The County Emergency Manager's Role in Recovery

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For decades emergency management has presented itself as an emerging profession devoted to coordinating activities related to mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. However, there has been little research to assess the extent to which it is, in fact, engaged in the coordination of activities in all of these areas. This study addresses this research gap by reporting the results of interviews with 54 county level emergency managers from eleven states regarding their role in disaster recovery. The results suggest that recovery is subordinate to other functional areas (e.g., preparedness, response, mitigation) within the work lives of the county emergency managers who participated in this research.

Keywords: Disaster recovery, Emergency management, Emergency manager, Professionalization, Comprehensive emergency management.

Introduction

Comprehensive emergency management (CEM) has been the recommended approach for U.S. emergency management for over three decades. This approach emphasizes the importance of emergency management involvement in activities in four functional areas—mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Professional organizations, such as the International Association of Emergency Managers and National Emergency

Management Association, describe the profession as engaged in CEM (IAEM 2012; NEMA 2012). Moreover, professional standards, such as the Emergency Management Accreditation Program Standards and the National Fire Protection Association 1600 Standards, state that emergency management programs must be engaged in all four areas (EMAP 2010; NFPA 2011). Yet, there is reason to believe that at least one major area— recovery—is still 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 and Wenger 2006, p. 237).

Since the emerging profession views itself as engaged in all four functional areas, then it follows that emergency management should be playing a role in the recovery process. Leaving out recovery while describing the emerging profession in keeping with CEM would not be a mere oversight on the part of emergency management, it would be a critical shortcoming. Recovery's subordinate status is clear in the disaster literature— much more attention is paid to the other functional areas (Rubin 2009; Smith and Wenger 2006)—and the relative status of recovery in the responsibilities of practicing emergency managers has not been documented. The present study reports findings from interviews with 54 county level emergency managers from eleven states about their role in recovery. The presentation of results and discussion to follow affirm the subordinate status of recovery within local level emergency management. The findings also suggest the need for much more emphasis on recovery in the training and education of emergency managers if there exists a desire to see emergency managers take on a greater role.

Background

Emergency management has always had a preparedness and response bias (Stehr 2007) that was evident before emergency management was formalized or even known by that name. Prior to 1950, disaster related activities tended to be undertaken in an *ad hoc* fashion immediately before or after an event with little-to-no coordinated efforts to address recovery or mitigation (Rubin 2007). The predisposition was also evident in the early days of civil defense (McEntire 2007; Rubin 2007). Activities related to disasters during the 1950s and early 1960s were characterized by a narrow focus on preparedness for, and response to, domestic attacks (Britton 1999; Stehr 2007). Even as civil defense concerns receded, natural and technological disasters became more salient, and emergency management began to emerge as a formal function at all levels of government during the late 60s and 70s, activities still focused on preparedness for and response to hazard events (Rubin 2007).

Although the academic community had voiced its concern with the narrow focus of emergency management (Britton 1999), the concern did not gain traction throughout the emergency management community until the National Governor's Association (NGA)

released its 1979 report. NGA (1979) took issue with emergency management's exclusive focus on preparedness and response, arguing instead for a more comprehensive approach that considered all hazards and balanced preparedness and response with mitigation and recovery—an approach the NGA dubbed "comprehensive emergency management" (CEM).

> [CEM] refers to…responsibility and capability for managing all types of emergencies and disasters by coordinating the actions of numerous agencies. The "comprehensive" aspect of CEM includes all four functional areas of disaster or emergency activity: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It applies to all risks: attack, man-made, and natural, in a federal-state-local partnership (p. 11).

NGA (1979) took the position that emergency management, at least at the federal level, needed to become more holistic in its approach.

The NGA report (1979) was widely distributed to great acclaim. Its dissemination and acceptance within the emergency management community has been heralded as a key moment in the transformation of both emergency management practice and the process of professionalization (Britton 1999; Drabek 1991; McEntire 2005; Neal 1997; Petak 1985). Since its release, CEM, together with its hallmark four functional areas, has become the mainstay of emergency management practice (Neal 1997).

As previously mentioned, professional organizations and professional standards suggest that coordination based on CEM is the responsibility of emergency managers. In addition, the significance of the four functional areas to the emerging profession was recently reaffirmed in a seminal document—the *Principles of Emergency Management*—developed by a group of respected practitioners and academics (FEMA 2007). The *Principles* document defined emergency management as the profession that "…coordinat[es] and integrat[es] all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from threatened or actual natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters" (FEMA 2007, p. 4). The *Principles* document has been adopted by organizations associated with the professionalization of emergency management including the International Association of Emergency Managers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The activities related to each functional area are many, some complex, and require an emergency manager to have the right combination of skills, knowledge, ability, and experience to be successful (NGA 1979; Stanley and Waugh 2001). As McEntire (2007) commented, "the art of the profession is just as important as the science of emergency management" (p. 171). Clearly, there is consensus that emergency management should be

involved in facilitating activities related to all of the four functional areas of CEM. Yet, it is unclear the extent to which emergency management is succeeding in fulfilling its enormous charge.

There is ample evidence of emergency manager involvement in coordinating activities related to preparedness and response (for example, see: Drabek and Hoetmer 1991; Fischer 1998; Jensen 2008; 2009; 2010; Labadie 1984; Wenger et al. 1986). The literature also suggests how emergency managers can be instrumental in ensuring that the activities are carried out effectively and efficiently (for example, see: Drabek 1987; 1990; 2005; Kapucu et al. 2008; Lindell and Perry 1992). Unfortunately, there is also some limited evidence to suggest that a preparedness and response bias still dominates, particularly since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC (Stehr 2007).

The extent to which emergency managers are involved in activities related to mitigation and recovery and the degree to which their involvement helps to bring about more effective practice in these functional areas remain unanswered questions. In light of the emerging profession's view of itself, it would appear these questions are important to address. These questions are also important because the disaster literature suggests there is a need for improvement in recovery but fails to address how, or to what extent, emergency managers are, or should be, involved in the process. The present study seeks to partially address this void. Specifically, this study explores the question: What is the current role of the county emergency manager in disaster recovery?

Literature Review

The body of literature related to the recovery from hazard events can be categorized in various ways (Smith and Wenger 2006). For the purposes of this study, literature related to defining recovery and its goals, the tasks associated with recovery, the recovery context, and the emergency manager's role in recovery will be discussed. This literature provided both a foundation for the present study and a context in which to view the study results.

