doi:10.1111/disa.12203

Culture, local capacity, and outside aid: a community perspective on disaster response after the 2009 tsunami in American Sāmoa

Sherri Brokopp Binder, PhD is President, BrokoppBinder Research & Consulting, United States, and **Charlene K. Baker, PhD** is Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Hawai`i at Mānoa, United States

Research on diverse cultural contexts has indicated that aid organisations often fail to leverage local, culturally-grounded resources and capacities in disaster-affected communities. Case-study methodology was employed to explore the relationship between local and external disaster response efforts in American Sāmoa following the earthquake and tsunami on 29 September 2009 in the southern Pacific Ocean, with a specific focus on the role of culture in defining that relationship. Interview and focus group data from 37 participants, along with observational data, suggested that the local response to the event was swift and grounded in Samoan cultural systems and norms. External aid was viewed as helpful in some respects, although, on the whole, it was seen as a disruption to village hierarchies, social networks, and local response efforts. The study discusses the implications for the role of outside aid in diverse cultural contexts, and makes suggestions for improving the ecological fit of post-disaster interventions.

Keywords: American Sāmoa, culture, disaster aid, disaster response, tsunami

Introduction

Culture and natural disasters

Understanding of disaster response and recovery processes in the United States and other Western settings is expanding, yet knowledge of these processes in other cultural contexts remains limited (Norris et al., 2005; Norris, 2006; Kayser, Wind, and Shankar, 2008). This is a significant oversight, as the cultural context in which disasters occur influences all aspects of the experience of the affected communities, including interpretation of, response to, and recovery from the event (Oliver-Smith, 1996; Berke et al., 2008; Chamlee-Wright, 2010). This paper presents the findings of a descriptive case study that explores the relationship between local and external disaster response efforts in American Sāmoa following the earthquake and tsunami on 29 September 2009 in the southern Pacific Ocean. It contributes to the nascent but growing body of literature that explicates the relationship between culture and disasters by examining how local cultural norms influenced the response to and early recovery from the disaster, how local capacities and resources were leveraged in the response process, and the interplay between these local capacities and outside

 © 2017 The Author(s). *Disasters* © Overseas Development Institute, 2017
Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA

aid interventions. In addition, it adds to the existing empirical literature on the tsunami in American Sāmoa by analysing these issues from a local community perspective.

After a disaster strikes, the initial response emerges from local resources, capacities, and norms (Dynes and Drabek, 1994). Prior research has emphasised the importance of incorporating these local resources and capacities throughout the response and recovery process (Olshansky, 2005; Paton et al., 2007), and indicated that interventions that disregard them remove ownership of the response from the affected community and may even stymie long-term recovery (Dynes and Drabek, 1994; Olshansky, 2005; Telford and Cosgrave, 2007). Still, disaster aid organisations often struggle to leverage local capacities in practice, particularly in non-Western cultural contexts (Mercer et al., 2010). This may be due, in part, to the fact that they operate on the basis of their own set of cultural norms, values, and assumptions (Kaniasty and Norris, 1999; Trickett, 2011), complicating further the relationship between these organisations and the communities in which they operate.

Specific activities and approaches have been highlighted in the literature as disregarding local resources and capacities. Perhaps foremost among them is the use of top-down aid strategies (Telford and Cosgrave, 2007; Berke et al., 2008; Thorburn, 2009; Rumbach and Foley, 2014). In a review of the role of aid agencies after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, for instance, Telford and Cosgrave (2007, p. 17) stated that: 'International agencies tended to ignore and "mis-recognize" local capacities in the early stages, and only later looked for local organizations to help with recovery'. Relatedly, challenges arise when the type of assistance and/or the delivery methods employed by disaster aid organisations do not match the expressed needs of the affected community. The needs of disaster victims vary according to geography and culture, and change with the amount of time that has elapsed since the disaster. Housing, for example, frequently is a key concern of disaster victims, although questions regarding the type required, survivors' decisions on where to live (including whether and when to leave their homes), and rebuilding processes are all culture-specific and critical to successful recovery (Rashid, 2000; Daley, Karpati, and Sheik, 2001; Barenstein, 2006; Thorburn, 2009). This issue extends to other kinds of aid as well. A study of disaster resiliency in Thailand found that villagers reported receiving unusable aid in the form of fishing and boating supplies, to which an elder in the village responded: 'if only they asked the receiver first . . . they need nets but are given traps . . . why don't they ask the people what they need?' (Berke et al., 2008, p. 313).

While examples of ill-fitting aid efforts abound, there is evidence of success in interventions that work with the local community and leverage its capacities. In a study of the impact of the 2004 tsunami in Thailand, Berke et al. (2008) detail the case of a Japanese non-governmental organisation (NGO) that, building on its pre-tsunami efforts in one village, implemented a community-based approach to recovery that focused on linking recovery activities and the village's existing long-term development and ecological sustainability goals. Kenny (2007) provides a second example centred on the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami: international aid organisations supplied funding to local NGOs in Aceh, Indonesia, in a hands-off manner,

thereby allowing them to pursue local reconstruction priorities. At a larger scale, the need to increase the ecological validity of disaster aid interventions is reflected in policy changes within large organisations, notably the adoption by the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the 'whole communities' principles for emergency management (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011).

Taken together, a picture is beginning to emerge in the literature of the ways in which cultural norms, values, and expectations permeate disaster response and recovery processes. This was evident in American Sāmoa, where the 2009 South Pacific tsunami yielded unprecedented damage.

The 2009 tsunami in American Sāmoa

Two nearly simultaneous great earthquakes along the northern Tongan Trench on 29 September 2009 generated a tsunami that struck the islands of Sāmoa, American Sāmoa, and Tonga just minutes later. The tsunami resulted in massive devastation on the islands of American Sāmoa, including 34 fatalities. More than 400 buildings and homes on Tutuila, the main island of American Sāmoa, were completely destroyed. Thirteen villages, including the capital, Pago Pago, sustained significant damage (Irish, Ewing, and Jones, 2012), with several villages near the western tip of the island experiencing total or near-total destruction. For the residents of American Sāmoa, this was the most significant natural disaster to strike the islands in living memory, and many residents were left confronting critical needs pertaining to food, medical care, shelter, and water. As is true in other contexts, the post-disaster response period in American Sāmoa was marked by a combination of local rescue and response efforts and outside aid interventions by national and international agencies and organisations.

A brief introduction to Samoan culture

To comprehend what occurred during and after the tsunami of 2009, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of the history and culture of American Sāmoa. It has been a US territory since 1899, when the Tripartite Convention divided the Samoan Islands into Western Sāmoa (which became a German colony, and later the Independent State of Sāmoa) and American Sāmoa (Blakeslee, 1928). Despite being a US territory for more than a century, US influence on the society of American Sāmoa has been limited (Blakeslee, 1928; Go, 2007), and many of its indigenous cultural systems are intact. While there are signs of cultural shifts, specifically Westernisation, daily life remains directed largely by *fa`aSāmoa*, or the Samoan way.

