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ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE ABANDONMENT IN
DISASTERS: A NEED FOR EMPIRICAL REORIENTATION

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More than a few observers of disaster research have charged that the field has developed in theoretical isolation from general sociology. Basically, they charge that students of disasters have not utilized established sociological concepts in their analyses and that the potentially beneficial cross polination that could occur between the subfield and the broader discipline has not materialized. For example, in a massive review of the field of disaster research, Mileti, Drabek and Haas conclude with this observation. "Existing studies on behavior in disaster have been conducted... as if no theory existed in the social sciences to provide a basis for the direction of inquiry... The continued heavy reliance on this method, once development of the area has been established to the extent of almost total exclusion of established theory, has been the disaster of disaster research." (1975:146)

It is possible to take strong umbrage with this statement. (A point realized by Mileti, Drabek and Haas who note that there are some exceptions to this charge.) The earliest codification efforts tried to link disaster studies to basic sociological and social psychological concepts and theories. (c.f. Fritz, 191). Barton (1969) attempted to link the field to issues at the individual and community level through traditional concepts. Dynes (1974) approached the analysis of disaster behavior at the organizational level. Others have utilized a variety of standard sociological paradigms in examining a diversity of topics,

including organizations (Kreps, 1978), communities (Wenger, 1978), emergent groups (Quarantelli, 1985), collective behavior (Perry, 1982) and social solidarity (Erickson, 1976). In fact, Kreps (1985) has recently argued that disasters represent the finest natural setting for studying such essential sociological processes as the emergence of social organization and the elaboration of a division of labor.

One traditional issue inherent in disaster studies, however, illustrates better than any other that Milette, Drabek and Haas are guilty of overstatement. Specifically, we are referring to the issue of the presence or absence of role conflict during the emergency period of disasters. Any student of society would be hard pressed to find a more traditional and established concept in sociology than that of "role." (Linton, 1936) Furthermore, an understanding of role conflict is so standard that it is difficult to find an introductory textbook that does not address the concept. As we shall see, students of disaster have also been concerned with the analysis of roles and role conflict for almost thirty years.

Role conflict, its absence and presence in disaster situations, has received the most extensive treatment. There has been considerable disagreement as to whether or not role conflict actually occurs. As will be shown, part of the problem is conceptual. There is a lack of agreement about what constitutes role conflict. Furthermore, it will

be noted that resolving this issue is central to understanding the response of both social systems and individuals to disasters. For the purposes of this discussion (unless otherwise noted) role conflict will be defined as "incompatibility between two or more roles that an individual is expected to perform in a given situation." (Theodorsen and Theodorsen, 1969:354)

This issue has both theoretical and policy importance. Theoretically, this review of the literature indicates that the concept of role conflict is hazy and blurred. Different investigators, utilizing different concepts with alternative attribute spaces, reach conflicting conclusions; but, they discuss the issue as "role conflict."

The policy implications of this issue are equally important. Effective preparation and planning for disaster response must be based upon accurate understanding of how individuals respond to disaster (Dynes, Quarantelli and Kreps, 1972). If people experience role conflict -- in particular conflict between the role expectations of their emergency roles and those of their family roles -- effective organizational response may be hindered. This single issue, in fact, has become a point of contention among advocates and opponents of nuclear power facilities in the United States. For example, the possible existence of role conflict was a central point of controversy in the hearings regarding the opening of the Shorham nuclear facility in Long Island. Literally, millions of dollars and the

possible loss of life ride in the balance of a resolution of this issue.

Simply put, this paper will examine the literature on role conflict and disasters. It will suggest new directions for future research. The suggestion will be made that research should turn its attention from the issue of whether or not role conflict exists during disaster to how people cope with it and attempt to alleviate it. In other words, what mechanisms do individuals employ to resolve role conflict and are these mechanisms similar to those employed by people during normal times.

