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Blaikie, P., T. Cannon, I. Davis, and B. Wisner. 1994. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 in *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters*. London: Routledge.

These chapters propose two models for understanding and evaluating risk and vulnerability. Chapter 2 discusses the Pressure-and-Release (PAR) model, which divides disaster causes into hazards and vulnerabilities. Hazards are the geophysical events commonly classified “disasters”: hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, etc. Vulnerability is broken down into root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions, each progressing from the previous. For example, the root cause of a lack of access to jobs may lead to increased dynamic pressure due to increased urbanization, which results in unsafe living conditions. The author highlights population growth and rural migration as two of the key factors that have increased vulnerability over the past few decades.

Chapter 3 discusses the Access model of disaster and vulnerability analysis, which improves on PAR by not arbitrarily separating the hazards from the factors that influence vulnerability. The Access model identifies vulnerability in terms of a population’s access to resources that can help reduce or mitigate the effect of a disaster. Of specific importance is the observation that the very poor have less items of monetary value to lose in a disaster, but their ability to recover is severely limited by a subsistence lifestyle.

As an engineer, I tend to like things that can be modeled. However, when looking at vulnerability models, I’m always skeptical that they are simply too much of an abstraction to be useful in a real sense, mostly because of the unpredictability of the hazard occurrence. A population can be very vulnerable, but there is still no way to determine what will happen in the next 20 years – only what COULD happen.

Morrow, Betty Hearn. 1997. “Stretching the Bonds: The Families of Andrew.” In W. G. Peacock, B. H. Morrow, and J. Gladwin (Eds.) *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters* (pp. 14-170). London: Routledge.

This article uses anecdotal evidence and interview responses to convey the negative effect that hurricanes can have on family structures, both immediately and after several months. As can be expected, there were immediate increases in stress, alcoholism, and depression. However, over time, there was a prolonged increase in these symptoms among working class homeowners who were marginalized by the recovery process. There were also difficulties in recovery due to a number of non-traditional family structures in the Miami area.

I enjoyed this article because the focus on family is something that many of the more high-level articles have glossed over. Most disaster effect and response occurs at the household level, and the author’s treatment conveyed that well. I was also surprised by FEMA’s delayed responses to non-traditional families, but can understand it since most policy makers come from traditional nuclear families.

Tierney, K., M. Lindell, and R. Perry. 2001. Chapter 5 in *Facing the Unexpected: Disaster Preparedness and Response in the United States*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press.

This chapter analyzes some factors that affect a community's preparedness towards disasters, including perception of risk, experience with similar disasters, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and the nature of the disaster. Like many of the other papers we have read, this chapter emphasizes that those groups traditionally marginalized by society, including women, ethnic minorities, the poor, and the elderly, are often most affected by disasters.

While this piece was well written, I don't feel that it presented much that has not been revealed in previous readings. Besides the reinforcement of previously visited themes and the fact that the author is the speaker this week, I'm not sure why this chapter was included.