

Local Faith Communities and Their Motivations for Involvement in Disaster Management  
Activities

by

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**Abstract**

Local faith Communities (LFCs), with their teachings, practices, resources, and structural organization, are increasingly being identified as vital sources of partnership in Disaster Management (DM) activities. Unfortunately, the voices of LFCs themselves have not always been widely represented. Most research into these partnerships has been conducted from the perspective of Disaster Management Specialists and Organizations (DMSOs) and their respective goals. The aim of this research is to dialogue with individuals identified as “leaders” in LFCs to capture insights into their motivations for playing a role in such partnerships. The primary research question is, “How do members of local faith communities perceive their role(s) in response to disasters?” Data gathering utilized semi-structured interviews with individuals from a variety of LFCs in the southern Vancouver Island region and used a generic qualitative research approach to explore the question. This research was also a form of action research insofar as the author sought to encourage dialogue within LFCs concerning DM and their role(s) with it. Partnership between DMSOs and LFCs, in order to be a true partnership, multidisciplinary in nature, requires an open and honest willingness to listen to one another’s perspectives, misgivings, and motivations. This research is an attempt to hear the voices of LFCs and provide DMSOs with important insights. The research indicated that LFC leaders had a clear understanding of what constituted a “disaster” and how their communities can play a role in preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery activities through providing material and human resources, as well as social capital. Many leaders highlighted their organization’s focus on social justice and special efforts to support marginalized communities in times of disaster. Though low numbers, limited resources, and aging membership were realities which hindered some LFCs capacity to respond to disasters, all participants clearly identified “compassion” as

## LFC MOTIVATIONS

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the most significant motivating factor and mandate for responding, in whatever way possible.

Moving forward, there is potential value in developing more and deeper bi-directional training opportunities to build closer partnerships between LFCs and DMSOs.

Keywords: religion, local faith communities, disaster, disaster management, partnership, training, motivation, interdisciplinary, social capital, compassion, hindrances

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**Local Faith Communities and Their Motivations for Involvement in Disaster Management****Activities**

As Disaster Management Specialists and Organizations (DMSOs) seek to develop more and better partnerships with local communities to facilitate cooperation, build resilience, and discover more opportunities to enable DM strategies, one vector that has been increasingly leveraged in the last 20 years is that of “religious” communities. Evidenced by the literature review below, local faith communities (LFCs), with their teachings, practices, resources, and structural organization, are increasingly being identified as vital sources of partnership. On the other hand, despite this growing relationship and subsequent research, the voices of LFCs themselves have not always been widely represented. Though there is much made of the differing interpretations of the meaning of ‘disaster events’ and ‘recovery’ among LFCs and their subsequent impact on Disaster Management (DM) activities, this is only one small part of the conversation between faith-based organizations (FBOs), LFCs and, DMSOs (Alawiyah, Bell, Pyles, & Runnels, 2011; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015). In the evolution of this thesis, several different terms have been used to refer to both sides of this relationship. During my literature review I became aware of the term “faith-based organization” (FBO) which referred to any organization that included some religious faith as part of its mandate. This category included everything from international organizations like World Vision and Islamic Relief Worldwide to local organizations such as Our Place (mandate: to provide a sense of hope and belonging to Greater Victoria’s most vulnerable citizens) and LFCs themselves. Because of the prevalence of the term “FBO” in the literature, I relied on it until my final drafts when I came to realize that my research was more precisely focused on capturing the perspectives of leadership in LFCs such as mosques, temples, and churches. In addition, though

I started by describing LFCs interactions with “Disaster Management (DM) activities,” this term broadened into Disaster Management Specialists and Organizations (DMSOs) to better reflect the other half of the relationship. Most research into the pros and cons of this partnership had been conducted from the perspective of DMSOs and their respective goals alone. The aim of this research was to dialogue with individuals identified as *leaders* in LFCs to capture insights into why they see themselves playing a role in such partnerships. I analyzed the gathered data to highlight relevant themes for the facilitation of interdisciplinary partnerships between LFCs and DMSOs. My primary research question is, “How do members of local faith communities perceive their role(s) in response to disasters?” This question can be broken down into the following sub-questions: How do LFCs define disasters? What types of hazard events do LFCs relate to disasters? What have been the previous experiences of LFCs in responding to disasters? What is/are the motivation(s) for LFC participation in DM activities? What concerns might LFCs have about engaging in disaster response activities? And do LFCs see themselves as ‘extending’ or ‘expanding’ (defined below) organizations in the context of disaster response?

As with most research work, I came to this thesis through a myriad of different, but related, questions. Despite the temptation to gloss over this process for the sake of simplicity, I feel there is value in “showing my work” to better describe how this thesis journey has been an organic learning experience. The specific topic of positionality will be dealt with more fully later.

I started raising questions about the role of LFCs in DM activities during an on-campus class (Facilitation, Coordination and Decision Making in Multi-Stakeholder Environments) in April 2018. While discussing ways of categorizing the types of organizations which play roles in DM, our class was introduced to Dynes’ organizational typology, as seen in Figure 1 (Dynes,

<b>Organizations in Disasters</b>			
<b>Tasks related to DM</b>	<b>Organizational Structure</b>		
		<b>Old</b>	<b>New</b>
	<b>Old</b>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Expanding</i>
	<b>New</b>	<i>Extending</i>	<i>Emergent</i>

*Figure 1.* Dynes Typology of Organizations in Disasters

While discussing the subtle differences between “extending” and “expanding” organizations, a question regarding the proper categorization of LFCs was raised. Do LFCs have a pre-existing mandate to expand and respond in times of disaster or was this task something a LFC might choose to extend and “take on” in response to disasters? This question elicited different responses not only from the class but also from colleagues when I raised it on various occasions. The variety of different responses led me to focus more on how different LFC leaders perceived their roles with respect to disasters. I explored this specific question during my literature review, anticipating that I might find answers in the concepts of “social capital,” “meaning making,” or “spirituality.” I soon discovered that although “social capital,” and “meaning-making” were referenced, most DM researchers focussed on describing the contributions of LFCs in terms of the types of tangible resources they might offer – labour, shelter, food and water, and the like. Considering this discovery, my question again evolved to focus more specifically on how LFCs themselves perceived their role(s) in response to disasters. The question needing a multi-disciplinary response at the heart of this inquiry was, how might understanding the self-perceived

role(s) of LFCs improve the effectiveness of the LFC/DMSO relationship? Stepping back from this larger question, I decided that, considering the very few examples of LFC-centric research into DM roles, for this thesis, I would capture the voices of LFCs themselves as they described their perspectives on their roles and motivations in disaster and emergency management.

### **Literature Review**

The original focus of the literature review was to explore how different LFCs were able to play roles in building social capital and resilience amongst victims in the context of disaster response as well as their motivations. Starting with varied Boolean searches of recent research which made specific reference to “building,” “community,” “resilience,” “religion,” “meaning-making,” “faith,” and “disaster(s),” I collected over 50 applicable articles and books. My finalized list of resources was selected based on three factors: a clear focus on the relationship between LFCs and DMSOs, a focus on the effectiveness of these relationships, and attempts to capture the motivations for these relationships. This list of 17 sources made up the core of my literature review and included both social science and disaster management perspectives. The next task in the review was to clarify some key terminology.

Four terms I chose to frame the current understanding of the perceived role(s) of LFCs in DM activities included, “disaster,” “disaster response,” “resilience,” and “social capital.” The choice of these terms was based on a number of factors. The terms “disaster” and “disaster response” were foundational to my research question. In exploring how LFCs perceived their roles in response to disasters, I sought not only to explore “official” definitions but the “working definitions” found within LFCs themselves. “Resilience” was a theme constantly highlighted through my Disaster and Emergency Management courses as a vital element of DMSO activities. Also, “resilience” was, at the time, a significant theme being explored within the Canadian

Armed Forces, my employer. The overlap in these emphases encouraged my interest to discovering the possible role of resilience in LFC responses to disasters. In my first analysis of my sources, “social capital,” including bonding, linking, and bridging social capital (defined below), was clearly highlighted as a resilience factor which LFCs ‘brought to the table,’ and so, clearly defining it became important.

Next, I explored some of the general motivations for the integration of LFCs into DM activities considering changing attitudes towards religion in DM scholarship and practice.

Finally, I attempted to show how the perspectives of those in the field of DM towards LFCs had evolved in recent years.

<b>Disaster</b>	“A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins” (IFRC, 2019).
<b>Disaster Response</b>	“Comprehensive disaster management is based upon four distinct components: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery...Response...involves taking action to reduce or eliminate the impact of disasters that have occurred or are currently occurring, in order to prevent further suffering, financial loss, or a combination of both” (Coppola, 2015, p. 12).
<b>Resilience</b>	“The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organising itself to increase this capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures” (UNISDR, 2005, p. 437).
<b>Social Capital</b>	“...the features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993).

*Table 1. Key Definitions for Literature Review*

One further term needs to be addressed at this point for the sake of clarity, is “response.”

In disaster management studies, the term “response,” usually refers to one of the four phases in disaster management activities: preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery. Response in this case refers to “actions aimed at limiting injuries, loss of life, and damage to property and the environment that are taken before, during, and immediately after a hazard event” (Coppola, 2015, p.322). Indeed, the Dynes’ Typology introduced above is meant to be specifically applied to the response phase. Although I started my research using “response” in this technical way, my focus broadened. I started exploring the how and why of LFC “responses” to all phases of disaster management. Other than in direct relation to questions regarding Dynes’ Topology, it is best to read “response” in this thesis in a more general way.