Role Structure and Role Conflict In Disaster

For the purposes of discussing the concept of role, a structural perspective is helpful. Obviously, conflict is endemic in all social systems. Differences in social power, access to resources, and vested interests are among the factors that produce conflict and dissensus. However, for our purposes, it is also valuable to examine the structural aspects of the system. Under normal conditions, societies and smaller systems can be visualized as complex structures of roles and rather elaborately developed role sets. Viewing roles as patterns of behavior structured around certain rights and duties and associated with particular status positions within groups or social situation (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969) allows for an understanding of the behavior of the role incumbents. Role sets, or a complex of roles centering around a particular

social status, are interrelated (Merton, 1957). Due in part to this division of labor daily life is somewhat predictable and patterned. For individuals who occupy various roles, expectations for their behavior are structured within the system. Under normal circumstances the system operates relatively smoothly, allowing for the above mentioned levels of conflict and a certain number of unexpected events.

Individuals, of course, occupy multiple roles. For the purposes of this discussion, one important role is that of citizen. The role of citizen requires participatory and altruistic behavior on the part of the encumbent. The behavior of the individual in the citizenship role is constrained by certain prescribed bounds. These limits are based on law and community loyalty. As long as the rules and norms supporting this typical citizenship role are effective, interrelated and interdependent behavior results from mutually understood expectations and demands. Other important roles involve those of occupational status and family status.

During normal conditions it is possible for an individual to be simultaneously occupying two or more roles. Furthermore, these roles may make contradictory demands upon the person's behavior. For example, an accountant who must take her work home from the office often is faced with simultaneously trying to meet the expectations of both occupational and family roles. Role conflict reflects this type of situation of contradictory demands. While role

conflict is a normal element of daily life, its existence is ameliorated somewhat by adequate time, resources and patterned mechanisms for dealing with it, such as compartmentalism, role abandonment and the development of a hierarchy of priorities.

Students of disaster studies attempt to examine the consequences of a disruption in this system for communities struck by natural and technological disaster agents. They have observed that in the case of a disaster impinging upon this system, often great alterations need to be made to deal with this often unexpected phenomenon and its effects. (Dynes, 1974) Fritz, for example, defines disasters as "an event, concentrated in time and space, in which a society, undergoes severe danger and incurs such losses to its members and physical appurtenances that the social structure is disrupted and the fulfillment of all or some of the essential functions of the society is prevented. (1962:655)

An important element of this disruption and overburdening of the community involves the concept of collective stress. Collective stress refers to the condition which develops when the needs of the community exceed the resources and capabilities of the community to respond. As a result of an event such as a natural disaster, there is a change in the type and amount of "inputs" into the community. (Barton, 1969) Not only is it likely that inputs or demands upon the community will increase, but its ability to produce "outputs" may also have

been lowered. Therefore, it is not the event itself which causes stress, but rather changes in the input-output relationships. (Perry and Lindell, 1978)

The amount of collective stress which develops in a community can vary depending on the presence or absence of certain variables. Table 1 summarizes the relationships of these variables and collective stress.

Table 1: Propositions

1. The greater the amount of collective stress, the greater the amount of role conflict.

2. The greater the level of role ambiguity, the greater the amount of role conflict.

*3. The greater the amount of competition for resources the greater the level of role conflict.

*4. The greater the amount of assignment of blame, the greater the amount of role conflict.

* Propositions three and four are interdependent, reversible and vary concomitantly in a positive direction.

The four propositions listed in Table 1 reveal the relationship between role conflict and other variables associated with role conflict. The first proposition states that an increase in the amount of collective stress tends to result in an increase of role conflict. The greater the degree of stress and the more a community is overburdened, the greater the demands are on the individual. Proposition two states that the greater the amount of role ambiguity tends to lead to an increase in role conflict. In other words, how explicitly defined the operant roles are, particular in the case of a disaster, greatly determines the

extent to which individuals will be able to occupy roles and know how to respond. Propositions three and four state relationships which are interdependent, reversible and vary concomitantly in a positive direction. In other words, the relationship between role conflict and competition for resources and assignment of blame are very closely related. They interact in such a way that they seem to enhance one another. (An argument that elaborates on the relationship between assignment of blame will be made later.)

