Redefining Disaster Preparedness: Institutional Contradictions and Praxis in Volunteer

Responder Organizing

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Short Bios

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Author Note

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Abstract

The utility of disaster preparation efforts involving volunteers is axiomatic, but a poor understanding of volunteer responder organizing may waste volunteer effort or, worse, endanger response. Effectively integrating volunteer effort during response necessitates understanding how volunteers figure into preparation, but most disaster research is concerned with best practices for response not preparation itself. Insights regarding the management of the political, rhetorical, and organizational challenges of implementing and evaluating disaster preparation are also needed. This study investigated how volunteer disaster responders—volunteers and volunteer coordinators in multiple Citizen Emergency Response Teams and Medical Reserve Corps— negotiated contradictions among and within institutional logics relevant to disaster preparation to justify their efforts. Their accounts drew on institutional logics of *preparation* and *the professional* to do so, and provided evidence of reflexivity about, mobilization of, and reconstruction of these logics—generative praxis that may enable innovation in disaster policy and preparation.

Keywords: disaster preparedness, volunteering, volunteer responders, institutional contradictions, praxis

Disaster and crisis experts generally agree that preparation is key to effective disaster response (Perry, 2004; Seeger, 2006), but most organizations do little to plan for disasters (Ulmer, 2012). Effective preparation is difficult (McConnell & Drennan, 2006), and problems of preparation recur. We tend to learn the same lessons about disasters over and over despite efforts to address them (Donahue & Tuohy, 2006). They recur in part because of the political, rhetorical, and organizational character of preparation (Ulmer, 2012); however, disaster research and practice tends to focus on generating best practices for getting disaster response right *through preparation* (Seeger, 2006), not the problems of preparation *itself* (Perry, 2004). Focusing on the problems of preparation can help address its difficulties. Understanding how preparers justify their efforts can inform decisions about disaster preparation policymaking (Donahue & Tuohy, 2006; McConnell & Drennan, 2006; Ulmer, 2012). This study does so by examining the accounts of preparedness offered by volunteer responders from multiple volunteer responder organizations. This study investigates the agency of volunteers by focusing on their legitimation of preparation and the expressions of that legitimation in volunteer responder organizing. We begin by providing a rationale for the study of the disaster preparation and volunteer responder organizing and frame the study with a communicative and institutional theory of preparedness.

The Necessity and Difficulty of Justifying Preparation Efforts

Preparation is difficult to evaluate, justify, and accomplish, because disasters are by their very nature unpredictable (Seeger, 2006). Despite the uncertainty inherent to disaster preparation, policy makers and the public need a sense that preparations are sufficient (Clarke, 1999; Jongejan, Helsloot, Beerens, & Vrijling, 2011). Evaluations of preparedness efforts must accept uncertainty to some degree (Seeger, 2006), and they will likely be incomplete (Clarke, 1999) if only because disasters are by definition overwhelming events (Boin & 't Hart, 2003).

With limited concrete criteria for evaluating preparedness before disasters, preparation is necessarily a symbolic as well as material accomplishment (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003).

Volunteer responder organizing is also an important but understudied part of disaster preparation, response, and recovery. Disaster research tends to focus on first responders, organizational structures for response, and communication strategies during or after crisis (Chen, Sharman, Rao, & Upadhyaya, 2008; Moynihan, 2008; Seeger, 2006). In practice, the utility of volunteers is generally taken-for-granted (Perry, 2004). Volunteer organizations are inserted into plans that they have little or no role in creating (McConnell & Drennan, 2006). Poor integration may mean that effort is wasted, or worse, that "well-meaning volunteers add a significant management burden to already over-taxed incident managers" (Donahue & Tuohy, 2006, p. 9).

Furthermore, research is needed that sheds light on the day-to-day work of preparation apart from response, because they involve related but different forms of organizing (Ulmer, 2012). Organizing associated with response (i.e., ad hoc, contingent, emergent organizing across disciplinary, professional, and organizational boundaries) does not typically resemble organizing that comprises the day-to-day accomplishment of preparation (Chen et al., 2008). Organizations that cooperate during response may compete for legitimacy and funding pre-crisis. During disasters, leaders face expectations to put immediate public safety first, but pre-crisis, they must justify preparedness efforts in the context of many policy priorities (Boin & 't Hart, 2003).

Given the difficulty of preparedness, existing research focusing response-efficacy tends to emphasize the material accomplishment of preparation, especially how organizations typically respond to specific categories of disasters (Ulmer, 2012). The search for the best practices of preparation is no doubt important for effective response (Seeger, 2006). However, the overriding concern for response efficacy sets a frame that may miss opportunities to provide resources for

practitioners to understand and better manage the political, rhetorical, and organizational challenges of justifying and implementing those best practices (Clarke, 1999).

A Communicative and Institutional Theory of Preparedness

We contend that the symbolic and material accomplishment of preparation depends on institutions, "constellations of established practices guided by formalized, rational beliefs that transcend particular organizations and situations" (Lammers & Barbour, 2006, p. 364). An institutional frame is useful for the study of preparation, because it brings our attention to organizational struggles for legitimacy and how established, extra-organizational ways of thinking about disasters may constrain and enable disaster policy and preparation (Lammers, 2011; Lammers & Barbour, 2006). McConnell and Drennan (2006) argued that because of the mix of high stakes, political scrutiny, costs of preparedness, limits on available resources, and inherent unpredictability, "the tendency is towards a form of institutional conservatism, which frames scenarios and how they should be prepared for, within the existing organisational [sensemaking]" (p. 65). Conceptualizing preparation as institutional may help address persistent dilemmas in preparation by generating insights about this tendency, which can make experimentation and innovation more difficult.

The study of disasters also offers a useful case for the investigation of the communicative negotiation of institutional constraint and possibility (see calls to do so in Barley, 2011; Lammers, 2011). Whereas much institutional theory has focused on explaining why organizations in particular sectors grow more similar over time (Suddaby, 2010), our focus is on (a) how individuals draw on institutional logics (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012) to argue for the legitimacy of their own conduct and (b) how communicative action may contribute to institutional change (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010; Johansson & Stohl, 2012).

According to Friedland and Alford (1991) institutional orders (e.g., democracy, family, science, and the state) each have an institutional logic, "a set of material practices and symbolic constructions—which constitute its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (p. 248). Research has demonstrated the shifting of institutions and institutional logics over time (e.g., Lounsbury, 2002), indicating the need for research on how the communicative *elaboration* of institutional logics may contribute to these shifts (Barley, 2011): Institutional logics are "symbolically grounded" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248). They are communicated and communicative (Lammers & Barbour, 2006). Lammers (2011) defined, for example, institutional messages as "carriers of institutional logics" (p. 157). Actors use institutional logics as interpretive schemes with "differing structures of control and systems of decision-making" (Scott, 2008, p. 232). Given research evidence that demonstrates the stability and taken-for-granted nature of institutions (Lammers & Barbour, 2006; Suddaby, 2010), volunteer responses' accounts of preparedness will likely reflect prevailing logics to some degree, but it is *how* they do so in the justification of their efforts that needs attention.