### **Motivation for the integration of LFCs in DM activities**

An overwhelming 13 of 17 sources (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah et al, 2011; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Goldstein, 2012; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015; Jonathan et al., 2014; Paton & Johnston, 2017; Rivera, 2018; Ross & Berkes, 2014; Stajura, Glik, Eisenman, Prelip, Martel, & Sammartinova, 2012) consistently emphasized the benefits of integrating LFCs into DM activities and programs. It is worth noting that these sources described research within a wide variety of cultural, geographical, and political contexts, and, for this reason, some of the positive attitudes towards integration and suggestions for improvement are context specific. I have sought to find the commonalities across these differing contexts for learnings or findings with a more general relevance. Regarding terminology and reference to LFCs or FBOs, there was a variety of usage. The term, “faith-based community” or “organization” was used by about half of these resources as a ‘catch-all’ term for any organization with a faith-based mandate. This usage of the term

generally reflected Stajura et al's (2012) use of the CDC definition of FBOs as "churches, synagogues, mosques, church sponsored service agencies, and all charitable organizations with religious affiliations" (CDC, 2010). Despite the prevalence of this general term, most of those sources clearly expressed a positive attitude towards the integration of LFCs, in particular, into DM activities. The most common justification for this integration was grounded in the continued prevalence of religion in contemporary cultures (Bryant-Davos & Wong, 2013; Dueck & Byron, 2011). This argument was reinforced by the practical consideration that, in monitoring community resilience, evaluating a community's networks and capacity to build and maintain social capital must consider all facets of the community. This means not failing to seriously consider the religious element of a community. Joakim and White (2015) argued that "working within the religious framework of people affected by disasters should be seen as another component of the social and cultural context in which disasters occur" (p. 206). Also, because of the "bridging social capital" inherent in most LFCs, their inclusion can aid in ensuring that support is provided to "underserved" and "at risk" populations (Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Stajura et al, 2012). In contrast to "bonding social capital," which highlights those common interests which are shared within a community, "bridging social capital" refers to the subsequent relationships built among different groups of people because of members' participation in a shared community (e.g. the bridging of disparate economic classes in a local mosque) (Wuthnow, 2002, p. 670). A final point to add with respect to the benefits of integrating LFCs into DM activities is the question of *when* this integration should take place. Adams (2016) and Stajura et al (2012) argued that building relationships *before* disasters was far better than trying to do so in the midst of a crisis or aftermath of recovery. Integrating LFCs earlier can help to clarify roles, ensure competencies, and build trust. Also, as Aten (2012) stated, "adopting a

participatory learning and action focus, where the local knowledge and capabilities are recognized and incorporated into response and recovery process provides a helpful framework for incorporating the faith and culture of the survivor into the healing process” (p. 133).

Though my research eventually evolved to focus more on roles and self-perceptions within LFCs, the literature did reflect significant research into the role of religious meaning making and its relation to resilience. A few points from some recent studies are worth noting. For the most part, research into meaning-making (religious or otherwise) deals primarily with the recovery phase of disaster management - a natural place to find survivor’s trying to find meaning (Captari, Hook, Aten, Davis & Tisdale, 2019; Davis, Kimball, Aten, Andrews, Van Tongeren, Hook...Park, 2019; Davis, Van Tongeren, McElroy□Heltzel, Rice, Hook, Aten...Lemke, 2021; Park, 2016). There is clear evidence that religious aspects of survivors’ global worldviews have an important influence on overall resilience (Park, 2016; Davis, Kimball et al, 2019). This relationship can be complex, however. Davis, Van Tongeren et al (2019) suggested, “religious disaster survivors may tend to draw on their religion/spirituality to cope with disaster-related adversity, but they do not necessarily tend to experience positive R/S [Religious/Spiritual] growth as a result of that adversity” (p. 13). Interesting as this topic may be, it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

### **Changing attitudes towards religion and the integration of LFCs**

One theme which arose from the literature review worth mentioning was a growing realization of the continued prevalence of religion in contemporary society. Despite predictions of the gradual eclipsing of religion by scientific thought and rationality which marked much of the Modern and Post-modern eras of academic thought, the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is one where religion remains widespread and integral to all world cultures, even those considered more

‘secular.’ “Religion” has not gone away. Bryant-Davos and Wong (2013) stated, “8 in 10 people globally affiliate with a religious group” (p. 676). Dueck and Byron (2011) asserted that the fact that 73% of world's population was “religious” was not only significant but could not be overlooked (p. 251). Regardless of the exact numbers, both made explicit arguments that the religious nature of contemporary cultures cannot be ignored, a sentiment shared by most of my sources. Religion remains a significant aspect of most people’s culture and, as Browne recently pointed out, “research suggests that people are more resilient when their cultural needs and values are represented, respected, and supported” (Browne, 2015; Marino, 2015; Maldonado and Lazrus, et al, 2016 cited in FEMA, 2019, p. 13).

Five sources specifically noted that attitudes towards LFCs, and faith-based organizations in general, have changed significantly in the field of DM over recent years. Alawiyah et al (2011), in their study of records created during early Katrina-recovery, noted a significant discrepancy between how victims and support providers (in this case, mainly social workers) viewed and referred to the benefits of religion and LFCs for recovery. They concluded that “social workers need to continue to educate themselves about spirituality and religion in different client groups and forge alliances with faith-based organizations so that they can enhance clients’ resilience in adversity” (Alawiyah et al, 2011, p. 316). Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) pointed out that the contributions of LFCs to DM activities had been a relatively neglected area of study and that, since LFCs clearly had been and continued to be present in such activities, more research needed to be done. Dueck and Byron (2011) directly challenged the outdated notion that religious theology itself might have a detrimental effect on resilience-building. Looking more closely at religious narratives, worldviews, and rituals, Dueck and Byron (2011) suggested that LFCs and their religious thinking could offer a positive philosophy of life,

positive societal exemplars, and strong connections (p. 247). They could help victims transcend their situation, have hope for the future, connect to social networks where resources could be shared, in addition to providing rituals which could bring people together (Dueck & Byron, 2011, p. 251). Finally, as mentioned above, there were strong arguments that any attempt to build resilience through bridging social capital must begin to acknowledge the presence and input of LFCs to be comprehensive and effective (Stajura et al, 2012).

### **Perceived pros and cons to integration**

At the heart of this review I found, amid many different academic approaches and purposes, a lengthy list of pros and cons concerning the integration of LFCs into DM processes. Though the benefits far outweighed the drawbacks, some of the most supportive arguments for LFC integration also cautioned that an awareness of drawbacks was valuable for effective disaster management. The most often mentioned benefit was that of material and human resources (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Joakim & White, 2015; Rivera, 2018; Stajura et al, 2012). Buildings, financial support, and large volunteer bases were three of the most common resources mentioned. There were numerous examples of situations where local faith communities were able to make buildings, facilities, money, and volunteers available to first responders and disaster managers, often supplying these resources rapidly. With the growing awareness of the role of social capital in resilience-building, much of the literature (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah et al, 2011; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Rivera, 2018; Stajura et al, 2012) also highlighted the capacity of LFCs to bring bonding, bridging, and linking social capital to DM activities in all phases of disaster management. Having already defined “bridging” and “bonding” social capital above, “linking social capital refers to the relationships between the community and higher formal institutions”

(Mignone, 2003). In a more general sense, several sources (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah et al, 2011; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Joakim & White, 2015; Rivera, 2018) argued that the networks which many LFCs have in place on local, national, and international levels are valuable as means of communication and coordination. In addition to these material, institutional resources, several sources (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah et al, 2011; Cruickshank and Cowley, 2014; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Joakim & White, 2015; Kaler and Parkins, 2018; Paton & Johnston, 2017) looked into the religious teachings, worldviews, narratives, and rituals of LFCs to identify the beneficial effects they could have and did have on building and maintaining community resilience in the face of disasters.

There were also several cons listed. Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) noted concerns about the ability of LFCs to maintain neutrality, unhelpful theology or teachings, patriarchal attitudes, and conflicting worldviews. Both Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) and Alawiyah et al, (2011) mentioned proselytizing and questions of competency as problematic cons. On the other hand, it was also asserted that these cons also often existed, even if in analogous ways, when disaster managers have worked with other established non-religious organizations (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015, p. 215). They are not definitive barriers as much as they are possible issues of which disaster managers must remain aware and navigate.

One aspect of the integration of LFCs into DM activities which figured prominently as both a pro and as a con was leadership. It was noted by Dueck and Byron (2011) and Joakim and White (2015) that the ability of LFCs to integrate effectively and beneficially with DM organizations and networks relied on the willingness and quality of their leadership. The role of effective leadership in DM is, of course, its own lively area of study in the field of disaster

management, but beyond the scope of this paper. For further reading on this topic, see Murphy (2009), Crowe (2013), or NATO (2019).

### **Research gaps**

Several conclusions and proposals concerning areas for further research had an impact on the evolving focus and parameters of my research. First, six sources (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Joakim & White, 2015; Rivera, 2018; Ross & Berkes, 2014) specifically emphasized training and competency as areas which required further research and clarification. The types of concerns raised about training and competency were varied. Adams' (2016) research into the Integrated Care Team (ICT) model used by the American Red Cross indicated that all members of ICT (including pastoral care workers from LFCs) would have benefited from more disaster response training (p. 9) as well as training concerning fostering skills in cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (p. 20). Also suggested was the need for more opportunities for training in the field of disaster management for those from non-DM professions (Adams, 2016, p. 11). Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) raised specific concerns about the overall technical competency among LFCs to support DM activities (p. 216). It is again worth noting that the research referenced above reflects a wide variety of contexts, from specialized and international initiatives to more generalized and 'ground-roots' partnerships. Despite the variety of contexts, however, there was a common emphasis placed on the need for effective training. There is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to addressing these training needs. "Competency" and "training needs" are contextually defined and, therefore, to be effectively addressed, must take into account realities of building a reciprocal relationship between the LFCs and DMSOs in each situation. Bryant-Davis and Wong (2013) made the specific recommendation that there was a "need for collaboration,

bidirectional training, and consultation between psychologists and leaders of faith communities”

(p. 681). The importance of collaborative, bidirectional training was implicit in much of the literature reviewed. Although research is needed into how training goals and programs might be developed in LFC-DMSO collaborations, I would argue that, regardless of context, there are some core principles and competencies suggested by the literature that are worth noting. First, training opportunities are more than opportunities to gain specific competencies, they can also help build relationships (social capital). Some core principles related to community-building which should be considered include: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Specific training regarding elements of disaster management – language/terminology, perspectives, and mandates – would also seem to be generic topics of instruction. Guiding the training process should be the principle of bi-directional consultation. This would mean that both LFCs and DMSOs would have input into and control of all aspects of training process, reinforcing a balanced approach with benefits for both.

Second, Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) suggested the need to further map and analyze the multiple informal ways in which local faith communities are already contributing to DM activities, with special attention to the problems of conflicting worldviews (p. 216). Stajura et al (2012) made the associated conclusion that an ongoing collaborative working relationship is the best method for improving inter-organizational relationships, especially when there are conflicting worldviews (p. 2305).

