

Militarism and Emergency Management in a post-9/11 Era:
A Feminist Analysis of the Implications of International Relations Theory and US
Strategy for Disaster Policy

Lindsey Tegen

Spring 2013

Women's and Gender Studies

Celeste Montoya-Kirk, Primary Advisor (Women's and Gender Studies)

Deepti Misri (Women's and Gender Studies)

Olivia Chadha (Program for Writing and Rhetoric)

Abstract

Despite research that has investigated the implications of the inclusion of FEMA into the DOHS, significant questions remain regarding the limitations and possibilities of a militarized emergency management sector. US approaches to security and military strategy are relevant in examining the nature of disaster policy following 9/11. This work investigates the compatibility of realism and aspects of strategic theory with feminist and gender disaster scholarship and the concept of vulnerability. This analysis shows that the militarized ideology that informs FEMA's policies and the structure of the emergency management field is not fully equipped to meet the needs of communities in crisis. The militarization of disaster policy renews hierarchical gendered social orders and systems of power and dominance in emergency management institutions. These findings point to the need for more extensive research on theoretical frameworks that shape disaster policy, particularly by relying on feminist theory to better understand the far-reaching effects of militarization and the nature of disasters. Further, this work demonstrates the need to establish alternative ways of envisioning US security that strengthens community resilience to emergency events and the continued development of a feminist theorization of emergency management.

INTRODUCTION

Gendered structuring of social lives and organizations fundamentally shape individual responses to disasters and the anatomy of emergency management. The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women highlights a recent study in 141 countries that found in highly gender inequitable societies, more women than men die when disasters strike.¹ The past several decades of disaster research has been marked by the emergence of a sociological framework that highlights vulnerability differentials caused by the social stratification system. Feminist theory has made important

¹ UN data collected from Neumayer, & Plumper. (2007). The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97 (3), 551-556.

contributions to this body of literature that seeks to (re)conceptualize disasters and offer alternative approaches to emergency preparedness and response. While there is no single and recognized approach to disaster research on gender, feminist scholarship links women's lived experience and structures of social inequality. This conceptualization allows researchers to better understand differences in disaster risk. An emphasis on the nexus of inequality and gendered experience and knowledge provides a more nuanced and holistic approach to emergency management.

A wide range of international empirical and qualitative studies on disasters document how women's responses, experience, and knowledge are embedded in patriarchal ideology and power asymmetries that contour their daily lives. Policy suggestions that have emerged from this body of data predominately focus on a concept of vulnerability that acknowledges those who are politically and institutionally impoverished. Feminist epistemological approaches have been employed to construct points of departure from dominant ideology that excludes women as producers of knowledge. The inclusion of marginalized groups as actors in all levels of emergency management is a central concern, as well as dismantling the hierarchical organization of FEMA. Still, scholars have not yet produced a gendered theoretical framework of disaster research that could be operationally useful and generally applicable. Further, the significance of the militarized doctrine that informs FEMA's policy has largely gone unnoticed. Thus, the process of self-reflection has not stimulated the impetus for reform in this regard.

The February 2003 reorganization of FEMA as part of the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DOHS) created significant shifts in how the U.S.

perceives, mitigates, and responds to disasters. Under this new organizational structure, the government was seen to be more efficient at responding to terrorist attacks.

Consequently, responses to natural disasters were reconstructed to coalesce with preparing for and responding to terrorism. Non-terrorism related events were no longer distinguishable from terrorism and domestic acts of war. As a result, leading military strategic theories and approaches to national security infiltrated the militarized post-9/11 FEMA. Therefore, the structural and ideological evolution of FEMA cannot be fully ascertained without invoking militarized ideational determinants as starting points. Ties to the military organizationally are not synonymous with the “militarizing” of an entity itself. Militarizing an institution involves the imposition of military culture and ideas and the degree to which a societal institution is shaped by war. Despite continued pressure from a range of disciplines that call for the autonomy of emergency management, FEMA remains a major agency of the DOHS. Militarized ways of understanding disasters are not remnants of FEMA’s history; rather, they now play an even greater role in FEMA’s current transformation.

Why do we have an interest in the militarization of emergency management? Ideas matter, and theory informs policy. The nature of emergency management and how FEMA prepares for and responds to disasters is a function of how security and disasters themselves are conceptualized. Hegemonic theoretical frameworks and discourse that inform the US approach to national security and military operations shape such conceptualizations. Understanding the possibilities and implications of emergency management policy requires a deeper analysis of militarized thought. Scholarship on the militarization of emergency management remains at the fringes

of feminist and gender disaster research.² This body of literature focuses on the impacts of an increased military presence in disaster zones and how well military values and doctrine meet the needs of civil society in crisis. Particular policies, directives, and institutionalized models of management have been evaluated and scrutinized by scholars and practitioners. This work has disrupted the compatibility of the post-9/11 policy landscape of disaster management and the salience of communities and individuals to emergency events. Feminist theory is an underutilized tool in examining the root causes of disaster vulnerability and policy theoretically. Implementing effective policy agendas, approaches, and structural shifts that are conducive with a feminist vulnerability and risk model, must include an investigation of the complex ideas that underpin the formal emergency management sector. Feminist theory better equips researchers to understand the implications of militarization.