Fa`aSāmoa* reflects a set of cultural scripts that guide personal relationships, interactions, behaviours, and roles. There are three key elements to *fa`aSāmoa: the *matai* system (system of chiefs); the *`āiga* (extended family); and the *lotu* (the church). Below is a brief description of each, without which it would be difficult to understand the findings of the present study.[1]

The *matai* system is the system of chiefs through which family units (*`āiga*) are governed. At the head of each extended family are *matai* (generally male) who are

responsible for making decisions, settling disputes, managing land, and engaging in other related activities on behalf of the family. The extended family, or *`āiga*, is the primary social unit in Samoan culture (Fitzgerald and Howard, 1990), and daily life is organised largely around one's role within, and responsibilities to, the *`āiga*. The *`āiga* includes all relatives by birth, marriage, and adoption, with extended family members often living on communal family lands within the village. The church, or the *lotu*, is central to regular social and spiritual activities, with residents of American Sāmoa typically attending church-related events multiple times per week (Wolff et al., 2012). Christianity was introduced by the London Missionary Society in the 1830s, and is the dominant religion in American Sāmoa (Shore, 1982).

The study

The impacts of disasters can be physically, psychologically, and socially devastating. However, while the acute effects can be severe, it is important to remember that disasters occur within pre-existing systems defined by, among other things, culture, history, and geography (Cutter et al., 2008; Aldrich and Meyer, 2014). Disasters disrupt these systems, and this disruption can be exacerbated or attenuated by post-disaster interventions.

This paper presents the findings of a descriptive case study (Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Corbin and Strauss, 2008) of the 2009 South Pacific tsunami in American Sāmoa, conducted 16 months after the event. The basic aim was to explore the relationship between culture, local capacity, and outside aid in a non-Western, post-disaster context.

The study builds on the extant literature by exploring the ways in which disaster response is embedded in local cultural systems, and by providing a detailed analysis of challenges that arose related to cultural and operational differences between the disaster-affected community and the outside aid organisations that participated in the response. Specifically, the principal objectives were to: (i) identify how Samoan cultural norms influenced the tsunami response; (ii) document the ways in which local capacities and resources were leveraged during the response process; and (iii) probe the relationship between external aid and local resources from the local community's perspective.

Numerous definitions of culture have been presented in the literature, reflecting a range of theoretical lenses with potential applications in disaster settings. These include definitions and approaches grounded in critical theory (Scandlyn et al., 2010; Cruz and Sonn, 2011), cultural politics (Jackson, 1991; Anderson, 2011), and cultural trauma (Sztompka, 2000).

The goal here is not to engage in a theoretical debate on the merits and flaws of these approaches, even though such evaluations are valuable. Rather, the study builds its discussion on an understanding of culture that is reflected in the following definition of Adams and Markus (2004, p. 341):

> *Culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of historically derived and selected ideas and their embodiment in institutions, practices, and artifacts; cultural patterns may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action.*

In addition to highlighting the role of culture in both influencing and being influenced by routine activities and relationships, this definition accounts for the dynamic nature of cultural systems. In examining these issues, this study considers explicitly the shared meaning of culture as a contextual feature of disasters and post-disaster interventions (Cruz and Sonn, 2011; Kral et al., 2011; O'Donnell and Tharp, 2012).

Method

This research employed a descriptive case-study methodology (Yin, 2003; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Corbin and Strauss, 2008), selected because of its capacity to capture the complex nature of the tsunami, and because it facilitated a focus on the context in which the event occurred. A single-case design was determined to be the most appropriate approach because of the island's relative cultural homogeneity and small population of approximately 54,000 people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). The study was bound by geography (all data were collected on Tutuila Island) and time (covering the period from when the tsunami warning was first issued in September 2009 through to the time of the initial fieldwork in January 2011). Additional data were procured by the lead author during a second visit in March 2012, the primary purpose of which was to disseminate the main findings of the initial phase of the study and to engage in discussions with community members and local organisations on preparedness and mitigation planning for future disasters.

Participants

A number of participants were recruited through personal and professional contacts of a key informant in American Sāmoa, and through contacts at the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa, where several faculty members had been conducting research in American Sāmoa for some time. Additional participants were identified using snowball sampling. A total of 11 men and 32 women from eight geographically-distributed coastal villages on Tutuila Island (ranging from Poloa at the western tip to Pago Pago in the centre) took part in this study. Participants were not asked to report their age, as this would have been culturally inappropriate. However, they did represent a diverse range of life stages (although only adults were included in the study), and a diverse cross-section of Samoan society, from members of vulnerable populations to titled leaders.

Individuals contributed to the study via semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups. Individual interview participants comprised 8 men (2 of whom also attended

a focus group) and 14 women, of which 13 were members of the general population, 4 were government representatives, 1 was a local cultural expert, and 4 were leaders of local community organisations. Focus group participants comprised 5 men and 18 women (one focus group was composed only of women). The first focus group (10 participants) consisted of representatives of a group of local Samoans who had been trained to work as counsellors after the tsunami by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. The second focus group was composed of 13 elderly[2] female tsunami survivors.

This sample, in keeping with the case-study methodology, was not intended to be representative of the population of American Sāmoa. Rather, the objective was to gather perspectives from multiple sources and a range of participants for the purpose of gaining insights into a complex issue. Still, two characteristics of the sample should be noted. First, the relatively large number of elderly participants was because of a subcomponent of this study, not presented here, that concentrated specifically on the tsunami experiences of elderly survivors as a special population in disasters. Second, the gender imbalance (the sample included more women than men) reflects a cultural norm that made it more appropriate for the lead author, a female, to approach and interact with other women.

Data collection

Data for this study were gathered from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, archival records, media reports, expert interviews, and a project website. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in person, and in locations of the participants' choosing. The purpose of the study and the rights of the participants were explained both verbally and in writing, and participants were asked to give oral consent for their participation.

The primary data sources were interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews were based on a protocol of open-ended questions covering the participant's experiences of the tsunami and the recovery process, and included questions such as: 'In the first few days after the tsunami, where did you turn for help?'; and 'Please tell me about the kind of help you received'. Focus groups allowed participants to hear and respond to each other's experiences, and to reflect on initial themes that emerged through the individual interviews. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to nearly three hours, although most were about one hour in duration. The two focus groups were approximately two hours in length. Most interviews were conducted in English (which is widely spoken in American Sāmoa); interpreters (a colleague and family member, both native speakers of Samoan) aided elderly participants on two occasions.

Data analysis

When possible, interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded. Detailed notes were kept for participants who chose not to be recorded. Recorded interviews and

focus groups were transcribed verbatim, and the data were coded using NVivo 8 qualitative coding software. Data analysis followed the procedures outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Data were organised into initial categories through an inductive process of open coding, with the identification of lower-level (explanatory) concepts continuing throughout the data analysis. Axial coding was then employed to organise categories into higher-level (thematic) concepts. Memoing was used to refine and explore themes further as they emerged, and to link data across sources. Data were reviewed for negative cases, and adjustments were made as appropriate. All phases of the data analysis process were synchronous and iterative.

Validity

In conducting research in American Sāmoa, a cultural concern is the possibility that respondents will prioritise politeness, which is highly valued, in their responses (Freeman, 1983). Two validation measures were employed to counter this potential threat to validity: triangulation; and member checking (Creswell, 2007). Findings of the study were triangulated by cross-checking interpretations across multiple data sources (such as comparing key themes from the interviews and focus groups with observational data and written materials from cultural experts). Member checking was used to review organising themes that emerged from the data with project participants and cultural experts.