Third, Bryant-Davis and Wong (2013) pointed out that more research was needed to diversify the religious and spiritual traditions included in DM-related scholarship. Most of the research to date has focused on facets of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (McCabe, 2014). When the opportunity presents itself, other religious perspectives needed to be engaged. In addition to

the need for a wider variety of religious representation in the voices of LFCs, I encountered multiple sources which argued for increased multifaith and multireligious input and participation in response to modern challenges such as terrorism and the effectiveness of DM in modern ‘secular,’ but multi-faith environments (Brodeur, 2005; Halafoff, 2013; Halafoff and Wright-Neville, 2009).

Fourth, Joakim and White (2015) proposed that more research into “the role of religious institutions in the response to and the recovery from disasters” (p. 195) is necessary and further encouraged “working within the religious framework of people affected by disasters” (p. 206). How do those within the frameworks of differing religious worldviews perceive disasters and their role in DM activities? Kaler and Parkins (2018) explored how evangelical Christian humanitarian actors in South Sudan relied upon their Christian narratives, based on “struggle,” “temptation,” and “hope of salvation,” in a context of a faith in “God’s plan” to overcome the challenges of working in such a dangerous environment with so few signs of success. Though this work did speak to themes of “motivation,” it did so in a context very different from the one I wished to explore - international evangelical Christian aide workers versus local faith communities of various backgrounds. Also exploring motivational factors, Cruikshank and Cowley (2014) examined the maintenance of a balance between modern humanitarianism and practices and approaches of Roman Catholicism in the context of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). In this case, the authors provided an overview of the realities of working with complementary values, complementary strengths, the need for compromise, and the need for finding a common language, to work together effectively. It did not focus on any particular motivations and, like Kaler and Parkins, focused on one Christian perspective.

Fifth, Ross and Berkes (2014), in their survey of tools for monitoring and enhancing community resilience, concluded “that the ability of communities to engage actively in reflexive learning processes is key for building resilience” (p. 794). What might this reflexive learning look like? What do DMSOs have to learn from LFCs? On a related note, Stajura et al (2012), concluded, in examining the positive effects of 'deeper' relationships between local health departments and LFCs, that “the quality of relationships seems to matter more than discrete resources provided by such ties” (p. 2294).

### **Literature review conclusion**

Despite a wide variety of different research contexts, there was a clear indication that there were significant benefits to including LFCs in DM activities especially regarding increased social capital. Outdated biases against the inclusion of ‘the religious’ in DM activities needed to be pushed aside by more research into the real value the religious perspective could bring. In addition, the pros regarding such integration outweighed cons. Research gaps included: further research and clarification into training and competency; the need to further map and analyze the multiple informal ways in which local faith communities are already contributing to DM activities; more research to diversify the religious and spiritual traditions included in DM-related scholarship; more research into “the role of religious institutions in the response to and the recovery from disasters”; and, more search into “reflexive learning processes” as they lead to “building resilience” (Ross and Berkes, 2014, p. 794).

I intended on directly addressing three of the research gaps identified through my research. First, the lack of diversity of the faith traditions included in DM research was addressed through my selection process for participants. The selection process also specifically worked through a multifaith organization in response to the suggestion from the literature that

multifaith networks can contribute to “trust and understanding” (Halafoff, 2013, p. 100).

Second, the question of LFC’s self-perceived roles in DM activities guided the development of my interview guide questions and overall analysis. Third, I addressed the question of what it is that LFCs might be able to teach DMSOs by offering participants the freedom and opportunity to share their own priorities with respect to DM activities. I did not directly address issues of conflicting worldviews but selected participants who were most likely to share common worldviews and open to working with DMSOs. Though I did not explore training needs specifically, my focus on self-perceived roles of LFCs in DM activities offered some insights into the types of training which might have value in this study’s particular context.

## **Methodology**

### **Positionality**

I came to this investigation as a constructivist and, more specifically, a social constructivist. My conceptual framework finds expression in the ideas that “that which we take to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in human relationships” (Gergen & Gergen, 2007, p. 6) and that “meaning is understood as a derivative of language use within relationships” (Gergen & Gergen, 2007, p. 9). I tend to agree with Emmel’s assertion of the “agnosticism” of constructivists about “the existence of anything beyond and behind material phenomena” (2013, p. 17). This does not, however, deny “a belief in theory, as sets of ideas that can be interpreted through qualitative researching” (Emmel, 2013, p. 17). To be clear, the conclusions I made at the end of this research have meaning insofar as they were a product of a rigorous methodology and reflected the understanding of the LFC participants in the study. Entirely different and valid conclusions might well have been possible through the inclusion of

different participants. Truth and meaning are products of the social context from which they arise.

On the other hand, my approach was also influenced, to some extent, by critical thinking. I realized that as I started asking questions about the role of LFCs in community resilience and disaster and emergency management, I also sought to challenge two communities. I sought to challenge LFCs to think more (and more critically) about their place in facilitating community resilience. I also hoped to provide some insights for disaster managers into how LFCs see themselves in this context. I had an overarching goal of enabling “change, the desired outcome of action research” (Stringer, 2014, p. 63). Inasmuch as I was challenging these communities, this research was also critical in nature and a piece of Action Research, a topic to be covered more fully in my methodology section.

I also came to this research as an Anglican Priest of more than 20 years who has served as a Chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces for the past 13 years. A significant aspect of my “calling” to priesthood and the Chaplaincy is linked to my belief that faith is an action one lives out and not a set of ideas/doctrines to be “held” or “believed in.” From my personal religious perspective as a Christian leader, I believe that a “good” local Christian community is one that works to make the world a better place for everyone, especially those in need. After I encountered different perspectives concerning the role and motivation of LFCs in DM activities – specifically the idea that some LFCs were perceived as “extending” and not “expanding” organizations – I felt a need to defend myself. This defensive impulse did not ultimately bias nor guide my research, however, I have sought at all times to keep an open mind and curiosity in light of others’ differing views. I have used extensive memo-ing and tried my best to make sure

that my interviews were an exploration of the perspectives of others and not attempts to justify my own opinions.

### **Overall methodology**

As stated above, my primary research question was, “How do members of local faith communities perceive their role(s) in response to disasters?” Some of the sub-questions which follow from this include: a) how have LFCs responded to disasters in the past; b) how might LFCs and DMSOs more effectively work together in the future to respond to disasters; c) what are the goals of LFCs in contributing to disaster response; and d) what motivates LFCs to take part in DM activities?

I used a generic qualitative research approach to explore these questions by interviewing those who self-identified as leaders from a variety of local LFCs. I chose a generic qualitative research approach to achieve my goal of trying to understand responses in the context of “the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Cooper & Endacott, 2007, p. 817) and not bias my research in favour of my own positionality. Focusing on pragmatic considerations rather than a rigid, pre-determined methodology, this generic qualitative approach drew upon some elements of “grounded theory methods of analysis such as contrast comparison and open, axial, and selective coding with the aim developing an understanding (or theory)” (p. 816). This process was more inductive in nature, focusing on “building the theory” during the data gathering phase (p. 816). Some key considerations in this approach included: a) being especially sensitive to experiences and perspectives of participants; b) a more purposeful than random sampling plan; c) semi-structured interviews (which could be updated and better focused as data was collected and the theory built); and d) an analysis process which was strictly guided by the research question (and, in this case, the key gaps identified in the literature review) (p. 817).

Because of the subjective and inductive nature of this approach, certain practices were utilized to establish rigour, specifically: a) sufficient saturation (making sure that a reasonable representation of participants has been included); b) fair dealing (including data which may be contradictory to the built theory to ensure fair representation); and c) maintaining process records (achieved in this case through the use of a memo-book). Also, as I stated above, insofar as I was seeking to have a positive impact on future relationships between LFCs and DMSOs, this was a piece of action research (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Stringer, 2014). This meant, among other things, that my goal needed to be made clear to all participants, and that my role as researcher was to act as more of a “facilitator” of conversations than an “expert” collecting data (Stringer, 2014, p. 5). Making a full disclosure of the purpose and scope of my research was both an ethical and methodological consideration. In terms of methodology, I remained aware of how my goals influenced my data collection (the questions I asked) and analysis (how I interpreted responses). This awareness of my own interpretive process, labeled “reflexivity” in the literature, was carefully recorded through a memo-ing process borrowed from the grounded theory approach (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Allen, 2017). I will comment on the ethical considerations of full disclosure later.

### *Sampling and recruitment*

I used a purposive theoretical sampling technique to identify participants who might best have been able to respond to the goals of my research (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004). To find participants with sufficient experience and knowledge, I purposively selected those who were identified as *leaders* within their own faith groups. I made initial contact with appropriate participants through the Interfaith Liaison Network of the Victoria Multifaith Society (VMS). This organization is made up of experienced faith leaders from various traditions

located on south Vancouver Island. I decided to use this organization both for its access to a wide variety of different faiths and the “multi-faith approach” of its membership. By “multi-faith approach,” I mean that I sought conversations with those who already had an attitude of openness toward discussing their faith and worldview(s) with others. Not all LFCs are open-minded with respect to others’ worldviews, an issue I will discuss later. Specifically, I solicited participants through an open invitation I had received to speak at a monthly meeting of the VMS. I provided the membership of the VMS with written information concerning the background, focus, purpose, ethical considerations, and confidentiality issues related to my research. Those who identified as willing to participate were selected based upon their availability and my goal of ensuring a diverse representation of faith groups. I was able to meet my goal of 12 participants as sufficient to achieve *saturation*, “the point at which further sampling was unlikely to produce new concepts” (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007, p. 1763). My sample included seven persons who identified as “male” and five persons who identified as “female.” Self-identified faith backgrounds included: Anglican/Baptist, Baha’i, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Roman Catholic, Sikh, Spiritualist, Unitarian Universalist, and United Church of Canada. Participants ranged in age from 34 to 91 with a mean age of 65.5. One final note selection: the topics of ‘disasters’ and ‘disaster response’ would very likely be familiar to all participants. Residents of Vancouver Island, in general are well acquainted with disasters and disaster preparedness. It is “one of the most seismically active regions in Canada. Approximately 400 earthquakes occur each year in the region” (Natural Resources Canada, 2011, para. 1). In addition, due to this seismic activity and location on the Pacific Ocean, “the western seaboard of Canada has the highest risk of being hit by an earthquake-generated tsunami” (Xie, Nistor, and Murty, 2012, p. 151). In response to these realities, local and

provincial government organizations actively provide educational resources (Government of British Columbia - Public emergency preparation and recovery:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc>) and encourage wide-spread involvement in preparedness activities (The Great British Columbia ShakeOut: <https://www.shakeoutbc.ca/>). LFCs are counted among the many community organizations which take part in education and preparedness activities.