This work is a feminist exploratory analysis of the ideological evolution of FEMA. Dominant US strategic and military theories are examined to investigate the implications for current and future disaster policy. Through this, the theoretical underpinnings of current policy are analyzed against salient and important findings of feminist and gender disaster scholarship. It is shown that aspects of dominant military and security theories that inform current policy are at odds with feminist approaches to emergency management. Policy suggestions and analyses by feminist and gender

² The use of the phrase “feminist and gender disaster research” is intended to distinguish between disaster research on gender and feminist disaster research. This work does not use these types of research interchangeably. An analysis of gender does not imply the use of feminist frames. Feminist theory is predominately absent from work on the social construction of disasters.

disaster researchers do not fully take into consideration the implications of a militarized emergency management sector. Consequently, FEMA may be immune to alternative policies proposed by the feminist and gender disaster field. The contributions of gendered experiential knowledge to disaster policy must be examined within an institution that fundamentally reproduces and sustains hierarchical gendered social orders rather than reflecting on patriarchy as a site of inconsistency. As long as FEMA remains militarized, whether or not it breaks from the DOHS, and theorization of militarized ideologies operates at the periphery of feminist and gender disaster research, hidden dimensions of policy innovation will remain unseen.

A comprehensive examination of the structural and ideological architecture of FEMA and disaster policies is beyond the scope of this work. Additionally, an in depth overview of disaster vulnerabilities, feminist epistemological and methodological approaches, and existing policy suggestions are not included. This work points to the importance of a deeper analysis of militarized emergency management entities and how these structures shape individuals experiences in disasters. Ways of thinking that acknowledge vulnerability differentials, social risk, and better meet the needs of communities must be further investigated. The relationship of patriarchal ideology and how it is enacted and renewed in emergency management institutions needs to be included as a new frame of examination. These findings provide for a richer and nuanced feminist approach to emergency management and disaster policy. This work adds to efforts to theorize emergency management and disaster studies.

This work will proceed as follows. The existing body of literature on feminist and gender disaster scholarship will briefly be considered. Findings on disaster

vulnerabilities and risk are categorized into 5 broad themes. A range of empirical and qualitative data is presented, and dominant theoretical paradigms and policy suggestions are detailed. Next, realist theory and aspects of US strategy are discussed. A focus is placed on the fundamentals of these two theories and how conducive they are with theoretical frameworks and findings of feminist and gender disaster research. This paper concludes with implications for the future of emergency management and the role of feminist theory in shaping disaster policy.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Why are social inequalities important to disaster research? How do women experience and respond to disasters differently from men? Prior to the 1990's, gender analysis was largely absent from disaster social science, with limited attention paid to the multiple and fluid ways individuals experience disasters driven by social difference and inequality. Since then, a large body of literature has emerged that highlights effective preparedness, response, and recovery must address the unequal ways power is distributed within societies that produce different vulnerabilities, experiences, and knowledge (Fothergill 1996). This conceptualization views disasters as inherently social events in which individuals' experiences and responses are grounded in the unequal distribution of social capital. Enarson and Morrow (1998), in an extensive analysis of a broad range of international case studies, documents that "disaster events often impact women disproportionately, endangering girls and women's personal safety, income sources, livelihood resources, environmental and economic assets, mental and physical

health, future opportunities, social power, human rights and, too often, life itself”

(1). Disaster risk and vulnerabilities cannot be captured without patriarchy as a frame of reference.

The following section is a brief review of the existing gender and disaster literature in the U.S. The purpose of this analysis is not to provide a comprehensive examination of the published research, but organizes salient patterns into 5 broad themes.³ The inclusion of these findings is paramount to the disciplines that contribute to emergency management scholarship, and the diverse range of actors and stakeholders involved in disaster preparation and recovery programs.

Social class has been revealed to be a significant category of analysis in examining the ways men and women are impacted differently by disasters. The “feminization of poverty” distributes risk disproportionately on women. The 2011 US Census reveals that women have a substantially higher poverty rate compared to the poverty rates among men. As of 2011, 17.7 million women are living in poverty, and among female-headed households, 40.9% live in poverty. More than half of poor children, 58%, live in female-headed households. Gender discrimination in wage has remained relatively stagnant, with women making 77cents for every dollar men receive. It is documented that disasters often leave women even more impoverished (Enarson, Fothergill, and Peek 2007). Poverty increases the chances that women will be living in structurally vulnerable homes and higher-risk geographical regions (Lovekamp 2003). Poverty limits the resources available to

³ See Betty Morrow and Brenda Phillips, *Women and Disasters: From Theory to Practice* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2008). The literature provides a comprehensive overview of disaster vulnerabilities.

individuals and constrains the choices they make in pre- and post- disaster environments.

Women are the vast majority of informal care providers and head the majority of single-parent households.⁴ Despite women's increased labor force participation over the last several decades, many studies show that employment does not deter caregiving. The 2011 US Department of Commerce brief on caregiving projected that women may spend as much as 50 percent more time providing care than male caregivers. As a result, women may be at greater risk in many disaster situations, as they must stay with, assist, protect, and nurture family members (Morrow and Phillips 2008; Morrow and Enarson 1994; Fothergill 2004). Traditional care giving roles account for gendered differences in financial security. In research on the Red River Valley flood, Enarson (2006) found that the lack of childcare for women prevented them from returning to work as quickly as men following a disaster. Fothergill's (2004) research on the 1997 Grand Forks flood shows that men's lack of childcare responsibilities allowed many to continue working throughout the disaster event. In some cases, this led to a promotion or upward mobility.

Cultural standards that promote female domesticity and position women in the center of the private sphere create gender differences in vulnerability and recovery.⁵

⁴ See Hooyman, Nancy R., and Judith G. Gonyea. *"A feminist model of family care: Practice and policy directions."* *Journal of Women & aging* 11.2-3 (1999): 149-169. This work examines the social construction of care giving and variations in care giving by gender, race, ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation.

