some of the "getting to know each other" activities of the group. Instead, descriptions systematically elevated the concerns and missions of first response organizations and dismissed the concerns and missions of human services and nonprofit organizations by framing these missions as everything from

support to a distraction from the work of the EMOCs. Studies of emergency management point out that this paramilitary conception is not a given, nor is it the only option available to these groups. Instead, practices of translation construct and perpetuate an ideological view of security and risk management that is focused on unilateral action (Thackaberry, 2004), immediate threat, and immediate response.

FEMA has also recently taken an interest in 'whole community' response work, and especially in hazard mitigation and resilience efforts (Long, 2018). This is in part because, as natural disasters grow more frequent and damaging due to climate change, FEMA has recognized that disaster response will grow more expensive, and has suggested that local communities focus more on prevention and rebuilding that does not assume FEMA can step in to aid in long-term recovery (Long, 2018). In dismissing human services and long-term recovery from the core EMOC mission, these first responders were thus bucking trends in other security organization that have chosen to cultivate more flexible attributions of value to threats. Stories of past success and The Flood, in particular, centered first responder work and immediate response while downplaying, for example, that long-term flood recovery was ongoing in the county. While several EMOC members were involved in this recovery, most members did not discuss the long-term recovery efforts or know much about them, unless they were involved in human service work. Similarly, members often talked about response efforts, but not *prevention* efforts or broader issues that contributed to community risk—including economic instability, for example, or climate change. As Ben, FOEM Emergency Manager, explained to me, talk about resilience seemed like a good idea, but it often veered far off course from the emergency management mission. While the office agreed to be involved in these conversations with the county, they did not see this as their primary mission.

These translations of various risks and responses into a shared mission did not accurately reflect the objective probability of these risks, or the trends toward broadening considerations of security. Instead, these translations were constitutive of the preferred responses to these threats, and the groups that had positioned themselves as having authority in emergency management. Related ranking of various priorities within the collaborations reinforced the dominant practices of the groups—including fire and police control, and the need for hierarchy and structure that contained both certain groups *and* collaborative practices themselves. For example, the concept of "staying in your lane" was tied to resource ordering practices, which meant that EMOC members without resource ordering capabilities (because they were not paying for the incident response) did not have as much of a say in decision-making. While this translation made response possible by prestructuring dispute resolution among members, it also meant that nonprofit and human services members did not have an equal say, and that many decisions were actually made by single members or groups, instead of being made collaboratively. Translations that defined the mission of the EMOCs, then, perpetuated the preferred practices of dominant members of the groups, especially the first response focus.

These translations demonstrate, then, that even as EMOCs collaborate, the paramilitary structure of emergency management can inhibit more egalitarian concepts of collaboration. Multiple practices documented in this study demonstrate how, although EMOCs claimed to value collaboration, they also sought to *limit* and *contain* collaboration, in order to maintain preferred images of hierarchy. For example, concerns about 'self-deploying' volunteers and the need to know your role before an emergency indicated that while collaboration was valued, there was such a thing as *too much* collaboration for the EMOCs. Collaboration itself, then, needed to be translated in meaning to fit the EMOC context. Members collectively constructed an

understanding that collaboration was useful and necessary during emergency response, but that there were limits to when collaboration should be used and how. Members that were seen as overinvolved with other groups, for example, or as directing the group toward concerns that were not the "primary" concerns of the group (e.g., volunteers talking about the need for grief counselors and parent reunification during ICS training) were disciplined and dismissed as not understanding the central priorities of the group. While members consistently framed collaboration positively, they also drew limits around collaboration, demonstrating that, for EMOCs, the egalitarian ethos of collaboration can be seen as disrupting a preferred paramilitary logic of organizing.

Finally, the practices that constitute horizontal translation in this chapter also created insight into the dominant view of authority in EMOC's. Members seemed to view authority as given based on position in the collaboration, and, in framing authority as dictated by roles, concealed the ways that authority was actually an ongoing accomplishment that was accepted or rejected in interaction. Here, members drew on several practices in order to author the collaboration's trajectory and mission. First, EMOC members often spoke as a "we" or spoke for "the county," meaning Foothills County. In doing so, they translated multiple and potentially competing priorities into a dominant account of the county's goals in emergency management. This account was accepted, often implicitly, when other members agreed to operate within this shared frame. As one example, multiple members told stories of the importance of police and firefighting responses from the past, instead of attempting to renegotiate these priorities to include public health responses. This is not to say, however, that authoring of the collaborations did not involve *struggle*. Members rejected attempts to translate alternative goals into the shared collaborative frame, for example health and human service priorities, through disciplining moves

(e.g., claiming these goals were "unrealistic") and by refusing to carry this frame forward in conversation (e.g., refusal to continue talking about the flu as a risk to the community, rolling eyes and not responding to health and human service concerns during meetings, etc.). Through horizontal translation, EMOC members authored a dominant account of the collaboration's identity and mission.

Conclusion

Practices of horizontal translation in emergency management constituted the collaborative mission, priorities, and ideals in local emergency management collaborations. Horizontal translation was necessary to reconcile the focus of various collaborative partners and create a shared mission. However, this form of translation was never value-neutral, and the related practices presented in this chapter demonstrate that it always involved *struggle.* By characterizing and differentiating participant identities, narrating past successes, and performing respect for authority, EMOC members created what they deemed to be a successful collaboration that could work to respond to community emergencies. However, in horizontal translation, there was never perfect equivalency of meaning. As various member interests scaled up asserted accounts to create a shared concept of the collaboration, member interests were distorted in ways that prioritized first responder organizations and values over human service and nonprofit missions. The implications of these horizontal translations for scholarly understanding of collaboration, and especially hierarchy in collaboration, will be discussed in Chapter Six. In the next chapter, I turn to practices of *vertical* translation, to understand how EMOC members translated institutional texts, especially from FEMA/DHS, into their collaboration in ways that gave these texts, and themselves, authority.

CHAPTER FIVE: VERTICAL TRANSLATION IN LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COLLABORATION

Following from my previous discussion of "horizontal translation," this chapter focuses on the related-yet-distinct phenomenon of "vertical translation" in local emergency management (EM). As such, it seeks to answer this study's RQ2: "*How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate the significance and implications of federal requirements for their collaboration?"* This chapter thus shifts our focus to the translation of institutional texts by the members of emergency management organizational collaborations (EMOC's). While Chapter Four's discussion focused on "horizontal" translations that resolved competing member interests to create a dominant account of the local EMOC, this chapter explores members' translation of federal texts and priorities as a means of organizing their work. In other words, I focus on how technically-absent institutional texts are invoked and appropriated as resources for the development of local conversation and practice.

As a result, this chapter expands on my previous discussion of RQ3, "*How do horizontal and vertical processes of translation serve to develop authority within EMOC's?"* Here, I will argue that, in and through vertical translation, EMOC members variously adapt, accommodate, and reject institutional texts as *authoritative* guides for their organization. In other words, through these practices, EMOC members variously assert these texts and themselves as *having authority*. Primarily, this process developed through three, inter-related discursive moves. Initially, first responders within these collaborations invoked the institutional texts of DHS/FEMA to accomplish instrumental functions (e.g., strategizing resource requests). Second, by so doing, first-responders depicted themselves as seasoned experts best qualified to interpret and apply those guidelines, on behalf of the EMOC. Third, by proclaiming the artifacts of this

translation as appropriate and effective actions taken by the EMOC, first-responders approved themselves as speaking on-behalf of their collaboration. As I have argued, this process is significant because it represents an important dialectic of structure and agency in which EMOC members orient to external (i.e., regulatory) control, while seeking to preserve their relative autonomy (e.g., as discretion and maneuver). Additionally, this chapter demonstrates that in EMOC's, bids for authority draw on both local *and* trans-local resources in order to author the collaboration.

My analysis of interviews, fieldnotes from observation, and organizational documents led to the identification of three different aspects of vertical translation. *First*, EMOC members strategically *referenced* Homeland Security events, and related these events to their local work. *Second*, the EMOC's strategically *identified* with federal systems, and discussed the benefits and drawbacks of adopting and imitating these systems. Conversely and *finally*, members also *criticized* federal systems and agencies in ways that their asserted the superior relevance and value of their local knowledge and identities. Together, these translations facilitated the adaptation and use of federal texts in local emergency management organizing.

This discussion thus enriches current understanding of organizational translation of institutional texts, and the relationship that is subsequently developed between translation and organizational authority. Organizational communication studies of translation have focused on how organizations "scale up" conversation to create texts, and how these texts influence future conversations (Brummans et al., 2013). Arguably, however, this work has overlooked the important role of *institutions* in the text-conversation dialectic. It has done so, specifically, by focusing on how members' communication serves to stabilize conversations as texts, which are then invoked as texts to further influence member conversations. Potentially, this focus neglects

how institutional texts—rather than organizational texts members create themselves in everyday conversation—can be an important influence on, and outcome of, interorganizational collaboration (Lawrence et al., 2002). This chapter thus sheds light on communicative practices that translate external texts into everyday conversations, and how these translations facilitate members' subsequent scaling of those conversations into texts embodying the governing norms, values, and beliefs of EMOC's.

In this way, my analysis here diverges from the conventional premise that – due to decreasing hierarchy in postmodern organizations – scholars should depict organizational authority primarily as an intersubjective, dialogic accomplishment occurring in relatively egalitarian conditions (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; Koschmann & Burk, 2016). As this study demonstrates, EMOC's conversely face a unique need to translate the *hierarchical* condition of their operations. That condition subsequently functions as a *text* that collaboration members can draw upon to support their bids for authority. As a result, while authority is still an intersubjective process in EMOC's (i.e., it is not solely dictated by hierarchical structures), that process unfolds as members assert their right to speak about -- and on behalf of -- those structures. As I will discuss, the prominent artifact in this case is the DHS-mandated Incident Command System. I begin by recounting how my engagement with the data led to the development of three themes, before introducing each theme and its corresponding practices. Considered together, these three themes demonstrate the tension displayed in EMOC between conformity and resistance to federal directives and priorities.

Emergence of Themes

Here, I use the term *vertical translation* to highlight how, for EMOC's, translation involves not just the resolution of multiple *local* identities as one shared mission, but also the

integration of *trans-local* meanings and priorities into that mission. These external conditions especially include *institutional texts*. As EMOC's are reliant for their short-term effectiveness (and long-term solvency) on acquiring federal funding during large-scale disaster recovery, they must interact with related federal structures and regulations. The two most relevant structures here include the Incident Command System (ICS), which is part of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Counties seeking this funding must be "NIMS-compliant," a status that requires them to have a disaster recovery plan. Beyond this structural relationship, however, there were other, more indirect connections between local EMOC's and DHS systems. For example, the EMOC's in this study frequently associated themselves with DHS by invoking types of security threats (e.g., terrorism) falling within that agency's jurisdiction. Primarily, they did so by comparing the characteristics of their home county with those of other counties where those threats had occurred (i.e., such that "It could happen here"). In constantly projecting these scenarios, the EMOC's rehearsed their qualification for using DHS structures. As exciting as this possibility was (particularly for the first-responders) Foothills County remained a mix of rural and urban areas primarily facing threats of fire and flooding, and had not yet experienced a high-profile terror attack. As a result, EMOC members were required to strategically interpret and assert the relationship between their operations and DHS structures *as* congruent.

Analysis for this chapter focused on text-to-conversation translation of federal directives, trainings, guidelines, and values. This analysis began with open-level coding, in which I identified numerous examples of participants' interacting with -- and making reference to -- federal regulation of emergency management. In particular, I noticed that member talk about the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Incident Command System (ICS) extended well beyond ICS trainings, and infused their everyday talk, both in jargon and in explicit references to

the system. Additionally, members frequently mentioned and told stories about the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, an agency located under DHS) and about prominent national events and emergencies that had impacted other communities. During my initial observations at the two EMOC's, I noticed the prominence of such talk, and thus designed interview questions that probed members' rationale for adopting these systems at the local level. I also collected data by observing members' actual use (e.g., interpretation and implementation) of these federal systems.

Working from open-level codes, I next looked for patterns concerning what these types of talk had in common. During selective coding, in particular, I identified a significant difference in member accounts of how and why federal systems were valued. I subsequently fractured the open code "talk about ICS" into many more specific types of talk, including, for example, "evaluating the adequacy of ICS for local EM work," "characterizing the clarity, coherence, and accessibility of ICS," and "rationalizing use of ICS (e.g., as necessary but imperfect)." Frequently, these types of talk served as a means for EMOC members to indirectly criticize ICS, in that practices that they involved *adapting* federal systems to serve local needs. In this way, criticizing federal systems served as a kind of preliminary ritual that enabled the group to rationalize its pursuit of more creative and flexible implementation. It permitted, in other words, the EMOC's to have their cake (i.e., construct a relationship with DHS providing both financial and cultural capital), and eat it too (i.e., a relationship that also preserved their preference for uniqueness and autonomy). Table 5.1 below provides a list of phase one codes and their revised categorization in phase two codes.

Table 5.1: Phase Two Coding for Vertical Translation

Phase One Codes (Initial)	**Phase Two Codes (Consolidated)**
References to 9/11 References to Hurricane Katrina References to mass shootings Need to learn from other communities Anticipate security threats to community Security as controlling perimeters Security and emergency management changes	*Referencing Homeland Security events* Telling stories of events (especially domestic terrorist attacks) that have occurred elsewhere; accounting for the threat of these attacks in conducting county planning; explaining how the profession and practice of EM have changed following domestic security events
ICS creates needed standardization ICS creates a shared language ICS is scalable Need to "talk the talk" of ICS Need to use federal tactics in new situations	*Identifying with federal systems* Discussing how federal systems work (especially ICS) as a condition of EM operations; praising the benefits provided by these systems; emphasizing the requirement that all members know related policies and procedures (e.g., to ensure standardized and seamless response)
ICS is inadequate ICS needs to be clarified ICS needs local adaptation FEMA is stingy FEMA is noncollaborative FEMA is overly bureaucratic	*Criticizing federal systems* Discussing ways that federal systems and agencies are inadequate, confusing, or not well suited to the needs of planning and conducting local response.

In this chapter, I depict these themes by describing their corresponding practices, and analyzing how they interact to produce a distinctive strategy of vertical translation. As in Chapter Four, I use vignettes for this purpose, drawn from thick description recorded in fieldnotes, participants' accounts recorded in interviews, and textual analysis of related EMOC and federal documents. Finally, I consider how these translations serve to transform the local meanings and practices of EMOC's, in particular as this work becomes more security-focused.

Theme One: Referencing "Homeland" Events

First, EMOC members made numerous references to previous events warranting the involvement of DHS – primarily domestic security threats and emergencies that had captured national media attention. References to these events were often colored by anxiety and concern that such events could also occur in Foothills County. EMOC members subsequently interpreted this risk this a reason for them to keep cooperating, improving, and planning for use of federal systems. Contexts for these performances included group storytelling and trainings, especially when members discussed how other jurisdictions had implemented federal systems. Members also invoked Homeland Security concerns in their "live" operational assessments of threats – both actual and potential -- posed to the community in the local events they monitored. In these instances, EMOC members would often talk in ways that appeared to intensify the seriousness of an apparent threat (e.g., in depicting the suspicious behavior of event attendees as potential precursors to the commission of terrorist attacks and mass shootings). These translations invoked high-level threat profiles as desirable resources for member sensemaking of events. They also occurred in EMOC member practices of designing and conducting training exercises, the scenarios for which often drew on events that had happened elsewhere in the US. For example, EMOC staff designed a terrorist attack scenario that drew on the Boston Marathon bombing, and even called a Boston EM official during the exercise to talk about lessons learned from her experience (fieldnote). Bracketing the concern of how valid these comparisons were, referencing national events served at least three functions in EMOC work. It dramatized and elevated the importance of that work; it facilitated member learning from historical and institutional environments; and it tied the local – and potentially mundane – conduct of county-level EM to

the broader, more professional – and potentially exciting-- culture of federal emergency management.

