

Extended Abstract: No Direction Home: The Inequality of Forced Displacement among Hurricane Katrina Survivors

Evacuations in the wake of many disasters can be understood as a form of temporary forced population movements. In the case of large scale complex disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, it may be better to understand these forced population movements as forced migrations since the nature and resettlement needs become a more complex and differentiated process. The purpose of this paper is to examine the forced migration aspects of Hurricane Katrina by examining the role of social inequality in the immediate evacuation context and emergency resettlement due to the pending landfall event and the longer term and more complex resettlement necessary in light of the wide spread infrastructure devastation.

Inequality and Disasters

Previous literature on inequality and disasters suggests that certain characteristics are consistently found to be important in all aspects of a disaster. Fothergill and Peek (2004) reviewed recent literature on poverty and disasters and found that the literature is consistent in finding that socio-economic status is a significant predictor of physical and psychological impacts of disasters. Further, the poor are more likely to face more obstacles during all phases of disasters and will recover more slowly (Bolin 1986, 1993).

Within the United States, poverty occurs within a social and historical context where the elderly, minorities, and women-headed households, are more likely to be at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum (Masozera, Bailey, and Kerchner 2006) and, therefore, more vulnerable to disaster. The elderly are more likely to have negative health consequences and are slower to recover (Bolin 1993, Mileti, Sorenson and O'Brien, 1992, Philips 1993, Peacock, Morrow, and

Gladwin 1997). Female-headed households are more likely to lack adequate preparation for a disaster and may need more and different assistance after a disaster (Enarson and Morrow 1997).

There is a growing body of literature documenting the impact of disasters on minorities and minority communities (Fothergill, Maestas, and DeRouen 1999, Morrow 1999). Minority populations, especially ones with languages other than English, are less likely to receive communications at every stage in the disaster process including planning and preparation (Aguirre 1988, Phillips 1993), evacuation (Perry and Lindell 1991), response (Barnshaw 2005) and recovery (Dash, Peacock and Morrow 1997). Further, minority populations may be limited in their ability to return and therefore lockout of the recovery process by economic development conditions that further marginalize the group(s).

Having material resources offers a buffer to the effects of a disaster and the single most commonly held asset is housing. Homeownership provides a material resource (Morrow 1999) and, while people with homes are more exposed to risk, they are more likely to have safety-nets such as adequate insurance coverage to mitigate losses (Cutter, Mitchell and Scott 2000). People who do not own their own homes tend to recover more slowly. Even with homeownership, when issues of race and class are overlaid, lower income and minority homeowners are more likely to be under-covered or have periphery or secondary market insurance (Peacock and Girard 1997).

Data and Methods

The data for this study were collected as a part of a two-stage survey conducted by the Gallup Organization in September/October 2005 and August 2006. The initial survey had a sample of 1510 respondents selected randomly from a database of over 460,000 people who sought assistance from the American Red Cross as a result of Hurricane Katrina (Gallup 2005, Elliot & Pais 2006). People were included in the Red Cross database if they had in-person,

telephone, or online contact with the Red Cross or affiliated charitable organizations and were seeking any form of assistance from emergency and temporary shelter to survivor and family notification and reunification services (Elliot & Pais 2006). To ensure collection of a representative sample, the Gallop Organization conducted a pilot survey to determine the usefulness of the Red Cross database and to assess the responsiveness of those contacted (Elliot & Pais 2006). As a result, Gallup refined the survey administration, conducted reverse number searches, and updated contact information (including cell phone numbers) of the selected sample who did not provide a contact number or who could not be reached through their initial contact information. The survey was conducted over ten days with up to nine attempts at contact (Elliot & Pais 2006). Interviews were conducted by landline and cell phone and the final response rate was 90% (Gallup 2005).

The follow-up survey was conducted almost one year after Hurricane Katrina from August 3-17, 2006. Of the initial 1510 respondents, Gallup was able to contact 767 households where the respondents were currently living and to complete 602 interviews (Gallup 2006). The current employment conditions were asked only of those respondents who were employed at the time of Hurricane Katrina. Therefore, the analysis is limited to respondents employed at the time of Hurricane Katrina and includes full-time and part-time workers.

Analysis

A series of analysis will be conducted to examine the relationship of various forms of inequality and the forced migration and resettlement. The analyses will be conducted on two time points. First, data collected one month after Hurricane Katrina will be analyzed to look for patterns of inequality in the timing and support for the evacuation. Second, data collected one year after Hurricane Katrina will be analyzed for the relationship between inequality and the

longer-term aspects of displacement including number of times moved, distance moved, and expectations of return for those who have resettled away from their community of residence at the time of Hurricane Katrina.

Expected Conclusions

As with Hurricane Andrew and other large-scale disasters, Hurricane Katrina was not an equal opportunity destructive force. Factors beyond the strength of the winds, the height of the water, or the magnitude of the shaking affect the degree to which a disaster will impact upon communities, households, and individuals (Girard and Peacock 1996). Previous research has shown that disaster vulnerability replicates the preexisting patterns of inequality and exclusion (Cutter and Emirch 2006, Cutter, Mitchell and Scott 2000, Enarson and Morrow 1997, Morrow 1997, Morrow 1999, Rodriguez and Russell 2006). Just as vulnerability to a disaster replicates existing social structures and inequalities, so too are the processes of exploitation and inequality present and replicated during the recovery process. Further, as the recovery process takes place within a social milieu, preexisting inequalities that increased vulnerability to the disaster event in the first place continue compound and exacerbate the difficulties of survivors' recovery efforts. The result is one in which preexisting inequalities are not just exposed by a disaster event, rather disasters accentuate and exacerbate preexisting inequalities. Hurricane Katrina and the surrounding events provide an excellent opportunity to examine the effects of inequality on the recovery process.

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