⁵ See Brines, Julie. "Economic dependency, gender, and the division of labor at home." *American Journal of Sociology* (1994): 652-688 for further research on the dimensions of gendered divisions of labor.

Studies show that household labor increases during the disaster event and recovery periods (Enarson, Fothergill and Peek 2007). The responsibility to attain disaster relief and ensure proper functioning of the family and home is relegated predominately to women (Fothergill 2003). Research documents that women are often excluded from positions of authority in relief and recovery efforts. Lovekamp (2003) finds that men were more aware of disaster warnings and had greater access to information regarding locations of shelters. Further, Lovekamp observes “women often had to obtain warning information from men, and the decision whether, when and where to take refuge was made mainly by men” (108). Constraints on women’s ability to obtain information contribute to higher rates of mortality among women compared to men across the globe. The distribution of aid and disaster relief sources tends to favor men. Morrow and Enarson (1996) found that relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew was based on a single “head of household” model that privileged men.

Women’s physical and emotional security is also compromised during a disaster. It is well documented that following extreme events, police and other public sectors responsible for protection often have less resources to carry out law enforcement activities (Wenger 1972). Morrow and Phillips (2008) find that incidents of violence against women increase in the period following a major disaster. Fothergill (2004) reports that individuals working in the field of domestic violence document higher rates of “woman battering.” Specifically, in her study of the 1997 Grand Forks flood, the following changes emerged at The Community Violence Intervention Center: 21% increase in all services, 159% increase in abuse and rape crisis program services to ongoing clients, 29% increase in the number of

abuse and rape crisis clients, and an increase in protection orders. The shortage of housing that often occurs in disaster events may force a victim of abuse to move back in with their abuser. Constrained police protection may prevent the enforcement of domestic violence orders. Crucial violence shelters, organizations, and psychological services may be overcrowded or located far away from available housing. Enarson and Fordham (2001) document that poor women tend to be more likely to depend on public and community services such as transportation, counseling, shelters, and healthcare. As such, women's health and security may be disproportionately undermined during and after disaster events, and poverty often exacerbates this increased vulnerability.

Race and ethnicity, either as an independent category of analysis or as part of an intersectional approach, remains limited in feminist and gender disaster research. Qualitative and statistical data available document that the intersection of race and gender, and in particular poverty, disadvantage women of color. In their study of Hurricane Andrew, Morrow and Enarson (1996) found that poor women of color had the greatest need for housing several years after the disaster. In general, poor women of color tend to face greater discrimination and barriers to housing-related relief systems. Findings on Hurricane Andrew and the Grand Forks flood reveal that immigrant and migrant women had greater obstacles in attaining relief resources, affordable housing, and disaster related repairs for public housing. Further, high rates of interpersonal violence were documented in temporary housing units inhabited primarily by minority women (Morrow and Enarson 1996; Fothergill 2004).

Female-headed households, gender, class, and race are not synonymous with disaster vulnerability. Other dimensions of human experience and patriarchal social arrangements, such as sexuality and disability, are not interchangeable with vulnerability either. For example, Fothergill (2004) found that some women benefited from the Grand Forks flood as a source of empowerment and autonomy that allowed them to leave abusive partners. In Miami following Hurricane Andrew, Enarson and Morrow (1998) documented an increase in political and personal empowerment. Fothergill (2004) observes, “it is indeed paradoxical how women embrace stereotypical roles that reflect and perpetuate gender inequality at the same time they emerge from the disaster with new skills and confidences to challenge the status quo” (16). Human experience in crisis is multifaceted and often elusively captured by distinct categories. It is important to highlight that social positioning may both disadvantage women while at the same time provide them with strengths and resources.

There are limitations of this review and this discussion does not illustrate the complexities of disaster vulnerabilities and the contributions of feminist and gender disaster scholars. There is no consensus among disaster scholars regarding the nature and implications of traditional gender roles in disaster events (Fothergill 2004). Feminist literature has complicated the public-private sphere distinction and the concept of gendered divisions of labor. Enarson (2001) argues, “no simple distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ labor usefully frames women’s disaster responses nor can women’s work be neatly confined to discrete categories” (3). The use of these terms, as well as conceptualizations of care giving is presented in overly simplistic ways. The themes of this section reflect the tendency of gender and disaster scholarship to understand social

positioning as dichotomous variables. Further, other facets of disaster experience are understudied in this field of scholarship and are, thus, absent from the above analysis. Though these limitations exist, there is clear and salient evidence that gender, class, and race produce patterns of augmented vulnerability.

Gendered Policy Responses to Inequality and Vulnerability

Scholars and practitioners increasingly advocate for the engagement of the community and public and governmental efforts in all stages of disaster events. Neal and Phillips (1990) document that women are active in grassroots groups addressing environmental hazards, often as a result of their female friendship networks. Disaster researchers have accumulated evidence of the relationship between greater community resilience and the involvement of women's community and grass-roots organizations. Phillip's (1990) observes that women contribute positively to the profession of emergency management and often bring a heightened sensitivity to the socioeconomic needs of survivors. In their study of Hurricane Andrew, Enarson and Morrow (1998) found that the grassroots feminist coalition, Women Will Rebuild, worked to unite women in the rebuilding process and stand up to a male-dominated system. Wilson and Oyola-Yemail (2008) argue, "local knowledge is the most important resource to bring to a recovery effort" (211). Tierney and Bevc (2007) pose that "the emergent groups that form following disasters are more effective than outside sources of aid, precisely because of their understanding of the community and its residents" (46). Further, they argue that "from the point of view of both effectiveness and fiscal responsibility, it seems hugely inappropriate to consider mobilizing military forces from outside a community to carry

out functions that community resident and local and state public safety agencies are better able to do on their own, such as life-saving and rescue activities” (46). Hierarchical models of organization often hinder the coordination of resources between governmental, local, and private actors that might strengthen preparedness and response to disaster events (Clarke and Chenoweth 2006). Enarson et., al. (2007) suggests that “grass-roots women’s groups may have first-hand knowledge about environmental and population pressures, local political dynamics, and leadership structures in high-risk neighborhoods” (144). In short, because different actors and organizations have unique resources, approaches to emergency management must include local and community level entities to better address security and vulnerability.