Elevating the importance of local emergency management

First, in their storytelling, members of both collaborations – particularly their leaders -- elevated their importance by linking their local work to national concerns. This storytelling often served to justify members' ongoing participation and continuous improvement of local practices. That is, members were urged to continue their involvement in the EMOC because it could face a high-profile threat at any time. The first example here, of a "fence jumper" at a college football game, does not initially appear to be a national security concern. However, in the telling and retelling of this story, EEMG members tied the incident to broader Homeland Security concerns.

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Vignette One: The fence jumper

I was observing one of my last command post sessions with EEMG—during college football games the group meets in a large classroom on the campus to work the event. As Liam told me on my first day in the command post, this is because all events, even planned events, can turn into dangerous incidents at a moment's notice. I sat in the back of the room next to Michael, who was the incident commander that night. In front of us were two rows of desks with desktop computers. Each computer had a label hanging from the ceiling overhead—dispatch, traffic, parking, logistics. These are all the positions that EEMG needs staffed during a response, and their categories are all borrowed from the ICS hierarchy. The front of the room was awash in the light of four projectors—each displaying a frame of 4-12 surveillance camera feeds onto the former classroom's whiteboards. During lulls in the game (which blasted on a TV located behind my head, serving as a supplemental video feed for CP staff), the staff would sit in a quiet trance,

absently gazing at the surveillance streams. On this night, however, a private security guard radioed into the command post to say that he had just caught someone trying to jump the fence into the stadium. "And?" Michael asked, "Was he caught?" Another private security worker in the command post explained that the private security guards couldn't actually arrest anyone; all they could do was wait for a police officer to show up. While a police officer was on their way to that section of the fence, the man had walked away. Ashley, who was working as the logistics chief, asked for a description of the "suspect." She typed up that the man had been wearing a white shirt, black pants, and a black backpack, and projected this onto Thirty minutes later, the private security worker called out, "He tried to jump the fence again!" "Where is he?" Michael demanded. Ashley and several others started moving the cameras providing the surveillance feeds, looking for the right section of the stadium. "He walked away again," the private security worker said. Now several people in the command post stood in front of the projected images, searching for a man in a white shirt and black pants. Michael even told me to start looking on the screens from the farthest right projector.

Fifteen minutes later, another private security worker radioed to say they had stopped someone from jumping the fence, and once again, he had been allowed to walk away. "God damn it!" someone yelled. "Unbelievable." "Okay, if we could try to get this guy," Michael yelled out. "If he gets into the stadium with that backpack . . . who knows what's in there. Our security is gone*." The command post waited in silence for the next 30 minutes. Many people stood close to the video feed wall, staring into the crowd for the white shirt and black backpack. No more radio calls came in about the fence jumper for the rest of the night.*

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While the fence-jumper incident appeared (at least to me) as a low-level trespassing concern, EEMG members in subsequent interviews expressed that this incident was a genuine security concern. In my subsequent interview with Liam, he expressed both satisfaction with how the situation had been handled, and a persistent anxiety about such incidents:

> I think we were successful because a person to our knowledge didn't access the stadium. So I think our systems are good. But what's the next thing? That's . . . always. For forever, we had minimal barricades at the end of the street, until all the sudden all over the world, people are using cars to plow through crowds. So now we have these heavy barricades. Well, then we have Las Vegas, where there's a guy shooting down into a crowd from a high vantage point, so now, we start patrolling the buildings. It's always taking the last incident and seeing what applies, until *you're* the next incident, and you didn't think about the next tactic. It's a problem all over the place (Liam, EEMG Emergency Manager, interview).

Here, Liam articulates the logic behind Michael's comment about security being "gone" if the fence jumper got into the stadium, and explains why the command post felt heightened tension during this incident. While EMOC could have minimized this incident as a mischievous university student without a ticket, he instead elevated it to a herald of "the next thing." Because its uncertainty could not otherwise be resolved, EMOC members defaulted to link this event to the evolving threat of domestic terrorism.

This sentiment that the town or county could be "next" was echoed by other collaboration members, who made reference to other Homeland Security events -- in particular, the 2013

Boston Marathon bombing. In this way, stories about Homeland Security-level events oriented EMOC members to both the past and the future, depicting an unending cycle of action, learning and innovation performed between the violators and protectors of domestic security. For example, Ashley, who was working as the logistics chief during the fence-jumper incident, explained to me:

> So with the Boston bombing, that incident was a package. Is that incident gonna happen here? Are they gonna leave a package somewhere that will cause casualties? Or is it gonna be a vehicle, which is the new MO? So, you try to see what suspects have done in the past and say okay, now we need to prepare for this. When officers get training on how to approach a building or enter into a facility, criminals are [also] looking into that. It's this whole dance. We learn stuff, they learn our techniques. We're trying to not be in rhythm. So the biggest concern is, are we behind the eight ball on this? And now we need to play catch up? (Ashley, EEMG staff, interview).

In addition to using a future-oriented frame in stories, members discussed Homeland Security-level events as a rationale for adjusting their own security protocols:

> After the Boston Marathon Bombing, security was huge for the Foothills City 10K [race]. We approach that more as an incident than a fun run on a Monday morning. It's more about "Is there a threat in that crowd?" then just crowd control. I don't know that we've had anything that we could call 'terrorist' here in Foothills County. But

> that doesn't mean that it couldn't happen, or that it has to be defined as a terrorist to be a big event. Somebody just, being crazy and driving their car through the Foothills City 10k. I don't know that we could do anything to plan to stop that. Just being aware that it's a potential. I think that everybody who works in law enforcement has just a more heightened awareness of the potential of a mass casualty incident (Rachel, Foothills County Sheriff's Office, interview).

This example indicates that for EMOC members, the apparent threat of a local terrorist attack elevated the importance of continuing to do their work. Specifically, it created a kind of 'future perfect tense,' in which one could imagine EMOC members looking back after a mass casualty event, and seeing ways that they had failed to adequately anticipate and respond to that emerging threat. This implication of future accountability, of course, was likely to induce EMOC members to perform at a high level in the present moment. Additionally, Rachel's discussion demonstrates how distant (but nonetheless urgent) Homeland Security events were often invoked as precedents for sensemaking, and subsequently conflated with other, more mundane acts of violence within the community—as she says, incidents do not need to be caused by (jihadist) terrorism to be big events. These high profile events themselves were thus presented by members as having authority—threats in other jurisdictions informed what the EMOC's did to prepare, and what their members regarded as suspicious or concerning.

It is also important to note that the key translators of Homeland Security events into the EMOC's tended to be law enforcement officers—as Rachel notes by saying that working in law enforcement leads to heightened awareness of potential security threats. In this way, vertical translation was accommodated by many members of the EMOC's, but it tended to be performed

by first responders. As noted, these organizations tended to be more identified with the counterterrorism mission, and also (to a point) with the federal structure of NIMS. When I interviewed the human services agency members discussed in Chapter Four, they would often perform deference for authority when asked about security threats—saying that I should talk to law enforcement members instead. In this way, security threats were translated into the collaborations as a shared concern, but they selectively enabled only *certain* members to perform bids for authority. First responders often assumed the role of "experts" about Homeland Security events—for example, by projecting how the group should prepare to respond in the event of serious threat. In so doing, they attributed authority to both *the events* and *themselves* as influences on the EMOC's mission and operations. This can also be seen in "lessons learned" from Homeland Security events—discussed below.

Facilitating learning from "homeland" events

Second, practices of storytelling and exercise planning that referenced Homeland Security events reinforced that they were an important concern for the local EMOC's. Stories of improvement in EMOC performance invoked violent events as challenges that members were increasingly willing and able to engage, including (jihadist) terrorist attacks and other mass shootings. As Rachel's discussion indicates above, violence did not have to be linked to international terrorism to be a "big event." For EMOC members, these types of violence were often conflated—and members seemed to frame violence as, regardless of cause, inevitable for the community. Stories of Homeland Security events, then, created opportunities for the EMOC's to project potential challenges, and to adapt their local practices accordingly. As with framings of "the next thing," these stories rationalized continued improvement of EMOC practices in a distinct manner – through increasing hierarchy and militarization.

Storytelling about national events informed members' perceptions of security threats to the community. As the fence jumper incident indicates above, small and potentially benign events were linked to larger national concerns in the everyday talk of members. As mentioned in Chapter Four, EMOC members tended to deprioritize human service and volunteer work. Another way that this work was deprioritized was by linking these groups to concerns during other national events. As William, a volunteer, told me:

> One of the things responding to Katrina, to work in different areas you had to be on a sheriff's department list, and you had to have credentials to get into the area because there were people looting, they'd be coming in as a volunteer, and they'd go through the houses stealing stuff. And you've gotta be careful, if you're a Red Cross person going in and doing that, you're hurting the reputation of Red Cross. From an organizational standpoint, you have to know your people and trust them in what they're assigned to do. Security is a big factor as far as I'm concerned, and I think that's one of the reasons that volunteer organizations are not called on that much. They're thinking I don't know them, I don't trust them, I can't really use them, and I can't really control them (William, FOEM Volunteer, interview).

In this way, by referencing national events, members rationalized the prioritization and deprioritization of certain groups. However, they additionally drew on national events to make sense of certain behavior *as* threatening. This shaping of security threats tended to be linked to *control of space.* For example, members often cited the need to secure the perimeter around an

emergency response, making reference to the public (which, for example, would impede response by gathering to watch), journalists (e.g., who might pose as firefighters to get close to wildfire response in other counties), and volunteers. Members often defined security as control of space in interviews—Ethan, a police officer, defined security to me as the need to "establish a perimeter, to control access, just get the area defined and control the access-who is going into the scene and who is leaving?" (interview).

In response to framing security threats as unauthorized and improper use of space, then, members adopted practices to *control* spaces during response. This included setting up physical barricades, increasing the number of surveillance video streams, and increasing scrutiny of credentials.

One common practice in EEMG during events was the handing out of rubber wristbands (see figure 5.1 below). Noah, who worked in the event security staff, would come around with a bag of the rubber wristbands during events and hand one out to everyone working. The wristbands had the name of the event and varied in color—during football games, they tended to be a mix of the colors from the opposing team, during the 4th of July firework celebration they were red, white, and blue. When I asked members of EEMG why they used the wristbands, they said that they indicated that someone belonged at, and was legitimately working, an event. Members told stories of off duty first responders in other locations who had threatened security—either by showing up to "self-deploy" during an event, or by showing up to execute acts of violence and using their credentials to gain access. Ethan, who was the incident commander during one event I observed, explained that the wristbands were "how we know who is working for real" (fieldnote). I noted that Ethan had lined up all of his old wristbands to fit around his water bottle, where they created a rainbow display of past events he had worked.

When I commented on them, he told me it was a sign that he had "earned his stripes" with EEMG.

Figure 5.1: Wristbands distributed to EEMG members as they staffed the command post during events.

Here, it is also relevant that first responders tended to be in the position to plan the EMOC's exercises. For FOEM, this was because it was run by a former firefighter; similarly, EEMG was run out of a police department and staffed by several police officers. As a result, these organizers tended to draw for their scenarios on preferred models -- particularly mass casualty events that had occurred around the US. Not surprisingly, drawing on these kinds of events increasingly normalized and legitimated militarized practices in EMOC response. As one example, Ashley, a Mountain U Police officer and EEMG staff member, explained its evolving tactics in this way:

> We did an exercise for the [police] officers with fire [agency personnel], where fire [responders were] outfitted with bulletproof

> helmets and vests. So we've learned in the past that when an active harmer is present, officers are concerned with stopping the threat and containing the area. Firefighters have normally, in the past, waited for officers to give the all clear. From all these experiences, we've realized that if firefighters are waiting for the all clear, there are people who are suffering trauma, who, maybe if we got them out of the area and started triaging them, we could have saved their lives. So two years ago we had training with all the officers and Foothills City fire, and we trained where the initial officers are dealing with threat, while the firefighters, almost in a diamond formation, are going in in the middle of the officers, going into the active harmer scene to pull out the victims, like "We can save them, we can't save them [implying that firefighters could determine who is already dead and who should be triaged immediately]." So multiple groups are going in and pulling people out (Ashley, EEMG staff, interview).

Ashley's comment indicated that EEMG members saw events around the US as an opportunity to learn and adapt their training, equipment, and tactics. In this case, firefighters were equipped like SWAT team members.

Similarly, Luke, a police officer, talked about changes to event security caused by other mass shootings:

> Let's talk about basketball games [on campus]: 2 years ago we put two SWAT guys in the stadium in a hidden room, in case there was an active shooter. The theory being that SWAT guys have better

> levels of protection, and rifles, so they can reach out from a greater distance. I get it, and that's a good way to think about it; however, I changed that model a little bit. I've moved it from two guys hidden in a room who really don't know the layout that much to 2 guys in patrol uniforms in a marked vehicle near the main entrance. The reason is, there are very few data points where this has happened, but where it has happened is where the bad guy has his moment of discovery, that's where he initiates his plan--or her plan. And that tends to be at the screening area or where people are congested, at the main ticketing area. So that's where that kind of stuff happens. . . Additionally, if we do that, now I have coverage actually along the street here. These guys can look over the balcony, and they can see the street. And they have a rifle with them. So I thought it was strategically a better utilization of a strategic resource (Luke, Mountain U PD, interview).

Luke's account links nationally-recognized threats (i.e., mass shootings) to college campuses and events, and frames that risk as an exigency for instrumental improvements in EMOC performance. In this way, stories of national events were often linked to the increasing militarization of event security. Members of the EMOC's saw these changes as necessary, and did not problematize their ethics—Luke seemed quite proud to tell me about this tactical adjustment. Similarly, during one command post shift that I observed with EEMG, members bragged to me about their new plan to put snipers during home games on the roof of the college football stadium. They hoped that this would be an improvement in case something happened on

the field, which would require "shooting into the bowl" (fieldnote). Being an outside observer in these situations could be quite challenging—I often felt waves of fear when members explained these tactics to me, imagining, for example, being a member of the crowd as snipers shot onto the football field. However, by displaying no reservations in performing these accounts and logics, first responders appeared to signal that they had achieved authority in normalizing them. That is, it was increasingly naturalized that stories *told by* first responders would also *depict* and *endorse* their perspective. This achievement was also evident in that EMOC members from different backgrounds displayed no apparent discomfort with -- or resistance to -- these changes.

References to homeland events, including terrorist threats, mass shootings, and other large-scale responses, thus informed members' framings of security meaning, and shaped their conception of appropriate practices of response. These stories were authoritative in that, as they were told by EMOC members, they tended to be paired with a militarized response framework in which security was tied to a fear of surprise threat, and to the control of space. In addition to elevating the importance of local response work, these references elevated the level of response and adopted hegemonic Homeland Security logics of response. Even as members who told these stories could achieve authority in interaction, they were also *granting* authority to dominant Homeland Security logics in their storytelling.

Articulating local events with changes in the emergency management profession

In addition to elevating the importance of their work, stories of Homeland Security events tied local work into the broader image of emergency management as a *profession*. Specifically, EMOC members pointed to how their changes in response practices were linked to evolving challenges, and the impact of those challenges on their professional identities.

First, in interviews members often discussed that they were not surprised by the apparent increase in security threats around the US, and tied this to their profession. Similar to the discussion of first responder identity in Chapter Four, members here characterized themselves as suspicious and alert because EM work made them that way:

> Car into crowd, dealing with someone in a hotel, shooting into a crowd. . . people go "Man, I can't believe that happened." I'm like "Weird, I'm at Mandalay Bay this summer looking up, and I was like. . . 'Man, somebody could do that.'" That's not unique to me, that's my profession, or guys coming back from the military think that way too. And most people don't go there (Luke, Mountain U Police Officer, interview).

Here, Luke associates being able to imagine potential security threats with the profession of emergency management. While this mindset could be viewed negatively, he (and many other EMOC members) viewed "going there" as essential to their profession. In contrast to the 9/11 Commission Report's charge that there was a "failure of imagination" about an attack on the 9/11 scale in the security community (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States et al., 2004a), members now saw security imaginings as *essential* to their work. These security imaginings emerged as collective accounts. One member, typically, would mention a potential threat that had occurred in another community, and other members would "pile on" to this concern, demonstrating that they had thought about this problem as well. This communication typically implied that the threat would be challenging to Foothills County; as a result, members needed to think about these things and work to address them.