The community must then deal with this stress situation and with the nullification of certain mechanisms that would assist in handling it. Due to a shortage of both material and human resources, alteration and preparations must be made. Emergency organizations, behaviors and structures develop to compensate and adapt to the altered environment.

The Initial Proposal

The first systematic discussion of role conflict in disasters was undertaken by Lewis Killian. His findings seem to imply that the occurrence of some natural disaster with an impact exceeding any existing crisis management mechanisms would result in the neutralization of many previously existing expectations of certain roles. With this neutralization occurs the ineffectiveness of certain norms and the rise of ambiguity. The effect of this ambiguous state may become manifest in many areas of the community. One particular effect would be that previously

nonconflicting roles may begin to overlap causing the fine tuned system to begin to falter. This claim can be specifically examined in the supposed conflict between the role of family member and that of public citizen. (Killian, 1952)

The family is a prominent institution within the community and a prominent entity and concern for the individual. Due to the individual's great concern for the family it would appear that in the time of a disaster, one's first concern would be for the care and condition of one's family. Furthermore, should the community become unable to aid the family during a crisis, then the community would become irrelevant and of minimal concern. (Barton, 1963)

Killian concentrated primarily on four disasters: an explosion in Texas City in which people's work and home were threatened and three towns in Oklahoma struck by tornadoes which resulted in individuals experiencing a conflict between family concern and other responsibilities and loyalties. Generally, Killian proposed that they resolved this role conflict by tending to their families. Upon closer examination of this mass reaction, however, Killian found that not all people reacted this way. There were a select few who chose to follow through with their occupational obligations. Killian believed that by revealing the motives of those who remained at work and applying them to society as a whole, one could safeguard the society in times of disasters. (Killian, 1952)

Through interviews with those present at the time of the four disasters who remained at their jobs, a definite pattern seemed to emerge. Killian discovered that of the miners who remained on the job after the oil explosions in Texas City, almost all had motives stemming from the knowledge that abandoning the refineries could possibly result in further explosions, thus increasing the amount of risk to their families. Killian also interviewed the police chief of Texas City who remained on the job for 72 hours following the explosion. He soon discovered that the chief's family was out of town, Therefore he knew they were out of danger. In addition, a fireman who left his home immediately after the impact of the tornado in Oklahoma also knew his family was outside the scope of impact: therefore, he could attend to his community service job.

From this research, Killian concluded that not until an individual is confident of their family's safety will they perform their emergency role effectively. He offered that perhaps only the individual free of family attachments would be free of conflict and capable of functioning effectively. Several solutions to this predicament have been offered by both Killian and Barton (Killian, 1952).

The solutions offered are founded on the basic premise that the answer is not to alter family loyalty to community loyalty, but to deal effectively and efficiently with the strain of family concern. Coping with this strain allows people to tend to their emergency responsibilities without

the preoccupation of family safety. The proposals include such items as facilitating communication between homes and jobs to allow one to learn of family safety and employing emergency workers who live outside the community, thereby increasing the odds that their families would be located outside the impact area.

Meda Miller White conducted some further research on the disasters studied by Killian and arrived at somewhat different findings. She offers that individuals will choose to act in whatever role is most familiar and most certain. She argues that this is characteristic of individual behavior under any stressful situation. (White, 1962)

"...the prediction here is that when disaster strikes, members of disaster-relief organizations will choose between job and family on the basis of whichever opportunity happens to present itself first. In case there is no definite information in either opportunity, the individual will subjectively evaluate these and choose the opportunity of which he is more certain." (As quoted in White, 1962:20)

Barton's Elaboration

Allen Barton elaborated on Killian's proposal by supplying three major reasons for the "ineffective individual participation in emergency social systems. They include:

1. That the society may have insufficiently defined individual roles in the case of a disaster.
2. That in the case of such extenuating circumstances the multiple roles held by a person, which normally remain exclusive, may be called upon simultaneously creating this role conflict.
3. That the society may have inadequately motivated essentially, "non-affected persons" to act in disaster situations.