Results

This section presents results related to the local and external response to the tsunami according to two themes that emerged from the data. The first theme assesses the local response to the tsunami by individuals, families, village leaders, and local organisations. The second theme examines the introduction of outside aid to the response process. The section concludes by describing the influence of outside aid on local cultural systems and by offering cultural explanations for challenges associated with the distribution of aid.

The local response to the tsunami in American Sāmoa

Residents of American Sāmoa felt the earthquake that generated the tsunami just before 07:00 on 29 September 2009. The first tsunami wave arrived just minutes later. In a moment, and in many cases without warning, people in the heavily-hit villages of American Sāmoa literally lost everything they owned. One respondent described what he saw when he returned to his village after evacuating to the mountains:

Respondent: When I going back by my place, all gone. Nothing left. Just a floor. Just the floor.

Interviewer: The whole house, the whole house is gone?

Respondent: The whole house is wash out. Gone. It's gone. Nothing left. Nothing.

While no one had anticipated a disaster of this magnitude, Samoan cultural norms and expectations facilitated a prompt response to many of the needs that arose because of the tsunami. As one respondent stated, 'the clean-up started immediately. People came out with wheelbarrows and their brooms and shovels and they started cleaning up. And they started sharing food and cooking for one another'. Rescue and response efforts emerged locally through culturally-established channels, including the *matai* system and the *`āiga*. These responses are reflective of a strong expectation in Samoan culture that help, specifically with material and practical needs, will be provided when it is needed. In the words of one participant:

> *that's the beauty of the Samoan culture. It doesn't matter if you guys are related or whatever but if something happens to another person or whatever, everybody, you know, they have that part that, you know, to, they wanna help. They feel obligated to each and every one and I see that that's the beauty of the Samoan culture, and it's in each and every one of us* (Binder et al., 2014, p. 808).

This expectation also extended to family members who were living outside of American Sāmoa at the time of the disaster. Family members living in California and Hawai`i in the US, New Zealand, and elsewhere were instrumental in collecting and sending aid to their affected relatives, and, importantly, did so based on an understanding of what items would be considered most useful locally. Of all the aid that arrived in American Sāmoa, participants referred to the assistance that came from family members living off-island as the 'real help' (Binder et al., 2014).

Interestingly, this response reflected a Samoan custom known as *fa`alavelave,* which translates roughly as 'disruption to daily activities'. *Fa`alavelave* can refer to a range of events, from a wedding, to the bestowing of a title, to a funeral, which typically necessitate a large gathering of the extended family. During a *fa`alavelave,* the *matai* calls on members of the extended family to contribute food, money, and other items. In part, this practice is intended to relieve the burden on those most directly affected, and to ensure that the needs of the *`āiga* are met adequately. Disasters also cause a disruption to the normal rhythm of life, and may be considered *fa`alavelave* that, in keeping with these customs and expectations, facilitate the collection and distribution of necessary goods.

Village-based organisations associated with the *matai* system also played an important part in the response process. In some cases, the village *`aumaga,* which is an organisation of young (untitled) men traditionally responsible for activities such as maintaining and protecting the village, instituted and enforced rules intended to ensure the safety of villagers. These rules included curfews as well as bans on fishing or swimming in contaminated ocean waters.

Beyond the embedded cultural norms that spurred action and helping behaviour, local capacity was also visible in the efforts of local organisations. Several of these reported having responded to the tsunami through their affiliation with the American Sāmoa Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (ASVOAD). ASVOAD,

the local chapter of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), is a coalition of faith-based, governmental, and community organisations that was established in 2004 and rekindled just before the tsunami in 2009 (ASVOAD, 2009). Records of ASVOAD's activities in American Sāmoa are scarce and the cohesiveness of the organisation was not clear from the study data. Still, ASVOAD provided a structure for local organisations to act and have an impact. Participant accounts indicated that ASVOAD was active for about six months after the tsunami, during which time local member organisations participated in the response by distributing clothing, food, and water in the villages. Other local organisations formed or rallied to fulfil the needs of the elderly and other special populations.

Local churches, some of which were also active with ASVOAD, were another key component of the local response. Churches in American Sāmoa are an integral part of everyday life. Consequently, church leaders were aware of the needs of their parishioners. A pastor's wife described how, after the tsunami, some people came to her and her husband looking for help, but many people were too shy or embarrassed to ask. In those cases, she and her husband would approach families and ask how the church could assist. A pastor's wife in another village pointed out how she was able to use her intimate knowledge of her parishioners to channel the aid that came into the village to the people who needed it most. Furthermore, local churches were connected to sister churches off the island. By harnessing these relationships and soliciting and managing donations, churches were able to acquire additional resources for distribution in the village.

The introduction of outside aid

When outside organisations arrived and began their operations in American Sāmoa, local response efforts were already under way. Still, participants were grateful for the help they received from them when they first arrived, bringing food, water, and other necessities. As one resident stated:

> *we thanked them for what they did, you know, just showing up out of the blue just to help out with our people. They helped our people get over the hump, you know, especially the immediate needs. We need the water, we need this, we need that, the food, the clothing.*

Interventions by outside organisations past that point, however, were viewed in a different light. There was a sense among study participants that they were disconnected from the community:

> *You know, like, this plane landed and [FEMA was] set up immediately. . . . State of the art kind of, you walked in there and you think you were walking into the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] building in D.C. [District of Columbia] or something, you know, very official, very, but really detached from what was really happening in the community. That's what I found.*

In addition, participants expressed a sense of frustration at the lack of communication between local and outside aid organisations. One woman, who was active in local response efforts, expressed her frustration with outside organisations that talked about cooperating, but did not do so in practice:

But the local organization wasn't connecting with the federal, like two separate heads. And then you had the organizations, the faith-based, functioning from the heart, arriving, and there's no real coordination . . . the local government and the federal government are coming to [the meeting of our local organization] saying, 'This is so good'. . . . And, you know, 'We really need you, [name of organisation]'. You know, 'You were a critical part of disaster relief'. And, you know, it was just so disorganized!

Another woman described how an outside aid organisation had asked her organisation for a list of names of the elderly, bedridden, and disabled persons who may need extra assistance. Her organisation, which had been working with the elderly for several years, offered to assist in reaching these individuals, but the outside aid organisation did not take advantage of the offer.

Taken together, the study data suggest a perception among local groups and organisations that the degree to which outside aid organisations actively partnered or cooperated with local organisations was inadequate. In an effort to probe this issue further, the first author interviewed representatives of local organisations during a follow-up field visit in March 2012. The individuals were asked to give their opinions on the functions of the government, local organisations, and outside organisations in future disasters. The most commonly cited recommendations were clarifying the roles of each group, and allowing churches and local organisations to assume a lead role in supplying meals and shelter, as there are several groups on the island with facilities that could be designated for these purposes. Another recommendation was integrating counselling services (which may be needed, but which are generally inconsistent with local cultural norms) into services related to material assistance (which are consistent with cultural norms). Other individuals recommended increasing prevention planning at the village level, which seemed to put a stress on the community's desire to be self-sufficient and less dependent on outside aid organisations, as portrayed in the following exchange:

Participant 1: It's like, 'Why don't we do, why don't we throw that into . . . early prevention?'.

