as a direct result of housing damage, among them domestic workers in Miami. Often primary hurricane victims themselves in hard-hit South Dade County, many lost work when their middle-class employers lost their homes or temporarily relocated during reconstruction. Contractor fraud was reported by some respondents in Miami during the rebuilding phase, particularly targeting older, non-English-speaking women.

Home-based work losses were reported by self-employed women in both cities. Grand Forks flood victims minimized housing damage ("just six feet in my basement"), but basements often provided needed living space. Basements were also used for storing equipment and supplies used by low-income women in home day care, hair dressing, bookkeeping and other forms of home work. For example, each of the Grand Forks family day care providers interviewed reported significant economic losses; estimates of how much their earnings contributed to family income ranged from 30 to 100 percent. Home-based child care was a vital but invisible part of the Grand Forks economy until floodwaters washed away basement services and kept thousands of employed mothers at home. A childhood educator observed:

> What happened was that most of the facilities in which children were cared for were flooded. There were very few that weren't flooded, because most of them were in basements. That's where we keep kids! . . .So everything shut down. And even the ones that didn't get damaged, they didn't have water—it was impossible to provide care. So what happened was the astounding realization that when businesses needed parents back in the work force, they didn't have anywhere to leave their kids. So all of a sudden it became an important issue. It was one of the

key issues in getting people back to work.

10. Emotional impacts of housing loss were gendered. Returning to damaged or destroyed housing may be especially difficult emotionally for those who built or remodeled their own homes, more often men than women. A member of the disaster outreach team touring Grand Forks met this distressed wife in an affluent flooded neighborhood:

> We had a lady call us and say 'Just come, I'll show you' We go down there and the guy got out of the car and he stopped at the end of the driveway and he sobbed and he sobbed. And she goes, 'This is what he does every time. We can't even talk. He's a wreck and I have to hold everything together.'

Women often articulated especially strong ties to place, reflecting the gendered division of labor and the material grounding of women's lives in the domestic realm. Women, in turn, may experience the loss of relational space more acutely. In both studies, women recalled their destroyed or damaged homes as places of personal growth where babies were born, family rituals enacted, gardens tended, and emotional and physical lives constructed under their care. The loss of household possessions was the loss of family history and personal identity: "Every box of my life was floating around," one Grand Forks woman remembered feeling as she surveyed her flooded basement (Fothergill 1998).[5] Less visible than male-dominated clean-up in the public realm, women's work in and around the damaged household enhances the emotional and material recovery of the family, for example when Grand Forks mothers retrieved and cleaned family memorabilia discarded on curbside berms.[6]

11. Some women took on nontraditional roles in the housing crisis. Though rarely employed in construction trades, women in a number of families reported practicing or developing new construction skills as they worked alongside husbands to repair their homes, especially in low-income households. As this woman reported:

> I can do wire now! Changed all my outlets and I can put up lights. I'm real scared of wiring even though I've done that. And I really got to be a good plasterer because I didn't like the way they did it so I redid it at nights myself.

In Grand Forks and Miami families, supervising or negotiating conditions with contractors, repair crews, and insurance agents often became women's work. Women reportedly took on most of the bureaucratic work of rebuilding (e.g. applying for building permits, arranging for volunteer assistance), as they had taken on the paperwork of emergency relief earlier on. The migrant community agency in Miami that built replacement housing after the hurricane reported that women were among those residents most actively involved in hands-on construction work. In the construction of Habitat homes in Grand Forks, women were engaged in critical roles as board members, construction managers, and volunteers.

12. Women organized politically to influence housing policy during the rebuilding phase, though social action was difficult in post-disaster conditions. Often lacking cars, burdened by the needs of dependents, and facing the challenges of home repair, it was difficult for women in both communities to make their housing needs visible in the public rebuilding process, as this outreach worker observed in Grand Forks: "We have a lot of public forums where people are allowed to come and—but I don't

think that works for [women]. You don't take your kids, or you can't get there, for starters. It just doesn't work."