Defining Recovery and Its Goals

For the purposes of this study, the researchers adopted the description of recovery offered by Smith and Wenger (2006), but a definition of recovery is by no means agreed upon (Alesch et al. 2009). Recovery has been defined variously by academics (see for example Bates and Peacock 1989; Haas et al. 1977; Nigg 1995; Rubin and Barbee 1985; Schwab et al. 1998) and government agencies (Disaster Recovery Working Group 2009). Alesch et al. (2009) report that some define recovery only in terms of selected recovery outcomes such as physical manifestations; administrative manifestations; or restoration,

or replacement of structures, facilities, and services (p. 34). Others such as Drabek (1986) frame recovery only from the vantage point of specific stakeholder groups (e.g., government, businesses, nonprofits, individuals and households) or in terms of levels of analysis (e.g., individual, group, organization, community, society). Some equate the words reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation, restitution, and recovery. As Quarantelli (1998) points out "most of the terms frequently used and sometimes interchangeably by both researchers and operational personnel… are not always pointing to the same thing or process" (p. 2). Some see recovery as a challenge or series of obstacles that must be overcome as expediently as possible; others view recovery as presenting a unique window of opportunity in which to make communities better than they were prior to a disaster (see Birkland 1997; 2006; Natural Hazards Center 2001). It is apparent that there is both a lack of clarity and consensus on what recovery means in academia and government.

The goals of recovery are no clearer. As Egan and Tischler (2010) point out, government adopts a population-based approach to recovery—focusing on efficiency and utility with the goal of getting communities back to pre-disaster conditions. Meanwhile, the nonprofit sector operates with a helping hand approach in recovery, trying to assist individuals and households in achieving a quality of life that is better than it was pre-disaster (Egan and Tischler 2010). Most scholars associated with research on disaster recovery would not only agree with the nonprofit view of the goal of recovery but also expand it by suggesting that sustainability and resilience are more appropriate and overarching goals for recovery (Berke and Campanella 2006; Berke et al. 1993; Berke and Wenger 1991; Burby 1998; Mileti 1999; Rozdilsky 2001; Steiner et al. 2006; Vale and Campanella 2005).

If the lack of consensus regarding a definition of recovery and its goals seen in disaster research and government is also found among emergency managers, it could be expected to have an impact on emergency managers' perceptions of their roles in the recovery process. It stands to reason that emergency managers' definitions of recovery can have significant implications for how they perceive their roles in the recovery process—i.e., the sphere of activities that they are purported to be involved in coordinating (Quarantelli 1998, p. 3). Thus, it is important to explore how emergency managers define recovery and the extent to which their definitions are related to their involvement in the process.

Tasks in Recovery

While there is a lack of agreement as to what constitutes recovery and the goals of recovery, there is a sizeable body of literature related to the tasks that should be, or are, a part of the recovery process. For instance, one of the most frequently identified tasks associated with an effective recovery process is planning (see, for example, Alesch et al.

2009; Berke and Campanella 2006; Garnett and Moore 2011; Olshansky 2006; Phillips 2009; Schwab et al. 1998).

Planning is most effective when it occurs prior to a disaster, but most recovery planning still happens in the post-disaster period (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). Emergency managers are known to play a significant role in planning for response and mitigation but it remains unclear if, and to what extent, emergency managers are involved in recovery planning either before or after a disaster.

Beyond planning, the research literature seems to identify two categories of tasks—short-term and long-term. Generally speaking, one can think of short-term tasks as those linked to the transition from response to recovery and long-term tasks as those associated with reconstructing, rebuilding, or otherwise restoring various aspects of communities (Alesch et al. 2009; Phillips 2009; Schwab et al. 1998; Rubin 1985). 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. Examples of long-term tasks include housing recovery, business recovery, economic recovery, infrastructure repair, cultural and historic site preservation/restoration, environmental protection/preservation, and individual and household recovery.

Completion of each task implies a need to address a host of considerations and carry out a range of activities. There is a substantial body of scholarly work that explores the considerations and activities involved in recovery. This scholarly work also posits factors related to the effective completion of activities as well as how activities can be completed in a manner that makes communities more sustainable and/or resilient. Table 1 lists short and long term recovery tasks as well as sample citations of related scholarly work.

Clearly many individuals, organizations, and government entities would have a role in the completion of the activities related to these recovery tasks. A diverse array of organizations provides relief to individuals and households; assesses damage; rebuilds infrastructure, homes and public facilities; etc. As Canton (2007) so aptly pointed out, emergency management—including recovery—is a distributed function. Moreover, it is a distributed function over which emergency management typically has no statutory authority (Canton 2007). Still, if one accepts these tasks as crucial for those involved in recovery, then it follows that emergency managers would, or ought, to have a role in their coordination. As Drabek and Hoetmer (1991) stated, "No one person or office is responsible for all tasks, and the activities listed will be uncoordinated and unrelated unless local officials take clear and appropriate action" (p. 226). Yet, within the literature related to recovery activities, no role (beyond a generic coordinator role) has been recommended or specified for emergency management. Moreover, the extent to which

