

Tricia Wachtendorf, PhD.
Director, Disaster Research Center

Differential Experience in Disasters:
Is there really too little time to “walk
a mile in your shoes?”



VULNERABILITY IS MORE THAN A VARIABLE

**VULNERABILITY IS SITUATIONAL
VULNERABILITY IS STRUCTURAL**

Vulnerability is tied to the context in
which it occurs

Vulnerability as a function of everyday life

Flooding events

- Women more likely to take warning messages seriously and want to act.
- Women more likely to be swept away in waters.
- Men more likely to stay behind and take care of the home.
- Men more likely to qualify for small business loans.

Fothergill: Grand Forks, ND 1997

- “The flood did not change who did what.”
- “Women’s family role demanded that they often put the role of mother ahead of their community role”
- What are the implications?

(Omi and Winant 1994: 55)

**RACE IS A CONCEPT WHICH SIGNIFIES
AND SYMBOLIZES SOCIAL CONFLICTS
AND INTERESTS BY REFERRING TO
DIFFERENT TYPES OF HUMAN BODIES**

What does Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice have to do with disaster warning?

Racial and ethnic minorities may not automatically see police, news media, or emergency management personnel...as trusted sources, as experiences with them prior to the hazardous event may influence perceptions. (Donner and Rodriguez, 2008)

Lazo, 2013: CALIF vs City of L.A.

- Creativity and the ability to improvise were offered as justifications for the lack of planning.

Standpoint theory

- Individual perspectives shaped by social and political experiences
- Multifaceted rather than essentializing (do not define people by their categories)
- What is credible? What is relevant?
- Strong objectivity (Sandra Harding): marginalized perspectives can help create more objective world accounts

- Shelter management
- Housing/site design
- Supply distribution
- Health care management

Standpoint theory

- What is credible? What is relevant?
 - I can live without food. I can't live without my medication.
- Marginalized perspectives can help create more objective world accounts
 - **Isolation**, limits capacity, lack of resources,

For more information, contact:

Tricia Wachtendorf, Ph.D.
Director / Disaster Research Center

Phone: 302-831-6618

Email: twachten@udel.edu

Webpage: www.udel.edu/DRC

Co-author of American Dunkirk:
The Waterborne Evacuation of Manhattan on
9/11 (Temple University Press, June 2016)