#### *Data gathering process*

I decided that one-on-one semi-structured interviews would afford me the framework I needed to maintain focus on the research topic while giving me enough flexibility to modify questions throughout the process to adapt to how each participant “frames and understands issues” and, in doing so, capture the most pertinent responses (Bryman, 2004, p. 314). Given (2008) stated that “semi-structured interviews are especially useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships among them are relatively well understood” (p. 2). For those who had experiences with disaster response, most of the concepts were relatively straightforward and so I used this format to guide the interviews into focusing primarily on roles and motivations as they arose from narrative. The semi-structured interview provided flexibility that supported participants being able to bring their own perspectives forward. This was consistent with Miller & Brewer’s (2003) contention about semi-structured interviews that their “main function is to provide a framework in which respondents can express their own thoughts in their own words” (p. 2). This idea of “framework” was expressed variously in the literature as a “basic scaffolding” (Olsen, 2012, p. 3) and “broad topics” (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.3). Another consideration was the “flexibility” (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.3) included in semi-structured interviews which allowed for prompting to follow lines of narrative which might have revealed

new concepts, processes, or structures of value to the purposes of the research (Olsen, 2012, p.

3). The goal was to arrive at a text which “is a collaboration of investigator and informant” (Given, 2008, p. 2) through “an effective balance between talking and listening” (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p.3). For this purpose, I prepared an interview guide which aided me in balancing focus and flexibility (Bryman, 2004; R. Cox, personal communication, January 12, 2019). I conducted all interviews via telephone and recorded them in MP4 format using an Olympus voice recorder. I created a “face page” document for each interviewee, noting their date of birth, identified gender, identified faith background, and the date of the interview, to provide context for responses. The last step in preliminary data collection was the transcribing of interviews in preparation for analysis. These transcriptions were a product of transcription software, Temi, and careful manual verification.

It became obvious to me, early in the interview process, that my original interview guide needed revision. The guide ultimately went through multiple revisions before I felt it had become effective. You will find the three utilized versions of my interview guide in Appendix A. My original interview format, asking question about past, present, and future (anticipated) understandings of LFC roles in DM was not as focussed as I had hoped. I seemed to be going over some of the same information without getting any deeper into self-perceived roles. I had difficulty eliciting comments about *why* participants and their respective LFCs might participate in DM activities. My focus on exploring roles led to predictable lists of support resources which only mirrored the data from my literature review, repeating the DM perspective. More important than listing their past, present, and future roles in DM, I wanted to know HOW participants (as members of their respective LFCs) understood their roles. By the fourth interview I had decided that “motivation” was the term which best focussed my questions to prompt the kind of data I

was seeking. Thankfully, I was able to use this idea of motivation to mine the previous three interviews for applicable data.

### **Ethical considerations**

Some of the ethical considerations related to this research included confidentiality, informed consent, participation rights, full disclosure of the purpose and scope of research, and data storage and security. I kept the identities of individual participants confidential while using face page data to provide valuable context (age, identified gender, and self-identified faith-background). Each participant was made aware of their participant rights, including a full disclosure of the purpose and scope of my research and plan for data storage and security prior to the interview (Appendix B). Informed consent was achieved through signed documents where possible and verbal verification at the start of each interview.

### **Limitations**

The two most significant shortcomings of this research were “the positive predisposition of participants” and the very focused sample population. As stated above, I deliberately selected participants who were members of the VMS because membership presupposed an attitude of openness to multifaith dialogue. This was to confirm the assertion from the literature review regarding the positive contributions of multifaith organizations to this kind of cooperative work (Brodeur, 2005; Halafoff, 2013; Halafoff and Wright-Neville, 2009). I correctly anticipated that this openness would extend to interaction and partnership with DM organizations. In fact, seven of the twelve participants shared experiences of working with various DM organizations in the past. Seven participants also highlighted organizations within their own structures (usually at a

national level) which specifically focused on coordinating responses to disasters. The limitation inherent in this choice of participant is that not all LFCs are so “open” to multifaith or multi-organizational cooperation. In fact, from my own personal experience, I know that there are many LFCs for whom this kind of cooperation would be either unthinkable or quickly reframed as an opportunity for proselytization, and not true partnership. The second limitation, my focused sample population, referred to the fact that I chose exclusively from LFCs located on southern Vancouver Island. This limitation is both cultural and environmental in nature. Participants represented a primarily urban/suburban population in western Canada, influenced by the Cascadia culture with its lived experiences of earthquakes and tsunamis. Both limitations suggest the need for further research among different populations.

### **Coding and analysis**

After conducting interviews, transcribing them through TEMI (<https://www.temi.com/>), and then editing for clarification, I started tagging and categorizing my data through the Dedoose qualitative analysis platform (<https://www.dedoose.com/>). My first tagging of the data produced 144 different codes which I thematized under 16 different headings and subheadings. After a second readthrough of all the data to tag information which I had missed, I reorganized all the tags under seven main themes, with subheadings where it seemed appropriate. I reviewed the raw data and coding two further times to finalize the coding process and build my theory in the format of six themes. A general coding analysis of the raw data organized by headings and subheadings is included in Appendix C.

## **Findings**

### **Theme 1: Elements in Defining a Disaster**

There was unanimous agreement that an event must cause some sort of “harm” to be considered a disaster and that a disaster in some way challenged the coping mechanisms of a group or individual. Some of the best examples include:

Participant A - [An] event that happens that can cause, that either provokes the possibility of, injury or death or actually causes injury or death. That's disaster, like big time, but also, requires a lot of resources in order to cope with that event.

Participant E - An event [that] throws us off balance...[in] a significant life-changing way...that covers it. I may come back to that, but I'm trying to think, you know, does that kind of encapsulate...because disaster can be like small disaster, [or] a large disaster, right?

Participant H - [C]ircumstances that are overwhelming to an individual or a group. And this can include being overwhelmed physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, or in the case of a society in terms of the infrastructure or other aspects that make up that civilization.

Familiarity with the basic concepts of disaster management was not surprising considering the local corporate knowledge of the sample population. Residents of southern Vancouver Island are no strangers to earthquake and tsunami warnings as well as disaster preparation measures. There was also unanimous consensus that disasters tended to be very complex to define and definitions tended to reflect the perspective of the speaker. Not surprisingly – due to frequent tsunami and

earthquake drills in this region, LFCs represented in this research had a more subtle understanding of the topic than might be expected from among other populations.

A specific contribution shared by Participant K highlighted an awareness of the political aspect of defining harm and disasters. It was his assertion that, in his experience, FBOs were more prone to respond positively to disasters where “blame can be attributed” than other organizations; that is, when, at some level, blame can be laid at the feet of those harmed (e.g., lack of preparation or perceived poor choices in general). Non-FBOs, again in his experience, sometimes hesitated to use the word “disaster” and instead highlight the negative impacts of hazard events as “consequences.” This hesitancy could often be attributed to the promotion of certain political agendas. Participant K suggested that, generally, with LFCs, there was more of a willingness to enter into a deeper level of compassion (listening and learning), and to focus on preventative measures, recognizing the social causes of disasters within communities and less political posturing. Though the veracity of this claim is beyond the scope of this research, it is further evidence of the awareness of subtleties and biases in the very act of defining a disaster.

### **Theme 2: Types of/Examples of Hazard Events**

In identifying examples of disaster-related hazards, although most examples were of the expected natural/technical hazard type (Coppolla, 2015), a number were more individualistic, including: a death, instances of hate crime or racism, relationship problems, personal losses, addiction issues, and even emotional/psychological/spiritual problems. Five participants clearly stated their belief that disasters also happened on a personal – individual – level, and sometimes in intangible ways (i.e. addictions and interpersonal conflicts).

Participant G - Disasters, at least from my perspective, you know, sometimes it's a very personal thing. What might be considered to be a disaster for one person is not necessarily the case for another person. It doesn't impact them in the same way.

Participant J - Sometimes there is just really local within a certain region, a breakout or an infection. Let's say maybe it's more a fire in one house that affects a few houses around it and a situation of disaster happens. So it could be in a very big scale affecting a huge population, or sometimes it could be a small situation that effects just a few, but for that individual or the person, it is a disaster.

Participant K - I would define or describe a disaster as an event or series of events that radically disrupts one's regular life pattern. In scope and size, disasters can be events that affect an individual.

Whereas most DM work is focussed on the “bigger picture,” including social factors, partnering with LFCs can also mean bringing the concept of “harm” down to the individual, personal, level. While this broadening of the definition of disaster may not fit easily into the mandate of most DMSOs, partnership with LFCs will sometimes mean working together to dovetail efforts.

### **Theme 3: Previous Experiences in Dealing with Disaster Management**

Half the participants indicated that the most common form of support previously provided by their respective LFCs to disasters was financial in nature, usually through coordinating fundraising for external organizations such as the Red Cross, or internal humanitarian organizations such as The Primates World Relief and Development Fund (Anglican) or The Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (Unitarian Universalist). Later, under

Theme 5: Concerns about Engaging in Disaster Response, we will note that most LFCs represented in the sample did not believe they had sufficient resources to offer much support to DM efforts at all. The prevalence of financial support is therefore not surprising since this form of support is the simplest and least burdensome. Seven participants identified previous experiences of working with DM partners as well as active involvement in mitigation/preparation activities. Some of the DM partners specifically named included, the Salvation Army, local food banks, local municipal councils, local police forces, interfaith organizations, and larger humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International. The focus of these encounters included: the development of disaster response policies, fundraising, providing community support, coordinating response efforts, and finding ways for LFCs to prepare themselves for disasters and ultimately be resources for the larger community. Though instances of partnering with DM organizations would not normally be noteworthy in the southern Vancouver Island region (where preparations and participation in local earthquake and tsunami drills often include the entire community) later comments concerning motivation suggest another factor at play. In addition to regional factors, religious themes of compassion and empathy also seemed to have a significant role in encouraging these past partnerships. We will explore this topic more closely under Theme 6.