Table 1. Short and Long Term Recovery Tasks

Recovery Tasks	Sample Citations	
Short-term		
Damage assessment	Bolin 1990 Franco et al. 2010 Horie, Maki, Kohiyama, Lu, Tanaka, Hashitera, Shigekawa, and Hayashi 2003	Klitz and Smith 2011 McEntire and Cope 2004 Oaks 1990 Pistrika and Jonkman 2010
Debris removal and management	Brown, Milke, and Seville 2011 Denhart 2010 Lauritzen, 1998	Roper 2008 Siddik, McEntire, and Afedzie 2009 Wasik 2006
Temporary relocation and housing	Brodie, Weltzien, Altmas, Blendon, and Benson 2006 Craemer 2010	Davis and Bali 2008 Johnson 2007 Liu, Ruan, and Shi 2011
Restoration of utilities and public services	Alesch et al. 2009 O'Rourke 1995 Reed, Preuss, and Park 2006 Rose and Guha 2004 Rose, Benavides, Chang, Szczesniak, and Lim 1997	Shinozuka and Chang 2004 Shumuta 2004 Somers 2007 Tabucci, Davidson, and Brink 2010
Volunteer and Donations management	Brennan, Barnett, and Flint 2005 Dynes and Quarantelli 1980 Fernandez ,Barbera, and van Dorp 2006	Neal 1994 Suga 2011 Wachtendorf and Kendra 2004
Long-term		
Permanent housing	Bates, Farrell, and Glittenberg 1979 Bolin 1985 Bolin and Stanford 1991	Comerio 1997a,b Evans-Cowley and Kitchen 2011 Freeman 2004
Infrastructure restoration	Chang 2003 Chang and Nokima 2001 Comerio 2006	Menoni, Pergalanib, Boni, and Petrini 2002 Sohn et al. 2004
Business recovery	Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2008 Dahlhamer and Tierney 1998 Doerfel, Lai, and Chewning 2010	Graham 2007 Runyan 2006 Webb, Tierney, and Dalhmer 2003
Economic recovery	Albala-Bertrand 1993 Baade, Baumann, and Matheson 2007 Benson and Clay 2004 Cole 2010 Dacy and Kunreuther 1969	Homm, Woods, and Barta 2003 Skidmore and Toya 2002 Tol and Leek 1999 Vogel 2001 Yamano, Kajitani, and Shumauta 2007
Cultural and historical site preservation and restoration	Al-Nammari 2009 Crue and Clark 2010 Graham and Spennemann 2006a, b	Matthews 2007 Spennemann 1999, 2007 Toki 2011
Environmental protection and preservation	Allen 2007 Evans-Cowley and Gough 2008 Kelly 2002	May et al. 1996 Natural Hazards Center 2001
Individual and household recovery	Bates and Peacock 1992 Bolin 1986 Erickson, Drabek, Key, and Crowe 1979	Hirose 1992 Johnson, Olson-Owens, and Collins 2002 Kamel 2010

emergency managers currently are involved in these activities is unknown (for a partial exception see Phillips and Neal 2007). The present research is intended to explore thisgap in our knowledge about emergency managers and their role in recovery related activities.

The Recovery Context

The research literature suggests that a variety of contextual factors are related to both the manner in which recovery is approached and the outcomes that result from these recovery activities. For instance, pre-disaster social, political, and economic conditions are known to strongly influence the recovery process (Alesch et al. 2009; Bolin and Stanford 1991; Passerini 2000; Webb et al. 2002). It can be argued that emergency managers as individuals have little influence over these contextual conditions. Yet, the research literature identifies a number of other contextual factors that influence recovery in which emergency managers could play a significant role.

The actual and perceived success of recovery efforts can be improved by involving a diverse mix of stakeholders including citizens and citizen groups (Berke and Campanella 2006; Ganapati and Ganapati 2009; Kweit and Kweit 2004). Emergency managers could play an instrumental role in identifying and inviting the participation of relevant stakeholders in the recovery process. Through their pre-disaster efforts, emergency managers could also be working to ensure that the community organizations that will be integral to recovery are involved. Berke et al. (1993) suggest that community level integration can bolster recovery efforts, while a lack of integration can result in a reduced probability that external programs and assistance from other levels of government will fit the community's needs. Moreover, emergency managers could be striving to bring about integration with other levels of government prior to disaster—without which community-level knowledge of resource availability can be limited as can opportunities for local concerns to be raised to central authorities (Berke et al. 1993). The research literature also suggests that a lack of local knowledge of, and experience with, federal programs and procedures can create difficulties during the recovery process (Rubin 1985). Smith and Wenger (2006) note that the community context is often lacking in these areas headed into the recovery process, thus leading to "constrained choices" (p. 239).

If emergency managers take on the role of identifying and involving stakeholders, bringing about integration, and amassing recovery related knowledge, they can foster a context in which recovery can progress effectively. The acceptance and fulfillment of such a role would also place emergency managers in a leadership position in the recovery process. Strong local level administrative and political leadership are needed to best guide communities through the recovery process (Rubin 1985). And, although emergency managers do not typically occupy positions of statutory authority and cannot compel the actions of other organizations (Labadie 1984; Waugh 2007; Wenger et al. 1986), they can nonetheless be leaders by virtue of the role they fulfill. As Rubin (1985) stated, "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" (p. 24).

In preparedness and response, emergency management officials typically act as "the centerpieces for state and federally supported disaster management programs in the U.S." (Berke et al. 1993: 96). Emergency managers coordinate the activities of involved organizations by leveraging their relationships with them even while not commanding the organizations or directing task execution. Perhaps emergency managers have developed relationships within their communities and other levels of government related to preparedness and response that could be leveraged within the recovery context. However, the role of the county emergency manager in collaborating and coordinating with state and federal entities during the recovery functional area has not been defined.

The Emergency Managers Role in Recovery

A discussion of just how emergency management, and, specifically, emergency managers, should fit into the recovery picture has been neglected in the research literature despite the fact that emergency management is the profession that describes itself as the "coordinat[ors] and integrat[ors] [of] all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to…recover from…disasters" (FEMA 2007:4). Even Smith and Wenger (2006), in their impressive effort to "operationalize" an agenda for sustainable recovery, point to changes required of—or actions that need to be taken by—academia, federal government agencies, state emergency management agencies, local governments, political officials, and local land-use planners, but fail to address emergency managers. The authors at one point state that research findings need to be better communicated and disseminated to emergency management professionals, but fail to identify toward what explicit end—as opposed to being undertaken with the general objective of having more educated emergency management professionals (Smith and Wenger 2006, p. 250).

Many scholars have argued that emergency management ought to be integrally involved in recovery (Berke et al. 1993; Phillips 2009; Schwab et al. 1998), while noting that emergency management has been historically underutilized (Phillips 2009). During recovery, local jurisdictions tend to rely on departments such as planning and public works (Berke et al. 1993) and emergency management tends to turn back to its comfort zone—preparedness and response (Phillips 2009, p. 351). Even when emergency managers are involved in recovery, the politicized nature of the process can result in the contributions of the emergency manager being either ignored or dismissed (Phillips 2009).

Recovery is a complicated process with a wide range of activities and a host of associated issues that ought to be considered, however one defines it. There is also much at stake in this process. Smith and Wenger (2006) noted a range of potentially negative consequences from a poorly executed recovery process (p. 239). Given what is at risk, it

is vital that the process be both informed by research and well-managed. Emergency managers could potentially assist in this regard since emergency management, as an emerging profession, claims for itself a coordinating role in recovery as well as preparedness, response, and mitigation.