Gender and feminist disaster scholarship has called for the introduction of women’s voices in all levels of emergency management and in decision-making roles. Wilson and Oyola-Yemail (2008) posit that “everyday life, for the most economically marginalized, represents a string of disasters that women prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against- including sexism, racism, ageism, ableism, economic deprivation, and health crisis” (210). Policy proposals place an emphasis on ‘gendered’ or ‘situated’ experiential knowledge as sites of valuable contributions to disaster preparedness and response. Shifting frames of analysis through the inclusion of women uncover dynamics of disaster policy that are inconsistent with an effective approach to emergency management. Perspectives, experiences, and needs that are traditionally rendered invisible by dominant disaster discourse and policy may be recovered by the inclusion of women as producers of knowledge (Enarson. Fothergill, and Peek 2007). Wilson and Oyola- Yemail (2008) argue that it is women’s intense involvement within

the family and community that make their voices in emergency management crucial to increasing the efficacy of emergency response systems. “Women’s experiences as community workers, informal neighborhood leaders, and social activists equip them to respond to community crises” (209). Thus, while social structures may disadvantage women and position them disproportionately vulnerable to disaster events, social positioning also affords them strengths and resources that need to be incorporated in the management of extreme events.

Different theoretical orientations have been used in disaster scholarship. Most researchers rely on various sociological theories, liberal feminism and gender and development theory (Enarson et., al. 2007; McEntire 2003; McEntire 2004). Identity and experience are central themes of research that explicitly use feminist theory. The concept of vulnerability serves as the foundation for feminist and disaster scholarship. Feminist theorists contend that the emergency management profession is gender biased. Aspects of emergency management, including disaster services, the demographic-makeup of the field, and all policy designs, are shaped by hierarchically gendered social orders. The material realities of women, shaped by patriarchal principles of social organization, afford women unique experiences, skills, and knowledge. Feminist epistemological approaches question the limited knowledge of disaster social science based on male experience that ignores the valuable ways women are producers of knowledge. The use of feminist theory in disaster research has introduced unique perspectives and policy agendas to disaster scholarship (McEntire and Marshall 2003).

Terrorism and Post-9/11 FEMA

“Some argue that misogyny is the ‘mother’s milk of militarism’- that is essential to the war system.” Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender*

There has been a long history of emergency management’s ties to national security. Emergency management agencies were formed by male-oriented occupations of the military and civil defense (Morrow and Phillips 2008). Consequently, formal training for emergency management was originally available only through the military. In the 1980’s, an attempt to professionalize the field of emergency management surfaced. Academic and formal certificate programs gained greater currency and FEMA’s status as an independent agency loosened beauracatic constraints that plagued other organizations. However, the absorption of FEMA into the DOHS following 9/11 privileged the military and defense sectors, supplanting the prestige and influence of formal and local emergency management entities.

The cultural climate and response to the crisis thrived in the proliferation of militarized US policy. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the military became increasingly viewed as the sole institution capable of managing disasters. In a speech, President Bush lauded the military as the “institution of our government most capable of massive logistical operations on a moments notice” (Tierney and Bevc 2007). A 2006 report from the Government Accountability Office recommended “more training and greater military involvement in disaster response” (Tierney and Bevc 2007). In White House reports regarding the lessons learned from Katrina, policies that authorize the military to act independently of civilian decision makers and to engage in disaster response without the consent of local authorities were recommended. In 2008 reports

published by NATO Science for Peace and Security, conclusions drawn from the attacks of 9-11 included “people are more willing to change behavior” -that is, recognize risk and pursue effective action- “if they feel they are ‘at war’” (Pasman and Kirillov 2008) with a disaster agent. Gibbons (2007) highlights that “by the end of the millennium, the U.S. military had impressive and unrivaled capabilities. Furthermore, it had largely escaped the legitimacy that had beset other parts of the government. The military had much higher confidence ratings than the executive, legislative, or judicial branches; indeed, trust in the military increased over the last quarter-century, so that, by 2001, roughly two-thirds of Americans professed to put a ‘great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of trust in the military” (316). These findings are significant because cultural predispositions that fostered an environment of military authority reinforced the emerging politics that privileged the military in managing domestic catastrophes (Gibbons 2007; Hoge and Rose 2001; Stokes 2007).

The DOHS was charged specifically with homeland preparedness and the deterrence and response to terrorism related events. FEMA is historically the only governmental entity that deals with catastrophic events that are not related to terrorism. The inclusion of FEMA into the DOHS caused structural, ideological, and policy changes that reflected a focus on terrorism and did not differentiate between terrorist and non-terrorist related domestic emergencies. Military and law enforcement agencies were elevated to positions of authority in dealing with non-terrorism disaster events. It is well documented that human and financial resources have been diverted away from FEMA and other disaster management entities to terrorism related disaster preparedness and response (Clarke and Chenoweth 2006; Tierney 2007; Sylves 2007).

