

## REVIEW ESSAYS

### The Elusive Recovery: Post-Hurricane Katrina Rebuilding During the First Decade, 2005–2015

KEVIN FOX GOTHAM  
*Tulane University*  
[kgotham@tulane.edu](mailto:kgotham@tulane.edu)

In the early years after Hurricane Katrina roared ashore, scores of pundits, researchers, and scholars described “Katrina” as an unfathomable disaster, a catastrophe so immense that it defied conventional theorizing and analyses of disasters. Rapid-response books and journalistic exposés declared the devastated New Orleans to be a modern-day Pompeii where the ravages of Katrina had wiped out the tight-knit communities that were the seed beds of cultural invention in the city. The storm and levee breaks displaced over a million Gulf Coast residents and flooded over 80 percent of the city of New Orleans. Since the deluge, the rebuilding of New Orleans’s infrastructure, including the economic base, school system, legal system, hospitals, police and fire protection, and other institutions, has been slow and challenging.

Much has been written about the lessons learned for improving disaster preparedness and response. Ongoing debates and discussions about the post-storm rebuilding process continue to fan the fires of national debates about democracy and social justice, the existence of poverty in a rich nation, and the tenacity of race, class, and gender inequality. More than a decade after the storm, we are now in a position to gain some perspective on the causes and consequences of the tragedy, assess the measures that have been taken to rebuild the Gulf Coast, and weigh the changes these measures have created in the capacity of local, state, and federal governments to manage and respond to disasters and other threats.

The three books under review here are multi-year studies that draw on long-term ethnographic field observations and interviews to address the quagmires and quandaries of the

*Standing in the Need: Culture, Comfort, and Coming Home after Katrina*, by **Katherine E. Browne**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781477307373.

*Children of Katrina*, by **Alice Fothergill** and **Lori Peek**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. 321 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781477305461.

*Left to Chance: Hurricane Katrina and the Story of Two New Orleans Neighborhoods*, by **Steve Kroll-Smith, Vern Baxter, and Pam Jenkins**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. 164 pp. \$16.72 paper. ISBN: 9781477303849.

post-Hurricane Katrina recovery and rebuilding process. The books are the newest entries in the Katrina Bookshelf Series published by the University of Texas Press and edited by Kai Erikson.

The term “Katrina” does not refer to a hurricane. Katrina is a symbol we use to describe an amalgam of social disruption and widespread community devastation linked with processes of short-term recovery and long-term rebuilding. When scholars, researchers, and residents speak about “Katrina,” they mean the ordeal of displacement, fits and starts of recovery, and cultural vitality and resilience in the face of adversity. What we mean by “Katrina” began long before the hurricane. While the actual hurricane is gone, Katrina is not over. Katrina is still ongoing, still taking shape, still unfolding along the flow of time. Details continue to emerge to contribute to the process of understanding Katrina.

"Recovery" is a problematic term because disasters do not have clear or measurable beginnings or ends. Relatedly, it is not possible to pinpoint a specific moment marking the beginning of recovery or identify with precision when recovery ended. Just as disasters "are episodic, foreseeable manifestations of the broader forces that shape societies" (Tierney 2007, p. 509), post-disaster recovery processes and rebuilding outcomes take place within larger social and political contexts that constrain some actions, enable others, and can breed unforeseen negative consequences. In addition, post-disaster phases are not clearly ordered, and there are no discrete stages that communities move through on the road to recovery. Rather, the process of post-disaster recovery and rebuilding is marked by trial-and-error experimentation, antagonistic group struggles, conflictual policies, contradictory institutional realignments, and crisis tendencies. Overall, the combination of actions and decisions made by government officials and other key actors and organized interests can decisively affect the speed of rebuilding efforts and accentuate social stratification and power differentials among different social groups. These are central concerns in contemporary sociological research on post-disaster recovery and rebuilding, and the books addressed here provide us with new empirical and theoretical insights to advance the state of knowledge of the field.

In *Children of Katrina*, Alice Fothergill and Lori Peek present a study of more than 650 children between the ages of 3 and 18 supported by their interviews of approximately 100 adults over a seven-year period. Logging over 1000 hours of ethnographic field observations, the authors closely followed seven focal children as they relocated to different cities, neighborhoods, and schools. The book describes the personal characteristics of the children, pre- and post-hurricane life experiences, the agony of displacement, and divergent paths of recovery. For the children, the post-Hurricane Katrina recovery process is punctuated by three trajectories—declining, finding equilibrium, and fluctuating. The declining trajectory involves children whose post-hurricane conditions were marked by intense and ongoing instability, insecurity, and diminishing quality of life. In many instances, these children lived in precarious

and unstable positions before the disaster. The finding-equilibrium trajectory involves children who were able to regain or attain stability after an initial period of disruption. Finally, the fluctuating trajectory involves children who experienced an oscillating pattern of post-hurricane stable moments followed by unstable periods in their lives. These children confronted life-threatening and frightening evacuations from New Orleans and were living in families with limited or no post-hurricane access to transportation, little savings or money, and few if any familial connections outside the city.