Participant 2: Mm-hmm.

Participant 1: Why is it that we're not already channeling that kind of money and saying to the communities, 'Well, what would you do if there was a fa'alavelave*?'.*

Participant 2: Mm-hmm.

Participant 1: 'What would you do if the planes didn't come? What would you do?'.

Participant 2: Right.

Participant 1: We would rely on our own . . .

Participant 2: People.

Participant 1: . . . resources and our own, the richness of what we can do for each other.

Participant 2: Yes.

To be fair, this study intentionally investigated this issue from the community's perspective, and thus did not include interviews with representatives of the outside aid organisations.[3] One should also note that, while the results presented here represent the predominant themes that emerged from the data, disconfirming evidence was present. A representative of one local organisation (a local affiliate of a large national organisation) reported that ASVOAD, the local government, and the outside aid organisations all worked very well together. This participant stated that she 'wouldn't change anything [about the outside organisations]. They were very good about submitting to the local organizations'.

Along with issues related to collaboration between local and outside aid organisations, participants also commented on the inappropriate nature of some of the aid that was supplied. In keeping with the findings of other studies of challenges in disaster response in non-Western cultural contexts, several participants commented on issues related to housing, which continued to be a contentious matter for many months after the tsunami. In addition to temporary housing support in the form of tents, FEMA's housing assistance programmes in American Sāmoa included both grants for affected residents to rebuild their own homes and a pilot programme through which the agency would oversee directly the construction of permanent homes. The latter was the target of considerable national criticism, owing largely to the extremely high cost of homes built under the initiative and its failure to meet deadlines (Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security, 2010). Locally, concerns about the homes being built by FEMA centred more on their suitability, as they were considered small (often many members of an extended family will share a house in American Sāmoa), did not include storage space for fine mats and other cultural items, and did not have a great room large enough for gatherings of the extended family. As one participant said: 'Samoans build their houses in a certain way. . . . If you're going to build somebody a house, why not build them a house they'll be able to live in?'.

Aid as a cultural disruption

From the community's perspective, the introduction of outside aid into post-disaster American Sāmoa, and the manner in which it was dispersed by aid organisations, was viewed as a source of disruption to social and cultural systems and to ongoing local response efforts, although a small number of participants did express a different opinion. With regard to cultural and social systems, a common criticism of the response and recovery efforts was that the aid supplied by outside organisations was

not distributed to the people who truly needed it. In explaining why this was the case, participants described how outside organisations, in an effort to operate within the local cultural context, often distributed the aid to the village *matai*, with the expectation that the *matai* would oversee the (appropriate) distribution of aid within the village. While some *matai* did distribute the aid, others were reported to have hoarded it, or to have distributed it to their family members, instead of to those in need. As one participant put it:

> *Anyway, the* matai *and distribution? That's what people were saying . . . some* [matai] *just have, take the best for me and my family, then what's left I give to the needy.*

Similar issues were reported when aid was distributed through government officials, including the *pulenu'u*, a government-affiliated position within the village akin to that of a mayor (*pulenu'u* are frequently *matai* as well). In the words of two participants:

> *Um, the distribution of goods wasn't what it should have been. They would, and they tried to . . . adapt into the culture so that they would go to the senior person in the village – the* pulenu'u *or the mayor – and they would take all the water and all the food and all the clothing there. And it's sad to say, but it didn't get distributed the way it could have been.*

> *Of course government corruption has kept the money being sent to victims of the tsunami from being distributed to them and people around the world sent money to help and none of it is given to the victims and a lot of stuff that was sent is not distributed. A lot of things the Red Cross sent—like water coolers—were given to government officials and chiefs first and then to victims.*

This influx of aid was associated, in the study data, with disruptions in relationships at the village level. Samoan social networks are centred on the family, with families organised into villages and governed by their *matai*. Damage caused by the tsunami led to changes in routine social interactions and activities as the focus shifted to the rebuilding of homes and villages. While these adjustments are understandable and even expected, they were not without consequence; participants reported that changes in social interactions and activities strained relationships within the villages (Binder et al., 2014). The tsunami may have been at the root of these shifts initially, yet the influx of outside aid appeared to exacerbate the problem. One participant suggested that people who received a relatively larger volume of aid were 'looked down on' by those who received less aid. When asked why she thought this was happening, she replied:

> *I just think it's out of jealousy because they didn't get that much, you know, and they wanted more, or, you know, they could use it more or, you know, just things like that. . . . You know, it's not being able to get as much assistance as they should get, and yet this person who didn't need that much assistance, you know, got a lot more. . . . Yeah, so you're actually creating more division. Yeah, so you're just dividing everybody, you know.*

In a related narrative, a pastor's wife in one of the devastated areas emphasised that several village groups that had been active before the tsunami were no longer meeting. When asked why the groups had stopped meeting, she replied that people were concentrating on building their houses and cleaning up their land, and so they were not available to convene as before. She implied that, within the rebuilding process, the perception that goods were being unequally distributed was fostering jealousy and souring relationships among the villagers:

> *Before, everyone was like close and normal was like to talk to each other or, you know, if they see you anywhere they, you know, they track you down and they say hello. You'll feel happy to see them, too. But it's like sometimes, right now, not everyone is happy to see, you know, like, to bring that good feeling. . . . I don't know, maybe. . . .* Sometimes it's because of what they're getting, and what we're not getting, you know? All that (emphasis added).

Another participant depicted the ramifications of the influx of aid as a change in 'the landscape of people':

> *you had [many organisations] all landing at the same time and choosing who they were going to go and give these things to. That kind of . . .* changed the, the landscape of people. *Uh, 'Did you get assistance? Who did you get that from?'. You know, 'We didn't get a tent', and 'We didn't get this! We didn't get that'* (emphasis added).

Broadly, the study data suggest that outside aid was disruptive to the ongoing response efforts being facilitated locally through the *matai* system and established local organisations. The outside aid, when it arrived, entered a context in which local response and recovery operations, based on cultural norms and the work of local people and organisations, were already under way, including initiatives to clean and rebuild, maintain the safety of villages, and ensure that the basic needs of affected individuals were met. Interestingly, while there was a sense of dissatisfaction with the ways in which aid was distributed, data related to the outside aid provided did not centre on it as being insufficient, as one might expect. Rather, there was a sense that, as one participant noted, 'the aid was too much'. In other words, when large volumes of assistance arrived, it may have influenced the behaviour of those responsible for distributing the aid (see the next section) and discouraged people from relying on local resources and capacities. This is evidenced in the following exchange on the impact of outside aid on culturally-embedded practices for meeting the material needs of others:

> *Participant 1: We, remember, remember I said earlier about, we naturally do things? . . . There is a natural thing that we do amongst ourselves. It's a cultural thing we've been raised with. But as soon as the outside aid arrived, we went to pieces.*
>
> *Participant 2: Yeah.*
>
> *Participant 1: It's like, you know, 'Well, did you get the assistance?'. I mean, 'Is your house being built? And what did you get? Oh, you got a car!'. Do you know what I mean? That division sort of.*

Culture and the distribution of aid

Efforts by outside aid organisations to deliver aid through culturally-appropriate channels (such as the *matai* and *pulenu'u*) represented an admirable attempt to operate within local cultural systems, although participants in this study described the outcome as less than ideal. In exploring further the important question of why the distribution of aid did not work as intended, a deeper analysis from the standpoint of Samoan culture is instructive. This section focuses on two key factors:

- the role of social hierarchy; and
- the presence of underlying cultural changes.