Various shifts in policy and presidential directives have been analyzed in great detail. The National Response Plan (NRP) emerged that provided a single management framework for all domestic emergencies. Under the NRP, the Secretary of Homeland Security was newly charged with the primary function of dealing with domestic crises. Further, the plan proposed that the federal government and military and law enforcement agencies would increasingly assume a greater role in disaster management, stripping authority from state governments and local agencies and organizations. NRP institutionalizes two directives that have had significant implications for disaster preparedness and response. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) are universal organizational structures and response plans for all levels of government and any other organizations involved in disaster management.

As an authoritative figure in disaster policy, Tierney (2006; 2007) criticizes the command-control and top-down models and strategies that are characteristic of NIMS and ICS. She cites policy expert William Waugh's congressional testimony: "ICS is far more compatible, both structurally and culturally, with command-oriented organizations like police and fire departments than with the structures and cultures of the many other types of agencies and groups that play key roles in responding to disasters but do not operate according to hierarchical principles" (5). Top-down policy structures like NIMS and ICS alienate local and grass-roots organizations from participating in disaster events and limits the coordination and relationships of diverse actors. Organizations outside the scope of formal government institutions have strategic resources that can be employed to address local vulnerabilities and security.

GENDERED FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY, GRAND STRATEGY, AND FEMINISM

“Theory cannot equip the mind with formulas for solving problems, nor can it mark the narrow path on which the sole institution is supposed to lie by planting a hedge of principles on either side. But it can give the mind insight into the great mass of phenomena and of their relationships, then leave it free to rise into the higher realms of action.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The implications of a militarized US emergency management sector have been limited to examining the increased role of law enforcement agencies and the military in domestic emergencies and how the emergency management profession has been reshaped. Yet, attention to the dominant discourses and theories that inform the military as an institution and national security remains absent. Militarizing an institution involves the imposition of military values and ideas and how a societal institution is shaped by war. These ideological frameworks inform public policy and formal approaches to disasters. The framing of disaster as ‘war’ (Tierney and Bevc 2007) and disaster as a ‘domestic battlefield’ in a post-9/11 world underscores the need to situate policy and state approaches to disasters within military and security thought. Importantly, there has not merely been a greater presence of and influence of the military in disaster preparedness and response; disasters are conceptualized as synonymous with war. Analyzing dominant military strategic and security theories allows us insight into how emergency management as a sector and disasters are conceptualized by FEMA. Effective legislation and approaches to emergency management consistent with the findings of feminist disaster research requires a deeper and more complex analysis

of the problems and possibilities for the current structural and ideological make-up of FEMA.

All domestic disasters and emergencies have been subsumed into “incidents of national significance” within the DOHS, inevitably linking disaster management to issues of national security. Policy directives and management models compatible with the military and other hierarchical organizations have supplanted concepts and policies that address distinct aspects of disaster events. The post-9/11 policy landscape does not distinguish between war and disaster emergencies. As such, military culture, doctrine, and modes of operation shape disaster management and policy.

Realist Paradigms

Realist thought has traditionally dominated the field of international relations and security. Despite the emergence of space for alternative approaches beginning in the late 1980's, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 renewed the role of realism in US security. The following examination provides a general interpretation of this area of thought and highlights fundamental characteristics and ways of thinking that are problematic for the concept of vulnerability and gendered dimensions of human and disaster experience.

At the heart of realism is the privileging of state power and the military sector. Understanding the international arena as inherently anarchical with the possibility for peace and cooperation unlikely, security is predominantly conflated with power. Positioning the primary concern of national security as state survival, military capabilities are seen as the dominant instrument of power. State boundaries shape the provision of security, where threats are only conceptualized outside state boundaries. Realism has an affinity to morality, in which space for ethics and justice are notably absent. Forsyth

(2011) argues, “to the extent that survival pressures tightly constrain state behaviors, we should not expect internal characteristics or moral considerations to seriously affect state conduct” (107). Perhaps most problematic for disaster policy, a realist account places domestic security as exogenous, ignoring any internal factors as sites for analysis. Kennan (2012), in his famous work, *American Diplomacy*, states “government is an agent, not a principal. Its primary obligation is to the interests of the national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience” (112).

The underlying theoretical framework of realist thought is incompatible with a feminist approach to emergency management. Feminist and gender disaster scholars argue that disasters must be understood as fundamentally social events, in which internal hierarchies and structural violence renders individuals more vulnerable to extreme events. Realist theory places an emphasis on the external enemy, where militarized disaster policy inevitably focuses on the disaster event itself without taking into consideration internal structures that cause insecurity. Wisner et. al. (1994) caution that the traditional view of risk places “too much emphasis in doing something about disasters on the natural hazards themselves” (4). Tickner (2001) postulates “realism leaves out cultural systems and structures that formulate identities and roles within a society” (201). Feminist disaster scholarship argues for a risk approach to emergency management framed by different vulnerabilities caused by the social stratification system. Consequently, realism as a mechanism for interpreting security may be incompatible with implementing vulnerability-centered models of disaster management.