Specifically regarding previous disaster response activities, eight participants described their respective LFCs as communication and coordination hubs for both their members and the wider community.

Participant I - As a faith based organization, I think the first and foremost responsibility is to bring the community together. And I think that is really important because people look

up to a faith based organization because that is their local 'go to' place. So, trying to mobilize the community to come together, to respond to the disaster.

Participant E - And so, for instance, at [my parish], like many parishes, we're doing pastoral care and outreach and study and connecting with people in different ways. And so that ministry has expanded in a lot of different ways that are, I think, surprising but not so surprising. Within the first few weeks of the pandemic, I was receiving emails and phone calls from people who are at the periphery of our community (like they've been in the church for a funeral or a wedding, or they live nearby), to say, what is the church doing? And how can we help support that? I have a car and I now am not working. Can I pick up groceries for people who shouldn't be out? I have this resource; how can I help? I love that they knew they could contact us and we could figure out a way to use that. [Our LFC] wasn't off the radar. They had a sense that this is a community of people who are already doing that work.

Participant G - [As a leader in a LFC] I've been personally involved in connecting with people in the community and the larger community as well with Mayor Helps and the police chief, Del Manak, Victoria PD, and other authorities just try to avert any repercussions [referencing hate-crimes] or just to give people the sense of safety.

This role was particularly noted by those interviewed during the COVID pandemic.

Communication and coordination roles reflected the fact that several sources (Adams, 2016; Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah et al, 2011; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Joakim & White, 2015; Rivera, 2018) noted that the networks which many LFCs have in place on local,

national, and international levels would be valuable resources for DMs as a means of communication and coordination when other networks are compromised.

#### **Theme 4: LFC Roles in Disaster Management**

In terms of roles which participants could see for future DM involvement, there was significant reference again to working with others to actively engage in mitigation/preparation activities.

Participant A - I have people listed so that I know that they can take care of CPR and first aid.

Participant B - We made some modest provisions in the building and the design of the building to be able to function post-earthquake.

Participant F - The reason why I joined the interfaith group in Victoria was after the demonstrations in Charlottesville a couple of years ago, I had read a call on social media from a minister who was at that demonstration. There were like 250 ministers there who said that people of faith groups should get to know each other and go out and have lunch once a month and that kind of thing, in order to be better equipped to respond to those kinds of disasters or those kinds of threats.

Participant G - Lately we've been involved with raising awareness and educating the community in terms of the COVID-19 response nationally.

Considering the reality that LFCs in general have a didactic component, it is no surprise that preparation, a teaching and learning activity, would be highlighted by participants. Disaster

Managers might well take advantage of this predisposition in the future, starting to build relationships with LFCs before disasters even occur. This idea lines up well with Adams (2016) and Stajura et al (2012) who argued that building relationships *before* disasters is far better than trying to do so amid a crises or aftermath of recovery. Integrating LFCs earlier can help to clarify roles, ensure competencies, and build trust. Based on previous experience, there was a coordinating role proposed within response activities and, as was previously highlighted in the literature review, most LFCs were part of larger organizational structures sometimes regional, national, and international in scope. As mentioned under Theme 2, the capability for LFCs to provide DM organizations and specialists with pre-existing and trusted communication and coordination structures should not be overlooked.

#### **Theme 5: LFC Concerns about Engaging in Disaster Response**

The most common concern raised about LFC involvement in DM activities was the limited capacity most LFCs had to respond at all. Over half of the participants expressed some sort of regret or frustration over their respective LFC's inability to "do more." Some cited their relatively small size or budgeting concerns, especially in the case of LFCs which were more independent in nature, without an over-arching organizational structure.

Participant C - We're small and we're also not particularly well recognized. We are a volunteer organization and we are a democratic volunteer organization. So, in some ways, when you want to get something done efficiently and fast, sometimes the top-down organizations work a little bit better.

Participant D - Well, in that sense, yes, we are a compassionate organization. We do like to reach out and assist in a disaster situation. It's just hard to say how much that would be

possible really. You know, as a smaller organization, we're also constantly trying to just keep afloat. Right? It's expensive to have a church in Victoria. We pay business expenses for everything. We don't have a lot of latitude. We have to survive ourselves. We don't have any parent church or anything like that, so it's all up to us.

Participant G - Like most other organizations whether faith based or otherwise, I feel that there's always going to be the problem of resources being stretched too thin. Many times, you know, as a mosque, we want to step up, we want to help people, but it's just that we're not at that capacity... we're not able to really help in the way that we want to help.

Yet others pointed out that their communities primarily consisted of seniors who had both fixed budgets and little or no capacity to make a “real” contribution.

Participant D - Well, I noticed in our sanctuary that many of the people that attend now (and this includes even the wider community) are in the elderly demographic. They're in their sixties and above (many in their seventies and eighties) and they're barely coping as it is. And so with the aging sort of church population, it lessens the ability for a group such as ours to assist in response because most people are just managing as it is.

Participant I - Be alert, be aware and know where there's need, if you can help, you help. You know a lot of [people]... especially in my community, we have a lot of elderly people. You can't do as much as let's see.... others, for example, that are retired people. Well, again, or do as much as those younger ones who are still working, [who] will have the means to reach out to others. So again, you do what you can and that's all we can do.

As DMSOs seek opportunities to work with LFCs, the common reality of limited resources and capacity (for whatever reason) will need to be acknowledged. This will require creativity in terms of *how* such groups might play a role as well as an honest appreciation that even a minor supporting role in DM might mean a large commitment with significant implications for some LFCs.

### **Theme 6: Motivation/Considerations of LFCs When Responding to Disasters**

The most cited motivation for LFC involvement in DM was compassion/empathy for humanity (cited 47 times). All participants described compassion/empathy for humanity as either a fundamental or general tenant of their LFC. This was expressed in different ways by participants. A few interview summaries might help:

Participant B - When you see people in need because of disasters, “if you can (help), you must.” This is a necessary corollary to faith in and a relationship with God.

Participant G - Although the primary focus of our LFC is inward, the inward focus is intimately tied to enabling outward, compassionate action.

Participant H - Our LFC focuses on facilitating community development, out of a place of compassion, understanding that each crisis is an opportunity to do good.

Participant I - The right-ness of having human decency and reaching out to help those in need “goes without saying” – a given.

Participant J – Our LFC is a community hub giving a “home” (safety, place, security) to members and enabling them to provide a *home* for others.

Though much has been written about the potentially problematic role of religion in DM activities, specifically regarding concepts of divine causality and blame (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Aten, 2012; Bryant-Davis & Wong, (2013), Goldsmith, Eimicke, &

Pinada, 2006; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015; Parker, 2019), it is worth noting that the two participants who brought up either of these concepts dismissed them as irrelevant. In the face of disaster and suffering, the primary motivation was clearly expressed in terms of a recognition of our shared humanity, an identification with victims, with little reference to the disaster event itself. This motivation provides ample common ground upon which DMSOs and LFCs might build strong and effective partnerships. Five participants made special reference to the fact that their LFC placed a particular focus on providing support to marginalized populations.

Participant C - Our particular organization tries to pay extra attention to people on the margins of society: people who have been historically or systematically/socially pushed to the margins and dismissed and not given as much respect and care as others.

Participant D - We often stand up for the underdog or groups that might be marginalized.

Participant G – [We stand] up for the rights of black people and really anyone facing discrimination or racism, or injustice.

Given the contemporary focus in the field of DM on social factors, especially with reference to marginalized populations, this reality also provides fertile ground for cooperation.

Two other significant theological perspectives/motivations also mentioned by participants included “expanding circles of care” and “shared giftedness.” “Expanding circles of care” was the name one participant put upon the belief that care always starts with oneself and one’s local family or community, and as this care enables the individual and then the local population, it expands (spirals) outward to larger and larger groups. Although only one participant used this

name, the theme was reflected through four participants in total. “Shared giftedness” was the name I have given to a referenced belief that if everyone does their part, no matter how small, the overall need will be met. This motivation, often mentioned with regard to a limited capacity to respond, was referenced nine times by five participants.

### **Theme 7: Are LFCs “extending” or “expanding” Organizations?**

In contextualizing this question for participants, I shared a summary of my experience of encountering those who would describe LFCs as “extending” (like Canadian Tire) and others who would describe them as “expanding” (like the Red Cross) – thus the references to “Canadian Tire” and “Red Cross” in the quotes included below. The responses to my direct posing of this question indicated that both terms can be applied, depending upon circumstances. The consensus, related to “the lack of capacity to respond,” was that most LFCs would be “expanding” if they had the capacity. Low numbers, limited resources, and an aging membership were realities which left many LFCs “practically extending” even though the commonly expressed ideal was to be “expanding.”

Participant F - So, the Quakers are not particularly the kind of organization that has a lot of money, a lot of people or anything like that to throw at something. So, in terms of disaster relief and that kind of thing, that they would be, it would be a very small help and it would be mostly individuals. Is that helpful?

Participant D - Well, we wouldn't be expanding. It's just... we don't have that ability. Right? The example you gave of ‘extending’ of the Canadian Tire, that would be limited for us just because of the resources. We just wouldn't have a lot of resources necessarily.

Participant D - Our community, because we respond also to the greater community because we're a small community. We don't have a lot of...I suppose...leverage to do a lot of things. So we do it in a small way and usually with other groups.

Participant C - I feel like practically the way that we function would be more like Canadian Tire. We don't usually think of ourselves as doing that sort of thing. I'm afraid that's the answer I'm going to have to give. I feel like theologically we should be functioning like a Red Cross but practically we probably function more like the Canadian Tire.

Surprisingly, the question that started me on this journey became the one I was least concerned with answering in the end. The data suggested that regardless of whether a LFC saw itself as expanding or extending, the motivation was almost always the same. Drawing lines between extending and expanding LFCs was often a matter of semantics based on available resources and capacity. DMSOs working with LFCs in the future would do well to consider whether the partnership will mean enabling or building a capacity to play a role in the DM process.