Secondly, members often discussed institutional changes that had occurred over the span of their collaboration. In particular, members noted national events that had changed the structure of emergency management. One common concern in meetings was that, as natural disasters became more prevalent and expensive to manage, the federal government would not be able to provide as much help. Members especially pointed to the increasing monetary threshold associated with federal disaster declarations—in other words, whereas the federal government was once seen as willing to intervene in "smaller" large-scale disasters, it was now seen as more reluctant to reimburse local communities, either as much or as frequently:

> Caitlin: Since the thresholds are going up, for the Feds to come in, that's gonna make the state's threshold go up so it will be more of our responsibility, with the state's help, to manage significant disasters…what's that gonna look like. . . The state is saying we're gonna have to figure out, how is this gonna work? More money pointed toward mitigation, less money for recovery. What needs to be changed?
>
> Interviewer: Are there other events that have changed EM?
>
> C: I mean, Hurricane Sandy, Maria, Irma, Harvey, are helping fuel wind change for the direction of money available, what's FEMA role.
>
> I: So more concern for hurricanes?
>
> C: I think it's just considering large dollar loss disasters so it could be earthquakes, nukes, any large disaster, just like everything we're supposed to plan for, The Bad Day. That,

> FEMA can't do everything, there's other federal agencies and the state, and again, how ready is local government to manage what they're gonna be expected to manage? I think it's gonna continue to change, especially with the current administration, money going away. 'Cuz again, local government should be responsible for that (Caitlin, FOEM Volunteer, interview).

EMOC practitioners traced evolving changes in the profession of emergency management and tied these changes to local adaptations. During trainings and meetings, these stories displayed members' rationales for certain practices. For example, because disaster thresholds were going up, FOEM members were encouraged to carefully comply with FEMA regulations, so that FEMA could not deny reimbursement after a disaster in the community; discussed further below. These stories also tied local EM to national events and trends in the profession.

As discussed in Chapter One, emergency management was tasked with more counterterrorism and security work post-9/11 by the creation of DHS. Members acknowledged 9/11 as a pivot point in the development of EM:

> 9/11 was interesting, because I think 9/11 was when everybody kinda learned about FEMA and all this stuff in a whole different way. The reality is, is that many things have to happen to make total destruction better again, and that's what everybody has had to learn over time. That's where fires became easy, fires you know, ok, if your house burns down, you clear all the ash away, and then you can choose to rebuild. That's kinda straightforward. If it takes all these

> other paths, it's like "Holy cow, what do we do?" Where in the world did we ever think we were gonna watch airplanes fly into the sides of buildings? Where in the world did we see all this stuff come? Now, what we're seeing with, Katrina, was just a bizarre show, that was strange to watch all that unfold. There were some good things happening, but at the same time it became such a big, involved complex that all of the sudden different aspects were trying to be in charge, and that got back to things I'd seen earlier in my career, like "You're fighting over who's in charge--screw that! Do the job, do the work, there's work to be done here, figure out how to get together and do the work." The rest is really aftermath stuff--if you try to do that up front, things won't ever get done (Anthony, Volunteer, interview).

Here, Anthony ties national events to broader trends in EM toward stronger collaborative work. The perception that Foothills County was uniquely collaborative (see Chapter Four), then, did not just stem from the local relationships themselves, but also from national events that changed values within the profession of emergency management. Referencing Homeland Security events served to elevate the importance of local EM work, facilitate learning and adaptation of local practices, and tie the EMOC's into broader trends in EM as a profession. In referencing Homeland Security events, members defined security and positioned certain practices (e.g., control of space) as the appropriate response. In doing so, members also made sense of themselves as doing security work.

Theme Two: Identifying with Federal Systems

Second, EMOC members negotiated the significance of federal mandates and structures by *identifying* with federal systems. Here, I use the term "identification" in its conventional sense to indicate how organizational members are moved to view their personal identities in terms of organizationally-defined ends and means, particularly in their adoption of officially-preferred premises for their making of decisions (Thompkins & Cheney, 1983). In conversations, members often talked with each other about why ICS, in particular, was not merely relevant, but *crucial* to their work. This discussion of the necessity and benefits of adopting ICS frequently spurred group conversation, with multiple members elaborating on helpful features of ICS. Citing the importance of ICS happened most explicitly during ICS trainings, where members would often educate each other about the benefits by sharing their experiences with using the system. Members also asserted superior knowledge of federal systems by "talking the talk" of these systems (using jargon and acronyms), and correcting those who did not use the terms correctly. Identifying with federal systems thus facilitated standardization of local EM response but also allowed members to achieve authority by drawing on the federal hierarchy and knowledge.

Facilitating and rationalizing standardization

First, members engaged in multiple practices that *rationalized* the features of the ICS system – including its limitations and challenges. During ICS trainings and monthly meetings, members of the EMOC's often spoke of advantages created by ICS. In these conversations, standardization of EM work was often cited as a benefit:

> You know, ICS does a lot of great things, and some of the things it enhances is it requires us all to use the same language. When all these groups come to the table if they have all had the same training

> we don't waste any time trying to figure out what we all mean. You start off with a structure everybody's familiar with. In crisis, we fall under the same kind of structure. We understand how to morph existing structures into that process. All of that enhances collaboration, instead of worry about how to make this work, we can focus on what we need to really collaborate on. In that sense, ICS is an enhancement (James, Mountain U PD, interview).

While ICS could have been seen as stifling the ability to be creative or independent, James, along with many other EMOC members, said that the structure allowed them to focus on their top priorities, instead of creation of collaborative structures. In this talk, members seemed to accept that ICS took away some freedom to create their collaborations, but saw this as a benefit, because those decisions could "waste time" during a crisis.

Similarly, ICS was cited as beneficial because it enhanced collaboration among members with egos (see Chapter Four). Here, the first responder personality was kept in check by a paramilitary structure that existed outside of the local collaboration:

> I think most people in emergency management have big egos, and they should, you don't want shrinking violets that are second-guessing themselves. A lot of people think "I know the right way and everyone else is wrong." And I think that's one thing that is a challenge, but I think ICS reigns that in, it gets people operating towards the common good, recognizing with the chain of command. It serves to keep those egos in check. Everyone is familiar with how it works and recognizes that we all need to take part in it, that helps

> facilitate the best result. Corollary to egos is “I've got a bigger piece of the puzzle, so I've gotta make more decisions.” That attitude is taken away in ICS (Ethan, Mountain U PD, interview).

In discussion of how ICS had changed the collaboration, members often cited early resistance to ICS because it threatened the ego of first responders, who wanted to do things their way. However, in the common story of ICS adoption, members claimed that eventually, everyone came around to the usefulness of ICS. ICS standardization was linked to saved time and reduced conflict.

Additionally, members saw the formalization of emergency management work as having benefits in the effectiveness of response. These conversations also referenced previous local practices, and saw ICS as improving those practices by formalizing them. For example, members often discussed how ICS made resource ordering easier. Foothills County had many memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with nearby counties, in which they committed to supporting each other during emergencies (e.g., if Foothills was not impacted by a fire, but Jefferson County, nearby, was, FOEM members would agree to help in that EOC during the response). In stories of the importance of MOUs, the EMOC members often talked about the importance of developing informal relationships with other counties that built trust before a shared response. However, ICS had subsequently formalized these relationships—before the adoption of ICS, many counties simply agreed to help each other without drawing up a written MOU. Sophia, the deputy director of FOEM, explained during a meeting that getting the MOU in writing was essential. Formalizing these understandings meant that they were less "personality-dependent" in her words. "It's great that if you need a resource, you have a cell phone number, but that's not as permanent as getting it in writing," she explained (fieldnote).

Members thus rationalized the recent standardization of EM work under ICS in their everyday talk. In particular, they cited instrumental benefits to their response work—that members would not jockey for authority and take up valuable time during a crisis, and that resource ordering was streamlined by formalizing local relationships using ICS best practices.

Performing authority by invoking federal hierarchy

Secondly, members relied on acronyms and jargon from ICS in their everyday performance of EM work. Using ICS-specific terms was linked to having the knowledge and authority to be successful in the EMOC's. So much ICS jargon filled members' speech that my first several months of field notes were full of terms and acronyms with question marks placed after them, and a promise that I would look the terms up later. First responders and their equipment, for example, became "resources"; there were no emergencies, only "incidents," and communication about evolving conditions was always "situational awareness." On top of these common terms, many terms were confusing to remember—one ICS training, for example, asked about the difference between "unity of command," "unified command," and "chain of command." Additionally, titles in the ICS hierarchy seemed to mimic military terminology. Each ICS position had a different label—branch directors differed from supervisors, who differed from section chiefs. A group divided a task by areas of operation, while a division divided a task by geographic area. While members admitted that the ICS terminology could be confusing, they also encouraged adoption of this talk—both by prompting new members to train in and use ICS, and by disciplining members who did not use the terms correctly.

Many non-first response organizations involved in the EMOC's adopted ICS—both in collaboration with the EMOC's and independently of the EMOC's –to practice using the system. Members saw this practice as boosting their credibility within the collaboration. Alexandra, for

example, was an acupuncturist who volunteered with FOEM as part of the medical reserve corps. During incidents, she and other acupuncturists were available to treat first responders—which she linked to better sleep, reduced soreness, and decreased stress during an incident. However, Alexandra said that FOEM could see her work as "voodoo" or too "hippie" to be legitimate medicine. As a result, she discussed the need to use ICS:

> A lot of it goes in one side and out the other. It's a lot about just the organization and the response. It's not exceptionally useful for the volunteers, but for the officers, they need to really know about that when they deal with other organizations. Just to know the flow of things. The hierarchy. It's pretty much all about the hierarchy. Who to defer to, who's in charge. We also used it in setting up our clinics. There needs to be a unit coordinator and an incident commander. For each event, we set it up. So they're more part of that structure and can speak to it in an official way. I think that's a big part of it. We're acupuncturists. It's voodoo, you know? Typically we haven't been given recognition as a medical…anything. Just being accepted for what we do. There's so many acronyms! It's nice to be able to look intelligent (Alexandra, FOEM Volunteer, interview).

As Alexandra makes clear, she felt that using ICS increased her perceived visibility and legitimacy within FOEM. As a result, tying her work to the ICS system led to increased recognition and legitimacy.

Similarly, Chris, who worked for the National Weather Service, discussed the need to train in ICS:

> We are trained. . .that incident meteorologist. . .that whole unit is trained in ICS to interface with it. Part of it, the weather service's decision support stance changing over the last several years, we are actually, our entire operational staff has to take ICS 100. We all have to be versed with it, so we can come in, we don't use it in our office so much, but being able to plug into it and speak the language and if we do get, if somebody gets deployed, we know how to plug into it (Chris, National Weather Service, interview).

Non-first response members thus felt the need to use ICS language and structure to perform authority within the EMOC's. In part, this could have occurred because of the emphasis on the consequences of not using ICS within these collaborations. Additionally, members seemed to enjoy their use of a technical language that marked the boundary around EMOC insiders. As Michael, the FOEM deputy director, explained to me, "Common language is key. It's a life safety issue. It prevents delays and assumptions. And it helps us out in the EOC…It's important to know who to talk to get things done" (interview). "Common language" was often cited as the rationale to use ICS—members frequently discussed the need to use the same acronyms to save time and understand each other during emergencies. While ICS training cautions against using excess jargon and acronyms, in practice, members relied heavily on ICS-specific jargon and acronyms in their everyday talk. Not being able to "speak the language" was viewed negatively—as demonstrated by the perceived need to train in and use ICS even if it was not as relevant to non-first response work.

While Chapter Four focused on the local hierarchy negotiated in EMOC's, the use of ICS also demonstrates the relationship between internal hierarchy in these collaborations and external

systems. In these collaborations, first responders facilitated the colonization of emergency management work by the ICS system. Their emphasis on using ICS seemed to suggest that the local collaboration should interact with the system by imitating the system as much as possible. In my own experience gaining access to these collaborations, not being able to "speak ICS" was a significant barrier. For example, early in my observations of EEMG, I asked Noah, an EEMG staff member, if I could sit in on a meeting about counterterrorism. He told me he did not want to bring me along because I could be embarrassed by "not knowing what I was talking about" during the meeting. Noah seemed to tie this to my lack of ICS training—he set me up on a computer during my first command post observation to ensure I passed ICS 100, the introductory online FEMA course. This course emphasized the multiple titles in the ICS hierarchy—officers, chiefs, leaders, and managers, to name a few differences. As I took the ICS 100 test, I told Noah I was nervous I wouldn't be able to remember the titles. He told me that the titles seemed "silly," but they were also important because you needed to sound like you knew what you were talking about. For example, if I went into the command post and asked for the "incident supervisor" (the correct title is incident commander), they would "tell you to fuck off," according to Noah (fieldnote).

By the end of my observations, I had completed six ICS courses. Noah and many other first responders appeared more comfortable with my presence as I gained these credentials, and they seemed to find my interview questions more understandable as I adopted ICS jargon. First responders relied heavily on ICS talk—and they tended to lead the disciplining of members who failed to perform ICS with enough credibility. During ICS trainings, this would involve correcting incorrect term usage. During exercises and meetings, first responders often tied lack of ICS knowledge to risk—especially the risk that EMOC members would not know who had the

authority needed to make decisions (which was tied to the jargon of ICS titles). This rationalization tied authority in the EMOC's to the ICS hierarchy. Additionally, EMOC members used ICS terminology to perform authority for themselves by relating their work to federal systems. First responders tended to facilitate this standardization in local EM work by invoking the federal system. In doing so, they gave both themselves and ICS authority in interactions, which was accepted by other members as they complied with the need to "talk the talk," and even adopted this as a strategy to gain their own authority.

Theme Three: Criticizing Federal Systems

Conversely, EMOC members also translated the significance of federal structures by *criticizing* and *adapting* (i.e., revising before incorporating) them, a process which made those systems less monolithic and more malleable. This commonly occurred in practices of training and teaching new members, as members were told what to do to "work around" overly complicated parts of ICS, or what the county "really" did, versus what trainings told the county to do. Additionally, criticisms of federal systems manifested in adaptations that the EMOC's had made, including adding and subtracting federal roles and simplifying federal forms and procedures. Criticizing and adapting the systems functioned to assert local authority (e.g., by claiming expertise and understanding of the local context, thus the need to explicitly translate these systems); however, it also opened space for creative implementation of federal systems (thus creating buy-in for these systems) and helped members cope with their place in the federal-local hierarchy.

Asserting local authority

First, in everyday talk about federal systems, members asserted that their local knowledge usurped federal guidelines. As I observed the EMOC's, I saw 18 adaptations of ICS in practice,

and members mentioned adaptations to the system 22 times in interviews. In the assertion of local authority, members recounted the ways the relationship between the federal government and the county had changed since 9/11. This story linked *decreased federal responsiveness* to *increased system leniency*. First, members often explained that FEMA had become less involved in local emergency management work:

> There are certain documents we're required to have, but otherwise, I think that it's kind of evolved some, and the federal government has evolved some as we've had more disasters of going "This is a local problem." And so the federal government has some resources, but they talk about it the day of the FEMA army and clipboards showing up in large scale disasters is largely over. FEMA as an organization has been cut, and we've had an increase in natural disasters with consequence management, and so there's a framework there. I think the federal government gets that more and more and has actually gone, “You know what? This costs a lot of money. Maybe this is a local issue, and we can help with some support and funding” (Dan, FOEM staff, interview).

Other members echoed this sentiment, which was especially common during ICS trainings. People would say that FEMA “couldn’t save them” or “FEMA will not make you whole” (fieldnote). These sayings served as reminders that the local collaborations should assume primary responsibility during disaster response and not wait for FEMA to come help.