Women did successfully organize around housing and other issues in Miami, where the multicultural women's coalition Women Will Rebuild established a working committee to investigate women's housing conditions and needs.[7] A founding member described the housing conditions which moved her to action:

> What I was seeing when I went to the trailer parks...over and over again the people who were living in unbelievable circumstances were women. They were living in those ghastly trailers. There was no playground, there wasn't a swing, there wasn't anything. The kids' main toys were razor-sharp pieces of metal from the blown-away trailers. They were being incredibly persecuted by the white mobile park owners who were getting zillions from the feds and who never had 'funny people' in their place before. And it was hell down there. Grandmothers were taking care of a trailer full of kids. Mothers were out working. There was one huge park with no phones because the owner wouldn't let them in. So try to imagine all those children with no access to a 911 number. These were the kinds of stresses I was seeing. I was listening to those fancy people sitting over in the Gables who had no sense of what was going on down on the ground.

Latina women in Grand Forks reported racial bias in apartment rentals (and in the distribution of relief goods), lack of rental housing affordable to low-income Latina families, and lack of recovery assistance for migrant workers absent during the flood but impacted indirectly by housing shortages when they returned for the growing season. A

focus group of seven Latinas criticized city officials' approval of expensive new townhouses, asking "So who's going to benefit? There's homeless people still . . .We're thinking of forming a group. It's still in the making, but we want to get together—all Hispanic women—so we can have a voice. We still need to get some basics."

Implications for Action

The patterns and issues reported here from two field studies are suggestive but far from conclusive. Disaster responders, elected officials, government leaders, community activists, and vulnerable women in at-risk communities all need more concrete knowledge about women and disaster housing. Practitioners need more concrete information on specific housing issues likely to impact women in order to more effectively anticipate problems and match resources and needs.

This analysis focused on utilizing gender-specific knowledge to reduce community vulnerability. Women's housing needs are frequently subsumed under generalized categories (e.g., low-income households, racial-ethnic groups, the elderly), although the root causes of their housing crisis and their need for services may well differ, for example in the case of female and male homelessness before and after disasters.

In this regard, funding gender-sensitive research on local vulnerability patterns is a significant mitigation strategy. Emergency management organizations should also consider gender audits of housing policies and practices to assess whose needs are addressed, what groups are targeted, what assumptions are made, what resources are made available, what benefits are likely, and how gender relations are impacted (Kabeer

1994: 302).

Grassroots women's organizations can and should be fully engaged as co-researchers in participatory research projects, drawing on their local knowledge about women's local living conditions to design studies providing local practitioners with useful information and insight. Qualitative methods such as focus groups, semi-structured interviewing, and oral history will be useful strategies for bringing the diverse voices of ordinary women to community emergency planning. Evaluation researchers can identify "best practice" models in which women's housing needs in disaster contexts are successfully addressed. As Blaikie and his colleagues note (1994: 227), sex-specific data on the "hazardousness of home and workplace" will provide important information on the root causes of community vulnerability. More longitudinal research projects are also needed to track women's housing recovery in diverse racial, economic, and age groups.

Hazards assessment at the local level should incorporate a gendered analysis of housing vulnerability, and accurately reflect the needs of all at-risk populations. Vulnerability maps should incorporate such indicators as the location and size of public housing units, residential patterns and trends among single parents and elderly women, home work patterns, migrant housing and labor market patterns, average numbers of women residing in emergency domestic violence shelter, spaces utilized by homeless women, local housing costs, and sex-specific income and employment data. If not yet available at the local and regional levels (and gender-specific data are rare in the tool kit of most emergency planners), it should be developed through collaborative research projects involving academic researchers, community members, and disaster planners.

Meeting practical needs and long-term interests

Figure 1 [Figure 1 about here] offers ten strategies for addressing the material housing needs of different groups of women through the disaster cycle. Researchers and responders have offered a variety of models for mitigating housing losses, stressing the need to address the chronic housing needs of the "persistently vulnerable" (Bolin and Stanford 1998: 33), map the housing vulnerabilities of migrants, transients, complex households, the disabled, and other groups, and broaden the planning base to utilize the local knowledge of community-based organizations (among others, see Bolin and Stanford 1998; Morrow 1999; Phillips 1993: BAREPP 1992). The strategies offered here build on this framework but identify women as a housing-vulnerable group with specific needs and resources.