## **Discussion**

### **How do LFCs define and describe disasters and hazard events?**

It was clear from the beginning of the interview process that most participants already had a good grasp of what constituted a disaster, many offering an extemporaneous definition which paralleled the IFRC definition I later offered for comment and critique (IFRC, 2019). The list of types of hazard events provided by participants was exhaustive, including: natural hazards, such as, tectonic hazards, mass-movement hazards, hydrologic hazards, meteorological hazards, and biological/health-related hazards; and technological hazards, such as, transportation hazards,

infrastructure hazards, industrial hazards, structural fires and failures, intentional, civil, and political hazards (Coppola, 2015). In addition, some went further to explore the subtleties of defining what constituted “harm” with emphasis on how harm was a subjective concept. In critiquing the IFRC definition, four of the participants highlighted the need to look at the second and third order effects of events to broaden the definition to include events and impacts related to climate change. This awareness of the subtleties of defining a disaster among the participants reflected the suggestion of Perry (2007) that disaster definitions in the social sciences are varied and reflective of each definition’s purpose, audience, and who was doing the defining (p. 1-2). It is important to point out that the depth of knowledge concerning disasters and disaster management is not a significant trait among the faith leaders I interviewed. As stated above, this level of knowledge and familiarity is relatively common among community leaders in Southern Vancouver Island.

Although I did not encounter any definitions that specifically contradicted the findings of the literature review, there were certain cases where participants took concepts further and provided new information. In terms of taking concepts further, most participants were adamant that the IFRC definition of disaster was not broad enough, focusing exclusively on larger groups and leaving out personal or familial disasters. Though there was general agreement that the IFRC definition was a fine working definition that served the purposes of that particular organization, it failed to capture the types of smaller disasters which LFCs regularly addressed (e.g., housefires, death of a loved one, divorce, etc.). Although the literature does include discussions of personal risk reduction (Stough & Kelmen, 2018) and personal resilience (Peek, Abramson, Cox, Fothergill, & Tobin, 2018), the concept of a personal disaster is not discussed.

Further broadening the definition of “harm” in particular, most participants questioned whether or not the term “human” in the IFRC definition adequately encompassed personal, psychological, emotional, or spiritual/moral harm. Undergirding this discussion was the above-mentioned assertion that harm is also subjective, whether the perspective be that of an organization or an individual. The subjective nature of disasters, referred to as “subjective-health” and “subjective-wellness” is also reflected in the literature (Boin, Hart, & Kuipers, 2018; Park, 2016; Wortmann and Park, 2009).

### **What have been the previous experiences of LFCs in responding to disasters?**

An awareness of social justice also led some participants to point out that even when there are deemed to be sufficient resources to respond to a hazard event there is still the real possibility of harm for vulnerable populations within the larger whole (the elderly, those with disabilities, etc.), another theme well-represented in current DM research (Alawiyah, 2011; Bergstrand, Brumback, & Zhang, 2016; Pasteur, 2011; Stough and Kelman, 2018). Because of this focus on social justice, many LFCs are ideally situated to provide bridging social capital to DMSOs. There can be real value in DMSOs entering into conversations with local LFCs concerning these vulnerable populations in order to take advantage of pre-existing communication networks and social capital.

As expected, when listing ways in which LFCs have and might support disaster response activities, all participants offered a similar list of material and human resource supports, echoing the findings of the literature review (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Alawiyah, Bell, Pyles, & Runnels, 2012; Joakim & White, 2015; Rivera, 2018; Stajura et al, 2012).

As stated above, one significant benefit of the inclusion of LFCs in DM activities suggested by the literature review and reflected in the data was the role of LFCs might play in providing linking social capital (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015; McCabe et al 2014; Rivera, 2018; Stajura et al, 2012; Wuthnow, 2002). Multiple references were made to different levels of LFC organizations having “service groups” which were focussed on responding to disasters or traumatic events. Two examples of this type of ‘service group’ included the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (Anglican Church of Canada) and The Unitarian Service Committee of Canada (Unitarian Universalist). Both organizations exist formally at a national level in Canada, partnering with the Canadian International Development Agency and other, similar, organizations to respond to humanitarian needs worldwide. Most groups of this nature have volunteer representation within local communities to promote awareness and coordinate response when needed. Having “service organizations” at national and international levels provided most LFCs with a trusted link and line of communication to wider and global perspectives on the goals and practices of humanitarian support (linking social capital). Also, these organizations encouraged a sense of shared ownership of these initiatives amongst religious leaders, professional humanitarian workers, and average members (bridging social capital). Even those LFCs without a higher organizational structure, while describing their encouragement of disaster response primarily at an individual, grassroots level, commented that this response was encouraged by the larger community: an example of linking social capital in its simplest form.

Participant B - So, I said we made some modest provisions in the building and the design of the building to be able to function post-earthquake. We expect that some Jews, maybe even ones who live nearby will come seeking shelter, food, water, whatever they need.

But we would not turn anyone away and we expect that the local general population of all stripes, if they're close by and they see an intact building, that they would go there and look for assistance and we would want to provide that.

Participant E - But what we can do is we can help encourage people to make good decisions about keeping themselves and their family safe. And by finding ways to offer them the resources that are ours to offer like worship and prayer and pastoral care, then helping the larger circle of community to stay healthy.

Participant G - Lately we've been involved with raising awareness and educating the community in terms of the COVID-19 response nationally and also, just now in the past few days or weeks, the issue with the Black Lives Matter movement. We've tried to be vocal community members standing up for the rights of black people and really anyone facing discrimination or racism, or injustice.

Participant J - So as a faith-based organization, I think it's very important to get the community together, to send the communication to all the members of the community and give them a reason why they should help out and for them to feel good.

**What is/are the motivation(s) for LFC participation in DM activities?**

When looking at the goals and motivations of LFCs in responding to disasters, the goal (what is hoped to be achieved) and motivation (why) were almost synonymous. The goals of "responding to those in need" and "living out one's faith" were generally motivated by a *desire*

to respond to the needs of others and *desire* to live out one's faith. There was a common belief expressed variously among participants that compassion was at the core of what makes us "human" and that responding to need (with an "if you can, you must" attitude) was a necessary corollary to faith. Though the themes of compassion and lived faith were alluded to in the literature review (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015; McCabe et al, 2014; Stajura et al, 2012), it was not generally highlighted as having particular significance. The most succinct answer to my research question is that, for most participants, the central motivating factor in response to disasters was compassion for those in need. The act of living out one's faith was an example of a "realistic spirituality" versus (as one participant put it) "being so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good!" Not down-playing the altruistic nature of this approach, multiple participants were quick to add their belief that when one lives out one's faith, one was "blessed," in some way.

Another benefit of LFC involvement in DM activities identified in the literature review which was supported by the data was the proposal that LFCs, with their "religious agendas" would have a generally positive effect on DM activities (Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, & Ager, 2015; Graham, 2014; Joakim & White, 2015). The clearest examples of this were expressed in the repeated concepts of "social justice" and "living out one's faith." Almost half of participants asserted that social justice and support for the marginalized were significant aspects of their approach to disaster response (and I suggest, reading between the lines, this focus was shared by most if not all participants). This perspective can be vital in developing mitigation measures as DMSOs focus more and more on the social factors of disasters. At the heart of this concept is the mobilization of people, calling people to act. This theme was clearly a guiding principle at

the heart of all the LFCs represented in the research and has been (and can be) an asset in DM attempts to get mitigation and preparation programs off the ground.

### **What concerns might LFCs have about engaging in DM activities?**

One aspect of LFC involvement in DM activities which was only mentioned once in the literature review was the description of the practical challenges of smaller LFCs in participating in disaster response (Stajura et al, 2012). Two participants dedicated most of the interview to describing that, from their experience, smaller, consensus based LFCs often struggle to find ways to coordinate and respond to disasters because of the time consensus-based decision making requires. As one participant put it,

Participant F - So there's no hierarchy in the meeting. There's a yearly meeting and then there's monthly meetings. The monthly meetings pick their own decisions. ... [T]he way decisions are made for Quakers is through unity, which is kind of a high bar consensus. So you don't do anything unless everybody is in unity. So that can take weeks, months, years for everybody to be in unity for something like say gay marriage or what kind of light bulbs to have or whatever... So, in terms of disaster relief and that kind of thing, that they would be, it would be a very small help and it would be mostly individuals.

In both hierarchical and consensus based LFCs, even though the impulse to respond logically flowed from their core beliefs, especially with regard to marginalized communities, there was an honest acknowledgement that there were often significant challenges to their capacity to respond. This brought new information to the earlier question of categorizing LFCs as either "extending" or "expanding." The practical reality is that while some LFCs found themselves functionally extending, they saw themselves as ideologically expanding, with a core mandate to reach out to help those in need, a response flowing from the motivating principle of compassion. Another

motivational theme linked to these practical challenges was the above-mentioned “shared giftedness.” Although struggling to find ways to effectively respond to disasters, most participants from smaller LFCs expressed a belief that “doing what they could” would be “enough” in the context of the larger response effort. An aspect of this learning is to highlight the importance of DMSOs working with LFCs of all sizes, not only to garner a wider resource base and local awareness, but also to work with these smaller, consensus-based LFCs to find ways in which they might provide support.

One final lesson learned from the interview process which can further the effectiveness of DM activities was the special focus some participants put on “care for the care-givers.” Primarily working with a small volunteer base, most LFCs have valuable experiences of dealing with burnout, balance, and the need for self-care, concerns which found voice in only one article from the literature review (McCabe et al, 2014). This wealth of knowledge and experience might be of great value to DMSO activities and the overall well-being of support workers. There may be opportunities for LFCs, as they receive training about DMSO principles and activities, to offer relevant training and policy-advice concerning issues of ‘self-care,’ ‘maintaining life-balance,’ and ‘volunteer management.’

### **The importance of bi-directional training in forging LFC/DMSO partnerships**

The value of past collaboration was evidenced in references to how some LFCs have integrated DM principles into their business plans and activities. When looking at how LFCs and DMSOs might more effectively work together in the future, some principles from the literature review were again reflected in the data, specifically the need for more collaborative and bidirectional training (Adams, 2016, Alawiyah et al, 2011; Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Joakim & White, 2015; McCabe et al, 2014; Rivera, 2018; Stajura et al, 2012). Some of the areas of

collaboration and training which were mentioned included: exploring how to maintain healthy boundaries between LFCs and DMSOs; coordinating and facilitating preparation/mitigation efforts; exploring how better to coordinate with DMSOs in times of disaster response; exploring how DMSOs might be better connected with the linking and bridging social capital of certain LFCs; exploring how DMs might best work with LFCs in their roles as community hubs; exploring how DMSOs might strengthen LFCs (especially smaller, consensus-based LFCs) and better equip them to respond; and, exploring how to build greater trust and understanding amongst LFCs and DMSOs. Partnership between DMSOs and LFCs, to be a true partnership, multidisciplinary in nature, requires an open and honest willingness to listen to one another's perspectives, misgivings, and motivations. To quote Stajura et al (2012) in examining the positive effects of 'deeper' relationships between local health departments and LFCs, "the quality of relationships seems to matter more than discrete resources provided by such ties" (p. 2294).