Fothergill and Peek's original and novel study provides vivid, engaging, and deeply moving accounts of the post-hurricane life experiences of the focal children that tug at one's heartstrings. Blending rich ethnographic descriptions with sophisticated theoretical points, they develop the concept of *cumulative vulnerability* to refer to how vulnerability factors interlock, build up over time, and cluster together in the children's lives. Most studies of disaster vulnerability have focused primarily on racial and ethnic minorities, low-income individuals and groups, women, disabled people, and immigrants because these groups tend to be more likely to suffer disproportionately negative consequences in disasters. Fothergill and Peek's contribution is to show us that it is not solely age, poverty, race, or hazard exposure but how these risk factors accumulate over time as "if each 'piece' of the vulnerability puzzle connects and then is experienced" by the person impacted by the extreme event (p. 23). Eschewing a fixed and static conception of vulnerability, Fothergill and Peek show that cumulative vulnerability has both temporal and additive components. Vulnerability develops over time as risk factors accumulate.

Fothergill and Peek explain differences in social circumstances of the focal children using the concepts of *resource depth* and *resource mobilization*. The former includes high-functioning schools, home and car ownership, safe neighborhoods, and two involved parents with steady jobs making livable wages. Resource mobilization refers to personally and socially valuable resources that are coupled with accessibility, transferability, longevity, and applicability of these

resources. Fothergill and Peek define resources in a broad sense, including notions of social and cultural capital. Access to advocates (shelter workers, teachers, and church leaders) and the resources of institutions such as integrated schools and safe and child-friendly spaces help to minimize the shock and disruption of displacement. In addition, a child's parent or another caring adult may act as an instrumental intermediary for locating and mobilizing resources for the child. A major contribution is to show that resource depth and resource mobilization act as shields or protections against the damaging effects of disasters.

In *Left to Chance*, sociologists Steven Kroll-Smith, Vern Baxter, and Pam Jenkins use stories, narrative accounts, and first-hand personal accounts of residents struggling to return and rebuild their flooded homes in two historic African American neighborhoods in New Orleans—Hollygrove and Pontchartrain Park. Both Baxter and Jenkins live in New Orleans and had the opportunity to visit with residents on a weekly basis during the years after the storm. As empathetic and passionate eyewitnesses, they offer an inside perspective on the disaster and the unfolding recovery process focusing specifically on the experiences of those residents forced into the status and role of an exile. Over the course of five years they conducted 65 interviews with returning residents of both neighborhoods. They spent another two years visiting the neighborhoods informally, engaging in small talk and “porch sitting” with residents.

Combining comparative analysis with participant observations and interviews, *Left to Chance* engages people in the two neighborhoods to understand the economic and social differences that enabled and constrained residents' long road out of displacement and exile. Hollygrove is a working-class neighborhood composed of poor and middle-income residents. Pontchartrain Park is a historically middle-class neighborhood that city leaders developed after World War II to appease and segregate an expanding black middle class. Each neighborhood has its own distinct history with racial and class inequalities, and both neighborhoods operate as sites to understand the different paths of rebuilding after the storm.

*Left to Chance* suggests we should proceed cautiously in making generalizations and drawing conclusions about the rebuilding process and be “at the ready to revise our standard nomenclature and models of people and catastrophe” (p. 74). While the study of displacement and evacuation has been a prominent topic in the sociology of disaster, there are few if any studies on long-term exile. Residents of Hollygrove and Pontchartrain Park were forced to flee their homes, only to discover that the flood made it impossible for them to return for long stretches of time. Exiled residents express despair, depression, and anger at having to make periodic trips back to the city from faraway places to deal with contractors and mortgagers intent on making them pay their mortgage on flooded and unlivable homes. In lucid prose and rich detail, Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins describe the chaotic transition from evacuation to exile. Residents struggle to understand the opaqueness of state and federal relief programs, fight for fairness with insurance companies, and clamor for a modicum of dignity in the face of fraudulent private contractors. The ethnographic detail and evocative interview quotes make for an impressively researched book that provides a welcome alternative to the many decontextualized and overly broad journalistic exposés that came out during the first few years after Katrina devastated New Orleans. In describing the tribulations of recovery, Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins provide a powerfully complex and nuanced analysis of how issues of neighborhood rebuilding and exile intersect with government policy.

