

COORDINATION IN DISASTER RECOVERY: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND
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Sarah Jo Bundy

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By

Sarah Bundy

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Jessica Jensen

Chair

Dr. Daniel Klenow

Dr. George Youngs

Dr. Stephenson Beck

Approved:

October 23, 2013

Date

Dr. Daniel Klenow

Department Chair

ABSTRACT

Disaster scholarship and recent disaster policy in the United States have suggested that coordination of efforts in the disaster recovery process will allow impacted jurisdictions to maximize positive recovery outcomes. Yet it remains unclear exactly who should be, or is, coordinating disaster recovery at the local level. This study explored the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery in an attempt to understand what role these elected officials currently play in the recovery process—particularly as related to the coordination of recovery efforts.

During the initial data collection process, the researcher discovered that the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery appears to be consistent with their routine, day-to-day role in county government. No one person within the impacted counties was charged with a coordinator role in recovery. The researcher expanded the focus of the study to explore whether there were disaster conditions that necessitate overall coordination in order to best negotiate the recovery process and, if so, who was fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it.

Data was initially collected through 20 in-depth, telephone interviews with county elected officials in twelve states. Grounded theory was used to conceptualize the overall research design and analyze the data. Based on theoretical sampling, an additional 22 in-depth, telephone interviews were completed with a combination of county elected officials, emergency managers, designated recovery coordinators, and municipal mayors.

The data showed that overall coordination in disaster recovery as implied by the literature and supported in federal policy did not appear to be currently happening—at least not at the county level. Coordination—to the extent that it was occurring in most jurisdictions—could best

be described as in pockets and ad hoc. However, the study was unable to determine the extent to which this absence of coordination represents a problem in recovery. Based on the findings of this research, it would seem that there is a discrepancy between the literature-based idealization of coordination in recovery and the ad hoc coordination materializing in practice that needs to be addressed by both researchers and practitioners.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ADD..... | Attention Deficit Disorder |
| DMA..... | Disaster Mitigation Act |
| EMA..... | Emergency Management Agency |
| EOP..... | Emergency Operations Plan |
| ESP..... | Emergency Support Function |
| FEMA..... | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| GAO..... | Government Accountability Office |
| HUD..... | Housing and Urban Development |
| IA..... | Individual Assistance |
| IRB..... | Institutional Review Board |
| NACO..... | National Association of Counties |
| NHRAIC..... | Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center |
| NDRF..... | National Disaster Recovery Framework |
| NGA..... | National Governor’s Association |
| NIMS..... | National Incident Management System |
| NRP..... | National Response Plan |
| PA..... | Public Assistance |
| PKEMRA..... | Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act |
| PDD..... | Presidential Disaster Declaration |
| SBA..... | Small Business Association |

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Disaster scholarship and recent disaster policy in the United States have suggested that coordination of efforts in the disaster recovery process will allow impacted jurisdictions to maximize positive recovery outcomes, including taking advantage of opportunities to create more sustainable and disaster resilient communities (see for example: Alesch, Arendt, & Holly, 2009; Berke, Kartez, & Wenger, 1993; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Yet, it remains unclear exactly who should be, or is, coordinating disaster recovery at the local level. Thus, this study explored the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery in an effort to understand what role these elected officials currently play in the recovery process and the implications of that role in relation to the coordination of recovery efforts. Specifically, this research sought to address the following question:

1. What is the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery?

During the data collection process, the researcher discovered that the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery appears to be consistent with their routine, day-to-day role in county government. In the vast majority of cases, no one person within the impacted counties was charged with a coordinator role in recovery—not the elected official or anyone else. The researcher expanded the focus of the study to explore whether there were disaster conditions that necessitate overall coordination in order to best negotiate the recovery process and, if so, who was fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it.

Background

Over the past three decades, emergency management has utilized four functional areas (i.e., mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) as its primary organizing paradigm in

both practice and scholarship (Britton, 1999; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007; National Governor's Association, 1979; Neal, 1997). Of these areas, there is evidence that one in particular, namely recovery, remains neglected (Rubin, 2009). Recovery is "the differential process of restoring, rebuilding, and reshaping the physical, social, economic, and natural environment through pre-event planning and post-event actions" (Smith & Wenger, 2006, p. 237).

As noted in the above definition, recovery is viewed as a dynamic process, meaning it has no distinct beginning or end (Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Quarantelli, 1998; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011; Sullivan, 2003). Recovery is comprised of many sets of separate but interrelated activities through which individuals, organizations, and communities move at different rates (Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Quarantelli, 1998; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011; Sullivan, 2003). It is understood that the recovery process varies both by, and within, stakeholder groups, meaning that individuals, neighborhoods, organizations, and communities will not all recover uniformly, have the same recovery needs, utilize the same recovery resources, and some may not recover at all (Alesch et al., 2009; Bates & Peacock, 1989; Phillips, 2009; Quarantelli, 1998; Smith & Wenger, 2006). Moreover, recovery progress is influenced by a host of factors including pre-disaster conditions, the nature of the hazard event, accessibility and availability of resources, and the decisions and actions taken in the post-impact stage, among other factors (Alesch et al., 2009; Bolin & Stanford, 1991; Bolin & Trainer, 1978; Chappell, Forgette, Swanson, & Van Boening, 2007; Nigg, 1995; Olshansky, 2005; Passerini, 2000; Phillips, 1993; Quarantelli, 1998; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Webb, Tierney, & Dahlhamer, 2003). Much is at stake in the recovery process (Smith & Wenger, 2006). Potential negative outcomes of a poorly executed recovery process include "shoddy reconstruction, a loss

of jobs, a reduction in affordable housing stock, missed opportunities to incorporate mitigation into the rebuilding process, and an inability to assist the neediest... ” (Smith & Wenger, 2006, p. 239) and a failure “...to return to their pre-disaster condition, or worse, actions [that] increase...exposure to hazards, worsen economic conditions, damage natural systems, or exacerbate racial and ethnic tensions” (Smith & Wenger, 2006, p. 239).

When done well, the recovery process “recognizes the possibilities of the situation and manages the necessary activities to create solutions, not additional problems” (National Hazards Center, 2005, p. 2-2). Communities can potentially take advantage of a window of opportunity presented by a disaster to improve infrastructure, the economy, the environment, and quality of life, including addressing ongoing concerns such as urban decay, affordable housing, and traffic congestions (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Passerini, 2000; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006). The outcomes of a well-executed recovery process can include an improved community that has increased community resiliency through mitigation efforts and/or the pursuit of sustainability objectives (Alesch et al., 2009; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006).

Academia is not alone in recognizing that future economic, political, environmental, and cultural conditions of communities hang in the balance during the recovery process (Smith & Wenger, 2006; Stehr, 2001; Rubin, 2009). The federal government has long had involvement in disaster recovery, mainly in the form of federal assistance programs directed at aiding impacted state and local governments (Rubin, 2007). However, recent events, particularly Hurricane Katrina, have highlighted shortcomings in these federal programs, as well as deficiencies in how recovery is managed at every level of government (Smith, 2011). The federal government has now acknowledged disaster recovery as a source of concern requiring attention at the highest

levels (Government Accountability Office 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012; Smith, 2011; Waugh & Streib, 2006). In 2006, Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), which required the federal government to develop a national recovery strategy. In 2009, President Barack Obama directed a newly-formed Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group to grapple with these emerging recovery concerns and fix identified shortcomings. This group's work resulted in the release of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) in 2011. The NDRF seeks to provide

guidance that enables effective recovery support to disaster-impacted States, Tribes and local jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner. It also focuses on how best to restore, redevelop and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient Nation. (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011, p. 1)

This document offers evidence that the federal government acknowledges the potential consequences—both negative and positive—associated with disaster recovery and is placing greater emphasis on a coordinated recovery process that incorporates all the various elements of a community system. Although the federal government has recently focused its attention on recovery, it will be important that this focus also extends to lower levels of government.

In the United States emergency management system, the local government bears the primary responsibility for recovery after a disaster (McLoughlin, 1985; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). Although local government shoulders the majority of the recovery burden, the local government does not navigate this process alone. The federal government plays a part by making resources available when emergency or disaster declarations are made (Drabek, 1985; Rubin, 2007, Smith, 2011; Sylves, 2008). And, state government also provides limited support (Rubin, 2007). But, even with “the augmentations and specialized functions that are provided by state and federal agencies, especially during the recovery phases

of many disasters, the first line of responsibility for public protection resides with local government” (Drabek, 1985, p. 85). Other entities, such as the private sector and non-profit organizations from both within and outside the disaster-stricken area also figure into the recovery picture by rendering assistance to a recovering community (Berke et al., 1993; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011; Stehr, 2001). Yet, as Smith (2011) states, “regardless of the type, quantity, or duration of assistance provided by members of the disaster recovery assistance network, the local unit of government—city, county, or township—is ultimately held responsible for community-level recovery” (p. 49). With the heavy burden of responsibility placed on local government, it is critical to have an understanding of how this responsibility is distributed within local government.

No one individual at the local level is responsible for avoiding the perils associated with the recovery process or guaranteeing community enhancement as a result of the recovery process (Canton, 2007; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Rather, averting potential negative consequences and securing the best possible recovery outcomes is a responsibility shared by the community (Canton, 2007; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Emergency management—including recovery—is a distributed function—many individuals, organizations, and government entities have a role in the completion of the activities related to emergency management tasks (Canton, 2007). Since recovery is “at once everyone’s job and no one’s job” (Jensen, Bundy, Thomas, & Yakubu, e.d., p. 27), a critical part of understanding the complexities of disaster recovery at the local level is to identify how members of the many and diverse governmental and nongovernmental organizations that do the actual work associated with the recovery process fit into the disaster recovery picture, including the extent to which their efforts are coordinated with one another throughout the recovery process.

The literature implies that coordination of the distributed function of disaster recovery is a key responsibility of local government. As Drabek and Hoetmer (1991) recount, “No one person or office is responsible for all tasks, but the activities listed will be uncoordinated and unrelated unless local officials take clear and appropriate action” (p. 226). Federal disaster recovery policy also suggests coordination of the recovery process should fall to the local government. Specifically, the NDRF recognizes the centrality of the local government to the disaster recovery process and identifies the need for a designated recovery coordinator at the local level to ensure the recovery process is coordinated across the diverse stakeholders involved in the process and to facilitate communities’ ability to “capitalize on opportunities to rebuild stronger, smarter and safer” (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011, p. 1).

Yet, despite the importance of local government to the recovery process, there is little empirical work to suggest just who is doing what and how in the recovery process at the local level, particularly in relation to fulfilling this implied need for the coordination of distributed recovery tasks and activities. Since emergency management is the profession charged with “coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to...recover from...disasters” (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007, p. 4), researchers have suggested that the local emergency manager should be intimately involved in disaster recovery (Berke et al., 1993; Phillips, 2009; Schwab, Topping, Eadie, Doyle, & Smith, 1998). However, recent literature suggests the current involvement of local emergency managers in recovery is minimal and restricted to administrative tasks such as paperwork (Jensen et al., e.d.). One has to wonder then if the local emergency manager does not play a significant role in disaster recovery (Jensen et al., e.d.), who—if anyone—within local government is coordinating and integrating this process?

Academia has made several suggestions regarding who is involved in disaster recovery at the local level, but offers little empirically based insight into how the recovery process actually plays out in local government. For example, local government departments such as planning, public works, and engineering are thought to be heavily engaged during recovery (Berke et al., 1993), particularly with respect to certain recovery tasks such as planning, debris management, damage assessment, restoration of utilities and services, and housing (Phillips, 2009). But exactly which departments are involved, how they go about accomplishing these tasks, the extent to which their activities are coordinated with other members of the distributed emergency management function, and how they shape the process have yet to be documented.

Local government leaders, including elected officials, are also said to bear significant responsibility for the management of the recovery process (Phillips, 2009; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011). As noted by Stehr (2001), “strategic choices made by local decision makers both before and after an event determine the success of both the immediate and long-term recovery processes” (p. 427). And local elected officials have significant authority to make decisions regarding a wide range of community matters. Much like democratically elected leaders at the national and state level, local elected officials represent constituents, control the public budget, make policy, and appoint and oversee other bureaucratic positions within their jurisdiction (Sokolow, 1993). Within their purview falls “agenda setting, resource allocations, staffing, training, and, ultimately, the effective implementation of a program designed to...recover from disasters” (Petak, 1985, p. 5). This broad span of influence potentially positions local elected officials to act as leaders in and drivers of the recovery process.

However, local elected officials have traditionally maintained an apathetic stance towards emergency management (Labadie, 1984). Beholden to the elected public, these elected

officials tend to place greater emphasis on day-to-day administrative matters and issues of immediate concern that resonate with the voting public (Labadie, 1984; Lindell, Prater, & Perry, 2007; Sylves, 2008; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). As such, when a disaster strikes, these local elected officials may lack knowledge related to the emergency management issues and activities within their communities (Labadie, 1984). This knowledge deficit may compel elected officials to rely on other public officials to play a larger role during the recovery process (Vogelsang-Combs & Miller, 1999). Alternatively, local elected officials may serve simply as “rubber stampers” of the decisions or actions of others (Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). Or, local elected officials may become champions of citizen views, letting political pressures determine their areas of engagement in the recovery process (Sylves, 2008; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). Given that the effectiveness of political officials is often evaluated in terms of whether or not they get reelected (Vogelsang-Combs & Miller, 1999), local elected officials may understand satisfying the demands of the voting public in recovery to be their most critical function.

Local elected officials could play a pivotal role in navigating their communities through the disaster recovery process by coordinating the wide array of stakeholders engaging in recovery tasks and activities; or, the burden of leadership may fall elsewhere, leaving local elected officials with a purely administrative or decision-making function. The bottom line is that not much is known about just what local elected officials do in disaster recovery, the decisions they make, and their influence on the overall process.

In considering the recovery process at the local level, it is important to recognize that local government is not a singular entity. Rather local government can be broadly categorized into three basic forms: counties, municipalities, and special districts (Smith, Greenblatt, & Buntin, 2005). The distinction between local levels of government is not often recognized in

emergency management literature, particularly research on disaster recovery. There are a few studies that have examined a particular level of local government (see for example: Jensen et al., e.d.; Phillips & Neal, 2004). However, disaster literature regularly references local government generically when discussing its responsibilities, actions, or capabilities, failing to specify which level of local government is being discussed or if differences exist between the different levels (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Berke et al., 1993; McLoughlin, 1985; Petak, 1985; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011; Stehr, 2001; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990).

This study focused on the county government. To focus on the county level is not to dismiss the importance of emergency management at the municipal level of local government or to ignore the special districts within local government, such as the school districts or water supply districts that play a part in the distributed function of emergency management. Rather, since the combination of a growing demand for service and increasing political autonomy have led scholars to suggest “that county governments could become the local governments of choice—if not necessity—in the 21st century” (Benton, Byers, Cigler, Klase, Menzel, Salant, Streib, Svava, & Waugh, 2008), examining the county level of local government serves as a logical starting point from which to begin to further analyze disaster recovery at the local government level.

Recovery is a complicated process with a diverse array of governmental and nongovernmental organizations doing the work associated with it; and, the consequences for a poorly executed process are significant (Smith & Wenger, 2006). There is much to lose if not done well. Despite the centrality of local governments to the recovery process, little is known about how these governments negotiate this process, particularly in terms of how the

responsibility is distributed both across and within various local governments and the extent to which this distributed function is being coordinated.

In the context of the proceeding discussion, this study set out to address this lack of knowledge about local government in the recovery process by concentrating on a primary player in the local government arena—the elected official. Specifically, this research sought to explore the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery. However, in the process of data collection, it was discovered that, in the vast majority of cases, the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery remained consistent with their routine role within the county government. County elected officials did not appear to be assuming any sort of unique coordination or leadership role as related to the recovery process. In fact, in most cases, overarching coordination was absent during the recovery period, seemingly from a lack of perceived need. Due to this discovery, the data collection and subsequent data analysis for this research expanded to investigate whether there were conditions under which overall coordination needed to be present in order to successfully negotiate recovery and, if so, who was fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it.

Significance

Emergency management's historical bias toward preparedness and response (Stehr, 2007) has meant that recovery has been largely ignored in both practice and research. In fact, recovery has been described as the least understood functional area in emergency management by academics and practitioners alike (Berke et al., 1993; Olshansky, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Rubin, 2009). Unlike preparedness and response, “scholars have yet to address fundamental questions [and] practitioners have failed to establish an integrated policy framework or utilize readily available tools to improve disaster recovery outcomes” (Smith & Wenger, 2006, p. 234).

Yet, there is growing recognition in emergency management of the need to bridge this gap in knowledge related to disaster recovery (Olshansky, 2005; Rubin, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006).

The number of hazard events occurring each year in the United States has been increasing, as have been the impacts on individual communities and states and our nation at-large (Rubin, 2007). As such, the recovery process is increasingly being negotiated without the benefit of guidance from any normative or empirical theory. Guidance would be helpful since the range of potential consequences from a poorly executed recovery process is more and more widely acknowledged by both practitioners and academics (Smith & Wenger, 2006). While findings related to recovery have accumulated over time, they have not done so to the same extent as findings related to preparedness, response, and even mitigation (Rubin, 2009). Valuable progress has been made, but now the academic community has a renewed interest in seeing the prior work on recovery built upon and expanded (Rubin, 2009).

It is known that local governments are primarily responsible for executing disaster recovery within their communities (McLoughlin, 1985; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). It is implied that part of this local government responsibility includes coordinating the different parts of the distributed function (Alesch et al., 2009; Berke et al., 1993; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). It is also known that local governments come in multiple forms, including counties, municipalities, and special districts (Smith et al., 2005). Yet, it remains unknown how this responsibility for recovery—including coordination—is distributed within and across local government.

This research began to answer this question by initially focusing on one of the primary actors in local government, the local elected official, at a pivotal level of local government, the county level. This study discovered the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery.

This study further explored the recovery role of county emergency managers—confirming what previous research had found regarding their involvement. This study also investigated when overall coordination was occurring in counties and the reasons for coordination—or lack thereof. In so doing, this study further addresses gaps in recovery knowledge, sets the stage for future research, and, through discussion, makes very specific recommendations for how coordination issues in disaster recovery could be addressed.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the distributed nature of the disaster recovery process, outlined the important role of the local government within that process, and highlighted the lack of knowledge surrounding how the local government—particularly local elected officials—go about fulfilling this significant role. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to recovery tasks and activities, the county context, factors that influence recovery outcomes, and community change in the recovery period—using that literature to develop an idealized recovery coordinator role. Chapter Three introduces the research methods for this dissertation. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven report the results of this research. Chapter Eight discuss the significance of this study’s results and its implications for emergency management discipline, policy, and practice. And, Chapter Nine concludes this dissertation by summarizing the study and providing recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two reviews the theoretical foundation for this study. Since no empirical research has explicitly examined the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery—particularly as it relates to overall coordination—the following review of the literature does not function as a means to demonstrate how this research fits into what is already known on the topic (Maxwell, 2005). Rather, this literature review was undertaken to provide theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978), allowing the researcher to begin the project with an awareness of the subtleties that may be associated with the data collected. Specifically, in this chapter, the researcher demonstrates an understanding of those contextual and background elements related to both disaster recovery and county government, which assisted the researcher during the collection and analysis phases by providing needed insight, giving meaning to data, and helping detach relevant from irrelevant information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, the researcher outlines how these contextual and background factors suggest a potential role that county elected officials could be playing in disaster recovery, which provided the basis for a comparison between the current role of county elected officials and the role implied by the relevant literature.

The first section examines the tasks and activities associated with disaster recovery, including the differentiation between short-term and long-term recovery tasks. The second section highlights the diversity of county governments in relation to services provided, intergovernmental relations, populations served, organizational structure, and attitudes towards emergency management. The third section reviews the factors that affect the way recovery is approached and recovery outcomes at the local level, including stakeholder participation, integration, and community leadership that is based on a knowledge of what to do and ability to act. The fourth section discusses the potential for positive community change as a result of the

recovery process. The fifth section uses the literature to develop an idealized disaster recovery coordinator role.

Recovery Tasks and Activities

The literature has identified a variety of tasks that should be, or are, completed as part of the disaster recovery process. For instance, one of the most commonly identified tasks associated with disaster recovery is planning (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Berke & Campanella, 2006; Olshansky, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith, 2011). Planning is most effective when it occurs prior to a disaster, but the majority of recovery planning still happens in the post-disaster timeframe (Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011). Regardless of when it occurs, planning can “provide some vision that serves as a beacon for decision makers and some framework within which decisions will be taken” (Schwab et al., 1998, p. 47). Recovery planning should include stakeholders from local government, state and federal government, the private sector, and voluntary agencies (Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith, 2011). Citizen participation can also bolster recovery planning and the perceptions of the recovery process (Alesch et al., 2009; Kweit & Kweit, 2004; Phillips, 2009). This type of planning can be an opportunity to outline a vision of the community for the future and can be strengthened by linking it to other planning initiatives such as comprehensive plans and mitigation plans (Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998). As constituency representatives, budgetary agents, and policy makers for the community, it would seem that the involvement of county elected officials would be important to the recovery planning process and its ability to guide the community in both a socially desirable and fiscally feasible manner. However, it remains unclear if, and to what extent, county elected officials are involved in recovery planning either before or after a disaster.

Beyond planning, the literature distinguishes two categories of tasks associated with disaster recovery: short-term and long-term. Generally speaking, short-term tasks can be understood as those linked to the phase transition from response to recovery and long-term tasks as those associated with reconstructing, rebuilding, or otherwise restoring various aspects of the community (Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Schwab et al., 1998). Examples of short-term tasks include damage assessments, debris removal, temporary relocation and housing, restoration of utilities and public services, volunteer management, and donations management (Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998). Examples of long-term tasks include housing recovery, business recovery, infrastructure repair, cultural and historic site restoration, public sector recovery, and social or psychological recovery (Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985).

Given that local government shoulders the primary responsibility for community recovery, it would follow that the aftermath of a disaster would find localities accountable for the completion of a myriad of tasks and activities associated with disaster recovery. Nothing in the literature suggests that elected officials would be the actual “doers” of these recovery tasks (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011); instead, the literature implies that the doers of the recovery tasks are distributed among officials in various departments and agencies of the jurisdiction, in concert with non-profit or private sector organizations (Alesch et al., 2009; Canton, 2007; Phillips, 2009). Yet, completion of each recovery task requires careful consideration of a variety of issues at each stage (i.e., before beginning, during, and post-completion) and most recovery tasks are associated with a wide range of activities that may involve elected officials.

There is a considerable body of research that explores the considerations and activities involved in each recovery task. This work suggests factors that facilitate and hinder task completion, as well as how these items can be completed in a manner that makes communities more sustainable and/or resilient (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Al-Nammari, 2009; Bates & Peacock, 1992; Bolin & Stanford, 1991; Bolin & Trainer, 1978; Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2008; Comerio, 1997; Corey & Deitch, 2011; Haynes, Danes, & Stafford, 2011; Runyan, 2006; Webb et al., 2003). The actions of county elected officials could potentially shape several of these factors and influence how those who are doing the actual recovery tasks go about getting them accomplished and the subsequent effectiveness of those endeavors.

For example, empirical studies on long-term business recovery have observed a variety of factors linked to their effective recovery. Webb et al. (2003) note that businesses with a short duration of closure, less operational disruption, and less physical damage are more likely to successfully recover. Webb et al. (2003) also suggest that newer businesses, businesses with poor pre-disaster financial conditions, businesses with regional, national, or international markets, and businesses outside of the wholesale and retail industry are also in a better position to recover. Larger companies and businesses that own property versus leasing have also been shown to have a greater propensity for recovery (Phillips, 2009; Runyan 2006), as have businesses that undertook preparedness measures pre-disaster (Runyan, 2006), businesses who implemented loss containment measures (Phillips, 2009), and businesses with a feedback mechanism to the government (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2008). Haynes et al. (2011) indicate that small family businesses headed by women and those transferring more income from the business to the family are most likely to succeed in recovery efforts.

Conversely, research has also determined a number of barriers to business recovery. Runyan (2006) notes that losing records during an event, inexperience with borrowing money, the onerous process to apply for financial assistance, the time lag between application for financial assistance and receipt of funds, the inability to assess damage, and a disrupted distribution network are all challenges that can negatively impact business recovery. A lack of customer base, lack of staff, lack of infrastructure, and a lack of information have also been identified as obstacles for businesses recovery (Corey & Deitch, 2011; Phillips, 2009), as has the zoning, permitting, and inspections processes (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2008; Phillips, 2009). In addition, pre-disaster regulatory schemes surrounding professional licensing, financing, and other hurdles businesses must overcome to achieve legal status may impede entrepreneurial efforts post-disaster (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2008; Runyan, 2006). And regime uncertainty, which “occurs when officials announce conflicting policies or make conflicting statements about the prospects for, or desirability of, the recovery of a particular community” (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2008, p. 10), can hinder the efforts of the businesses to recover as these businesses rely on clear signals from both the marketplace and community to make decisions in the recovery process (Chamlee-Wright et al., 2008; Runyan, 2006).

Although county elected officials cannot affect many of these facilitating and inhibiting factors, within this lengthy list there are areas where county elected officials could potentially have influence. For example, public meetings or hearings on business recovery that include businesses and business interest organizations could facilitate two-way communication, providing mechanisms for businesses to both provide feedback on the recovery process and their needs, while also allowing elected officials the opportunity to communicate information that can assist in making business decisions. Such interface could serve to minimize regime uncertainty.

County elected officials could also temporarily amend laws or suspend policies to allow for an expedited process for zoning, inspections, and permitting, as well as other regulations that may delay entrepreneurial efforts. In addition, county elected officials could also authorize funding for a public information campaign that publicizes which businesses are open, what services those businesses are provided, and a projected schedule for future business openings.

Beyond these facilitating and inhibiting factors for each task and activity, the literature suggests that how a community approaches these recovery tasks and activities overall during the recovery process can influence recovery outcomes. An approach that seeks to rebuild quickly and return the community to what it was prior to the disaster may result in the community failing to take advantage of the opportunities to improve itself that are available during the recovery process (Alesch et al., 2009; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger 2006; Smith 2011). Instead, the literature advocates that communities take a *holistic* or *sustainable* approach where “the principles of sustainability become decision making criteria applied in recovery decisions” (Natural Hazards Center, 2005, p.1-1). This notion of holistic recovery means that when deciding how to undertake recovery tasks and activities, communities should use a participatory process and consider how these tasks and activities can be accomplished so as to enhance quality of life, build economic vitality, promote social and intergenerational equality, protect the environment, and incorporate disaster resilience and mitigation (Mileti, 1999; Natural Hazards Center, 2005).

To leverage this holistic approach, a community “should strive to fully coordinate available assistance and funding, while seeking ways to accomplish other community goals and priorities, using the disaster recovery process as the catalyst” (Natural Hazards Center, 2005, p. 2-2). Alesch et al. (2009) note that it is important to think of communities as a system

understanding “that all the parts are interconnected and have to develop roughly in tandem with other parts” (p. 164). The literature implies that tasks and activities related to recovery should not be conducted in isolation, but rather coordinated across the diverse doers of recovery (Alesch et al., 2009; Berke et al., 1993; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Smith, 2011). Such coordination allows communities to maximize an understanding of how the different tasks and activities are contributing to the creation of a more sustainable community (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006). It also allows communities to build capacity for best accomplishing these tasks and activities and introduces diversity in developing ideas and solutions related to recovery challenges (Alesch et al., 2009; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger 2006; Smith 2011). For example, Phillips (2009), suggests that rather than seeing housing recovery as a singular recovery task, housing should be viewed in the context of all the elements that “make a community a place worth living in” (p. 198). Considerations such as green space, access to public transportation, and connections to places of employment should be taken into account meaning that associated recovery tasks such as environmental restoration, infrastructure repair, and business recovery would necessarily be influenced by housing recovery—and vice versa—and would need to be coordinated to achieve the desired outcomes (Phillips, 2009). In taking a holistic approach to recovery, tasks and activities are necessarily linked together and must be thought of comprehensively—the positive and negative consequences associated with task completion must be considered in light of all the dimensions of community recovery (National Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009).

County elected officials could play a critical role in leading their communities to adopt this holistic approach to disaster recovery tasks and activities. County elected officials could also

act as coordinators of the different tasks and activities—or appoint another individual to do so—to ensure that the tasks and activities are working in harmony towards creating a more sustainable community. County elected officials, as policymakers, could also contribute to holistic recovery by considering the sustainability principles in policy decisions related to disaster recovery. However, community expectations of a quick return to normal, difficulties associated with stepping back to gain a larger perspective, and challenges with turning sustainable visions into reality may inhibit the ability of county elected officials—or other local officials—to create and maintain this bigger picture of recovery tasks and activities (Alesch et al., 2009; Passerini, 2000, 2001). The extent to which county elected officials champion this holistic approach, strive for coordination among the various recovery tasks and activities, and make policy decisions based on sustainability principles is unknown.

This review would suggest that county elected officials could be playing a noteworthy role in the disaster recovery process related to recovery tasks and how they proceed, even if they are not actually doing the tasks themselves. However, it remains to be seen whether or not elected officials indeed maintain a significant role in influencing these recovery tasks and how they are accomplished.

County Context

The ability of county elected officials to influence recovery tasks and how they proceed within their jurisdictions may be shaped by several contextual factors. Counties across the United States vary significantly from one to the next. The role that counties play in service provision in relation to other levels of government, the ability of counties to generate and implement policy, the number of constituents served by counties, the strength of the county government *vis-à-vis* other levels of government, the organizational structure of counties, and how counties view

emergency management vary significantly from one county to the next. These contextual factors influence the environment in which the county elected officials operate, including the responsibilities associated with their position and the challenges they face in the fulfillment of those responsibilities. A review of the landscape of county contexts provides an important foundation for examining the role county elected officials' may play in disaster recovery.

Changing Role of County Government

Counties are the basic geographic subdivisions of state government. Historically, county governments have also acted as administrative arms of the state, delivering functions and services mandated by the state government (see for example: Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; Duncombe, 1977; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Martin, 1993; Smith et al., 2005; Streib & Waugh, 1991). These services have included administration of property taxes, administration of elections, judicial administration, provision of human and social services, road maintenance and construction, recording deeds and other legal instruments, and law enforcement, including jails run by county sheriffs (Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Kemp, 2008; Smith et al., 2005; Streib & Waugh, 1991).

Increasing suburbanization after World War II led to a changing role for county government (Benton, 2003; Kemp, 2008; Martin, 1993; Streib & Waugh, 1991). The demographic shift from urban to outlying areas created an increasing demand for counties to provide services that previously fell to municipal governments, such as housing, mass transit, highways, parks, airports, water supply and sewage, planning, and zoning (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; Benton & Menzel, 1993; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Kemp, 2008; Marando & Thomas, 1977; Smith et al., 2005). In acquiring the responsibility for increased service provision, many counties also sought greater autonomy from the state so as to have the flexibility to

undertake the policy-making and administrative actions necessary to fulfill these demands (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Duncombe, 1977; Kemp, 2008).

Yet, while counties have wanted more autonomy in how they provided services within their geographic jurisdiction, they have nevertheless faced several challenges that have made it difficult for them to be more independent from states. For instance, counties have struggled to obtain the fiscal capacity to support their expanded service functions (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; Berman & Lehman, 1993; Smith et al., 2005). Increasing revenue flexibility through changing the level or pattern of intergovernmental assistance, altering property tax laws and implementation, or revising user charges or fees can assist with bridging the financial gap (Benton et al., 2008; Cigler, 1993); yet counties have met with varying level of success in taking advantage of this flexibility (Benton et al., 2008). Counties have also had difficulty using sophisticated financial management techniques associated with administering larger pools of money (Waugh & Streib, 1993).

In addition to concerns about financial capacity, many counties have not had the administrative capacity and/or the political capacity to provide expanded services (Lobao & Kraybill, 2005; Waugh & Streib, 1993). Administrative and political capacity refers to having the “knowledge and leadership skills related to the democratic political system” (Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999, p. 199) that are required to accomplish what local officials want or need to do within their counties (Gargan, 1981; Vogelsang-Coombs & Miller, 1999; Waugh & Hy, 1988; Waugh & Streib, 1993). Included in administrative and political capacity are elements such as local policy-making discretion, policy management aptitude, the ability to translate community values into a set of policy priorities and programs, sophistication of management techniques, and ability to integrate new technologies (Streib & Waugh, 1991; Waugh & Streib,

1993). Waugh & Streib (1993) found significant variation in county governments across all three types of capacities—financial, administrative, and political—noting that “there are some counties delivering the most demanding services very effectively, and there are counties operating literally out of the garages and checkbooks of elected officials” (p. 52).

As noted by Martin (1993), “the proper role and responsibilities of county government in the local intergovernmental context remains a major unresolved issue” (p. 12). Tensions remain regarding the differing conceptualizations of the county as an administrative arm of the state and as a unit of local government providing day-to-day services (Berman, Martin, & Kajfex, 1985; Martin, 1993). The provision of municipal-like services has also brought county government into competition and conflict with municipalities regarding which services are most appropriate for the different level of government to provide to what citizens (Martin, 1993). Further, the evidence is unclear regarding the capacity of county governments to offer these services and to create and implement policies and programs capable of addressing constituent desires and needs (Streib & Waugh, 1991).

While the general role of county elected officials is to represent constituents, control the public budget, make policy, and appoint and oversee other bureaucratic positions within their jurisdiction (Sokolow, 1993; Vogelsang-Combs & Miller, 1999), the contextual factors described above may impact how they go about fulfilling this role (Berman & Lehman, 1993). County elected officials may be operating under very different state-county relationships and county-municipality relationships (Martin, 1993; Streib & Waugh, 1991; Waugh & Streib, 1993). These relationships may have varying levels of conflict or collaboration depending on how well the county role in intergovernmental relations is established and agreed upon (Waugh, 1994). County elected officials may also have differing levels of responsibility and expectations for the

fulfillment of services, as well as varying degrees of autonomy for making decisions in relation to these responsibilities (Benton, 2003; Berman & Lehman, 1993; Duncombe, 1977; Sokolow, 1993; Smith et al., 2005).