So what is the role of the county emergency manager in disaster recovery? The answer to this question is that we just do not know. Our nation has a cadre of county emergency managers charged with coordinating and integrating activities related to all areas of CEM, but current research provides neither a clear understanding of what their role should be nor a clear picture of the extent to which emergency managers are fulfilling any recovery-related role. This study begins to address this important void by examining how county emergency managers understand their role and evaluating any roles found in the context of the disaster recovery literature.

Method

Methods

This exploratory study was conducted using semi-structured telephone interviews with county emergency managers. The researchers chose to collect data from these respondents because we considered them "critical cases", or individuals capable of giving "a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon…this allows for detailed investigation of social processes in a specified context" (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, p. 79.). County emergency managers are charged with being involved in all disaster functional areas and arguably have an important role to play in disaster recovery (Phillips 2009). Thus, we used purposive and convenience sampling for this sample (Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

The research team initially sought to schedule interviews with six county emergency managers in nine different states, for a total of 54 interviews. However, the small number of counties in the selected western states combined with a low response rate in those states led the team to expand the project to eleven states so as to achieve the desired number of interviews.

Interviewee selection was implemented by using systematic random sampling on an alphabetical list of counties and county-equivalent jurisdictions in each state (Chambliss and Schutt 2006). Initially, 18 counties or county-equivalent jurisdictions from each state were chosen using this sampling technique. Due to low response rates, additional samples of 18 were drawn from within each state until six interviews were arranged or until the list of counties was exhausted. In the latter instance, another state was selected and a sample of 18 drawn for that state. Table 2 summarizes the request and respondent information.

An interview guide facilitated the interview process. The questions were broad and open-ended to allow emergency managers to respond in-depth based on their

understandings and perceptions (Charmaz 2006). The interview guide covered the following topics—experience and background, definition of disaster recovery, role of the emergency manager in disaster recovery, and factors that would help or hinder recovery. The telephone interviews ranged in length from 17 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes with an average of 43.5 minutes. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory model was used to analyze the interview responses. Specifically, open and axial coding were used to identify and develop key concepts within the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

Limitations

The results need to be viewed with caution because the sample was not random. In addition, the fact that some emergency managers declined participation may have introduced non-response bias into the results (Fowler 2009). As noted in Table 2, within the eleven states, 479 county emergency managers were invited to participate in the study. Of those, only 54, or 12%, of the total invited actually participated. Relative to the total number of invitations sent, very few negative replies were received ($N = 30$). More often than not, emergency managers that were invited to participate chose not to respond to the invitation at all. Of the 30 emergency managers who declined the invitation most stated they were "too busy" or "not interested." 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 results are exploratory and not generalizable to all county emergency managers.

Table 2. Responses by State

State	Invitations Sent	Positive Replies	Interviews as Result	Negative Replies
One	67	6	5	4
Two	18	5	4	0
Three	45	12	7	1
Four	108	7	5	8
Five	54	7	4	1
Six	36	10	6	0
Seven	40	7	7	5
Eight	18	3	3	2
Nine	17	3	3	0
Ten	54	12	7	6
Eleven	22	3	3	3
Totals	**479**	**75**	**54**	**30**

Results

The data revealed gaps between the role envisioned for emergency managers and the role they actually play. Specifically, the managers perceived their recovery role as both unclear and minimal. The data indicated that, despite some growing awareness of disaster recovery and its importance, there still exists a widespread emphasis on preparedness and response functions among emergency managers. The data suggested a variety of possible explanations that may explain why they are not doing more related to recovery.

Unclear, Minimal Recovery Roles

Generic Terms. The majority of emergency managers used generic terms to describe their involvement in recovery. They employed catch-all phrases such as "coordinator", "facilitator", or "information provider" to describe their role. In most cases, analysis of their use of these terms and the descriptions offered in reference to them provide only a vague understanding of how, and to what extent, an emergency manager would be involved in disaster recovery. For example, one respondent described the emergency manager's role in recovery thus,

> They are coordinators in disaster recovery, making sure that the county and the individual entities within the county that are having to do different operations to get the county back to normal have what they need.

Or, as another respondent described emergency managers' role,

> It's the same role they play as in response and mitigation. They're a coordinator. They're a facilitator. They bring people together to get the right things done and in the right order to help the most people.

And another stated,

> Basically we just help coordinate it. We are kinda the "go to" people or "the gophers". [If] people have questions, or whatever, it's up to us to see if we can find answers for them...to try to offer some guidance if we can as to maybe the direction they need to take.

Descriptions of whom and what were to be coordinated or facilitated and what types of information were to be provided to whom varied considerably. Some resopndents did identify various entities (e.g., local government departments and agencies, state government, federal government, private sector, local citizens, and voluntary agencies) as potential stakeholders with whom they would coordinate. Yet, even when these

respondents identified entities they would coordinate, the data demonstrated a lack of consistency and specificity in terms of the stakeholders who would be involved and the activities being coordinated with these different groups. Furthermore, exactly what they would actually be doing to "coordinate" or "facilitate" these groups was absent, ambiguous, and/or variable in the data.

The majority of respondents did not describe, in any explicit or uniform manner, the methods or processes for recognizing and engaging relevant players or coordinating a specific recovery tasks or activities. Instead, most used broad phrases such as "bringing people together", "making sure the right people are involved", or "getting people what they need" to explain their efforts. This pattern in the data persisted even when respondents were probed for more detail.

Support Role. The majority of respondents saw their "coordinator", "facilitator", or "information provider" role as a supporting position. Emergency managers support—they do not "do". As one emergency manager put it, "…I'm just assisting, or coordinating the recovery process. I'm not actually out there doing it." According to the majority of respondents, responsibilities for recovery and completion of activities related to it are widely distributed throughout their counties (and potentially states in large-scale events). County emergency managers are not the individuals in charge of the completion of activities or directing the work of those entities who are.

> First of all, emergency managers don't deal with recovery well. Recovery is, is one of those, uh, is, is parts of the cycle, the emergency cycle that is often passed off to others and that's just the way it is. The supplementary or support role I think that they're not going to leave. I think recovery is bigger than emergency management. Ah, we're a resource support center; we're an information support center.

> They're not there to bring the troops together. They're not there to motivate the people or the different departments to meet obligations, meet needs, meet objectives. They're there to support it.