To begin, it is important to recognise that in Samoan culture *everything* is determined according to the social hierarchy. As an example, traditionally the division of food is strictly guided by ceremonial rules. If a pig (or a turtle, or a shark, for instance) was killed in the village, it would be carefully divided and distributed to members of the village according to each person's status, with the best pieces going to the high chiefs (see Figure 1). In this way, the pig constitutes a helpful analogy for understanding why the post-tsunami aid was distributed as so. When the aid arrived, it was delivered to the chiefs who kept the best items and passed on the rest accordingly. From this perspective, the issue was not one of corruption, but one of custom. As an outsider observing this system, it would be difficult to determine what 'appropriate' distribution looks like.

A generation ago, the patterns of distribution may not have been questioned. However, as was reflected by some of the participants in this study, the culture is changing. While traditional cultural values and practices are still very much intact, some have begun to question openly these practices and traditions. In this study, this was particularly evident among participants who had travelled to or lived in Western countries. Several participants described a general sense of dissatisfaction with the *matai*, indicating, by way of example, that some *matai* had become 'greedy' in their demands for contributions for *fa`alavelave*. During these events, family members are expected to make contributions as determined by the *matai*, typically in the form of food, money, or cultural objects. These contributions are an accepted practice (and part of the propensity to help with material needs, as described previously), yet some participants felt that the demands for contributions were becoming excessive, in some cases requiring that families obtain loans to comply. One woman described how she had refused to take out a loan for her contribution to a funeral, and as a result was no longer permitted to attend village meetings. From a cultural perspective, this willingness to question openly and even criticise the *matai* is a dramatic departure from the past. Furthermore, it illustrates how, while the culture in American Sāmoa is dynamic and changing, *fa`aSāmoa* remains dominant.

The influx of aid may have exacerbated or accelerated these underlying cultural changes, a finding that echoes anthropological disaster studies (Oliver-Smith, 1996). Historically, one's status in Samoan society was determined by one's generosity. For

Figure 1. Pig ceremonial divisions

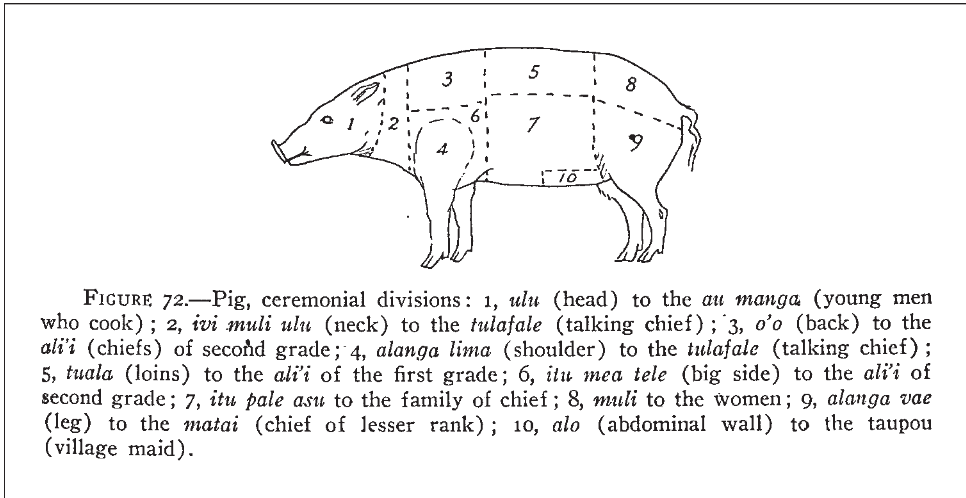

FIGURE 72.—Pig, ceremonial divisions: 1, *ulu* (head) to the *au manga* (young men who cook); 2, *ivi muli ulu* (neck) to the *tulafale* (talking chief); 3, *o'o* (back) to the *ali'i* (chiefs) of second grade; 4, *alanga lima* (shoulder) to the *tulafale* (talking chief); 5, *tuala* (loins) to the *ali'i* of the first grade; 6, *itu mea tele* (big side) to the *ali'i* of second grade; 7, *itu pale asu* to the family of chief; 8, *muli* to the women; 9, *alanga vae* (leg) to the *matai* (chief of lesser rank); 10, *alo* (abdominal wall) to the taupou (village maid).

Source: Hiroa, 1930.

instance, one participant noted how, when she was young, her grandfather, who was a *matai* and a minister, travelled to other villages to preach and was given food and other gifts to take home in return. When he arrived back in his village, he would divide up the items he received, and then have the grandchildren distribute them throughout the village. This reflects the type of behaviour that traditionally was expected of the *matai*, according to the study participants, and still reflects the behaviour of many. In recent years, though, participants reported that this has begun to change as people have become more Westernised and materialistic. With this shift in values, more emphasis is placed on what one *has*. This may have contributed to the issues that arose with some of the aid that was given to the *matai* not being properly distributed in the village. Furthermore, the volume and the nature of the aid that was received may have altered this balance. It seems that basic necessities, such as food and water, were distributed according to need (at least in the days immediately after the tsunami), whereas complaints about greed and hoarding tended to focus on non-essential items, such as cash, coolers, and tents. In previous years, the practice by some *matai* of keeping the first and best goods for themselves and their families may not have been questioned openly. The statements of participants in this study, though, reflect a perception that, in this case, some *matai* kept too much and did not act in the best interests of their family and village.

Discussion

This case study of the tsunami in American Sāmoa, while interesting and valuable in its own right, is also a poignant example of the need to assess the roles and responsibilities of outside aid organisations in non-Western cultural contexts. In considering

the relationship between local systems and external organisations, the literature reveals that aid and relief operations can 'ignore and "mis-recognize"' (Telford and Cosgrave, 2007, p. 17) the existing capacities of affected communities in international disaster events. This is an apt description, from the community's perspective, of the post-tsunami situation in American Sāmoa (see also Rumbach and Foley, 2014). Family- and village-based response efforts were active and under way when the outside aid organisations arrived. Many of these efforts were an extension of cultural norms and practices, embedded in *fa`aSāmoa*, which have equipped Samoans to deal with crises. Ablon (1972, p. 52) describes this eloquently:

> *Samoan families and communities have their own disaster plan, a complex pattern of expectations and actions that spontaneously becomes activated when a crisis arises. This plan is evident on a small scale at the time of the death of an individual, when all family members – including those so remote in degree that most Americans would have lost all record of relatedness – are expected to donate money and ritual items of goods and food to the bereaved family.*