(Barton, 1963:66-67)

Table 2: Typology of Disaster Roles

Motivation Toward Goal	Knowledge of What To Do	Knowledge of Relationship	
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1. Strong	Present	Present	Well-defined Disaster role
2. Strong	Absent	Present	Improvised activities in well-defined role relation- ships.
3. Strong	Present	Absent	Improvised relationships for familiar activities
4. Strong	Absent	Absent	Entirely im- provised role.
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(Barton, 1963:21)

As observed in Table 2, a comparison of three components (motivation toward a goal, knowledge of what to do, and knowledge of relationships) are used in categorizing roles. These dimensions produce four situations each varying in their degree of role ambiguity. As one moves from the first to the fourth type the level of role ambiguity increases. What is most important for our purposes, however, is that the potential degree of role conflict also concomitantly increases.

Barton devised an extensive formulation to ensure that the objectives of reducing role conflict are met. The first part contains mechanisms for raising the priority of organizational or professional roles. The second suggestion

consists of mechanisms for avoiding conflict between family and organizational or professional roles. He proposes that by instituting these mechanisms, role conflict in time of disaster would diminish greatly and possibly be eliminated. (Barton, 1963)

The first component concerns the leveling of priorities. It is accomplished primarily in three ways.

1. By training of essential organization members and professionals to give first priority to the job.
2. By increasing the visibility of co-workers so as to exert pressures for them to stay on the job.
3. By decreasing the degree of primary group loyalty among organization members.

(Barton, 1963:154)

By implementing these procedures, Barton feels that there may begin to develop a leveling of priorities at which point energies could be diverted to trying to minimize and avoid conflict.

The second component involves four steps. They are:

1. To increase the proportion of organization members recruited from outside the community.
2. To increase the proportion of organization members without close families.
3. To increase the availability of information about the scope of impact.
4. To increase the availability of rapid communication between job and home.

(Barton, 1963:155)

Essentially, this proposal rests on two main tenants. It is offered that role conflict results from 1) the high proportion of community workers with closely located families holding essential positions and 2) the difficulty in communication with one's family.

The Disaster Research Center Challenge

Research conducted at the Disaster Research Center (DRC) raised some questions in regard to the accepted wisdom of work done by Killian and Barton. DRC approached the issue of role conflict as a behavioral rather than a psychological, one. Principally, the position acknowledges the psychological dimension to role conflict, yet distinguished between it and actual role abandonment.

In "A Note on the Protective Function of the Family in Disaster," Quarantelli (1970) reveals that during disasters the extended family is the major source of help to victims and that victims in actuality only turned to social agencies as a last resort. From this observation, he further concluded that the dispersion of kin proves to be functional because most extended family are found outside the area of impact. It is this family support network that permits individuals to tend to their community obligations.

Quarantelli not only defends the positive contributions of the family in disasters, but also argues that a shortage of community service workers is rare. In fact quite often the opposite is true; that is, during emergency times there is often an overabundance of organizational personnel without relevant emergency roles. (Quarantelli, 1960)

Through the work of the Disaster Research Center, Quarantelli and Dynes have collected interviews of top organizational personnel within six disaster stricken communities. They were questioned about their physical

location at the time of impact. They found that of the 183 people interviewed who were at work when the disaster hit, only 12 temporarily left the job while none reported actually abandoning their occupational role. Hence, they concluded that no evidence for role conflict was found.

"The evidence which has been presented here does not support in any way the contention that multiple group membership leads to role conflict in disaster which consequently results in occupational role abandonment." (1978:5)

Puzzled by the great incongruence in findings, Quarantelli and Dynes turned toward a possible solution inherent in the conceptualization of role conflict. It is at this time that they distinguish between feelings of conflicting demands and actual behavioral manifestations of these feelings (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978).