Additionally, members suggested that this relationship, and thus their obligation to comply with federal systems, was changing:

> I don't know, the federal government for a while was the big bad wolf, and you did what they wanted you to do. They do come in, when you get a big enough disaster, and you're requesting federal assistance, they'll come in and audit your work, they'll take a look at all of your emergency plans, what you've written, they'll look at your after-action reports, and see if you follow some sort of process. I think that's where they've become more lenient in recent years. At least if you can prove that you tried, they're gonna give you the benefit of the doubt. Federal funding comes on the back end, you're reimbursed for the cost you incurred during disaster response (Noah, EEMG staff, interview).

Multiple members claimed in interviews that the expectation for local EMOC's to comply with ICS was slackening as local responsibility for disasters increased, and that EMOC's couldn't expect that the federal government would step in, as the mentality changed to a "starts local, ends local" approach (fieldnote).

In addition to citing the changing federal-local relationship, EMOC members characterized federal systems as *inadequate* for conducting their everyday work. In this way, they framed the systems as inherently insufficient and in need of local interpretation. A common criticism of ICS, for example, echoed my own experience taking the ICS 100 course—that the system was hard to remember and filled with unnecessary technical information. As Sophia, the FOEM deputy director, and I talked during her interview, she challenged me:

> Sophia: You've gone through it now, can you recite an ICS structure for me?

> Interviewer: Oh gosh, no.
>
> S: No, of course not. Most people can't. The sad part is I've gone through six courses, and because I didn't use it every day in my work life, I had no context to apply it. So you've taken six classes, sat there for over a week, plus online classes, and you can't even recite it, I'm with you. Until you have context to put that into, daily application, it's just a concept out there. The federal mandate that everyone will be ICS trained is kind of crap…what we want to train you on is how to really function *here* [emphasis added].

EMOC members stressed the need for local interpretation and application to understand ICS. Without these opportunities, they often framed ICS as rote memorization that was not actually useful.

As a result, members emphasized the necessity to follow the federal guidelines, but also go above and beyond these guidelines:

> Ben: Well the federal guidelines are pretty simple. You look at what it says to have under NIMS policy: a resource management system, so we have a resource plan, mutual aid agreements, so we have those, incident command training, which is (scoffs) crap.
>
> Interviewer: But you do it anyway?
>
> B: You do it cuz it's required, right? And you adopt NIMS as your NIMS doctrine, then you have a training and exercise system. Those are the foundations of NIMS…
>
> R: It sounds like it doesn't answer all the questions.

> B: Never does. It's the federal government, it shouldn't. It's local. That's where people go, "are you NIMS?" "Yeah, we do ICS training." That's not what it means. We only have four out of the ten counties that have resource mobilization plans in this region. Are they all NIMS compliant? Nope (Ben, FOEM Emergency Manager, interview).

Ben often talked to FOEM members in meetings about how NIMS was not enough to guide local response, and here, criticized other counties that assumed that they were NIMS compliant because they had offered ICS trainings—which he viewed as insufficient. EMOC members often made this point by criticizing NIMS and ICS training specifically. As the relationship between FEMA and local response changed, and because federal systems could not answer all local response questions, EMOC members talked about these issues in ways that justified their creative implementation of federal systems.

Opening space for creative implementation

As a result of this changing relationship with FEMA, the EMOC members spoke in ways that authorized them to adapt federal systems to suit local needs. Members were very proud of some of these adaptations, which took place both in trainings and in everyday practices. In training and educating on federal systems, especially during local ICS classes, EMOC members often simultaneously assessed the validity of ICS while teaching the course concepts. For example, to facilitate ICS training, the EMOC's had to use FEMA-regulated and created slides. During one break during an ICS 400 course, I talked to Dan, a FOEM staff member who was serving as an ICS instructor that day. He apologized for the dull nature of the slides and said that he as an instructor was not allowed to alter the slides in any way. While the slides remained

visually intact, ICS instructors (who were all local emergency managers), often verbally corrected and altered the slides. It was not uncommon for them to click to a slide and then say "this is what the slide says, but I'm going to tell you how we really do this," or "we don't actually use this system here" (fieldnote).

In addition to altering ICS training, the EMOC's adapted federal structures and procedures to suit their needs. For example, FOEM used an Emergency Support Function (ESF) framework to staff the EOC during incident response. In using ESF roles to staff their EOC, FOEM was already exercising creative license, as EOCs could have instead been staffed using the same positions that ICS used in the field. In addition to opting to use ESF roles instead, FOEM also *added* ESF positions to their organization. While the National Response Framework created 15 ESFs (see figure 5.2), FOEM had 29 ESF positions (see figure 5.3) in their EOC. They were quite proud of this adaptation, and one page of their online web portal had the phrase at the top "29 ESFs. . . and counting!" (fieldnote).

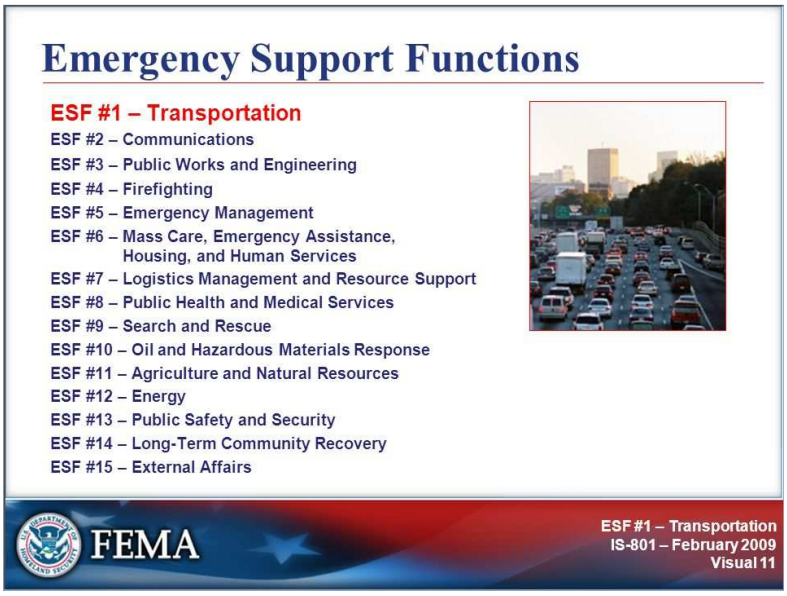


Figure 5.2: Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), as outlined by the National Response Framework. Retrieved from https://slideplayer.com/slide/6081409/18/images/11/Emergency+Support+Functions.jpg

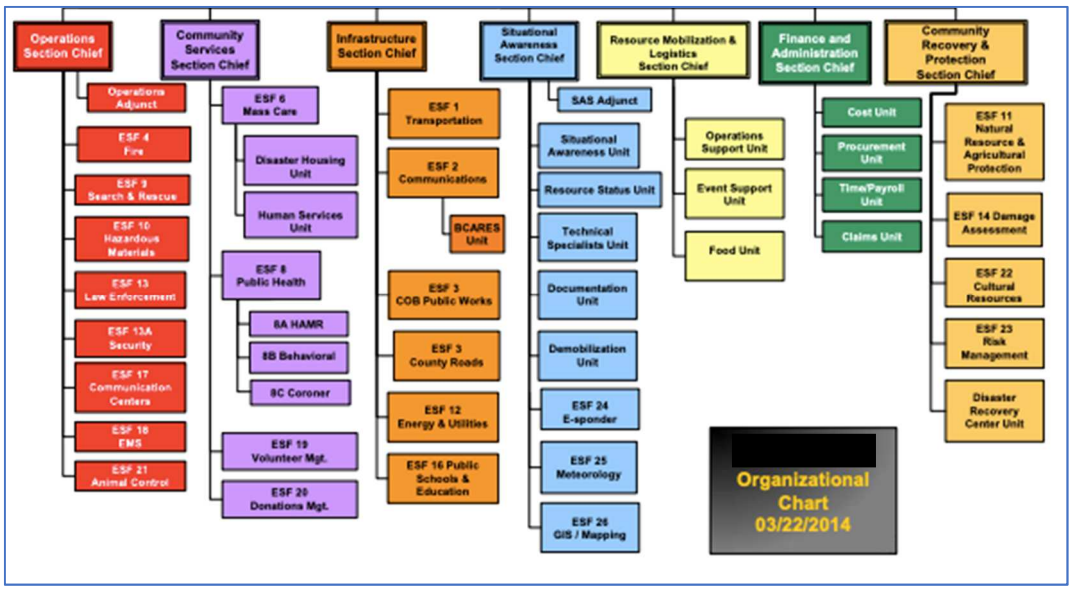


Figure 5.3: The FOEM adaptation of ESFs (source: fieldnote).

Several adaptations are evident in this structure: first, FOEM had opted to use ESFs, but place them in a chart that resembled the ICS hierarchy. Second, multiple roles had been relabeled and redefined to suit the county. ESF 10, for example, the federal "oil and hazardous materials" support function, had been relabeled "hazardous materials," perhaps because the county did not have many concerns with oil. Added ESFs included education and public schools (16), communication centers (17), and emergency medical services (18)—which had been separated out from the federal ESF 6, mass care. Additionally, FOEM had a situational awareness section and a resource mobilization section—both aspects of the ICS command chart that were not ESF positions. These two sections, unlike the other ESFs, were staffed by volunteers (other ESFs tended to be staffed by county employees). For FOEM members, these ESF adaptations were a sign that the collaboration was going "above and beyond" the federal system. As Dan, a FOEM staff member explained to me, FOEM had altered the ESF titles and positions "because it's more of a fit" with the county needs (interview).

In addition to emphasizing the fit with local needs, the EMOC's modified some federal procedures because they saw the procedures as confusing, and thus risky during fast-moving emergency response. FOEM had put significant time and training into altering FEMA-based resource ordering procedures in particular. This was in part because members viewed FEMA reimbursement procedures after disaster declarations as overly strict—in theory, FEMA would reimburse the county for many resources ordered during a response, but in practice, getting these reimbursements was cumbersome and confusing. Members frequently complained that FEMA needed too much specific information to reimburse the county after a major disaster—when, of course, the disaster response itself could be chaotic and impede gathering that level of information. For example, during one resource mobilization monthly meeting at FOEM, a member complained to me that she was trying to get FEMA reimbursement for a rental car that was used during the county flood response in 2013—but that FEMA would not reimburse the county until she found a list of every person who had driven the car. She was skeptical that she could produce this information over five years later (fieldnote).

Additionally, to make sure volunteers put in resource orders accurately, but also quickly, FOEM had adapted the "EOC 213rr" or "resource request" form. This form contained many boxes (see figure 5.4) that a volunteer taking resource orders in the EOC would need to complete so that FEMA would have the necessary information for federal reimbursement. However, volunteers in the EOC received numerous resource requests during an emergency, and the requests happened at a brisk pace—often as first responders out in the field called in to ask for equipment. As a result, Matt, the FOEM staff member in charge of resource ordering, warned volunteers that they needed to be ready to ask many questions and keep the caller on the phone long enough to get the information required. To make this easier, FOEM had created a second

resource ordering form that functioned more like a script for the phone calls (figure 5.4). Matt reminded volunteers that it was okay just to follow the script and jot information down—the actual EOC 213rr form could be completed later.

This simplified resource ordering form contains several county-specific translations. First, the form has a section for "wildfire specific information" because Foothills County often dealt with wildfire response. This part of the modified form asks if a "red card" is required to operate the resource (a wildland fire specific certification). Other changes in the form encouraged ICS compliance and details that, in local experience, were helpful. For example, under the "resource requestor name" line, Matt's new form said in red "Check: is person authorized to order?" Under ICS, only certain members of the command chart can call and order resources (and accepting a resource order from the wrong person could be a reason for reimbursement to be denied). However, this new form also goes beyond ICS compliance issues, and asks for information that is helpful in everyday practice. For example, the question "Check: Is location specific enough?" was added because first responders calling to order resources would often call out their general locations as the site for resource delivery. As Matt explained during resource ordering training, this could become confusing and lead to people wandering around buildings and large parking lots looking for the right place to drop off an ordered resource, like a generator (fieldnote). EMOC members adapted federal systems, both because these systems could be seen as confusing and not tailored to local needs. Rather than seeing these adaptations as violations of federal guidelines, members positioned

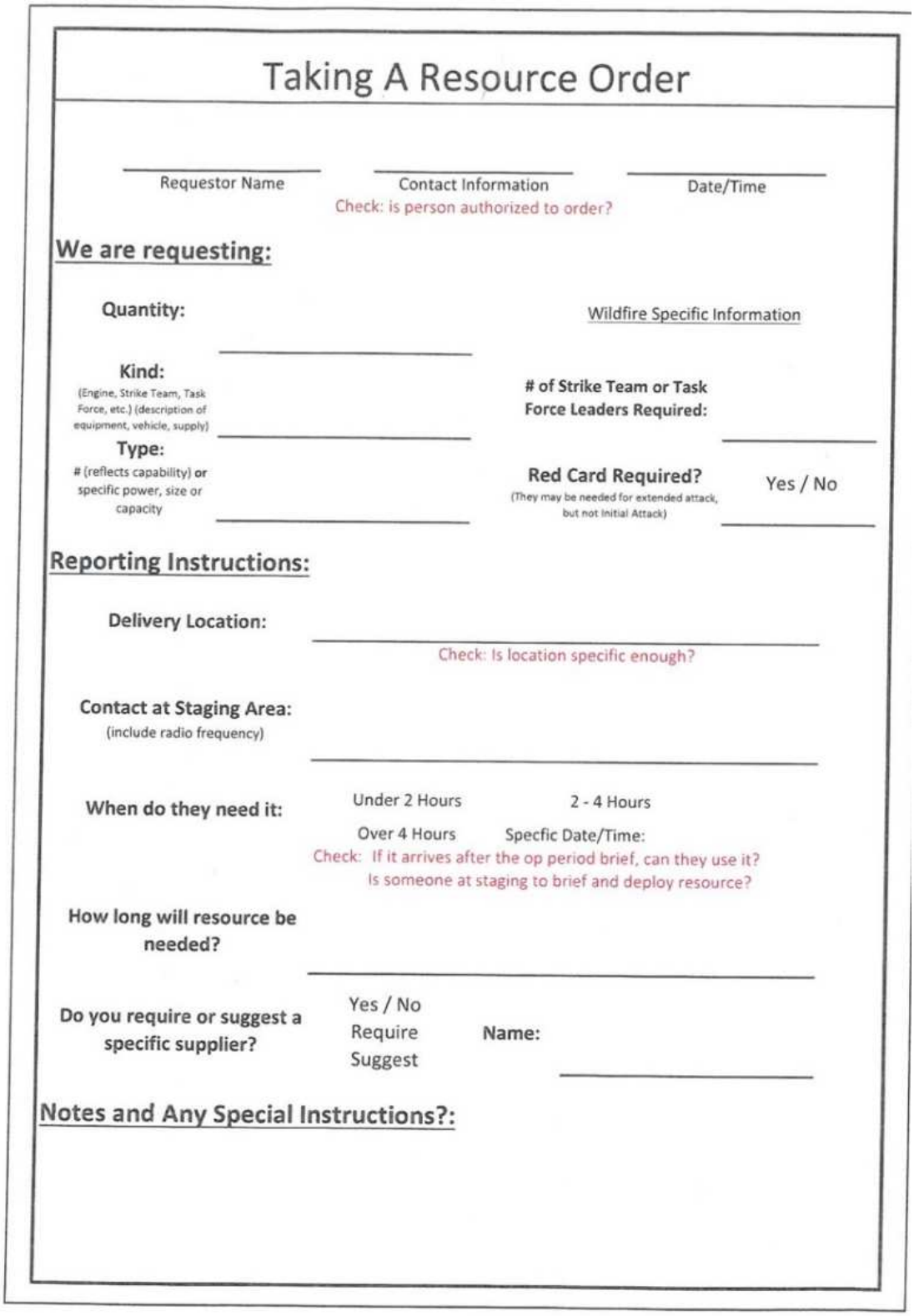
EOC 213 RR - Resource Request Message		☐ Priority Request
1. ESSENTIAL INFORMATION		
Order Number: To be assigned by Section Chief		Incident: Name of Incident
213RR Initiated By: Name of Person Taking Order		
Resource Title: Initial Title (description of resource) or Final Title (Description + (Function or fulfilling agency)		
Quantity:	**Kind:**	**Type:**
Number	General description with info about teams, equipment, vehicle, supplies, etc.	Type # (reflects capability) Or specific power, size or capacity
	If Fire Resource: Engine, Strike Team, Task Force, Overhead, etc.	
Delivery / Check-in Location: Be specific (if building, where in building?)		
When do you need it?	☐ Under 2 hours	☐ 2 - 4 hours
If early, can they use it?	☐ 4 or more hours	Specific time / date:
How long is the resource needed? Specific time or duration of incident?		
Requestor Name, Position, Contact Information: Check: is person authorized to place the order?		
Description: Fill in with all information from requestor, to include: - Quantity - Delivery location - Specific Instructions - Type - When needed and for how long? - Additional Details - Kind - Name and contact info for requestor		
Do you have a supplier suggestion? Name/Phone/Email/Fax: Always ask		
Do you **require** a specific supplier? Name/Phone/Email/Fax: Always ask		

2. SUPPLIER DETAILS Request call from organization when resource is on the way			
Supplier Name/Phone/Email/Fax:			
Vendor's order #:	Cost:	ETA:	
Method of Payment:	☐ Extradition Card ID#: (i.e. Ten)	☐ P - Card Name:	
	☐ Purchase Order # :	☐ Direct Billing	☐ Other

3. APPROVAL PROCESS	
☐ ESF/Single Ordering Point (SOP) Approved Person at the respective ESF desk	
ESF/SOP Signature:	Date / Time:
Comments / Details: If order is from the field, confirm the order and who it was placed by with the ESF responsible for that function/unit	

Page **1** of **2**

Figure 5.4: The original EOC 213 resource ordering form.