Feminist considerations of security often position realism as a patriarchal discourse. Tickner (2001) argues that “in the West, the image of a foreign policy maker has been strongly associated with elite, white males and representations of hegemonic masculinity, in which national identities [are] used by domestic elites to promote state or group interests and hide race, gender, and class divisions” (54-56). Realism captures a conceptualization of security that privileges hegemonic masculinity and denies space for women’s experiences and women in decision-making roles. Women’s invisibility in dominant discourse ignores the ways women are producers of knowledge, an epistemological approach that underpins feminist disaster scholarship. Blanchard (2003) highlights that the state typically denies women the opportunity to be societal “protectors”, assigning them to the role of “protected”. Realism and traditional security politics define security in a way that reproduces the hierarchies and structural violence that position women at greater risk in disasters. The concentration of power and hierarchy inherent to realism ignores the ways that grass-roots and community level organizing are better equipped to deal with aspects of emergency management. Patriarchy cannot coexist with feminist vulnerability theories of disaster management. A feminist vulnerability model of emergency management links women’s material realities with social structures, calls for the inclusion of female experiential contributions and women in decision-making roles, and examines the unequal distribution of social capital for a more nuanced, enriched, and effective system of emergency management.

Strategic Theory

Dominant strategic theories that inform the behavior of the US military and approaches to security shape the structure of FEMA and the states preparation and response to disasters. Approaches to strategic theory have traditionally been dominated by an emphasis on material capabilities and environmental factors and how these variables determine the distribution of state power, security, interests, and constrain strategic choices. Within this framework, a state's position in the international system and their national attributes provide the primary conceptual foundation behind a state's behavior and approach to war. However, this leaves absent that complex social processes and subjective assessments shape the meanings and implications of the nature of the international system, interests of states, and threats to them. Cultural models of strategic behavior tend to either position ideational determinants as secondary to systemic international pressures, as an independent variable that supplants neorealist theories, or what Baylis (2007) proposes, that "aspects of human conduct can only be understood by becoming fully immersed within a given strategic culture" (86). US strategic theory privileges material and environmental factors. But, these material and environmental factors are only relevant and meaningful in relation to subjective, socially constructed values and ideas. Strategic culture sets the context for which material and environmental factors operate and shapes state interests and political objectives (Art and Waltz 2009). Patriarchal organizing of social, economic, and political institutions shapes strategic culture, which in turn shapes the US military and security strategies.

Strategic culture can be conceptualized broadly as encompassing organizational and political cultures, domestic norms, and identities that serve as a national lens through which states perceive themselves and the world around them. Strategic choices are not only limited by the material and political environment, but by cultural norms and institutions that constrain how actors perceive events and respond to them. Rosen (1995) defines strategic culture as “beliefs and assumptions that frame...choices about international military behavior, particularly those concerning decisions to go to war, preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare, and levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable” (88). Scholars note that the relationship between culture and strategy is inordinately complex because it consists of a combination of discursive and non-discursive expressions (Baylis 2007) and is therefore hard to quantify. However, rather than attempting to measure the importance of culture as an independent variable, examining its influence in relation to other factors better captures the nature of the relationship between strategy and culture and increases the explanatory power of strategic theories. Through this, we can better understand how patriarchal social organization manifests itself in patriarchal approaches to strategic theory, and how these assumptions are enacted and renewed in disaster management.

Strategic behavior is as much a function of capabilities as willingness and subjective opinions. Applying Clausewitz’s ⁶ view on war, strategic theory must be

⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz is the author of authoritative work on philosophical approaches to Western military thinking and war. His work has had powerful affects for military

understood as a relationship between ends and means, in which war is used as an instrument of policy, a means of achieving specific political ends, and is fundamentally a social activity. Consequently, Baylis (2007) argues that “social conditions mold the character and conduct of war” (73). Sun Tzu argued that one’s positioning in strategy is influenced by both objective and subjective conditions, famously advising “know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battlefields you will never peril” (77), noting the significance of national identity. Thus, ideational factors influence how states perceive the implications of international anarchy and conceptualize power and security, craft interests and political objectives, and how material or structural assets are used.

That the international arena is anarchical is a given, but how states interpret the meaning of this and understand power and security implicates subjective assumptions and ideas about the social and political world. Physical factors such as military power and geography indeed play a crucial role in how states approach international systemic pressures, but ideational factors such as history, experience, values, tradition, and beliefs also play an important role. For example, a multilateral cooperative approach to security may be more compatible with a culture that values peace and human rights compared to a more militaristic and expansionist approach to security. Further, a state’s approach to security in an anarchical world also influences military doctrine, if a state adopts offensive v. defensive doctrine, and hard v. soft power. For example, following World War II civilian casualties became less acceptable, which can be understood as both a function of new technological

operations and strategic thinking. See "On War, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret." *Princeton: SPrinceton* (1976).

innovations and an emphasis on human rights. Additionally, the U.S.'s military influence across the globe can also be understood as a projection of long rooted cultural ideas of manifest destiny and American Exceptionalism. Offensive v. defensive doctrine can also have as much to do with technology and geography, or capabilities in general, as with which one may be culturally more acceptable. Thus, how a state perceives threats and how it utilizes its instruments can be a broader manifestation of public opinion and cultural norms, socialized into a specific way of strategic thinking.

Capability is relative. Capabilities of states take on meaning only when they are viewed in relation to the objectives of the state and to the capabilities and objectives of others. Further, Art and Waltz (2009) highlight that “what functions as a power-asset is contextual, and may not be relevant in another”(8). Resources can only become aggregated into measurable or quantifiable capabilities in relation to political objectives that implicate subjective state interests and a state's perception of other's interests, objectives, and intentions. Such political objectives, willingness to convert resources into capabilities, how capabilities are conceptualized by a state in a given social, economic, and political context, and how other's capabilities and intentions are perceived involve calculations based on cultural norms and institutions.