Quarantelli and Dynes suggest that many problems exist in defining role conflict and in pointing out actual incidents of it. They begin by clearly distinguishing between verbal conflict and behavioral conflict. They stress the difference between verbalizing contradictory demands and the actual behavior of individuals. They found that although one may describe feelings of conflicting demands, it does not necessarily follow that one will act according to them. (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978)

Alternative terms and definitions for these concepts are offered by Quarantelli and Dynes. They describe feelings of anxiety as role strain, defined as "felt difficulty in fulfilling role obligations," whereas role

conflict is defined as "equally weighted contradictory alternatives." (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978) (Perhaps it should be mentioned that latter work done by Mileti refers specifically to role abandonment as a possible behavioral manifestation of role conflict.)

Furthermore, the claim is made that the source of the strain and conflict must be examined and considered from the perspective of the social system, not the individual. (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978) It seems that they are arguing that it is the system that is in the state of crisis, not the individual, and therefore, the system which is under strain. Consequently, the solution must lie within the structure of the system not within the individual.

Clarity of Role Expectations

Recent work in the area of role conflict suggests that the reduction of role ambiguity and an increase in clarity of expectations results in the reduction of role conflict and the elimination of role abandonment. It seems that this can be accomplished in two ways. The first involves the actual definition of roles and role assignment, while the second involves the structure of the community as a whole rather than with individuals.

In "Role Conflict and Abandonment in Emergency Workers," Mileti (1985) makes the strong argument that although an individual may experience psychological role strain, this "does not result in role abandonment in disasters, if emergency workers are provided - before an-

emergency - with a clear idea of what would be their emergency role" (1985:21). In addition, Mileti argues that Killian's earlier work specifically supported this notion of role certainty resulting in the elimination of role abandonment (Mileti, 1985). In many respects Mileti's argument is very similar and agreeable with the work done by Barton some twenty years earlier.

From the psychological viewpoint, one would argue that in order to reduce or eliminate role abandonment one must seek to reduce role strain. Quarantelli and Dynes suggest that to accomplish this one needs to decrease ambiguity surrounding role expectations and obligations particularly for emergency relevant positions. It is for this reason that they make the claim that one can not compare the behavior of those in emergency roles with those in non-emergency roles at the time of a disaster. This point, they believe, was a major flaw of Killian's work. Although there was evidence of some role abandonment, it was not found among those in emergency positions, such as firefighter and police officer. They state that since these non-emergency workers have no clear obligations during a disaster, it is difficult to discern exactly what obligations they abandon in order to tend to their families (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978).

Based on this assumption, they offer a formulation which would eliminate role abandonment among emergency workers in the event of a disaster. Again, this proposal

can be compared to Barton's suggestions previously discussed. The basis of this proposal is to avoid as much ambiguity as possible. This elimination of ambiguity may be accomplished through various methods. First, by clarifying role responsibilities and obligations, people will know exactly what to do and role strain will be eliminated. Second, by devising a plan in which co-workers rely on each other's participation, peer pressure will make people increasingly reluctant to abandon their roles. Third, by devising a preplan for one's family in case of a disaster and by facilitating communication and information on the scope of the disaster, role strain will still further be reduced and compliance with one's role will be increased. (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978)

Quarantelli and Dynes address the issue of structural alterations in a community during a disaster and role conflict. They make the argument that role strain and role conflict, in the psychological sense, may be more characteristic of non-disaster times than disaster times.

"...Individuals commonly face a wide, distracting, and sometimes conflicting set of role obligations. Since this is a normal state of affairs, certain institutionalized mechanisms exist which allow many actors to reduce the strain, e.g., compartmentalization, delegation, elimination of role relationships, etc." (1978:8)

Quarantelli and Dynes also argue that due to the consensus nature of the emergency period, there tends to be a shift from organic solidarity to mechanical solidarity. The community response, in one sense, serves to eliminate

"non-relevant roles by specifying minimum performance levels at the same time that other roles become critical and performance levels are enhanced." (1978:10)

