The gendered terrain of disaster: Through men’s eyes

Elaine Enarson, Ph.D.
Independent Scholar, Boulder CO
“Just Ask”: The experiences of men after disaster
Melbourne, AU
November 26, 2013
Why gender? Why men?
Foreword on privilege
Ten challenges disasters bring to men and boys
Implications for change
Discussion

Overview
With a gender lens, we see . . . .

- Gaps in our understanding about
  - “Vulnerability”
  - “Resilience”
  - “Recovery”
  - “Good practice”
  - “Windows of opportunity”

But no single lens exists

But there is no single “gender lens”
Who speaks for men?
Barriers to gender analysis

- The silences of men
- Practitioner bias
  - Human = male
  - Gender = women
  - Women = family/children
- Benign neglect?
  - Gender scholars
  - Disaster scholars
  - Emergency managers, practitioners, responders
- Resistance (a topic for another day)
Foreword on privilege
KATRINA
YOU
BITCH
REAL MEN BECOME
EMERGENCY MANAGERS

REAL MEN BECOME
EMERGENCY MANAGERS
MAN-MADE DISASTERS
Ten challenges disasters bring to men & boys
[1] Survival
Dedicated to Allen Kruse, charter boat operator, Orange Beach, Alabama. First documented BP oil spill suicide
2 Safety
[3] Health
[4] Shelter
[6] Family
[ 7 ] Control
Authority
Who says I'm not fit to lead this organization?

Whoa! Check it out... an Arabian horse!
[ 10 ] Identity
Our Disaster Recovery Plan Goes Something Like This...
Transformational change? Canadian case study
Promising practice

Implications for change
In the case of the Mountain Park fire, firefighters worked to protect patriarchy, natural resources, and homes but were most successful in protecting patriarchy. Ultimately, the gender regime of firefighting proved decidedly more fireproof than the houses and trees that so readily succumbed to the flames. (p. 110)
Competing masculinities

The challenge of losing—and compensatory gender politics

Losing created a threat to the firefighters’ credibility as competent and appropriately gendered firefighters, because in the firefighting world gender is constructed using binary logic. Good firefighters are masculine, and bad firefighters are unmasculine or feminine. Femininity is equated with poor firefighting skills; therefore, losing was itself potential evidence of a collective failure of firefighting masculinity. (p. 55)
Discursive defense of privilege

Unfortunately, rather than subverting existing gender patterns, the struggles for dominance exacerbated the inequalities among the men and did nothing to unsettle the gender hierarchy. Instead, they created inter-group tension and conflicts, which the firefighters resolved by using gendered strategies of self that positioned some groups as superior (ultimately as more masculine) and others as subordinate. The standards invoked to define and demonstrate masculinity, including aggression, risk taking, and the suppression of emotions, entrenched the hegemony of this gender pattern and consequently shored up boundaries between groups. (p. 85)
Disasters and the gender order

In Connell-speak, crisis tendencies in the gender order require a new answer to the problem of patriarchy (2005). The solution to the tensions created by losing and by the success of female firefighters was a revised configuration of firefighting masculinity. Both structural and wildland firefighters proudly presented themselves as enlightened, equity aware, and ready to let women in on an even playing field. (p. 107)

Yet, out of the ashes, the destruction, and the chaos and despite the generally inhospitable environment in firefighting workplaces, the seeds of gender change took root. The work of women firefighters prompted a discursive shift, a new discourse that constituted a modified pattern of gender practice in which women firefighters were praised and supported. These small acts of resistance and accommodation are noteworthy because they take place in the shadow of an occupation that has a long and dubious history of gender and racial exclusivity and a highly masculinized occupational culture. (p. 109)
More positive signs

- Increasingly gender inclusive humanitarian outreach
- New communities of practice, e.g.
  - Masculinity studies
  - Sex and sexuality studies
  - Men, gender, & development
  - Gender justice and climate change
- Men-focused gender & disaster research
Disasters & progressive change

- Crises are opportunities for change
  - Crises in masculinity—moments or eras for confronting/reconfiguring dominant masculinities
  - Crises of disaster—moments for retrenching/challenging patriarchal capitalism
- Multiple forces of resistance
- “But some of us are brave” . . . A different kind of risk taking and courage demanded of men
SAFETY PLAN For DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What is a SAFETY PLAN?