Limited Involvement. As stated previously, respondents articulated a generic and vague role for themselves in disaster recovery. This lack of clarity continued to be demonstrated when the data were analyzed for their involvement in recovery activities. Some respondents identified a distinction between short-term and long-term recovery; yet, the activities they associated with either category were seldom offered without probing. And, even when activities were identified, the lists were not comprehensive. For example, one respondent said,

> Short-term is getting people back to work, schools open, if they're able to be open. And then long-term is getting those facilities that were destroyed built so people have jobs.

When respondents did identify short- or long-term recovery activities, few discussed any role for themselves in there completion.

Rather than citing involvement in activities related to recovery (e.g., planning, debris operations, housing, economic recovery, infrastructure recovery and the like), respondents most often cited their involvement as limited to administrative tasks—essentially, paperwork—associated with state or federal assistance (e.g., damage assessments, tracking of expenses, and reimbursement paperwork for the Federal Emergency Management Agency).

> …working with risk management and those folks in finance [and] making sure that everything is documented. And again, stressing the documentation piece throughout the whole incident because, as you're probably aware, if it's not documented then it never happened according to FEMA. So, you know, when we have the EOC activated, stressing the fact that people need to keep track of eligible expenses and documentation of those items.

Other than ensuring completion of paperwork associated with receiving state and federal assistance, emergency managers rarely reported any other specific tasks or activities as being within their purview.

Although the majority of respondents acknowledged that they do not focus on recovery as much as other functional areas of emergency management, the data revealed that this is changing or is about to change in some counties. For instance, the data show a growing recognition among some respondents that recovery is important and should be a focus within their positions as county emergency managers.

> Well, it used to be that we spent most of our time in preparedness, little bit in mitigation, little bit in response. But I think people, after what, especially the state of X went through in X Year, I think people have shifted a little bit more away from preparedness and are now starting to concentrate on recovery.

> Then you go into recovery from the disaster, which we don't touch on hardly enough, in my estimation. But it's one of those fields that we don't do a lot of work on, and we should because if you look at the operations for disasters and emergencies, your emergency response primarily will go

for maybe 24 hours. It's unfortunate that we don't focus more energy on recovery because that's the longer time-consuming duration.

Analysis of the data from the vast majority of interviews supported what the research literature has suggested (Stehr 2007); most emergency managers played a greater role in preparedness and response than in recovery.

Usually responders and emergency managers have typically focused on um preparedness. Doing the plans, meeting the people, coordinating how we're going to respond. Then they respond. During the response we've always been conscious of what we're doing but a lot of times we've left the scene or we've left an area that maybe will never recover correctly.

These respondents dedicated more of their time and energy to activities related to these functional areas. There were many comments along the lines of "recovery is probably the aspect of the job that I have spent the least amount of time on so far", "our time has been dealt more in response and preparedness and training", and "I don't think anybody is giving a second thought to recovery". When respondents addressed the role they perceived for themselves, they relied heavily on generic terms and broad phrases to articulate their role. There was a lack of clarity as to what exactly their role as "coordinator," "facilitator," or "information provider" meant. The data also revealed that the majority of them perceived their role as a supportive one (as opposed to a leadership role) and that their involvement in recovery activities is most often limited to paperwork.

Possible Explanations for Role Data

We analyzed the data for possible explanations for these findings. Analysis led us to discount several possible explanations we had initially thought likely; and, led us to discover seven possible alternative explanations for the limited role of emergency managers in recovery.

Discounted Explanations. After initially exploring the data with respect to the research question, we wanted to explore the data further for ideas as to what might explain the results. Our discussions led us to postulate that counties with significant disaster experience, counties that were primarily urban, emergency managers with backgrounds other than first response or military, or emergency managers with college degrees may be among those whom the respondents report having a more significant role in recovery. To explore these notions, we placed the data from each interview in rows in an Excel file and coded each interview according to the respondent's previous disaster experience (i.e., high, medium, low), the respondent's background (i.e., first responder, military, other), type of county served (i.e., rural, urban, mixed), and education (i.e.,

emergency management degree, no emergency management degree). We then tabulated the interviews by these codes and analyzed the data to see whether there were any patterns that emerged. We were surprised that the data did not support any links between the identified factors and the involvement of the respondent in disaster recovery.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that these factors *do not* explain emergency manager roles in recovery—they may. Instead, we are suggesting that the data collected did not evidence a relationship between these factors and the roles of the county emergency managers who participated in this research. As noted earlier, this study is qualitative, exploratory, featured a small sample, and was not intended to support statistical claims or reach definitive conclusions. However, because we found no connection between the factors identified and involvement in disaster recovery, we returned to the data seeking alternative explanations for the study results.

Ambiguity in Recovery Definitions. One possible alternative explanation for the results could be the respondents' definitions of recovery. However, the data revealed little variation in the respondents' definitions of recovery; most of them defined recovery as disaster-impacted communities' return to "normal" or pre-disaster conditions.

> Disaster recovery is anything it takes to get the county back to normal operating conditions; or, close to normal operation conditions and bring normalcy back to the citizens. That's the best way I can describe disaster recovery.

> I would say that [recovery is] a process of attempting to restore the citizen or business back to the approximate position, or as close as you can get to it, prior to whatever the event was that caused the damage.

Yet, not all respondents defined recovery in terms of a return to normal. A few suggested that communities are irrevocably changed by disasters and, therefore, recovery would not be able to return a community to what it was pre-disaster. Instead, recovery entails finding a way to adapt to new circumstances while trying to rebuild or restore the community at-large (i.e., find a "new normal"). A couple of emergency managers defined recovery as synonymous with response. And, a couple of others felt that the definition of disaster recovery changes depending upon the nature of the incident or the jurisdiction involved. For example, one respondent commented, "Well, I think it's going to be multi-faceted. And I think a lot is going to depend on your locality and what type disasters actually, affect you".

Regardless of how the respondent defined recovery, a consistent theme in the data was the underdevelopment of the definitions they held. Their definitions lacked detail and were ambiguous. This ambiguity in recovery definitions may contribute to perceptions of their role in recovery. It is possible that there is a relationship between the vague recovery

definitions held by most respondents and the generic, non-specific role they envision for themselves in the process of recovery. It is hard to imagine how they could clearly articulate and fulfill similar or significant roles in recovery without a clear and shared understanding of what recovery is and the goals of the process.