The contextual factors highlighted above could potentially influence the extent to which and how county elected officials play a role in the disaster recovery process. For instance, a county elected official in a county that serves more as an administrative agent of the state may have less of a decision-making and more of an administrative role in recovery than a counterpart in a more autonomous locale. Or, a county elected official operating in a more confrontational state-county or county-municipality environment may have to divert more time and energy towards delineating local versus state recovery responsibilities than a county elected official in a collaborative environment. And, a county elected official in a county lacking capabilities to fulfill service requirements may necessarily focus more on attaining those lacking capabilities from outside sources while a colleague in a county with higher capabilities may be able to put efforts elsewhere. Ultimately, however, the nature and degree of the impact of these contextual factors on the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery remains unknown.

County Diversity

In addition to changing roles in the intergovernmental context, “the responsibilities, operation, and structure of counties vary with the laws and customs of each state and with their location on the rural-urban continuum” (Berman & Lehman, 1993, p. xiii). The preference for governing at the town and township level that developed during the colonial period has been retained in New England, meaning county governments have remained a relatively weak, and in some cases, non-existent, form of government in that region of the county (Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2003; Martin, 1993; Smith et al., 2005). Counties in Connecticut and Rhode

Island have no government authority, but exist as geographic subdivisions only. And, Massachusetts to date has abolished eight of its 14 county governments (Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth). Conversely, county government has enjoyed prominence in the south and southeastern part of the United States (Berman & Lehman, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2003; Martin, 1993; Smith et al., 2005). This enhanced standing may be attributed to the region's historic rural character and low population density which has required a local government structure that could cover a large area (Dunscombe, 1977; Harrigan & Nice, 2003). In the middle and western parts of the country there is variation in the status of county government with some county governments being stronger than others (Martin, 1993).

Counties also range considerably in physical size, population, and population density (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Arlington County, Virginia is the smallest county, covering only 42 square miles, while North Slope Borough, Alaska traverses 142,224 square miles of mostly uninhabited land (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The average population of all counties is 83,705, but county population size spans a vast range of 82 in Loving County, Texas to over 9.8 million in Los Angeles County, California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). And the most densely populated county, New York County, New York, has over 69,000 people living per square mile, while the least densely populated county, Lake and Peninsula County, Alaska, has less than one person living per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The wide variation in county size, population, and population density can be thought of as creating a rural-to-urban continuum along which counties can be placed (Berman & Lehman, 1993). Where a county is located on along this rural-to-urban continuum influences county government's responsibilities and capabilities. Typically, more urban counties maintain governments that provide more services in a more efficient manner than their rural counterparts

(Berman & Lehman, 1993; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Lobao & Kraybill, 2005; Schneider & Park, 1989; Warner & Hefetz, 2002). Rural county government faces challenges because many rural elected officials are part-time or volunteer and have limited expertise or training in making resource decisions (see for example: Cigler, 1993; Lewis, 1986; Voorslang-Combs & Miller, 1999). In addition, because the cost per taxpayer of providing services decreases as the population goes up, rural counties have difficulties affording the same level of services as their urban counterparts (Cigler, 1993). And, in general, these smaller governments find themselves with more limited revenue options, depending almost solely on property tax (Cigler, 1993).

County governments also differ in their forms of government. Most counties use a commission, or plural executive, form of county government, which consists of a melding of legislative and executive authority into an elected board of supervisors or county commission (DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2009). Row officers, such as the county clerk, coroner, sheriff, treasurer, attorney, and tax assessor, may also be elected and share in the executive powers (DeSantis & Renner, 1993). A lack of a singular executive with responsibility for the operation of the entire county can “create tremendous fragmentation of the system, promoting chaos, inefficiency, and little centralized accountability” (DeSantis & Renner, 1993, p. 22).

Due to the perceived shortcomings of this traditional form of county government (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999), more than 40 percent of counties have shifted to either the county administrator or the elected executive type form of government (National Association of Counties, 2012). Under the county administrator format, voters elect a legislative body who in turn appoint an executive responsible to this body to implement policies and oversee daily administration of the executive departments (DeSantis &

Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2009). Under a county executive format, the county executive is elected at-large separately from the legislature and acts as the chief administrative officer of the jurisdiction, with veto power over legislative decisions made by a county board or council (DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2009). These revised formats are intended to overcome the issues associated with the diffuse executive powers in the traditional form of county government, although the extent to which these revised formats have succeeded has received minimal scholarly attention (DeSantis & Renner, 1993).

The diverse nature of counties means that the type and scope of issues facing county elected officials may be vastly different depending on the county's geographic location and placement along the rural-urban continuum (Berman & Lehman, 1993). And depending on the form of government employed in the county, both how and the way in which elected officials make decisions may be vastly different, although the linkages between forms of county government and their consequences for policy-making and decision-making have not been well-explored in literature (Benton, 2002; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Morgan & Kickham, 1999).

The extent to which the diversity among counties impacts the role of its elected officials in disaster recovery has not been explored. A county elected official in a rural county may have a much different part to play in the recovery process than an urban counterpart. Likewise, the historic strength of county government may translate to a county elected official in New England finding himself or herself playing a much smaller role than a colleague in Alabama. And, it could be that the role of an elected county executive in recovery could be very different from that of an elected member of a county commission. Understanding the diversity of counties then may

provide an important backdrop for evaluating the roles of county elected officials during the recovery process.

County Views of Emergency Management

County government offices are thought to be the commonsense home of emergency management at the local government level because of their geographic proximity to environmental hazards, expanded resource base with respect to municipalities, position as local agents of state administration, close administrative ties to state agencies, and ability to represent local interests and maintain strong local identification (Waugh, 1994). But, despite the fact that counties are acknowledged as the appropriate centerpiece for local emergency management, not all counties hold emergency management in high esteem (Labadie, 1984; Jensen et al., e.d.). In many cases, both elected officials and citizens regard other problems as more pressing and significant than issues associated with hazard events that may or may not occur (Labadie, 1984; Petak, 1985; Sylves, 2008; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). And, the political and economic costs associated with preparing for or mitigating an event that may or may not happen are often too great to translate to action on emergency management topics (see for example: Burby, Deyle, Goldschalk, & Olshanksy, 2000; Labadie, 1984; Petak, 1985; Sylves, 2008; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990).

County elected officials then may have minimal involvement in and an apathetic attitude towards emergency management endeavors within their county day-to-day (Labadie, 1984). However, there is growing recognition among researchers of the importance of emergency management within local government and the need to involve elected officials in emergency management activities, particularly in relation to planning activities (see for example: Burby, 2003; Burby et al., 2000; Canton, 2007; Pearce, 2003; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky,

1990). The inclusion of elected officials in trainings and exercises has also been said to be required for effective emergency management (Perry, 2004; Perry & Lindell, 2003); however, the extent to which county elected officials are actually involved in planning, training, and exercise activities has not been empirically studied.

It would make sense that county elected officials who place significant value on emergency management day-to-day and have been exposed to and involvement in emergency management activities may play a greater role in disaster recovery. When a disaster occurs, these elected officials may have knowledge related to the emergency management issues and activities within their communities that would allow them to be more active in the post-disaster timeframe. However, the influence of county elected officials' perceptions of emergency management and/or their prior involvement in emergency management activities on their role in disaster recovery has not been researched.

Factors that Influence Recovery

While these county contextual factors may influence the role that county elected officials play in disaster recovery, there may be additional considerations that could shape their involvement in, and effect on, the recovery process. There are a variety of factors identified in the disaster literature that may influence the way recovery is approached and recovery outcomes at the local level. Some factors, specific to the hazard involved (e.g., predictability, speed of onset, forewarning) and characteristics of the hazard event itself (e.g., duration, geographic scope) (Smith & Wenger, 2006; Stehr, 2001), drive the subsequent recovery needs of the community. The pre-disaster social, political, and economic conditions of communities are also known to strongly influence the recovery process (Alesch et al., 2009; Bolin & Stanford, 1991; Passerini, 2000; Stehr, 2001; Smith & Wenger, 2007; Webb et al., 2002). County elected

officials arguably have minimal control over the impacts and damages caused by the hazard event. And, while county elected officials could have considerable influence in shaping the pre-disaster conditions in their counties through their leadership, policy work, and budget decisions, the degree to which pre-disaster involvement in policy related to these issues would impact their role in the recovery period has been unexplored through empirical work.

There are other factors recognized as shaping recovery approaches and outcomes over which elected officials may have influence, but the extent of this potential influence also remains unknown. For example, the literature suggests that recovery efforts are bolstered by involving all relevant stakeholder groups (see for example: Berke et al., 1993; Berke & Campanella, 2006; Smith, 2011), including the participation of individual citizens and citizen groups (Kweit & Kweit, 2004). Berke et al. (1993) suggest that, along with stakeholder participation, community level integration, both horizontally and vertically, can also improve recovery efforts, while a lack of integration can result in an increased likelihood that external programs and assistance from other levels of government will not fit the needs of the local community. Horizontal integration refers to the “structural and functional relations among the community’s various social units and subsystems,” while vertical integration involves “the structural and functional relations of a community’s various social units and subunits to extra community systems” (Warren, 1963 as quoted by Berke et al., 1993, p. 101). In a practical sense, the combination of involving multiple stakeholders and integrating the community is often considered as tantamount to coordination (McEntire & Dawson, 2007) and serves to minimize conflict, lessen any duplication of effort, and reduce the chances that recovery needs will go unmet (Quarantelli, 1999). In addition, recovery efforts are said to be enhanced when led by individuals at the community level who have the knowledge of what to do to accomplish disaster recovery, as well as the necessary

resources to carry out recovery activities (Rubin, 1985). The following subsections include an in-depth discussion of these three factors that may affect recovery outcomes—stakeholder participation, integration, and leadership—and how county elected officials may affect these factors.

Stakeholder Participation

Although local government has been charged with responsibility for disaster recovery, it is not the sole participant in the process. In disaster recovery, the local government could potentially receive recovery assistance from the federal and state government, quasi-governmental and nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit relief organizations, private sector organizations, the international community, or individuals and emergent groups (Smith, 2011). Assistance can be financial, technical, or policy-based (Smith, 2011). Any of these entities that offer assistance become participants in the recovery process and may seek to shape how that assistance is used based on their different general approaches to recovery and specific recovery goals (Egan & Tischler, 2010).

In addition to the potential involvement of various stakeholders—with differing, and possibly conflicting, goals and approaches in the recovery process—individuals and businesses in the disaster-stricken area will have expectations of the local government based on their perceived needs during disaster recovery; and, these groups may exert significant pressure on localities to fulfill those expectations (Smith, 2011; Stehr, 2001). These individuals and businesses also then become participants in the recovery process.

Stakeholder conflict is common in the recovery process. As noted by Stehr (2009), the recovery period “allows political, social, and economic pressures to build as individual property owners and affected communities compete over differing perceptions of ‘successful’ recovery

and over scarce resources” (p. 420). Involving all stakeholders in the recovery process can serve to minimize this conflict by allowing communities to develop a shared vision for recovery, generate a shared understanding and agreement on problems and solutions, create a level of buy-in for recovery planning proposals, and minimize the mobilization of latent populations (see for example: Berke et al., 1993; Kweit & Kweit, 2004; Phillips, 2009; Phillips & Neal, 2004; Reddy, 2000; Smith, 2011). Kweit and Kweit (2004) note “...that citizens had an effect on decisions and that cities which attempted to get citizens involved had a substantial effect on the overall evaluation of the success of the recovery” (p. 369).

County governments may be faced with a multitude of additional considerations, constraints, and/or pressures stemming from these various stakeholder groups during the recovery process. It would seem that county elected officials could potentially be involved in meeting and working with these various stakeholders groups on recovery issues in order to address considerations or minimize pressures. However, if and how these considerations and pressures from various stakeholder groups impact county elected officials in disaster recovery has yet to be considered by scholarly research. And the extent to which county elected officials are involved with or incorporate various stakeholder groups during the recovery process also remains unclear.

Integration

As noted in the previous section, many stakeholders are involved in offering disaster assistance to affected communities. One challenge with this assistance is that it often fails to meet the needs of the local community (Berke et al., 1993; Smith, 2011; Stehr, 2001). However, Berke et al. (1993) suggest it is likely that integrated communities will be able to use aid available to fit their needs whereas those communities that are nonintegrated may very well find

their needs unmet despite aid being available. These authors have adopted a typology from the literature on disaster planning that identifies four different types of communities based on levels of horizontal and vertical integration (Berke et al., 1993). Using this typology, a Type I community would have both strong horizontal and vertical integration, meaning that ties across individuals and organizations would be robust, allowing the community to exert influence on the recovery process, while also having access to external programs and resources, making it the best suited to accomplishing positive recovery outcomes (Berke et al., 1993). A Type II community would have strong horizontal integration, but weak vertical integration, meaning that it would have a workable local structure, but would lack knowledge and access to important external resources in recovery, which could hinder recovery (Berke et al., 1993). A Type III community would be an example of a dependent community, meaning that it has vertical ties to receive external aid, but lacks the strong local network needed to exert community concerns, needs, or values, so its recovery would be heavily influenced by outside forces (Berke et al., 1993). A Type IV community would lack access to external aid and resources due to lack of vertical integration, but would also be missing the horizontal ties important to recovery, placing it in the most precarious of positions in terms of achieving positive recovery outcomes (Berke et al., 1993).

Berke et al. (1993) suggest that although integration patterns may be altered in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, such patterns typically revert to pre-disaster horizontal and vertical relationships during recovery, indicating the importance of establishing these pre-disaster relationships. Such sentiments have been echoed in other research on recovery (Nigg, 1995; Phillips, 2009; Quarantelli & Dynes, 1976; Rubin, 1985; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Smith, 2011; Wenger, 1978). However, this tendency to return to pre-disaster

relationships does not mean that communities cannot improve their integration patterns during the recovery period. Communities have been shown to move from one type to another type in the aftermath of an event (Berke et al., 1993; Smith, 2011).

Achieving integration is particularly important in those disaster scenarios where the federal government is included in the web of assistance. Prior to 1950, federal assistance to states and localities in disaster recovery remained limited and undefined. Decisions to provide aid to lower levels of government were made on a case-by-case basis by Congress (Rubin 2007; Sylves, 2008). The first piece of general disaster legislation, passed in 1950, provided a standardized process for local and state governments to request specific types of aid and transferred decision making power from Congress to the President (Rubin, 2007; Sylves, 2008).

Since 1950, the federal government has seen its role in disaster recovery evolve dramatically. What initially entailed modest federal assistance in natural disasters to state and local governments has been significantly expanded. New disaster laws have been passed that address a broader range of needs across an extensive array of hazards resulting in the development and implementation of a collection of new disaster relief programs (Rubin, 2007; Sylves, 2008). The categories and types of assistance have also been expanded to provide aid in the forms of grants, loans, and/or other services directly to individuals and households, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations (Rubin, 2007; Sylves, 2008).

An expansive and complicated web of federal programs now exists. A major disaster or emergency declaration by the president triggers the availability of all or various parts of this labyrinth of programs (Rubin, 2007). These programs typically operate in isolation, both within and across federal agencies (Smith, 2011). Federal disaster assistance in recovery then can be characterized as a complex, confusing, and disconnected system (Smith, 2011).

This system of federal aid can add to the substantial challenges already associated with the recovery process. Hurricane Katrina exposed significant shortcomings of this aid system, including “duplicative efforts, the uncoordinated timing of assistance, counterproductive funding strategies, and a widespread failure to meet local needs following a disaster” (Smith, 2011, p. 37). Further, these prescriptive programs “hinder recovery efforts because local governments perceive that they have a limited set of options” *vis-à-vis* programs that take into account local goals and interests (Smith, 2011, p. 39).

This failure of recovery programs during Hurricane Katrina spurred the federal government to begin to find solutions to these issues. As noted in the introduction, Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) in 2006, which required the federal government to develop a national recovery strategy. President Barack Obama ordered the formation of a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group in 2009 to begin to confront recovery issues and their efforts culminated in the release of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) in 2011 which provides states, tribes and local governments “a construct to optimally engage existing federal resources and authorities, and to incorporate the full capabilities of all sectors in support of community recovery” (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011, p. 2). While this document offers evidence that the federal government is placing a higher emphasis on reducing the disaster recovery challenges associated with the rigid and complex nature of federal disaster recovery programs, the document does not “go far enough to operationalize specific policies, resource allocation strategies, and planning activities” (Smith, 2011, p. 380). While perhaps improved, Smith (2011) suggests federal assistance will continue to perform in an uncoordinated manner that does not fully take into account local needs in disaster recovery.

Efforts made both before and after a disaster to integrate a community horizontally and vertically could potentially help overcome the tensions created by the distributed nature of the assistance network, as well as the shortcomings of the prescriptive nature of current federal disaster recovery programs. County elected officials, often elected because “of who knows them and who they know” (Vogelsang-Combs & Miller, 1999, p. 200), could potentially play an important role in building the necessary relationships to integrate their communities both internally and externally. However, no research has been done that examines the extent to which county elected officials are involved in developing the horizontal and vertical ties that would lead to more positive recovery outcomes for their community.

Leadership

Beyond stakeholder involvement and community integration, local leadership has also been shown to influence recovery outcomes (Rubin, 1985). Rubin’s (1985) model of community recovery indicates recovery can be thought of in terms of a combination of influences from the federal and state government, the local demands and context, as well as three variables controlled by the local level: leadership, knowledge of what to do, and ability to act. While the local community cannot directly impact the federal and state context, it can seek to influence these elements through positive intergovernmental relations (Rubin, 1985) and strong vertical integration as described in the previous section (Berke et al., 1993; Smith, 2011).

The local level has the most control over the three variables of leadership, knowledge, and ability to act, as well as how these variables relate to local demands. The three elements of leadership, knowledge, and ability to act are critical because they exist in all communities to a certain extent, can be manipulated, and interact in predictable ways (Rubin, 1985). While each of

these variables is necessary individually, no singular variable is sufficient in and of itself to maximize recovery (Rubin, 1985).

In this model, leadership that is flexible, allows for creative problem solving, maintains a vision of the future community, sustains links to other decision-makers in the private and public sectors, and attracts motivated and competent assistants will facilitate positive recovery outcomes (Rubin, 1985). However, leaders in recovery may not be singular individuals in a disaster, rather “the leadership characteristics that are important to recovery often have been found in several individuals, each having a different role or set of responsibilities in the recovery process” (Rubin, 1985, p. 24). Rubin (1985) also notes that while leadership in recovery may come from elected or appointed individuals, holding a given office or position is not a prerequisite for being a leader in the recovery process.

Having the knowledge of what to do in recovery and the ability to act are crucial components of being able to effectively lead a community during disaster recovery (Rubin, 1985). Knowledge of what to do includes possessing both general emergency management and recovery-related knowledge, particularly regarding the types of external resources that might be available (Rubin, 1985). Ability to act includes having administrative, technical, and tangible resources, as well as public capacity, to carry out long-term recovery (Rubin, 1985). When these elements are grounded in community-based demands for action, more positive outcomes are associated with the recovery process (Rubin, 1985).

The extent to which county elected officials may exhibit leadership in a recovery scenario remains uncertain and may be a product of their knowledge of what to do and ability to act. As noted in Chapter One, county elected officials have paid minimal attention to emergency management issues historically instead concentrating on more pressing community concerns

(Labadie, 1984; Lindell et al., 2007; Rubin, 1985; Sylves, 2008; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990).

This dearth of attention toward emergency management could potentially translate to elected officials lacking sufficient knowledge of what to do and limit their leadership role in the recovery process. In particular, a failure to understand the resource requirements associated with the recovery process, the external resources that may be available, how to garner those resources, and how to use those resources effectively could potentially limit the ability of county elected officials to act and therefore minimize their leadership role.

Community Change in the Recovery Process

The section on recovery tasks and activities earlier in this chapter discussed the holistic or sustainable approach to recovery (Natural Hazards Center, 2005) as it relates to how recovery tasks and activities should be conceived and accomplished during the recovery process.

However, it is also important to discuss this type of approach as it relates to its desired outcome of positive community change. Communities with significant stakeholder involvement, strong vertical and horizontal integration, and robust leadership based on a solid knowledge of what to do and ability to act could potentially take advantage of a window of opportunity that exists in the recovery period to undertake mitigation activities or other actions that “both increase the community’s resiliency to future disasters and address ongoing community concerns such as urban decay, traffic, or non-conforming buildings” (Passerini, 2000, p. 68). Rather than simply rebuilding to the status quo, communities have the chance during this window of opportunity to relocate or rebuild in such a way as to improve the quality of life for residents, enhance environmental conditions, and boost local economies (Smith & Wenger, 2006). This notion of *sustainable recovery* (Smith & Wenger, 2006) has grown in popularity within the emergency management community (Passerini, 2001). However, studies suggest that more often than not,

little change actually occurs in most communities during the post-disaster timeframe and most return to pre-disaster conditions (Mileti, 1999; Passerini, 2000, 2001).

Improving community resiliency through mitigation activities or advancing sustainability objectives often involves more costs than communities can afford or are willing to spend in the recovery period (Passerini, 2000). Communities, often seeking to revive pre-disaster patterns of culture and human interaction, are also resistant to any changes that may be socially disruptive (Passerini, 2000). In addition, decision-making in recovery occurs in a compressed timeframe, with public pressures to rebuild quickly limiting the time available to systematically evaluate recovery options (Mileti, 1999; Passerini, 2000; Stehr, 2001). Mileti (1999) also notes that “the lack of clear goals at federal, state, or local levels, the complexity of acting in concert with multiple entities, and the absence of institutional capacity brought about by advance planning all help undermine recovery targeted toward mitigation and sustainability” (p. 236).

Structural and cultural barriers may also exist that limit the feasibility of post-disaster community change (Passerini, 2001). For example, the creation of an ecological community with minimal automobile use would face significant structural and cultural barriers if residents are accustomed to driving their personal vehicles, if the community is without public transportation, or if lifelines (e.g., hospitals, schools, grocery stores) are only accessible by car (Passerini, 2001).

Despite the tendency not to see widespread adoption and application of the concepts of resiliency and sustainability after disasters, significant change does sometimes occur. For example, several small communities were relocated out of flood-prone areas after the 1993 Midwest floods (Mileti, 1999). And, the town of Greensburg, Kansas undertook a number of

initiatives during its recovery from a destructive tornado that emphasized sustainability themes including energy efficiency and green development practices (Smith, 2011).

Post-disaster improvements are more likely when there is a preexisting plan for community improvement and outside funding is available to assist with the changes (Mileti, 1999; Phillips, 2009). Reddy (2000) also suggests that the presence of strong local leadership, a positive link between well-established ways of doing things in a community and new policies, recognition of local rights, high stakeholder involvement in developing strategies, adaption to dynamic local conditions, and monitoring and compliance strategies tailored towards local conditions are all factors that may overcome some of these barriers to change and result in the inclusion of mitigation strategies during the recovery process. Thus, while planning and outside assistance are key components in the recovery process, locally based plans, leadership, and involvement are critical in helping communities achieve greater resiliency and sustainable through the recovery process.

Given the importance of the local level, county elected officials in disaster recovery have an opportunity to significantly influence the extent to which a community incorporates mitigation and sustainability measures during the recovery process. The ability of these elected officials to navigate the pressures associated with competing demands between the desire of a community to rebuild quickly and to rebuild in a more resilient and sustainable manner through the incorporation of mitigation and other measures (Berke & Beatley, 1997; May, 1991; Passerini, 2000; Reddy, 2000; Stehr, 2001) could be essential to understanding community change during the recovery process; so too could the ability of these elected officials to identify and obtain outside funding be critical to understanding this change potential (Mileti, 1999).

However, it is unknown the extent to which county elected officials are involved in discussions relating to sustainability, resiliency, and mitigation in the recovery period.

Coordination in Local Disaster Recovery

Within the academic literature, consensus has yet to be reached on a definition of coordination as it relates to emergency management (Drabek & McEntire, 2002; Quarantelli, 1997). As Quarantelli (1997) states, “The term coordination is neither self-explanatory nor a matter of consensus” (p. 48). Despite the lack of an agreed-upon definition however, researchers have consented that coordination is valuable—and even vital—in responding to disaster events (Drabek & McEntire, 2002; Quarantelli, 1997; McEntire & Dawson, 2007). The disruptive and dynamic nature of disaster events translates to significant demands being placed on the impacted community—demands that cannot be met without the combined efforts of many organizations and stakeholders (Drabek & McEntire, 2002). Without some sort of organized and synchronized process being used by these different stakeholder groups, the result may be a failure to determine priorities, inability to fully utilize resources, duplication of efforts, omission of important tasks, misunderstandings or conflict between organizations, counterproductive activity, and overly-taxed groups (see for example: Auf der Heide, 1989; Drabek & McEntire, 2002; Quarantelli, 1999; Tierney, 1994).

While the academic literature has concentrated its overt discussion of coordination in response, the literature—as well as recent federal policy—has also implied that coordination is important in recovery not only to avoid or minimize the negative consequences outlined above, but also to encourage the creation of more sustainable and disaster resilient communities (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011). Specifically, the potential benefit of overall

coordination in the disaster recovery process is the linkage between the future of the community and the individuals and households who live within it, including the nexus between their quality of life and the various lifeline systems that support it (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009). Although the literature does not offer an explicit picture of what coordination looks like in disaster recovery, a profile of the role an individual or group of individuals charged with coordination of recovery at the local level can be induced from the literature and is presented in the following paragraphs.

A recovery coordinator—or recovery team—would be engaged in three categories of activities—planning, guiding a participatory process, and facilitating a holistic approach. In relation to planning, a recovery coordinator would facilitate community recovery planning initiatives, ensuring that those initiatives result in plans that are actionable, publicly supported, and feasible given community capacity. As part of the planning process, a coordinator would solicit wide stakeholder input to develop a vision for the direction the community desires to take as a collective in recovery efforts. A recovery coordinator would ensure that the stakeholders within the jurisdiction know and accept their planned roles in recovery *vis-à-vis* other stakeholders and have the capacity necessary to fulfill their established roles. A recovery coordinator would continue to relate what the community is doing as it moves through the recovery process back to the vision and what the community sought to accomplish during the planning process.

In regards to guiding a participatory process, a recovery coordinator would work to identify the different stakeholders within the community and determine their recovery needs—including where those needs are similar across stakeholder groups and where the needs might be unique. A recovery coordinator would work with all stakeholder groups to determine and agree

upon priorities in disaster recovery, generating community support and public buy-in for recovery efforts. A recovery coordinator would identify and highlight recovery challenges across the different stakeholder groups, as well as advocate for the development of creative solutions to overcome those challenges. A recovery coordinator would integrate the community by working to build and maintain relationships with community and government partners in order to both identify available resources and ensure those resources are used to facilitate projects congruent with community needs. A recovery coordinator would develop and leverage knowledge of community and external sources of assistance relative to different stakeholder groups to garner financial support for community recovery. A recovery coordinator would facilitate communications among the diverse stakeholder groups.

In relation to facilitating a holistic process, a recovery coordinator would sensitize the community to options for sustainable redevelopment—specifically opportunities to improve the quality of life for residents, enhance environmental conditions, ensure social and intergenerational equality, boost the local economy, and incorporate mitigation measures into the recovery process. A recovery coordinator would then actively seek out these opportunities to pursue these improvements. And finally, a recovery coordinator would seek to link different recovery tasks and activities in such a way as to ensure all dimensions of recovery are considered and to advance sustainable redevelopment objectives. While the role is comprised of these three separate categories of activities, it is actually the summation and integration of all of these activities through the efforts of one or more individuals that creates overall coordination in community recovery.

As noted in Chapter One, limited research has suggested that emergency managers are not fulfilling such a coordination role in disaster recovery (Jensen et al., e.d.). Elected officials

are said to bear significant responsibility for the management of the recovery process (Phillips, 2009), but the extent to which county elected officials—or anybody else—is playing this type of ideal coordinating role at the local level is unknown.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that there is a lack of research on the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery. It suggested that county elected officials could be playing instrumental roles in the recovery period through influencing the factors that facilitate recovery tasks and activities, the factors that affect the way recovery is approached and recovery outcomes at the local level, and the factors that determine if a community incorporates mitigation and sustainability initiatives into the recovery process. Ultimately, county elected officials could be playing a critical role coordinating recovery overall at the local level. Yet, as this chapter has also shown, the extent to which elected officials are acting in these various roles remains unknown and may be shaped by county contextual factors. Thus, this study stands to make important contributions to the discipline and the profession of emergency management by exploring the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery. By doing so, it will begin to fill the gap identified in the literature and inform the discipline and practice of emergency management. Next, Chapter Three will describe the research methods proposed for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter Three is organized into seven sections. The first section details the methodological approach to this study. The second section outlines the study's population and sampling process. The third section specifies the data collection procedures used. The fourth section explains the theoretical sampling that was undertaken as the research progressed. The fifth section outlines changes to the data collection necessitated by the use of theoretical sampling. The sixth section reviews the data analysis process employed. Finally, the seventh section discusses the limitations of this study.

Methodological Approach

This study used qualitative research methods to investigate the role of county elected officials during disaster recovery. Qualitative research methods recognize the importance of studying “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). The recognition that social reality is constructed around people's frames of reference (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) made a qualitative approach particularly useful in a study where the purpose was to understand individuals' perceptions of their own roles.

Qualitative methods are also “particularly well suited to exploring issues that hold some complexity and to studying processes that occur over time” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 5). Given the multifarious and temporal characteristics of disaster recovery, it would follow that the roles of elected officials related to it would also be multifaceted and time-based. In addition, qualitative methods can “be used to explore substantive areas about which little is known” (Straus & Corbin 1990, p. 19). With minimal discussion of these issues in the academic literature and the lack of empirical work on the topic, the foundational nature of this study made a

qualitative approach suitable for addressing this study's research question. For these reasons, qualitative methods were clearly the most appropriate option for studying the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery.

Grounded theory was the underlying methodological approach to this qualitative research. Although modified and refined since its inception by Glaser and Strauss (1967) (see for example: Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2001, 2006; Glaser, 1978, 1996; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a series of fundamental grounded theory components comprise the foundation of all the grounded theory variations to date. As articulated by Charmaz (2006), the basic premises of grounded theory include:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed towards theory construction, not for population representativeness. (p. 5-6)

Grounded theory research seeks to derive theory from the data rather than imposing a predetermined theory or hypothesis on the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This type of research relies on the continual interaction between the researcher and the data and allows for reflection, questioning, and refinement of concepts and ideas throughout the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This continual interaction lends flexibility to the research design since researchers are able to explore questions as they arise and test ideas as they are formulated through the use of theoretical sampling or additional data collections strategies (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theorists posit that substantial contact with, and extensive contemplation of, the data collected,

and testing theory as it develops makes it likely that the resultant theory is consistent with empirical reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The grounded theory approach facilitates the development of rich, descriptive, and explanatory theory as opposed to a static account of a given phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Given the dynamic nature of recovery and the dearth of empirical knowledge on the role of county elected officials during the recovery process, the most suitable place to begin a line of inquiry on this topic was immersion in detailed data provided by those with the most relevant experiences—namely county elected officials whose jurisdictions have undergone recovery. From this starting point, the researcher was able to embark on a scholarly expedition, exploring the unknown and following wherever the data led.

As this project reached its culmination, it became evident that the research and analysis process benefited from the absence of any predetermined theory or hypothesis. As the findings in subsequent chapters will make clear, an open mind and a lack of theoretical framework provided the researcher the freedom to pursue additional intellectual avenues uncovered during the quest for the answer to the original research question. The use of the grounded theory approach allowed the researcher to discover important insights into the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery, as well as additional important findings related to the manifestation of overall coordination in disaster recovery.

Population and Sampling

The population for this research study included all county elected officials in jurisdictions who had experienced a disaster resulting in a disaster recovery process. As the emergency management academic community has yet to reach consensus on the definition of what constitutes a disaster (see for example: Jensen, 2010; McEntire, 2005; Quarantelli, 1998; Perry &

Quarantelli, 2005), it became important for the purposes of this study to designate how it would be determined whether or not a jurisdiction had experienced a disaster. Due to considerations related to time and feasibility, this study used receipt of a Presidential Disaster Declaration (PDD) as the threshold for establishing that a disaster occurred in a given county and delineating those counties whose elected officials would be invited to participate. Use of the PDD was an imperfect means of determining that a disaster had occurred due to the subjective and political nature of the PDD process (see for example: Downton & Pielke, 2001; Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Reeves, 2011; Sylves & Buzas, 2007); nevertheless, the request by the county and state for assistance from the federal government suggested that an event of sufficient magnitude had transpired to require recovery endeavors at the county level.

This study initially relied on purposive sampling techniques to build its sample. Purposive sampling units “are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). As this study was interested in the role played by county elected officials during disaster recovery, it followed that county elected officials would be able to offer the best data regarding that role. County elected officials would then be considered a “homogeneous sample”, or individuals “chosen to give a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon...this allows for detailed investigation of social processes in a specified context” (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, p. 79.).

Counties undergoing a hazard event may be governed by an elected official or an assembly or board of elected officials. As noted in the literature review, some counties may have additional elected row officers such as such as a county clerk, coroner, sheriff, treasurer, attorney, and tax assessor. Again, due to time constraints and the number of elected officials that

may be involved in recovery within a county, not all elected officials located in a county where a PDD had been granted were invited to participate in this study. Instead, this population of elected officials was reduced to a more manageable sampling frame. This study targeted elected officials whose responsibilities included the overall supervision or administration of the county government's operations. It was believed that elected officials in these positions as county executives would play a more instrumental role in disaster recovery than those in row officer positions, who have more specific administrative duties.