Indeed, the theoretical concern for institutional logics developed alongside efforts to explain how institutions may change, by recognizing that institutions are not all determining or monolithic across time and space but are fragmented, contradictory, and messy (Thornton et al., 2012). Institutional fragmentation and contradiction may provide purchase for innovation even as individuals orient their behavior to institutions (Johansson & Stohl, 2012; Kuhn, 2009). In organizing to change an institution, actors can exploit contradictions within and among institutional logics (Creed et al., 2010; Seo & Creed, 2002).

Preparation at the community level involves multiple organizations and multiple levels of social experience implicating multiple relevant institutional logics. Disaster policy dynamics at a

national level (e.g., policy and funding priorities) are connected to disaster response, which is

necessarily local (Moynihan, 2008). Because multiple relevant institutions operate at multiple

levels, no single logic governs the agency of preparers. For example, Frandsen and Johansen

(2009) studied Danish municipalities' "communicative rearmament" of their crisis management

organizations to provide the municipalities "greater financial and professional sustainability"

(pp. 102-103). The reorganization gave invigorated attention to the chief communication officers

and communication departments involved in disaster response. In studying this "rearmament,"

they documented the supplanting of an "emergency logic" by an emerging "crisis management

logic," which conceived of crisis in broader terms; however, they argued that in the end both

logics persisted. The existence of multiple relevant institutional logics and the contradictions

within and among them can provide opportunities for institutional change.

In other words, through more or less effective individual and collective action—what Seo

and Creed (2002) termed *praxis*—actors' appropriation of institutional logics may be more or

less successful and, gradually or all at once, change institutions (for a broader discussion of the

concept of praxis in communication, see Baxter, 2010; DeGooyer, 2010). According to Seo and

Creed's theorizing, individual and collective praxis is the mechanism that mediates institutional

change: Actors use institutional contradictions to construct as legitimate what might otherwise be

seen as illegitimate, and in doing so contribute to institutional change.

According to this theorizing, praxis is *generative* to the extent that it produces novel

resources for the justification or legitimation of action. Seo and Creed (2002) illustrated praxis in

examples of the diffusion of institutional change in grievance procedures, corporate

philanthropy, and work computerization, where diffusion depended on the artful adoption and

use of institutional logics. Creed, Scully, and Austin (2002) analyzed the efforts of workplace

advocates seeking legal and policy protections for workers. Through an analysis of legitimizing accounts, they demonstrated how the advocates drew on contradictory ideas regarding workplace discrimination, made arguments about the meaning of multiple relevant institutional logics, and mobilized a civil rights frame to legitimate re-readings of worker identity. Kuhn's (2009) analysis of legitimating accounts for lawyering found appeals to discursive resources grounded in differing notions of professionalism. Creed, DeJordy, Lok (2010) documented microprocesses through which gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender ministers reconstructed institutional logics of religion from within. The ministers in the study internalized institutional contradictions, reconciled these contradictions, and transcended orthodox readings of who they were by reframing their connection to the church. To summarize, *generative praxis* involves (a) *reflexivity* about institutional logics and the contradictions among and within them and (b) *mobilization* of the logics and contradictions, which (c) enables their *reconstruction* (DeGooyer, 2010). We focus on the communication through which generative praxis may be possible.

Treating disaster preparation as institutionalized recognizes the remarkable stability and constraining forces of institutions (Lammers & Barbour, 2006), but it also enables a vantage of that stability that accounts for the potential of generative praxis for institutional change (Seo & Creed, 2002; Suddaby, 2010). Focusing on faithful *and* ironic appropriations of institutional logics in volunteer responders' accounts of their preparedness can enable more effective action by revealing strategies for addressing intractable problems in disaster policy and preparedness. Given the established and constraining character of institutions, we expected to find straightforward, faithful appeals to institutional logics in volunteers' accounts of their preparedness, but also we sought evidence of potentially generative praxis marked by reflexivity, mobilization, and reconstruction. We therefore asked, *how do volunteers' accounts of their*

preparedness reflect institutional logics and institutional contradictions (RQ1) and, w*hat*

generative praxis is evidenced in volunteers' accounts of their preparedness (RQ2)?

Methods

Guided by these research questions, we immersed ourselves in the volunteer responder

milieu by interviewing volunteers in and coordinators of Community Emergency Response

Teams (CERTs) and Medical Reserve Corps (MRCs). CERT and MRC programs are volunteer

associations with a public health and safety mission coordinated locally by Citizen Corps

Councils and at the federal level by the United States Department of Homeland Security through

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to the formal CERT mission,

CERTs come together to learn how to stay safe during a disaster, to help other citizens, and

support professional responders. The teams typically cluster around, for example, a

neighborhood association, workplace, or church. CERT training involves weeks of classes

covering disaster preparedness, fire safety, first aid, light search and rescue, the incident

command system, CERT organizational structure, disaster psychology, and antiterrorism. CERT

coursework is typically organized by a federally registered CERT coordinator who might be

responsible for multiple discrete CERTs. MRCs are similar, but MRCs exist to bolster the

healthcare resources in a community in the event of an overwhelming need. In formal accounts,

MRC volunteers are healthcare professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, EMTs, veterinarians,

pharmacists, dentists). MRCs often find their locus in healthcare organizations.

Our data include in-depth interviews (*N*=29) that we recorded and transcribed (755

single-spaced pages), replacing participant names with pseudonyms that we invited them to

provide. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. To recruit, we contacted

the coordinators of registered CERTs and MRCs using publically available listings, and used

snowball sampling to identify participants. We interviewed members of CERTs (*n*=19) and

MRCs (*n*=6) and individuals with overlapping membership (*n*=4) representing four distinct

CERTs and seven distinct MRCs. We sought participants involved in multiple separate

organizations to encourage variation in accounts though our focus was not a comparison of the

CERT and MRC programs per se. The participants were all still registered with a Team or Corp,

and though their level of engagement varied, all had undergone volunteer responder training. A

few participants reported being retired (*n*=5), and one participant had retired and then returned to

work. All volunteers were unpaid, and the coordinators tended to be paid—typically for a role

that encompassed other disaster or emergency focused work as well as their coordinator role—

though not all were paid. We sought diversity in the experience, engagement, and tenure of

volunteers, because these factors are key in volunteers' sensemaking (Chinn & Barbour, 2013).

Our goal was sufficient variation (Bowen, 2008) to allow for the collection of a diversity of

volunteer accounts to be more or less reflective of volunteer experience as a whole.