For residents of the two neighborhoods, traversing the world of government disaster assistance was a disaster itself. A profound disconnect between making disaster aid available and making it accessible haunted the efforts of residents who sought help from the government.

Shifting eligibility criteria dovetailed with discriminatory and segregationist implementation of the Louisiana Road Home program that provided grants to homeowners to rebuild their homes. *Left to Chance* focuses attention on the impacts of the program in the two neighborhoods as seen through the eyes of the residents. The book devotes less

attention to the Road Home program's operational logics and formulation and implementation processes. Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins argue that the ideology of limited government, competitive individualism, and faith in the market guided the development of the Road Home program and many of the other federal and state policies. These points are familiar and revisit what other Katrina researchers have studied. One of the strengths of *Left to Chance* is to connect the affective and personal struggles of residents accessing rebuilding resources with the impersonality and coldness of bureaucratic decision-making underlying the delivery of aid.

Katherine Browne's *Standing in the Need* covers similar terrain, pointing to the struggles waged by the Johnson-Hernandez family from St. Bernard Parish to navigate the labyrinth of state and federal bureaucracies to access aid and resources to rebuild their lives. As an anthropologist, Browne focuses on the quotidian and cultural dimensions of disaster recovery, drawing on eight years of ethnographic research with the extended family of 150 members. The book follows the arc of evacuation, exile, and slow return, centering on four women in "The Peachy Gang," descendants of Alma "Peachy" Johnson James (1900–1984). They are Katie Williams, Cynthia Winesbury, Roseana Maurice, and Audrey Brown. Browne explains how Dallas, TX relative Connie Tipado served as a "culture broker," helping displaced family members recreate a sense of normalcy in the new environment far from New Orleans and communicate with local, state, and federal agencies.

After the initial joy of return to St. Bernard parish, family members express dismay and frustration with the struggle to find or regain employment and access rebuilding funds. As *Standing in the Need* illustrates, for many people, returning to the New Orleans region after Hurricane Katrina meant coming "home" to a place with no friends, no neighbors, and no community. The hope of reclaiming a life and culture that once existed is what draws family members back to St. Bernard Parish. Both *Left to Chance* and *Standing in the Need* imply that the construction of home, however fragile and tenuous, has a radical political dimension as residents express a "need to be back." It is no

coincidence that when New Orleans residents speak of "displacement" they are not only talking about being displaced from a physical dwelling and neighborhood but from a shared culture and cherished heritage.

The notion of disaster-is-in-the-response frames the post-storm experience, as family members confront the ordeal of living in FEMA trailers, the indifference of recovery bureaucracies, and reliance on outside contractors. One of the major contributions Browne makes is to reveal the profound contradiction between the cultural needs of the displaced St. Bernard family and the default and formulaic administrative approaches built into the recovery protocols of bureaucratic organizations. At the heart of the family's suffering, as Browne describes, was not so much loss of home and community but "the imposing control of outsiders who had taken over their world and did not speak their language" (p. 107).

In describing the "non-responsive response" of government agencies like FEMA, Browne reveals how a lack of empathy, poor communication, and inability to engage local communities were central features of the recovery process. She identifies how family members adopted a coping system of talk therapy as an alternative to the individualized nature of mental health counseling. At the same time, family members expected help from kin who could afford it, and negotiations over these expectations often injected ambivalence, frustration, and guilt into family relations. As Brown notes when describing the Road Home program, the strikingly different amounts of aid and arbitrariness of awards created confusion, discomfort, and suspicion. Rather than directing the frustration toward bureaucrats, the "hurt got distributed within the group" (p. 157) as family members perceived that some did not know how to work the system while others knew how to work the system but did not share their information with the group. Shame and blame permeated the everyday reality of the so-called "recovery."

*Left to Chance* and *Standing in the Need* both methodically investigate how the vocabulary of race infuses people's narrations of the disaster. African American residents of Hollygrove and Pontchartrain Park speak broadly of the history of racial oppression

and inequality as a means for understanding why federal and state governments did not act expeditiously after the failure of the Army Corps of Engineers' levee system. One person's observation that the "way Katrina happened I'm thinking had something to do with race" implies that the disruption and unequal effects of the hurricane were not accidental but rather conformed to a logic of racial segregation, exclusion, and institutionalized discrimination. In Browne's ethnography, residents frame the sluggish government response to Hurricane Katrina as part of a continuation of a long history of government indifference to the plight of African Americans.