This study also targeted only one elected official in each county for participation. Depending on the form of government employed in a county, elected officials in a chief supervisory or administrative position could either be elected county executives or members of an elected board. In those counties where an elected executive exists, that executive was invited to participate in the study. In those situations where the county was governed by an elected board or other elected assembly of officials, the individual designated as chair or supervisor of the group was invited to participate. If no designated chair was named, the member of the group with the most tenure in his/her position was asked to participate.

In addition to limiting participation to one elected official in each county, who had supervisory or administrative responsibility over all county operations, additional restrictions were established to create a manageable sampling frame. Since short-term recovery is associated with the phase transition from response to recovery, the duration of the short-term recovery period remains relatively brief, generally spanning only the first months following a disaster event (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009). It was determined that limiting the investigation of county elected officials' recovery role to the short-term recovery period would mean that a time restriction could be employed that would serve to limit the sample while still

maximizing the likelihood that the county elected official in place during that short-term recovery period remained in office at the time of data collection. Specifically, it was anticipated that by the end of the third month after an event, communities would have completed short-term recovery efforts and transitioned into long-term recovery activities. As such, a county elected official was invited to participate if his/her county had been granted a PDD between January 1, 2012 and July 15, 2012.

Using the above limitations on PDDs meant that data collection occurred at least three months following any event, allowing for the short-term recovery tasks and activities to be accomplished. It also meant that no event took place more than 15 months prior to the interview, increasing the chances that the county elected official in place during short-term recovery remained in office at the time of data collection. It should be noted that if the current county elected official did not act in that role during short-term disaster recovery, that county was removed from the sampling frame. It is also important to highlight that although there were two PDDs declared in the early part of July, the triggering disaster events occurred in mid-June, meaning three months passed between the date of the event and the data collection timeframe.

Using these criteria, county executives or board chairpersons from 155 counties were eligible to participate in this study. The counties these elected officials represented were geographically diverse—including 17 different states from all regions of the country—and had been involved with recovery from various hazards, e.g. wildfires, tornados, severe storms, flooding, and tropical storms/hurricanes. The researcher believed that, although purposive, this sample would provide meaningful and detailed information regarding the research questions for this study. Appendix A provides a breakdown of the counties that met the specified criteria, detailing both the states in which the eligible counties were located, as well as the type of hazard

event that occasioned the PDD. It should be noted that six counties in Massachusetts did receive a PDD during the designated timeframe. However, these counties were removed from the sampling frame because they had abolished their county governments, meaning they exist as geographic entities only.

Systematic random sampling was conducted on an alphabetical list of all counties eligible for participation (Chambliss & Schutt, 2006). Using this alphabetical list, every other county was selected, meaning a total of 77 counties or county equivalents were chosen using this sampling technique. The researcher sought to limit the sample size through this systematic random sampling and aspired to an ambitious response rate of 50%. However, the response rate was significantly lower than anticipated. Despite multiple contacts requesting participation of this first sample (as detailed in the data collection section below), only eight county elected officials participated in this research. Due to this low response rate, the remaining 78 counties in the sampling frame were solicited for participation. Of this second sample, interviews were conducted with 12 county elected officials. So out of the 155 county elected officials that were invited to participate in this study, a total of 20, or 13%, decided to contribute to this project. Within this sample, very few negative replies were received ($n=5$) relative to the total number of invitations sent. More often than not, county elected officials that were invited to participate chose not to respond to the invitation at all. Of the five county elected officials who declined the invitation most stated they were “too busy” or “not interested.” However, the participants still represented a broad range of states and types of hazard events. A breakdown of respondents by state, hazard type, and sample is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Breakdown of Respondents by State, Hazard Type, and Sample

| Attribute | Number of Interviewees |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Position of Respondent | |
| • County elected official | 20 |
| State | |
| • Alaska | 1 |
| • Colorado | 1 |
| • Florida | 2 |
| • Indiana | 1 |
| • Kansas | 1 |
| • Kentucky | 1 |
| • Minnesota | 1 |
| • Oklahoma | 1 |
| • Oregon | 3 |
| • Tennessee | 3 |
| • Washington | 4 |
| • West Virginia | 1 |
| Hazard Type | |
| • Flooding | 3 |
| • Severe Storm | 5 |
| • Tornado | 3 |
| • Tropical Storm/Hurricane | 2 |
| • Wildfire | 1 |
| • Winter Storm | 6 |
| Sample | |
| • First | 8 |
| • Second | 12 |
| Total Interviews | 20 |

Data Collection

This study followed Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory model both for data collection and data analysis. The generation of grounded theory requires obtaining rich data, meaning information that is “detailed, focused, and full” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). Therefore, grounded theory researchers adopt data collection strategies conducive to revealing “participants’ views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). Intensive interviewing is one such strategy for achieving this level of in-depth

exploration. Intensive interviewing is a particularly valuable data-gathering method for conducting a detailed investigation of a given topic with a person who has had the relevant experiences because it asks “the participants to describe and reflect upon his or her experiences in ways that seldom occur in everyday life” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). Intensive interviewing was initially used in this study with the expectation that the opportunity to reflect on their short-term recovery experiences in a directed conversation (Charmaz, 2006) would allow county elected officials to provide unique and meaningful insights into the role they played during the short-term recovery process.

Research commenced immediately following the approval of the research proposal by the dissertation committee and approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. Data collection for this study was conducted using telephone interviews. Interviews initially took place between October of 2012 and February of 2013. The researcher contacted potential participants via email to request their involvement in the project. An information sheet detailing the specifics of the project was included as an attachment to the invitation email. See Appendix B for a copy of the invitation letter and Appendix C for a copy of the information sheet. Follow-up phone calls were made to ensure receipt of the email requests. Upon their consent to be interviewed, the researcher scheduled an appointment for a date and time convenient to the participant. Interviews ranged in time from 22 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes; length was influenced by the participant’s availability and responses to questions.

An interview guide was used to facilitate the interviews. In keeping with grounded theory methodology, broad, open-ended main questions were created in order to allow county elected officials to respond in-depth based on their perceptions and understandings of their short-term recovery experiences (Charmaz 2006). The interview guide covered the following topics:

background/experience as an elected official, description of the disaster event, and description of the evolution of short-term recovery. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed for “ideas and issues to emerge during the interview and interviewers can immediately pursue these leads” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). See Appendix D for the exact questions in the interview guide. Follow-up and probing questions were used as a means to explore these leads. See Appendix E for a list of potential probes that was used as a guide during the interview process.

All interviews were digitally recorded. Digitally recorded interviews were uploaded to the researcher’s personal computer. The interviews were transcribed and codes substituted for identifying personal characteristics. Only the researcher and dissertation advisor had access to the audio files, transcriptions, and codes. Once transcribed, the interview recordings were deleted from the researcher’s computer. And, once the transcriptions and codes are no longer relevant to this research, they too will be destroyed. In the final product, neither codes nor identifying characteristics have been employed. In presenting the quotations, several measures have been taken to ensure that as much as possible, participants’ identities are protected. Quotations were edited for “um”, “ah”, and “you know” and any words that could compromise respondents’ identity were replaced with ellipses.

Theoretical Sampling

Grounded theory compels the use of theoretical sampling, meaning “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate or refine categories in your emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). As the initial 20 interviews were conducted and analyzed, the researcher discovered that in the majority of counties, the role of the county elected official appeared to remain consistent with their routine role within the county government. The researcher also realized that although all of these counties had received a PDD, the damage associated with the event in most

cases was not particularly extensive and little overarching coordination seemed needed to navigate the recovery process. The researcher began to wonder if there were conditions under which coordination needed to be present in order to negotiate recovery and, if so, who was fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it. The researcher determined that it would be necessary to pursue additional interviews specifically in relation to these emerging ideas.

In the initial sample, a county was considered to have gone through a disaster if a PDD was issued for that county. No differentiation was made between counties that received Individual Assistance (IA), Public Assistance (PA), or both as part of the PDD. Given that the simple existence of a PDD did not seem to guarantee that an event of significant magnitude had occurred in a county, the researcher created a sample of counties that had received a PDD granting both PA and IA. It was believed that a county in need of both forms of federal assistance would have suffered damages of a greater magnitude than a county that only required a singular source of federal aid.

A time restriction was placed on the date of an event for this sample as well. Specifically, a county was invited to participate if the county had been granted a PDD granting both IA and PA between July, 15, 2012 and December 31, 2012. Since these interviews were occurring into the late spring to early summer of 2013, it was determined enough time had passed since the event for short-term recovery to be completed and long-term recovery activities to be well underway (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009). It should also be noted that as this notion of overall coordination emerged and continued to evolve, it appeared to be important in both short-term and long-term recovery efforts, with a suggestion that overarching coordination might be even more of an issue in the long-term. As such, the researcher did not limit the

discussion in these interviews to the short-term recovery period as initially planned. Using these criteria, 93 counties were eligible to participate in this phase of the study. Appendix A provides a breakdown of the counties that met the specified criteria, detailing both the states in which the eligible counties were located, as well as the type of hazard event that occasioned the PDD. It should be noted that two counties in Rhode Island did receive a PDD with both IA and PA during the designated timeframe. However, these counties were removed from the sampling frame because they had abolished their county governments, meaning they exist as geographic entities only.

While invitations to participate in this research were sent to the county elected official in a chief supervisory or administrative position, in three densely populated counties along the east coast and one along the Gulf coast, the county elected official designated an appointed chief of staff or administrator to conduct the interview on his/her behalf. For the purpose of data analysis, these interviews were considered as part of the county elected official data as the county elected officials had given consent for these designees to speak on their behalf. Given the expanded focus of the study to include this notion of overall coordination, the researcher also accepted interviews with the county emergency manager within these counties when offered. It was believed that the emergency manager could provide similar insight into whether or not overall coordination was occurring within the county and who was involved in a coordination role to the extent that it existed. Given that the recovery literature has suggested that the emergency manager should be playing a role in disaster recovery (Berke et al., 1993; Phillips 2009; Schwab et al., 1998), but a recent study indicated the current involvement of local emergency managers in recovery is minimal and restricted to administrative tasks such as paperwork (Jensen et al., e.d.), it was also thought that the inclusion of emergency managers within this project could shed

additional light on their involvement in the recovery process. Based on this sample, nine interviews were conducted with county elected officials (or their designees) and six were conducted with county emergency managers for a response rate of 16%. As with the initial sample, very few negative replies were received (n=10) relative to the total number of invitations sent. Most county elected officials that were invited to participate chose not to respond to the invitation at all, but of the ten who declined the invitation, most stated they were “too busy” or “not interested.”

The data from the initial interviews also suggested that to the extent overall coordination was occurring in disaster recovery, the role of coordination may fall to individuals apart from the county elected official or the emergency manager. To follow up on this theme, the researcher interviewed four individuals with the title of recovery manager or recovery coordinator, as well as three elected officials at the municipal level. See Chapter Four for the data that suggested the potential relevance of these positions to the notion of overall coordination. To identify these participants, the researcher relied on a combination of purposive sampling and the snowball, or chain referral, sampling technique. This snowball sampling technique seeks to identify additional respondents by asking individuals already participating in the study to share their knowledge of anyone who may possess information or insight related to the research topic (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The researcher asked the responding county elected officials and emergency managers interviewed if such a position was used in their county or if they knew of a county who had designated such a position. The researcher also conducted internet searches for “disaster recovery manager,” “disaster recovery coordinator,” and “long term recovery coordinator” to identify events where such a position was utilized. In addition, the researcher reviewed disaster events to identify where impacts heavily affected a given municipality, as well as asked county

elected officials and emergency managers if they knew of any municipalities within their jurisdictions that had been particularly impacted by the event. In two cases, a recovery coordinator or municipal elected official was located in a county that was not part of a previous sample. In these cases, the county elected official was also provided the opportunity to participate in order to relate their perceptions of recovery, particularly their role *vis-à-vis* the role of the recovery coordinator or municipal elected official. One chose to be interviewed for this project. A summary of the participants interviewed as part of the theoretical sampling associated with the second sampling effort is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Summary of Participants Interviewed as Part of the Sampling Approach

| Attribute | Number of Interviewees |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Position of Respondent | |
| • County elected official or designee | 9 |
| • County emergency manager | 6 |
| • Disaster recovery coordinator | 4 |
| • Municipal mayor | 3 |
| State | |
| • Alabama | 1 |
| • Colorado | 3 |
| • Louisiana | 3 |
| • New Jersey | 8 |
| • New York | 2 |
| • North Dakota | 2 |
| • Washington | 1 |
| • West Virginia | 2 |
| Hazard Type | |
| • Flooding | 3 |
| • Severe Storm | 2 |
| • Tornado | 1 |
| • Hurricane | 13 |
| • Wildfire | 3 |
| Total Interviews | |
| 22 | |

Theoretical Saturation

The intent of grounded theory research is to follow emerging themes and to reach theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Straus & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical saturation can be understood as the point at which “no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). However, as noted by Strauss and Corbin (1998), attaining this theoretical saturation can be a challenge, as “new” dimensions or relationships will always emerge given enough energy directed toward so doing. As such, these authors suggest that “saturation is more a matter of reaching the point where collecting additional data seems counterproductive; the ‘new’ that is uncovered does not add that much more to explanation” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136). Seidman (1991) suggests that, in addition to saturation, the notion of sufficiency can be used to determine when an appropriate amount of data has been collected. Sufficiency can be understood to mean that there are “sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experience of those in it” (Siedman, 1991, p. 45).

In the course of 29 interviews with county elected officials across a range of geographic locations and disaster experiences, it was clear that theoretical saturation had been reached regarding their role in disaster recovery. Additional themes and concepts emerged through the grounded theory process and were subsequently explored through the course of an additional 13 interviews. While saturation was not reached on all emergent ideas, the researcher felt that sufficient data was collected to generate a strong discussion surrounding these developing themes and provide suggestions for additional research in these areas. While in the ideal world, the researcher would have exhausted all the avenues presented by the data, it was necessary to

take into consideration “the practical exigencies of time, money and other resources” (Siedman, 1991, p. 45). A breakdown of the final numbers of participants interviewed for this project is provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Breakdown of Final Numbers of Participants

| Attribute | Number of Interviewees |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| • Initial sample | 20 |
| • Theoretical sampling | 22 |
| Total | 42 |

Theoretical Sampling Data Collection

As noted in the above section, the researcher discovered a need to do theoretical sampling related to the conditions under which overall coordination in disaster recovery might emerge and who might be fulfilling the coordination role when it existed. The researcher continued to rely on intensive interviewing during this phase of the project. And the same contact and interviewing procedures were used as in the initial data collection phase of this project. However, given that the researcher sought to speak not only with county elected officials, but also emergency managers, disaster recovery coordinators, and municipal elected officials, the researcher sought an amendment to the original IRB protocol. This amendment was approved. See Appendix G for the IRB amendment approval form. In the application for the IRB amendment, the information sheet was slightly modified to adjust the dates of the interviews. A copy of the revised information sheet is included in Appendix H. Also, the interview guide was slightly modified to remove references to experience as a county elected official and a separate list of potential follow-up questions was developed for the main interview questions based on the emerging theory and information sought. A copy of the revised interview guide for non-county elected

officials can be found in Appendix I, while Appendix J contains the updated list of potential follow-up questions.

Data Analysis

Pursuant to grounded theory methodology, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. This constant interplay between the researcher and the data followed a set of analytical procedures that offered “a balance between science and creativity” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13). More specifically, the analytical steps offered a level of standardization and rigor to the research process, while still allowing the researcher the flexibility to “extract an innovative, integrated, realistic scheme from masses of unorganized raw data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13).

Coding was the critical link between collecting and organizing this mass of data into a meaningful scheme (Charmaz, 2006). The coding process allowed the researcher to “define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46).

Coding occurred in two phases: initial and focused. The initial coding involved closely reading early data to extract “analytic ideas to pursue in further data collection and analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). For the purposes of this project, early data was considered the data gathered through the first seven interviews, a number where the researcher felt that the initial codes were sufficient to conduct the constant comparative analysis described in the paragraph below.

During the initial coding phase, the researcher examined and coded the data line-by-line. Although a line-by-line examination of the data may appear to be an arbitrary distinction given that not all lines may contain information of relevance to the research questions, such an exercise compelled the researcher to “remain open to the data and see nuances in it” (Charmaz 2006, p. 50). Line-by-line coding also yielded insights that informed successive data collection, including

the need for new lines of inquiry from already identified participants, as well as the need to identify additional participants through theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006).

The initial codes developed through the line-by-line coding process were then examined using a constant comparative analysis, whereby the data was compared within and across interviews in order to find similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2006). Conducting a constant comparative analysis yielded a series of codes that appeared significant and were repeated throughout the data set. These codes were then evaluated through the second phase of coding, focused coding. The focused coding process involved comparing first data to later data to establish the adequacy of the initial codes (Charmaz 2006).

Once determined, these focused codes were then used to sift and synthesize the information contained in a larger data set (Charmaz, 2006)—in this case, the remaining 35 interviews. By comparing the data to the codes, the process allowed for the refinement of analytical categories, ensuring that the categories best represented the empirical data (Charmaz, 2006). It should be noted, however, that the coding process was not linear (Charmaz, 2006). As new insights emerged during this process, reevaluation of earlier data was undertaken by the researcher to explore issues or topics initially overlooked (Charmaz, 2006).

Throughout the coding process, the researcher relied on analytic memos to detail emerging categories, including their definition, scope, applicability, and potential linkages to other categories (Charmaz 2006). Once the analytical categories were developed, the researcher used these memos to conduct theoretical sorting, a process which sought to determine the theoretical links between categories by examining the relationships between them (Charmaz, 2006). Diagramming was also a useful technique for developing these theoretical links, as it offered a visual representation of the categories and their relationships (Charmaz, 2006). As part

of the memo-writing and theoretical sorting processes, quotations for the various emerging themes were all listed under the appropriate theme and each quotation included a label with the associated interview number and position data. This listing was done in order to ensure that the information being provided by the interviewees was accurately represented and themes were emerging across the data. Subsequently, responses with similar opinions were reduced and the labels removed before reporting.

In navigating the grounded theory process, it was important to keep in mind that the ultimate goal of this project was to produce meaningful findings. A number of criteria have been advanced by experienced grounded theory scholars for evaluating grounded theory research. Charmaz (2006) indicates that credibility of the research and researcher, the originality of the research and how it resonates with and beyond those studied, as well as the usefulness of the research's interpretations to a discipline or practice, are all valuable criteria for determining research quality. Glaser (1978) notes that the criteria of fit, work, relevance, and modifiability are useful when determining how well the theory fits the collected data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that the presence of dense, well developed categories, built in/explained variation, and new information or guidelines for action that explain phenomenon, direct future research, or guide programs, are all hallmarks of a sound grounded theory study. The researcher kept these criteria at the forefront when conducting this study and made every effort to ensure that the criteria for a quality study were met when developing the final dissertation product.

Limitations

The results of this study need to be viewed with caution because the sample was not random (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The use of nonrandom sampling, and snowball sampling in particular, may have resulted in sample bias (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In addition, the fact that

some county elected officials declined participation may have introduced non-response bias into the results (Fowler 2009). The low response and participation in the study creates a significant potential for non-response bias because “nonrespondents are likely to differ systematically from those who take the time to participate” (Chambliss and Schutt 2006, p. 91). Thus, the findings are not generalizable to all county elected officials involved in short-term recovery or to all events where recovery coordination may or may not take place

While the interviews conducted led to meaningful findings regarding disaster recovery at the local level, further research would be needed to ascertain whether these findings would be applicable to all locales facing a disaster recovery scenario. This is particularly true in regards to the emerging themes surrounding overall coordination in recovery. This study can only suggest the implications for the discipline and profession of emergency management.

Because researchers “construct grounded theories through past and present involvement and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10), it must be acknowledged that researcher bias and the researcher’s effect on participants may have influenced this study (Maxwell, 2006). However, the researcher employed the “checks” built into the grounded theory methodology as described by Charmaz (2006), Glaser (1978), and Strauss and Corbin (1998) to diminish the possibilities of misinterpreting the perspectives of participants. The researcher also solicited feedback from the dissertation advisor during the analysis and writing process to assist in identifying any unrecognized bias or assumptions, as well as any flaws in logic (Maxwell, 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the qualitative research methods that were used for this study. Following Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory methodology, a pre-developed interview guide

was used to initially conduct telephone interviews with 20 county elected officials who had experienced a disaster in their county. Following the grounded theory method, theoretical sampling led to the completion of an additional 22 in-depth, telephone interviews with a combination of county elected officials, emergency managers, recovery managers or coordinators, and municipal elected officials. The grounded theory methodology used for data collection was also utilized to code and analyze the data collected. Next, Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven relate the study's results.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIAL IN SHORT-TERM DISASTER RECOVERY

This chapter is the first of four results chapters. As noted in the methods chapter, the researcher initially conducted 20 interviews with county elected officials regarding their role in short-term disaster recovery. This chapter relates the key findings from these original interviews, including the routine role of county elected officials within the county government, their role in short-term disaster recovery, and possible explanations for their defined recovery role. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how these initial results informed the future direction of the study.

Routine Role

To understand how county elected officials perceived their role in short-term disaster recovery, it is first necessary to understand how they viewed their routine role and responsibilities within the county government. The data indicated that county elected officials assumed a number of similar responsibilities across jurisdictions even while there existed a certain amount of variation in interviewees' overall conceptions of their regular duties based upon the varying structures of county government, namely the extent to which they fulfilled the legislative and executive functions in the counties. Regardless of government structure, the data suggested that helping to solve constituent issues or problems and being accessible to the public are significant responsibilities of all county elected officials. As noted by one county commissioner,

I get phone calls here on a regular basis, emails. It's kind of a standing joke in the family that they don't send me to the grocery store very often because it's four hours for me to pick up a gallon of milk. It's just that I run into everybody I know and we go over everything, their concerns, or what's going on here. And I do enjoy it but that part of it can be very time-consuming. And it's not uncommon to have a 15 to half-hour conversation with a constituent to try and help them understand and know where they can

go if they're not getting the right answers, and I am like a full-service shop, you know, it's a one-stop shop.

A county executive shared similar experiences,

I know so many people, and they feel so comfortable coming to me, and a lot of times they'll come to me with things that don't have anything to do with what my duties are except the fact that I want to help anyone if I can, and therefore I may make calls for some of them, and get them directed in the right place. So, I have an intense schedule and very...I'm very hands-on.

Elected officials noted that being accessible means not only being reached by email or telephone, but also attending a variety of meetings and other public events. As stated by a county executive,

Well, in addition to the administration of government, obviously as a public official, groups and individuals in the community want you to participate in, you know, public meetings, and ground breakings, and the ceremonial side.

Elected officials reported that being accessible to handle constituent issue was an important, but often time consuming part of their role.

Elected officials at the county level also saw themselves as liaisons to other levels of government. Elected officials voiced the importance of building and maintaining relationships with city and municipal governments, as well as being advocates for the needs of the county and its constituents to those state-level elected officials charged with representing residents in both state and federal legislative assemblies, as well as in the state executive office. One elected official described this part of the elected officials' role as being "conduits of the political process." As noted by one commissioner,

The cities, we have a program where every quarter, every 3 months, we get all the mayors and city managers together and then we talk about, you know, how things are going, what are some of the issues, and I attend all of those meetings. And then at the end of February I'm going back to Washington, D.C., to talk to our congressman about some of the issues that we have that are important to our county.

While all elected officials reported that handling constituent issues, being accessible, and building relationships with other levels of government as key responsibilities, they differed in the

extent to which they fulfilled the legislative and executive functions of the county based upon the structure of the county government. As noted in the literature review, many counties use a commission, or plural executive, form of county government, which consists of a melding of legislative and executive authority into an elected board of supervisors or county commission (DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2009). Eight counties in this part of the study reported having a plural executive form of government. Under this structure, elected officials reported being responsible for setting the budget and making policy decisions. These responsibilities were accomplished through a defined budgetary process and regularly scheduled public meetings or hearings. One county legislator described the role as follows,

We have meetings on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Tuesday is usually a staff kind of meeting. Wednesdays is an actual board of county commissioners meeting where we take care of business. We set a budget of over \$400 million a year once a year, and then we deal with the policies, and the projects, and the problems of the county as we spend time in the office each day throughout the year.

These elected officials also fulfilled the county's executive functions, including administering departments, overseeing county government services, and managing county finances. One county commissioner expressed these responsibilities as follows,

We have...we call them liaisons, but each commissioner, every year in January we take what departments we're going to be a liaison with. It doesn't mean we directly supervise them, because all 3 commissioners supervise the department heads, but we're...like I'm liaison to the community development department, so any kind of planning issues those kind of things the director would talk to me first and I would try to help him through those issues, but if there's something that needs to come before the full board he has every right to do that.

The elected officials in the plural executive form of government suggested that it was necessary to juggle their time and efforts between the legislative and executive functions—in addition to the functions common to all elected officials.

While the plural executive form of government is still widely used, many counties have shifted to either the county administrator or the elected executive form of government (NACo, 2012). Under the county administrator format, voters elect a legislative body who in turn appoint an executive responsible to this body to implement policies and oversee daily administration of the executive departments (DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2009). Under a county executive format, the county executive is elected at-large separately from the legislature and acts as the chief administrative officer of the jurisdiction (DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Engel, 1999; Harrigan & Nice, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2009). In counties using either the administrator or county executive form of government, the members of the county commission or legislative equivalent retained budgetary and policymaking responsibilities, but reported that they transferred the administrative and financial management responsibilities to the executive or administrator. Six counties in this portion of the study reported using an administrator form of government, while six indicated that an executive format is employed. Elected officials serving as executives described their duties as solely those associated with the various managerial functions of government. One county elected executive defined the role this way,

I as an executive am the only one that can put up any names for hiring and pretty much am the supervisor of all of department heads of all of the departments in county government. Magistrates can vote on bills to pay and for spending and that sort of thing, but once they vote to spend in a certain area they can't really direct how things are managed after that point. It's all up through here.

Another county executive emphasized the importance of financial management to the role,

I'm the chief financial officer for the county. I'm the agent for the county as far as all contracts and lawsuits and all those things, that all comes through the county mayor's office. A lot of the day-to-day is financial. A lot of overseeing purchasing, making sure department heads are within budget, making sure things

are bid correctly. We purchase a lot of goods and services and insurances and all that sort of thing and that's...and then maintenance of all...overall the maintenance of all the county buildings.

These elected officials suggested that being responsible for only the executive responsibilities allowed them to fully concentrate on the day-to-day administration of the government while leaving policy decisions to their legislative counterparts.

Analysis of the interviews indicated that dealing with the voting public and preserving relationships across levels of government were consistently seen across counties as responsibilities falling under the routine or normal purview of all county elected officials. Other responsibilities differed depending on government structure. In some counties, elected officials wore dual hats, fulfilling both the legislative and executive tasks of government. In other counties, elected officials served as legislators, making the policy and budgetary decisions, but appointed an administrator to handle the administrative and financial management functions associated with government. Still other counties had elected legislators to make those policy and budgetary decisions, as well as elected executive to implement those decisions. Understanding this normal or routine role provides the context needed for understanding the role of county elected officials in the short-term recovery process. In the next section, how county elected officials perceived their role during short-term disaster recovery is presented.

The Disaster Recovery Role

There were a number of respondents that identified recovery tasks and activities that were being accomplished within their community (e.g. damage assessments, debris removal, temporary relocation and housing, restoration of utilities and public services, volunteer management, and donations management). However, most did not discuss any significant role for themselves in the completion of these tasks and activities—they did not see themselves as the

doers or coordinators of the recovery tasks. Rather, respondents suggested that responsibilities for the completion of recovery tasks and activities were widely distributed throughout the various departments and agencies within the county government or other stakeholder organization including the state government, the federal government, the private sector and voluntary agencies, including faith-based groups.

Analysis of the data indicated that while not being the doers or coordinators of recovery tasks and activities, county elected officials still played some role in the recovery efforts. However, the data suggested that for the vast majority of respondents this role would not be considered unique to the recovery phase. As summarized by one county executive,

There is a lot more time involved in that because the ongoing responsibility and management of government continues. It's just another level that's thrown on top of that, so it adds another time element that has to be managed into things. But I'm still responsible for the same things, just with another layer.

The data indicated that the recovery role for most county elected officials could best be characterized as an extension of their routine or normal role within the county government as applied to recovery efforts.

As discussed in the previous section, all elected officials indicated that one of their primary responsibilities was handling issues brought to their attention by constituents. The data suggests that this responsibility extends to the disaster recovery period. Nearly all respondents indicated at least some involvement in handling constituent issues or challenges related to the recovery process. In almost all cases, handling citizen challenges involved fielding phone calls or emails from citizens concerned with the slow pace of performance for different recovery tasks—particularly the restoration of utilities and infrastructure—or citizens needing information about a particular recovery task or activity but not knowing where to find that information. Elected officials acted on these inquiries either by directing them to the appropriate

department/organization for disposition or directly providing them with suitable explanatory information. One elected official described contending with citizen issues as follows,

The best thing about being a county commissioner is you're close to the people. The worst thing about being a county commissioner is you're close to the people. So, you know, they know us personally, so they just call us up and say hey, my road's still closed. Why don't you get it opened? Or, my power's still out. You say, well, have you contacted the utility company? No, no, I know you, I'm contacting you, you know. Or, this state highway is blocked. Well, have you contacted the department of transportation? No, no, I'm contacting you. And so, we're pretty much, because they know us so well and because we're local, they'll contact us and then we try, we the commissioners, try to move them in the direction either to get the answer on their own or we'll contact that agency of that department and have them contact or you let them know about the issue.

Another remarked,

You know when disaster incidents are being managed and somebody either doesn't like what's being done or has a concern or feels threatened about what's happening, either from flooding or lack of power or whatever, you know, oftentimes they call the executive's office. And I talk to people and say, okay, this is what we're doing, and listen to them, and then I pass that information on, and we try to make sure that they are followed up on so that they don't feel like they're on their own.

The data suggested that, although they occasionally found it frustrating, allocating the time to sort out these citizen issues was a priority for county elected officials. As one executive put it,

Because you're here locally, people phone or come into the office every day. And it may be from a broad perspective a minor problem, but it's the most important thing to that person on that particular day and so it has to be dealt with promptly.

County elected officials suggested that their relative proximity and closeness with the impacted population meant that constituents were particularly apt to voice any issues or concerns to the county elected officials.

In addition to handling constituent issues, nearly all of the interviewees emphasized the importance of being accessible to the public. While public accessibility was considered a significant part of their routine role, county elected officials suggested that this accessibility becomes critical after a disaster event, particularly as a means of offering the public reassurance.

Talking to citizens about government recovery efforts and being visible in the community were viewed by respondents as key activities in restoring the public confidence. Some elected officials attempted to offer assurance to their citizens through public addresses at press conferences, radio or television stations, or meetings. As described by one commissioner,

I am actually directly involved and mostly from the standpoint of going on the radio, talking to citizens about calming them down, you know. Mostly what people want to hear when the lights are out and, you know, the power is out, and they can't get anywhere is what's going on, you know? Will I be able to get to the grocery store? Will I be able to get gas? All of these kinds of questions are being asked. And the role I play is going down to the radio station and getting on the radio and talk to folks, give them the latest information.

Others went out into the community to meet personally with impacted people or participated in other types of community outreach efforts as a means to provide support, encouragement, and assistance. One commissioner remarked,

Probably the biggest thing you can do for the community is minister to the people that were hurt, were affected. You've got to be out amongst them. You've got to know that they are going to be angry. You've got to know they're going to be hurt. You've got to know that they're going to be confused and you can't deny that. In fact, it's better to go straight in... Tell me what you're angry about. Tell me what you're confused about. Tell me what you hate about government, about storms, about your next-door neighbor. You've got to get that out of the way before you can get down to the level of what you need. We are here. What can we help you with?

Another commissioner stated,

I did a lot of community outreach, talking to people, a lot of meetings, just trying to be available and letting them know we are there. It's everything from showing up at a rotary meeting to presenting at a school that was saved. We actually had a special celebration that was put together that me and one of the other commissioners. You know, what we did is we showed up and waved hands. We didn't even say anything. And people were just so glad to have us there. It was just a show of outreach and support to the people who fought, the people who had lost structures, the people who had kept their houses, just people impacted by the event.

Five counties set up recovery centers at local community buildings where citizens could access insurance and government services that could assist them in their individual and household

recovery efforts. County elected officials in all of these communities made regular visits to these centers in order to both be available to the public as well as provide appreciation and support for the individuals staffing the centers. One executive even shifted his daily operations to the recovery center for a period of time. This elected official remarked,

I was there just about every day. Sometime twice a day, yes. I wanted to make sure everybody got served that needed serving, and everybody got help that needed help, and then make sure everybody was aware that the people was there taking out the cases for their assistance and getting that out for the people.

Another stated,

I went to the disaster recovery center several times, talked to people and talked to the staff. I did not staff anytime there. I thought about it. We talked about it and decided it was actually better for me to go in and tell people what a great job I thought they were doing, thanks for all the volunteer help, then for me to actually sit down and spend time in a booth.

Reaching out to impacted citizens through multiple forums to offer reassurance and support became a priority for county elected officials during the recovery period.

Beyond constituent issues and public reassurance efforts, nearly half of the respondents indicated that their liaison function extended to working with elected officials at other levels of government on recovery issues. These county elected officials reported being involved in communicating or interacting with state-level elected officials representing county residents in both state and federal legislative assemblies, as well as at the state executive level. While many of these interactions were informational, such as answering questions from these state-level elected officials regarding the status of infrastructure or services within the county or conducting visits of affected areas, there were four instances where county elected officials acted as serious advocates for county needs in the recovery process. The elected officials involved in these advocacy initiatives indicated that these efforts centered on highlighting those recovery tasks and

activities that were at risk of not being completed due to budgetary or other resource constraints and attempting to garner the necessary support to meet those shortfalls,

You know, I think the only thing I didn't do during that time was either get into my car and drive down to the state capital or get on a plane and fly to Washington. I talked to my Congressman or their representatives and Senators and their reps. I talked to Governor's office several times. We as a board sent a couple of letters and we were very involved with trying to get what we needed for watershed restoration.