Meeting women's practical housing needs—for example, of senior women living alone for home repairs, or of single mothers in trailer camps for adequate transportation–is vital, but does not challenge deeply-rooted patterns of gender, race, and class power producing women's housing insecurity. To reduce social inequalities placing women at risk, d*isaster housing policies and practices must also support women's autonomy.* Reconstruction programs should support women's right to secure housing, accommodate women's responsibilities in the home, work force, and community, and facilitate women's access to nontraditional skills, tools, and responsibilities.

Affordable, safe, and appropriate housing for women is both an immediate post-impact need, and in the long-range interest of gender equality and community solidarity before and after damaging extreme events. Secure housing which meets the needs of

women at all income levels, in all cultural communities, across the life cycle, and with varying physical abilities is an essential precondition for women's autonomy.

Engendering reconstruction is also in the long-term interest of women as well as men. Postdisaster redevelopment forces the issue of how communities are constructed socially as well as materially, affording a window of opportunity for revisioning housing and community life. Feminist urban planners, geographers, architects, and activists have offered models for woman-friendly redevelopment, including such features as affordable and accessible housing for women through the life cycle, shared open space, on-site child care and other social and human services, decentralized employment and city services, safe public lighting, and affordable public transit (e.g. Hayden 1981; Eichler 1995). Disaster professionals working with communities to rebuild should include this perspective and these professionals in their consultations.

Finally, women need *decision-making voice in constructing sustainable built environments*. Local mitigation initiatives must engage women's groups and advocates representing migrant and homeless families, minority families in at-risk neighborhoods, battered women, the frail elderly, women in public housing and other insecurely housed women. Women's long-range housing interests are rarely part of public discourse in the highly politicized process of postdisaster housing redevelopment. But effective planning for sustainable and disaster-resilient human settlements cannot engage only the energies and ideas of men; women, too, must be fully engaged as full and equal partners. Rebuilding without taking the material conditions of women's lives into account not only fails to mitigate the impact of future disasters but reconstructs significant housing

vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

Understanding that disasters are as much social constructions as the individuals, households, organizations, and communities they touch, disaster researchers have searched for underlying fault lines and fractures placing communities at risk—including gender inequalities. Women's practical needs and long-range interests in secure housing were investigated in this context, suggesting root vulnerabilities in developed societies and addressing the practical question "so what?"

The absolute need for shelter, land, and secure housing is manifestly greater in the world's most impoverished nations and where women lack land and inheritance rights. Secure housing under those conditions is a vital need for women before, during, and after disasters. But demographic trends and global development patterns suggest that housing is and will increasingly be salient for women in the world's wealthiest nations as well. Persistently high poverty rates, women's longevity, the global trend toward single mothering, cutbacks in social subsidies for affordable housing, and increases in family homelessness and homelessness caused by violence against women undermine the housing security of women across the nation long before the threat of flood or hurricane.

Preliminary and suggestive in nature, findings from the gender-focused field studies reviewed here also suggest a range of housing issues that arise for at-risk women impacted by disaster in wealthy developed nations like the United States. Both overlapping and distinct from those experienced by women in developing countries, these include: shortage of housing affordable to women, especially to low-income women

supporting families; gender-based barriers to household preparation and repair; stressful living conditions for women caregivers in temporary accommodations; economic losses to home-based businesses; increased risks for women in domestic violence shelters or otherwise homeless; and neglect of women's long-term housing interests as community rebuild. A better understanding of these complex and inter-related housing issues can guide community planning, and may help untangle the causes of women's apparently higher levels of post-disaster stress (e.g. Ollenburger and Tobin 1998).

Finally, a number of action steps for planners and practitioners were suggested to help integrate gender-specific housing issues into community-based mitigation and response planning. Why should practitioners take this up? In the final analysis, focusing on women's housing needs is a needed tool, providing a framework for planners and residents to work together in practical ways to anticipate and plan for disasters. Disaster practice based on concrete knowledge of how and where women live and the housing issues they face in emergencies is an essential step toward building more disaster-resilient households and communities.