Following the tsunami, affected individuals could expect help from three primary sources: (i) family and village leaders; (ii) churches and other local organisations; and (iii) family members living off-island. The arrival of outside aid introduced a large source of assistance that tended to replicate and disrupt, rather than support, these culturally-embedded capacities. In addition, local organisations in American Sāmoa reported feeling alienated from the response process. This suggests that outside aid organisations did not take full advantage of opportunities to collaborate with and support local organisations that played vital roles in the functioning of American Sāmoa before the tsunami, and that will continue to do so in the future. Interestingly, Paulson (1993) documented a case in which a similar outcome was avoided after a hurricane struck neighbouring Independent Sāmoa in 1990. She attributed the effectiveness of the local response to the fact that the 'amount of aid received at the village level was not overwhelming' (Paulson, 1993, p. 52). Households in Independent Sāmoa received very small quantities of goods (some food supplies and a small amount of cash), but not so much that it discouraged village-level rebuilding and recovery efforts.[4]

One way to view the relationship between local residents and organisations and outside actors in this context is as a case of intercultural contact. The literature provides examples of the challenges that arise in these instances, when disaster aid workers operate with a different worldview than that of the affected community. Kaniasty and Norris (1999, p. 36), for instance, note that:

> *[T]hese helping volunteers and professionals may lack information and understanding of the lives of those individuals they are trying to help. Helpers' working models of how to help, of what help is needed, or of what is appropriate and when are direct reflections of their own cultural and societal standing and convictions.*

In American Sāmoa, outside organisations disseminated aid based on their understanding of the local cultural context. Supplies were distributed to the village *matai* and *pulenu'u*, a decision that, laudably, reflected the centrality of the *matai* system in Samoan culture. Unfortunately, these efforts did not account adequately for the complexity and dynamic nature of *fa`aSāmoa*. While the assumption that the distribution of resources in American Sāmoa is administered by the *matai* is accurate, it is incomplete, as it does not represent the complexities associated with daily life in American Sāmoa, nor the cultural changes that are taking place.

What could be done differently?

In considering the response process in this and other disasters, one instructive question is: what could have been done differently? With regard to American Sāmoa, the following two key questions arise:

- How could the response process have been tailored better to the cultural context?
- How could the response have been more supportive of local capacities?

Answers to these questions need to be generated locally and in collaboration with aid agencies, although, as discussed, village leaders and representatives of local organisations did offer some specific recommendations as part of this study.

While highlighting the actual and potential roles of local systems and resources, this research is careful not to ignore the challenges that are evident in these systems. On the one hand, the *matai* system can be leveraged as a resource in disasters, yet its hierarchical nature is a potential challenge.[5] Relatedly, the local territorial government was viewed as exacerbating the challenges associated with the response and recovery processes. Villagers' dissatisfaction with response and recovery efforts centred on the role of outside aid organisations, but the local organisations that participated in this study (with one exception) also expressed dissatisfaction with the government's performance during this event. As of the completion of the fieldwork for this research in March 2012, though, there had been no formal debriefing meeting or other effort to facilitate discussions across organisations or sectors locally. Representatives of local organisations reported that the government was actively developing an operations plan for future disasters, but that it had not reached out to local organisations to include them in that process. One participant said that there had been some discussion of organising a debriefing meeting, but that it was unlikely to happen because there is a cultural expectation that the 'top people' will do the planning and make the decisions. In fact, despite their misgivings, representatives of three local organisations indicated that the government was primarily responsible for planning and preparing for future disasters, a view that is reflective of cultural norms related to attribution and social hierarchy (Poasa, Mallinckrodt, and Suzuki, 2000). This issue is complicated further by cultural shifts that appear to be altering perceptions of and opinions on these hierarchical structures.

While questions specific to planning for future disasters in American Sāmoa deserve further attention, the focus here is on more broadly applicable process-related matters. The analysis begins with a discussion of the importance of considering culture in disaster response and recovery interventions. It is imperative that disaster practitioners and researchers consider the role of culture in disaster contexts carefully and fully. The alternative, as stated by Trickett (2011, p. 64), is for culture to become 'something to which a program must be tailored, rather than a local ecology that requires understanding and prolonged engagement'. The shortcomings of approaches that do not reflect an adequate understanding or acknowledgement of culture as local ecology, both for the disaster-affected community and the outside aid organisations, have been highlighted in the literature and were evidenced in American Sāmoa. Alternately, a better understanding of the relationship between culture and post-disaster interventions, followed by the development of methods for operationalising that knowledge, can improve these outcomes, and provide a better foundation for long-term recovery.

Thorough and careful consideration of culture in disaster contexts is important, yet one must also consider what is appropriate and feasible in terms of the roles and responsibilities of outside aid organisations. In American Sāmoa, outside aid organisations took steps to be more reflective of local cultural systems, but their comprehension of them was incomplete. By acting on a surface-level understanding of the culture, their well-intentioned attempts at cultural sensitivity became a flaw in their efforts, and potentially a stumbling block in American Sāmoa's recovery. In other words, there is a level of risk inherent in operating with a partial understanding of a cultural system.

Still, cultural systems are both complex and dynamic. This is certainly the case in American Sāmoa, where long-held values and practices have recently begun to be questioned for the first time, and where the local territorial government was influential in shaping post-tsunami response and recovery processes. In these situations, it may seem infeasible or impractical to hold outside aid organisations (or any outsider) responsible for maintaining a deep understanding of each culture exposed to a disaster. Importantly, though, this knowledge is available locally, and can be utilised through meaningful collaboration with local organisations. It is the responsibility of outside aid organisations to work collaboratively with local organisations, and, notably, to do so in ways that privilege the cultural perspective of the local organisations.

The people of American Sāmoa, like other disaster-affected communities, were in need of help after the tsunami, but they were not helpless. They were harnessing their capacity as families, organisations, social groups, and villages to respond to their needs using methods that emerged from cultural beliefs, norms, and practices. In the case of American Sāmoa, more meaningful collaboration with local organisations may have complicated the implementation of aid programmes, but it would have represented an important investment in the viability of the organisations that are responsible for its long-term recovery, a process that will continue long after outside aid organisations depart. The response of local organisations in American Sāmoa

indicates that more work and more effective processes are needed. In addition, by working within the local cultural context, this type of collaboration would increase the ecological validity and minimise the unintended consequences of aid interventions (Kelly, 2010).

Finally, this discussion has implications for practice and research. For practitioners, careful consideration of the role of meaningful collaboration and of whose cultural perspective is privileged in the planning and implementation of aid programmes is recommended. Interventions that prioritise the local cultural perspective could address identified gaps in local resources without replicating or displacing resources that are available locally, or introducing resources or practices that are inconsistent with local norms. In this way, outside aid organisations could provide valuable and needed services while remembering that they are 'guests in someone else's house' (Trickett, 2011, p. 65). To this end, ecological assessments of the impacts of disasters and, subsequently, the arrival of aid would be beneficial. Hawe, Shiell, and Riley (2009) have developed one such evaluative framework that is grounded in ecological systems theory, and which views a given intervention as a 'critical event in the history of a system' (Hawe, Shiell, and Riley, 2009, p. 267). This framework could be applied to determine the effects of a disaster itself, or, perhaps more usefully, the ecological fit and the ramifications of post-disaster aid interventions (with the introduction of outside aid as the critical event).