### **Conclusion**

In the process of this research, I have contributed to addressing to some degree, the gaps identified through my literature review. I analyzed current and potential LFC contributions to DM. I responded to the need to diversify the types of faith traditions included in this field of research by ensuring that the participant sample was as diverse as possible. I used a semi-structured interview process to explore the continuing question of how those within LFCs actually perceive their own roles in response to disasters. My research also makes suggestions of how to improve the quality of relationships between LFCs and DMSOs. The goals of this research were to encourage discussion and consideration of DM issues among LFCs as well as provide, through the data collected, insight into the motivational perceptions of different LFC

members for DMSOs. These goals have been achieved. This research has started many conversations and opened multiple possibilities for future partnership opportunities in addition to planting seeds of LFC engagement with the topic of DM.

In addressing the research gaps identified through the literature review, I offer the following conclusions. First, with respect to the lack of diversity of the faith traditions included in DM research, I was pleasantly surprised to find that despite the very different worldviews represented by my participants, there was significant commonality regarding motivation for involvement in DM activities – specifically: compassion, shared humanity, and living out one’s faith – as well as common concerns about the ability of smaller LFCs to respond effectively to disasters. Regarding the question of what it is that LFCs might be able to teach DMSOs I would suggest that the commonly expressed theme of recognizing both the subjective and sometimes individual understanding of what constitutes a disaster might be of value to DMSOs working with local communities. Though I did not seek to define specific training needs, I hope my findings might provide insight for DMSOs into the “Professionalized Language” (Cruickshank & Cowley, 2014, p. 20) of LFCs to aide in the growth of deeper relationships and facilitate the development of training strategies in a more bilateral, reciprocal manner.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

One topic that I did not explore fully in this research because of my focus on hearing the voices of LFCs themselves was, “what are some of the (real or perceived) challenges to LFC involvement in future DM activities?” Although some of my findings touched on the issue of challenges, I believe that more research is needed to fully explore and address the issue of increasing LFC involvement in DM and build a collaborative relationship between two different, but complimentary organizational types.

Another question I suggest may be worth exploring in the future is, what does the idea of “having compassion/empathy for the well-being of humanity” look like from the perspective of different DM professionals? This may be a discussion best lead by a multi-faith team with goals of building trust and self-understanding through dialogue.

Noting this study’s shortcoming in sampling more “open” LFCs, there would be value in conducting a second study including participants from more “closed” LFCs. These LFCs might supply a deeper insight into “roadblocks” and “challenges” to collaboration and broaden the picture of the LFC landscape.

In terms of Action Research, the next steps I am personally interested in taking include hosting research workshops to try to build relationships between local disaster management professionals and LFCs and exploring how best to teach DM principles to LFCs in order to engage interest and facilitate further collaboration.

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## Appendix A - Interview Guides

*Interview Guide 1.0 was used for only the first two interviews.*

### Interview Guide (Version 1.0)

- **Introduction** (Building rapport):
    - Who Am I?
    - What is the focus of my research?
    - What is the purpose of this interview?
    - Address issues of confidentiality (data storage and security), consent, and withdrawal.
    - Explain the format (contextual data, present, past, and future) and duration of the interview.  
Are there any questions about the process?
  
  - **Interview Questions** (Exploring Present, Past, and Future)
    - Contextual Data:
      - Age:
      - Identified Gender:
      - Faith-Background:
    - Research Questions:
      - Topic One: “Understanding(s) of Disaster”
        - How would you (as a member of your Faith Group) understand a disaster?
        - What makes an event a ‘disaster?’
      - Topic Two: “Experiences of Dealing with Disasters”
        - Example Questions:
          - Have you had any personal experience with disasters?
          - If so, what role has your faith played in handling these experiences?
          - How would you describe your Faith Group’s response(s) to disasters?
      - Topic Three: “What role(s) do you see your FBO having in response to disaster?”
        - Example Questions:
          - “In light of everything you have shared, what do you think your faith group’s role might be in responding to future, possible disasters?”
          - Is there anything thing else you would like to share?
- 
- **Conclusion** (Appreciation and Tying off Loose Ends)
  - Offering Thanks

Types of Interview Questions:
• Introductory
• Follow-up
• Probing
• Specifying
• Direct
• Indirect
• Structuring
• Silence
• Interpreting
• Open/Closed

## LFC MOTIVATIONS

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- Sharing information concerning the follow-up survey.
- Immediately review notes made during the interview and make any further observations which may be pertinent.

*Interview Guide 2.0 was used only for the third interview.*

### **Interview Guide (Version 2.0)**

- *Introduction* (Building rapport):
  - Who Am I?
    - John Hounsell-Drover, the primary and only researcher associated with this project.
    - I am a Chaplain with the Canadian Armed Forces currently on 'study leave' in order to complete a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at Royal Roads University.
    - My Thesis Committee is comprised of two supervisors: Dr. Robin Cox and Dr. Olivia Wilkinson. The Dean of my program is Dr. Matthew Heinz. Please feel free to contact the Interdisciplinary Program at Royal Roads University (250-391-2511) if you wish to verify any of these details.
  - What is the focus of my research?
    - I am seeking to understand how Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) perceive their role(s) in the face of disasters. I hope to use this research to help give voice to various FBOs so that Disaster Managers (DMs) might have a greater richer understanding of how FBOs might play a role in Disaster Management.
  - What is the purpose of this interview?
    - The purpose of this interview is to listen to members of various FBOs from various religious backgrounds in order to collect information about how they perceive the role(s) of their Faith Groups and FBOs in the face of disasters.
  - Address issues of confidentiality (data storage and security), consent, and withdrawal.
    - Data Storage and Security: All data will be maintained electronically on my personal laptop (a MacBook Pro 2018 with fingerprint reader). A back-up of the contents of my laptop is maintained through an iCloud account. Once all data has been processed (after the follow-up survey), any data containing personal information for contact purposes will be deleted. The remaining data will only include an alphanumeric identification code with contextual information such as age, identified gender, and faith-background. Recordings of the telephone interviews will be made using the "Call Recording App" from NoNotes and immediately transferred to my laptop and erased from my phone at the end of the interview.
    - Written Notes: I also maintain a 'Memo- book' to maintain record of my own personal reflections during the research process. This book will

- contain no information identifying participants, only using alphanumeric codes when referencing specific interviews/survey replies.
- Consent: Consent will be verbally confirmed before the interview begins.
  - Conflict of Interest: I do not believe that there are any conflicts of interest in this process. Can you think of any?
- My preliminary findings will be made available via a survey-link emailed to each participant for their feedback after all the data from the interviews has been processed. I would ask that you complete the survey-link as soon as possible after receiving it. If there may be a delay in this part of the process, we can discuss it at that time.
  - My final Thesis will be made available electronically to all participants once it has received final approval through Royal Roads University.
  - You have the right to withdraw from this research at any point before the approval of the final thesis. If you choose to withdraw, all your information will be erased from all sources.
  - Explain the format (contextual data, present, past, and future) and duration of the interview:
    - This interview will take approximately 90 minutes, it is semi-structured, and it includes three basic stages:
      - Stage One: Collecting Contextual Data (age, identified gender, and faith-background)
      - Stage Two: Questions about present, past and possible future role(s) of your faith group with regard to disaster.
      - Stage Three: Checking in to gather any final thoughts and confirming willingness to take part in a follow-up survey.
  - Do you have any further questions about the process?
  - Consent: “Do you agree to participate in this study knowing that you can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you?”
- *Interview Questions (Exploring Present, Past, and Future)*
    - Contextual Data:
      - Age:
      - Identified Gender:
      - Faith-Background:
    - Research Questions:
      - Topic One: “Understanding(s) of Disaster”
        - Example Questions:

## Types of Interview Questions:

- Introductory
- Follow-up
- Probing
- Specifying
- Direct
- Indirect
- Structuring
- Silence
- Interpreting
- Open/Closed

- How would you (as a member of your Faith Group) understand a disaster?
- What makes an event a 'disaster?'
- Topic Two: "Experiences of Dealing with Disasters"
- Example Questions:
  - Have you had any personal experience with disasters?
  - If so, what role has your faith played in handling these experiences?
  - How would you describe your Faith Group's response(s) to disasters?
- Topic Three: "What role(s) do you see your FBO having in response to disaster?"
  - Example Questions:
    - "In light of everything you have shared, what do you think your faith group's role might be in responding to future, possible disasters?"
    - Is there anything thing else you would like to share?
- *Conclusion* (Appreciation and Tying off Loose Ends)
  - Offering Thanks.
  - Confirming contact information for the follow-up survey.
  - End Interview.
  - Immediately review notes made during the interview and make any further observations which may be pertinent.

*Interview Guide 3.1 was used for the final nine interviews:*

### **Interview Guide 3.1**

- 1. Prepare:**
  - i. Interview Space
  - ii. Documentation
  - iii. Equipment
- 2. Place call.**
- 3. Introduction:**
  - i. Read and answer questions arising from the Informed Consent Form.
  - ii. Highlight:
    1. Action research
    2. “Benefits”
- 4. Begin Recording.**
- 5. Demographic Information:**
  - i. Would you please state your DOB?
  - ii. Would you please state your identified gender?
  - iii. Would you please state your identified Faith-Background?
- 6. Interview Orientation:**
  - i. The questions we will explore are really just starting points for our conversation.
  - ii. I am mostly interested in what you have to say – your perspective – so I may ask you to repeat things, clarify things, or ‘say more’ about things.
  - iii. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers.
  - iv. I’m look for honesty.
- 7. Exploring the Meaning of Disaster:**
  - i. How would you define a disaster?
  - ii. What factors turn an ‘event’ into a disaster?