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Notes

[1] My thanks to Dr. Kimberly Porter of the University of North Dakota History Department and to Eliot Glassheim of the UND Museum of Art for facilitating early access to this invaluable resource.

[2] In contrast, a study of middle-class couples in Miami found most men highly involved in physically preparing their own and others' homes, perhaps finding hurricane warnings more credible than flood level predictions (Alway, Belgrave, and Smith 1998). Facing more remote threats, men were less likely than women to seek information or protect household items in a study of aftershock communication after the Loma Prieta earthquake (O'Brien and Atchison 1998).

[3] Gender bias in evacuation can also be explicit, as occurred across the U.S. border in the rural municipality of Richot in Manitoba. There, only women providing direct services to the remaining male responders (e.g. waitresses) were exempt from mandatory evacuation orders as the Red River floodwaters moved north (Enarson and Scanlon 1999). Australian researchers found stress levels to be higher among evacuees from Cyclone Tracy, among them virtually all the women and children of Darwin (Milne 1979).

[4] A study from Perth, Scotland found that even basic household appliances like washing machines were not widely available ("50 caravans and one washing machine") and time-consuming and expensive daily trips to buy food were necessary in temporary accommodation (Fordham and Ketteridge 1998:88; see also Fordham 1998). That temporary housing during evacuation impacts women's lives more than men's was also

apparent among families evacuated from the Red River flood in Canada (Enarson and Scanlon 1999).

[5] My thanks to Alice Fothergill for sharing an early version of the manuscript from which this quotation is taken.

[6] Participants at an Australian symposium on women and disaster noted that male clean-up crews tendency to throw away damaged personal items conflicted with women's desire to clean and preserve emotionally significant household items and may contribute to postdisaster stress. See Dobson 1994; Fuller 1994; and Honeycombe 1994.

[7] See Enarson and Morrow (1998a) for an analysis of Women Will Rebuild. See also Leavitt's description (1992) of women's activism in public housing damaged by civil disorder in Los Angeles, and Turner's (1997) analysis of Anglo women mobilizing around home clean-up and sanitation issues in the aftermath of the 1900 Galveston hurricane.

Figure 1. Strategies for Meeting Women's Practical Needs in Disaster Housing

1. **Identify insecurely housed women at the local level for priority assistance with preparedness, evacuation, repair, and rehousing, including women in domestic violence shelters, low-income women heading households, senior and disabled women, public housing residents, and home-working women.**

2. **Include locations of group homes, homeless shelters, public housing, non-confidential domestic violence shelters, extended care facilities, and migrant labor camps in community hazards maps.**

3. **Organize and administer emergency and temporary housing projects to meet women's needs for personal safety, child care, access to relevant employers, public transportation, reproductive health care, and gender-sensitive mental health services; employ a gender-fair checklist to plan and evaluate housing projects.**

4. **Develop educational materials for use by women's grassroots organizations to educate senior women, non-English-speakers, low-income single mothers, undocumented women, and other vulnerable women about safe clean-up, home repair, fraud, exploitation, redevelopment policies, and other housing issues.**

5. **Develop gender-specific emergency communications, e.g. publications responding to male resistance to home preparedness and evacuation, providing contact information for caregiver support, etc.**

6. **Provide and subsidize drop-in child care and adult respite care in temporary housing sites and central community facilities during evacuation, clean-up, and rebuilding; provide on-site child care at meetings of temporary residents' councils, community committees, and government bodies deliberating postdisaster housing decisions.**

7. **Monitor progress of repairs in public housing, migrant housing, women's shelters and other sites housing vulnerable women; liaise with knowledgeable community groups, e.g. through an appointed municipal ombudsperson.**

8. **Develop a community roster of women in the construction professions and trades and offer nontraditional skills training for women during repair and reconstruction; strive for gender-balanced contracting during clean up and rebuilding.**

9. **Mandate consultation with low-income women, women heading households, and other insecurely housed residents in the design and location of new housing units.**

10. **Implement gender audits assessing and monitoring impacts of new housing initiatives or land use policies on women operating home businesses, low-income single mothers, women with mobility barriers, and other vulnerable women.**

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