War is also inherently political, as it is separated from other forms of violence through its use as a tool to attain political objectives. Baylis (2007) cites Clausewitz: “strategy is the essential link between political objectives and military force (69), in which “there should be a correlation between the value a state

attaches to its end and the means it uses to achieve them”(75). State interests and political objectives are not derived independently from the limitations of the military instrument and international systemic pressures, but are equally a function of cultural norms, values, and ways of thinking. Consequently, because policy drives strategy, culture is foundational in understanding a state’s approach to war. The U.S.’s strategy abroad can not be understood through it’s geography and military capabilities alone, but has to be framed within the state’s belief in democracy, freedom, and human rights, both as a political end of war, and beliefs that shape it’s use of its material capabilities.

The salience of ideational factors in explaining strategic behavior has several important implications for the future of emergency management policy. The allocation of US strategic assets- relief programs, financial aid, military and construction personnel- are linked to the broader cultural and social context in which they are embedded. Social and cultural constructs and particular perspectives that sustain hierarchically gendered social orders manifest themselves and are renewed in US emergency management institutions and disaster policy. Strategic uses of federal assets in domestic emergencies are not just contingent on physical, technological, and geographical constraints, but the complex patriarchal social order of normative society and the military in which they operate.

Focusing on changes in the implementation of FEMA’s physical and economic aid alone does not address the root cause of disaster vulnerabilities and narrows the scope of policy innovation. Effective strategic deployment of resources requires shifts in patriarchal ideological assumptions and power relations. Ideologies,

beliefs, and perspectives that are compatible with a social risk approach and findings of gender and disaster research must be investigated. A materialist feminist approach provides space for alternative standpoints and frames of analysis that uncover patriarchy's failure to reconcile the contradictions of federal disaster policy and those individuals within disaster zones whose lives are shaped by disaster policy. Policy prescriptions must recognize how patriarchy shapes US strategic behavior and, in turn, disaster policy and the anatomy of FEMA. Theorization of gender and disaster research and public policy cannot operate on the periphery if the emergency management sector is to be fundamentally transformed.

FEMINISM AS THE FUTURE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT?

Theory enables understanding. The theoretical architecture of US approaches to security and military doctrine, culture, and modes of operation are inordinately complex. Certainly, a discussion of realism and paradigms of strategic theory is not a comprehensive perspective and cannot fully capture the relationship between emergency management policy and the militarization of FEMA. Rather, this work shows the problems that exist by positioning US military and security thought as exogenous to feminist and gender disaster analyses. The relationship of patriarchal ideology and how it is enacted and renewed in emergency management institutions needs to be included as a new frame of examination. Specific policy proposals do not fully address the problems with a militarized emergency management sector. These findings provide for a richer and nuanced feminist approach to emergency management and disaster policy.

An increasing number of policymakers, academics, and practitioners have criticized the inclusion of FEMA into the DOHS and the implications of a militarized emergency management sector. However, the discourse and policy suggestions that have emerged from this criticism often neglect the ways social structures shape risk differentials and resilience to catastrophic events. Within feminist and gender disaster scholarship, examinations of a militarized emergency management sector rely on limited social paradigms for analysis. Gender bias in emergency management predominately focuses on how gendered social arrangements affect disaster services and management operations, as well as the inclusion of women in the disaster field and the design, implementations, and effects of policy in all stages of disaster events (Enarson, Fothergill, and Peek 2007). Current literature does not address the underlying theoretical frameworks and ideologies that shape the military and defense sector and, as such, shape disaster management and policy. Consequently, the root causes of why the militarization of FEMA is significant remains unexamined.

Diverse ranges of disciplines have generated important contributions to disaster scholarship and the field of emergency management (McEntire 2002). The development of emergency management theory provides openings to better understand the nature of disasters and vulnerability. Most areas of the gender and disaster field are policy and action oriented, where analyses are predominately limited to specific case studies of disaster events. Summarizing gender and disaster literature, Enarson, Fothergill, and Peek (2007) highlight that researchers “investigate how gender stereotypes affect disaster services and emergency operations; the careers of women in the field, and gender bias in the design, funding, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of

emergency shelters, water and sanitation, health care, and other post-disaster initiatives” (132). Studies are often characterized by in depth statistical and qualitative research, but tend to lack historical contextualization and deeper theoretical analysis of disaster vulnerability.

An intersectional approach to disaster research is understudied, though recently scholars have begun to pay more attention to the complexities of the relationship between structural inequality and systems of power and dominance; how individuals negotiate their social positioning and daily lives; and how experience and knowledge is embedded within societal institutions and social practices. Though salient patterns of gendered difference at all stages of disasters have been documented, it is necessary that the diversity of women be regarded as a central theme for future scholarship. Clearly, not all women experience disasters uniformly. Sexuality as a factor that augments vulnerability is virtually absent in the literature, as well as other aspects of social organizations that shapes people’s lives. An incomplete paradigm of disaster vulnerability remains a significant barrier to establishing theoretical links between structures of inequality and women’s lived experience. The absence of an intersectional approach to feminist and gender disaster scholarship reproduces power relations woven into discourse and institutions that undermine the resilience of women to disastrous events. Feminist theory can provide an approach to better acknowledge intersectionality and the complexities of human experience.

The nature of disasters and operational definitions vary in emergency management and disaster scholarship (McEntire 2003). Quarantelli (1995) contends, “unless we clarify and obtain minimum consensus on the defining features

per se, we will continue to talk past one another on the characteristics, conditions and consequences of disasters” (225). Feminist and gender disaster scholars perceive disasters as fundamentally social events. As long as dominant military paradigms perceive the nature of disasters and security differently, implementing policy alternatives and shifts in the organizational structure of FEMA may be very difficult. Better policy cannot be expected without changes in the ideological underpinnings of FEMA. Feminist theoretical frameworks of security and vulnerability must be imagined to better understand the relationship between women’s disaster experiences and structures of inequality. Greater community resilience to catastrophic events requires fundamental transformations in the emergency management sector. It is projected that FEMA will remain an agency of the DOHS for the foreseeable future. As such, it is paramount that feminist and gender disaster scholars examine the compatibility of forms of militarized thought and more effective disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response. It cannot be expected that inclusive and non-hierarchical models of management will be implemented if the emergency management sector fundamentally operates from patriarchal sites of power and domination.