Taking A Resource Order

Requestor Name _____ Contact Information _____ Date/Time _____

Check: is person authorized to order?

We are requesting:

Quantity: _____

Kind:
(Engine, Strike Team, Task Force, etc.) (description of equipment, vehicle, supply) _____

Type:
(reflects capability) or specific power, size or capacity _____

Wildfire Specific Information

# of Strike Team or Task Force Leaders Required: _____

Red Card Required? Yes / No
(They may be needed for extended attack, but not Initial Attack) _____

Reporting Instructions:

Delivery Location: _____

Check: Is location specific enough?

Contact at Staging Area:
(include radio frequency) _____

When do they need it: Under 2 Hours 2 - 4 Hours
Over 4 Hours Specfic Date/Time:

Check: If it arrives after the op period brief, can they use it?
Is someone at staging to brief and deploy resource?

How long will resource be needed? _____

Do you require or suggest a specific supplier? Yes / No
Require
Suggest
Name: _____

Notes and Any Special Instructions?:

Figure 5.5: The updated resource ordering script. Source: fieldnotes.

creative implementation as necessary to achieve compliance. They also framed embellishments to the federal system as essential to put ICS into practice.

Coping with federal-local hierarchy

Members of the EMOC's also criticized the federal government itself in ways that allowed for coping with their position in the emergency management hierarchy. The EMOC's appeared to enjoy belittling and criticizing FEMA itself—especially by characterizing FEMA as overly bureaucratic or stingy. These characterizations served to paint FEMA, not as a true collaborator, but as a system that needed to be worked around to get to the real, significant work that occurred at the local level. The idea that compliance was a *performance* came up repeatedly in member talk, and members did not always see this performance as genuine.

First, members frequently claimed that FEMA did not want to reimburse them using federal disaster funds. This was in part because FEMA was "running out of money" as disasters escalated (fieldnote). As Ben, the FOEM emergency manager, explained:

> It's a bureaucracy. It's an insurance company. Does your insurance company wanna find ways to give you money? Or do they wanna find ways to take your money? They're finding ways to limit the exposure of the federal government paying for local disaster. Part of that is if you're reckless, you don't have an emergency management program, you don't have the things in place, it generally costs more for response and recovery…should you get the same amount of reimbursement as everyone else? No. There's definitely some pieces to that that make sense, they want you to have some skin in the game…The more reckless you've become, the more you pay.

> The logic behind that is true. And you add in the amount of fraud that the federal government has put up with from locals trying to pull a fast one on them, and then it's overly regulated, to try to protect the taxpayer. The difficulty is it creates bureaucracy of biblical proportions that you have to deal with to access the money. Especially if you have a community that's—and our community is—really transparent and very honest (interview).

Ben and many other EMOC members described FEMA as an insurance company. While members occasionally acknowledged the rationale behind federal rules—as Ben does here—they were just as quick to characterize FEMA as *wanting* to withhold federal funds from their community. Melissa, from Housing and Human Services, said that she thought the federal rules were motivated by "trying to save money. There's not enough money, with as many disasters as are happening, to cover everything" (interview). EMOC members characterized FEMA as miserly with federal disaster funding because they were "running out of money" as more expensive disasters occurred.

Additionally, FEMA was frequently described as being overly bureaucratic and uncoordinated. Members of the EMOC's told stories of receiving mixed information from FEMA, and of FEMA making matters worse when they came to help the county. The most recent collaboration with FEMA for almost all members of the EMOC's was the 2013 flooding in their county. The flood had exceeded federal disaster thresholds, leading to a federal response to help Foothills and the surrounding counties. Melissa, who had been heavily involved in 2013 flood reimbursement, described the challenged of filing for reimbursement:

> With the flood, with people like FEMA, I just started asking them "well how does it work, how do you apply, what do you offer?" and just trying to figure out that system, which is pretty complicated. I kind of ended up with the rule of thumb that if three FEMA people told me the same thing, it was probably true (interview).

Melissa and others involved in flood recovery claimed that FEMA employees often had misinformation, or had no idea how specific programs worked. As a result, members recalled their response to the flood as a steep learning curve about how to deal with FEMA. Melissa said that if the county ever had to interact with FEMA again, they would be much more prepared—they now knew what information was needed to file for reimbursement, and had designed forms to collect that information during the immediate response. When I asked Melissa why FEMA did not provide forms that would help the county collect this information, she agreed that that would be a good idea, but that FEMA didn't work that way (interview).

Similarly, as a result of the 2013 flood response, members viewed FEMA as inflexible and noncollaborative. Ben told me that with FEMA:

> There's no collaboration, you're being told. You're being told, here's how you should fill out your project worksheet. You fill it out, you do it the way they're telling you, then they come in and tell you it's not being approved. You're like "What!" They're like "It's not meeting the standards." You're like "Your people told us to fill it out that way." The entire process is them telling you how to do it, them telling you you screwed it up, and them saying how

> if you wanna get the money, here's what you gotta do to get it reconsidered (interview).

Anthony, a FOEM volunteer, echoed the sentiment that FEMA was inflexible. He said that when they came in for flood response, they would look for the ESF positions that corresponded with their federal roles, but, as previously mentioned, FOEM had consolidated, eliminated, and created different ESFs to staff their EOC. Despite member pride in this, Anthony said that the changes did confuse FEMA. He mocked them, saying that when FEMA contractors came to the EOC during the 2013 flood response, they would be told what ESF to go talk to, and would whine "but they're not me!" He said that local response was "well, that's true, but you're in my neighborhood now, is this is who you've got to talk to" (interview). Members thus described FEMA as cheap, inflexible, and incompetent—not a true collaborative partner. In interactions, FEMA and the ICS system were not always granted *authority.* Instead, they also became foils that members used to position themselves as *having authority over* these systems and mandates.

Similarly, if FEMA was stingy and bureaucratic, federal rules were then traps or obstacles that needed to be overcome to get needed disaster funds. As a result, members often expressed the sentiment that they should "just play along" with federal mandates, even though they knew these mandates were not always helpful. Ben, the FOEM emergency manager, often repeated the saying "no money is free!" (fieldnote). This talk was especially common during ICS training as a rationale to comply with ICS and during the yearly THIRA, or Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment.

***

During one FOEM meeting, a representative from the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) visited FOEM to discuss the THIRA. UASI[8] is a DHS initiative to identify urban areas with a heightened risk of terrorist threats, and to provide grants for preparedness initiatives in those areas. Foothills County was part of a UASI, as it was densely populated, and located near the state's most populated urban area and capital. As a result, FOEM participated in threat identification. However, members were confused by this process, and wanted to know what threats they should identify, or why they should participate. Ben told FOEM members that they should show up to the THIRA and help to make a plan, because "This is all about getting grant money, but it's good to have a plan also" (fieldnote). FOEM members continued to ask why they should be involved. The UASI representative in the room told them that "If you don't show up to these meetings, you don't get to be involved in where the money is going" (fieldnote). Finally, a FOEM volunteer raised their hand and asked why they should be involved if the money was only for terrorism events. The UASI representative clarified that "The money can double up—you have to start with terrorism (plans) first, but if the plan can be used for other incidents, that's okay too" (fieldnote).

***

This conversation demonstrated how the EMOC's still struggled to understand their place in the federal directive that emergency management offices should prepare for terrorism in their communities. However, rather than rejecting involvement, Ben and other EMOC leaders encouraged members to "play along" and participate in these initiatives to take advantage of available funding.

[8] For more information about UASI visit https://www.homelandsecuritygrants.info/

Even as EMOC members linked their work to Homeland Security concerns, above, they seemed to wrestle with their place in the Homeland Security hierarchy. As this vignette illustrates, members were not sure of their place in the UASI, or how to link their work to terrorist threats. Even as they imagined how their local security threats linked to broader national trends, they seemed to adopt a frame of performing compliance without expecting to be genuinely involved in terrorist response. As Ben, FOEM emergency manager told me, all the EMOC's could do during a terrorist threat was consequence management, because "the FBI's not gonna tell me if they're busting a terrorist cell" (interview). Other members went so far as to admit that terrorism was not a high priority for them. Amy, from Foothills County Community Services, started to acknowledge this, saying "the whole terrorist van idea. . .I don't think. . .well, you never know what a terrorist thinks is a good target" (interview).

EMOC members occupied a precarious position in the Homeland Security regime, where linking their work to terrorist threats increased prestige and funding opportunities, but engaging with this work also seemed to draw members away from the everyday threats to their communities in ways that members themselves acknowledge were only tangentially linked. To address this tension, members framed their compliance with federal mandates and initiatives as a performance that could produce local benefits. Criticizing federal agencies and directives, while also performing compliance, helped local EMOC members to cope with their place in the US emergency management hierarchy.

Vertical Translation in Local Emergency Management

Considered together, these three themes conceptualize practices of vertical translation in local EMOC's, and demonstrate how EMOC's make sense of their work as related to institutional texts including federal directives and national priorities like the War on Terror.

These practices of translation highlight tensions in local buy-in by EMOC's to federal prioritization and practices. On the one hand, their members' translation of federal systems and Homeland Security threats elevated the status of local emergency management work. On the other, their translation of federal systems and mandates made clear how local emergency management work occupied a low level of the federal Homeland Security hierarchy, that members were required to comply in order to receive needed funding, and that their compliance meant working to align perceived community priorities with federal priorities. Translation of federal systems, then, was linked to locally constructed meanings of security and the need to make sense of local EMOC identity in relation to national and global security events. However, these translations were also tied to first responders' accomplishment of *authority*—both through successfully translating institutional texts like Homeland Security, and by parlaying that competency (i.e., translating that translation) into *a reinforcement* of their intra-collaboration hierarchy.

Here, practices of translation transformed national Homeland Security meanings in ways that aligned with local concerns. Members tended to define security threats as hazards that were "human caused," in opposition to natural disasters. The post-9/11 DHS mantra that "all terrorism is local" is meant to encourage local police jurisdictions to look for signs of terrorism and seek to prevent terrorism before it occurs (Chenoweth & Clarke, 2010). While Homeland Security threats are nationally linked to concern over Islamic jihadist terrorism, local EMOC members stretched this meaning to accommodate more probabilistic local threats. In particular, members discussed terrorist attacks and mass shootings as one-in-the-same, in terms of their local response. Doing so cast both types of threats as grave and ever-present, but also as impossible to prevent. By referencing Homeland Security events, members elevated the importance of their

local work, but did not attempt to change their role in this work, which would primarily be focused on consequence management, rather than prevention. This framing seemed to gloss over the EMOC's low level of power in relation to the Homeland Security regime by conflating acts of violence within the local community. Doing so meant that members often trained for hypothetical terrorist threats. During my observations, I saw four exercises designed around terrorist threats to the community: anthrax, a package bomb at a football stadium, a car-into-crowd incident, and a terrorist hostage situation. Nonetheless, EMOC members linked these trainings to other and potentially more likely threats to their communities. For example, while Foothills County had not experienced a terrorist attack in recent years, members discussed that their counterterrorism exercises would be relevant in the case of a mass shooting on the nearby university campus, and tied these trainings to recent incidents in the community, which included two cases of a person brandishing a knife in a public space.

Additionally, members frequently tied security response to the need to control space. Doing so translated multiple high-profile Homeland Security threats (e.g., package bombings, car-into-crowd attacks) into the local emergency management domain. In addition to being on the lookout for signs of these infringements on space, policing space became an important component of EM work—however mundane the space infractions were. For example, when asked about security threats, members often cited the need to establish a secure perimeter around any type of incident, including natural disasters. Doing so translated Homeland Security concerns into the everyday work that was more likely to occur in the community.

Additionally, this position of security as control of space stood in for a broader local tension involved with vertical translation, the struggle for control over local priorities and response. Implementation of federal directives and trainings, in particular ICS, can be

challenging for resource-strapped county governments (Jensen, 2011). However, here members did not just struggle to meet all NIMS requirements -- they also intentionally *altered* certain directives to suit local needs. Members grappled with their role in the Homeland Security regime, and asserting expertise and control over their local community as their domain was one strategy to cope with this hierarchy. In addition to controlling space during emergency response, members used multiple strategies that framed federal mandates as impositions on their local communities, including belittling FEMA and pointing out shortcomings in federal systems. In response, they asserted their right to adapt federal systems to suit the local community.

This concern with local needs thus played into a broader question of local identity. Members' translations demonstrated a need to construct local identity and answer the question "who are we" as local emergency management interacts with federal systems. Members demonstrated a need to both *conform* to these systems (e.g., due to the perceived usefulness of ICS and the incentivization to receive federal funding), and to *resist* them, in order to preserve local differences. By aligning local community concerns with DHS/FEMA priorities, members were able to capitalize on federal funding by using a "function creep" model, where money designated for counterterrorism could also benefit local response to other risks (Monahan & Regan, 2012). However, members also struggled to see their place in the Homeland Security regime, as demonstrated by their hesitance to participate in terrorism risk assessment as part of their local UASI. Unsurprisingly, the first responders of the EMOC's tended to invoke federal systems and hierarchies, and enforced the compliance of others, as first responders tended to identify more with the federal security mission. Adapting federal systems elevated the importance of local work, and allowed EMOC members to perform as members of the Homeland Security regime. Conversely, members seemed to recognize that they would never be given full

access to this work and worked to assert the need for local expertise and focus as a way to cope with this tension.

This chapter builds on discussion in Chapter Four concerning authority in EMOC's. As noted in that chapter, authority was intersubjectively achieved among collaboration members in a distinctive pattern of interaction, as some spoke on behalf of (i.e., both *about* and *as*) the collaboration, and then others accommodated – and implicitly endorsed -- these bids for influence (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). The analysis in this chapter thus demonstrates how authority in EMOC's was not only intersubjectively formed (versus given), it was also multifaceted and layered. That is, members in this collaboration drew on multiple sources as they attempted to achieve authority, including local hierarchies, culturally significant events, professional norms of emergency management, and federal systems. Authority, then, was both diffuse and occasionally contradictory—as members spoke about FEMA/DHS, for example, these agencies *came to matter*, but were also *dismissed*, as a means of authorizing particular interpretations – and interpreters -- of related rules and regulations. Authority, then, was an ongoing struggle for the EMOC's, in which competing priorities and logics were communicatively resolved through the invocation and animation of texts (Kuhn, 2008). The complexity of this work emerges when we acknowledge how speakers depicted various sources of authority as congruent, and then drew upon their resonance to amplify their bids for influence. In this way, the dominant first-responder culture of the EMOC's, outlined in Chapter Four, both facilitated – and was strengthened by – those members' claims to accurate and appropriate translation of DHS systems.

