

**DISASTER STUDIES: AN ANALYSIS OF  
THE SOCIAL HISTORICAL  
FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF RESEARCH IN THE AREA\***

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*Almost nothing has been written about the social historical emergence and development of social and behavioral research on disasters. This paper provides a description and a sociology of scientific knowledge analysis of the factors affecting the initiation of studies in the area in the United States. First, we note how disaster research on group and behavioral aspects of disasters had their roots, almost exclusively, in rather narrowly focused applied questions or practical concerns. Second, we point out how this led to certain kinds of selective emphases in terms of what and how the research was undertaken in the pioneering days, but with substantive consequences which we still see operative today.*

Very little has been written about the history of social science disaster research, the factors which have influenced the emergence of this field of study, and the ensuing theoretical and methodological consequences for scientific work on the human and group aspects of disasters (for passing observations, see, Fritz 1968; Quarantelli 1972; Quarantelli

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