As a result of the social system requiring a narrow array of roles in times of disasters, there arises the earlier stated problem of over abundance of community service workers ready to help victims. Most emergency response workers, such as police officers, fire fighters and public officials, have, as part of their occupational roles, the obligation to help the community. They are willing to do so, even when their positions are somewhat irrelevant. To the degree that concern for one's family does exist in a disaster-stricken community, many of the willing workers are at home during the actual impact of the disaster and are therefore aware of their family's condition. Generally, there are people attending these emergency roles 24 hours a day with many reinforcements in the event they are needed. (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1978)

The consensus nature of the emergency period (associated with the absense of conflict), mentioned above, can be characterized by several major factors. Quarantelli cites seven factors or characteristics associated with each type of crisis. Table 3 reveals a manner of measuring the amount of ambiguity resulting from and relating to the disaster. The greater the degree of ambiguity at the structural level, the greater the

expectancy of role conflict at the individual level.
(Quarantelli and Dynes, 1976)

Table:3 Seven Factors Associated With the Consensus and Dissensus Crises

Consensus Crises (Absence of Conflict)	Dissensus Crisis (Presence of Conflict)
1. External Threat - A stress agent originating from outside the community	1. Internal Threat
2. Specified Threat - An agent which can be perceived and specified	2. Ambiguous Threat
3. Community Priorities - A general agreement to tend to community problems	3. Individual Priorities
4. Immediate Problems - The emergence of imperative problems	4. Unspecified Problems
5. Present Orientation - A lessened concern for future and past conflict	5. Past and Future Orientation
6. Leveling of Social Distinctions - The nullification of pre-existing social stratification.	6. Heightening of Social Distinctions
7. Strengthening Ties to the Community - The stress agent acts as a unifying shared experience.	7. Weakening Ties to the Community

These seven factors associated with the presence or absence of conflict during disasters can be measured on a continuum, that is, each characteristic may be present to varying degrees. The seven factors associated with consensus crises all involve the reduction of ambiguity in terms of what the threat is and what should be done about it

or in response to it. This reduction of ambiguity in response then serves more clearly to define what tasks should be done and hence reduce ambiguity in regard to role performance and expectations. The less ambiguous the essential tasks are, as in the case of a consensus crisis, the easier it is for people to adopt and take on responsibilities. As the threat becomes less ambiguous and of a more consensus nature, what should and needs to be done becomes clearer. This results in a decrease in the opportunity for role conflict to develop.

Wenger's "Community Response to Disaster: Functional and Structural Alterations," (1978) also deals with the structural changes of a community during a disasters. Again, the argument here is that these types of changes lead to the reduction of role conflict and abandonment.

Wenger refers to the five principle functions of non-disaster communities. In order of priority they are as follows: 1) Production, distribution, consumption 2) Socialization 3) Social participation 4) social control 5) mutual support (1978:19) Through an examination of these functions one can surmise and, with some degree of precision, predict the type of existing and valued roles in a community. For example, in non-disaster times, there is generally a sufficient supply of material, human and temporal resources. As a result, the manner in which these functions are performed could take a variety of forms. There may even be competition between the nature of the

functions and how they should be performed. There appears to be a certain degree of ambiguity of meaning which allows for a wide array of behavior in fulfilling these functions (Wenger, 1978).

Likewise, an emanation of priority functions in a disaster impacted community indicates the most relevant roles. These functions are; 1) mutual support 2) social participation 3) social control 4) socialization 5) production, distribution, consumption (Wenger, 1978). The one of greatest priority seems to be of a most immediate and life sustaining nature, therefore limiting the amount of role variety applicable. For example, search and rescue activities and care for the injured become high priority behaviors. Resources may become scarce. Time often becomes a crucial factor and material and human resources may be limited. The options of how and when these activities and roles should be performed become limited and less ambiguous.

Summary and Conclusions

As the review of the literature suggests, role conflict is a complicated and multi-faceted issue. However, perhaps this complex issue can be broken down into three major areas. The first involves the question of whether or not role conflict exists during disasters. In terms of Theodorson and Theodorson's definition of role conflict, it seems unquestionable that it does. Just as one can expect a certain degree of role conflict during normal times, one can expect it during disaster times. It appears that role

conflict is inevitable by virtue of the fact that people simultaneously occupy more than one role.