Another noted,

I felt very strongly that we should request a Presidential Declaration and we were not getting our folks from the state emergency division to be responsive, so it required me to contact the governor. But first I contacted my peers in neighboring counties to say would you sign a letter of support. Not all of them did, but that is what I did. And I felt strongly that it was, especially in this economy, especially now, that we didn't have the resources to help recover from all of the devastation that was happening across the county, that I needed to intervene with the governor.

In only one of these instances was the advocacy effort successful. The elected officials in the remaining three jurisdictions indicated that although the state-level elected officials supported their position and "went to bat" for the counties, their efforts were constrained by federal policies and regulations limiting the desired resources. One commissioner stated in reference to state-level elected officials,

You know, we found that contact from a local elected official I think, how can I say, helps make it even a little bit higher priority usually on their agenda. So we were essentially, I guess I would say, an important information conduit that helped highlight what needed to get done.

Regardless of outcome, all of the county elected officials engaged in advocacy endeavors stressed the importance of having their voices heard at the state and federal level and being involved in the political process.

While liaisons with state and federal level elected officials appeared regularly in interviews, very few respondents mentioned much personal communication or interaction with municipal or city governments. There were respondents who indicated that cities were taking

responsibility for the completion of various recovery tasks, such as debris collection within the city limits or managing volunteers, but there was minimal discussion of any interface between county elected officials and their municipal counterparts. It appeared that interactions between municipal and county government occurred more frequently between city officials and county staff members than between elected officials at the respective levels.

While it could be argued that by liaising with other government officials and, in some cases advocating for the needs of their community, county elected officials were attempting to integrate their communities, at least vertically, it should be noted that the elected officials were not leveraging these relationships with other levels of government to ensure that the programs available were being best tailored to local needs. Rather, they were exerting political pressure in an attempt to garner additional resources for their jurisdiction.

Just as county elected officials found themselves handling constituent issues, being accessible to the public, and negotiating relationships with other levels of government in relation to recovery issues, county elected officials indicated that they exercised their given legislative and executive functions *vis-à-vis* disaster recovery as well. And just as government structure affected the role of the elected official in routine or normal government operations, so did that structure shape the role that the elected official played in disaster recovery.

County elected officials with legislative responsibilities indicated that there were budgetary or policymaking decisions that had to be made in relation to recovery activities. As noted by one commissioner,

We had to make a decision to allocate some money, several million dollars. We set money aside from our reserves specifically to deal with any costs that didn't get covered from other sources and any recovery costs that we needed to pick up over the course of the next year. We also made decisions on zoning issues and waiving fees, as well as approving taking the lead on getting permission for some of the watershed recovery projects.

Another remarked,

There were some policy decisions on whether we were going to allow burning in the county. It happened to be a very dry season, so we had a burn ban that we had enforced and we had to work with our own fire district to be able to create a fire pit to burn a lot of the tree debris and other debris, so that was a policy decision that had to be made. Well, we had to release and put some budget authority to the public works director so he could get equipment into the area, manpower into the area, we had to authorize overtime.

These county elected officials indicated that during disaster recovery decisions related to expenditures and appropriation approvals for recovery tasks were particularly prominent.

In those counties with a county administrator or elected executive form of government, most commissioners or legislative equivalents reported doing little else in relation to specific recovery tasks beyond these appropriations and policy decisions. As one commissioner put it, “Once we declare a state of emergency, we kind of step back and let the professionals do their jobs unless they ask us for something.” And another stated, “There really wasn’t much else for me to do other than observe and make sure again if there was a call for something that it was provided, but I didn’t intervene at all.” The elected officials left the doing and the coordinating of recovery tasks to what one official described as “the capable hands of the hired administrator, department heads, and other qualified county staff.”

However, despite not having much direct involvement in the recovery tasks and activities, most commissioners stressed that they felt it was still critical to continue to monitor the recovery process and be knowledgeable of the recovery efforts that were going on within the jurisdictions. One commissioner commented,

We've got good people in place, people that know their jobs. But you have to monitor the situation...I think that just goes back to the role of a commissioner in general as you have to be informed and be aware of what's going on in your county and within your departments.

It was also seen as important to be accessible to those positions that might require a budgetary or policy decision to be made. According to one commissioner,

A lot of the things that we are needed for are quick decisions, about fuel allocation or where to get money or declaring an emergency, or any number of things like that. I can't tell you how many times they will call and ask for decisions or we will come into the office...The commissioners need to be accessible and we need to be available to make decisions when they are needed. If that means we let everybody else do the work, that's the way it has to be.

While the commissioners or legislative equivalents in a county with a county administrator or elected executive form of government had limited direct involvement with recovery tasks or activities, they sought, as one commissioner put it, "to be as informed as possible and help where we could by making any budgetary or policy decisions that benefited those affected by the event."

Those county elected officials serving in an executive role as either part of a plural executive or elected executive government structure reported that their oversight of all county issues, including recovery efforts, continued during the post-disaster timeframe. While these elected officials maintained supervision and management over the departments and funds under their purview, they, like their legislative counterparts, generally did not act as the doers or coordinators of recovery efforts. Rather, recovery tasks and activities were simply accomplished within the various departments or by the stakeholders charged with completing them with little apparent executive direction or intervention. Elected officials reported completing the necessary support functions such as signing off on requests for funding from the state and federal government, signing purchase orders for necessary resources, and signing/administering any contracts associated with recovery, as well as helping address any issues as requested or needed, but did not appear to direct or facilitate the execution of recovery tasks and activities. As one commissioner noted,

I also sit in on almost all the management team meetings when they are making decisions and they almost always ask for my advice and opinion on, you know, are we going down the right path? Do you have a different idea? Sometimes they listen, sometimes not.

Another observed,

It's just one of those things that we just basically oversee it and we usually have a stand back approach and let the offices work. You know, let the people hired in those positions do their job... The biggest thing we did was the bidding for debris removal contracts.

While the supervisory responsibilities led elected executives to be perhaps slightly more involved in recovery efforts than their counterparts with solely legislative functions, these executives were, for the most part, still apt to step back and let the hired staff members handle the recovery tasks and activities, playing only a supporting role when asked or required.

The data revealed that for the majority of county elected officials, their role in disaster recovery appears consistent with their routine role within the county government, albeit with a recovery focus. During the recovery timeframe, these elected officials continued to sort out constituent issues, make themselves available to the public they represent, liaise with elected officials at other levels of government, particularly the state level, and fulfill their designated legislative or executive functions for both the routine and recovery related issues that occurred in the county. Table 4 summarizes the findings related to the role of county elected officials.

Table 4
Summary of County Elected Officials' Roles

| Functions within Role | Commissioner in Plural Executive Government | | Commissioner in Administrator or Elected Executive Government | | Elected Executive in Elected Executive Government | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|
| | Routine | Disaster | Routine | Disaster | Routine | Disaster |
| Handle constituent issues | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Be accessible to public | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Liaise with other levels of gov't | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Set the budget | x | x | x | x | | |
| Make policy decisions | x | x | x | x | | |
| Manage administrative tasks | x | x | | | x | x |
| Manage finances | x | x | | | x | x |

It should be made clear, however, that the finding that the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery appears to be an extension of their routine role should not be taken to suggest that the efforts of these elected officials during the disaster recovery period are insufficient. Certainly many county elected officials reported increased demands on their time as they juggled recovery responsibilities with ongoing routine issues. Many conveyed being highly active in monitoring or supervising recovery efforts and doing what they could to assist in those efforts within the auspices of their defined role within the county government. And, undoubtedly some of the decisions they made in terms of managing personnel, appropriating funds, or passing recovery-related policies positively facilitated the recovery efforts. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of county elected officials did not appear to be taking on any new or unique responsibilities during the disaster recovery timeframe. Of particular note, the data showed little evidence of county elected officials stepping into the ideal recovery coordinator role implied by the literature (see for example: Berke et al. 1993; Berke & Campanella 2006; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Passerini, 2000; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011) or driving a holistic or sustainable approach to the recovery process (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006). The next section offers possible explanations for why the role of the county elected officials in recovery did not appear to expand to encompass any of the functions associated with the ideal role of a recovery coordinator or to act as a driver of holistic recovery, but rather remained limited to an extension of their routine responsibilities into recovery efforts.

Possible Explanatory Factors

The initial interviews indicated that for the majority of elected officials, their role in disaster recovery could best be described as an extension of their routine or normal role with a focus on recovery issues. The data were analyzed for possible explanations of this finding.

Analysis led the researcher to discount several possible explanations suggested by the literature, accept one that may be relevant, and led to the discovery of three possible alternative explanations for the role of county local elected officials in short-term disaster recovery.

Discounted Factors

The literature review indicated a variety of contextual factors related to the county that could potentially influence or explain what role the county elected official plays in short-term disaster recovery. These factors included level of autonomy (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Duncombe, 1977; Kemp, 2008), resource capacity (Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990), government structure (Benton, 2002; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Morgan & Kickham, 1999), location along the rural-urban continuum (Berman & Lehman, 1993), and views of emergency management (Labadie, 1984; Jensen et al., e.d.; Petak, 1985; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990).

To explore these contextual factors identified in the literature, the researcher placed the data from each interview in rows in an Excel file and coded each interview row with codes in columns related to county charter (yes, no), county location (northeast, southeast, midwest, southwest, northwest), county resources (i.e. lacking, sufficient, abundant), elected official experience in office (i.e., high, medium, low), government structure (plural executive, elected executive, appointed administrator), location along the rural-urban continuum (i.e., rural, urban, rural-urban), elected official routine involvement in emergency management issues (i.e., high, medium, low), and the placement of emergency management within the county organization (i.e., direct report to elected official, direct report to another department head or row officer, no emergency manager). The researcher then sorted the interviews by these codes and conducted analysis to see whether there were any patterns in the interview data related to the codes

assigned. Based on this analysis, while county government structure played a part in defining both the routine and disaster recovery roles of county elected officials, there was no apparent difference in either routine or recovery role based on county charter status, county location, county resources, elected official experience in office, government structure, placement along the rural-urban continuum, elected official routine involvement in emergency management issues, or the placement of emergency management within the county organization.

This study is qualitative and exploratory and features a small sample; thus, it cannot make definitive conclusions. This finding does not mean that these county contextual factors do not influence the county elected officials' role—they may. The data collected did not evince any such links between these identified contextual factors and county elected officials' roles. Yet, because county contextual factors beyond government structure offered no explanatory power for role differentiation or expansion, the data was explored for alternative explanations.

Nominal Events

One possible alternative explanation for the limited role of county elected officials in disaster recovery could be the nominal impacts of the associated hazard events. The data revealed that in many cases, the impacts and subsequent damages of the event were minimal. There were a couple of elected officials who suggested that the damage was so insufficient within their counties that perhaps the event should not even be considered a disaster. As one stated, “We declared not knowing what the damage was going to be, but in reality, in hindsight, we wouldn't have even had to declare it.”

The data suggested that nominal damages to people and property translated to a limited need for response activities designed to save or minimize harm to lives, property, and the environment, i.e. evacuation, search and rescue, mass care and sheltering, access control,

emergency medical care, etcetera (Lindell, Prater, & Perry, 2007). With manageable or negligible response tasks at hand, short-term recovery tasks were able to be conducted simultaneously with, or in lieu of, response. Notably, many county elected officials even spoke of recovery efforts in terms of incident management—terminology typically associated with the policies and standard operating procedures related to the response phase.

The recovery efforts rest with the incident command team. They stay in place until the disaster has reduced down to a point where we're back to normal operating procedures. In other words, public works can continue to fix the roads just as a normal course of business, law enforcement is not stretched anymore, the shelters aren't open anymore, people's power is back on for the most part. We'll keep our incident command team operating for maybe a week or so.

It's an incident command structure, so we have set up an emergency center. There are lots of people that are taking calls and of course the director of emergency management is responsible for managing those resources... So the emergency manager and the incident management team manage the information that comes in them and route it where it needs to go for either emergency services, roads, to the electrical utility, etc.

The data suggested that minimal damages also meant that completing recovery tasks was well within the capacities and capabilities of the county. While some county elected officials stated that the financial resources of the county would have been strained without federal assistance, county personal and equipment resources were not incapacitated or overwhelmed in the vast majority of cases.

Our folks were there in the command center and made sure that people got whatever they needed in the way of resources we could supply. We didn't have to call in any other counties or anything. We have mutual aid agreements, obviously, but we didn't have to call in aid from other counties. We had what we needed to get it done.

But they did work overtime. You know, after the initial probably first few days they just put in their normal... they just kind of shifted their resources for that area until they got it cleaned up and, you know, they might've quit mowing in other parts of the county and stuff like that, but I don't think it really hindered their day-to-day operations.

Although often requiring overtime work or contracts with private industry, counties were able to accomplish recovery tasks such as debris management, utilities and service restoration, and

temporary housing without struggling to obtain the people or tools necessary for their completion.

With minimal damages and the ability to use available county resources, recovery tasks were completed quickly, with most counties reporting being able to resume normal operations within a matter of days to a couple of weeks. There was no need for long-term recovery or the tasks often associated with that part of the process (e.g. housing recovery, business recovery, infrastructure repair, cultural and historic site restoration, public sector recovery, and social or psychological recovery). With recovery tasks focused on the short-term, the number of recovery tasks was fewer and the nature of those tasks such that they were not going to evolve over a period of many months.

Recovery tasks were also achieved without much apparent direction or overarching coordination. This is not to say that the different facets of county government or outside stakeholders, such as utility companies, failed to work together. Rather, the recovery tasks were able to be identified and clearly assigned to the different departments and outside stakeholders. And, those entities had the necessary knowledge, resources, and abilities at hand to satisfactorily accomplish those tasks simultaneously and with little challenge. As one commissioner stated,

The follow-up process, the mopping up, the meetings in the agencies that you have to deal with sometimes to get compensation, I would say our emergency management director was in charge of those efforts. If it was highway stuff, then it was our highway department, our highway engineer. If it was other debris, then it was public works. Our electric company was private and took care of restoring power... Our department heads report back to our administrator who is, you know, basically the next step in the chain of command. But again nobody was really micromanaging of any of this. Everybody knew their job and what they had to do.

The data suggested that there was communication between the different stakeholders working on recovery issues when necessary to facilitate a task, but the different stakeholders worked mostly autonomously.

Consistent with the findings of Jensen et al. (e.d.), the only recovery tasks that seemed to linger in most counties were the administrative ones—essentially, paperwork—associated with state and/or federal assistance (e.g., tracking of expenses and reimbursement paperwork for the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]) and contract management for infrastructure repair. In some counties, each department was responsible for the completion of these administrative tasks, including working with the necessary state and federal agencies. However, in most counties, the emergency manager was designated to coordinate the administration of FEMA paperwork.

The roads department obviously and the road inspectors are responsible for documenting their expenses, the fire service areas are responsible for theirs, and then emergency management is responsible for coordinating all of that and providing advice and doing a lot of the follow up paperwork and submissions.

Overall responsibility fell to our Emergency Management Agency [EMA], but pretty much fire and rescue took care of keeping up with theirs, road department took care of keeping up with theirs, the utilities folks took care of keeping up with theirs, you know what I'm saying? But then, when they all had to be coordinated together in the report, and there's some ridiculous report that has to go to FEMA, it was pretty much coordinated by the EMA guys. At that point, EMA is your contact with FEMA.

Regardless of whether the paperwork part of disaster recovery was conducted independently by the various departments/agencies or whether it was consolidated by an emergency manager, there appeared little need for the county elected officials to be involved in its accomplishment.

It seems reasonable that the role of county elected officials remained an extension of their routine because the magnitude of events was small enough that no real expansion was warranted. While recovery tasks necessarily had to be accomplished, their completion did not require any direction or overall coordination. Nor did the elected officials—or anybody—introduce the notion of holistic or holistic recovery suggested by the literature (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006). There was no evidence that these events were viewed as

opportunities for community improvement—issues like sustainability and mitigation did not appear to even arise.

Departments and stakeholders groups deemed responsible for tasks were able to simply handle their execution with minimal, if any, support required. The need implied in the literature for overall coordination driven by the notion of holistic recovery might simply have been nonexistent. As one county elected official stated,

You know if this had been a huge disaster it might be a different scenario. But for what we've had up to this point, there were no big issues. Now, you know, if a tornado were to hit a little community in our county like it hit in Joplin and then all that damage, well, that would be probably a different scenario.

It could be that there is relationship between the extent of the damages and the role the county elected official assumes in short-term recovery. Perhaps more extensive damage would correspond to a more expansive role for these elected officials.

Purview of Local Government Role

In those instances where the event damaged and/or destroyed private homes or property, respondents indicated that the county government only had limited ability, as well as responsibility, to assist those impacted individuals and households or businesses. County elected officials reported that it was the federal government, through FEMA and the Small Business Administration (SBA), as well as the private or non-profit sectors that were primarily responsible for helping individuals and businesses with their recovery.

County government provided space for these federal agencies, as well as insurance companies and nonprofit organizations, to handle individual cases, but outside of providing security, support staff, and information about agency availability, the county government appeared to have little involvement in these case management activities.

But we were able to find them [FEMA] a building and, you know, they'll come and set up in your town, but you've got to provide them the space and electricity and everything, and so there were some other issues that had to be addressed, but they were set up for several weeks until they quit having anybody to see, you know, so, and then they closed up shop and of course our job is to make sure the public knows hey, FEMA is going to be leaving Friday. If you have any other needs, you need to go by and see and talk to them, this kind of thing.

Well, the county provided a place for those at the community center in that community. We opened up that community center for FEMA and that's where they had their command post. And then we had our, I guess you would call it the food bank there. People brought all their food stuff there and then the county provided internet service and phone service. The SBA was there too. And the sheriff's department provided security for them while they were there.

And even if the county wanted to help individuals rebuild or clear out debris on their private property, federal disaster assistance regulations disallowing reimbursement of private property debris removal, as well as additional legal restrictions surrounding private property, limited their ability to engage in these efforts.

I'd have liked to have been able to go onto private property and help the people some, but that's not allowable. So we couldn't do that, but we just got to do what we can do. We couldn't go in and actually take our equipment into like the house or trailers or whatever and bring it out. But once they got it to the road then we could take the material and things away like that.

Now one of the difficulties is that a lot of housing was a privately owned manufactured home park, a trailer park, and that's a little bit different than stick-built homes. The land was private; it was leased, so the county didn't have much jurisdiction as far as rebuilding that.

Almost all counties restricted their efforts to removing debris that had been moved from private property to public roadsides.

When additional assistance in repairing and/or rebuilding homes was needed beyond the help that the federal government or private insurance could provide, county elected officials reported that it was non-profit organizations or community volunteers that took on the role of helping citizens to rebuild.

The community people went in and helped them get, you know, put a roof back on their houses and different organizations went together and put the roof on, some different businesses paid for the materials, and different things like that, and some of the school groups, church groups went in to work and cleaned up their yards and different things like that.

Most of it was the other organizations. About the only thing the county did or got involved in was a lot of the parts of the barns and parts of the houses was put on the roadways and ditches, and we was able to legally remove some of the stuff from the roadway and the ditches, and kind of get that cleared back off, and that was about the limit of what we could do other than what some of my guys would do after hours, you know, on their own time.

In one instance, a local recovery committee with limited government representation was created to monitor the distribution of donated funds, but government did not drive this process.

Then, it became pretty much them working with individuals, fixing homes, repairing homes, rebuilding homes, helping with needs, and not using tax money. See, at that point it was basically funded with donations that had been raised and so forth. Donations continue to come in, but they really came in right at first, and so they had funds that they worked with under the direction of a board, but it wasn't...it was no longer a government thing, which is the way it should be. Government should step aside, and let the private sector do its job, and that's another thing that, you know, may not be explained really well. It's what really worked well here.

Interviewees suggested that many affected by the disaster were either not insured or underinsured. And while the county government could make policy decisions such as waiving permitting fees or adjusting property assessments and provide information about outside agencies that could help, there was little else that could be done by the county government itself to assist with repairing or replacing underinsured private property.

We found a lot of people were underinsured. That was huge. And that the way the insurance policies tended to work, you know, a lot of people don't realized they don't have adequate insurance. They think they do, they think they're all set and ready to go... What we did was waive permits for people who, you know, and the point we made is that the insurance should cover it and if you insurance is going to cover it, we're not going to pick it up, but if not, we're not going to create a \$1,000 fee for you. But there wasn't much else we could do.

Obviously, if there was damage to people's houses our assessing department could take that into consideration, you know, in valuing the properties and giving discounts on a

short-term basis, but for the most part, our responsibility was managing the disaster in making sure that, you know, access and safety and things like that were taken care of, the aftereffects. We can coordinate information or provide information on agencies that can give either assistance or loans or things like that. But, you know, we don't have the money to make people whole. And then some people said, well some people had insurance and some people did not. Well, you know the ones who didn't that's not really our responsibility. You know, that's the responsibility of the individual citizen to make sure that they've done something to prepare for themselves.

Policy decisions and outside agency referrals were seen as the only activities government could feasibly pursue due to limitations of funding and regulations regarding how taxpayer dollars could be spent.

In regard to tasks and activities associated with helping individuals and households or businesses recover, it is possible that county elected officials continued to fulfill their routine roles because the county government was not perceived as being charged with the completion of those tasks and activities. There were four participants who explicitly indicated that government in general was fundamentally not responsible for private recovery. The remaining participants did not present such an unequivocal view, suggesting instead that other stakeholders, such as the federal government or private and non-profit organizations were viewed as the appropriate mediums for satisfying any emerging needs associated with the recovery of these groups. As one elected official summarized,

My involvement was a whole lot less because we didn't have the public cleanup, the government involvement. It was pretty much citizens applying for FEMA help and that kind of stuff, but most of the damage was individuals, individual homes and stuff is what I mean. Long-term recovery, which was done by our committee, played an equally important role when it got to the point, but other than...it sort of jumped from emergency to long-term recovery. You didn't have the cleanup phase, so there wasn't much work for the county to do.

It seems possible that having this notion of two distinct facets of recovery—public and private—could be a limiting factor in the role of county elected officials, or other local officials, play in disaster recovery. If it is not seen as within the local government purview to facilitate or drive

private recovery, as well as public recovery, then the notion of holistic recovery suggested by the literature (Alesh et al., 2009; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006) becomes unrealistic or on the whole unnecessary from the perspective of government. If county government limits its involvement to repairing the built environment and resuming government services and excludes “reestablishing interrelationships among the members of the community and between the community and the local government” (Alesch et al., 2009, p. 178) as part of its recovery responsibilities, then perhaps overall coordination—and the other influential factors suggested by the literature that it encompasses—are not regarded as a necessary functions for disaster recovery, or at least not functions that need to be fulfilled at the county government level.

Other Players

While the majority of counties suffered minimal damage, as described in the earlier section of this chapter, there were four counties in the initial interviews that reported significantly greater damage to both private homes and public infrastructure than other respondents. In three of these counties, a recovery coordinator was hired or designated almost immediately to serve as the individual responsible for directing and coordinating recovery efforts across stakeholders groups.

The recovery manager is responsible for coordinating, just following up. It's making sure all this stuff gets done. We don't leave anything, you know, I've told a lot of people that we're going to be here for the long haul and that's part of what this job is about is making sure that a lot these things are not a one year effort, it's not a six-month effort. It's probably going to be a couple of years before we get this done. It's convening and working with the communities. It's staying on top of the insurance thing. It's keeping in touch with people and how we're doing stuff.

The director for long-term recovery is coordinating a lot of the community efforts. The long-term recovery board ended up being, you know, you had people from Habitat for Humanity, you had people from the Salvation Army, people from Red Cross, people from

United Way, all of those organizations. The director coordinated with them, worked with them and individuals to fix or repair homes and help with any other needs.

The potential significance of the findings from these three counties is twofold. First, the data from these counties lends credence to the idea that in disasters of greater magnitude, the need for the functions of a recovery coordinator—as described in the literature review as the idealized recovery coordinator position based on the literature—may be present. However, it also implies that when needed, the provision of these functions may not fall on the shoulders of the county elected official, but rather another individual may be charged with coordinating recovery efforts.

In one of these heavily impacted counties, the elected official had experience with disaster recovery as both a county commissioner and a small town mayor. This commissioner suggested that elected officials at the municipal or city level may have a more active or hands-on role in recovery efforts. The official described the differences in the two levels as follows,

I was a lot more boots on the ground involved as a mayor than I was at the county commission level. I was out and visiting citizens, walking the areas, holding town hall meetings. I spent my days constantly thinking of nothing but taking care of people, working with the media, working with FEMA, working with the National Guard, working with the state. I mean, whoever I needed to talk to, I'd go on in. But I didn't put that much energy and effort into the second tornado because I was chair of the county commission. It only impacted one part of my county, not the entire jurisdiction. And we had a lot of staff at our disposal and they took over a lot of that. But as mayor of a jurisdiction, most of that fell on me when it went through my town.

A county commissioner from a different heavily-impacted county also suggested that the city level government might have been more directly involved in emerging recovery functions.

Actually, the mayor of our major town and his crew took over staging facilities for donations and managing volunteers. They took over that part, to organize that and to distribute people and the different things like that. And I know our county received a lot of money that came in and went through the system out through the mayor and his people.

The analysis of these experiences suggests that while the role at the county level for elected officials may be routine, the lower levels of local government may have a more expansive role

given that more of their jurisdiction may be affected and they may not have the resources to delegate recovery tasks and activities. If elected officials at the municipal level are taking a more active role in recovery activities that may also serve to explain why the county elected officials need not expand their functions. It is possible that in some cases the lower level local government is bearing greater responsibility for recovery. Thus, the county level, including its elected officials, are not as heavily engaged and serve in more of a support capacity.

Conclusion

The first part of this study found that during disaster recovery the vast majority of county elected officials continued to perform their legislative and/or executive functions, handle constituent issues, be accessible to the public, and act as a liaison with elected officials at other levels of government, particularly the state level. They did not coordinate overall or drive the recovery process—no one did. But from a practical standpoint, with the limited magnitude of most of the events studied, there seemed to be no overarching need for such coordination or leadership to occur. The tasks and activities associated with recovery were distributed across stakeholders who appeared to operate relatively independently while still being able to accomplish recovery tasks and activities fairly quickly and without much difficulty. While proponents of a holistic approach would argue that such a lack of overall coordination could have resulted in missed opportunities to enhance sustainability, there was no evidence of opportunities to improve the community even being present within the context of such limited damages. It is possible that while the literature suggests that overall coordination is important for negotiating disaster recovery, it may not be needed in all cases.

Recovery also appeared to be divided into two distinct facets—public and private. While active in the cleanup and rebuilding of public infrastructure, county government seemed to have

a minimal role in the recovery efforts related to individuals and households and businesses; either government was thought to have no responsibility for private recovery or the federal government or private and non-profit organizations were viewed as the appropriate avenues for satisfying any emerging functions associated with the recovery of these groups. But again, from a practical standpoint, this distinction is consistent with the role of government more generally—on a day-to-day basis the county government has only a limited role in relation to individuals and households or businesses by way of providing regulation and offering designated funding and services. While in a disaster scenario, regulations can be altered or relaxed and services continued or expanded, the local government is not situated, either financially or legally, in either a normal or disaster context to cater to the specific needs of all individuals and households or businesses.

It is important to note that nowhere in the recovery literature is it suggested that the local government should be responsible for making individuals and households or businesses whole after a disaster event. However, the literature does stress the centrality of local government in disaster recovery (McLoughlin, 1985; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990) and implies that coordination of the distributed doers of recovery tasks and activities—including other levels of government, individuals and households, and private or non-profit organizations—is important for the achievement of more positive recovery outcomes (see for example: Berke et al., 1993; Kweit & Kweit, 2004; Phillips, 2009; Phillips & Neal, 2004; Smith, 2011). Specifically, such overall coordination is important as related to the holistic approach because it connects the government, private to non-profit, and individual and household stakeholders, providing a critical link between the future of the community and the individuals and households who live within it (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009). It is possible,

again, that perhaps maintaining this distinction in some cases does not adversely affect disaster recovery. However, it is also possible that by failing to bridge this gap between public and private recovery through the overall coordination of the diverse players within disaster recovery, the resulting recovery may be comprised of duplicated efforts or needs that go unmet (Quarantelli, 1999), as well as missed opportunities to increase sustainability or resiliency within the community (Passerini, 2000; Smith, 2011).

There were a few cases in these initial interviews that did suggest that the idealized role of recovery coordinator suggested by the literature could be needed in some cases, or at least could improve the recovery process. Moreover, these cases suggested that at least elements of such coordination were being used to synthesize public and private recovery. However, the data hinted that even when overall coordination is present, it is not the county elected official who steps into that role. In these limited cases, the county elected official still did not serve as the coordinator or driver of the recovery process. Rather, this role fell to either an appointed recovery manager or to the municipal level of government. It is possible that, even when conditions merit the application of those factors suggested by the literature, the county elected official is not the person within local government who is coordinating the recovery efforts.

The exploration of this data and these initial findings described above led the researcher to consider additional questions. Was the role of the county elected official the result of disaster conditions or does the role remain consistent despite different conditions? Are there conditions that necessitate overall coordination to best negotiate the recovery and ensure the process yields the most positive recovery outcomes? If those conditions exist, who is fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it? Based on these emerging questions, theoretical sampling was done as previously described in the methods section. County elected

officials, emergency managers, disaster recovery coordinators, and municipal mayors who had suffered a disaster with greater impacts were all interviewed to explore these questions surrounding recovery role and coordination.

Chapter Five relates the extent to which overall coordination was found to be present in these events of greater magnitude and describes how coordination was actually occurring in the majority of counties. It also communicates the roles of those individuals or groups that the literature suggests could or should be instrumental in providing that overall coordination. Chapter Six offers explanatory factors for why overall coordination was not found to be occurring in most cases. Chapter Seven discusses those cases where overall coordination was present—including describing the roles of those doing the overall coordinating, the implications of overall coordination on the recovery process, and factors that might explain why overall coordination was seen in these cases.

CHAPTER FIVE: LACK OF OVERALL COORDINATION IN DISASTER RECOVERY

At the end of the initial interviews, the researcher was interested in whether there were disaster conditions that required overall coordination in order to facilitate recovery and, if so, whether it was the county elected official or another individual or group who was fulfilling that coordination role. Thus, as detailed in the Chapter Three, the researcher pursued additional interviews with county elected officials, emergency managers, designated recovery coordinators, and municipal mayors who had suffered a disaster of greater magnitude in order to explore these emerging ideas. This chapter is organized into two sections. The first section discusses the lack of overall coordination seen in disaster recovery in the majority of counties—even in events of greater magnitude—and the implications of this lack of overall coordination on the recovery process. The second section describes the role of county elected officials and emergency managers—two groups that the literature identifies as potentially being suited to fulfill a coordination role—in the recovery process.

Lack of Overall Coordination

Emergency management—including recovery—is said to be a distributed function meaning that many individuals, organizations, and government entities have a role in the completion of the activities related to emergency management tasks (Canton, 2007). The data analyzed for this study further substantiated the distributive nature of disaster recovery. Respondents across jurisdictions suggested that responsibilities for the completion of recovery tasks and activities were widely distributed throughout the various departments and agencies within the county government as well as other stakeholder organization including the state government, the federal government, the private sector and voluntary agencies, including faith-based groups.

It has also been suggested that the coordination of the distributed doers of recovery tasks and activities is important for the achievement of more positive recovery outcomes (see for example: Berke et al., 1993; Kweit & Kweit, 2004; Phillips, 2009; Phillips & Neal, 2004; Smith, 2011). With the centrality of local government to disaster recovery (McLoughlin, 1985; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990), the literature has implied that local government—or some elements thereof—should be serving in this overall coordination function (Berke et al., 1993; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011). But, a key finding of this study is that despite what the literature suggests about the importance of overall coordination, the data indicated that in the vast majority of cases there was no one at the county level who served as an overall coordinator or driver of the recovery process. This lack of overall coordination at the county level was consistent across the majority of jurisdictions regardless of the type or magnitude of the disaster event.

This is not to say that the various agencies and departments within the county government did not work together or with the other identified stakeholders—they did. Yet, in most cases, coordination seemed to be occurring among or between specific organizations or agencies related to specific tasks. There was no singular group or individual charged with maintaining the big recovery picture. There was no overall coordinating mechanism or any overarching structure put into place to manage recovery (short of some counties instituting a long-term recovery committee, but those committees were geared towards providing individual case management and not overall management of the recovery process). There was no individual or group providing strategic direction. The vast majority of counties were not using a recovery plan to guide their efforts. The ideal role of recovery coordinator based on the literature that was

depicted in the literature review was notably absent. Instead, coordination could best be described as happening in pockets and on an as-needed basis.

I mean I can't say that that there's been one specific person in charge of coordinating the recovery efforts. There's been many different people who have had involvement, I mean, because this was the most damaging storm that we've ever seen so this is a much larger scale than anything we've seen yet. Our county executive and our emergency management coordinator have been involved. But there's even so much behind the scenes like our public works crews and engineering, roads and bridges, our parks and recreation. So I mean, it's really been a cooperative effort. Everybody worked together as necessary.

So we all kind of tried to be utility players a little bit and whatever the problem that was the most pressing, that was in the most need of some kind of attention, all of us worked in that direction and, you know, sometimes you had to triage what was the most important thing that you should be doing on a particular day, and try to get it done, and then move on to the next one, you know.