The CERTs under study were organized around multiple loci including a retirement

community, a local church, a neighborhood homeowner's association, and a regional Council of

Governments. The MRCs under study were organized out of emergency management offices, a

nonprofit founded as a hub for disaster organizations (that also coordinated a CERT), and

another hybrid CERT/MRC with a particular focus on psychological intervention. Participants

included volunteers (*n*=17) and individuals in a coordinating role (*n*=12). Those in coordinating

roles included CERT and MRC leaders, emergency management personnel, and state-level and

community-level emergency management coordinators. To enhance the rigor of our analysis, we

also interviewed an expert informant multiple times to check our analysis. The expert informant

was leader of a municipal volunteer development office and a CERT coordinator who was also

familiar with the MRC program and who recruited and coordinated the training of CERTs.

We developed a semi-structured protocol that prompted participants to provide accounts of their preparedness and reflect on how well prepared they were and why. At first, we conducted interviews as a team. After each, we reflected together, adjusting how we planned to use the protocol. After reaching consensus, we conducted remaining interviews separately. We also met to discuss themes emerging in the interviews to (a) guide our decisions about potential participants and (b) assess theoretical saturation, the point at which no further theoretical development was occurring (Bowen, 2008). We twice conducted additional recruitment (i.e., for diversity in the ages and professional backgrounds of volunteers). We concluded the interview process once we observed a substantial drop in the distinctiveness of the stories and examples. As part of our interviewing, we also participated in first aid training related to ongoing CERT training and visited a disaster exercise site. Although the analysis focuses on the accounts offered during interviews, these experiences informed our interpretation of interview data.

Analysis

We conducted a thematic analysis of the interview data using an iterative process of open and focused coding. To enhance the rigor of our analysis, each author independently coded each transcript. The analysis centered on highlighting rationales or accounts of the efficacy of preparedness. We looked for evidence of appeals to institutional logics, tensions, and contradictions in participants' accounts of the legitimacy of their preparedness efforts (RQ1), and participants' strategies for coping with tensions and contradictions (RQ2). We supported the collaborative, inductive process using Atlas.ti 6.2, which allowed us to flag examples in the text during open coding, cluster those codes during meetings for focused coding, and highlight examples that we would report. During the first rounds of line-by-line, open coding, we

independently developed discrete codes (e.g., "plan writing," "volunteer counting," appeals to

"ICS"). We also drafted research memos, notes on emerging interpretations of quotations and

codes, which allowed us to track and refine ideas iteratively throughout the analysis.

In a second round of analysis, we integrated our codes and examples through discussion.

Reviewing all transcripts again together quote-by-quote, we integrated the code list creating

cross-references and clustering the codes into subcategories relevant to each research question

according to the underlying rationale in an account. These subcategories became the logics and

shifts we report in the follow sections. We discussed each example together retelling stories,

reflecting on meaning, and reconciling when interpretations differed. We revised the memos

attaching them as relevant to each research question. To enhance the rigor of our analysis, when

our interpretations differed, we sought consensus by looking for other examples that supported

one interpretation over another or that allowed us to reconcile inconsistencies. We also attempted

to preserve differences in interpretations by qualifying the reporting of the data, offering multiple

reasonable interpretations especially when the differing interpretations highlighted the operation

of a tension or institutional contradiction.

Institutionalized Preparedness in the Accounts of Volunteer Responders

The logics in participants' accounts of legitimacy emerged during the analysis processes

as we compared codes, explained our coding and clustering choices, and argued about the

fidelity of those choices. We termed the first the ***logic of the professional***. A reliance on and

references to experts and professional responders constituted an institutional logic of the

professional. Accounts relied on expert judgment—professionals with the training and

certification to bless efforts as legitimate. Participants cast their legitimacy at times in alignment

with and at times contrary to their ideas of what it meant to exhibit professional qualities or to be

a professional. At the same time, we saw another logic connected, in participants' accounts, to the idea that to be legitimate they had to train, to plan, to engage in preparedness activities regardless of their form. They had to use standardized and perfected procedures and templates. We termed this the ***logic of preparation***—a rational model of organizational effectiveness that emphasized coordination, communication, and cooperation.

Before substantiating these logics with examples, we need to make clear that we do *not* contend that recognizing these logics in participants' accounts is surprising or novel in and of itself. The logics are not novel or new, and in fact, we would not expect them to be. That these logics are *not* remarkable marks them as institutional. They *should* be familiar. For example, these logics echoed Clark's (1999) arguments about planning and preparation drawing on the expertise of disaster professionals (see also, Frandsen & Johansen, 2009; McConnell & Drennan, 2006). We describe how these logics are employed by situated actors in the next section (RQ1) and lay the groundwork for considering how they might be appropriated in novel, creative, and reconstructive ways (RQ2).

We did learn, however, that participants' appeals to these logics were complex and multilayered, and that even volunteers with relatively little formal training or experience in actual disasters were conversant in them. We focus first on accounts that emphasized the logic of the professional (i.e., professionals plan, training as certification), and then transition to accounts that emphasized the logic of preparedness (i.e., we have prepared/we are prepared, the language of preparedness, counting volunteer roles as a proxy for the health of volunteer efforts).

We separate them for clarity of reporting, but participants' use of these logics overlapped, and contradictions and tensions were clearest when both logics were relevant. A given account of preparedness might reflect both at once, or appeal to one to address a perceived problem of

legitimacy in the other. For example, training was an activity related to both logics. According to

participants, professionals train using approaches and materials certified by other professionals;

at the same time, to be prepared was to train even if the training did not rise to the standard set by

professionals. Accounts also oriented to these logics when resisting them. Throughout the

following sections, we report examples that reflected each logic, and to make clear the tensions

and contradictions, we highlight points of overlap.

Logic of the Professional

  Professionals plan. Volunteers reported involvement in planning, but the form of

planning and the degree of volunteer engagement in planning varied, including no involvement

at all, insertion in a plan without a role in creating it, and involvement in planning processes

themselves. Highlighting that variability, Sean, a CERT volunteer, told us, "Each team kind of

works on their own plan, who does what." Mary and Judy, MRC coordinators, explained that

local emergency organizations were increasingly asking them to be involved in planning. The

variability in planning involvement reflects what we already know about volunteer organizing;

generally, they tend not to be involved (McConnell & Drennan, 2006).

  Participants explained this variability in terms of the logic of the professional, which,

they argued, placed planning in the purview first and foremost of professionals. Riley, a CERT

volunteer, explained, "So, the preparation system, while there is uniformity in the preparation

process across the state and the country, how individual entities choose to integrate that is a

decision made at the county and city levels." He explained that those choices are made by the

professionals involved:

> Somebody who's been an old fire chief may perceive it one way, somebody who's retired
> military will see it yet another way, somebody who's retired law enforcement will
> perceive it yet another way. So, even though the entire process works off of pretty much
> exactly the same training documents and the same preparation materials from what is

now Homeland Security, what used to be Federal Emergency Management Agency, becomes -- and I don't know that politicized is the right word to use, so much as it is subject to the [city] manager's background, training, and experience, and his sphere of influence.