Local Expectations and Dependence. The expectation that state and federal government would support local recovery efforts and that counties are dependent on this support was an another theme in the data that may explain why the respondents report a limited and ambiguous role in recovery. Most of them reported that both citizens and local government officials expected that the state and federal government would arrive "on a big white charger horse…and just bail them out." Some respondents themselves expected the state and federal government to "save" their county after a disaster. For example one respondent stated, "…There's a lot of destruction and you're going to be overwhelmed. And it's really going to be based on the state and feds coming to help out anyway". Another commented, "So much that causes long-term recovery is again…we pretty much hand everything off to FEMA when things happen…ours is more short-term than anything else". This expectation appeared true even when respondents reported that their county took pride in its independence from state and federal government. Most managers were aware that this expectation was unrealistic. As one respondent noted, "There's a misconception out there that FEMA's coming and everything's gonna be taken care of now. Well, it really isn't, you know."

In addition to an expectation that state and federal governments would provide assistance for recovery, many respondents also pointed out that there was a real need—even a dependence on—the resources that higher levels of government could provide.

> …without those dollars that came in from us getting declared in February, we, our hands, were tied; we just were at a total loss as to how to help all those people. That was one of those situations where I told you people are there and they're so hurt…and they're crying and you have no resources, or any avenue to help them; and, it's, a very, very terrible place to be.

> If we don't get a disaster declaration then it really stresses our budget. Like the freeze, the freeze-thaw, that disaster we had this past winter. That took probably 80% just to recover just fixing what had to be fixed to make the roads passable about 80% of our road budget for the year. And we got no declaration out, no federal, no disaster declaration out of that. So that throws the rest of the year for road repairs way behind.

It is possible that there is a relationship between the limited, vague roles reported for recovery and the finding that there are many counties that are dependent on state and

federal resources to spur recovery and expect the state and federal government to guide the recovery process.

Navigating FEMA Procedures. Perhaps another explanation of the findings related to county emergency manager roles in recovery is that the majority of them indicated challenges with their role in navigating the FEMA assistance processes (e.g., paperwork). They were frustrated by the complexity of the process when the federal government is involved in recovery.

> The rest of the recovery is sort of intuitive, but when you get to the part of having to complete the proper paperwork and submit the proper paper documentation particularly to FEMA and the federal government that's less intuitive. It's more about following the procedures that they have set in place. So, the disasters that I worked on, the reimbursement processes has been among the most challenging.

Respondents were also frustrated by the laborious nature of the process.

> Because you know FEMA usually doesn't come for a while…I guess just the hindrance would be waiting on them. Knowing if it could be a [presidentially declared] disaster and it's going to be a FEMA event and you have to do it all different than if you were going to take care of it all locally. You have to keep up with that stuff differently and man hours…it takes a lot more…a lot more paperwork and a lot more secretarial stuff.

They found the process to be frustratingly lengthy in addition to being complex and labor intensive.

> It's funny, you know, it went through, um, the individual that came on site here as a FEMA representative. Great individual to work with, was very accommodating to us and helped us make sure that we were going to recover our losses. So, then he sent it to his supervisor and he reviewed it and signed it and then he sent it to his supervisor and reviewed it and signed it. Then it went to FEMA headquarters and I guess they all touched it and reviewed it and signed it. And then it came back to the state. This thing has had so many reviews. You know, Hollywood don't have this many reviews on a, on a multi-million dollar movie. And all we're asking for is $14,000, you know.

Respondents recognized that they would be better able to navigate the process with more knowledge about the rules that govern federally assisted recovery and how the process works in practice.

> I think actually, in our small community…we don't have the personnel to actually spend time and effort streamlining that process. It's probably hindered us in being able to acquire, maybe as much of our recovery resources as would have been possible, had we had better plans in place up front and being more knowledgeable of the Stafford Act and things that govern the recovery.

It makes sense that the recovery role of these emergency managers will be influenced should they have to dedicate significant portions of their time during the recovery process to paperwork and navigating the federal assistance bureaucracy.

The Importance of Response. An additional possible explanation for the preparedness and response emphasis is that there is a perception that there is a very short time frame for response within which to carry out the activities to save lives, property, and the environment.

> Recovery is something that can be put off until tomorrow and I guess that's the horrible truth of all of this discussion is the tendency to put recovery off until tomorrow. Response we have to do right now. We do not have any choice.

> Planning and response are the two big ones because they are the ones where the proverbial stuff hits the fan and everyone is pulling their pins to get out there and do a good job and getting things taken care of. So I would say recovery is very low on the scheme of emergency management's wheel.

And, there is awareness among emergency managers and their counties that effective and efficient execution of response activities is critical because there are significant and immediate consequences for the county and its residents if response was poorly executed.

> I think a lot of times [recovery] takes, plays second fiddle. And what I mean by that is we're so worried about the response and in most disasters the response is a relatively small window. And, when I'm talking response, I'm talking the response for the, human life…getting people getting people into a shelter...Then it's like there's not a whole lot of planning that goes into recovery.

Most respondents did not appear to see the consequences associated with a failure to execute recovery activities effectively and efficiently as equal with those consequences associated with response. It stands to reason that emergency managers who perceive recovery as less important than response will focus their work time and effort accordingly.

Political Barriers. Another possible explanation for emergency managers' focus on preparedness and response instead of recovery may be the existence of political barriers. In some counties, emergency managers find that politics shapes the role they are allowed to play in their counties—often in such a way that they are unable to fulfill the recovery role they feel they could or should.

> Why are we spending millions of dollars putting sand on a beach that wants to erode, it just doesn't make sense to me. So in my dream world, emergency management would be much involved in decision making of the land use and the future. Politically speaking, it is not going to happen, because politicians are usually lawyers and not risk managers.
>
> So in a lot of respects, the emergency manager, management agency, winds up catering between the elected officials, because we don't want to piss anybody off, because those are votes, and the building official's office and their hard line saying it will be built to code period. And we're stuck in the middle. And then you have a bunch of citizens that are raising hell and those elected officials, all they want is to make everybody happy. So how do we make everybody happy?

It seems reasonable that emergency managers will be limited in the extent to which they are involved in recovery in areas where recovery is not considered a top priority or there is a lack of stakeholder support for them to play a significant role in recovery.

Value of Emergency Management. The final possible explanation suggested by the data for respondents' reported recovery role is that emergency management has not been historically perceived as an integral or important part of county government. It seems intuitive that, where emergency management is undervalued or unappreciated, those emergency managers may be limited in the recovery role they can play. The data also showed that. in some counties. the perceived value of emergency management is increasing.