As counties tackled the various tasks and activities that arose during the recovery process, departments and agencies would reach out to and work with other stakeholders whose resources, guidance, and/or support was necessary in order to accomplish the given task.

There was nothing in the data that suggested a lack of overall coordination or direction led to an ineffective recovery. Respondents indicated that recovery tasks and activities were being identified, assigned to appropriate departments or stakeholders, and subsequently executed to the best of those department or stakeholder abilities. Challenges arose during recovery task execution—from convergence of spontaneous volunteers to identifying places to haul debris to locating affordable housing—but were met with improvised solutions devised through ad hoc communication and coordination measures, such as meetings and conference calls with other stakeholders with recognized skills or resources who could potentially assist.

There was an outpouring of people from around the country who wanted to help, people who wanted to donate resources and time. It was just difficult to manage. We would just get calls and we would have groups of 60 people who were at the airport looking to come help—all they needed was food and accommodation. It was wonderful that they wanted to help, but we were trying to deal with other things. So our emergency management office dealt with it initially. But eventually we set something up with the United Way and

they helped screen a lot of the volunteers and manage the information, and organize other faith-based groups to help manage people and donations.

We got hit pretty hard so you can imagine the millions of tons of debris. We had to figure out where to put it all. The county public works department coordinated with the county landfill to figure out where they were going to take it and what they were going to do with it. I think they burned some of it and maybe recycled some of it. But those two groups sat down and made it happen.

One of the problems and issues that came up is that we are very limited when it comes to affordable housing in the area. It's very difficult to find affordable housing on a regular basis. So our department of social services became the lead agency on handling temporary housing issues, but they worked with all of the nonprofits to try and manage the housing issue. They actually worked with a conference center to provide housing for 100 families for well over two months.

These improvised solutions appeared adequate to overcome the hurdles associated with recovery tasks and effectively complete the related recovery tasks and activities.

It is possible that overall coordination could have resulted in the recovery process being more efficient. It is possible too that a lack of overall coordination meant counties could have missed opportunities to implement positive change—particularly related to sustainability and mitigation efforts. Moreover, it is feasible that without overall coordination, the linkages between the community and the individuals who live and work in it were absent, and, as a result, quality of life questions went ignored and the needs of certain stakeholder groups were perhaps overlooked. For example, one participant suggested that individuals and households struggled to make their needs known and get answers to their questions.

People didn't know who to call and the phone lines were so bad that you weren't sure whether nobody was picking up or if the call was even going through. So people were just mass calling people. If they needed help or wanted information or something like that, they would call city hall, they would call the courthouse, they would call the council members, they would call their state assemblyman, they would call their congressman, and they would call everybody until they got some kind of answer. So it was kind of like a shotgun type approach from people looking to get help because they didn't know where to call.

Another participant indicated that the needs of businesses, particularly small businesses might have gone unnoticed.

I think what is lacking is that focus on helping the smaller businesses get back up and running right away and I think the impact of them not doing that is more than people realize. We have like these, you know the local chamber of commerce or the economic office, the office of economic promotion, and all this other stuff, but nobody has the big picture. There's no agency or anybody involved in the bigger picture. You can't survey all the small businesses. They just can't send out an email. There's no umbrella agency or persons or groups interested in keeping track of that.

While the potential for these negative outcomes certainly existed, there was not enough data to definitively determine the extent to which this lack of overall coordination in the recovery process translated to reduced efficiency, missed opportunities to implement sustainability and/or mitigation measures, or stakeholder needs going unmet. This finding does not mean that such negative outcomes might not result from a lack of overall coordination—they may. The data collected did not evidence such conclusive links.

The next section examines the roles played in disaster recovery by two groups within the county government—elected officials and emergency managers—that the literature has suggested could or should be fulfilling this role of overall coordination.

Roles of County Elected Officials and Emergency Managers

There exists an underlying assumption in the literature that overall coordination should be occurring in disaster recovery in order to achieve more positive recovery outcomes (see for example: (Drabek & Hoetmer, 1991; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips & Neal, 2007; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Based on their broad span of influence on county government affairs, the literature has suggested that county elected officials are well-positioned to play a sizeable role in the recovery process (Petak, 1985; Phillips, 2009; Stehr, 2007). In addition, scholars have implied that the local emergency manager should be intimately involved in disaster recovery

(Berke et al., 1993; Phillips 2009; Schwab et al., 1998), although recent research has challenged the extent to which their involvement is actually occurring (Jensen et al., e.d.). Based on this literature, the researcher focused on these two specific groups within the county government—elected officials and emergency managers—in the theoretical sampling as the individuals who could have potentially fulfilled this implied role of overall coordination. The data revealed, however, that in the vast majority of cases, county elected officials and emergency managers—though involved in the disaster recovery process—were not serving as overall coordinators or drivers of the recovery process as conceptualized in the idealized role of recovery coordinator outlined in the literature review. Their involvement in disaster recovery was more limited. This section offers a description of the roles elected officials and emergency managers were actually fulfilling in the recovery process in the aftermath of events of greater magnitude.

County Elected Officials

Even in disasters of larger magnitude that resulted in greater damages to the jurisdiction, the role of the county elected official during disaster recovery appeared to remain consistent with their routine role as described in Chapter Four. During the recovery timeframe, these elected officials continued to sort out constituent issues, avail themselves to the public they represent, liaise with elected officials at other levels of government, and fulfill their designated legislative or executive functions for both the routine and recovery related issues that occurred in the county. However, in those counties reporting substantial damages to their jurisdictions, county elected officials described dedicating more time to fulfilling these stated functions in relation to recovery efforts over a longer duration than the majority of the initial interviewees or jurisdictions reporting lesser damages. Whereas most of the initial interviewees reported being able to return to a focus on day-to-day county activities within a matter of weeks, the majority of

these county elected officials indicated that recovery issues continued to demand at least a portion of their time even six-months to a year after the event.

While roles remained consistent, it should be noted that liaising with other levels of government seemed to be a function of greater importance after a more major event than it did in lesser events, particularly in regards to advocacy. Like in the events discussed in the previous chapter, county elected officials reported being involved in communicating or interacting with state-level elected officials representing county residents in both state and federal legislative assemblies, as well as at the state executive level, for informational purposes such as answering questions from these state-level elected officials regarding the status of infrastructure or services within the county or conducting visits of affected areas. But in many cases with disasters of greater magnitude, county elected officials stressed the importance of using the political process to advocate for additional funding and to address issues raised by constituents. The elected officials involved in these advocacy initiatives indicated that these efforts centered on highlighting those recovery tasks and activities that were at risk of not being completed due to budgetary or other resource constraints and attempting to garner the necessary support to meet those shortfalls, pressuring federal organizations for funds or information important to recovery efforts, and pushing on issues voiced by citizens within their jurisdiction.

Well, as long as the key governmental people keep complaining to FEMA to move it along quickly, yes the reimbursement process goes well and we have the resources we need. The county executive's office has stayed on FEMA's back and the executive has even solicited the governor's office to keep the pressure on so we can get reimbursed.

When the preliminary flood maps came out it was basically going to put a large majority of our residents in the high-risk velocity zones, which was going to mean significant increases in their flood insurance and people were just...they didn't know what to do. Many of them said we won't be able to afford to live here anymore. We're just going to have to walk away and our county executive was very involved in that and wanted answers, wanted information. I had many conversations with the governor and the

governor's office to try to explain that FEMA may not have had all the data that was needed to come up with those maps.

You have to be somewhat assertive. If things aren't going the way you think, I think you go to your appropriate elected official to express your concerns, whether it be directed at the state level and so forth or these organizations of the department of emergency services and even some of our local FEMA people that are positioned in the state. And you have to work you elected officials at the national level or state elected officials to try to get stuff done. You need to be willing to step forward and let them know what your concerns are because if you sit back and are silent, nothing's going to happen.

County elected officials also reported having more interaction with their municipal counterparts in these larger magnitude events. With greater damages, municipalities appeared to be responsible for an increased number of tasks and activities as related to their municipal citizens, including damage assessment, debris removal, service restoration, and temporary housing. And, as such, county elected officials had more contact with municipal mayors who were leveraging the political process to get the necessary assistance. As one county elected official summarized,

You know, for the most part, the cities themselves dealt with it (recovery) with their fire departments and their Offices of Emergency Management (OEMs) and their police departments and their public works departments. But you know, the county offered support and whatever expertise and whatever equipment we had to try to deal with that, we would help them out the best they could. A lot of communication went through the county and city staff members, but I would hear from mayors when things needed to be brought to my attention.

County elected officials reported the necessity for sustained efforts related to acting as a conduit of the political process—both up and down the levels of government—in these disasters of greater magnitude.

It should also be mentioned that the data suggested many county elected officials in events of greater magnitude may have a more prominent individual decision-making role in the response phase than during the recovery process. A number of these county elected officials reporting having to make significant, high-profile decisions related to response such as when to declare a state of emergency, if and when to evacuate the county or portions thereof, how to

ration supplies such as water, ice, and gasoline, and when to allow residents to return to their homes.

Simply making the call to evacuate and making that call to declare the emergency during that event, I had people saying just do it, don't worry about it. Whoa, wait a minute, wait a minute. You're dealing with people's lives here. If I start telling people to evacuate, people get into accident, maybe killed. When you evacuate, you got to worry about burglaries and people's houses getting burglarized. I'm the one that made that call. That's on my back and I take that responsibility seriously.

And I had people accusing me personally of hoarding ice. Now, there is some truth to that. We did. I ordered it to be done and we did it. I just couldn't allow the people out there in the field not to be in the best physical shape we could get them in... When we finally got some ice in, we padlocked it up and I had a sheriff's deputy guard it. That was my decision.

However, decision-making in recovery appeared more diffused. In keeping with their legislative and/or executive duties, county elected officials still had to make decisions on policies and budget expenditures, as well as contract agreements, in relation to recovery tasks. And while some of these decisions were certainly beneficial to recovery, such as making public transportation free for a period of time or lowering permitting fees, the decisions were not perceived by county elected officials to be as weighty or as consequential as some of those faced in response. And it seemed that the majority of decisions related to the performance of recovery tasks and activities occurred within county departments, with county elected officials keeping informed and offering only minimal direction or advice.

But each of the directors, they're cabinet level positions that are in charge of each of the departments that we have, they took care of their own people, and their own tasks, and they all came to work and they all did well.

I offer some direction, but listen, I'm not a micromanager. I believe you hire good people, people who you can trust, and you give them their task, and while you as an overall administrator have to make sure it gets done, I don't want to have a lot of oversight. I don't want to have to be there and take time out of my day to make sure they're making the right decisions and whether they're doing their job in relation to recovery. I want them to take care of it.

County elected officials did not convey the same level of personal involvement, urgency, or pressure related to decision-making in recovery as they did in response. These officials appeared content to delegate primary decision-making authority in the recovery process to other players within the county government.

The data suggested that the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery is not contingent on the type or magnitude of the event, but is instead an extension of their routine role with a recovery focus. It should also be noted that the same analysis that was done in the initial interviews to evaluate whether county context appeared to influence county elected officials' role was repeated for this data set. As in Chapter Four, it was found that while county government structure played a part in defining both the routine and disaster recovery roles of county elected officials, there was no apparent difference in either routine or recovery role based on county charter status, county location, county resources, elected official experience in office, government structure, placement along the rural-urban continuum, elected official routine involvement in emergency management issues, or the placement of emergency management within the county organization.

As emphasized in Chapter Four, saying county elected officials continue to engage in the same the functions in relation to recovery as they do in day-to-day issues is not to dismiss their involvement in the recovery process. Just as the functions county elected officials routinely fulfill are critical to the ability of daily county government operations, so are these functions essential to the recovery process. However, the county elected officials, regardless of disaster magnitude, do not appear to be stepping into any sort of disaster recovery coordinator role that goes beyond the role they normally play within the government structure.

Emergency Managers

Much like county elected officials, the emergency managers who participated in this study did not describe themselves as the doers of disaster recovery. Emergency managers agreed that the responsibilities for recovery and completion of tasks and activities related to it are distributed widely throughout their counties and with other state and federal stakeholders. As one emergency manager noted, “Obviously recovery work is not a one person or one organization show. Lots of people play a part—public works, building department, assessors, public health, FEMA—the list goes on.” And county emergency managers did not see themselves as the individuals in charge of the completion of most tasks and activities or directing the work of those entities to who tasks were assigned. As summarized by one emergency manager, “Recovery is not an emergency management function, it is well beyond that.” Another provided more detail,

I don’t see our role as being the leader of it (recovery). I think it’s more in another entity’s wheelhouse to be in charge of it...But yet, I mean, we definitely need to support, champion, and do all the right things we need to do, you know, build those relationships and all that stuff.

While not labeling themselves as leaders of the recovery process, emergency managers did describe themselves as playing a coordinating role during the disaster recovery process.

However, consistent with the findings of Jensen et al. (e.d.), in most cases this notion of coordination was discussed in relation to the administrative tasks associated with state and/or federal assistance.

Then on the public assistance side, there was some significant infrastructure damage here in the county, so it took quite some time to get all of the project worksheets written. We certainly didn’t write them all, but we coordinated it all though with the various applicants and the FEMA teams.

The local coordinators are responsible for submitting their paperwork on behalf of their entity and then we shepherd that process with FEMA on top of working with our own jurisdiction on the necessary paperwork because we do have our own jurisdictions and

we do our own. We champion for the municipalities and make sure the process is going smoothly.

The applicant on our FEMA application reimbursement would be our director of public works. But it's the OEM people that worked with him to coordinate that effort. We're the ones that brought everyone together, who made sure that all the businesses and public entities all made sure that everything they're putting in for reimbursement was proper, made sure they didn't forget anything, you know. We're the ones that checked, double-checked the paperwork to make sure it was all right.

Specifically, most emergency managers described coordinating the documentation and paperwork related to receiving monetary reimbursement for expenses as being a significant part of their role.

While coordinating this documentation and paperwork was viewed as a large part of their coordinating role, the six emergency managers in this study described their role as extending beyond that found in Jensen et al. (e.d.). They saw themselves as coordinating and facilitating other recovery functions beyond the documentation and paperwork associated with state and federal assistance. For example, in the immediate aftermath of an event, all emergency managers indicated that they worked with utility companies, particularly power companies, to establish restoration priorities. They also reported working in tandem with county and municipal public works departments to determine debris removal priorities, both to facilitate the movement of emergency responders and utilities crews. As much of this work was occurring simultaneously with response activities, emergency managers related that these initial utilities restoration and debris removal activities were mostly being managed out of the county Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Emergency managers viewed working with other stakeholders in the EOC to prioritize and communicate needs as tantamount to coordination.

We actually had representatives from the electric and gas companies sitting in our EOC 24/7 taking calls and dispatching. The electric company is really good about sending somebody here and taking the calls and directing their people to fix the downed lines

stuff like that... We don't own the electric company so we can't direct them, but we can notify them that some calls are more important than others and they did prioritize.

Recovery actually begins right in the middle of response and when you're dealing with your public utility which has all of our power lines. They are looking at where they can either do a temporary or permanent repair and they're recovering as they restore power. In the public works road infrastructure system, unless it's a significant bridge washout or something, they'll start doing an immediate fix. And we work with them to communicate where the outages are and what needs to be done.

Despite this communication and having representation within the EOC, a couple of emergency managers reported that challenges still existed in organizing efforts between the utility companies and the road crews, particularly given that the private utilities were not under government control.

We'll get in the priorities, but the problem is the electric companies will work on their own and so if a road is closed, they'll say that they can't open it the road because there's a tree on the wire and then the local public works department will say, well, we can't remove the tree so the wire's hot, and the electric company will say, well there's a tree on the wire so we can't shut electricity off. It's like a catch-22 and what we're trying to tell them is why can't the local electric company and the utility crews work alongside the public works crew and a cop and a fireman and go take care of those priorities? But I can't make them do it. We need to work on that.

Coordinating with these private entities was viewed as a continuing challenge in the recovery process.

In addition to describing themselves as handling assistance paperwork and being engaged with specific recovery tasks happening concurrently with response, emergency managers also indicated some limited involvement in facilitating individual and household recovery through assisting FEMA in setting up disaster recovery centers within their jurisdictions, advertising FEMA programs, answering questions about assistance programs, and ensuring social service departments within county government were available at the recovery centers. However, emergency managers were offering mostly logistical support to these individual and household recovery efforts being driven by other stakeholders.

We facilitated the establishment of a disaster assistance center so that the SBA programs, the individual assistance programs were available for individuals to come to and get information about them instead of having to be on the phone somewhere. FEMA ran that. But we set it up and made sure that things were going smooth.

We had a DRC set up for three weeks. It's actually located in the building next to mine. We take over a rather large atrium area. It's prewired for data, it's prewired for phone, and it's prewired for power for them. We flip the switch for them and make sure they have everything they need. And we try to have at least representation there for at least the first week in the building. And then as need tapers off, you know, we taper off our involvement. We typically have someone from mental health, we have someone from the health department itself, the mental health administrator's department, consumer affairs, you know, all those entities and they provide services we would expect to see needed post-disaster.

But we are heavily involved and support the DRC by giving them a location, helping them out with supplies, and with staff. And we promote individual assistance, but we also manage expectations that people have that they're actually going to, you know, receive this enormous amount of help, which always is a lot less than they expect.

Emergency managers also reported being part of long-term recovery committees designed to help individuals and households who had exhausted all other assistance programs but still had unmet needs.

We are part of a long-term recovery group. We're like a quasi-official role there. I cannot direct them to do anything because the minute I direct them, they become agents of mine and then when they become agents of mine they're also subject to my same restrictions, meaning confidentiality information about what people received from FEMA. So we are sort of a Dutch uncle with them.

We have established a long-term recovery taskforce and that's made up of representatives from the United Way, the Red Cross, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and a number of others. So it's a pretty robust group and we mobilize that group as needed after these types of events. We sit on it, along with other social service agencies from the county. But the United Way is the chair. They lead it and facilitate the decisions.

Emergency managers reported helping to organize/mobilize these committees and offering support as necessary, but stated that these efforts were being driven by non-profit organizations within the community and they acted in a supporting role.

The data revealed that the majority of emergency manager participants perceived their role as a supportive one and that their involvement in recovery tasks and activities outside of those occurring simultaneously with response was typically limited to paperwork and logistical assistance—a finding largely consistent with Jensen et al. (e.d). While emergency managers described their involvement in disaster recovery using the language of coordination, the role the majority of them actually played in disaster recovery fell well short of the literature-based idealized recovery coordinator role. It should be noted, however, that one emergency manager took on a role more in keeping with the literature-based conception of recovery. This emergency manager did have a recovery plan in place—including a vision and recovery goals consistent with the vision—and was fulfilling elements of guiding a participatory process, particularly related to identifying and communicating with relevant stakeholder groups.

Our office takes the lead on coordination of recovery. We have a series of briefings that we do daily to coordinate all of the groups that are involved in the recovery efforts and it's the same as when we're doing response. We have an operational rhythm, different groups come in... It entails all of our public agencies from the school board, fire departments, sheriff's office, all of our county departments, and then any other groups we have come in is going to be outside of that. We bring in larger private businesses and industries, special briefings for them as part of that. And then any private partners that have a stake in the discussion, we'll bring them into whatever briefing is necessary. And our United Way director is our coordinator of volunteer agencies so he attends our briefing and reports on his group and then he goes back and holds briefings with his volunteer agencies.

But, evidence of facilitating a holistic approach was still lacking.

Outside of this lone exception, to the extent that the five remaining emergency managers were collaborating with different departments or stakeholders to accomplish a given task, it can be said that they were coordinating in pockets. And in terms of the type of coordination implied by the literature as needed to facilitate the notion of holistic recovery, the involvement of

emergency managers in disaster recovery—while certainly contributing to the process—would not best be described as coordination.

There was some data that suggested this minimal involvement may be because emergency managers do not really want to be involved or feel it is not the best use of their talents.

I've spoken with a couple of emergency managers and they don't want to be all that involved in recovery. You know, it's slow, it's time consuming, it's long, and it's not the melodrama. I guess the adrenaline rush of an emergency is a whole different job, whereas this kind of slow. I don't want to call it frustrating, but it's a slower process, a little more uncharted. Whereas an emergency, it's, you know, do this, do this, do this... Recovery is the very unsexy part of emergency management and they're just not interested in doing it.

Recovery is a foreign idea to many of us in this business... You know it's a marathon, not a sprint. We're lousy recovery people because it takes too long for us. Our Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) steps in. And, you know, that Type-A personality thing gets in our way. What's the problem, solve the problem, go on to the next problem. We need to bring people to the table that can do that longer scope work. Not necessarily the bigger picture type, but the longer, you know they understand this is going to be five, 10, 15 years maybe.

The vast majority of emergency managers in this study appeared content with the limited role being playing in disaster recovery and did not wish to pursue a more involved role in recovery—much less an overall coordination role. It should be noted that while only six emergency managers were interviewed directly for this study, data about their role was also collected in the interviews with county elected officials and their designees. The descriptions by county elected officials of the emergency managers' role in disaster recovery was consistent with the role described by the emergency managers themselves.

Conclusion

This study found that in the majority of cases, the doers of recovery were not being coordinated overall or directed by any entity within the county government. When coordination was happening at the county level, it was occurring in pockets, i.e., between specific

stakeholders for the express purposes of accomplishing a given recovery task or activity. Of particular note, two groups of individuals at the county level that the literature suggested could potentially be fulfilling the role of maintaining the big picture of disaster recovery—elected officials and emergency managers—were found to actually be functioning in a more limited capacity in disaster recovery. Even in disasters of larger magnitude that resulted in greater damages to the jurisdiction, the role of the county elected official during disaster recovery appeared to remain consistent with their routine role. The majority of emergency managers also appeared to be fulfilling roles consistent with previous research, namely a support role with limited involvement in recovery tasks and activities outside of those occurring simultaneously with response limited to paperwork and logistical assistance (Jensen et al., e.d.). Yet, in the absence of overall coordination, counties appeared to negotiate the recovery process and related tasks and activities quickly. Whether overall coordination would have translated to a more efficient and comprehensive recovery or whether opportunities for change were missed due a lack of overall coordination could not be determined. Chapter Six offers some possible explanations for why overall coordination and direction might not be occurring at the county level of local government.

CHAPTER SIX: EXPLANTORY FACTORS FOR LACK OF OVERALL COORDINATION

The interviews indicated that overall coordination was not occurring for the majority of jurisdictions. There was no one individual or group charged with maintaining the big picture of disaster recovery. Rather in counties, coordination could best be described as happening in pockets and on an as-needed basis. The data were analyzed for possible explanations of this finding. In keeping with grounded theory, the data from the initial interviews—originally examined for themes related to the role of the county elected official—was revisited to explore factors related to lack of overall coordination (Charmaz, 2000). Analysis across all interviews led the researcher to the discovery of five potential explanations for why coordination appears to materialize ad hoc and in pockets as opposed to overall in disaster recovery. This chapter relates the findings related to these explanations.

Nominal Events

In Chapter Four, the nominal impacts of hazard events were discussed as a possible explanatory factor for the role of the county elected official in disaster recovery. In reexamining this initial data, the researcher found that the nominal impacts of hazard events could not only serve to explain the role of the county elected official, but could also potentially account for the lack of overall coordination in many cases. With minimal impacts and subsequent damages, recovery tasks were able to be identified and clearly assigned to the different departments and outside stakeholders. And those entities had the necessary knowledge, resources, and abilities at hand to satisfactorily accomplish those tasks simultaneously and with little challenge in a short period of time. Communication between the different stakeholders working on recovery issues was apparent when necessary to facilitate a task, but the different stakeholders were able to perform the various recovery tasks autonomously for the most part. There was no need for long-

term recovery or the tasks often associated with that part of the process (e.g. housing recovery, business recovery, infrastructure repair, cultural and historic site restoration, public sector recovery, and social or psychological recovery). With recovery tasks focused on the short-term, the number of recovery tasks was fewer and the nature of those tasks such that they were not going to evolve over a period of many months. Opportunities for community improvement did not appear to present themselves. It would make sense that minimal impacts and damages could translate to a series of straightforward recovery tasks whose execution does not require any real direction or high-level coordination. It could be that with only minimal damages the need for overall coordination of recovery is simply nonexistent.

Public/Private Recovery Division

In Chapter Four, it was also noted that in those instances where the event damaged and/or destroyed private homes or property, respondents indicated that the county government only had limited ability, as well as responsibility, to assist those impacted individuals and households or businesses. Participants suggested that it was the federal government, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Small Business Association (SBA), as well as the private or non-profit sectors that were primarily responsible for helping individuals and businesses with their recovery. This notion of individual and household recovery not being a primary responsibility of county government was echoed in the interviews done as part of theoretical sampling.

Individuals deal with insurance companies, FEMA, and the SBA. And you have those volunteer organizations that come in and give us a great deal of help and it's very much appreciated. But from a government standpoint, we don't deal with individual homes and the individual businesses. We take care of the public infrastructure and that's it.

No, for household issues, that was pretty much FEMA directly with residents. I'm sure we stopped in from time to time to FEMA's recovery center, but we had our own FEMA

application process for our costs as a county government. So mostly that was just FEMA and the individuals.

It was not seen as within the purview of county government to be responsible or coordinate private recovery.

Like the initial interviewees, these respondents noted that the county government provided space and logistical support for these federal agencies, as well as insurance companies and nonprofit organizations, to set up shop to handle individual cases. And some counties did report offering limited services to individuals through existing social programs such as emergency food stamps.

One of our departments is our department of family and community development, which provides, I mean, it used to be called welfare, but it provides government assistance to people in need so, you know, before, during, and after the storm that office has been involved in trying to help families through our existing programs.

We also had a desk set up with our department of social services and some of other community departments, like the office of aging, so people could see if the county had any services that might be applicable to them as well.

But when additional assistance was needed in repairing/rebuilding homes and replacing belongings beyond what the federal government or insurance could provide, the responsibility for meeting those unmet needs fell to nonprofit organizations. A number of counties reported established long-term recovery committees to help manage those unmet needs and minimize duplication of efforts, but those committees were being driven by the non-profit with county representatives observing their efforts. And even if the county wanted to take on a more active role, outside of making policy decisions to lessen the tax or bureaucratic burden on citizens, there was little else that could be done by the county government itself to assist with repairing or replacing underinsured private property due to limitations of funding and regulations regarding how taxpayer dollars could be spent.

The government can speed up all the bureaucracy of the stuff they normally do, that is something they can do that can make a difference. For example, beefing up your code inspectors and speeding up electrical permits. I don't know how to phrase that, but to have their normal services heightened just really seems to be the key. You can't give the money to make people whole, but you can speed up normal services and make sure there is as a little red tape as possible.

This notion of two distinct facets of recovery—public and private could be a limiting factor not only in the role being played by the county elected officials, but also in the coordinating role being played by the county government. If it is not seen as within the county government purview to facilitate or drive private recovery, as well as public recovery, then perhaps maintaining the big picture of the recovery process—including individuals and households and businesses—is also not seen as an essential function of the local government. If the county government does not embrace the notion of holistic recovery, but rather limits its recovery involvement to rebuilding public infrastructure and restoring government services, then making the subsequent linkages between the community and those who live and work within it through coordination may be viewed as unimportant. For example, if limited in purview to infrastructure repair and service restoration, the government may be focused only on restoring public transportation routes that existed pre-disaster. It would not be seen as important to understand where and how housing was being rebuilt or if businesses were reopening in the same locations and determine transportation needs accordingly. Even if a county wanted to embrace this idea of holistic recovery, restrictions of bureaucracy in relation to how assistance money can be used, the timeframe for using it, and how things need to be done could be potentially limit the ability of local government to bridge this public-private divide.

Lack of Pre-Disaster Recovery Focus

Perhaps another reason that overall coordination was not being done at the county level was that very few counties had considered disaster recovery in any systematic way prior to the

disaster event. When planning is done, it is assumed to help achieve greater horizontal and vertical integration within a community, discourage competition among stakeholders, provide a vision of the community from which to build, contribute to a stronger understanding of local needs and desires, enhance perceptions of the recovery process, create links to other community initiatives, and improve the timing of assistance (see for example: Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith, 2011). However, almost no counties reported engaging in a pre-disaster recovery planning process or engaging in discussions about recovery issues prior to the disaster event. And the few that had started such recovery discussion indicated that the plans that had been developed lacked sufficient depth and/or implementation of associated plans had stalled.

There is a genuine and noted lack of recovery planning. Many of us have switched over from the functional annexed-formatted Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) to the Emergency Support Function (ESF) format and then of course ESF-14 is the recovery process, but again, it's not deep. We understand the value of recovery planning and we had actually hoped to create a recovery plan separate and distinct from our emergency operations plan using Homeland Security funds. But the funds have dried up over the years and it's just not something that we've been able to get rolling.

Well that's one thing that hasn't been laid out yet. In our new plan, according to the National Response Plan (NRP) and some other input, our new emergency operations plan includes what is called a long-term recovery committee to sort of come together and coordinate it and that we haven't done yet. So we don't have as formalized of a long-term recovery committee and plan, as it's recently been written into our actual plan. We really haven't been able to organize that and put it into effect yet.

With little to no discussion of recovery prior to a disaster event and a lack of clearly defined or applied coordinating mechanisms in place, it would follow that coordination efforts in recovery are necessarily ad hoc and adaptive in nature. Without being previously arranged and rehearsed, the makeshift creation and implementation of mechanisms that facilitate overall coordination could prove time-consuming and difficult for counties to achieve while juggling the other tasks and activities associated with recovery. To minimize these difficulties and to allow for a more immediate focus on carrying out recovery tasks and activities, it would make sense that in the

aftermath of disaster these improvised coordination efforts are occurring on a smaller, more concentrated, scale.

Negotiating the Bureaucracy for Needed Resources

Another theme that emerged throughout all disaster events was a real need for—and even dependence on—the financial resources that higher levels of government could provide. Most respondents indicated that a trend of shrinking county budgets meant unexpected disaster expenditures had the potential to put counties in a strenuous, if not perilous, financial situation if not reimbursed by other levels of government.

Like many counties around the nation, we've seen a significant reduction in budget and staffing. And without federal funding, we'd be faced with the choice of responding to the disaster or keeping the county government going for the rest of the year. We'd struggle to find a way to meet the needs for the operations of county government but also the needs of the disaster.

That's a concern for poor counties like us. If we now have \$25 million in damages and if we don't get reimbursed 75%, that's going to break our county... When we are already facing a major deficit in the budget, we all know that we don't have the resources unless the federal government bails us out.

The data suggested that this need for state and federal resources translated to a large emphasis being placed on the administrative processes—namely documentation and paperwork—associated with receiving the resources from these higher levels of government.

There's assessing the damage and trying to make sure that we are eligible for any kind of aid that FEMA, the state, or the federal government might be making available. We didn't really worry about the money as we were dealing with the problems, but I'm responsible for a rather large budget here and those numbers start tallying up in your head saying how are we going to pay for all of this? So we were working very hard to get things in some kind of bureaucratic order so that we wouldn't miss any opportunities to try and get ourselves reimbursement for the expenses that were outgoing. That was critical for us.

Instantly start documenting the destruction once the threat is gone. That's the biggest thing for recovery, you know, and then make sure that your folks who are dealing with the federal agencies like FEMA know what they're doing, know what they're talking

about, because if you don't have an experienced person you can lose a lot of money that you might be entitled to that these people know about.

Respondents suggested that they were concerned insufficient time or resources was allotted to the administrative processes would result in missing out on much needed state and/or federal funding.

Many respondents indicated that negotiating this assistance process—particularly at the federal level—was time consuming, complex, and labor intensive. For example, one participant noted, “Document, document, document. You have to document everything—man hours, resource hours—so that you can substantiate your costs, just volumes and volumes of costs.” With such elaborate documentation requirements, participants noted that paperwork had to be coordinated with various municipalities, as well as different departments and agencies within the county government to ensure that all costs were accounted for and nothing was missed. As one emergency manager noted, there was very little time to address other recovery issues when he was responsible for “helping the different agencies to understand the paperwork and what was eligible, how it works, how fast it works, and being that person who goes between them and the state to help them understand that okay, no you can't do this or yes, you can do that.” And it was noted across a number of jurisdictions that FEMA further complicated this process with confusing procedures and constantly changing personnel.

It was difficult with FEMA at times because they were rotating staff out on a relatively regular basis. So if you were working through specific issues or problems and then they sent in a new staff person, not only did you have to reestablish the relationship, but you had to bring them up to speed with really what was going on.

I think some of the FEMA procedures were a little bit of a roadblock. I think there are some inconsistencies and I think part of the problem was the changing of personnel. FEMA would come in and make a decision on something and then a short time thereafter it might be a different FEMA person that comes into the area and tells them a different thing and part of the problem is I think they just had changing personnel and I think they

either had too much flexibility in making decisions or they weren't paying real close attention to their guidelines.

It would make sense that if the county must devote a significant amount of its time and finite personnel resources towards navigating the bureaucratic process associated with federal and state assistance—particularly the documenting of hours and resources used by the various departments and municipalities—that the ability for the county to provide overall coordination of other tasks and activities related to the recovery process might be negatively influenced.

Experience

Perhaps another reason that overall coordination was not being done in counties is that over three quarters of the counties interviewed indicated that they had been previously impacted by events of a similar or greater magnitude within the past year to five years.

So this is our seventh or eighth declared disaster in nine years, so unfortunately we know pretty much what to expect as much as the FEMA people do. So we are very experienced, so we know how it works. We have our damage assessment done before they ask for it. We have our disaster recovery center potential site set up ahead of time. So only because of so many declared disasters am I able to do that.

This was our third extreme weather event in a 15-month period. In late August of 2011, we were hit with another storm that resulted in widespread flooding. Then the following year, June of 2012, we were hit with a straight-line rainstorm. That hit us overnight. People woke up to widespread power outages, communications outages. So we, you know, this wasn't our first experience with disasters.