According to participants, variations in planning reflect professional differences, and professionals create the plans within which volunteers work. Dr. Ivan, a CERT volunteer, recalled, "individual CERT members have not been a part of the preparation process. [CERT members] are not familiar with the national response framework," and "when you're called for action…you plug in to some plan that somebody else has written." Dr. Ivan explained that emergency preparation professionals in his area saw volunteers as "more trouble than they're worth," and there was "resistance to including CERT." Instead, he explained, "You have to demonstrate a utility for CERT, and at that point they become part of the preparation." Professionals, they argued, were the arbiters of that utility.

Demonstrating that utility in the context of the tension between the expressed importance of professionalism *and* the perceived limitations of what is possible for volunteers was not straightforward. Outside of disasters, professionals may have little impetus to work with volunteers and more structural incentives to protect their professional domain (Boin & 't Hart, 2003). Negotiating this tension, participants argued that volunteers represented a resource to be used, but planning itself should be left to the experts. Despite engaging in training and having certifications, they were still viewed as 'volunteers' and unable to participate with the professionals in planning. This demonstrates that training and knowledge were still insufficient. Sean, a CERT volunteer, argued that "by exercising your plan, you find the weaknesses, and you learn" (the logic of preparation). However, he explained that CERTs had not necessarily engaged in those sorts of exercises, but the professional emergency management teams had. Preparation efforts should, according to this logic, integrate volunteers into response without involving them

in planning. Planning was also fraught for volunteer coordinators in part because the engagement

necessary for demonstrating value of volunteers was less likely because volunteers were not

included in the process.

       Training as certification. Volunteers engaged in a great deal of training. Training was a

(and perhaps the) key context for enacting these logics. Training offered certification, they

argued, mimicking the requirements of professional responders. Training content reflected the

logic of preparedness that we elaborate upon further below (a point of overlap), but training was

also oriented to the professional standards and professionals as arbiters of preparation

effectiveness. Training was a requirement for participation. We asked Darin, a CERT and MRC

coordinator, what might happen if a volunteer group sought to insert themselves into an ongoing

disaster. He explained, "…if they don't go through the right channels, they won't be utilized. …

People try to interject themselves into it… They will say they have the training, but we haven't

verified that." Alton, a coordinator of a hybrid MRC/CERT, agreed: "Everybody else must have

that certificate or they can't hit the field." Participants argued that professionals made judgments

about the quality of training.

       Participants expressed that training was prerequisite, and their accounts of training

oriented to the logic of the professional: The certification drew authority from the professionals

involved in training and the experts who produced it. For example, most participants were

familiar with the incident command system (ICS)—a formal, scalable structure for organizing

during disaster that was integral content in volunteer training. Jetta, a CERT and MRC

coordinator, described himself as "an ICS purist" and told the story of a colleague who organized

his daughter's wedding using the system: "I think the daughter was so happy that everybody

wasn't fighting that she thought it was a wonderful plan." Training content came from sources

seen as legitimate such as FEMA or other teams/corps where the training had worked. Rose's

account (CERT volunteer) referenced ICS as well: "We follow the Federal plan…the ICS plan

that's set up. Or…whatever they call it… Incident Command System, ICS. We follow those basic

procedures and those are in the book, and then they ask you to take additional training online."

ICS worked as a fuzzy discursive resource even when participants could not explain it in detail

and even though ICS may not fit the needs of all response scenarios (Moynihan, 2008). The

inclusion of ICS also echoed the logic of preparation discussed below by referencing systems of

organizing designed and legitimized to support preparedness (another point of interaction), but

the accounts made clear that ICS is what *professionals* use and endorse.

Also reflecting the logic of the professional, participants justified training as working, in

part because it helped volunteers understand disaster sites as professionally controlled. Eugene, a

MRC and CERT coordinator, explained "having an individual walk up that's credentialed and

trained and already knows the incident management system, already knows a little bit about what

we're doing there as a professional emergency responder is much more applicable than a

citizen…I can deploy a lot more trained people out into the field a lot faster than I can an

untrained volunteer." In arguing for the legitimacy of volunteer responders, participants oriented

to a logic of the professional. Certification through training served as a marker of

professionalism even (or perhaps especially) compared to others considered to be professional

responders. Captain, a volunteer CERT coordinator heading a team based in a retirement

community, argued that although firemen are seen as professionals:

> …firemen have no standard of training whatsoever. There is no standard of training for a
> volunteer fireman. He can join today, and he can respond to a fire tonight.…There is a
> standard of training for CERT. I can take you to fire departments and pick out fireman,
> and just ask them questions, and things that -- basic firefighting questions, they won't
> know. They know they put the wet stuff on the red stuff, and they're a fireman.
> "Yesterday, I couldn't spell 'fireman.' Today, I are one." And, that -- I mean, that's not

everybody there, but that -- that happens. But, you won't find that at CERT.

At CERTs, volunteers must be certified, and that means being trained. Yet, Captain's account

was also a frustrated rendering of the view of that training. Volunteers who engaged in routine

firefighting were proven in the disaster response community in a way that CERT and MRC

volunteers were not regardless of their training.

Participants also acknowledged criticisms of volunteer training as untested and the

trained as dispersed. In the same interview, after arguing for the importance of training, Eugene,

a CERT and MRC coordinator, complicated this view pointing to efforts to sustain training:

> We've not had an opportunity to apply the things that's learned in school. … as I saw the
> CERT teams graduate, they became dislocated and we lost some of our alumni, and I just
> had to have kind of a meeting with those that would come to re-explain to them, to
> refocus them … We've trained over 125, 130 people, and we probably had 20 people at
> the meeting.

Training has limits, but what is remarkable is that participants addressed the limitations in their

accounts of preparedness with appeals to the logic of the professional (i.e., planning as

professional, training certified by professionals, training emulating professionals). Coordinators

could mark the training of volunteers as professionally sanctioned despite its limits.

Logic of Preparation

We have prepared / we are prepared. Accounts evoking the utility of planning,

training, and exercising unto themselves reflected the logic of preparedness as well as the logic

of the professional. In fact, the overlapping accountability of training to both logics created a

principal locus of tension. Volunteer training mimicked professional training, and it was certified

and codified thanks to the involvement of professionals. At the same time, training could be

justified as an end to itself, because to train was to be prepared. Volunteers train, because, they

argued, training *is* preparedness. Relatedly, participants explained that as volunteers they were

not very involved in creating plans, but they also made clear that they were part of a plan. Volunteers' accounts referenced training and their role in plans to demonstrate their legitimacy even if those plans were not their own. Sean, a CERT volunteer, explained, "Bad preparation is not having a plan, and preparation, conversely, is not only having a plan, but going through scenarios, and exercising your plan, training on your plan."