Additionally, along with members, various ideas and practices could also gain authority by "coming to matter" in local conversations (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). The strongest

example of this was the ICS hierarchy itself, which functioned as a text that interacted with local authority claims through translation. While ICS was transformed in local conversations (e.g., made less rigid and more adaptable), members continued to support an informal hierarchy that aligned with the basic principles of the ICS system. Unlike more traditional views of authority, which would see positions in the hierarchy as sources of authority (Kahn & Kram, 1994), hierarchy here was a text that could be presented in translations in order to attribute authority to both the ICS system and the speaker. Using this view of authority, then, reframes hierarchy as a more dynamic force that can be present and negotiated, even in seemingly informal organizations like collaborations.

Conclusion

Practices of vertical translation in emergency management impact the collaborative mission of EMOC's. Local EM practitioners must grapple with the need to demonstrate implementation and compliance with federal systems and mandates, while also addressing the need for local tailoring and independence. Practices of vertical translation demonstrate a tension in local EM organizing between conformity and resistance at the local level. To address this tension, members communicatively make sense of their use of federal systems in ways that mimic federal emergency management practices while also altering -- and even rejecting -- these practices. By referencing Homeland Security events, identifying with federal systems, and criticizing federal systems, the EMOC's translated federal priorities into their local collaboration and made sense of the changing nature and priorities of emergency management work. As institutional texts influenced local EMOC's translation, the meaning of these texts was adapted and changed in ways that accommodated a unique local identity and set of practices. This is because, as they adopt the "all hazards" paradigm, local EMOC's must somehow resolve the

ongoing tension between conforming to federal standards and regulations, preserving valued uniqueness and autonomy. These developments – including the increasing tendency of EMOC's to identify with paramilitary and counter-terrorism genres of "security" work – create important consequences for EMOC identity. I turn now in the study's final chapter to address those questions.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to address communication problems arising from the increasing need for community emergency management work to be collaborative. Emergency management collaborations face distinct challenges. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, US security organizations recognized the need to collaborate and share information. However, the cultures of these organizations pose challenges to collaborating. Additionally, the push for local communities to prepare for both human-caused terrorist threats and natural disasters challenged security organizations to cooperate with a diverse set of local organizations in order to accomplish this work. Local emergency management collaborations, then, face challenges in what to prioritize and how to go about doing their work collaboratively.

These collaborations require their members to develop coordination and understanding across different local offices and groups. The stakeholders involved in these local collaborations have different goals and organizational cultures, and must find a way to develop a shared frame of the collaboration. This can lead to conflict among members' values, and necessitates *horizontal* translation, or translation of the various member organizations' priorities into a shared collaborative framework. In addition to this need to coordinate across diverse local organizations, EMOC's must also interface different levels government, and are intertwined with state and federal emergency management organizations through legal mandates and funding mechanisms. Thus, EMOC's must also demonstrate accountability to state and federal regulatory agencies. However, for a variety of reasons, these accomplishments of horizontal and vertical translation are not guaranteed: EMOC's are staffed by human beings working in conflicting conditions of both uncertainty and urgency. In response, they develop organizational structures

and cultures that produce both intended and unintended consequences. The study posed three research questions to understand these challenges:

> *RQ1: How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate their respective interests and agendas in order to create successful collaboration (i.e., engage in horizontal translation)?*
>
> *RQ2: How do local emergency management practitioners negotiate the significance and implications of federal mandates and models for their collaboration (e.g., engage in vertical translation)?*
>
> *RQ3: How do horizontal and vertical processes of translation serve to develop authority within EMOCs?*

To summarize the findings from these three research questions, Chapter Four explored practices that contribute to *horizontal translation*, or the transformation of multiple local interests into a seemingly shared understanding of the mission of the emergency management collaborations. In response to RQ1, that chapter presented three themes of horizontal translation. First, in multiple practices that *characterized members' identities*, the EMOC's engaged in strategic categorization of members that asserted a moral/political hierarchy. In this structure, first responders' "egos" and "action bias" were framed as assets, while the "touchy-feely" nature of health, human services, and volunteer members were used to deprioritize their missions and contributions. Second, members engaged in practices that fell under the category of *recounting past successes*, which confirmed their collaborative mission by attributing success to internal practices, confirming that previous responses should serve as precedents for future incidents, and sustained dominant priorities in the stories that members told (and did not tell). Third, members *performed respect for authority* by defining roles in ways that prestructured dispute resolution in

favor of members with resource-ordering power – who, tellingly, were most often from first response agencies.

Next, Chapter Five answered RQ2 by examining practices of *vertical translation,* or members' translations institutional texts as resources for the development of local conversation and practice. First, this chapter found that members of the EMOC's *referenced Homeland Security events* in ways that elevated potential threats posed to their local work -- and thus its importance. Second, members *identified with federal systems* -- mainly the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Incident Command System -- in ways that facilitated standardization of their training and actual responses. Finally, members also *criticized federal systems* in order to assert their discretion to creatively implement and adapt these systems. This practice also served as a way for members to cope with their place in the federal/local hierarchy by preserving a desirable level of autonomy.

Both chapters addressed RQ3 by provided evidence of how, through horizontal and vertical translation, members of the EMOC's intersubjectively achieved *authority* in communicatively shaping the trajectory of their collaborations. In particular, Chapter Four demonstrated that, through multiple practices of horizontal translation, EMOC members elevated first responders' unique priorities and mission to the level of a *shared, necessary* mission for the EMOC's. First responders achieved authority in part because of how they were characterized in member talk, and how potential competitors for leadership—particularly, health, human service, and volunteer members—were characterized. Chapter Four demonstrated that members successfully spoke with authority when they were able to speak without challenge on behalf of "the county" as a stand-in for the collaboration. This authority was often tacitly accepted by health and human services members in their recounting of past successes, which emphasized first

responders' preferred definitions of concerns and responses over other available definitions. This accommodation led those members, in turn, to accept characterizations of their work as peripheral or "supporting." In addition to these translational practices, which contributed to the establishment of local authority, Chapter Five demonstrated that EMOC members' vertical translations of institutional texts facilitated their selective attributions of authority to both those texts and their local translators. This chapter demonstrated that in EMOC members' communication, the most successful bids for authority played off of both locally-established hierarchies and the related ability to "correctly" translate institutional texts (i.e., in ways that appeared to best serve the needs of the collaborations, as those needs were defined by collaboration members). However, in these vertical translations, EMOC members did not simply or directly adopt institutional texts like ICS as "authoritative texts." Instead, they also adapted these texts in ways that authorized local speakers to *change* institutional texts.

To now consider the significance of these findings, I clarify a particularly sweeping pattern that evolved across data in both Chapters Four and Five. Specifically, multiple processes and practices in this study supported what we might label *first responder hegemony* in EMOC's. This dominance came from multiple sources of authority that accumulated in favor of first responder priorities. First responders performed successful bids for authority by invoking their familiarity with federal systems (especially ICS, which originated as a wildland firefighting system), and they rejected competing bids for authority by others who did not know how to "talk the talk" of these systems. Additionally, first responders supported their bids for authority at the local level—even as nonprofit, community and health and human services groups were invited into the collaboration, the first responders of the collaborations characterized themselves as central members with missions that were synonymous with the EMOC's overarching mission.

These bids for authority were compounded as members utilized other available markers of authority, including, for example, the ability to order resources during emergency responses (a power mostly held by first response groups), and storytelling that privileged first response aspects of previous EMOC achievements. Bids for authority, then, were complex, and the most effective ones drew on multiple sources that emphasized the value of first responders in emergency management collaborations. Conversely, the members of other health, human services, and volunteer groups did not always have experience with ICS, or possess the authority to order resources under federal systems. Without the advantages afforded by these vertical translations, then, they seemed to lose authority in local conversations as well, through informal talk about member identities and stories of the collaboration throughout the years.

After clarifying the nature of these findings, I now turn to explore their significance as part of ongoing conversations within three areas of literature: collaboration, CCO and authority, and securitization. Contributions to these areas demonstrate that while horizontal and vertical translation were separated in the results of this study, it is the *interaction* between these types of translation that often compounds, and sometimes contradicts, attempts by EM professionals to author collaborations.

Contributions to the Collaboration Literature

In using ethnography, this study draws from multiple sources (including firsthand observation and interviews) to provide an in-depth depiction of interorganizational collaboration. In particular, this study contributes to understandings of interorganizational collaboration by examining the formation of meaning in everyday practices. As Hardy, Lawrence, and Phillips (2005) argue, using qualitative methods (rather than network analysis) can provide insight into *processes* of collaborating. Using ethnographic methods can add depth and nuance to the study

of collaboration, primarily due to its ability to depict how processes unfold, and compare participant accounts to participant actions. As Lewis (2006) points out, the majority of collaborative data collection comes from self-reporting, especially in interviews, and increased observation can lead to greater understanding of the multiple perspectives that exist in any collaborative setting (for additional examples, see Hardy, Lawrence, & Phillips, 1998; Heath, 2007; Hoelscher, 2019; Keyton, Ford, & Smith, 2008; Koschmann, 2016). Without ethnographic observation, for example, I could not have analyzed the still-unfolding conflicts between volunteer organizations and FOEM, which, were misrepresented in many interviews as resolved conflicts no longer influencing the collaboration. This study thus delivers methodological benefits to the study of collaboration, including an in-depth examination of processes of authority creation and negotiation of internal and external hierarchies.

This study also contributes to more nuanced understandings of "successful" collaborations by depicting how collaborations both construct and cope with preexisting hierarchies. Collaboration scholarship has worked to define ideal collaborations – albeit with some dispute concerning the relative emphasis placed in those definitions on theoretical versus practitioner interests (Heath, 2007). Subsequently, Barbara Gray and Jill Purdy (2018) have emphasize the need for scholars to consider how *members* themselves make sense of their collaboration as successful (e.g., through the use of local vernacular). Here, prior research has emphasized the need for collaborations to constitute novel outcomes and influence shared problem areas by creating buy-in from members. In this view, when collaborations "scale up" discourse to create authoritative texts, they can also contribute to the formation of proto-institutions, or changes in technologies and practices that influence both member organizations and the larger professional field (Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002). In the two county-level

EMOC's in this study, members valued their effectiveness in influencing state-level practices for collaboration, and saw their collaborations as models for other counties in the state. While these surrounding counties were not studied, the internal *perception* that the EMOC's could create proto-institutions was itself important to members and helped to facilitate buy-in. Being a leader in the field of emergency management was thus not so much an objective state, as a culturally-driven belief that incentivized members to keep collaborating over time. In this way, practices such as recounting past successes and attributing those successes to the collaboration helped members to feel that their collaboration *was* successful, which justified *both* their continued participation, their conformity to the collaboration's existing structure and culture.

Additionally, multiple studies have emphasized that collaborative success can be measured in member interactions and their consequences. Here, collaborative success is viewed as reliant on collaborative buy-in to create an authoritative text, and members must experience substantial interactions that lead to changes in knowledge construction and influence in a given problem domain (Koschmann, 2016). Renee Heath and Patricia Sias (1999) term this interaction "collaborative spirit," or the general principles regarding acceptable goals, values and behavior that guide collaborations. To be successful, in this view, members maintain shared understandings of the collaboration's "spirit" in explicit in ongoing discussion of the mission *and* in practices of shared power. However, in EMOC's, development of the collaborative mission also took several less explicit forms. For example, in characterizing member identities, participants pointed out who had central (versus peripheral) missions and priorities. In addition to outright discussion of the EMOC's mission, then, members also created buy-in using several indirect lines of talk. Additionally, in practice, members tacitly affirmed the dominant mission of the EMOC's—for example, in standing up to check-in with other members, and in performing

respect for authority of those who could order incident resources. Finally, the idea that collaborative spirit involves nonhierarchical practices is challenged by this study, an implication that is discussed in the next section.

Unique aspects of security collaborations

This study also engages a particularly challenging area for collaboration that has been underexplored: *security*-related collaborations. Many previous studies of collaboration have focused on relatively communal collaborations that include governmental entities (e.g., Heath & Sias, 1999; Keyton et al., 2008; Koschmann & Laster, 2011; Lawrence, Phillips, & Hardy, 1999), nonprofit collaborations (e.g., Gazley, 2010; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Guo & Acar, 2005; Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003; Heath, 2007), and cross-sector collaborations (Babiak & Thibault, 2009). To be sure, security collaborations face challenges that parallel each of these "types" of collaboration, especially as these collaborations engage more nonprofit partners and create a network of participants that include local government workers and volunteers. However, the *culture* of security organizing poses an additional challenge to collaboration, as these organizations are often (para-)military in structure (Bean, 2009b). Many participants in this study, for example, had first responder and/or military backgrounds, and the values of these organizations were introduced and enforced by members and reinforced by the legacy of emergency management systems (e.g., ICS, which was developed initially for wildland firefighting agencies by a US defense contractor, The Forest History Society, n.d.). Security collaborations face several additional challenges, including the unpredictable recurrence of security threats, the challenge of coping with and establishing hierarchy, and tensions in conformity with federal systems. Continued study of these conditions offers important contributions to existing understandings of interorganizational collaboration.

What exactly are those contributions? First, there have been discrepancies of opinion about the *temporal* nature of collaboration, with numerous authors defining collaboration as a temporary relationship that disbands after solving shared problems (Lewis, 2006). Security collaborations do not seem to fit this characterization of collaboration, because, in these collaborations, the shared problem *recurs unpredictably.* This potential for recurring threat is both constructed in member talk, and used to justify the collaborative mission and practices. For example, in discussing the possibility that the EMOC could be the site of "the next thing" (e.g., a high-profile Homeland Security threat or a natural disaster) members sustained several other dominant translations. These included claims that ICS was a necessary (if imperfect) system, that members should know their role and perform respect for authority, and that certain members needed to be contained because of their potential to threaten response efficiency. This study, then, contributes to recent work that recognizes that not all collaborations meet a shared goal and then dissolve—instead, collaborations can form to address complex, systemic societal problems that cannot easily be solved (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

This perpetual suspension of collaboration identity and mission in the near-future of "might happen" was also invoked by members to justify their continued participation, and became an essential communicative strategy to create buy-in and *collaborative advantage*. Here, it is important to remember that many collaborations struggle to achieve their goal, because without a catalyst to act, collaborations may fail to assemble, or may subsequently devolve—a process Huxham and Vangen call (2005) *collaborative inertia.* As part of the mission of EMOC's, security was a powerful discourse that was intertwined with other dominant logics of the collaboration. Among EMOC members, the constant potential for occurrence of security threats functioned as an important catalyst for them to get together and stay together—in other

words, storytelling about security threats provided the energy needed to avoid collaborative inertia (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Collaboration requires motivation and inspiration to get the group together, and for these EMOC members, storytelling about security threats was vital part of this communicative work. Huxham and Vangen suggest that collaboration requires a great deal of energy, including the establishment of common aims, strong leadership, clarity, and accountability among members. The security mission, while not a cure-all for collaborative inertia, seemed to be a powerful appeal that encouraged member buy-in. As will be discussed in the subsequent section about security, labeling of work as security work marks out that work as exceptional, time-sensitive, and elevated in importance. As a result, security was a powerful discourse whose apparent urgency and high-stakes stimulated collaborative buy-in among members. This study, then, suggests that appeals to the shared community problem that the collaboration seeks to solve are an important aspect of member talk.

Hierarchy in collaboration

This study also contributes to understandings of the relationship between collaboration and organizational structure and hierarchy. Rather than seeing collaboration and hierarchy as at-odds, these two sites demonstrate that collaboration can *both* lead to the emergence of hierarchy *and* must often cope with preexisting hierarchies.