Based on this previous experience, many counties intimated that even though they did not have a specific recovery plan, their personnel knew what tasks and activities had to be done and had a good understanding of how to complete those tasks and activities. They also noted that they had previously established relationships with other stakeholders in the recovery process.

All I can say is that everybody is pretty good at knowing what their role is and, at this point, as I said, because we've been through it several times now, most of us just go into action...And because we have been through a number of these disasters, we've already built relationships with our municipal officials, our state officials. We know how FEMA operates. And that's important.

And unfortunately we've had a lot of experience over the past several years with major disasters so you learn each time what needs to be done and how to incorporate what you learned into the next time. We know what resources are out there, we know what volunteers can be available. So we work with those things.

Disaster literature has suggested that repetitive experience with a particular hazard may cause communities to develop a considerable amount of institutional knowledge based on previous disaster events (Weller & Wenger, 1973; Wenger, 1978). A community may develop a “disaster subculture” by which it demonstrates a general level of adaption to such situations and leverages lessons learned from prior similar events to respond to future events appropriately, quickly, and as efficiently as possible (see for example: Weller & Wenger, 1973; Wenger, 1978; Drabek, 1986). Although the existence of a “disaster subculture” has only been explicitly discussed by the literature as it relates to preparedness and response, perhaps it extends into recovery as well and impacts a perceived need for overall coordination. It seems reasonable that if jurisdictions have recent previous experience with disaster recovery—particularly from a similar hazard event—they might not feel overall coordination is needed since the different stakeholders already have developed the institutional knowledge of what needs to be done in the recovery process and how to go about carrying out those tasks and activities.

Conclusion

This study found that in the majority of cases, the doers of recovery were not being coordinated or directed by any entity within the county government. When coordination was happening at the county level, it was occurring between specific stakeholders for the express purposes of accomplishing a given recovery task or activity. The data revealed five possible explanations for why this coordination in pockets—and not overall coordination—was occurring within most counties. Data analysis suggested that nominal events, the perceived split between

public and private recovery, a lack of pre-disaster recovery focus, negotiating the process for needed outside resources, and experience are all potential factors that may explain the absence of overall coordination. Chapter Seven discusses those rare instances where overall coordination did exist, including the role played by those charged with overall coordination and the potential factors that explain why coordination appeared in these particular instances.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHEN LIMITED OVERALL COORDINATION DID OCCUR

The results communicated in this chapter are the product of exploring the theme of overall coordination suggested by the initial interviews—specifically when it might be present. The researcher identified four cases where a disaster recovery coordinator was designated and interviewed these individuals in that coordinator position to learn how they described their role. The researcher also interviewed three municipal mayors to better understand their role in the recovery process at the lower level of local government as it relates to overall coordination. This chapter describes the findings of these interviews related to the extent to which they, or others, undertook the function of overall coordination. This chapter also discusses the extent to which overall coordination was found to influence recovery in these cases and possible explanatory factors as to why overall coordination appeared. The intent in presenting these results is to describe what was discovered by following where the data led and to provide the basis for future empirical research. But, these results should be viewed with caution given the limited data associated with the findings.

Disaster Recovery Coordinator Role

Recovery coordinators indicated that an important part of coordinating recovery efforts was helping to identify and prioritize projects related to recovery in their community and finding funding to facilitate the implementation of those projects. Coordinators indicated that they wrote grants to different state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit agencies, in order to generate funding for projects in areas such as infrastructure upgrades, affordable housing, mental health counseling, insurance assistance, property acquisition, and environmental restoration or replenishment.

My role initially was to identify major areas of impact and focus for immediate recovery as well as some long-term initiatives. In doing so and working with the state recovery

coordinator, we identified three primary things essential to recovery. The first was getting the damaged infrastructure back online and permanently repaired. The second was to address the affordable housing needs within the community. And then the third initiative was to enhance future flood protection, which is a very long-term initiative.

I wrote a few grants for the things I mentioned before—replacing culverts and things—and a few others ones to help restore some of the roadways and stuff... We also got a grant for a team of counselors—mental health workers who actually went into areas where the people lived, and talked with them, and worked with them in those area... And we sponsored a huge grant from the governor’s fire find to bring in United Policyholders for the whole period of time they were here.

Like county elected officials and emergency managers, the four disaster recovery coordinators—called disaster recovery managers in some jurisdictions—who participated in this research did not see themselves as the doers of the projects and initiatives related to these priorities. The responsibilities for the completion of recovery tasks and activities related to these priorities were widely dispersed throughout the various departments and agencies within the county government or other stakeholder organizations including the state government, the federal government, various municipal governments, the private sector and voluntary agencies, including faith-based groups. However, depending on the project or initiative, recovery coordinators reported working with different stakeholders who were responsible for the “doing” of the project to help the project reach fruition and manage the associated funding. For example, one coordinator stated, “I continue to work with the city housing authority and the state housing finance agency and a few others to try and develop truly affordable projects by identifying sites and putting those projects together.”

It should be noted that a number of projects or initiatives that recovery coordinators identified and worked to achieve concerned mitigating any potential impacts from future events. Specifically, recovery coordinators reported being concerned about the potential for future flooding due to environment changes caused by the initial hazard event. Recovery coordinators

reported working with agencies within the local, state, and federal government to identify whether the affected area was at an increased risk because of the hazard event and to develop mitigation strategies.

We looked at what additional hazards could potentially impact us and flooding rose to the top pretty quickly. So part of my job was to prepare the community for any follow-on events, do flood awareness, and flood treatments. We worked on mitigation treatments like aerial mulching.

Right now we're in the process of holding workshops to educate people about post-event flooding and what they can do to protect themselves. I got a grant from the Red Cross to buy a sandbag filling machine and so we are going around the county and setting up this machine and just filling sandbags and leaving them for people to pick up and use to protect their properties.

These mitigation efforts appeared reactionary in nature—designed to reduce or eliminate consequences from a burgeoning threat—rather than increase overall community resiliency.

In addition, recovery coordinators indicated that an essential part of coordinating recovery efforts was to listen and understand the needs of those individuals and households and/or businesses that were impacted by the event. Specifically, recovery coordinators reported making needs known to other stakeholders in the recovery process who had the ability or authority to provide resources or make policy decisions that could address those needs.

I served as an advocate for survivors and others and so I would come into an organization and say, you know, here's what I'm hearing, here's the challenges, how can we address them, and we would get people together and figure it out.

I am trying to represent the impacted residents and the affected area itself. What's going on, who's doing what, and how can I help anybody? Part of my job is to help better communicate what's going on so we all know what's happening and get things addressed as best we can.

Listen to the people. Listen to your citizens. They all have a story to tell and they are all impacted and they'll be very emotional, but once they kind of clear some of those things, people have some really good ideas and they can help you streamline processes if you listen. You know, if you're listening to their experiences with federal agencies following a disaster, if you listen to them what truly their needs are, you know, I think you can go a

long way into soothing the losses they've had by again identifying the resources that's going to, you know, be most beneficial to them in their recovery.

Respondents suggested that understanding the survivors' needs and communicating those needs to other stakeholders with the authority and/or capacity to meet to those needs was a key component in helping move recovery forward for the affected population.

Disaster recovery coordinators also indicated that enabling and supporting the efforts of non-profit organizations to aid impacted individuals and households and businesses was a part of their coordinator role. Disaster recovery coordinators recognized the importance of leveraging the capacity of non-profit organizations within the community to assist affected individuals and households. These coordinators suggested that it was important to understand non-profit competencies and capabilities so individuals could be directed to the right place for assistance.

I went to all the meetings of the long term recovery group. It really wasn't the county directing what was going on with that. It was that group doing it on their own, you know. We'd make a recommendation here and there, but we normally wouldn't do that. But it was good for us to know what was going on, how many people had been helped, how many still needed help, that sort of thing.

You need to rely on the capacity and organizations that already exist in your community that do volunteer management and donation management and case management. So the county did not get involved in those activities. But I talked to the organizations that were doing it and made sure I knew what they were doing and if they needed anything.

The faith-based organizations have handled the influx of volunteers and coordinated the volunteer effort for everything from cleanup to rebuilding. I've assisted them in quite a few different ways including finding funding sources, providing some direction, liaison, you know, between that group and the city on particular issues that they are dealing with, but maybe didn't have an avenue in which to address at the city level.

Three out of the four recovery coordinators indicated that one critical link that was made between individual and household needs and non-profit capabilities was the provision of assistance related to navigating the insurance process. These recovery coordinators partnered

with non-profit organizations to deliver pro-bono informational workshops and assistance to individuals and households in working with private insurance companies to settle claims.

We brought in an insurance consumer advocacy group and they provided workshops for folks to help them navigate the settlement process and I would say given what we have learned from the survivors that they're one of the most important, impactful interventions we provided just because you get traumatized twice often in a disaster, once with the disaster and once with the insurance process.

Recovery coordinators suggested that leveraging these non-profit organizations by supporting and enabling their efforts was an important way to fuse the private and public sector recovery endeavors.

Recovery coordinators also identified providing information and support to the various stakeholder groups as central to their role. Specifically, recovery coordinators highlighted the importance of ensuring that the citizens were informed about the decisions being made by government, at either the municipal, county, state, or federal level so that citizens would have the best information possible about policies and available resources when making assessments and choices related to their personal or business recovery.

So I spent a lot of time just clarifying policy points, decisions made by the city, trying to influence some of these policies whether they be from an equitable standpoint in acquisitions and valuing properties to making sure and trying to ensure timely communication to affected citizens about what direction the city was going, how they were moving forward, and what the impacts would or would not be in particular geographical areas of the city, making sure the message was clear, was concise and that people understood it and what potential resources might or might not be available for them to access in their rebuilding process.

Recovery coordinators indicated that an additional part of their information-sharing and support function was giving those people affected by the event a singular point of contact within the local government structure to ask recovery questions or find out recovery information. Recovery coordinators reported having a single point of contact minimized the chances of citizens being

“pawned off” or “stuck in the endless phone transfer loop,” as well as allowed coordinators to track and follow-up on questions or issues being brought to their attention.

I think having one contact person that they know that they can go to, that they can get an answer from. If the recovery manager doesn't know the answer, they at least probably know where to get the answer. I think that's very important for not having people, you know, calling all these different departments and getting thrown around to get their questions answered. They get one person they can contact and find the information for them.

It's much more effective if you have one person to go contact rather than having to navigate a large organization or a community with lots of different resources. Going to one place, one stop shopping, one point of contact was huge in helping affected people.

I think the most important is to have a person to call. I don't have all the answers. I don't have all the information. I'm not in charge of all of the mitigation or restoration projects. In fact, I'm in charge of none of them. But I do know what's going on and who's doing what and I can at least be the point person when someone calls me and say, you know, I have no insurance, no place to live, it's contact the long-term recovery group. This is the phone number and this is the person you need to talk to. And I can make sure it happens, you know, that the person gets help.

Recovery coordinators also saw being a singular point of contact as beneficial to other departments and stakeholders by allowing them to focus on their assigned tasks and activities—both recovery-related and routine—instead of handling questions and concerns.

Having a recovery manager takes the burden off other county departments. People aren't calling all over the place trying to get answers. Other county departments can get on with doing what they need to do.

By helping connect those who needed help with those people who could provide the help in a one stop manner allowed our department heads and a lot of our employees to go back to doing the work, the daily work they needed to do and allowed us to really be much more effective in determining what policies needed to put into place and how to work not only with the citizens, but with other agencies that were involved in recovery.

Three of the four recovery coordinators saw acting as a singular point of contact as so central to the coordinator role that the notion was highlighted multiple times throughout the course of the interviews.

Three out of the four recovery coordinators did not mention developing or being guided in their efforts by specific recovery plans. These coordinators listened to their citizens, addressed challenges, and located opportunities, but were doing so without any formalized planning.

At the time, we didn't have a recovery plan. It was something we weren't ready for really... We didn't have this thought out ahead of time; we kind of worked it out on the fly. I figured it out as we went.

You know, when I was doing it, I didn't really have time to work on any long-term plans. I wasn't there long enough to do that. I was just trying to get things stabilized, that was my priority. But I see the benefit of having a recovery plan in place.

The fourth coordinator was involved in working with the federal government to develop a long-term recovery or strategy that guided the subsequent recovery efforts.

So I worked very closely with FEMA in developing a long-term recovery strategy for the region. So we spent a lot of time looking at different things within the community, within the county that we could do from a long-term recovery perspective. As part of that, we held numerous community meetings where the citizens were able to come in, provide their input, what they wanted in certain areas, what they wanted to community to look like into the future.

All of the recovery coordinators agreed that having a disaster recovery plan would have been useful and indicated that their respective jurisdictions should create one, if not done already since the event. The recovery coordinators suggested that the real benefit in planning was in identifying responsibilities and establishing relationships—something they were still able to accomplish post-disaster—albeit it sometimes in a reactionary and occasionally uncomfortable fashion.

So you know I had to do a little bit of inserting myself. This was a position that was brand new... So it came down to me inserting myself into other people's world which I think was a little uncomfortable for me and probably for them too. But you just have to move through it quickly and make everybody understand that I'm not here to take charge or do anybody's job, I am really just trying to help everyone do their jobs more effectively. You know, it was really a feeling our way through it kind of process and maybe if an organization had planned for this, identified this position or even assigned this duty to someone in a non-disaster situation, someone who just stepped into this role, but was already part of the organization, it might have been easier.

Recovery coordinators suggested that with no prior planning, their position in the organizational structure was not previously discussed but rather was determined based upon sources of funding and swift post-disaster decisions. Recovery coordinators indicated that their place in the organizational structure and the level of support they received from the commissioners, county managers, and municipal mayors influenced how effective they perceived their role to be in recovery efforts. Those working directly for leadership at the local level stated that they had the support and resources to accomplish what they believed needed to be accomplished.

My position was under the county commissioners' office. And I think that it was a really wise decision to put it there because it allowed me to have really quick access to the commissioners for decisions and also have all the department heads reporting not to me, but to the commissioners, so it was very organized. I wasn't put off into some department where you have political challenges, resource challenges. I was underneath the decision makers.

I work for the county manager who works directly for the county commissioners. I think it works because it's a high-profile position and it gives me access to the county manager and county commissioners who need to make decisions about funding fairly quickly. I think that's the best thing is the access to those people who are really the final decision makers, because I can't make decisions on funding or anything, but I can approach people very easily who can...And the county manager and the commissioner want to know what to do, what've we've been doing, and they've been just great.

A recovery coordinator whose position reported to a variety of entities within the municipal and county governments suggested that a lack of clear place within the organizational structure perhaps diminished the ways in which the position was utilized.

There really wasn't a clear chain of command in some regards in my position... You know, that was probably and still is probably one of the things that I think if we could have established early on a little bit better or a little bit more definitively it might've changed some of the challenges that I have dealt with in recovery issues. Sometimes when somebody doesn't really know where you belong, they may not utilize you in ways that you think that they should be utilizing you. They may be apt to dismiss you if you maybe don't agree with them... I really think that the recovery coordinator needs to be entrenched within the local government, embraced by the local government, you know.

Not only were most recovery coordinators working without plans and carving a place for themselves within the organizational structure, all of them stated that they were working in a newly created position with a minimally defined job description. Recovery coordinators reported being hired into the position based on a general notion or mandate by the jurisdiction to make recovery more efficient. While a couple of recovery coordinators were employed with the county government at the time of the disaster event, none of the recovery coordinators held any sort of position related to disaster recovery prior to assuming coordination responsibilities. As one coordinator stated, “So I’m not in the OEM world. I’m not in disaster management. I had been working in the land use and planning department.” As such, all of the recovery coordinators remarked that they took the recovery coordinator position without much specific knowledge of the recovery process and with little guidance as to how to best navigate recovery efforts. One coordinator said,

It’s really hard for me to say how you prepare for something like this position when there aren’t that many people that you can go to learn how to do it. I mean, you just jump in and try to do what you would normally do...or what I would normally do in one of my jobs is just try to coordinate and move people where they need to be.

Without recovery-specific knowledge, recovery coordinators negotiated the process by learning recovery-specific information as they went and by applying the coordination and management skills that they had gained through previous work experience. As one stated, “It’s not just a technical problem to solve, it’s a human problem. I had experience in community engagement and organizing, facilitation, and strategic planning that I was able to apply to that problem.”

Overall, the recovery managers felt that they were able to play an important part in the process despite their lack of recovery knowledge and guidance. As a recovery coordinator summarized, “By no means have I been perfect in the process, I know that. But I tell you what, there isn’t a

job description either. I've worked hard to figure it out and make things happen. And we've made good strides, things are moving forward.”

Based on the data analyzed in this study, designated disaster recovery coordinators were playing a role in disaster recovery that reflected some aspects of the idealized coordinator role. However, their role fell short of fully encompassing planning, guiding a participatory process, or facilitating holistic recovery.

Municipal Mayors

In speaking with both county level and municipal level officials, it appeared that municipalities had significant responsibilities for recovery tasks and activities related to municipal infrastructure and population. And while municipalities relied on counties for some financial and administrative support, much of what was being done at the municipal level was separate from the tasks and activities being completed at the county level. One participant noted, “So the county government really has been, I think, very well engaged in the recovery process. But they have little to say in terms of what is going on in the city itself. It is, you know, two entirely separate political subdivision and entities.”

Unlike elected officials at the county level, municipal elected officials perceived themselves as taking on new or unique roles directly related to disaster recovery. Two of the three mayors perceived themselves to be fulfilling both a leadership and coordination role for the recovery efforts. As one mayor stated, “I've been coordinating efforts like I've explained to you, leading the troops, delegating things to various committees, and just getting things back to normal as quick as possible.” The other stated:

I took the lead. I led meetings, town hall meetings, outreach meetings on how to recover and what the process was. I worked with FEMA, the state, the media. I coordinated all that stuff. I just wanted to take care of people. I was lucky that I had a lot of contacts in

the overall community so I could very easily make phone calls to help people. And, I spent my days doing that. That all fell on to me, my shoulders.

Coordination was described as gathering information on needs from various stakeholders—including individuals and households and community businesses—and working with other government entities and non-profits to identify projects to address those needs.

One of the best things I did as mayor was have a huge, anybody can come to it town hall meeting. I went through the whole protocol of letting them vent and then I had orchestrated having all the major insurance companies there, mental health people, the building associations, the guys who were in construction were there to help people connect with legitimate roofers and reconstruction people. But it was one of the best things I did as mayor. I had over 300 people in that meeting. By the second meeting, I only had four because we knew what the problems were after the first one and we could go fix them.

These mayors reported linking government and private interests related to mitigating future events and working to facilitate creative solutions to mitigation barriers. As one mayor noted:

We are trying to figure out the issue of receiving money from the federal government for beach replenishment after the storm...And there's a lot of variables there having to do with the fact our beaches are public, but they are privately owned. I'm working with the Army Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Environmental Protection to get the issues out on the table, to make them known. So I'm trying to represent our beach owners and protect the whole town and facilitate this whole process.

In these two instances, recovery issues forced a significant change in the mayor's time commitment. Unlike the third mayor—who was a full-time municipal employee with a large dedicated cadre of city staff—these mayors prior to the storm had been part-time with a small contingent of full-time staff—six to ten people. As one mayor stated,

It's become a full-time job and I welcome that because I really like what I'm doing and, but it is almost a 24/7 job, although I do sleep. I have no trouble sleeping. So, I'm in the office every day now most of the day or out and about the town trying to get things fixed and, you know, making sure that everybody has what they want... And I will stay on that job until it's done, until we're back 100%. That could be a year or more from now.

For these mayors, recovery meant that running the town, and the recovery efforts associated with it, became a full-time position.

The remaining mayor indicated that the additional or unique role being fulfilled in recovery was one of strategic leadership—the function of the mayor was to outline how recovery was going to be approached. The mayor indicated that—in consultation with other city officials—the decision was made to use recovery as an opportunity to garner citizen input and use that input to make improvements to the community in the rebuilding process. The mayor determined that the city needed a strategic plan to guide these rebuilding efforts and provided the framework and climate for a recovery strategy to be developed, including designating dedicated staff to devise and implement the plan.

I believe that strategically rebuilding back is important. You've got to build a plan and then go out with that plan you build to get funded. And then work through all the various guidelines to begin construction. It's got to be a ground up movement for how we want to rebuild and rebuild better. So that's how we've been doing it. The night of the event, I took my planning director aside and said let's start mapping out a strategy moving forward.

This mayor stated that the coordination of planning efforts—including wide stakeholder involvement—as well as subsequent funding and implementation activities was being done, but that the mayor had appointed a recovery coordinator and recovery team to act in that coordination role:

I reassigned several staff members into what's called a recovery team and they work in our Emergency Management Agency (EMA) area still today and many of their salaries are paid for through the disaster recovery dollars which we received from Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I have about a staff of eight that do nothing but focus on recovery, but that's a little misleading. When you received HUD funding, you generally have to hire two or three accountants that do nothing but audit and ensure compliance and so I really have about four staff members that focus on the planning implementation, the housing programs and assistance programs, things of that nature.

The mayor suggested that while the city succeeded at including individuals and households in discussions surrounding the rebuilding process, listening to their needs, and generating their buy-

in for the recovery plan, recovery could have been improved had the city done a better job of listening to and engaging the business community:

On the recovery side, we had no one assigned to engage all the 350 businesses individually. Our focus was the 5000 residential structures and we were gravitating to the issues of those people who were affected... We were directly communicating with the residents. The residents were showing up at town hall meetings, but the businesses were not and most often they're trying to make payroll and they're trying to keep their lives going. So we should've assigned an operations team to do nothing but connect with those businesses so that their concerns could get to city hall and they we could properly respond to those concerns.

It is worth noting that engaging businesses did not appear to be an issue in the other two cases as both mayors were business owners within their respective towns and reported having previously established relationships with the business-owner counterparts.

At the county level, elected officials continued to sort out constituent issues, avail themselves to the public they represent, liaise with elected officials at other levels of government, and fulfill their designated executive functions for both the routine and recovery related issues that occurred in the county. At the municipal level, mayors also appeared to fulfill a similar role for their city—both in relation to routine and recovery operations.

As stated in the above paragraph, like county elected officials, the mayors in this study reported that an important part of their role was being accessible and listening to the issues of their constituents.

We went out there. We engaged. We listened. We reacted. And I think they [the citizens] will always appreciate the fact that we—as a city—and me—as their mayor—just tried our best to make sure that those who were impacted the most, those who felt the most pain, that their voice was heard loud and clear in the rebuilding process.

Also like county elected officials, all three municipal mayors reported acting as liaisons with the other levels of government in relation to recovery tasks and activities, particularly in regards to issues associated with funding for recovery projects and tasks, as well as reimbursements—

particularly understanding and negotiating the rules contingent to receiving funding. And, again, like county elected officials, municipal mayors reported acting as advocates for the needs of their citizens when they perceived those needs were either not being met at all or not being met in a timely fashion.

So you have to go above things. The reason we go electricity, I had to get on the one with our representative in Congress and with the electric company to get them to recognize our town was alive and well because it was 18 days and we hadn't seen a truck. We had no electricity. So, due to my call, that night 18 trucks rolled into town. So you've got to push people. That's another part of it.

Secretary Donovan, the secretary of HUD, I can call him personally when there's a need. And even when we've had problems with HUD, I sensed in HUD a genuine effort to get it corrected. And we've worked through things. I've really appreciated that.

Finally, municipal mayors shared with their county level counterparts the function of continuing to fulfill executive functions such as acting as the chief executive officer and managing the general operations of the city. However, since either all or a large portion of their jurisdictions were impacted by the disaster event, municipal mayors indicated that they allotted a significant amount of time and energy to recovery efforts, perhaps even more so than at the county level, where it may only be a small percentage of the county that was impacted.

My office has played a major role; 40% of my day deals with recovery. In fact, my entire Monday afternoon schedule is recovery. Every week, I ride the recovery zone, so even 2.5 years later, it is still recovery. You never...it's a shadow that remains on us and will for some time. Every day I am faced with recovery managing recovery and decisions related to it, you're auditing which infrastructure projects to do, you know, which agencies to fund, which streets to realign. You know, it's endless and today there's probably 20-something items on our agenda to deal with recovery...it's an endless stream of issues that arise and we have to handle.

Thus, while elected officials at the municipal level carried out the same functions at the city level as their counterparts at the county level during disaster recovery, elected officials at lower levels of local government also went beyond their routine role. The data suggested that 1) overall coordination was occurring at the municipal level, and 2) municipal mayors were fulfilling new

roles that emerged during the recovery process—either coordinating recovery or providing the strategic leadership that facilitating coordination.

Overall Coordination

This study found that in a limited number of cases, an individual or group was appointed at the county level to serve as the designated overall coordinator for the distributed doers of the recovery process. The findings of this study also suggested that perhaps some form of overall coordination is being done at the municipal level. The recovery role described by designated recovery coordinators and municipal mayors—while not identical to the literature-based idealized role—reflected more aspects of how the recovery process is conceptualized in the literature and recent federal policy.

It is possible that the presence of overall coordination resulted in the recovery process being more efficient, particularly in relation to offering a singular point of contact to provide information to and work with the various stakeholder groups on all recovery issues. It is also possible that a sustained focus on recovery translated into the identification of funding and other opportunities to implement change—particularly related to sustainability and mitigation efforts. And, it is feasible that with overall coordination, the linkages between the community and the individuals who live and work in it were present so that quality of life questions were raised and the needs of all stakeholders taken into account when making decisions. However, just like this study did not conclusively find that the coordination in pockets used by the majority of counties led to an ineffective or less effective recovery, there was not enough evidence based on the exploratory nature of this research to conclude that the presence of an overall coordinator translated to a more effective recovery in these ways. Although unable to draw conclusions about the relationship between overall coordination and recovery outcomes, this study was able to

determine factors that could possibly explain why some form of overall coordination did appear in these particular cases.

Explanatory Factors for Overall Coordination

The interviews with designated recovery coordinators and municipal mayors indicated that some form of overall coordination was occurring in a small number of jurisdictions. The data were analyzed for possible explanations as to why overall coordination—such as it was—appeared in these cases. Analysis across the seven interviews led the researcher to the discovery of three factors that were present across all cases which might offer potential explanations for why overall coordination materialized within these jurisdictions. A fourth explanatory factor was also inferred from the data provided by municipal mayors.

Significant Damage to Homes and Businesses

One factor that was present across the cases where overall coordination was occurring was that the disaster event resulted in significant damages to houses and businesses. Damage to public infrastructure may also have been present, but there was a vast number of homes and/or commercial property impacted by the event. As one participant noted, “At the time, this was the most destructive event of its kind in state history. Over the span of a week, 165 homes burned.” Another said, “We lost so much of our housing stock and our housing availability, in particular affordable housing, was pretty non-existent. And our main street businesses were affected heavily too.” Unlike in the nominal events described in previous chapters where damage was minimal and geographically limited, in these cases, the damage to homes and businesses encompassed all or a significant portion of the jurisdiction. Participants indicated that the impacts to private citizens and businesses were both extensive and pervasive within their geographical boundaries.

Priority of Individuals and Households and Businesses

Another factor that was present in all cases associated with overall coordination was a shared view within the county or city leadership that the needs of individuals and households, as well as businesses, were both a priority for the jurisdiction and within their purview of responsibility.

So our primary effort was to get people back into their homes and get small businesses operating again. The local dry cleaners, the local restaurants, the local grocery store, and the local restaurants, so our primary effort was to get the small businessman and businesswoman back into their businesses and the local property owner who owns a little house on a 50x100 plot of land back into their home.

Well, it's hard to measure success, you know. It's such a long-term project. But success would be in the end how many people made their home back in the area. Did we rebuild the community and get a sense of community back into the area? That would be the long-term. In the near term, I looked at it as are we taking care of people and do we have them all accounted for? Can we get them what they need to survive the day, the week, the month?

This is not to say that these jurisdictions did not have public infrastructure, debris removal, or administrative tasks associated with recovery to be concerned about—they did. But they viewed it as an important part of the government role in recovery to ensure that the needs of the citizens were being made known and addressed to the best of their abilities. These jurisdictions, like all counties and cities, were limited in the assistance they could provide in repairing or replacing underinsured private property due to limitations of funding and regulations regarding how taxpayer dollars could be spend, but took a more active role in finding other solutions in tandem with federal, state, and voluntary organizations.

Experience

A third factor that was present across the cases where overall coordination was occurring was that a need for such coordination was identified either within the community itself or based

on the experiences of other jurisdictions. For example, in one county, the need for overall coordination was recognized as the disaster event was unfolding:

It was clear from the county perspective that we needed someone to coordinate this recovery activity as a project for the county. We weren't really reaching all of the community and all of the departments. And so, I researched about what options were there and found a job description for recovery manager from a county in California and said to the commissioners, "I think this is what we ought to create house." I tried to go back to my other job at that point, but it turned out I'd been involved at that point, I lived in the mountains, so I was the right person at the right time.

Other counties understood the importance of overall coordination based on their own previous experiences.

We've had enough real world experience. We know it needs to be coordinated or it can become messy. We do tabletop exercises on recovery. But I think our real world experience has been our greatest learning factor for how to best do and coordinate recovery.

Still other counties made the decision to implement overall coordination because they heard from other jurisdictions who had experienced a disaster the importance of so doing.

Two years prior another jurisdiction in the state experienced a similar event. So when our event occurred, our county manager approached that county and said what do I do and they said hire a recovery manager and go from there. So we were not sure everything that this job would entail but we believed we needed it.

Regardless of whether the decision to implement overall coordination occurred because of their own previous or immediate experiences with a disaster or was based on the experiences of others, the common denominator was that because of experience all of these jurisdictions recognized a need for overall coordination to take place.

Municipal Level

The final explanatory factor for when overall coordination was not present across all cases, but rather was inferred from the data provided by municipal mayors. Municipal mayors indicated that they perceived the municipal government as primarily responsible for disaster

recovery. While other levels of government and outside stakeholders offered potential assistance, the overall recovery burden fell on their shoulders.

Recovery on a local [city] level is a lot different than other levels. You're really on the line, you're the frontline person. Everybody knows who you are, everybody contacts you. You're involved in all decisions, all the tasks, not just the visible ones. It falls to you.

If the majority of responsibility for recovery rests at the municipal level, perhaps it is at this level that overall coordination is occurring—as opposed to the county level. It would make sense that municipalities that suffer a disaster are likely to have more significant damages to a greater proportion of the community than at the county level where impacts and damages are more diffuse. It is possible that it is at this municipal level then where this overall coordination is either needed or most beneficial for pursuing positive recovery outcomes. The recovery coordinator position may have been filled by municipal mayors in a couple of cases, but it may not have been by virtue of the elected officials' position that they served in this position. Rather, mayors may have recognized the need for the role and taken it upon themselves to fill it because, having been embedded in the community, these mayors had the requisite local knowledge and established relationships with all the people to do it well. But ultimately, it could be the level of government and the need for overall coordination at that level that explains its presence in these municipal cases.

Conclusion

Limited data suggested that elements of overall coordination were occurring in a small number of counties through the use of a designated recovery coordinator. Disaster recovery coordinators worked not only with the county departments, but also with federal, state, non-profit, and private stakeholders to effectively complete recovery tasks and activities—serving in particular as a vital link between those individuals and households and businesses impacted by

the disaster event and the other entities involved in the recovery process. While recovery coordinators were playing a role reflecting aspects of the literature-based idealized role of coordination, they still fell short of fulfilling all three categories of activities. Limited data also implied that overall coordination might be offered at the municipal level. Two municipal mayors—in addition to fulfilling their routine governmental roles in relation to recovery efforts—filled a role at the municipal level similar to that of the recovery coordinators at the county level. In addition, these mayors directed many of the recovery efforts within their jurisdiction. One mayor also reported extending the routine role to recovery efforts, as well as providing strategic leadership for the city’s recovery projects and assigning overall coordination to a recovery team. The influence of the overall coordination efforts of these individuals on recovery efficiency and comprehensiveness, and/or subsequent community change could also not be established through this research. Nevertheless, factors were identified that could possibly explain why overall coordination did occur in these particular cases. The significance of the results from the data related to overall coordination—or lack thereof—are interpreted in the following chapter in addition to the significance of the results related to what roles different groups or individuals are and are not playing in disaster recovery.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

Chapter Eight is comprised of five sections. The initial section reviews how disaster recovery coordination is conceptualized in literature and policy and discusses the findings of this study within these contexts. The second section discusses the extent to which overall coordination was observed in practice. Discussion of the significance of this study's findings for education and training, practice, and policy is then interwoven throughout the remaining three sections. Section three considers the extent to which coordination is needed in all cases. The fourth section discusses the differences between how literature and policy define recovery and how recovery seems to be conceptualized in practice. The final section discusses other considerations related to the emergence of the literature-based idealization of coordination in practice.

For more than three decades, emergency management has used the terms mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to organize scholarship and practice (Britton, 1999; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007; National Governor's Association, 1979; Neal, 1997). Both the emergency management discipline and practice have been guilty of "neglecting recovery" in favor of preparedness and response (Rubin, 2009; Stehr, 2007). This neglect has translated to disaster recovery being the least understood aspect of emergency management by academics and practitioners alike (Berke et al., 1993; Olshansky, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Rubin, 2009).

There is growing recognition by both scholars and policymakers, however, of the need to close this knowledge gap related to disaster recovery (Olshansky, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006; Rubin, 2009). The number of hazard events occurring each year in the United States has been on the rise; with mounting consequences being felt by communities, states, and the nation at large

(Rubin, 2007). And the costs of not facilitating the recovery process well are becoming increasingly recognized—both in terms of the negative consequences associated with a poorly managed recovery process (Smith & Wenger, 2006) and the potential for missed opportunities to improve infrastructure, the economy, the environment, and quality of life (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Passerini, 2000; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006).