Volunteers' accounts of planning referenced its necessity and value but also acknowledged its limits, which underscored a contradiction between the logics: They planned to be professional, yet they could not plan as professionals. Alton, coordinator of a hybrid MRC/CERT, "The plan is written as a jumping off point. Because, in an emergency, what you're really doing is you're taking that chaos of that emergency and you're trying to make some order out of it. So, you can't write all contingencies for that." Reflecting on their involvement in H1N1, Chip, a MRC coordinator, explained "It's really made us look at things … when the big one does hit, you know, we'd better be better prepared for it than we were for this." Instead, he added, "Right now, it's more a, you know, kind of a general, 'volunteers will be used for blank, as available'…" Having to have the plan regardless of fidelity with practice reflected the idea that to be prepared is to have a plan.

The logic of preparedness emphasized size and exhaustiveness. The sheer availability of training resources was overwhelming irrespective of its quality and utility. Nelson, a CERT volunteer explained, "Oh, I have thousands of hours of training. You know, like some of these classes are 40-hour classes. 2, 3, 4, 5 days, you know, so I really have no idea how many hours I've put into it." Rachel, a CERT and MRC coordinator, estimated that there were over 3,000 relevant courses online on top of the training that MRCs and CERTs complete as part of their initial face-to-face training. Participants argued for more training and cross-training (e.g., one

MRC engaged in extra training to augment hospital staff, staff special needs clinics, assist

disaster medical assistance teams and disaster mortuary operational response teams, support the

administration of the strategic national stockpile, and be embedded within nearby CERTs).

As accounts acknowledged the limits of training, they construed it as nonetheless

effective. Consider the following exchange between Brenda and Elizabeth, CERT volunteers:

> Interviewer: So, it sounds like the process is informal. It's not something like a manual is handed to you?
> Brenda: No.
> Elizabeth: No, you have to remember it all. We all have those little bitty books that they gave us in training that we keep in our backpacks; this is something we need to refer to in case there is an injury that you don't really know how to handle or you have never encountered before, or you don't remember the training, then you flip through the pages of this book. And that is probably what I would be doing. I would be flipping. [laughing] But yes, it seems to me like it would be basic instinct at that time, for me it would.
> Brenda: Yes, it would.

Their account highlights a contradiction: They joked about flipping through their reference, but

they also see themselves as needing to remember it all and as guided by training-honed instinct.

Speaking of the inherent limitations of preparedness, coordinators referenced the

prospective and paradoxical character of preparation explicitly. Jetta, a CERT and MRC

coordinator, explained: "Enough is a difficult word. I think it's - do I think it's enough? If all we

ever did was exercise, it would not be enough." Such accounts might indicate that complete

preparedness, and thus the legitimation of preparedness, is impossible or at least very difficult.

Nonetheless, participants did not pass on the question. They were willing to provide evaluations

in their accounts. They argued that their preparations were effective, because they had prepared.

Using the language of preparedness. Volunteers also used a language of preparedness.

They used terms from emergency management such as "hazard mitigation," "mitigation tactics,"

"ICS," and "after action reviews." Participants' accounts not only repeated specific vocabulary,

they also referenced arguments about communication, coordination, and cooperation common in

disaster preparation discourse (Clarke, 1999). Note how Darin, a CERT and MRC coordinator, praised his group: "We had a total of 13 agencies that coordinated together on that response, and they all worked very well together," and said of his preparation, "…good preparation is communication." Linda, a CERT volunteer, agreed, "I would probably say communication is definitely a big thing. Having your, I think it is called intra-jurisdictional preparation between different agencies, making sure that coordinated effort is there." Dr. Ivan, a CERT volunteer, explained of CERT, "It's provided a means of community coordination and interest in emergency response and Homeland Security…it's provided a community interaction and community support that I think maybe the emergency managers don't give full credit to." The practical exigencies of preparedness may not alone explain the recurrence of specific jargon and arguments about the ideals of preparedness.

Using legitimate terms also allowed coordinators to resist the logic of the professional and the implication that volunteers were not really very helpful, highlighting another overlap between these two logics. In their accounts, CERT and to a lesser degree MRC volunteers' ability was under challenge, and the language of preparedness countered this: Riley, a CERT volunteer, explained, "The primary responders, fire department in particular, would be able to walk into our neighborhood, and we'd be able to at least give them, based upon NIMS, an organized report with some standard." This reflected too an orientation to the logic of the professional, but the use of the legitimate language of preparedness protected them from judgments of illegitimacy by professionals.

Counting volunteers. Monitoring and measuring the health of volunteer programs was a principal task of coordinators and a strategy for indicating readiness consistent with the logic of preparedness. Official accounts of MRCs and CERTs focused on counting the number of

volunteers. Rachel, a CERT and MRC coordinator, explained, "if you want to know how robust

the unit is look at how many volunteers we have. Because that's the true measure, you know, is

if they have a lot of volunteers." Yet, participants were aware of the gaming needed and expected

in these numbers. Eugene, a CERT and MRC coordinator, explained, "I have one friend of mine

that runs a program here close-by that he says he has 3,000 members…he really only has around

200, but you multiply that times the disciplines he's doing, and he's got 3,000." Jetta, another

CERT and MRC coordinator, argued that in practice, however, the same core group shows up

around any particular issue, even using shorthand to describe it "STP… Same Twenty People."

The coordinators did "coordinator math" to protect this committed core of volunteers. However,

according to participants, the impulse to count the number of volunteers to measure the

robustness of volunteer engagement reflects the logic of preparedness.

To summarize the analysis thus far, participants' accounts have surfaced contradictions

and tensions between the logics of the professional and preparation: (1) Training was designed to

reflect professionally adjudicated standards, but training did not (and perhaps could not) make

volunteers professionals. (2) Preparation was by nature limited, but those limitations were

obviated under the logic of preparation: To prepare was to be prepared. (3) The use of the

language of preparedness allowed volunteers to mark their preparedness as legitimate and protect

their efforts from perceptions of illegitimacy under the logic of the professional. (4) Teams and

corps were measured by roster counts, but it was really a committed core that did the work.

Participants' accounts oriented to the logics of the professional and preparedness to negotiate

these tensions and contradictions, and, as we argue next, their accounts also revealed moments of

reflexivity, mobilization, and reconstruction—generative praxis.