This leads to the second issue. Is there an increase in role conflict during disasters? Perhaps and perhaps not. As suggested earlier, consensus crises and certain structural alterations in a community may serve to reduce role strain by decreasing role ambiguity and increasing task clarity. However, role conflict may actually increase due to the immediate nature of the situation and the urgency with which one must make a choice between roles. Moreover, the answer to this question appears to depend on one's conceptualization of the term role conflict and where one looks for it. In other words, does one define the concept in behavioral or psychological terms.

Again, this leads to the next issue. If role conflict exists during a disaster, what are its manifestations? At this point we will focus solely on the behavioral manifestation. The research has always focused on role abandonment as the principle indicator of the presence of role conflict. In other words, the case is made that where there is role abandonment there is role conflict and where there is role conflict there is role abandonment. I believe that research in this area has fallen too far into this mind set.

Disaster research has revealed that in many ways individuals during disasters act in very similar manners as they do during normal times. "Disaster victims are usually

quite frightened, but that does not mean they will act selfishly or impulsively. they do not become unreasoning animals..." (Quarantelli 1986:4).

If individuals generally act in similar ways during disaster and non-disaster times, there seems no reason to believe that they will handle the experience of role conflict differently in disasters. In other words, it seems more than plausible that during disasters, individuals will use other methods of resolving role conflict besides role abandonment.

During normal times individuals might use mechanisms such as compartmentalization, delegation, elimination of role relationships, hierarchy of obligations, role extension or mutual support to alleviate role conflict. A reexamination of some early work in this area may provide evidence of this type of behavior.

Compartmentalization refers to the subdividing of one's life so as to act in accordance with a certain role while ignoring another. This "permits the individual to meet the crisis on its own terms, setting aside for the moment the role demands which he was meeting prior to the crisis." (Goode, 1960:486) White, for example quotes a fireman who states,

"You see, your thought is at home, and your thought is on the people that you can possibly help at the present time... the thought of the family was in the mind, but there was nothing you could do about it. We couldn't leave." (As quoted in White, 1962:42)

Delegation refers to the act of assigning particular role tasks to others in order to relieve one self of certain obligations. (Goode, 1960) Killian gives an example of this in the following quote.

"You should take charge of the company's property. That's what the president of your company would tell you if he were here. You look after the property. I'm going over to Galveston to call our president, and I'll call yours at the same time." (As quoted in Killian, 1952:313)

The elimination of role relationships refers to the curtailment of certain roles. (Goode, 1960) Again, a citation from Killian supplies an example of alleviating role conflict. A police officer who decided that his major task was to drive out of town to get outside help. He states,

" As I drove out of town people I knew well would call me by name and ask me to help them find their relatives. Driving by and not stopping to help those people who were looking to me as a friend was one of the hardest things I ever had to do." (As quoted in Killian, 1952:312)

Hierarchy of obligations refers to a ranking of one's goals whereby one role takes precedence over another (Vander Zanden, 1979). Once again, Killian captures this ranking of roles in his discussion of a minister who at first felt he should participate in search and rescue activities but then chose to stay and comfort families of those involved in the explosion. "I saw then that my job was with the families - not doing rescue work. I had a job that I was peculiarly suited for, prepared for, and I felt that I should do that." (As quoted in Killian, 1952:312)

Lastly, role extension refers to an individual expanding s role relations in order to avoid fulfilling certain committments or to fulfill two or more role obligations simultaneously. (Goode, 1960) Mutual support, another mechanism refers to efforts to band together to negate the power of another group thus making a choice about which role to adopt. (Vander Zanden, 1979)

The above are just examples of the types of alternative methods employed by individuals to reduce role conflict. The point is that if we assume role conflict exists during disasters at a significant level, then we must turn research in the direction of determining how individuals resolve it. I believe the first place to turn is to the methods used during normal times. By doing this we will begin to see beyond role abandonment as the sole indicator of role conflict.

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