> Well, previous administrations looked at emergency management like, "Oh well, it's just another something the state tells you [that] you got to have and they don't do anything any way. So…". Now, they realize I've gotten more active…into what I do, what emergency management does,

> what the state does, how that all wraps up together in, to get the needed
> resources that we have, what resources are available in or out of the county
> or within the state. So, it's been a real eye opening experience for them.

It seems logical to think that, in counties where emergency management is valued, emergency managers will be more likely to be seen as a resource for recovery and both expected and allowed to take on recovery related roles. There was some evidence in the data to suggest this hypothesis might be true.

> In the past, we have not been real active in recovery. Then people started
> to really realize how important that was, so emergency management is
> getting more and more to be something somebody chooses.

In summary, these data show that the respondents perceive a generic and limited role for themselves in recovery that is largely focused on the completion of paperwork. The data did not support several seemingly plausible explanations for this finding. Yet, the data did suggest a variety of other possible explanations for the emergency manger's role in disaster recovery. The following section discusses the implications of these data and makes recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Comprehensive emergency management (CEM) is heralded as the paradigm guiding the practice of emergency management (see for example: EMAP 2010; IAEM 2012; McEntire 2005; Neal 1997; NEMA 2012; NFPA 2011). Thus, it might have been expected that this research would find county emergency managers to have an active role in coordinating recovery activities before and after disasters. This expectation was not supported by the data. The finding that respondents were playing almost no role in recovery beyond facilitating the completion of post-disaster paperwork suggests that Rubin's (2009) concern that emergency management is "neglecting recovery" is worthy of further discussion.

A starting place for this discussion is an examination of where lines of demarcation are drawn and linkages exist between the profession of emergency management and the function of emergency management. Disaster recovery activities—like those related to preparedness, response, and mitigation—are "distributed functions" (Canton 2007). The governmental and nongovernmental organizations that do the actual work associated with the vast majority of "emergency management" activities are many and diverse. Thus, recovery is at once everyone's job and no one's job. Has it not yet been determined how professional emergency managers ought to fit into the disaster recovery picture before

and after a disaster in light of this fact? Or, has the role been defined but simply not yet implemented in practice?

Who, or what entity, ought to be doing the activities associated with disaster recovery is not a matter of debate and is not the critical issue here. Professional emergency managers ought not to "do or direct" recovery just as they do not "do or direct" preparedness and response. For instance, while emergency managers have a role in facilitating planning processes within their jurisdictions, they should not write the plan. Instead, the plan developed should represent the synthesized ideas, content, and commitments developed by an array of organizational representatives (Lindell and Meier 1994; Lindell and Perry 2003). And, though emergency managers ought to design exercise programs, they do so to test the jurisdictions plans as well as the capabilities of organizations within the jurisdiction (Perry 2004; van Lakerveld et al. 2008). The "doers" of planning and the exercising are again distributed throughout a jurisdiction. Yet, emergency managers have a clear role in preparedness that is consistent with the role the emerging profession envisions for itself in seminal documents and professional standards related to the profession and through professional organizations.

There is also consensus around the notion that emergency managers should not be first responders during disaster response (Drabek 1987). For instance, they ought not to put out fires, provide medical care, or enforce the law; these tasks are performed by other organizations (McEntire 2007, p. 169). Nevertheless, the role of emergency managers with respect to response is significant and clear. Among many other responsibilities, they should coordinate information, people, organizations, and resources to support the response effort in multi-agency coordination centers (Perry 1991). Moreover, they should facilitate relationships and resource sharing both within their respective jurisdictions and outside their jurisdictions such as newsmedia, neighboring jurisdictions, state emergency management, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (Perry 1991). The role of emergency managers is to help their jurisdiction's response be as effective as possible. Emergency managers do not execute the perfect response themselves and they are not "in charge" of response efforts. Yet, they are nevertheless substantively and specifically involved in response (Perry 1991).

Although there are distinct lines between what an emergency manager and all of the players in the distributed function of emergency management do in preparedness and response, there are also clear interdependencies. The emergency manager in preparedness and response facilitates the performance of emergency management tasks for their jurisdictions. Emergency managers and what they do, how they do it, and with whom they do it during preparedness and response activities impacts performance and outcomes both within and across the organizations in their jurisdictions (Drabek 1983; 1987; McEntire 2007; Stanley and Waugh 2001). Conversely, it is also recognized that the organizations within a given jurisdiction and the jurisdictional context also impact

emergency managers' ability to perform their role in these functional areas (Drabek 1983, 1987; McEntire 2007; Stanley and Waugh 2001).

There is a need for improved coordination and integration in the recovery process (Smith 2011). Emergency managers could potentially be instrumental in addressing this need—not by stepping out of the role they normally fulfill in preparedness and response—but by fulfilling this same role both prior to and during disaster recovery. The majority of respondents in this study did in fact describe their involvement in disaster recovery as being a "coordinator" or "facilitator". However, virtually all were unable to articulate what they were coordinating/facilitating or with whom they were interacting. It became clear both through probes during interviews and data analysis later that the respondents were using these terms generically to describe their role while, in reality, their involvement was minimal. Thus, despite emergency managers using language congruent with the CEM approach and the emerging profession's vision of itself, they were not actually fulfilling the role suggested by the words they were using or as demonstrated by the role they assume in preparedness and response.

Disaster research has repeatedly indicated that disaster recovery is a critical, complicated process with economic, political, environmental, and cultural conditions at stake (see for example: Berke et al. 1993; Berke and Campanella 2006; Kweit and Kweit 2004; Phillips 2009; Rubin 1985; Smith and Wenger 2006). Unfortunately, the process of disaster recovery is not often conducted in keeping with what the literature suggests (Berke et al. 1993; Rubin 2009; Smith and Wenger 2006). There is a need for additional attention to be paid to recovery both pre- and post- disaster (Stehr 2007). And, disaster researchers are not alone in their concern regarding recovery.

The federal government has certainly acknowledged that disaster recovery is a source of concern—particularly since Hurricane Katrina. President Barack Obama ordered the formation of a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group to begin to tackle recovery issues in 2009. Congress has held numerous hearings on the topic and even went so far as to require the drafting of a National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) through the Post-Katrina Reform Act of 2006. The NDRF was released Fall of 2011 and intends 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 (FEMA 2011: 1).