Praxis in the Accounts of Volunteer Responders

We turn now to examples that highlight the reconstruction of preparedness efforts in light of these logics, contradictions, and, perhaps by extension, generative praxis. We focus on four shifts in the logics emergent in the data. Negotiating the tensions and contradictions in arguing for the legitimacy of their preparedness generated these shifts, which may have created space for the reconstruction of the logics. Such reconstructions may enable more effective preparation *and* the implementation of more effective preparation in actual organizations.

Shift 1. Planning as Enabling Professional Response *and* Volunteer Engagement

Accounts of planning that demonstrated a generative praxis shifted the meaning of planning. They shifted away from planning just for the sake of professional response (the logic of the professional) toward planning as an opportunity for sizable and meaningful volunteer engagement as well. Darin, a CERT and MRC coordinator, explained the formal preparation process undertaken by his team members: "they take the plan, dissect it, and make their ideas and changes…we get back together and go through the process as to what we say." Such involvement was necessary, according to Darin, because volunteers were not like government officials or employees. This participative process allowed his volunteers to contribute their expertise about emergency response from a volunteer perspective, but also motivated them to stay involved. The plan they created was maintained and distributed electronically. Darin emphasized that good preparation involves the active engagement of the planners so that diverse interests may be integrated and "the individuals that are working on it understand and know what needs to be done." CERT volunteers could recommend needed changes to officers. He explained, "the biggest benefit in preparation is the process…and when it comes to the emergency you are not going to have time to go through a 500-page document."

Framing planning as a way to engage volunteers recast the need for involvement and

helped address the tensions between the need for professionalism and impossibility of being

professionals. Reflexivity and a willingness to work beyond a dogmatic focus on response-

efficacy alone accompanied this shift. Under the rubric of engagement, the scope and practice of

planning changed. Alton, a coordinator of a hybrid MRC/CERT, put it well: "A plan is never

complete. A plan is not a product, it's a process." These accounts offered evidence of praxis as

they explicitly acknowledged the tension and shifted the function of planning to engagement

over response efficacy.

Shift 2. Training as Credentialing *and* Empowering/Community Building

Shifting the meaning of training as only about para-professional credentialing (the logic

of the professional) reflected generative praxis as well. Brenda and Elizabeth's accounts of their

training, reported earlier, were typical. They had not participated in training in some time. They

did not remember specific details about training and imagined needing to consult their manuals

in the field. They were getting emails from the coordinator, but had lost track of them or had

stopped receiving them. Elizabeth explained:

> Yes, like I said, the training that we got I felt very ready and just empowered with the
> knowledge I was given to be able to help someone and actually not make their situation
> worse by killing them. "Okay, I'm trained here; you are bleeding, I know what to do. If
> you start gushing out then I am in trouble." But with the training that we got I felt really,
> really prepared.

Brenda and Elizabeth's story offered a more complicated version of volunteer training. Official

accounts of this training envisioned citizen-armies of well-trained responders. On the ground the

experience of volunteers was messier. However, making sense of their experience was not as

simple as saying that their training had not really prepared them (a failure per the logic of

preparation). The training empowered them in some ways but not as official accounts of CERTs

might have imagined. For example, Darin, a CERT and MRC coordinator, argued that their

efforts built community, which also enabled preparedness: "…it can make their neighborhoods prepared. … But more importantly…it builds community…you get people from different walks of life that are working together on a common problem."

Though the sanctioned purpose of training was about knowledge (logic of preparation) and certification (logic of the professional) needed for response, participants articulated value beyond official definitions, redefining the legitimacy criteria of these logics and reconciling the tension between inevitability of preparing and the limitations of preparing. Rachel, a CERT and MRC coordinator, argued, "For me a disaster is that if my dad has a heart attack and nobody is around that knows CPR. You know, that spells disaster for me." Donut, a CERT volunteer, agreed: "[I]f you take the CERT training and only use it to keep family readiness that's okay…if you don't come to meetings, you don't participate, at least you have the knowledge in your community."

Training was at once not useful in some ways imagined by official accounts, but nonetheless valuable for participants. Participants' accounts demonstrated a generative praxis by shifting the rationale for training to include empowerment as well as certification. For example, David a CERT volunteer, proposed an alternate model to the standardized training, holding that instead, tailored training experiences would not only empower volunteers, but facilitate greater engagement: "send out 5 different modules. And, you know, if I have more interest in …this one… allow us to kind of pursue and create our own path."

Shift 3. Counting Volunteers *and* Reconstructing Who Counts

As they counted volunteers per the logic of preparedness, coordinators and volunteers also (re)constructed who counted to resist the logic. They negotiated volunteer membership to circumvent official rules. Consider Riley's powerful story of his "greatest success" in CERT:

> There are some very strict rules about who you can teach. You're not supposed to teach anybody under about eight, and people who have infirmities. … he wasn't strong enough to do CPR. So, mom could physically do the CPR, he couldn't. She couldn't remember

the steps, son had it locked. Never saw anything so funny in your life. [laughs] … Dad
had a heart attack, so they needed to learn CPR … So, as they were practicing, here's the
six year old shouting to mom, "shake and shout!" She'd be doing her thing. "Open the
airway!" So, he had the steps, he'd tell her, and she'd be doing it, so it was -- just that
whole process of a great team and setting them up for success.

Working around the rules for membership fit the makeup of the CERTs and MRCs to the

volunteers who showed up, producing a different sort of preparedness.

Offering an example of the interactions among logics, control of membership could draw

on the logic of the professional to lend legitimacy not found under the logic of preparation nor

under a strict reading of the logic of the professional as about professional responders. As a

matter of fact, official rules surrounding members in MRCs had recently expanded to include not

just healthcare professionals but others in a support capacity. Still, the conception of MRCs as

limited to healthcare professionals (i.e., anyone licensed by the state) persisted, and some MRCs

still limited who could join. MRC volunteers *were* professionals by virtue of their medical

backgrounds. National-level MRC organizers reinforced this frame even as they changed the

policy. They tracked the participation of healthcare professionals specifically.

Coordinators adjusted membership based on availability of volunteers in the community,

creating local iterations of the organization that differed from the national conception. For

example, Alton coordinated a hybrid MRC/CERT unit with a focus on mental health: "We see

ourselves as being kind of a specialty. It's where the interest lies in the community…" Jetta,

coordinator of CERTs and MRCs, argued that MRCs actually required more "non-medical

people." He explained that whereas some MRCs are "strictly medical," he needed, "someone to

sweep too…MRC is managed on the local level, you make it what you want and what you need"

(though notice too an implicit account of the typical volunteer as "someone who can sweep").

Initially the program was conceived as a way to track healthcare professionals who could

volunteer during a disaster. This view shifted in part due to insights from on-the-ground MRC

organizers. The logic of the professional (i.e., MRCs are for healthcare professionals) persisted,

but it was supplanted by some by reconceiving who could count as a member.