More research, too, is needed. Studies could include ethnographic explorations of disaster response and recovery processes outside of the US to pinpoint specific ways in which culture influences the disaster process. Participatory research with affected communities would facilitate the identification of culturally-appropriate strategies for post-disaster assistance (Mercer et al., 2010). And valuable knowledge could be gained through explicit evaluations of the values that underlie post-disaster interventions, such as comparisons of perceptions of interventions across multiple stakeholders. The use of techniques such as discourse analysis (Oliver-Smith, 1996) could flag principal conceptual disconnects and highlight avenues for improving intercultural communication and cooperation in disaster settings.

Limitations

As with any study there are limitations that one should note. First, this study concentrated explicitly on the events surrounding the tsunami from the *community perspective*. A limited number of interviews were held with representatives of the territorial government, but the study did not include interviews with representatives of outside aid organisations. This was a strategic decision based on recommendations by key informants, intended to foster the highest level of trust possible between the lead author, community members, and community-based organisations. In addition, this approach enabled an emphasis on the community perspective, which is underrepresented in the literature and other sources. As such, these findings should be considered along with related studies that represent the perspectives of outside aid organisations.

Second, this study was also affected by a number of cultural issues. Language was a barrier in a small number of cases, although most residents of American Sāmoa speak English. Translators were employed on only two occasions. Still, some participants seemed to face a challenge in describing their experiences as richly in English as they could have done in their native language. Cultural norms also contributed to a gender imbalance in the sample, as it was more appropriate for the lead author to speak to and spend time with other women.

Third, recall bias was a potential concern, given the amount of time that had elapsed since the tsunami. Yet, it is important to note that the impacts of the tsunami were still very present among many participants at the time of this study, and the recovery process was ongoing. Furthermore, the literature indicates that self-reports related to disaster losses are reasonably stable over time (Norris and Kaniasty, 1992).

Finally, it was not possible to conduct follow-up interviews with the participants in this study, although multiple informal interactions did take place with several of them. This was primarily because of the living situation of the lead author during fieldwork. As a guest of a Samoan family, family expectations sometimes precluded additional meetings with participants.

Conclusion

By all accounts, the local response to the tsunami in American Sāmoa was impressive. Residents mobilised to help with the rescue and clean-up, as well as to provide food, shelter, and water to those who needed them. Still, the magnitude of the disaster meant that outside aid was necessary. That which arrived in American Sāmoa after the tsunami was critical in many ways. There was an acute need for food and water, and outside aid organisations helped to meet those needs until additional help could be secured from off-island family members, church networks, and other sources of assistance. On the whole, however, rather than leveraging local capacities successfully, outside aid efforts were perceived locally as a destabilising influence in the response and recovery process. Outside aid (and the way it was distributed) resulted in a disruption of local response efforts, social networks, and village hierarchies. Analyses of these events from the standpoint of Samoan culture suggested that, while the distribution of aid reflected, to some degree, traditional cultural norms, underlying cultural changes may have contributed to the sense of dissatisfaction with the response process.

This study has implications for the role of outside aid in diverse cultural contexts. It highlights the need for outside aid organisations to support local capacities. Although this is the intent of many such actors, more work needs to be done on understanding how to operationalise this objective in meaningful ways. This research also highlights the importance of cultural and intercultural understanding on the part of aid organisations. While the acute and unplanned nature of disasters must be taken into account, post-disaster interventions risk generating a host of unintended

consequences when they are not reflective of the local culture, or when they are based on limited comprehension of the local culture. Methods grounded in an ecological perspective may be helpful in understanding the impacts of disasters and post-disaster interventions, and for developing effective aid and recovery strategies that are ecologically valid, supportive of local capacities, and sensitive to the expressed needs and recovery goals of the communities in which outside aid organisations are operating.

Acknowledgements

This study was conducted while the lead author was a graduate student at the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa. Sincere gratitude is expressed to all of the research participants in American Sāmoa, for sharing their stories and for their invaluable guidance throughout the course of this study. Fa'afetai tele lava. Thanks also to Dr John Mayer for sharing his vast cultural expertise. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the American Evaluation Association's 'Evaluation 2012' in Minneapolis, MN, US, on 22–27 October 2012.

Correspondence

Sherri Brokopp Binder, BrokoppBinder Research & Consulting, 1553 W Turner St., Allentown, PA 18102, United States. E-mail: sbinder@brokoppbinder.com

Endnotes

[1] See Shore (1982) for an excellent description of the complexities and intricacies of *fa`aSāmoa*.

[2] The term *elderly* (or *elderlies*) is used locally to refer to older adults, so that is the term applied here.

[3] Prior to conducting the fieldwork for this study, local contacts in American Sāmoa suggested to the lead author that there was a level of mistrust between the villagers, the territorial government, and the outside aid organisations. Hence, the authors opted to focus the data collection effort at the community level, since, in this small community, interactions or associations with government officials or outside aid organisations would probably have jeopardised the lead author's relationships with community members. As with all research, the findings of this study are best understood in the context of other related works that explore this topic from alternative perspectives.

[4] For a broader discussion of this topic, see Olshansky (2005).

[5] While this proved true for disaster response and recovery processes in American Sāmoa generally, members of vulnerable populations, notably individuals from Independent Sāmoa and Tonga, faced particular challenges. Individuals from Independent Sāmoa and Tonga frequently emigrate to American Samoa in search of economic or educational opportunities or for US national status for their children. While people from Independent Sāmoa often live with family members in American Sāmoa, they are treated as second-class citizens in a number of respects, including access to jobs and services such as healthcare. The study data, while limited on this topic, indicate that this social status translated into vulnerability after the tsunami, and meant that members of these populations did not have the same access to resources as did others on the island.

References

Ablon, J. (1972) *Samoan Family and Community in Crisis: The All Hallows Fire*. Community Mental Health Training Program, San Francisco, CA.

Adams, G. and H.R. Markus (2004) 'Toward a conception of culture suitable for a social psychology of culture'. In M. Schaller and C.S. Crandall (eds.) *The Psychological Foundations of Culture*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Mahwah, NJ. pp. 335–360.

Aldrich, D.P. and M.A. Meyer (2014) 'Social capital and community resilience'. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 59(2). pp. 254–269.

Anderson, M.D. (2011) *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, VA.

ASVOAD (American Samoa Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) (2009) 'What is ASVOAD and why is it important to know about them?'. Press Release. December. http://citizencommand center.org/shelters/show/4801 (last accessed on 23 March 2016).

Barenstein, J.D. (2006) *Housing Reconstruction in Post-earthquake Gujarat*. HPN Network Paper No. 54 (March). Humanitarian Practice Network, Overseas Development Institute, London.

Baxter, P. and S. Jack (2008) 'Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers'. *The Qualitative Report*. 13(4). pp. 544–559.

Berke, P.R., R. Chuenpagdee, K. Juntarashote, and S. Chang (2008) 'Human–ecological dimensions of disaster resiliency in Thailand: social capital and aid delivery'. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. 51(2). pp. 303–317.

Binder, S.B., C.K. Baker, J. Mayer, and C.R. O'Donnell (2014) 'Resilience and recovery in American Sāmoa: a case study of the 2009 South Pacific tsunami'. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 42(7). pp. 799–822.

Blakeslee, G.H. (1928) 'The Future of American Samoa'. *Foreign Affairs*. 7(1). pp. 139–143.