This rising awareness of recovery consequences in combination with a growing understanding that it might be possible to take better advantage of the recovery process has seemingly translated to a newfound resolve to increase the study of recovery and improve recovery practice. Academia is being increasingly called upon to inform the understanding of what recovery entails and how it might best be facilitated in practice. And emergency management scholars are not alone in focusing on recovery. Since Hurricane Katrina, the federal government has also recognized disaster recovery as an area of concern—particularly the lack of coordination between the different stakeholder groups (Government Accountability Office, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012). The federal government has sought to address recovery issues in practice through the development of policy, particularly, and most recently, the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF).

Coordination as Theorized

The academic literature recognizes that the primary responsibility for disaster recovery falls to the local government (Drabek, 1985; McLoughlin, 1985; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). But the distributed nature of disaster recovery (Canton, 2007) also suggests that the efforts of the various stakeholders in the recovery process need to be coordinated in order to avoid negative consequences and allow impacted jurisdictions to maximize positive recovery outcomes, including a holistic recovery that takes advantage of

opportunities to create more sustainable and disaster resilient communities (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Drabek & Hoetmer, 1991; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Specifically, the literature posits that a potential benefit of overall coordination in the disaster recovery process is linking the future of the community and the individuals and households who live within it, including the nexus between their quality of life and the various lifeline systems that support it (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009).

While the academic literature strongly implies that coordination is important in the disaster recovery process, it fails to explicitly outline what coordination is, the extent to which it is happening in recovery, what it looks like in practice, and what is being achieved as a result. However, the literature has identified a variety of tasks that should be, or are, completed as part of the disaster recovery process and suggests factors that facilitate and hinder task completion (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Al-Nammari, 2009; Bates & Peacock, 1992; Bolin & Stanford, 1991; Bolin & Trainer, 1978; Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2008; Comerio, 1997; Corey & Deitch, 2011; Haynes et al., 2011; Runyan, 2006; Webb et al., 2003). The literature also advocates that communities take a holistic approach to recovery tasks and activities when deciding how to undertake recovery tasks and activities (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006). Communities implementing this approach would use a participatory process and consider how these tasks and activities can be accomplished so as to enhance quality of life, build economic vitality, promote social and intergenerational equality, protect the environment, and incorporate disaster resilience and mitigation (Mileti, 1999; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009). In addition, the literature suggests that recovery efforts are bolstered by involving all relevant stakeholder groups (see for example: Berke et al. 1993; Berke & Campanella, 2006; Smith, 2011), having strong community level integration, both

horizontally and vertically (Berke et al., 1993), and being led by individuals at the community level who have the knowledge of what to do to accomplish disaster recovery, as well as the necessary resources to carry out recovery activities (Rubin, 1985). Leveraging this body of knowledge, it is possible to extrapolate what overall coordination would look like in the form of an idealized recovery coordinator position.

As described in Chapter Three, a recovery coordinator—or recovery team—would be engaged in three categories of activities—planning, guiding a participatory process, and facilitating a holistic approach. In relation to planning, a recovery coordinator would facilitate community recovery planning initiatives, develop a collective community vision, identify and confirm stakeholder roles and capabilities *vis-à-vis* other stakeholders, and relate recovery tasks and activities to the vision and the plan. In regards to guiding a participatory process, a recovery coordinator would work to identify different stakeholders and their recovery needs, establish priorities, generate community support and buy-in for recovery efforts, identify and highlight stakeholder recovery challenges, integrate the community, identify available funding sources, and facilitate communication among stakeholder groups. In relation to facilitating a holistic process, a recovery coordinator would sensitize the community to options for sustainable redevelopment, actively seek out these opportunities to pursue these improvements, and look to link different recovery tasks and activities in such a way as to ensure all dimensions of recovery are considered and to advance sustainable redevelopment objectives. The summation, integration, and realization of these three categories of activities through the efforts of one or more individuals produces overall coordination in community recovery.

Federal recovery policy—specifically the NDRF—demonstrates that the federal government has approached overall coordination in largely the same way as the academic

literature. The NDRF outlines nine principles that when employed maximize recovery outcomes—individual and family empowerment, leadership and local primacy, recovery planning, partnerships and inclusiveness, public information, unity of effort, timeliness and flexibility, resilience and sustainability, and psychological and emotional recovery (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). See Appendix L for the definitions of these principles. The NDRF directs that at the local level a recovery coordinator be designated to facilitate the application of these principles to the recovery process (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). These activities include organizing an inclusive planning process, communicating priorities to stakeholders, developing an accessible communications strategy, incorporating mitigation, sustainability, resilience, and accessibility issues to recovery efforts, and working with all stakeholders to raise financial support for recovery efforts and eliminate duplication (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011).

These activities align neatly within the three aspects of the coordinator role suggested by the literature. The literature and federal policy are largely consistent both in identifying a need for coordination in disaster recovery and in how overall coordination can and should be conceptualized. Yet, while both the literature and policy are in agreement that coordination is needed in disaster recovery, neither makes clear who should be fulfilling the coordinator role at the local level.

Coordination as Practiced

The literature has suggested that local government leaders, including elected officials, bear significant responsibility for the management of the recovery process (Phillips, 2009; Stehr, 2001; Smith, 2011). The researcher began this project with a desire to understand the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery with the thought that these individuals could

potentially be performing some or all of this coordinator role suggested by the literature and policy. However, this study found that the responsibility for overall coordination as described did not appear to be shouldered by county elected officials—they did not perceive recovery coordination as their job. Instead, the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery could best be described as remaining consistent with their routine, day-to-day role in county government. County elected officials did not have a unique role within disaster recovery. Rather, they continued to perform their legislative and/or executive functions, handle constituent issues, be accessible to the public, and act as a liaison with elected officials at other levels of government—albeit with a recovery focus.

Role consistency was evidenced regardless of the magnitude or type of disaster event and regardless of county context. Significant space in the literature review was dedicated to discussing the county context. The researcher examined counties' level of autonomy (Benton, 2003; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Duncombe, 1977; Kemp, 2008), resource capacity (Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990), government structure (Benton, 2002; Benton et al., 2008; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Morgan & Kickham, 1999), location along the rural-urban continuum (Berman & Lehman, 1993), and views of emergency management (Labadie, 1984; Jensen et al., e.d.; Petak, 1985; Wolensky & Wolensky, 1990). The researcher felt it was important to be sensitive to these differences in counties and believed that the county context might explain how recovery was handled from place-to-place. Specifically, it was thought that the county context could provide meaningful insight in terms of the role of elected official. But the county context did not seem to explain either—nor did it seem to explain when overall coordination did or did not occur.

If county elected officials were not serving as recovery coordinators, it necessarily begged the question who, if anyone, was fulfilling this coordinator role? Since emergency management is the profession charged with “coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to...recover from...disasters” (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007, p. 4), it would seem logical that the local emergency manager would fulfill such a coordinator position in disaster recovery. However, recent literature suggests the current involvement of local emergency managers in recovery is minimal and restricted to administrative tasks such as paperwork (Jensen et al., e.d.). And while the NDRF recommends that disaster recovery coordinators be designated, it does not specify that this role should fall to the emergency manager (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). The document states, “While these [local, tribal, and state disaster recovery coordinators] will often interact with the emergency management community, it is not necessary that these individuals be emergency management professionals.” (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011, p. 22).

This research found that county emergency managers—while involved in disaster recovery—were not serving in the coordination role suggested by the literature and policy. The majority of emergency managers appeared to be fulfilling a more limited role consistent with previous research, namely a support role with their involvement in recovery tasks and activities outside of those occurring simultaneously with response limited to paperwork and logistical assistance (Jensen et al., e.d.). The majority of emergency managers who participated in this study seemed comfortable in this supporting role and did not wish to pursue a more involved role in recovery—much less an overall coordination role

After examining the role of the county elected official and emergency manager and finding their role in disaster recovery lacking as it related to the idealized coordinator role, the

question still remained: who—if anybody—was serving as the overall coordinator in disaster recovery? The researcher discovered through the course of the initial interviews that designated recovery coordinator positions did exist in a few jurisdictions at the county level. These counties appointed or hired an individual specifically into the recovery coordinator role. The researcher specifically sought out and interviewed these designated recovery coordinators to understand the extent to which the role they were playing in recovery matched the idealized coordinator role. It was discovered that even when designated recovery coordinators were present in counties, their role did not fully encompass planning, guiding a participatory process, or facilitating holistic recovery.

Of the recovery coordinators who participated in the study, only one described being involved at all in a planning process. Even in this case, the involvement in the planning process was described in terms of helping FEMA develop a plan, not as being a primary facilitator of a locally-driven planning process. The remaining coordinators did not report either facilitating a planning process or having a pre-disaster recovery plan in place from which to operate. There was no discussion of working with stakeholders to create a shared vision of what the community wanted to look like as a result of the recovery process and using that vision to serve as a beacon for recovery actions (National Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith, 2011). There was no evidence that recovery coordinators opened a dialogue among various stakeholder groups about the future of the community, flushed out differences in ideas, generated buy-in, and worked to create congruency between goals and activities pursued in the recovery process based on a collective vision (Burby, 2003; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998). The data did not suggest that these coordinators worked to generate

agreement on roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholder groups and ensure stakeholders have the necessary capacity to fulfill their role (Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011).

Recovery coordinators appeared to be more involved in guiding a participatory process. Recovery coordinators served as a vital link between those individuals and households and businesses impacted by the disaster event and the government and non-profit stakeholders, including advocating creative solutions for their particular needs (consistent with: Alesch et al., 2009; Berke et al., 1993). There was strong evidence that recovery coordinators were actively engaged in facilitating communication between different stakeholder groups (consistent with: Alesch et al., 2009; Kweit & Kweit, 2004; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011)—including bringing stakeholder concerns to government officials and conveying government decisions back to relevant stakeholders. Consistent with Alesch et al. (2009), the data indicated that recovery coordinators sought to establish recovery priorities. But, the data suggested that these priorities were the result of federal, state, and local government discussions and were limited in the extent to which broader stakeholder involvement was solicited or community buy-in on priorities was achieved. There was also some evidence that recovery coordinators assisted in developing various projects and identifying funding sources from a variety of stakeholder groups both within and outside of the community that allowed for progress to be made in relation to those identified priorities (consistent with: Berke et al., 1993; Phillips, 2009; Smith 2011). However, it could not be determined the extent to which recovery coordinators were able to leverage external programs and assistance from other levels of government to actually fit the needs of the local community because, again, the data did not suggest wide stakeholder involvement in priority and project identification.

While recovery coordinators did seem to facilitate the incorporation of some limited mitigation activities in the recovery process related to environmental restoration, recovery coordinators did not appear to necessarily drive a holistic recovery process in their communities. There was no evidence that these mitigation activities or projects were considered in light of how they affected other parts of the community system or that they were serving as part of integral design for overall community improvement. Rather, these projects seemed highly reactionary. Changes in the environment as a result of the disaster contributed to post-disaster flooding in the impacted areas and mitigation actions were being considered to lessen these emerging flooding impacts. The data did not show recovery coordinators actively seeking out and implementing initiatives designed to improve the quality of life for residents, promote economic vitality, or ensure social and intergenerational equality (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Smith & Wenger, 2006). While disaster recovery coordinators described themselves as working with not only county departments, but also with federal, state, non-profit, and private stakeholders to effectively complete recovery tasks and activities, they did so only in regards to ensuring that the necessary resources were in place to accomplish the task and activity. There was no evidence that recovery coordinators were linking these different tasks and activities together in a holistic sense—meaning that they were not viewing tasks and activities comprehensively to determine how they could be accomplished collectively so as “to enhance quality of life, offer positive environmental benefits, support local businesses, and revitalize a devastated community” (Phillips, 2009, p. 80).

The disaster recovery coordinator positions described by participants did not necessarily match the idealized role suggested by the literature and supported by policy, but these positions did not appear to emerge in response to the literature or policy anyway. There was no discussion

by disaster recovery coordinators of the NDRF or their role in that context. Coordination was not being done in these jurisdictions because the federal government said so or even suggested it. There was no talk of coordination being implemented in order to allow communities to create linkages between tasks and activities and engage in sustainable redevelopment. Coordination was not being done in these communities because of some desire to undertake holistic recovery. These jurisdictions reported designating a recovery coordinator either in reaction to challenges emerging in the recovery process or because experience—either their own or that of another jurisdiction—suggested recovery would present fewer problems and be more efficient if there was a singular person charged with managing the recovery process. In fact, all of the coordinators described their role first and foremost as simply being a singular point of contact for recovery issues—not exactly the grand description of coordination that the literature would imply and policy would dictate.

The answer to the question then of who is coordinating—and the key finding in the study—is that overall coordination as conceptualized in literature and policy did not appear to be occurring at all—by anyone—at the county level. Coordination could best be described in the majority of cases as occurring in pockets on an as needed basis with the express purpose of accomplishing a particular task or activity. In a minority of cases, elements of overall coordination were being done by designated recovery coordinators relative to engaging in a participatory process and incorporating some mitigation activities. While closer to the ideal of overall coordination, even in these jurisdictions, planning and facilitating holistic recovery were still glaringly lacking. However, failure to implement overall coordination did not seem to be the result of willful neglect or inattention by counties. The data suggests that overall coordination may simply not have been warranted in all cases. There is also evidence that differences between

how disaster recovery is conceptualized in the literature and policy and how it is viewed in practice may contribute to overall coordination not being accomplished.

Coordination as Needed

The extent to which the absence of overall coordination is a problem remains debatable. At one extreme, it would seem based on literature and policy that the lack of overall coordination in practice would suggest that counties were somehow failing at recovery and failing widely. At the very least, this absence of coordination would seem to indicate that recovery was somehow not as comprehensive, that certain stakeholders or activities were in some way overlooked, or opportunities for improvement were somehow missed. Yet, this research was unable to conclude that a lack of overall coordination necessarily translated to the negative recovery outcomes suggested by the literature or resulted in missed opportunities related to sustainable redevelopment. In fact, it can be argued that in at least half of the cases studied such overall coordination did not seem to be warranted—at least at the county level. The nominal nature of the events was such that there appeared to be no need for planning, guiding a participatory process, or facilitating holistic recovery. In these events—where the recovery process consisted of removing debris, restoring utilities, and repairing minimally damaged infrastructure—recovery tasks and activities were able to be identified and clearly assigned to the appropriate stakeholders and those stakeholders had the necessary knowledge, resources, and abilities at hand to satisfactorily accomplish those tasks simultaneously and with little difficulty in a short period of time. And—perhaps more importantly—opportunities for participatory-driven sustainable redevelopment simply did not seem to exist.

It is possible that overall coordination is not needed in all cases. Perhaps there is a threshold of impacts or damages that must be reached before the negative consequences

associated with recovery and missed opportunities for community improvement become likely outcomes—outcomes that coordination would potentially help avoid. For example, if the physical damage is so light that there is no necessity to engage in substantive rebuilding then it is virtually impossible to rebuild in a shoddy manner or miss opportunities to rebuild better from a recovery standpoint. If the economy continues to function as it did prior to an event, it becomes unfeasible for the economy to unravel or to take steps to improve the economy within the recovery context. Without impacts across the various interconnected facets that make up a community system, there is no need to link the tasks and activities associated with recovery across the different parts of that system.

It is worth mentioning here that the lack of need in every case suggests a potential disconnect between the types of events literature and policy seem to be perceiving as disasters and what is deemed a disaster for the purposes of federal assistance and support. The NDRF suggests that local recovery managers are supposed to be designated in all disasters. The nine principles are supposed to be uniformly employed. Planning is always supposed to be done. Yet, the implementation of these policy elements is particularly expected when the President has declared a disaster and made federal assistance available to states and local jurisdictions (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). The recommendations of the NDRF were notably absent in counties where a Presidential Disaster Declaration (PDD) had been granted in this study. Not only were these recommendations absent, but the nominal magnitude of many of the events suggested that not all of the characteristics of an idealized coordinator role seemed to be needed. The criteria used to determine whether a disaster has occurred for the purposes of determining federal assistance may not be the same as those that would signal the need for overall coordination.

The researcher purposefully included counties which sustained more significant damages in theoretical sampling by sampling those counties who had received both Individual Assistance (IA) and Public Assistance (PA) as part of a PDD. Yet, the data from these cases did not support the conclusion that failure to implement overall coordination resulted in more negative recovery outcomes or missed opportunities for sustainable redevelopment. It could be that these negative outcomes and missed opportunities did in fact result but due to the exploratory nature of the study these consequences did not come to light; or, perhaps, overall coordination is not as critical to the ability of communities to successfully negotiate the recovery process as the literature and policy might suggest. Literature and policy seem to indicate that there is an urgent need for overall coordination in all cases (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011). However, it would seem that there is an opportunity for both scholarship and practice to revisit—and empirically demonstrate—the relationship between overall coordination and improved recovery outcomes. It would seem necessary to explore this link to determine the extent to which overall coordination is valuable or to discover if there is a tipping point at which the existence of a coordinator role is needed to avert negative consequences and minimize missed opportunities for improvement.

For the purposes of further discussion, let it be assumed that the literature is correct—and policy has been designed to meet a real need. Furthermore, let it be assumed that overall coordination of efforts in the disaster recovery process will result in impacted jurisdictions maximizing positive recovery outcomes, including taking advantage of opportunities to create more sustainable and disaster resilient communities (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009;

Smith, 2011). Given these assumptions, the finding that overall coordination is not occurring at all in most cases—and still lacking in important areas in the remaining minority—suggests a need to bridge the gap between how coordination in recovery is theorized and how coordination is practiced. This research indicates that a good place to start is by looking at the implications associated with how disaster recovery is defined in literature and how it seems to be conceptualized in practice.

Coordination as Defined

For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted the definition of recovery offered by Smith and Wenger (2006) that delineates recovery as “the differential process of restoring, rebuilding, and reshaping the physical, social, economic, and natural environment through pre-event planning and post-event actions” (p. 237). A definitional consensus for recovery has not been reached in emergency management (Alesch et al., 2009; Jensen et al., e.d.; Quarantelli, 1999). However, this definition has becoming increasingly accepted having been adopted by other researchers (see for example: Rubin, 2009; Pribadi, Dirhamsyah, & Novianto, 2010; Frimpong, 2011; Potts, Bennet, & Rajabifard, 2011; Jensen et al., e.d.) because it considers both the impacts of disasters on human constructs across stakeholder groups, as well as how built and natural systems are affected and can “recover” from a disaster (Smith & Wenger, 2006, p. 237). The holistic approach to the recovery suggested by the literature (Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith & Wenger, 2006) seems a natural extension of this definition—as does the overall coordination to facilitate that approach.

Yet, the findings of this study suggest that how recovery is being conceptualized in practice is not in keeping with this definition. Alesch et al. (2009) suggest that when local government does not look at helping the whole community recover, it is likely because local

officials define recovery as “limited to replacing the built environment and municipal enterprises and excludes reestablishing interrelationships among members of the community and between the community and the local government” (p. 178). While Alesch et al. (2009) found that generally local officials were interested in whole community recovery, this study found a clear distinction in most jurisdictions between public and private recovery. County government saw itself as limited in its recovery involvement to repairing the built environment and resuming government services—due either to fundamental beliefs regarding the role of government or limitations of funding and how taxpayer dollars could be spent. And, it appeared that of critical import to replacing this built environment and resuming government services was successfully navigating the bureaucracy and completing the administrative tasks associated with securing much need federal and state assistance—hence the concentration of resources on this task.

If recovery is defined simply in terms of eliminating physical manifestations, completing administrative manifestations, and/or restoring or replacing structures, buildings, and services (Alesch et al., 2009, p. 34)—as it seemed to be in the majority of cases in this study—then it seems reasonable that the approach to recovery would be to complete these tasks and activities as quickly and efficiently as possible. Coordination—such as it is—would only be needed in so far as it relates to making the accomplishment of these individual tasks go more smoothly. It would also follow that previous disaster experience would serve to minimize the need for any sort of coordination within county government—overall or otherwise—since the different stakeholders would already have identified the activities associated with those tasks and know how to go about carrying them out.

The idea of definitional disconnect is important because—as alluded to above—it suggests that these counties are not necessarily failing to implement overall coordination due to

purposeful neglect or inattention. Rather, how they seem to be conceptualizing recovery is fundamentally different than a characterization of recovery where overall coordination would be needed or warranted. Based on their understanding of what recovery is, ad hoc coordination in pockets is sufficient to negotiate the recovery process. It would seem to follow that before overall coordination as implied by the literature and supported in policy can even begin to be manifested in the recovery process, the incongruence between how recovery is currently being conceptualized in the literature and policy and how it is being viewed in practice must be addressed.

The simple existence of a federal policy that mimics the recovery conceptualization touted by the literature and advocates a similar holistic approach will not likely be sufficient to correct this disconnect. The findings in this study offer evidence that the majority of counties were barely aware of the existence of recovery policy as outlined in the NDRF—let alone attempting to implement it. It could be argued that many of the disasters studied in this research happened only a year after the publication of the NDRF and perhaps communities had not had time to understand and adjust to the policy. However, even as recently as Hurricane Sandy in late 2012, the NDRF was not being implemented—at least not as intended. Most impacted jurisdictions did not have a recovery coordinator in place at all—nor did they know that federal policy prescribes that they designate one. Those few that did establish a coordinator position did so not because of policy or because of literature-based knowledge of recovery, but because someone either inside or outside the jurisdiction suggested that they appoint one. And these coordinator positions fell short of what is implied by the literature and stated in the policy.

Perhaps a strong federal policy mandate is needed. In the mitigation and response areas, the federal government has implemented policy mandates through the Disaster Mitigation Act

(DMA) of 2000 and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) respectively. And, the federal government has attempted to obtain local government compliance with these mandates through the use of sanctions and incentives. These sanctions and incentives are intended to result in “increased commitment of intermediaries to the basic policy goals” (May, 2003, p. 224). It is possible that tying federal disaster recovery assistance—a stream of funding that the majority of counties in this study deemed necessary to their ability to recover—to mandates such as the existence of an approved recovery plan guided by the nine principles of the NDRF or the designation of a local recovery coordinator with an approved job description could influence the attention that the NDRF is receiving at the local level, and, subsequently, begin to expand their conceptualization of disaster recovery.

A key benefit to such a mandate would be forcing local government to think about recovery issues prior to disaster events. It would make sense that there is a greater chance for coordination and a coordinator role to be designated if recovery is thoughtfully considered pre-disaster—particularly through a planning process. The literature has also suggested that planning, especially pre-disaster, facilitates many of the outcomes that a coordinator would be trying to achieve after a disaster—greater horizontal and vertical integration within a community, less competition among stakeholders, a vision of the community from which to build, a stronger understanding of local needs and desires, enhanced perceptions of the recovery process, links to other community initiatives, and improvement of the timing of assistance (see for example: Phillips, 2009; Schwab et al., 1998; Smith, 2011). Yet, this study indicated that disaster recovery is not being considered prior to a disaster event—at least not in any systematic way. And, there was no evidence suggesting that the existence of the NDRF is in itself sufficient to change this lack of pre-disaster focus.

Some research has found that mandates can indeed be effective in coercing lower level government jurisdiction to engage in the activity the mandate is designed to address—particularly when lower levels of government are not committed to the policy objectives (see for example: Berke, 1996; Burby & Dalton, 1994; May, 1993; 1994; May & Burby, 1996). However, research on NIMS implementation cautions that policy mandates do not necessarily translate to implementation noting that “future policy mandates should recognize that there are factors beyond the control of those designing the policy that will impact the extent to which the policy is implemented” (Jensen, 2010, p. 113). Incentives and sanctions may not guarantee that this transition in recovery conceptualization will occur. But, stronger policy mandates related to the NDRF combined with adequate federal attention on building the technical, institutional, fiscal, and political capacities needed for their implementation could potentially cause county governments to place a greater emphasis on disaster recovery as it is defined by literature and policy (Smith, 2011).

It seems that there is also a role to be played training. As noted by Rubin (2009), “Recovery as a practice issue is virtually uninformed by the research that does exist, at the present time” (p. 11). Local government officials—regardless of position—would benefit from training in disaster recovery designed to dispel the notion of recovery as being tantamount to repairing the built environment and resuming government services and instead instill the research-driven idea that recovery involves not just the built system, but the social and natural environments as well. Specifically these officials—as well as all of the distributed doers of recovery tasks and activities—could gain from training early in their careers related to how the different parts of the community system may be impacted by an event, the needs associated with various stakeholder groups during recovery, the resources available to meet these needs in the

aftermath of hazard events, common tasks associated with recovery related to meeting those needs, and how those tasks could potentially be linked together across the various parts of the community system to generate community improvement. Through such training, local government officials may start to realize how recovery—and local governments' potential role in it—extends well beyond physical infrastructure and services.

Such a training initiative is not without precedent. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the federal government made sweeping changes to policies and released national initiatives—including NIMS—designed to correct perceived deficiencies or weaknesses in the emergency management response system (Jensen, 2009, 2010; Sylves, 2008; Tierney, 2005). NIMS was to be implemented by all emergency management relevant government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels of government, as well as emergency management relevant private sector and nongovernmental organizations (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2012). As part of this implementation, it was mandated that local governments train to NIMS—and not just one person, but many people within the local government and across communities. The NIMS mandate has led to mixed results, with counties varying widely in the extent to which implementation has occurred (Jensen, 2009; 2010). Nevertheless, the mandate may have brought about change in how disaster preparedness and response are prioritized and conceptualized—at least in some jurisdictions (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). If recovery is deemed a sufficient priority by the federal government, perhaps a similar extensive training mandate needs to be employed.

Coordination as Emerging in Practice

Determining if there exists a threshold of need and securing a definitional shift may not be all that is required in order for a coordinated recovery process as implied by the literature and

outlined in policy to emerge in practice. If overall coordination is to be implemented, it would also be of key importance to determine who exactly is going to be playing this role of overall coordinator and how jurisdictions will go about filling such a position.

This study found that those selected to fulfill the coordinator position did not have specific training or education in the recovery process. In these cases, it was believed that building relationships in the community and having local knowledge would be sufficient to effectively discharge the coordinator functions as minimally described. The NDRF also states that community relationships and local knowledge is all that is needed (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011, p. 25). However, while this type of knowledge and skillset is necessary and very useful related to the set of activities surrounding guiding a participatory process, it seems that the realization of the coordinator role that federal policy seems to really want and the literature certainly suggests requires additional recovery-specific knowledge. Such recovery knowledge goes beyond even that outlined in the training suggested above to encompass what constitutes a recovery plan, how to facilitate a planning process, an understanding of how to navigate the disaster assistance framework, what a holistic approach to recovery entails, and how to link tasks and activities to work towards implementing such an approach. In fact, it would seem that a higher education recovery courses that explore the way in which “hazards, hazard characteristics, and vulnerabilities are related to the recovery process; the factors related to more effective/efficient community recovery as well as those related to the more effective/efficient recovery of various stakeholder groups; the opportunities and challenges associated with disaster assistance in the recovery process; and, the relationship between recovery, sustainability, and resilience” (Jensen et al., e.d., p. 33) would equip an individual with this knowledge.

In addition to recovery-related knowledge, it seems the idealized coordinator role would also require specific skillsets including “analytic, evaluative, and policy making skills...and political acumen” (National Governor’s Association, 1979, p. 6). These skillsets are distinct from those needed in response, which requires a “fast-action, authoritative, operational, and decision-making approach...and systems-planning skills, training skills, and technical expertise” (National Governor’s Association, 1979, p. 6). The additional recovery-specific knowledge and skill requirements placed on the recovery coordinator position suggest that to be done well, the role cannot be fulfilled by just anyone.

Finding an individual with this unique combination of local knowledge and recovery-specific knowledge and skills could prove challenging. Unless the emergency management profession decides to fully conform to the charge it has given itself and coordinate recovery—something that does not appear to be happening currently (Jensen et al., e.d.; Rubin, 2009; Stehr, 2007)—it seems improbable that a person with this recovery-related knowledge and skillset would be readily available within the local government staff. And even if recovery coordination were to be embraced by emergency management, it seems likely that the profession would have significant work to do related to training and education to ensure that emergency managers had the requisite recovery knowledge and skills given that the knowledge and skills required for recovery are distinct from those necessary in response (National Governor’s Association, 1979) and emergency management has long suffered from a clear preparedness and response bias (Stehr, 2007).

If the local government lacks personnel with the necessary combination of knowledge and skill to coordinate recovery as idealized in the literature and desired by policy then it would seem that local government would be best served to either provide recovery-related training and

education to an individual with local knowledge or local knowledge to an individual with recovery-related training and education—not an easy task either way and one likely to come at some expense in terms of both time and money. It seems unlikely that jurisdictions—many of which are already operating on tight budgets—would make such an investment prior to a disaster without some sort of federal or state mandate. And arguably less money would be available to fund such a position after the disaster—unless supplemented by state or federal funding—and the time to correct any deficiencies in knowledge or skills would be highly compressed. As summarized by Smith (2011), the implementation of local recovery coordinators would be difficult to achieve because

local emergency managers are less engaged in long-term recovery than in response-related activities...and local governments lack the resources, including the funding needed to staff the position and provide the training perspective local recovery managers will need to assume assigned tasks. (p. 381)

Closely related to the question of who is going to fulfill such a recovery coordinator position is at what level of local government is this position going to reside? Local government is not a singular entity. Rather local government can be broadly categorized into three basic forms: counties, municipalities, and special districts (Smith et al., 2005). The NDRF indicates that a local disaster recovery coordinator position should be designated but does not specify if this position should exist at the municipal level, county level, or both. Emergency management in local government is thought to best reside at the county level (McGuire & Silvia, 2010; Waugh, 1994) because counties “generally are geographically close to environmental problems, are closer in proximity to disasters and hazards, have greater resource bases than do cities, have access to state resources, and, perhaps most important, have administrative structures that encourage intergovernmental collaboration” (McGuire & Silvia, 2010, p. 282). This study concentrated on the county level and found that overall coordination as implied by literature and

conceived in policy was not happening, but that certain elements of overall coordination appeared in the limited number of municipalities studied. Municipal mayors appeared to be guiding a participatory process within their smaller municipal jurisdictions. In one case, planning and a holistic recovery approach were being driven by the mayor and coordinated by appointed team.

While certainly there is not enough evidence within this very limited sample to suggest that overall coordination is happening at the municipal level, there is evidence to support the notion that the lower level of local government may be most appropriate based on needs and/or potential to bring about more positive recovery outcomes. Perhaps at the county level, the impacts and associated needs in most cases are so diffuse and/or the population is so varied that planning, guiding a participatory process, and facilitating holistic recovery is not as practicable or feasible as it is at the municipal level. Or maybe because municipalities “are formed primarily at the request of the people within its jurisdiction to serve the needs of the inhabitants” (Bell, 2007, p. 3)—while counties serve the dual function of being the administrative arm of the state and providing some urban services (Bell, 2007)—the municipal government is better suited to undertake these three categories of activity associated with recovery coordination. The county level may be in a better position to serve in a support capacity. The county could potentially act as a conduit between the municipalities and other levels of government, as well provide entry into a wider network of nonprofit organizations.

Implications

In order for recovery coordination as implied by the literature and outlined in policy to emerge in practice, this study suggests that there are significant questions that need to be addressed by scholars and practitioners alike. First, emergency management needs to decide if

disaster recovery is indeed going to be part of its professional purview—as currently articulated in the widely accepted *Principles of Emergency Management* (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2007). If so, the discipline and the practice must necessarily determine how emergency managers—both current and future—are going to expand beyond the traditional response-related knowledge and skillset and incorporate recovery-specific knowledge and skills. Higher education recovery courses as described earlier in this section would certainly be beneficial, as would the training previously discussed. Education and training would also be best if grounded in the growing body of scholarly knowledge related to disaster recovery. As noted by Smith and Wenger (2006), translating scholarly findings into practice remains of critical import to the evolution of the emergency management field as a whole, and particularly as it relates to the more broad process of disaster recovery.

Questions about the level of local government at which coordination is most warranted and best suited would also need to be discussed. As noted earlier in this section, emergency management is thought to best reside at the county level (McGuire & Silvia, 2010; Waugh, 1994). Yet, this study implies that perhaps coordination might be more necessary and/or suitable at the municipal level. Most states have laws requiring emergency managers at the county level—although at least a couple have municipal requirements as well. It would need to be decided if it would be the county emergency manager or municipal emergency manager—if present—or both who would fulfill or share this coordination responsibility. If no municipal emergency manager was present, scholars and practitioners must necessarily figure out if it make sense that this coordination role fall to a county emergency manager or if there is another individual at the municipal level that might be more appropriate for the role.

Should emergency management decide that disaster recovery is not going to be within its purview, then scholars and policymakers need to grapple with how jurisdictions are going to identify and obtain individuals with the necessary combination of local knowledge, established relationships, and recovery-related knowledge and skills. Perhaps a cadre of individuals who specialize in disaster recovery coordination can be developed through education and training and deployed to localities where an event has occurred. But then these individuals lack local knowledge and do not have established relationships. And their services would need to be paid for either out of local government funds—which may be stretched very thin—or through state or federal disaster assistance.

Or, local government could identify a recovery coordinator that currently resides within the local government and determine how to provide that person with the necessary recovery-specific knowledge and skills through education and training opportunities. However, it would have to be recognized that unless dedicated solely to recovery—an unlikely proposition given most local government budgets—this individual could be faced with competing responsibilities between the recovery position and whatever other position he or she is fulfilling.

Scholars and policymakers would also need to consider this notion of level of local government. While perhaps municipal governments are where coordination is warranted or best suited, the extent to which it is feasible and makes sense to have a coordinator at that level in terms of personnel and financial resources would have to be determined. How the coordinator position is structured would also suggest potential implications for how recovery-related education and training is developed and administered, including what types of degree programs offer recovery courses as part of their curriculum, what types of agencies or institutions provide

recovery training, and who or how it is determined that the level of recovery-related knowledge and skills are sufficient for the position.