Indeed, Hurricane Katrina put on display the growing impoverishment of poor African Americans living in U.S. cities and revealed that racial and class divisions in the United States are deeply rooted and consequential. The treatment of disaster victims in New Orleans and other areas affected by Katrina reflected and reinforced the nation's color-line. In showing us how Katrina scarred the souls of those in its path, the books offer a powerful illustration of C. Wright Mills's sociological imagination, demonstrating how the "personal troubles" of losing a home and neighborhood are linked with the larger "public issues" of social policy and disaster rebuilding.

All three books eschew a notion of recovery as akin to a "return to normal" and, in doing so, challenge longstanding views of disaster recovery as reaching an endpoint or final conclusion. Browne describes recovery as a "long tunnel" and uses the metaphor of "recovery machine" to describe the bureaucratic production of uncertainty and despair. For Fothergill and Peek, the concept of trajectories entails active processes that unfold over time, at different speeds and rates, and across different dimensions of children's lives. The post-Katrina trajectories of the children resembled a "rollercoaster" (p. 194). Because recovery happens across time and space and varying dimensions of social life, there is no simple way to declare when cities, communities, children, families, or any other groups reach a "recovery" endpoint. Normal daily activities never fully resume for disaster victims. Rather, daily activities alter and transform in response to the constraints of the disaster experience.

"[I]t was clear that the disaster continued to unfold in the lives of many children and youth," declare Fothergill and Peek, "even after our seven years of study" (p. 205).

Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins make the case for reconsidering the idea of "disaster recovery." For these scholars, recovery has "insufficient reach" (p. 13) to grasp and understand the many tragic stories and nightmarish experiences of survivors. They recount that "[e]ven those who tried to ride out the flood and ended up in harm's way found escape from danger an easier task than living in exile" (p. 115). In asking the question, how does one recover from "recovery," Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins suggest that Katrina is not something that people lived through but rather is something they live with. For the residents of Hollygrove and Pontchartrain Park, the notion of recovery is "unfamiliar territory" (p. 127). Even after some residents were able to return to their neighborhoods and rebuild, "they felt estranged from what had once been home" (p. 127). For returning residents, Katrina was not past, but was "all too present" in the strange new neighbors and in the loss of a place that used to serve as a retreat from the daily grind. Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins maintain that the notion of recovery has a "seductive power to stop inquiry in its tracks" since it has the "quality of a final vocabulary" (p. 129). The close-up look at the lives of residents in the two devastated neighborhoods reminds the authors "more of editing than of recovery" in which residents amend and revise their lives, "cutting here, splicing there, adding and deleting, all in some way self-consciously responding to this historic flood" (p. 129).

Taking stock of the contributions these books offer leaves one with a sense of admiration for the nuanced and sophisticated nature of Katrina research and the hope that scholars can bring this developing scholarship to bear on public debates and current urban planning processes and practices. The nuance and sophistication I see stems from the rich combination of well-researched qualitative case studies and fine-grained ethnographies the field has developed in the last several years. The extensive use of interview data is at the heart of all three books—gut-wrenching, visceral,



and deeply expressive of residents' trauma. Each of the three books contains a multi-page methodological appendix that meticulously describes the data sources, interviewee sampling strategies, analytical strategies, time line, and research sites the authors accessed and used to conduct their research. The appendices also reflect on the insights gained from the data collection and analysis. Long-term, team-based ethnographies are rare in disaster research, and readers will find much to like in these conscientious and sophisticated appendices in terms of useful methods and research design strategies.

Alongside the nuance and sophistication of the books, one also sees a number of empirical gaps that provide opportunities for future research. First, we need careful analyses that link macro and micro levels to explain processes of disaster recovery and socio-spatial variations in recovery outcomes. To understand and explain what happened in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, one should not only focus analytical attention on the local level but also look to the halls of Congress and the executive branch of the U.S. federal government. The Katrina recovery policies and programs adopted by FEMA, HUD, and so on were debated and developed in Washington, D.C. Much has been written about the anemic response by the Bush Administration, the limitations of the privatization of disaster aid and relief operations, the inequitable distribution of government resources across neighborhoods, and the lack of a clear and coherent plan for long-term equitable rebuilding (Gotham 2015; Olshansky and Johnson 2010; Brunsma, Overfelt, and Picou 2007). The disjuncture between the extra-local bureaucratic implementation of disaster aid and the lack of local accessibility of that aid is a running theme in the books reviewed here.