First, this study gives insight into the communicative processes that lead to the establishment of hierarchy among local collaborative members. In particular, through discussion of differences in member identities and values, EMOC practitioners elevated the interests of certain members to the level of the shared mission (e.g., first response priorities) and minimized other concerns as supporting, peripheral, or irrelevant (e.g., human services, health, and nonprofit priorities). Several processes of translation led to the establishment of hierarchy,

including characterizing member identities, performing respect for authority, and recounting of (certain) past successes. In this talk, members defined both the mission and various organizations' centrality to the mission. Since the undertaking of this study, Woo and Leonardi (2018) have highlighted challenges faced by aspiring organizations in gaining access to collaborations when they are not invited or perceived by collaboration gatekeepers as useful. These authors find that such organizations were best able to gain access when they framed their expertise to those gatekeepers as a unique and necessary resource. In the case of the EMOC's, nonprofits and health and human service members both framed their expertise as useful to EMOC's, while seeming to accept that their expertise would never be the top priority. Instead, these members positioned themselves as useful because they could address lower priority concerns (e.g., sheltering, donations management, family reunification). These groups were willing to concede their relatively low status in the collaboration's hierarchy (e.g., a supporting role), as a cost of getting their work done. Characterizations of members, then, served to define both the collaborative mission and the hierarchy used to accomplish that mission.

In addition to establishing a local hierarchy, members also grappled with *when* to be collaborative and when to *not* be collaborative. Maintaining shared power is a significant challenge in collaborations, and remaining nonhierarchical is, in reality, likely impossible (Heath & Sias, 1999). However, Heath (2007) encourages members to work toward shared power (in her words, through "dialogic moments") in their everyday practices. The practice of encouraging members to stand up and check in with each other could be seen as a practice that encouraged *moments of equality* among members of the EMOC's. Rather than assuming that collaboration is *generally* made up of nonhierarchical interactions, in this study, collaboration was generally made up of hierarchical moments, with truly collaborative or equal moments happening only

occasionally, and only when members intentionally made these moments occur. However, members seemed to see these moments as useful, and often shared stories about moments of shared expertise where spontaneous interactions enhanced their ability to respond during emergencies.

Conversely, talk about "overzealous" members in Chapter Four indicated that spontaneous collaborative moments were seen as *threatening* to the existing order of the EMOC's. Because of the nature of security work, EMOC members saw collaboration as needing to be *contained* and *controlled.* As a result, collaboration was acceptable so long as it fit within the established structure. Stopping to provide input into a decision during an emergency, for example, would be threatening because of the time-sensitive nature of response. Participants had similar perspectives on conflict (that it needed to be avoided) and volunteering (that it could become threatening and "get in the way" during response). In practice, members often indicated their acceptance of (or rejection of) collaborative moments—for example, by dismissing health and human service concerns during meetings, or by meeting these concerns with silence and eye-rolling. Members seemed to cope with the perceived need to be both collaborative and independent by allowing for moments of more collaboration in an otherwise hierarchical structure. However, one's position in the hierarchy also dictated the ability to provide unsolicited input. In other words, through the establishment of a local hierarchy, those with a higher position in the hierarchy (first responders) were allowed more flexibility in their participation.

In addition to the internal establishment of hierarchy through local practices, the *external* structures of EMOC's also sustained a hierarchy—both between the levels of governmental agencies and within the local collaboration. One aspect of external structuring that contributed to power differences was the tie between resource ordering and decision-making. Disparity in

resources has been linked to power differences in collaboration (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Stone, 2000; Woo & Leonardi, 2018). In the EMOC's, resource disparities played a role in the construction of hierarchy—something that members acknowledged in their attempts to cope with the federal-local hierarchy by, for example, calling FEMA an "insurance company" that was stingy with federal disaster funds. Despite this negative talk, members acknowledged the need to do what FEMA asked of them, even if they were just "playing along" or "filling out the forms." Despite their seeming dissatisfaction with such power disparities, EMOC members also practiced them at the local level, where roles in the ordering of resources were tied to members' performing respect for authority and "staying in your lane," especially when members were not inherently authorized to order resources.

Additionally, this study highlights that collaborations must manage tensions between local meaning and institutional texts. This finding also contributes to understandings of collaborative tension by highlighting how collaborations must address conformity/resistance tensions within their broader institutional contexts, which can both enable and constrain local emergency response (Barbour & Manly, 2016). In addition to potentially contributing to the creation of proto-institutions, collaborations exist within the context of institutional fields and are influenced by institutional norms. Simultaneously, collaborations exist to form innovative solutions (Gray, 1989), and must contend with the tension between these values. In addition to pre-identified internal tensions to collaboration, including cooperation versus competition (Hardy et al., 2005), and structural tensions about how the collaboration will be run (Lewis, Isbell, & Koschmann, 2010), EMOC's also experience a tension between conformity to institutional texts and innovation and novelty in their translation of these texts. Since the undertaking of this study, Hoelscher (2019) has traced tensions in cross-sector collaborations between government

agencies and private sector organizations. She finds that collaboration members contend with tension between creativity and parameters, or between ordered and emergent activities. To deal with this tension, participants may invoke authoritative texts. In Hoelscher's case, participants made explicit reference to the collaboration's strategic plan, and claimed that the plan preferred a given pole of the tension. The case of EMOC's demonstrates that tensions also exist *among* authoritative texts for the collaboration, including institutional texts versus locally-created texts.

These tensions have implications for understandings of authority in collaboration (covered in more depth below). Members referenced local authoritative texts (e.g., texts based on local knowledge) to justify their creative translations of institutional texts. Simultaneously, members recognized the need to use institutional texts in their work, especially in translations that facilitated standardization and referenced the need to be "on the same page" during emergencies. To cope with this tension, then, members drew on a *temporal* element to justify more conformity to institutional texts during emergencies, and to allow for more flexibility during times of non-crisis. As Hernandez et al. (2019) argue, vertical collaboration is necessary during large-scale emergencies, and during those emergencies, an increase in rigid structure may be necessary to take decisive action. This rigidity can decrease, and local authority can be reasserted, once the crisis is over. Members of the EMOC's seemed to accept this reasoning in their talk about the benefits of using ICS during emergencies. Adaptations of federal systems, which drew on the local authoritative text of the collaboration (e.g., adaptations "the county" needed to make due to the local context), were more likely to be asserted by members during times of non-crisis, especially in trainings and monthly meetings. Members thus distinguished between times for creativity and standardization as one strategy for dealing with the tension between conformity to institutional texts and resistance to these texts. In doing so, they granted

more authority to institutional texts in conversations about emergencies, and more authority to the local collaboration during pre-planning and times of non-emergency.

Is security work collaborative?

Given these differences, it might be tempting to write emergency management organizations off as being *non-collaborative*. For example, collaboration scholars might ask why emergency management collaboration could not merely be considered as another form of coordinated activity (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). In this view, emergency management work does not appear to be as transcendent or egalitarian as collaboration, but its complexity still stretches to the level of, say, information sharing and coordination across organizations. However, emergency management organizations fit into existing collaboration research in their attempts to solve a shared problem, leading to the creation of new and novel solutions that no one organization could achieve on its own. The EMOC's studied posed innovative solutions to the need to be both accountable to federal systems and flexible in the face of emergencies—for example, in their adaptations of ICS.

This study also takes an interpretive frame on collaboration, and is interested in what organizational members themselves think of their activity. While many past studies of collaboration have shown an interest in the worldview of members, fewer studies have problematized emic meanings of "collaboration" itself, and the term continues to be defined in various ways (or not at all) in collaboration literature (Gray & Purdy, 2018; Lewis, 2006). The term "collaboration" is important to local emergency management participants, and the use of this term evoked many behavioral expectations from members. For example, along with the idea of performing respect for authority, members also saw the importance of breaking their formal

hierarchy and fostering spontaneous interactions between members. This occurred through the practice of "standing up and checking in" with others in the group.

The term collaboration itself is also an important aspect of tying emergency management work to broader concerns for the profession of emergency management *and* to Homeland Security concerns. As outlined in Chapter One, US security organizations feel increasing pressure to collaborate and share information to become more effective instrumentally in their responses. Future studies can expand on this work by considering how practitioners themselves define successful collaboration. In taking this focus, organizational communication scholars can pursue more emic studies of collaboration as an important "buzzword" that infuses multiple organizational contexts. Additionally, this study invites future research about the informal negotiation and establishment of hierarchy in collaborations. Rather than assuming that collaborations must be made up of equal members to succeed, future research can consider how collaboration is introduced and adapted in hierarchical contexts, including militarized cultures like first response and emergency management.

Contributions to CCO and Conceptions of Organizational Authority

This study also contributes to understandings of translation as a key aspect of organizing. In the text-conversation dialectic, translation highlights how meaning is necessarily added and lost as conversations become abstracted and change in context. Additionally, this study demonstrates that *translations themselves* often contain valuation of the conversation or text being translated. Translations do not just transform meaning because of the changing level of abstraction; instead, speakers can also employ translation in bids for authority to negotiate the value of competing narratives of the organization's trajectory. Thus, this study joins conversations about *translation* and *authority* in CCO.

First, this study deepens understandings of the intersubjective accomplishment of *authority in collaboration* by tracing processes in which both local authoritative texts and broader institutional texts interact in bids for authority. Oversight groups and convening groups are an important part of the collaborative landscape, and are increasingly necessary to invite stakeholders to join together to solve community problems (Gray & Purdy, 2018). This study thus sheds light on how oversight groups come to matter in the local collaboration processes by demonstrating processes through which members come to see themselves as accountable to oversight groups. Using a CCO lens on authority, it is not given that DHS/FEMA structures have authority over local EMOC's—instead, scholars can trace how these structures *come to matter* in local interactions and are presented as *having authority.*

As demonstrated here, institutional texts came to matter through several different processes of translation. First, EMOC members *identified* with federal systems and invoked their usefulness and even necessity in local conversations. In doing so, they accepted the federal principle that some standardization is necessary for emergency response work. Similarly, references to the broader culture of emergency management in talk about Homeland Security events aligned local emergency management with DHS/FEMA, and facilitated member learning from national events. In their everyday talk, then, members translated these institutional texts in ways that granted the texts authority in local interaction. This study thus extends understandings of the communicative practices through which members accomplish authority in interactions by highlighting the relationship between authority and practices of translation (Benoit□Barné & Fox, 2017; J. R. Taylor & Van Every, 2014). Here, members drew on institutional texts to attribute legitimacy to their own actions (Barbour & Manly, 2016). In doing so, they carried out government goals in exchange for legitimacy and resources (Mountford & Geiger, 2018).

However, members also *selected* and *interpreted* certain aspects of DHS/FEMA as having authority by rejecting other components of these systems. In doing so, they demonstrated that in translation, organizational members can accomplish authority *both* for themselves *and* for various institutional texts. In practices that criticized federal systems, for example, members asserted their own and their organization's ability to author a uniquely local trajectory for emergency management. In trainings, talk about how "we don't really do that," along with alterations of FEMA forms to fit with local needs (e.g., adapting FEMA forms to account for wildland fire resource ordering) drew on members' local knowledge, the length of their membership in the EMOC, and their personal experience with emergency response, to name a few sources. Members succeeded in these bids for authority when they were able to speak uncontested for "the county" or FOEM, and other members demonstrated through their response their acceptance of related accounts and explanations of vertical translations. In translation, then, "members use policy to *legitimate their own positioning* in the transactional conversation and to establish their own authority" (Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, & Taylor, 2013, p. 181, emphasis added). However, not every member of the EMOC's could successfully create the authority needed to translate institutional texts. In questions of who got to engage in vertical translation, then, members also drew on horizontal translations that placed first responders as the dominant authors of the local collaboration.

As a result, this study also emphasizes that authority can be a *cumulative* or *additive* accomplishment for collaboration members—in other words, members were most successful in bids for authority when they drew on multiple potential sources of authority, including institutional texts and dominant horizontal translations of the collaborative mission. The dominant account of these EMOC's built upon the authority of multiple sources, including

accounts of member identities (e.g., that first responders had an appropriate action-bias and ego), authoritative events (e.g., national Homeland Security threats), and institutional texts (e.g., ICS). The pattern of first responder dominance displayed across Chapters Four and Five demonstrates that first responders had the most sources of authority available to them, and that other members accepted this authority by *also* drawing on these sources in their own attempts to claim expertise. Health, human services, and nonprofit members felt the need to train in ICS even if it was not as useful to their position to sound knowledgeable. In doing so, they both accepted ICS as having authority and those who could "speak" ICS most effectively as having authority.

However, while authority was additive in these collaborative contexts, authority in collaboration is also *fragmented.* EMOC's display a combination of accommodation and resistance in their translation of institutional texts. This demonstrates the uniqueness of institutional texts as a potential source for authority. Here, previous studies have focused on "authoritative texts," or how the organization itself can become textual through translations (i.e., how abstracted conversations scale up to form the text of the organization, which comes to have authority in future conversations) (Kuhn, 2008). In this collaboration, however, authority of "local" authoritative texts (the abstracted account of the collaboration) and institutional texts were sometimes at odds, and needed to be reconciled through acts of authoring. Institutional texts, in other words, were not simply allowed to "stand for the organization" (Benoit□Barné & Fox, 2017, p. 117). Instead, texts that were "exterior" to the organization were translated into the organizational context (J. R. Taylor & Van Every, 2014). In bids for authority, EMOC members did not simply speak on behalf of the collaboration; instead, they also spoke for the collaboration in order *to author* the relationship between the collaboration and institutional texts. In doing so, their bids for authority were also bids to translate these texts *on behalf* of the collaboration.

This study contributes to growing understandings of processes of authoring and highlights specific communicative practices of translation that can be used to accomplish authority. Collaboration has been thought to magnify questions of authority due to the perceived lack of preexisting hierarchies in these organizations (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009; J. R. Taylor & Van Every, 2014). Vertical translation in particular highlights that processes of authority in collaboration cut across multiple levels. Authority is a struggle in which local actors can align themselves with various texts to achieve authority for themselves and the texts; however, these speakers can also choose to reject or alter the texts and position themselves as authorized to do so.

Contributions to Security Studies

Finally, this study contributes to a growing interest in the relationship between organizational communication and studies of security (B. C. Taylor et al., 2017), in particular, by centralizing the role of *organizations* as sites for the creation of security meanings. This study subsequently takes a communicative practice approach to examine the organizational shaping and changing of security meaning. Previous studies of securitization have tended to focus on *speech acts,* mainly political and public attempts to label security threats (e.g., presidential and world leader rhetoric). However, recent security scholarship has attempted to recast security meaning as shaped in *non-discursive practices,* opening space for an understanding of the ways security threats are defined in mundane, daily rituals in security organizations (Balzacq, 2005; Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008; Bueger, 2016). The latter perspective highlights how security meaning is often narrowed to focus only on questions of organizational response and instrumental effectiveness—versus public concerns. However, to this point, security studies has largely accepted the either/or contours of this debate—that securitization occurs either in speech acts or

in practices. This study demonstrates that considering securitization as *both* speech act *and* practice is most productive, to understand how securitization occurs within discursive speech acts and practices. Organizational communication's approach to communication as practice adds to current conversations about securitization by dissolving this distinction, and recognizing that all practices have ties to discursive elements and are maintained through discourse (Kuhn & Ashcraft, 2003). Practices are similarly *generative* of justifications for action and legitimation of actions. Translations of the ICS system, for example, resource ordering, involved both the establishment of bodily performances (e.g., the phone script) and justification of this translation in conversations.

Additionally, this study centers *authority* as an essential and underexplored aspect of securitization. Security studies literature has problematized the process of securitization, leading to questions about *when* and *how* a security label is accepted. The CCO approach to authority demonstrates that authority is not given – it is negotiated. To this point, security studies has tended to assume that authority is granted by hierarchical position, which then authorizes certain speakers (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008). A CCO perspective on authority, alternately, accounts for attempts to label security threats, and how these attempts are accepted in conversation. In other words, securitization occurs when a speaker's framing of security is accepted *as standing in for the organizational perspective as a whole*, and others begin to organize around this authored trajectory.