References

- Art, R. J., & Waltz, K. N. (2009). *The use of force: Military power and international politics*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub Incorporated.
- Baylis, J. (2006). *Strategy in the contemporary world: an introduction to strategic studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Blanchard, E. M. (2003). Gender, international relations, and the development of feminist security theory. *Signs*, 28(4), 1289-1312.
- Clarke, S. E., & Chenoweth, E. (2006). The politics of vulnerability: Constructing local performance regimes for homeland security. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(1), 95-114.
- Enarson, E. (2006). What women do: Gendered labor in the Red River Valley flood. *Global Environmental Change Part B: Environmental Hazards*, 3(1), 1-18.
- Enarson, E., Fothergill, A., & Peek, L. A. (2007). Gender and disaster: Foundations and directions. *Handbook of disaster research*, 130-146.
- Enarson, E., & Morrow, B. H. (1998). *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Forsyth Jr, J. W. (2011). *The Past as Prologue: Realist Thought and the Future of American Security Policy*. Air Univ Maxwell AFB AL School of Advanced Air and Space Studies.
- Fothergill, A. (1996). Gender, Risk and Disaster. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 14, 33-56.
- Fothergill, A. (1998). The neglect of gender in disaster work: an overview of the

- literature. *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster: Through Women's Eyes*. Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers. Pp11-25.
- Fothergill, A. (2004). *Heads above water: Gender, class and family in the Grand Forks Flood*. SUNY Press.
- Fothergill, A., & Peek, L. A. (2004). Poverty and disasters in the United States: A review of recent sociological findings. *Natural Hazards*, 32(1), 89-110.
- Gibbons, D. E. (2007). *Communicable Crises: Prevention, Response, and Recovery in the Global Arena*. Information Age Pub Incorporated.
- Hoge, J. F., & Rose, G. (2001). *How did this happen?: terrorism and the new war*. Public Affairs.
- Hooyman, N. R., & Gonyea, J. G. (1999). A feminist model of family care: Practice and policy directions. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 11(2-3), 149-169.
- Kennan, G. F. (2012). *American Diplomacy: Sixtieth-Anniversary Expanded Edition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lovekamp, W. (2003). Gender and disaster: a synthesis of flood research in Bangladesh. Women and Disasters. *Exlibris publication from the International Sociological Association, Research Committee on Disasters*.
- McEntire, D.A. (2003). Searching for a holistic paradigm and policy guide: A proposal for the future of emergency management. *International Journal of Emergency Management*, 1(3), 298-308.
- McEntire, D. A. (2004). *The status of emergency management theory: Issues, barriers,*

- and recommendations for improved scholarship.* University of North Texas. Department of Public Administration. Emergency Administration and Planning.
- McEntire, D. A., Fuller, C., Johnston, C. W., & Weber, R. (2002). A comparison of disaster paradigms: the search for a holistic policy guide. *Public Administration Review*, 62(3), 267-281.
- McEntire, D. A., & Marsall, M. (2003). Epistemological Problems in Emergency Management: Theoretical Dilemmas and Implications. *ASPEP Journal*, 10, 119-129.
- Morrow, B. H., & Enarson, E. (1994, July). Making the case for gendered disaster research. In *XIIIth World Congress of Sociology*. Bielefeld, Germany (July 1994).
- Morrow, B. H., & Phillips, B. (1999). What's Gender "Got to Do With It"? *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 17(1), 5-11.
- Morrow, B. H., & Phillips, B. (2008). *Women and Disasters: From Theory to Practice*. Xlibris.
- Pasman, H. J., & Kirillov, I. A. (2008). *Resilience of cities to terrorist and other threats: Learning from 9/11 and further research issues*. Springer.
- Rosen, S. P. (1995). Military effectiveness: why society matters. *International Security*, 19(4), 5-31.
- Stokes, P. (2007). The militarizing of organization and management studies: Reconnoitering the tensions-problems and possibilities for reshaping the terrain? *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 3(1), 11-26.

- Sylves, R. T. (2007). US disaster policy and management in an era of homeland security. *Disciplines, Disasters and Emergency Management: The Convergence and Divergence of Concepts, Issues and Trends from the Research Literature*, 142-57.
- Tickner, J. A. (2001). *Gendering world politics: Issues and approaches in the post-Cold War era*. Columbia University Press.
- Tierney, K. (2006). Social inequality, hazards, and disasters. *On risk and disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina*, 109-128.
- Tierney, K. (2007). Recent developments in US Homeland Security policies and their implications for the management of extreme events. *Handbook of Disaster Research*, 405-412.
- Tierney, K., & Bevc, C. (2007). Disaster as war: Militarism and the social construction of disaster in New Orleans. *The sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a modern catastrophe*, 35-49.
- Quarantelli, E. L. (1995). What is a Disaster? *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 13(3), 221-229.
- Wenger, D. E., Quarantelli, E. L., & Dynes, R. R. (1989). *Disaster analysis: Police and fire departments*.
- Wisner, B., Blaikie, P., Connon, T., & Davis, I. (1994). *At Risk Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters*.