Shift 4. Reconstructing Preparedness Activities

Describing the range and frequency of activities engaged in by the groups also served as

ways to demonstrate legitimacy, addressing the tension between the need to test their training

and the lack of opportunities to do so. These activities may not have been legitimate under the

logic of the professional, and participants framed diverse activities as preparedness not just those

activities that had a clear focus on disaster readiness per the logic of preparation. The rarity of

disasters made keeping a group of volunteers together more difficult. Victor, a CERT volunteer,

argued that "CERT locally has become different than the original FEMA intention" meaning that

the particular iterations of CERT depend on "the local community and culture, and the political

system, acceptance by the formal responders, and their own makeup." For Victor's CERT and

others, team activities, by necessity, expanded beyond training to keep the teams active. The

localized community engagement helped manage the tension between the goals of training and

the lived experience of the disaster volunteer who typically did not have to deal with disasters.

Reframing allowed these groups to serve the needs of the local community. Consider this

incomplete list of the good works of the groups we investigated: They provided logistical support

during H1N1 response, passed out water during evacuation, created a shelter for those displaced

during a hostage situation, provided after-fire care, cleaned up after disasters, acted as victims

during disaster training, organized a CERT-sponsored rodeo, provided babysitter training,

organized a child seat inspection, held funding drives, engaged in search and rescue during a

missing persons case, organized a children's health fair, fielded calls at an emergency operations

center, staffed the first-aid tent at a special Olympics event, and directed traffic at a parade.

Many of these examples fit neatly the missions of preparedness. Others better fit the sort of community-centered work that coordinators used to keep people engaged in lieu of a disaster or yet another training exercise. Still, all of them were nonetheless framed as preparedness. The creation of localized preparedness activities was the part of their effort to legitimize their preparedness and demonstrate that, by virtue of accomplishing these activities, they were legitimately prepared. Dr. Ivan, a CERT volunteer, described a "gap between national level expectation and the local area capability." He explained efforts to act despite the gap: "Now, that's where our guys have found a very logical utility in the business of working with shelters…the bottom line is this is a matter of finding the utility for CERT." Reconceiving activities as about CERT and MRC preparedness allowed them to escape a contradiction between the ideas that they could not be professionals because they could not work with them, and they could not work with them because they were not professionals. The reconceptualization created opportunities for volunteers to work with professionals and to demonstrate their utility.

Discussion

The major objectives of this study center on understanding individual and collective praxis in the context of institutional constraint and change. We have argued that participants negotiated the tensions and contradictions in and among institutional logics relevant to preparation in their arguments for the legitimacy of their efforts. In doing so, they reconstructed the logics and shifted the meanings of legitimate preparation and volunteer organizing. Inasmuch as these shifts offer evidence of generative praxis, they have practical value: They demonstrate the possibility of change even when change has proven difficult.

The logics of the professional and preparedness are not inherently dysfunctional though

they may constrain novel preparation and response strategies (McConnell & Drennan, 2006).

Exercising, planning, and training *are* important in disaster response and recovery, and

professional judgment *is* invaluable before, during, and after disasters. The efficacy of the logics

compounds what makes them problematic: (a) engaging in practice inconsistent with them is

unconsidered, and (b) challenging them as ineffective in particular situations is taboo (Clarke,

1999; Jongejan et al., 2011). Being taken-for-granted shields them from scrutiny (Lammers,

2011). The examples of praxis above demonstrate the reflexivity, mobilization, and

reconstruction needed for change under institutional constraint—the sort of change needed to

address recurring difficulties in preparation.

These findings at once indicated promising strategies for improving preparedness while

confirming its contradictory and institutional character. They also confirmed the formation of

institutional contradictions through the multiplicity and interaction of institutional logics

(Johansson & Stohl, 2012; Seo & Creed, 2002)—participants described the limitations of their

planning and training even as they argued that they would be ready for "the big one."

Findings evidenced generative praxis through participants' reframing of planning and

training, negotiating which members counted, and construing diverse activities as preparation.

Such praxis depends on the skill and creativity with which actors can recognize and mobilize the

contradictions and may be more likely as institutional contradictions increase (Seo & Creed,

2002). This study shows that such praxis was a skillful, communicative accomplishment.

Reframing planning as a form of volunteer engagement brought to the fore different criteria for

evaluating it. Planning as volunteer engagement would necessarily require their involvement. It

would be effective when it drew on their input, not when it translated into knowledge of plans

per se. Likewise, training as volunteer empowerment made the knowledge they gained less

important compared to building community and conveying the sense that they could be careful and effective citizen responders. Counting volunteers and showing active teams/corps allowed volunteers to demonstrate the efficacy of their efforts. Constructions of who counted as a member challenged the boundary between professional and amateur (Ganesh & McAllum, 2012). The next sections explore insights from these findings and theoretical implications for the study of communication as institutional and for disaster preparedness.

      Reflexivity and praxis. Generative praxis involves reflexivity (DeGooyer, 2010; Seo & Creed, 2002), and the findings here raise questions about the nature of that reflexivity. Studies of the negotiation of organizational tensions often make awareness a principal recommendation (e.g., Barge, Lee, Maddux, & Townsend, 2008; Stoltzfus, Stohl, & Seibold, 2011) or a prerequisite for advocacy and change (Creed et al., 2010). The examples given in prior studies of generative praxis featured purposeful actors engaged in careful advocacy for change (e.g., Creed et al., 2002). Although, like past studies, our findings also evidenced generative praxis, our findings are different: The volunteers and coordinators were not for the most part purposely reimagining the logics for the sake of changing them. Participants did not typically make the existence of contradictions explicit in their accounts. They were drawing upon these logics selectively for purposes of legitimation on a local level. Our findings suggest that all individuals may not have to act with awareness if others do. Reflexivity may be a collective accomplishment. Participants were in some cases aware (e.g., joking about them, working around them). For example, Jetta's (a CERT and MRC coordinator) comment, "Enough is a difficult word…" reflected such awareness. His insight about "enough training" may not need to be shared by all to precipitate change. Future research should consider how *collective reflexivity* may enable generative praxis.

Embedded praxis. Praxis has been theorized as including "actors' multilateral or collective action to reconstruct the existing social arrangements and themselves" (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 230), but the degree to which the praxis we observed would translate into collective action (or new institutional logics) was not always clear. Reconstructed frames for planning, training, and evaluating preparedness (i.e., the shifts) did circulate. Multiple participants' accounts from multiple organizations mentioned the need to redefine preparation and who counted as a responder, but it was not clear in the scope of these data if reconstructions consistent with a prevailing institutional logic would contribute to macro change.