In considering the implications detailed above, it seems that what really needs to occur in order for overall coordination to emerge in practice is a cultural shift. Within emergency management—and across the nation more broadly—the disaster focus has been limited to preparedness and response. Recovery is now emerging as a concern, but the emphasis on recovery—not only within the emergency management profession, but also as relates to national policy and federal support—must expand until it is on an equal footing with preparedness and response. The emergency management profession plays lip service to recovery, but is certainly not coordinating recovery in the same way that it does in preparedness and response (Jensen et al., e.d.; Stehr, 2007). The federal government has provided guidance by way of the NDRF, but in terms of federal support of those activities outlined in the NDRF—namely the provision of technical assistance, funding, and potentially compliance mandates—recovery still falls well behind preparedness and response. If the recovery coordinator position that the literature seems to imply and policy seems to want is to be implemented in practice, there must first be an underlying cultural shift in how recovery is thought of and prioritized—both inside of emergency management and in the wider national conscience. The emergency management profession and the federal government must be willing to “put their money where their mouth is” so to speak and underscore the importance of disaster recovery in actions, not just words.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the extent to which overall coordination as implied by the literature and supported by federal disaster policy was observed in practice. This chapter then discussed the disconnect between the literature-based idealization of coordination as supported

by federal policy and the coordination observed in practice. This chapter also considered the implications to education and training, practice, and policy related to eliminating the discrepancy between the literature-based idealization of coordination in recovery and the ad hoc coordination that is currently materializing in practice. The following chapter concludes this dissertation by summarizing the study and providing recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Disaster scholarship and recent federal disaster policy in the United States have suggested that coordination of efforts in the disaster recovery process will allow impacted jurisdictions to maximize positive recovery outcomes, including taking advantage of opportunities to create more sustainable and disaster resilient communities. But who—if anyone—is coordinating recovery at the local level has not been defined. This study used qualitative methods to examine the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery to understand what role these elected officials currently play in the recovery process and the implications of that role in relation to the coordination of recovery efforts. Initial interviews indicated that the role of county elected officials appears to be consistent with their routine, day-to-day role in county government and that in the vast majority of cases, no one person within the impacted counties was charged with a coordinator role in recovery—not the elected official or anyone else. This study leveraged theoretical sampling to further explore this notion of coordination—specifically, the extent to which overall coordination was occurring in counties, who was fulfilling the recovery coordinator role, and what they were doing as part of it.

The findings of this study suggest that overall coordination in disaster recovery as implied by the literature and supported in federal policy is currently not happening—at least not at the county level. Neither county elected officials nor emergency managers appeared to be stepping into this role. In limited cases recovery coordinators were identified who played a role in recovery that reflected more aspects of the literature and policy, but still fell short in key areas. Coordination—to the extent that it was occurring in most jurisdictions—could best be described as in pockets and on an as needed basis.

Significance of Study for Emergency Management

This study sought to inform the discipline and the practice of the profession of emergency management by beginning the much needed process of understanding the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery. The emergency management literature stresses the distributed nature of disaster recovery (Canton, 2007), but implies that coordination and leadership of the varied entities involved in disaster recovery is important its successful execution (Drabek & Hoetmer, 1991; Phillips & Neal, 2007; Rubin, 1985; Smith, 2011). Federal policy also suggests that coordination of recovery efforts is critical at the local level (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). In investigating the role of county elected officials in disaster recovery, the researcher was able to determine that county elected officials were not the ones fulfilling this implied role. This is not to say that county elected officials were uninvolved in disaster recovery. Rather, county elected officials could best be described as continuing to execute their routine role, but with a recovery focus.

With this foundational knowledge of the role of county elected officials, prospective researchers can examine the roles of other stakeholders in the recovery process to both to determine how recovery is played out at the local level and to understand their role *vis-à-vis* the elected officials. Understanding how the roles and responsibilities of disaster recovery are distributed across local government can assist both practitioners and academics alike. By analyzing how roles are/should be distributed, practitioners can better engage the different players and provide them what they need (information, training, etc.) to be more successful in their role post-disaster. Such analysis also contributes to the theory and research literature available for educating students and faculty in emergency management higher education

programs about the recovery process and how the roles manifest within the process. This research added another piece to that puzzle.

Academic literature and federal policy both imply that the coordination of distributed recovery tasks and activities could potentially bring about more positive recovery outcomes, including building more sustainable and resilient communities (see for example: Alesch et al., 2009; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011; Natural Hazards Center, 2005; Phillips, 2009; Smith, 2011). Yet, the extent to which overall coordination occurs related to disaster recovery and the degree to which that coordination translates to these more positive recovery outcomes remain unanswered questions. These questions are important to address because the disaster literature suggests there is much at risk in disaster recovery and the potential for negative outcomes is high when recovery is not done well. The present study served to partially address this void. The researcher discovered that in many cases overarching coordination was absent during the recovery period, seemingly from a lack of perceived need. Because grounded theory methodology was used, this discovery allowed the researcher to pursue additional questions of whether there were conditions under which overall coordination needed to be present in order to best negotiate the recovery process and, if so, who was fulfilling that overall coordination role and what were they doing as part of it.

This line of questioning led to meaningful findings regarding the lack of overall coordination in disaster recovery in the majority of cases examined, including explanatory factors of why this overall coordination might not be occurring at the county level. It also identified certain factors present in the minority of cases where overall coordination did occur, as well as allowed the researcher to further contribute to delineating roles and responsibilities across various elements of local government, including what role recovery coordinators played

when designated. These findings, while limited in generalizability due to the exploratory nature of this study, raise questions about the extent to which the disaster recovery process is being conducted in keeping with what the literature and policy suggest, as well as a need for this implied overall coordination across all cases. This research serves as a foundation from which to build additional empirical knowledge regarding overall coordination and the recovery coordinator role in disaster recovery.

Recommendations for Future Research

While making important contributions to the study of disaster recovery at the local level, this study represents only a small step towards increasing the knowledge related to overall coordination and the recovery coordinator role in disaster recovery. There are a myriad of ways that future research can expand and extend the findings of this research. Only a few recommendations for future research are included here.

This study identified several factors that could potentially explain why overall coordination was not occurring in practice: nominal events, division between public and private recovery, lack of pre-disaster focus, negotiating the bureaucracy, and experience. The research also found several factors that could potentially explain when overall coordination—at least to some extent—was present: significant damage to homes and businesses, priority of individuals and households, experience, and municipal level. Future researchers might want to quantitatively test these factors related to absence or presence of overall coordination. Future researchers could also examine the relative impact of these different factors to ascertain which of these factors exert more influence over the emergence of overall coordination in the recovery process.

The Discussion Chapter of this dissertation raised a series of questions related to the finding that overall coordination as implied by the literature and described in policy seemed to be

lacking in practice. Questions raised included the following: Is overall coordination needed or warranted in all cases? Is there a particular threshold of impacts or damages beyond which overall coordination is needed to best negotiate the recovery process? Is there a disconnect between how disasters are defined related to determining federal assistance and when overall coordination is needed or warranted? Is it at the county level, municipal level, or both where coordination is most needed or warranted? Future research should explore all of these important questions.

The Discussion Chapter of this dissertation also suggested that perhaps a strong policy mandate was necessary to induce local government to focus on recovery issues—including overall coordination and the recovery coordinator role. Researchers could leverage variables found in other policy implementation studies in emergency management (see for example: Jensen 2008, 2010) to predict implementation behavior related to potential mandates associated with the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF).

Thus, this study not only endeavored to address fundamental questions about overall coordination in disaster recovery and the disaster coordinator role, it also has discovered an even broader range of questions not yet addressed. It is hoped that the combination of these accomplishments will move disaster recovery scholarship, policy, and practice markedly forward.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLING INFORMATION

Table A1
Breakdown of Counties that Met the Initial Selection Criteria

| State | Hazard Event | Counties Included |
|---------------|---|-------------------|
| Alabama | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-Line Winds, And Flooding | 3 |
| Alaska | Severe Storm | 1 |
| Colorado | Wildfire | 2 |
| Florida | Tropical Storm/Hurricane | 34 |
| Hawaii | Severe Storms, Flooding, And Landslides | 2 |
| Indiana | Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, and Tornadoes | 6 |
| Kansas | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding | 14 |
| Kentucky | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding | 23 |
| Minnesota | Severe Storm and Flooding | 15 |
| New Hampshire | Severe Storm and Flooding | 1 |
| Oklahoma | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding | 5 |
| Oregon | Severe Winter Storm, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides | 12 |
| Tennessee | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Straight-line Winds, and Flooding | 10 |
| Utah | Severe Storm | 1 |
| Vermont | Severe Storm, Tornado, And Flooding | 3 |
| Washington | Severe Winter Storm, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides | 11 |
| West Virginia | Severe Storms, Tornadoes, Flooding, Mudslides, and Landslides | 12 |
| Total | | 155 |

Note. Data from *Declared disasters*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 29, 2012, from Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov/disasters>.

Table A2
Breakdown of Counties that Met the Theoretical Sampling Selection Criteria

| State | Hazard Event | Counties Included |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Louisiana | Hurricane Isaac | 23 |
| Maryland | Hurricane Sandy | 1 |
| Mississippi | Hurricane Isaac | 17 |
| New Jersey | Hurricane Sandy | 21 |
| New York | Hurricane Sandy | 13 |
| West Virginia | Severe Storms and Straight-line Winds | 18 |
| Total | | 93 |

Note. Data from *Declared disasters*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 29, 2012, from Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov/disasters>

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW INVITATION LETTER

NOTE: THIS INVITATION WAS SENT BY EMAIL. IT LOOKED AS FOLLOWS:

From: North Dakota State University
Center for Disaster Studies and Emergency Management
Dept. 2351
P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050
(701) 231-5595

Dear [*Potential Participant Name*],

I am writing to request your input for an exploratory study on the short-term disaster recovery process at the county level. Short-term recovery can be understood as the transition period between when initial life-saving efforts have concluded and when reconstruction, rebuilding, or otherwise restoring various aspects of communities have fully commenced.

I am exploring this issue because not much is known about short-term recovery at the county level, even while there is reason to believe that there are unique challenges faced by counties confronting a recovery scenario.

I am eager to hear about the recent disaster in your community and your experience in the recovery process. If you would be willing to participate in this project, please contact me to schedule a convenient time for a short phone interview. The interview should take approximately one hour.

Please take a look at the attached document with information about the project. Afterwards, should you have any questions, feel free to contact me by phone at 859-539-0537 or email at sarah.bundy@my.ndsu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Jessica Jensen, who is assisting with this project, by phone at (701) 219-4293 or by email at ja.jensen@ndsu.edu.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this research project and look forward to speaking with you about your experiences.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bundy

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION SHEET

NDSU

North Dakota State University
Department of Emergency Management
*Center for Disaster Studies and Emergency
Management*
Department 2351
P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050
(701) 231-5595

“The Short-Term Recovery Process at the County Level”

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Study:

You are being invited to participate in an interview for a research project entitled “The Short-Term Recovery Process at the County Level.” This study is being conducted by Sarah Bundy from North Dakota State University, Department of Emergency Management.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore the short-term disaster recovery process at the county level. Short-term recovery can be understood as the transition period between when initial life-saving efforts have concluded and when reconstruction, rebuilding, or otherwise restoring various aspects of communities have fully commenced.

Basis for Participant Selection:

You are being invited to participate in this research project because of your role as an elected official in a county that received a Presidential Disaster Declaration between January 1, 2012 and July 15, 2012.

Explanation of Procedures:

Should you choose to participate, we will arrange a time of your choice between September 23, 2012 and February 1, 2013 for an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour unless you have more time and information to share.

The interviews will be conducted over the telephone and will be recorded using a digital recorder to assure that I accurately use the information you provide.

Potential Risks and Discomforts:

There should be no potential discomfort or physical, social, psychological, legal, or economic risk to you due to your participation in this study.

Potential Benefits:

Not much is known about the short-term recovery process at the county level, even while there is reason to believe that there are unique challenges faced by counties confronting a recovery scenario.

Your participation in this project will increase the information available to educate students and faculty in emergency management higher education programs as well as practicing emergency managers, other local elected officials, and members of local government about the realities associated with short-term recovery from a disaster.

Assurance of Confidentiality:

There are several important considerations that will be given to those who participate. First, anything you share in an interview will not be shared with any other interview participants.

Second, the interviews will be digitally recorded. Digitally recorded interviews will be uploaded on to the interviewer's personal computer. The sound file will then be transcribed and codes assigned for identifying personal and geographic characteristics. The researchers for this project will be the only people in possession of the interviews, paper listing the codes, and their link to participant information. Once the recordings, transcriptions, and codes are no longer relevant to this research, they will be destroyed.

In interview transcriptions, researcher notes, and the final product, codes rather than identifying characteristics (personal or geographic) will be used. Your personal information will be kept confidential. Your name and your jurisdiction will not be used in any reports. Aliases will be substituted instead (i.e. John Smith in County A).

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study:

Your participation is voluntary and you may quit at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your present or future relationship with North Dakota State University or any other benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

Offer to Answer Questions:

You should feel free to ask questions now or at any time. If you have any questions, you can contact me, Sarah Bundy, at sarah.bundy@my.ndsu.edu or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jessica Jensen, at (701) 231-5762 or ja.jensen@ndsu.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of human research participants, or wish to report a research-related problem or injury, contact the NDSU Institutional Research Board (IRB) Office at (701) 231-8908 or ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Local Elected Officials in Short-Term Recovery

Interview Guide

Introduction Script: *Before we begin, I want to make sure that you are comfortable with a few things. Are you comfortable with the fact that you have been selected for participation in this research due to your role as a local elected official; that your participation in this project is voluntary; that you can let me know if you want to stop participating anytime; that while your confidentiality is not guaranteed, your name and your county's name will not be used in the final write-up of the data collected for this research; and, that our conversation is going to be digitally recorded? Do you have any questions before we begin?*

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a county elected official?
2. Can you tell me about the [name of disaster event (e.g., 2011 flood)]?
3. For the remainder of this interview, I would like to talk about the time period beginning when immediate life-saving measures concluded to three months after the disaster. Can you tell me about how the recovery efforts evolved in your community during this timeframe?
4. What role did you play in recovery efforts during this timeframe?

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| County Represented: | | Interview Date: | |
| State Represented: | | Time Started: | Time Finished: |
| Gender: | Education: | Experience: | Background: |

APPENDIX E: LIST OF POTENTIAL PROBING QUESTIONS

1. What did you do prior to assuming office?
2. What made you decide to run for office?
3. How many years have you been in office?
4. What type of county government structure exists in your county?
5. Can you describe your normal or routine responsibilities as an elected official?
6. Would you say you have the resources to fulfill these normal or routine responsibilities?
7. How would you characterize your county? Rural? Urban?
8. How often/how well do you work with other elected officials?
9. What kind of involvement have you had with emergency management issues during your tenure?
10. What were the major impacts of the county due to the disaster event?
11. What did you view as your primary responsibilities during recovery?
12. What sorts of things were you involved in doing in relation to recovery?
13. How much time did you spend on [insert task or activity]?
14. Who else was involved in [insert task or activity]? How involved?
15. How well did you work with that individual/organization/group?
16. Did you have to make any decisions in relation to [insert task or activity]?
17. What types of information did you use to make that decision? What were your sources of information?
18. What went well in the recovery period?
19. What barriers existed to recovery?
20. What might you do differently during the recovery period?

APPENDIX F: INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

701.231.8995

Fax 701.231.8098

Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer

NDSU Dept. 4000

1735 NDSU Research Park Drive

Research 1, P.O. Box 6050

Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Dr. Jessica Jensen
Emergency Management
Putnam 102C

Re: IRB Certification of Human Research Project:

“The Role of the County Elected Official in the Short-Term Disaster Recovery Process”
Protocol #HS13047

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Sarah Bundy**

Study site(s): **NDSU/varied** Funding: **n/a**

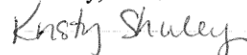
It has been determined that this human subjects research project qualifies for exempt status (category # 2, 3) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, *Protection of Human Subjects*). This determination is based on the protocol form received 9/20/2012 and consent/information sheet received 9/20/2012.

Please also note the following:

- This determination of exemption expires 3 years from this date. If you wish to continue the research after 9/24/2015, the IRB must re-certify the protocol prior to this date.
- The project must be conducted as described in the approved protocol. If you wish to make changes, pre-approval is to be obtained from the IRB, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to subjects. A *Protocol Amendment Request Form* is available on the IRB website.
- Prompt, written notification must be made to the IRB of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
- Any significant new findings that may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the participants and the IRB.
- Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB policies.

Thank you for complying with NDSU IRB procedures; best wishes for success with your project.

Sincerely,



Kristy Shirley, CIP, Research Compliance Administrator

APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AMENDMENT APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board

...for the protection of human participants in research

North Dakota State University
Sponsored Programs Administration
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
NDSU Dept #4000
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050 231-8995(ph) 231-8098(fax)

Date of Receipt



INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD

Protocol Amendment Request Form

Changes to approved research may not be initiated without prior IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. Reference: SOP 7.5 Protocol Amendments.

Examples of changes requiring IRB review include, but are not limited to changes in: investigators or research team members, purpose/scope of research, recruitment procedures, compensation scheme, participant population, research setting, interventions involving participants, data collection procedures, or surveys, measures or other data forms.

Protocol Information:

Protocol #: **HS13047** Title: **The Role of the County Elected Official in the Short-Term Recovery Process**

Review category: Exempt Expedited Full board

Principal investigator: **Jessica Jensen** Email address: **ja.jensen@ndsu.edu**
Dept: **Emergency Management**

Co-investigator: **Sarah Bundy** Email address: **sarah.bundy@ndsu.edu**
Dept: **Emergency Management**

Principal investigator signature, Date:  6/6/13

In lieu of a written signature, submission via the Principal Investigator's NDSU email constitutes an acceptable electronic signature.

Description of proposed changes:

1. Date of proposed implementation of change(s)*: **June 6, 2013**
* Cannot be implemented prior to IRB approval unless the IRB Chair has determined that the change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.
2. Describe proposed change(s), including justification:
Data revealed that the role of elected officials and others within jurisdictions in short-term recovery may vary as the result of the characteristics associated with a particular disaster. I wish to conduct interviews with some of the "others" (i.e., county emergency managers and county administrators) involved in disaster recovery to see the extent to which this finding holds as well as to explore the conditions under which this occurs .

3. Will the change involve a change in principal or co- investigator?

No - skip to Question 4

Yes:

- *Include an Investigator's Assurance (last page of protocol form), signed by the new PI or co-investigator*
- *Conflict of Interest disclosure.* Does any investigator responsible for the design, conduct or reporting of the project (including their immediate family members) have a financial, personal or political interest that may conflict with their responsibility for protecting human participants in NDSU research? (*SOP 6.2 Conflict of Interest in Human Research, Investigator and Research Team*)

No – As PI, I attest that I have conferred with my co-investigators and key personnel and confirmed that no financial, personal or political interests currently exist related to this research.

Yes – Describe the related financial, personal or political interests, and **attach documentation of COI disclosure and review** (*as applicable*).

Financial, personal or political interests related to the research (the sponsor, product or service being tested, or a competing product or service) may include:

- compensation (e.g., salary, payment for services, consulting fees)
- intellectual property rights or equity interests
- board memberships or executive positions
- enrollment or recruitment bonus payments

(Refer to *NDSU Policy 151.1, External Activities and Conflicts of Interest, and NDSU Policy 823, Financial Disclosure – Sponsored Projects* for specific disclosure requirements.)

Note: If the change is limited to addition/change in research team members, skip the rest of this form.

4. Will the change(s) increase any risks, or present new risks (*physical, economic, psychological, or sociological*) to participants?

No

Yes: *In the appropriate section of the protocol form, describe new or altered risks and how they will be minimized.*

5. Does the proposed change involve the addition of a vulnerable group of participants?

Children: no yes – include the *Children in Research* attachment form

Prisoners: no yes – include the *Prisoners in Research* attachment form

Cognitively impaired individuals: no yes*

Economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals: no yes*

**Provide additional information where applicable in the revised protocol form.*

6. Does the proposed change involve a request to waive some or all the elements of informed consent or documentation of consent?

no

yes – include the *Informed Consent Waiver or Alteration Request* attachment form

7. Does the proposed change involve a new research site?

no

yes – include a letter of permission/cooperation, IRB approval, or grant application or contract



If information in your previously approved protocol has changed, or additional information is being added, incorporate the changes into relevant section(s) of the protocol. Highlight (e.g. print and highlight the hard copy, or indicate changes using all caps, asterisks, etc) the changed section(s) and attach a copy of the revised protocol to this form. (If the changes are limited to addition/change in research team members, a revised protocol form is not needed.)

Impact for Participants (future, current, or prior)

1. Will the change(s) alter information on previously approved versions of the recruitment materials, informed consent, or other documents, or require new documents?
 No
 Yes - attach revised/new document(s)

2. Could the change(s) affect the willingness of *currently* enrolled participants to continue in the research?
 No
 Yes - describe procedures that will be used to inform current participants, and re-consent, if necessary:

3. Will the change(s) have any impact to *previously* enrolled participants?
 No
 Yes - describe impact, and any procedures that will be taken to protect the rights and welfare of participants:

-----FOR IRB OFFICE USE ONLY-----

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Request is: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Not Approved | |
| Review: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt, category #: <u>2</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited method, category # <u> </u> <input type="checkbox"/> Convened meeting, date: <u> </u> | |
| IRB Signature: <u>Kristy Shurley</u> | Date: <u>6/11/2013</u> |
| Comments: | |

Protocols previously declared exempt: (Allow 5 working days) If the proposed change does not alter the exemption status, the change may be administratively reviewed by qualified IRB staff, chair, or designee. If the change(s) would alter this status, Expedited or Full Board review will be required.

Protocols previously reviewed by the expedited method: (Allow 10 working days) Most changes may also be reviewed by the expedited method, unless the change would increase risks to more than minimal, and/or alter the eligibility of the project for expedited review.

APPENDIX H: REVISED INFORMATION SHEET

NDSU

North Dakota State University
Department of Emergency Management
*Center for Disaster Studies and Emergency
Management*
Department 2351
P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050
(701) 231-5595

“The Short-Term Recovery Process at the County Level”

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Study:

You are being invited to participate in an interview for a research project entitled “The Short-Term Recovery Process at the County Level.” This study is being conducted by Sarah Bundy from North Dakota State University, Department of Emergency Management.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore the short-term disaster recovery process at the county level. Short-term recovery can be understood as the transition period between when initial life-saving efforts have concluded and when reconstruction, rebuilding, or otherwise restoring various aspects of communities have fully commenced.

Basis for Participant Selection:

You are being invited to participate in this research project because of your employment in a county that received a Presidential Disaster Declaration between July 15, 2012 and December 31, 2012.

Explanation of Procedures:

Should you choose to participate, we will arrange a time of your choice between June 1, 2013 and July 15, 2013 for an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour unless you have more time and information to share.

The interviews will be conducted over the telephone and will be recorded using a digital recorder to assure that I accurately use the information you provide.

Potential Risks and Discomforts:

There should be no potential discomfort or physical, social, psychological, legal, or economic risk to you due to your participation in this study.

Potential Benefits:

Not much is known about the short-term recovery process at the county level, even while there is reason to believe that there are unique challenges faced by counties confronting a recovery scenario.

Your participation in this project will increase the information available to educate students and faculty in emergency management higher education programs as well as practicing emergency managers, other local elected officials, and members of local government about the realities associated with short-term recovery from a disaster.

Assurance of Confidentiality:

There are several important considerations that will be given to those who participate. First, anything you share in an interview will not be shared with any other interview participants.

Second, the interviews will be digitally recorded. Digitally recorded interviews will be uploaded on to the interviewer's personal computer. The sound file will then be transcribed and codes assigned for identifying personal and geographic characteristics. The researchers for this project will be the only people in possession of the interviews, paper listing the codes, and their link to participant information. Once the recordings, transcriptions, and codes are no longer relevant to this research, they will be destroyed.

In interview transcriptions, researcher notes, and the final product, codes rather than identifying characteristics (personal or geographic) will be used. Your personal information will be kept confidential. Your name and your jurisdiction will not be used in any reports. Aliases will be substituted instead (i.e. John Smith in County A).

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study:

Your participation is voluntary and you may quit at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your present or future relationship with North Dakota State University or any other benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

Offer to Answer Questions:

You should feel free to ask questions now or at any time. If you have any questions, you can contact me, Sarah Bundy, at sarah.bundy@my.ndsu.edu or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Jessica Jensen, at (701) 231-5762 or ja.jensen@ndsu.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of human research participants, or wish to report a research-related problem or injury, contact the NDSU Institutional Research Board (IRB) Office at (701) 231-8908 or ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu.

APPENDIX I: REVISED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NON-ELECTED OFFICIALS

Local Elected Officials in Short-Term Recovery

Interview Guide

Introduction Script: *Before we begin, I want to make sure that you are comfortable with a few things. Are you comfortable with the fact that you have been selected for participation in this research due to your role as a county official; that your participation in this project is voluntary; that you can let me know if you want to stop participating anytime; that while your confidentiality is not guaranteed, your name and your county’s name will not be used in the final write-up of the data collected for this research; and, that our conversation is going to be digitally recorded? Do you have any questions before we begin?*

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the government of your county?
2. Can you tell me about the [name of disaster event (e.g., 2011 flood)]?
3. For the remainder of this interview, I would like to talk about the time period beginning when immediate life-saving measures concluded to three months after the disaster. Can you tell me about how the recovery efforts evolved in your community during this timeframe?

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| County Represented: | | Interview Date: | |
| State Represented: | | Time Started: | Time Finished: |
| Gender: | Education: | Experience: | Background: |

NOTE: A question that read “What was your role in those disaster recovery efforts?” has been removed from the interview guide.

APPENDIX J: REVISED POTENTIAL PROBES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your county?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your government structure?
3. How would you describe your normal or routine responsibilities as a county elected official?
4. What types of interactions have you had with emergency management during your tenure?
5. Can you tell me about the {name of disaster event} that occurred in your community?
6. What types of damages did the community suffer?
 - a. To public infrastructure
 - b. To individuals and households
 - c. To businesses
 - d. Across the community or just pockets
7. I would like to talk about the time period beginning after the immediate life-saving measures were concluded, the cleanup and recovery efforts. Can you tell me about how the recovery efforts evolved in your community?
8. Was coordination of recovery efforts needed in your county?
9. How was that coordination achieved if needed?
10. Did you have the necessary supplies, personnel, and materials available in the county to accomplish what you needed?
 - a. If no, how did you get them?
11. During recovery, did the county need to work with other levels of government, i.e. municipalities, state, or federal?
 - a. Previous relationships?
 - b. How did that go?

- c. Who involved?
 - d. What responsibilities?
12. Do you feel like you knew what needed to be done or were you figuring it out as you went?
 13. Are there areas or parts of recovery where you wish you had known more?
 14. How involved was the county government in assisting individuals and households?
 - a. Why?
 15. What was your role in the disaster recovery efforts?
 16. Were there any major actions that you had to take or decisions that you had to make?
 17. Was that role different than what you would consider your routine role?
 18. What went well in the recovery period?
 19. What barriers existed to recovery?
 20. What might you do differently?
 21. What advice would you give to elected officials in other counties who might not have experienced a disaster?

APPENDIX K: POTENTIAL PROBES FOR NON-ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your county?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about your government structure?
3. How is emergency management viewed within your county?
4. Can you tell me about the {name of disaster event} that occurred in your community?
5. What types of damages did the community suffer?
 - a. To public infrastructure
 - b. To individuals and households
 - c. To businesses
 - d. Across the community or just pockets
6. I would like to talk about the time period beginning after the immediate life-saving measures were concluded, the cleanup and recovery efforts. Can you tell me about how the recovery efforts evolved in your community?
7. Was coordination of recovery efforts needed in your county?
8. How was that coordination achieved if needed?
9. Did you have the necessary supplies, personnel, and materials available in the county to accomplish what you needed?
 - a. If no, how did you get them?
10. During recovery, did the county need to work with other levels of government, i.e. municipalities, state, or federal?
 - a. Previous relationships?
 - b. How did that go?
 - c. Who involved?

d. What responsibilities?

11. Do you feel like you knew what needed to be done or were you figuring it out as you went?
12. Are there areas or parts of recovery where you wish you had known more?
13. How involved was the county government in assisting individuals and households?

a. Why?

14. What was your role in the disaster recovery efforts?
15. Were there any major actions that you had to take or decisions that you had to make?
16. What was the role of the elected official(s)?
17. Probe on any other roles that emerge, i.e. public works director, finance, etc.
18. What went well in the recovery period?
19. What barriers existed to recovery?
20. What might you do differently?

APPENDIX L: NINE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY

| Principle | Description |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Individual and Family Empowerment | <p>All community members must have equal opportunity to participate in community recovery efforts in a meaningful way. Care must be taken to assure that actions, both intentional and unintentional, do not exclude groups of people based on race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), religion, sex or disability. Care must be taken to identify and eradicate social and institutional barriers that hinder or preclude individuals with disabilities and others in the community historically subjected to unequal treatment from full and equal enjoyment of the programs, goods, services, activities, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations provided. A successful recovery is about the ability of individuals and families to rebound from their losses in a manner that sustains their physical, emotional, social and economic well-being. The restoration of infrastructure systems and services is critical during recovery. It is vital that all individuals who make up the community are provided with the tools to access and use a continuum of care that addresses both the physical losses sustained and the psychological and emotional trauma experienced.</p> |
| Leadership and Local Primacy | <p>Successful recovery requires informed and coordinated leadership throughout all levels of government, sectors of society and phases of the recovery process. It recognizes that local, State and Tribal governments have primary responsibility for the recovery of their communities and play the lead role in planning for and managing all aspects of community recovery. This is a basic, underlying principle that should not be overlooked by State, Federal and other disaster recovery managers. States act in support of their communities, evaluate their capabilities and provide a means of support for overwhelmed local governments. The Federal Government is a partner and facilitator in recovery, prepared to enlarge its role when the disaster impacts relate to areas where Federal jurisdiction is primary or affects national security. The Federal Government, while acknowledging the primary role of local, State and Tribal governments, is prepared to vigorously support local, State and Tribal governments in a large-scale disaster or catastrophic incident.</p> |

| Principle | Description |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning | <p>The speed and success of recovery can be greatly enhanced by establishment of the process and protocols prior to a disaster for coordinated post-disaster recovery planning and implementation. All stakeholders should be involved to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive planning process, and develop relationships that increase post-disaster collaboration and unified decision-making. Another important objective of pre-disaster recovery planning is to take actions that will significantly reduce disaster impacts through disaster-resilient building practices. The NDRF strongly encourages innovation among the States, Tribes, localities, and the private sector in working together to identify State, Tribal and locally-generated tools and resources, pre-disaster, that will serve to support and sustain disaster mitigation and recovery efforts.</p> |
| Partnerships and Inclusiveness | <p>Partnerships and collaboration across groups, sectors and governments promote a successful recovery process. Partnerships and inclusiveness are vital for ensuring that all voices are heard from all parties involved in disaster recovery and that all available resources are brought to the table. This is especially critical at the community level where nongovernmental partners in the private and nonprofit sectors play a critical role in meeting local needs. Inclusiveness in the recovery process includes individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, advocates of children, seniors and members of underserved populations. Sensitivity and respect for social and cultural diversity must be maintained at all times. Compliance with equal opportunity and civil rights laws must also be upheld.</p> |
| Public Information | <p>Clear, consistent, culturally appropriate and frequent communication initiatives promote successful public information outcomes. These incorporate a process that is inclusive and ensures accessibility to all, including those with disabilities, persons who are deaf or blind and those with limited English proficiency. Public information messaging helps manage expectations throughout the recovery process and supports the development of local, State and Tribal government communications plans. This ensures stakeholders have a clear understanding of available assistance and their roles and responsibilities; makes clear the actual pace, requirements and time needed to achieve recovery; and includes information and referral help lines and websites for recovery resources.</p> |
| Unity of Effort | <p>A successful recovery process requires unity of effort, which respects the authority and expertise of each participating organization while coordinating support of common recovery objectives. Common objectives are built upon consensus and a transparent and inclusive planning process with clear metrics to measure progress.</p> |

| Principle | Description |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Timeliness and Flexibility | A successful recovery process upholds the value of timeliness and flexibility in coordinating and efficiently conducting recovery activities and delivering assistance. It also minimizes delays and loss of opportunities. The process strategically sequences recovery decisions and promotes coordination; addresses potential conflicts; builds confidence and ownership of the recovery process among all stakeholders; and ensures recovery plans, programs, policies and practices are adaptable to meet unforeseen, unmet and evolving recovery needs. |
| Resilience and Sustainability | A successful recovery process promotes practices that minimize the community's risk to all hazards and strengthens its ability to withstand and recover from future disasters, which constitutes a community's resiliency. A successful recovery process engages in a rigorous assessment and understanding of risks and vulnerabilities that might endanger the community or pose additional recovery challenges. The process promotes implementation of the <i>National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIP P)</i> risk management framework to enhance the resilience and protection of critical infrastructure against the effects of future disasters. Resilience incorporates hazard mitigation and land use planning strategies; critical infrastructure, environmental and cultural resource protection; and sustainability practices to reconstruct the built environment, and revitalize the economic, social and natural environments. |
| Psychological and Emotional Recovery | A successful recovery process addresses the full range of psychological and emotional needs of the community as it recovers from the disaster through the provision of support, counseling, screening and treatment when needed. These needs range from helping individuals to handle the shock and stress associated with the disaster's impact and recovery challenges, to addressing the potential for and consequences of individuals harming themselves or others through substance, physical and emotional abuses. Successful recovery acknowledges the linkages between the recovery of individuals, families and communities. |

Note. Data from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2011). The national disaster recovery framework. Washington D.C.: FEMA.