Central Intelligence Agency (2013) 'Australia-Oceania: American Samoa'. The World Factbook. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aq.html (last accessed on 28 March 2016).

Chamlee-Wright, E. (2010) *The Cultural and Political Economy of Recovery: Social Learning in a Post-disaster Environment*. Routledge, New York, NY.

Corbin, J.W. and A. Strauss (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Third edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Second edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Cruz, M.R. and C.C. Sonn (2011) '(De)colonizing culture in community psychology: reflections from critical social science'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 47(1–2). pp. 203–214.

Cutter, S.L. et al. (2008) 'A place-based model for understanding community resilience to natural disasters'. *Global Environmental Change*. 18(4). pp. 598–606.

Daley, W.R., A. Karpati, and M. Sheik (2001) 'Needs assessment of the displaced population following the August 1999 earthquake in Turkey'. *Disasters*. 25(1). pp. 67–75.

Dynes, R.R. and T.E. Drabek (1994) 'The structure of disaster research: its policy and disciplinary implications'. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*. 12(1). pp. 5–23.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (2011) *A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action*. FDOC 104-008-1. December. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC. http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1813-25045-0649/whole_community_dec2011__2_.pdf (last accessed on 28 March 2016).

Fitzgerald, M.H. and A. Howard (1990) 'Aspects of social organization in three Samoan communities'. *Pacific Studies*. 14(1). pp. 31–54.

Freeman, D. (1983) *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Go, J. (2007) 'The provinciality of American empire: "liberal exceptionalism" and U.S. colonial rule, 1898–1912'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* 49(1). pp. 74–108.

Hawe, P., A. Shiell, and T. Riley (2009) 'Theorizing interventions as events in systems'. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 43(3–4). pp. 267–276.

Hiroa, T.R. (1930) *Samoan Material Culture.* Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI.

Irish, J.L., L.C. Ewing, and C.P. Jones (2012) 'Observations from the 2009 Samoa tsunami: damage potential in coastal communities'. *Journal of Waterway, Port, Coastal, and Ocean Engineering.* 138(2). pp. 131–141.

Jackson, P. (1991) 'The cultural politics of masculinity: towards a social geography'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers.* 16(2). pp. 199–213.

Kaniasty, K. and F.H. Norris (1999) 'The experience of disaster: individuals and communities sharing trauma'. In R. Gist and B. Lubin (eds.) *Response to Disaster: Psychosocial, Community, and Ecological Approaches.* Brunner/Mazel, Philadelphia, PA. pp. 25–61.

Kayser, K., L. Wind, and R.A. Shankar (2008) 'Disaster relief within a collectivistic context'. *Journal of Social Service Research.* 34(3). pp. 87–98.

Kelly, J.G. (2010) 'More thoughts: on the spirit of community psychology'. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 45(3–4). pp. 272–284.

Kenny, S. (2007) 'Reconstruction in Aceh: building whose capacity?'. *Community Development Journal.* 42(2). pp. 206–221.

Kral, M.J. et al. (2011) 'Culture and community psychology: toward a renewed and reimagined vision'. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 47(1–2). pp. 46–57.

Mercer, J., I. Kelman, L. Taranis, and S. Suchet Pearson (2010) 'Framework for integrating indigenous and scientific knowledge for disaster risk reduction'. *Disasters.* 34(1). pp. 214–239.

Norris, F.H. (2006) 'Disaster research methods: past progress and future directions'. *Journal of Traumatic Stress.* 19(2). pp. 173–184.

Norris, F.H. and K. Kaniasty (1992) 'Reliability of delayed self-reports in disaster research'. *Journal of Traumatic Stress.* 5(4). pp. 575–588.

Norris, F.H., C.K. Baker, A.D. Murphy, and K. Kaniasty (2005) 'Social support mobilization and deterioration after Mexico's 1999 flood: effects of context, gender, and time'. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 36(1–2). pp. 15–28.

O'Donnell, C.R. and R.G. Tharp (2012) 'Integrating cultural community psychology: activity settings and the shared meanings of intersubjectivity'. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 49(1–2). pp. 22–30.

Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security (2010) *American Samoa 2009 Earthquake and Tsunami: After-action Report.* OIG-11-03. October. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC. http://www.hsc-democrats.house.gov/SiteDocuments/20101112164313-77960.pdf (last accessed on 28 March 2016).

Oliver-Smith, A. (1996) 'Anthropological research on hazards and disasters'. *Annual Review of Anthropology.* 25. pp. 303–328.

Olshansky, R.B. (2005) 'How do communities recover from disaster? A review of current knowledge and an agenda for future research'. Paper presented at the *46th Annual Conference of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*, Kansas City, MO, US, 27–30 October 2005.

Paton, D. et al. (2007) 'The impact of the 2004 tsunami on coastal Thai communities: assessing adaptive capacity'. *Disasters.* 32(1). pp. 106–119.

Paulson, D.D. (1993) 'Hurricane hazard in Western Samoa'. *Geographical Review.* 83(1). pp. 43–53.

Poasa, K.H., B. Mallinckrodt, and L.A. Suzuki (2000) 'Causal attributions for problematic family interactions: a qualitative, cultural comparison of Western Samoa, American Samoa, and the United States'. *The Counseling Psychologist.* 28(1). pp. 32–60.

Rashid, S.F. (2000) 'The urban poor in Dhaka City: their struggles and coping strategies during the floods of 1998'. *Disasters*. 24(3). pp. 240–253.

Rumbach, A. and D. Foley (2014) 'Indigenous institutions and their role in disaster risk reduction and resilience: evidence from the 2009 tsunami in American Samoa'. *Ecology and Society*. 19(1). Article 19. http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol19/iss1/art19/ (last accessed on 28 March 2016).

Scandlyn, J., C.N. Simon, D.S.K. Thomas, and J. Brett (2010) 'Theoretical framing of worldviews, values, and structural dimensions of disasters'. In B.D. Phillips et al. (eds.) *Social Vulnerability to Disasters*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL. pp. 33–56.

Shore, B. (1982) *Sala'ilua: A Samoan Mystery*. Columbia University Press, New York, NY.

Sztompka, P. (2000) 'Cultural trauma: the other face of social change'. *European Journal of Social Theory*. 3(4). pp. 449–466.

Telford, J. and J. Cosgrave (2007) 'The international humanitarian system and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis'. *Disasters*. 31(1). pp. 1–28.

Thorburn, C. (2009) 'Livelihood recovery in the wake of the tsunami in Aceh'. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*. 45(1). pp. 85–105.

Trickett, E.J. (2011) 'From "water boiling in a Peruvian town" to "letting them die": culture, community intervention, and the metabolic balance between patience and zeal'. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 47(1–2). pp. 58–68.

Wolff, K., V. Koller, E. Walters, and D.W. Son (2012) *From Tsunami to Renewal: A Review of American Samoa's National Emergency Grant Program*. Social Policy Research Associates, Oakland, CA. http://www.americansamoarenewal.org/sites/default/files/American_Samoa_Report.pdf (last accessed on 28 March 2016).

Yin, R.K. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Third edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Copyright of Disasters is the property of Wiley-Blackwell and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.