Yet, despite the fact that FEMA has espoused CEM as the domain of the emergency management (see signatories on *Principles of Emergency Management*, 2007) and the

recognition that recovery is an area of concern for the nation, the NDRF does not suggest that emergency management ought to be hub of recovery activity or the coordinator of such activities at the local, tribal, and state level. Although the NDRF (2011) recommends that disaster recovery coordinators be designated, the document states, "[w]hile 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. Their primary role is to manage and coordinate the redevelopment and building of community" (p. 22).

There may be good reason for this seeming break between other visions of emergency management and the FEMA decision not to recommend in the NDRF (2011) that disaster recovery coordinators be located within an emergency management program. For instance, the federal government might be acknowledging the resource limitations emergency managers face in many jurisdictions and the difficulty associated with taking on new tasks and responsibilities in light of these resource limitations. As McEntire (2007) suggests, "[e]mergency managers have traditionally been underfunded and overworked in most jurisdictions" (p. 178). Another reason for FEMA's decision might be that individuals within emergency management programs at the local, tribal, and state level have not had the training and/or education that would be required to see the role fulfilled by personnel within their offices.

The results of the present study suggest that changes in training or education are worth additional discussion. Although the data related to this study did not support the notion that the recovery roles observed were due to resource constraints, they did support alternative explanations for why emergency managers were playing a limited role in recovery (i.e., ambiguity in definitions, local expectations and dependence, the FEMA piece, "unsexy" recovery, the importance of response, political barriers, and the value associated with emergency management). Training and education related to recovery would help emergency managers reduce, or eliminate, the impact of these constraints in their jurisdictions—assuming, of course, that the profession desires to embrace a recovery role commensurate with the CEM approach.

Although there are many similarities between response and recovery, there are differences that require education or training to manage effectively. According to NGA (1979),

> Preparedness and response personnel need a fast-action, authoritative, operational, and decision-making approach to their work. They need systems-planning skills, training skills, and technical expertise. Mitigation and long-term recovery personnel, by contrast, require analytic, evaluative, and policy making skills. They also require political acumen and knowledge of the state development plan. It should not, then, be a question of whether military or civilian personnel or responders or

planners should run emergency management. The question should be how any given operation can use both types of skills. The fortunate governor has a manager who has both sets of skills and infuses an appropriate balance into the emergency management program (p.6).

More recently, Stehr (2007) pointed out that there are "important differences between the response and recovery periods related to intergovernmental and interorganizational behavior are the specific agencies and groups participating, the character of tasks undertaken, and the higher potential for goal conflict as the immediate crisis abates" (p. 419). Accumulation of knowledge in all of these areas is a tall order.

Should the emerging profession of emergency management desire to take on a recovery role commensurate with what the CEM approach suggests, then perhaps the training and education available to emergency managers can do more to support this change by broadening the traditional focus on preparedness and response to build both the technical expertise and knowledge of the recovery literature that would be required. For instance, emergency managers could benefit, particularly early in their careers, from training related to the needs associated with various stakeholder groups during recovery, common tasks associated with recovery and the entities with responsibility for those tasks, resources available in the aftermath of hazard events, and the legal issues and laws related to recovery. Emergency managers could also benefit from higher education recovery courses that explore the way in which hazards, hazard characteristics, and vulnerabilities are related to the recovery process in the aftermath of hazard events; 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.

The body of knowledge on which to ground training and education on emergency management topics, including recovery, is available and is expanding rapidly. The translation of research findings into practice remains a critical component for the evolution of the emergency management field, especially as it relates to disaster recovery (Smith and Wenger 2006). Rubin (2009) went further to state "[r]ecovery as a practice issue is virtually uninformed by the research that does exist, at the present time" (p. 11). Should emergency managers have a combination of training and education in these areas, they would undoubtedly be in a better position to take on a role in recovery commensurate with the CEM approach.

This study served as exploratory research to better understand emergency managers' perceptions of their roles in disaster recovery. Future studies could be conducted with a larger, ideally systematic random, sample of county emergency managers to determine if the results from this study are consistent across the population. Within these future studies, the relationship between disaster experience, emergency management

experience, community size, and education level, should be re-examined. Additionally, it would be of value for future research to investigate the benefits, or lack thereof, from increased emergency manager involvement in recovery.

Future studies could also consider the link between academic research and the practice of disaster recovery. As was demonstrated in the literature review (see for instance Table 1), there exists literature to inform the practice of emergency management. Yet, as Rubin (2009) recently noted that there is a "…very serious lack of knowledge acquisition, utilization, and institutionalization in professional practice" (p. 2). For the CEM approach to be truly implemented, research should investigate the best mechanisms for transitioning research on disaster recovery into practice, just as more research is being conducted on each and every aspect of recovery.

Finally, this study did not examine whether the fundamental assumption underlying CEM (e.g., emergency management ought to coordinate community activities in all four functional areas) *should* be the guiding principle for the field. Rather, this study sought to understand the current role in light of the claim that the CEM approach is currently the paradigm guiding practice in the field (McEntire et al. 2002). Future research could examine whether disaster recovery should be within the purview of emergency managers at all or whether, because of the knowledge and expertise involved, resources required, or lines of community authority, coordination of disaster recovery efforts would be more appropriately situated outside of emergency management.

Conclusion

The results this exploratory study cannot be generalized so much more research needs to be conducted before any firm conclusions can be drawn. Yet, the data did not suggest that recovery is simply less of a focus than preparedness and response but rather almost no focus at all outside of paperwork. The possible explanations suggest (assuming that future research bears it out) that it will require significant change at more than one level to see the role of county emergency managers change in any widespread way and further that this change will take considerable time.

Although the charge of emergency management reflected in CEM is enormous, some have suggested that CEM itself is too narrow in focus (Britton 1999). It has been argued that emergency management also needs to be involved in broader activities related to sustainability (e.g., Mileti 1999; Schneider 2002), building community resilience (e.g., McCreight 2010), and reducing vulnerability (e.g., McEntire 2004). As society continues to grapple with the challenges associated with increasing disaster frequency and costs, and the field of emergency management professionalizes, there can be little doubt that the responsibilities of emergency managers will be revisited. As emergency management evolves as a profession, it is critical that practitioners and academics alike evaluate both emergency managements' status relative to the dominant paradigm of CEM and reflect

on the purview of the profession *vis a vis* the distributed function of emergency management. This will allow both the profession and emergency management higher education to advance in a meaningful way. Given the road ahead, it is not without reason that Stanley and Waugh (2001) remarked that emergency management "promises to become one of the most challenging occupations in government" (p. 695).

Acknowledgements

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