This study also demonstrates the colonization of Homeland Security priorities in local community organizations. Previous studies have shown that there are advantages to translating Homeland Security missions into local emergency organizing, especially because Homeland Security provides cooperative communities with beneficial access to federal grants (Monahan &

Palmer, 2009; Monahan & Regan, 2012). In partly accommodating Homeland Security priorities, the EMOC's in this study gained several advantages. First, participants did note the ties to resources, especially in their participation in threat and hazard identification, and in their relationship with the Urban Area Security Initiative. Secondly, drawing on Homeland Security discourses elevated the importance of local work by tying the EMOC's to the broader professional field of security work (Eski, 2016). Linking to broader Homeland Security concerns reconfigures local/national and public/private boundaries, as security professionals struggle to define threat (Bigo, 2011). In other words, in tying in to Homeland Security concerns, EMOC's both elevated their work and recast their own relationship to threats, making Homeland Security threats a constant possibility, despite the improbability of these threats coming to fruition in the EMOC's locale.

To capitalize on the elevated status of the Homeland Security regime, the EMOC's conflated multiple threats with potential terrorism concerns, including unattended packages and bags and suspicious behavior near scene perimeters. The association between security threats and improper use of space elevated what tended to be a mundane issue in the EMOC's event security work to high-profile concerns. Similarly, the EMOC's often discussed active shooter threats (a concern across college campuses, including the campus EEMG was tied to) in conjunction with other potential terrorist attacks, including cars driving into crowds, package bombings, and anthrax. They also linked domestic concerns to international terrorist threats in their design of exercises, including a hypothetical anthrax attack (which, one event planner told me, would also be useful training in case of something more mundane, like a flu outbreak) and a car-into-crowd on the college campus scenario (which also facilitated learning about collaboration between FOEM and EEMG, and thus would be useful regardless of the type of emergency happening on

the college campus).Therefore, EMOC's could see themselves as doing Homeland Security work, even if the threats they might actually face were usually unrelated to international terrorism. As Howell (2014) argues, "with the widespread acceptance of terrorism as a security issue, any issue that becomes associated with terrorism also becomes a security issue" (p. 153). Accepting the prioritization of terrorism post-9/11 had material advantages for the EMOC's but also elevated the status of local work.

In these translations of Homeland Security priorities, members of the EMOC's also engaged with the meaning of *security* itself and attempted to adapt discourses of security to suit their local context. This engagement with the term was significant for EMOC operations, culture, and identity. In storytelling, members engaged in the translation of Homeland Security threats into their daily work—for example, in the case of the "fence jumper" during a football game. The idea that the security for the event would be "done" if this person was able to jump a fence was both a call to action that facilitated collaboration among the EMOC's, who oriented to this threat, and likely also a case of threat *inflation.* Security work was frequently *dramatized* by practitioners in their storytelling, which tended to invoke hyperbole and self-inflation of the importance of the work—a phenomenon that has already been of interest to organizational culture scholars (Pacanowsky & Anderson, 1982; B. C. Taylor, 2010; Trujillo & Dionisopoulos, 1987). Along with this threat inflation comes the *militarization* of local emergency management practices. Practitioners in these collaborations seemed to see the militarization of their work as nothing more than an instrumental advantage—as evidenced in their discussion of the use of sniper rifles to security college campus events. Local applications of Homeland Security grants have militarized emergency management response options, which, for example, now include tank purchases and SWAT team tactical supply gear (Salter, 2014). In their adoption of

counterterrorism priorities, EMOC members also bought into complementary frames, including instrumentality of response, urgency, and the labeling of suspicious activity as potentially threatening.

In their acceptance of the hegemony of Homeland Security, however, EMOC members also recognized some disadvantages. First, accepting the counterterror mission meant also accepting the low status of local emergency management work in the Homeland Security hierarchy. Official communication about emergency management may attempt to elevate this work, using, for example, the mantra that "all terrorism is local." In practice, however, EMOC members complained of their ineffectiveness in preventing terrorism, and noted that the federal and state government were not true partners in this mission. Instead, EMOC's could expect to know about terrorism only as it was unfolding and would be charged with consequence management after an attack. The militarized nature of security work, as noted above, is at odds with collaborative values, and cooperation among various levels of government may itself been viewed as a risk to efficiency and effectiveness in response to Homeland Security events (Chenoweth & Clarke, 2010). Local emergency management workers recognized that there were disadvantages to adopting Homeland Security priorities in their work and did not believe that they could intervene to prevent terrorist plots—instead, they assimilated counterterror priorities by conflating terrorist response with their response to all other emergencies and reframing counterterrorism work as first response work.

A key implication of this study is that, through communicative practices and processes, security meanings and regimes can and do *change.* The current concerns of EMOC's involve the post-9/11 Homeland Security paradigm, which has been subsumed into the "All Hazards" approach to community emergency management. However, this colonization of Homeland

Security must also be appropriated, negotiated, resisted and transformed in local emergency management collaborations. As demonstrated in Chapter One, these priorities have shifted over time and were not always as concerned with counterterrorism. These necessary translations have benefits for the emergency management profession and for the local community and can be used to attempt to reassert the relevance of local concerns, especially, in this case, natural hazards and non-terrorist threats. Previous security studies have tended to focus on public figures and/or national and international-level organizations. As this study makes clear, local organizations play a critical role in the Homeland Security regime, and, in their everyday talk, establish local security priorities. These priorities are influenced by both global/national events and discourses and by local knowledge, priorities, and personal interests (Whelan & Molnar, 2018). Taking an organizational communication perspective on emergency management collaborations emphasizes that institutional texts can change gradually through participants' local practices (Barbour & Manly, 2016). This study enhances the current conversation about translation in security by emphasizing that translation of security threats into local contexts do not just impact local organizations, these translations also affect the broader institutional field, in this case, security organizations and meanings of security.

Future research on the security-organization relationship can expand on this work by considering additional organizational contexts that experience securitization. Studying emergency management opens up recognition that numerous local organizations grapple with the meaning of security. Security meanings extend beyond the US Homeland Security regime, for example, to include security in economic, cultural, and social spheres (Buzan et al., 1998). Additionally, security itself can be seen as a broader incentive for organizational membership, and membership in organizations contributes to security both in resources and in identity (Grey,

2009). Longitudinal and historical studies could also add to this growing area of research by highlighting how various contexts are securitized and *de*securitized over time (Bourbeau & Vuori, 2015; Wæver, 1995)—for example, recent US concerns that climate change will exacerbate security threats opens up new organizational contexts for study as environmental organizations contend with the meaning of security in their work (Anderson, 2014).

Study Limitations

The two collaborations chosen for this study, FOEM and EEMG, created the opportunity to study different methods of translation of the same set of federal guidelines. However, the collaborations also had a relationship—EEMG would be supported by FOEM during an emergency on the college campus. As a result, the two organizations talked frequently and had some member overlap. On the one hand, this interdependence between the EMOC's created the opportunity to watch ideas and priorities spread between the two groups. On the other, studying two or more distinct EMOC's, perhaps in different locales, would create the opportunity to explore more stark differences in translation. This study started with the hopes of observing another county collaboration that was seen as very different from FOEM in structure, leadership, participation, and history. However, that collaboration's differences (along with my association with FOEM) seemed to make negotiation of access challenging (the other county seemed concerned I was aligned with FOEM, and was judging their collaboration from that perspective). Additionally, future studies could consider emergency management collaborations in different areas or with different population sizes, which could dramatically alter the interpretation of FEMA/DHS priorities. For example, more populated metropolitan areas may not feel that concerns about counterterrorism are overblown or unrealistic.

Additionally, this study was limited by the lack of observation of an actual emergency response. While as a researcher I certainly did not wish for the occurrence of any catastrophic events in the community, practitioners talked a great deal about what "really" happened during emergencies. This talk indicated that in some ways, collaboration was easier during emergencies, but in other ways, clashes occurred due to the stress of the event. However, without ethnographic observation to compare this talk to, it was difficult to tell how emergency responses differed from the day-to-day collaborative work of the EMOC's. Studies that are developed immediately following a major emergency may be able to shed more light on this (Harris & Doerfel, 2017). However, long-term embeddedness with the collaboration can also produce benefits in case an emergency occurs, including the ability to watch changes over time, for example in trainings and protocols, because of that emergency. Practitioners frequently mentioned past emergencies and how they had shaped the collaboration. Because I was not present for those emergencies, I was unable to observe these changes firsthand, and instead heard only retrospective accounts.

Finally, normative studies of emergency management translation might be able to provide a framework for practitioners about how to implement the most effective translations of federal guidelines. Future comparative work across sites could be used to document and predict processes of translation in local emergency management work. Practitioners themselves seemed to want this type of information, and sometimes asked me about "the best way" to relate with FEMA and to build robust collaboration. This study took an emic approach and was interested in what practitioners themselves found most useful. From these conversations, I develop implications and suggestions for emergency management offices, below.

Implications for Emergency Management Practitioners

Communication issues are a frequent concern for emergency managers across levels of government and are an often-cited reason for failure in response. However, this study supports Timmons' (2007) suggestion that we "stop blaming the radio" for those issues. This study moves beyond a transactional view of communication—communication is not just the transmission of information between various responding parties. Instead, in everyday talk, emergency management collaboration members *constitute* their collaboration. In what we talk about, then, we also establish cultures, structures, and patterns of authority in collaboration. As a result, this dissertation leads to three recommendations for emergency management practitioners:

1. *Create collaborative buy-in through talk about past successes and future advantages.*
2. *Be aware of power imbalances in collaboration that occur in everyday conversation.*
3. *Embrace multiple identities and priorities to build community partnerships*.

First, multiple practices are necessary to form a robust emergency management network. While previous studies have used network analysis to determine *who* is involved in emergency management collaborations (e.g., Comfort, Boin, & Demchak, 2010; Doerfel, Chewning, & Lai, 2013; Kapucu & Demiroz, 2017), this study focuses on *processes* of relationship building. A frequent complaint among emergency managers is that FEMA training emphasizes the need for relationship building but does not do much to specify how to build those relationships.

Several practices seemed vital in building strong community partnerships: first, members needed to create *collaborative buy-in,* which they did through multiple patterns of talk. Members celebrated past successes of the group, which encouraged continued pride, and thus involvement,

in the collaboration. Talk about the *value* of collaborating reminded participants that this was "not just another meeting" they were attending once a month; it was important work that had helped the community in the past. For an emergency management collaboration that is just starting out, this line of talk may be impossible, so a second suggestion is to talk about the *need* for collaboration, in part by talking about potential hazards in the community. References to past emergencies resonated with collaborators, who had often witnessed these emergencies firsthand. Storytelling about previous threats to the community reminded stakeholders that these emergencies could occur again and seemed to encourage them to get involved in the collaboration to prepare.

Additionally, taking a constitutive view of communication encourages emergency management offices to think about the ways that their everyday talk can lead to power imbalances in the collaboration. The establishment of hierarchy did have advantages for these offices by allowing for quick decision-making during emergencies. However, this need for hierarchy is not as pressing during times of nonemergency. For example, during trainings and monthly meetings, emergency management offices can relax this hierarchy to allow for more free information sharing, and relationship building, across groups. Informal communication, for example, circulated jokes about nonprofits and health and human service groups (e.g., that these groups were "touchy-feely" or too "people-oriented") were a way for members to bond, but also led to some resentment among those groups. Even if emergency management officials do not want to consider these groups as central to their mission, they are important supporting groups that can dramatically ease the workload of emergency management offices during times of crisis (Butts et al., 2012). Informal talk, then, can be used to elevate the work of these groups and to build trust and respect between first responders and other organizational members.

The emergency management offices studied here also seemed to value hierarchy as a way to reduce conflict among different organizations. If collaboration was contained during emergencies, and only one person was making each tactical decision, the collaboration saved a significant amount of time and confusion. However, the presence of multiple identities and priorities among organizational members can be reframed here, not as a risk to be contained, but as a potential benefit to the collaboration. Previous research has encouraged the study of multiple identities in collaboration, which have the potential to create *multiple* collaborative outcomes (Thuesen, 2018). While the organizations studied here seemed concern with "getting everyone on the same page," differences in member identities and priorities can be reframed as an asset to emergency management. Take, for example, the nonprofit members' concerns with victim assistance and family reunification. In my observations, first responders in the EMOC's were concerned that this was an unrealistic and distracting priority for the group to be discussing right away during an incident—instead, the focus should be on life safety. However, nonprofit members would mostly not be involved in search and rescue efforts or incident stabilization in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, and thus may not need to focus on "life safety" first. The nonprofit and health and human services members of these collaborations were willing to accept that they had a supporting part in the emergency management mission. During trainings and meetings, then, it might be best to allow these groups to think about their different priorities, and to recognize that this member difference can be beneficial, even during emergency situations, to help the collaboration achieve multiple goals.

Finally, in prioritizing first responder missions, emergency management offices miss out on an opportunity to transform and expand their work in relationship with their community. While considering life safety priorities during an immediate emergency is key, emergency

management officers can also consider broadening their missions, and thus their community participation. For example, more emergency management offices are considering their roles in community resilience—especially in mitigation efforts before disasters (Long, 2018). The framework of community resilience may fall outside of the first responder mission, but it is beneficial because it can make emergency management work easier in the long term, increase community trust and awareness of these offices, and draw in collaborative partners. As natural disasters increase in scale and cost, communities will need to think past first response to consider both prevention and long-term recovery. Emergency management offices are poised to contribute to these conversations with their know-how, but may need to recast their missions as going beyond first response to also consider long-term community relationship building.

Conclusion

This study highlights that processes of translation are an essential mechanism for collaboration. Emergency management collaborations provides a compelling case to explore how collaborations negotiate their collective mission and identity across various member organizations, and how they communicate compliance to oversight groups, in this case, the US federal government. Collaboration is an increasingly trendy solution to shared and complex community problems. Natural disaster and security threat preparedness and response are ongoing concerns for local communities, who are being tasked with increasing responsibility to attend to both types of threat. These preparedness efforts require many organizational participants, and must overcome the obstacle of presumptuous paramilitary first responder cultures to create collaboration. The translations defined in this study demonstrate the importance of local emergency management work—in these collaborations, participants do not just define their collaboration, they also define community goals and security threats themselves. As local

collaborations play a significant role in the US “all hazards” response structure, taking an organizational communication perspective on these collaborations highlights that their ability to make decisions about threat perception and response priorities go far beyond the tactical, and are matters of community survival.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introductory

Explain purpose of this study as a study of the ways members use communication to collaborate in emergency response. Explain and show interviewee consent form and ask for their signature. With their permission, start recording.

Tell me about your involvement in collaboration—which groups are you in, what do you do, when did you join?

Collaboration

How does (your organization) use collaboration, and how is this different than your normal work?

Does the organization give you any guidelines for ways you participate in the collaboration? Do you take into account the way you think they want you to act? How do you think that is?

What is the history of this collaboration? How did it start, who put it together? What purpose do you think this collaboration serves?

How do you make collaboration work in crisis situations?

Are there any challenges or advantages to collaboration that you think are unique to your organization?

Tell me about a time when collaboration worked for the organization? A time when it didn't?

Federal Mandates

What is ICS about and why do you think it is used in this collaboration? How does it work in the collaboration? How does ICS impact your participation in the collaboration?

In what ways do you collaborate with the federal government?

Are there things DHS suggests that you do that you don't think works in your collaboration? Why or why not?

Do you think there is an overemphasis on following these guidelines? Why follow them?

Tell me about a time you felt that federal government NIMS guidelines weren't helpful or practical for your collaboration? What justified adapting those rules?

Tell me about a time when FEMA guidelines have been useful?

Security
I've noticed that (your organization) tries to prepare for many types of events. Do you feel that training and preparedness are the same for all events?

What is your role in response during natural disasters? What about during human-caused events?

How do you see security concerns as an aspect of your collaborative work? Have you seen any security concerns in your work?

What "counts" as a security threat to you? How do you know when something or someone is a security threat? Can you give me an example?

Do you think that your work as a county has changed due to the creation of DHS and 9/11? Or in response to other events (e.g., Boston Marathon Bombing, San Bernardino shooting)?

What do you do to prepare for security threats?

Conclusion
What advice would you have for another county that is just starting to use ICS?

Ask if there is anything else interviewee would like to talk about.