- iii. What makes an event a 'disaster?'

**8. Reacting to a definition of disaster:**

- i. The definition of 'disaster' I want us to consider during this interview comes from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC):

"A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins."

**Types of Interview Questions:**

- Introductory
- Follow-up
- Probing
- Specifying
- Direct
- Indirect
- Structuring
- Silence
- Interpreting
- Open/Closed

- ii. What are your thoughts on this particular definition of 'disaster?'
- iii. Is there anything you would change about this definition?

**9. Experiences of Dealing with Disasters:**

- i. Have you had any personal experience in responding to disasters whether they be on a local, national or international level?
- ii. Tell me about your motives in responding to....
- iii. Has your organization had any experience in responding to disasters whether they be on a local, national or international level?
- iv. Tell me about your organization's motives in responding to...

**10. Categorizing organizations which respond to disasters:**

- i. Define "Extending" – pre-existing structure, but not focused on disaster response – Canadian Tire – Extending their mandate to help, but not a core mandate.
- ii. Define "Expanding" – pre-existing structure, with a focus on responding to disasters – Red Cross – expanding to respond to disasters, part of their core mandate.

- iii. Would you categorize your organization as ‘Extending” or “Expanding?”
- iv. Explore...

**11. Is there anything thing else you would like to share with regard to your organization’s role in response to disaster?**

**12. Conclusion:**

- i. Offering Thanks.
- ii. Do you give me permission to use the information I have gathered in this interview anonymously in my research?
- iii. Would you like to have a copy of my finished research?

**13. End Interview recording.**

**14. End Call.**

**15. Immediately review notes made during the interview and make any further observations which may be pertinent.**

**16. Immediately transfer interview recording to laptop and erase from recording device.**

## Appendix B - Informed Consent Form

# Informed Consent Form

*Informed Consent Form (ICF) for faith-based organization leaders, who I, Robert John Hounsell-Drover, am inviting to participate in one-on-one interviews for my research thesis, titled “How do Members of Faith-Based Organizations Perceive Their Role(s) in Response to Disasters?”*

**Name of Principle Investigator** – Robert John Hounsell-Drover.

**Name of Organization** – Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at Royal Roads University.

**Credentials** - My Thesis Committee is comprised of two supervisors: Dr. Robin Cox and Dr. Olivia Wilkinson. The Dean of my program is Dr. Matthew Heinz. Please feel free to contact the Interdisciplinary Program at Royal Roads University (XXX-XXX-XXXX) if you wish to verify any of these details.

**Name of Project** – Master’s Thesis - How do Members of Faith-Based Organizations Perceive Their Role(s) in Response to Disasters?

**This Informed Consent Form has two parts:**

- **Information Sheet** (to share information about the study with you)
- **Certificate of Consent** (for signatures if you choose to participate)

*You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.*

### Part I: Information Sheet

#### Introduction

My name is Robert “John” Hounsell-Drover. I am an Anglican Priest and a member of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service within the Canadian Armed Forces. I am doing research into how members of faith-based organizations perceive their roles within the context of disaster response. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of anyone else.

#### Purpose of the Research Interview

The purpose of this research interview is to listen to members of various faith leaders from a variety of religious backgrounds in order to collect information about how they perceive the role(s) of their respective faith groups and faith-based organizations in the response to disasters.

#### Type of Research Intervention

The part of the research process to which you are being invited is a one-on-one, semi-structured interview of approximately 90 minutes in duration.

### **Participant Selection**

In order to find participants with sufficient experience, knowledge, and a high likelihood of being members of multiple faith-based organizations, I will be purposively selecting those who are identified as 'faith leaders' within their own faith groups. Two organizations through which I hope to make contact with appropriate participants include the Interfaith Liaison Network of the Victoria Multifaith Society (VMS) and the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service (RCChS) of the Canadian Armed Forces. Both organizations are made up of experienced faith leaders from various traditions across Canada. I have decided to use these organizations both for their access to a wide variety of different faiths and the 'multi-faith' nature of their membership. I am seeking conversations with those who already have an attitude of open-ness to discussing their faith and worldview(s) with others.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

### **Procedures**

A. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in a recorded, one-on-one interview of approximately 90 minutes in duration.

B. Some of the questions you will be asked, include:

- a. How would you describe a disaster?
- b. How would you describe your faith-based organization's response(s) to disasters?

C. In order to maintain focus on my research topic and also have the flexibility to seek further information and clarification on responses which I believe may aid my research, I will be using an interview guide listing topics and sample questions, but will also prompt you for further information and/or clarification as needed. You do not have to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing.

D. The interview will take place in a private space within which you are comfortable, and no one else will be present during this discussion. The entire discussion will be recorded.

E. I also maintain a 'Memo-book' to keep track of my own personal reflections during the research process. This book will contain no information identifying participants, only using alphanumeric codes when referencing specific interviews. I will also be making notes in my Memo book during the interviews themselves. The purpose of these notes will be to help maintain my focus on the research topic and highlight concepts about which I may seek further clarification.

### **Duration**

As stated above, this interview should take, approximately, 90 minutes.

**Risks or Conflicts of Interest**

There is a possibility that I might have an influence over chaplains who wish to participate because (depending upon the participant) I may be a higher-ranking officer. I will attempt to minimize this influence by making it as clear as possible that I am doing this research as a graduate student, outside the military chain of command. Any interviews done with chaplains will take place in a neutral environment with no reference to rank or uniform.

I do not believe that there are any other risks or conflicts of interest in this process. Can you think of any?

**Benefits**

I hope to see two specific benefits from this research:

1. That this research will help to give voice to various faith-based organizations so that disaster and emergency managers might have a richer understanding of how faith-based organizations understand their role(s) in disaster management.
2. That through this interaction, you, as a faith leader, may bring an awareness of disaster management to your faith traditions/faith-based organizations and encourage a continued dialogue.

**Reimbursements**

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

**Confidentiality**

As stated above, the interview will take place in a private space with which you are comfortable, and no one else will be present during this discussion. The entire discussion will be recorded. The recording will be saved to my laptop (a MacBook Pro 2018 with fingerprint reader). A back-up of the contents of my laptop is maintained through an iCloud account. Once all data has been transcribed, the recordings will be kept for follow-up verification until 31 October, 2019, at which time, all original recordings will be erased. The transcribed data will only include an alphanumeric identification code with contextual information such as age, identified gender, and faith-background. Any and all personal references to the interviewee or other persons mentioned in the interview will be replaced by aliases within the transcription.

**Sharing the Results**

My final thesis will be made available electronically to all participants once it has received final approval through Royal Roads University.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You have the right to withdraw from this research at any point before the end of this interview. If you choose to withdraw, all your information will be erased from all sources.

**Who to Contact**

My Thesis Committee is comprised of two supervisors: Dr. Robin Cox and Dr. Olivia Wilkinson. The Dean of my program is Dr. Matthew Heinz. Please feel free to contact the Interdisciplinary Program at Royal Roads University (XXX-XXX-XXXX) if you wish to verify any of these details.

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about this board, contact The Office of Research Ethics at XXXXXX@XXXXXX.ca; XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX.

You can ask me any more questions about any part of the research study, if you wish to. Do you have any questions?

**Part II: Certificate of Consent**

I have been invited to participate in research about how members of faith-based organizations perceive their role(s) in response to disasters.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Day/month/year)

**Statement by the researcher/person taking consent**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the process.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

## Appendix C – Coding Analysis

### **Basic Coding of Responses:**

Note: Each code is presented with two variables : X(Y). X represents the number of times this code was noted in the interview transcripts. Y represents the number of different participants (out of twelve) who are responsible for these codes. Data in each Heading are listed in order of number of occurrences.

### **Heading #1. Elements in Defining a Disaster:**

1. Causes Harm/Damage – 51(12)
2. A Challenge to Current Coping Mechanisms – 44(12)
3. Defining Disaster is Very Complex – 46(12)
4. Lack of Basic Needs – 33(11)
5. Accessibility/Isolation Concerns – 9(3)

### **Heading #2. Previous Experiences in Dealing with Disaster Management:**

1. Active Response to Disasters – 45(10)
2. Working with DM Partners – 12(7)
3. Prevention/Mitigation Activities – 11(6)

### **Heading #3. Types of/Examples of Hazard Events:**

1. General:
  - A. Natural Hazards – 83(12)
  - B. Technical Hazards – 39(11)
2. Community:
  - A. Hate Crimes/Racism – 7(5)

- B. Death – 4(3)
3. Personal:
    - A. Relationship Problems – 7(2)
    - B. Personal Losses – 6(3)
    - C. Addiction – 3(1)
    - D. Emotional Problems – 2(2)

**Heading #4. LFC Roles in Disaster Management:**

1. Mitigation/Preparation:
  - A. Working with Others in Mitigation/Preparation Activities – 12(5)
  - B. Actively Engaging in Mitigation/Preparation Activities – 9(3)
2. Response:
  - A. Providing For Basic Needs – 21(9)
  - B. Providing for Psychological/Emotional Needs – 14(6)
  - C. Coordinating the Response of those inside and outside FBO – 6(4)
3. Recovery:
  - A. Facilitating Healing Afterwards – 2(1)

**Heading #5. Concerns about Engaging in Disaster Response:**

1. Lack of Capacity to Respond – 15(7)
2. Approaching Disaster Management with An Attitude of Respect for the Impacted Community – 5(2)
3. Issues of Self-Care – 4(2)
4. Encountering Motivational/Political Conflicts – 2(2)
5. Balancing Physical/Emotional/Psychological Needs – 1(1)

**Heading #6. Motivation/Considerations of LFCs When ‘Responding’ to Disasters:**

1. Fundamental Belief/Tenant/Practice:
  - A. Compassion/Empathy Towards Humanity – 22(10)
  - B. Baha’i Approach of Crisis/Victory – 1(1)
2. General Belief/Tenant/Practice:
  - A. Compassion/Empathy Towards Humanity – 25(10)
  - B. Faith In Action – 24(8)
  - C. Focus on Support to the Marginalized – 7(5)
  - D. Bringing Hope – 1(1)

**Heading #7. Are LFCs ‘extending’ or ‘expanding’ Organizations:**

1. Expanding 8(7); Weighted Mean(1-10): 8.5
2. Extending 7(5); Weighted Mean(1-10): 5.85