A safety plan can help prepare you and reduce the risk of physical harm if you plan to leave your relationship. It helps you brainstorm options that are available to you as well as what to do in case of an emergency. Having a plan can also help reduce the impact of the violence, even if you decide to remain in the home. Safety plans evolve as your situation changes, so update your plan as necessary. For example, if your neighborhood is ordered to evacuate due to a hurricane warning, consider how your safety may change if you have to go to a hurricane shelter. This may be a safe time for you to attempt to go to one of Florida’s 41 domestic violence centers. Some steps you can take are the following:

- Memorize or make a list of telephone numbers — friends, relatives, colleagues, or of a local program that can help.
- Prepare a suitcase with clothes, important documents and things you, your children, and/or pets may need. Leave it with someone you trust, a neighbor, a friend, or a relative. You may refer to it as your “Hurricane” or “Natural Disaster” preparedness bag if you must leave it at home.
- Keep money, and an extra set of car keys and other essential items in a safe place.
- Prepare your pets if you plan to take them with you. Have their vaccinations up to date and verification available. Realize Florida disaster shelters cannot take pets; however, domestic violence center staff are trained in how to keep your pet(s) safe. Call the Florida Domestic Violence hotline or local center for details: 1-800-500-1119.
- Teach your children to use the telephone to contact the police in case of an emergency.
- Keep an extra set of coins (or pre-paid phone card) to make calls.
- Get a 9-1-1 cell phone from your local domestic violence center.

- Call the hotline for information regarding your local domestic violence centers. Call an advocate to assist you with creating a safety plan and/or a lethality assessment.
- Call Florida’s Domestic Violence Legal Hotline: 1-800-500-1119, prompt 3 regarding legal options.

What are some options you may consider?

- Your safety and that of your children and/or pet’s is essential.
- Call the police in an emergency.
- File a police report about the violence.
- Call the domestic violence hotline to talk, get information or ideas, find a shelter, or make a safety or escape plan.
- Have the abuser ordered by the court to stay away from you by getting an Injunction for Protection.
- See a doctor for injuries (and consider having him/her write down what caused the injuries).
- Talk to a friend, family member, neighbor or someone else for support and ask for help.

Florida’s Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-500-1119
Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
425 Office Plaza Drive • Tallahassee, Florida 32301
PH: 850-425-2749 • Web: www.fcadv.org
Hello all!

NCADV and the Disaster Distress Helpline would like to invite you on Tuesday October 23rd from 1pm - 2pm EST to our twitter chat for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We are partnering with numerous disaster response agencies and domestic violence agencies to explore the overlap between the two. Please spread the word through email, Twitter and Facebook (see sample tweet and post below), and - most importantly - show up on twitter next week with information, ideas, resources and questions to share!

Twitter Tweet:

Join @distressline & @NCADV for a twitter chat on 10/23 at 1:00 EST to discuss overlap btw domestic violence and #disasters. Use #DV&Disaster.
Violencia contra las mujeres:

Un desastre que los hombres sí podemos evitar.
Just ask: A conference on the experiences of men after disaster

TUESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2013
WILLIAM ANGLISS CONFERENCE CENTRE MELBOURNE
Pathways to change

- Inclusive uses of the gender lens, e.g. social marketing/social media campaigns
- Promoting disaster resilience through men’s networks
  - Men’s professional, civic, educational, and service organizations
  - Boys’ organizations
  - Progressive men’s movements, LGBTQ, antiviolence
  - Men’s health advocates
- Institutional collaboration to address concerns
  - Emergency management and law enforcement leaders
  - Men and women in emergency response occupations and roles
- Working with masculinity/gender researchers to ask and answer harder questions about social change
Your turn!

Sincere thanks for your attention and please be in touch:

enarsone@gmail.com