Work examining tensions in organizing has tended to find that strategies that integrate and transcend competing ideals are the most enabling, but that may not always be true (Baxter, 2010; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Stoltzfus et al., 2011). In this case, "splitting" (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 389) or avoidant strategies for negotiating the tensions proved useful. Accounts at times reframed preparation efforts as legitimately useful without challenging the logics of preparedness or the professional. For example, the reframing of training was nonetheless construed as *consistent* with the logic of preparedness. Splitting or avoiding strategies may work, but they may also undermine institutional change, because they do not challenge existing logics for what is and is not legitimate (Creed et al., 2010). Research should consider how praxis embedded in prevailing institutional logics may enable and limit its promise for institutional change without assuming that avoidant strategies will be necessarily maladaptive.

Praxis and gradual change. The degree to which "institutional arrangements are deeply embedded and tightly coupled…conditions two possible ways in which the reflective shift in collective consciousness may unfold" (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 234): a gradual reshaping or a revolutionary disruption. Gradual reshaping is less likely if institutional practices are adopted

with limited reflection, which is often the case in preparation. Without disaster to motivate

change, gradual change may not be likely. Preparers' most meaningful contact with institutional

contradictions may occur during actual disasters (McConnell & Drennan, 2006). However,

during and after disasters, they may be inoculated against revolutionary disruptions, *because* they

surface during the cacophony and upheaval of disasters (Boin & 't Hart, 2003). Future research,

especially in the disaster and crisis communication domain, should consider potential

interactions between disaster circumstances and the form of institutional change (if any).

The findings here are promising for they indicated that uneven, gradual change may be

possible through local praxis despite the taken-for-granted efficacy of the logics of preparation

and the professional. For example, even raising the idea that a community might forego some

sorts of preparedness is taboo, but in these data, participants reconstructed what could count as

preparedness instead of just engaging in more training activities. A blindness to existence of

contradictions altogether may contribute to the intractability of problems in disaster preparedness

(Boin & 't Hart, 2003; McConnell & Drennan, 2006); accepting and working around that

intractability allowed actors praxis even if it was only local: They did serve their communities.

Coordinators may count their volunteers in the hundreds or thousands, but the contributions

possible from small groups of committed volunteers organized, engaged, and empowered by

reflexive coordinators was also inspiring. Integrating volunteer organizations into response may

face resistance, but volunteers may have nonetheless supported disaster response indirectly by

building community.

Practical Applications

Building on the theoretical contribution that local praxis works in part by offering locally

functional responses to institutional constraints, we turn now to the practical applications of these

shifts. First, we encourage practitioners to consider sharing strategies for local practice that work, highlighting those that contradict prevailing institutional logics. Reflexivity about the tensions among all volunteers may not be necessary, but in sharing practices among CERTs and MRCs, coordinators and volunteers could make explicit the ways that their strategies undermine the dysfunctional aspects of disaster policy. Planning conversations could include dialogue about the operational definitions of preparedness. Those dialogues could challenge what plans and training materials mean in practice when evoking the institutional logics of the professional and preparedness. Treating planning as engagement, seeing training as empowerment, counting on the same twenty every time, and reconsidering preparedness exercises, all offer alternative frames. At the same time, making explicit the ways that such alternatives challenge preparedness dogma may help crystalize local, functional workarounds into collective action and institutional change.

Second, CERTs and MRCs could reframe volunteer organizing as a site for experimentation. Coordinators could underscore the value of volunteer organizing as creating opportunities for experimenting with different approaches to preparedness. Their praxis could include experimentation—a playful, uncomfortable substitution of logics (DeGooyer, 2010). The cellular nature of CERTs and MRCs may lend well to experimentation. Coordinators could challenge assumptions that all forms of planning and training are universally functional (Jongejan et al., 2011). That might involve exploring arguments for the special utility of a core of volunteers and training tailored to the needs of that core group. Experimentation was evident in Alton's (coordinator) CERT's psychosocial-health-focused unit. David's (CERT volunteer) suggestion of a shift towards using modules of interest for volunteers would enable more diversity of participation. While existing logics may obscure useful forms of action, the shifts

documented here could point to practice that is more or less effective contingent on particular

situations and disasters. This insight is key, because disasters are not uniform. Experimentation

could demonstrate the utility of alternatives to established wisdom on a small scale, and

challenge the wisdom of searching for the one right way to prepare (Ulmer, 2012).

Third, volunteer organizations could look for opportunities to give volunteers direct

experience with professionals through, for example, redefined preparedness activities. Accounts

that CERT/MRCs were trained and thus legitimate seemed not as successful as accounts that

they were helpful in specific moments. Participants pointed to specific instances where they

organized large numbers of spontaneous volunteers during other events. Without the dangers of a

disaster looming, volunteers working in leadership roles along side professionals could create the

contact needed to establish their legitimacy.

Limitations and Caveats

No single study can fathom the full complexity of volunteer responders' role in

preparedness. We highlight here important caveats to these findings. First, the reading of the

emergent logics as *preparedness* and *the professional* reflected the data, but alternative readings

are possible. We retained these logics to focus attention on the accounts that exhibited

recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness in participants' justifications. Second, we included the

accounts of volunteers *and* coordinators in this analysis. The results use this categorization to

give a sense of the data, but the bifurcation should not obscure the complex fluidity of

participation in volunteer responder organizing. Some in coordinating roles were also volunteers

(e.g., in their own CERT or MRC), and volunteers engaged in coordinating to varying degrees

even if they never held a formal coordinating role. The distinction between coordinators and

volunteers should not be overstated. Third, the scope of this study does not encompass the full

range of the circulation of institutional logics in the context of preparedness even though the appearance of institutional logics in the accounts of volunteers and coordinators with differing levels of involvement and responsibility reflected the multilevel suffusion of institutional logics. Likewise, the inclusion in the study of (a) multiple volunteer responder organizations of (b) two different kinds (CERTs and MRCs) and (c) the perspectives of volunteers and coordinators working at differing levels provided the richness necessary for at least some insight about volunteer responder organizing as institutional. Finally, although we included multiple volunteer responder organizations, we did not interview everyone involved in each team or corps, and we interviewed more individuals familiar with CERTs than MRCs, which limits the claims possible (e.g., comparing these organizations or occupational differences among participants). However, the analysis does nonetheless contribute insights useful for understanding generative praxis in the context of multiple institutional logics, practical ideas for implementing best practices in preparedness efforts, and an exemplar of the study of preparation itself apart from response.

Conclusion

As Dr. Ivan, a CERT volunteer, argued, a mismatch exists at times between the national vision for these programs and the reality at a local level, but to call this dysfunctional is too simple. Volunteers were ready for the small disasters of day-to-day life. They were more prepared in the sense that they had connected people in a community that might otherwise not be. Recall the story of the mom-son CPR team: Training (e.g., learning CPR, first aid, search and rescue) may fade, yet the connections made, the feeling of empowerment, the engagement and community accomplishments, and the support for related programs persist.

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