Second, Kroll-Smith, Baxter, and Jenkins rightly point out that there are few studies on exile and that we need more research on the social, economic, and political factors that keep people from returning to their homes following a disaster. While all three books describe in fine detail the anguishing ordeal residents encountered with the fuzzy requirements and the shape-shifting nature of federal and state relief programs, we need more research on how people navigate

the complex bureaucratic and impersonal world of disaster recovery from afar. As the frequency and destructiveness of disasters increase and threaten greater swaths of the landscape, we can reasonably assume that disasters will force more and more people to flee their homes and be unable to return for long stretches of time.

Likewise, nonprofit organizations have become key players in an expanding arena of disaster service provision in which disaster aid is publicly regulated but privately delivered (Adams 2013; Arena 2012). We know that there are accountability problems in this public-private system of disaster service provision, and much debate surrounds whether this system can be successful in delivering aid to displaced (exiled) individuals. Drawing on the post-storm experience of the St. Bernard family, Browne suggests that recovery agencies could reduce suffering and speed healing by learning about the history, culture, and distinctive customs and needs of disaster-impacted communities. The provision of places to gather, places to cook big meals, and places to care for children could assist in repairing frayed cultural bonds and offer a roadmap for recovery. Future research could examine how cross-scale interactions and networks composed of a diversity of "bridging" links to a variety of external resources and "bonding" links that build trust and unity among displaced people could enhance prospects for a speedy return home and facilitate recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Third, we need more close-up examinations of the agency, creativity, and capacities of disaster-impacted people in responding to adversity. One of the great services of the books under review is to reveal how disaster victims are active agents in organizing and leading recovery and rebuilding efforts. Fothergill and Peek point to three capacities of children and youth: helping adults, helping other children, and helping themselves. Children assist parents with making plans and preparing for the imminent hurricane landfall. Older children take responsibility for their younger siblings as the displacement and relocation experience unfolds. Children engage in creative activities such as writing songs, stories, and poems to get through the trauma of moving to a new city.

Disaster coping strategies assume many forms, and Browne observes them within the St. Bernard family in which members form networks of mutual exchange and reciprocity. The residents of Hollygrove and Pontchartrain Park and family members from St. Bernard Parish attempt to fight the oppressive "othering" of disaster recovery agencies that construct a narrative of displaced residents as undeserving of government assistance. Future research could explore whether displaced residents consciously adopt particular coping strategies to distance themselves from externally imposed, stigmatized roles (e.g., looters, swindlers, fraudsters, cheats, undeserving of aid, etc.) and from the agencies that provide disaster aid. Distancing behavior and talk may represent attempts to salvage a measure of self-worth and dignity and to assert agency and control over conditions of uncertainty and volatility. In addition, it may be that different agential processes—for instance, adaptation and resistance—interlock simultaneously and reinforce each other as displaced residents, elected officials, and recovery agency managers battle over contending meanings of "recovery" and "rebuilding."

Fourth, we need more comparative and historical studies that examine the determinants of key policy actions at a given historical moment, explore actions and choices not taken, and explain why sequential paths are sustained through time in a path-dependent fashion. Typical case-study accounts of disasters tend to embrace an event-centered conception in which each disaster's immediate and disruptive impacts and subsequent response efforts and recovery outcomes become the main objects of analysis. While useful and important, event-centered conceptions concentrate analysis in time and space and can obscure the deep historical and political-economic roots of disasters. Moreover, case-study approaches can miss the multiple intersecting processes that connect different and disparate disasters. In contrast, holistic and context-embracing comparisons can help explain variation and similarity in the federal response to urban disasters and reveal how specific emergency management strategies and processes recur or diverge in the different cities. Sharp debates have unfolded concerning

HUD's and FEMA's response to the September 11 and Hurricane Katrina disasters, arbitrary and capricious modifications in eligibility rules for disaster assistance, and problems and limitations with post-disaster federal response (Gotham and Greenberg 2014; Johnson 2011; Spader and Turnham 2014). Entrenched policy orientations, framing strategies, and the feedback effects of past decisions can affect the subsequent trajectories and outcomes of urban recovery and rebuilding.

How might we use the research and knowledge from the three books reviewed here to contribute to reducing disaster risk and building more disaster-resilient cities? This is a difficult question. We know that the fragmentation of the decision-making process and the tendency to devolve disaster recovery program implementation to the private sector can create bottlenecks to the delivery of aid and slow rebuilding efforts. While trends indicate the increased application of market-oriented policies to disaster recovery, could larger policy shifts of privatization and devolution provide an institutional opening for exercising greater political influence over disaster recovery contract allocation decisions? Can leaders and policy-makers develop collaborative governance mechanisms to enhance the flexibility and spatial targeting of particular recovery programs? Can they provide an institutional foundation for direct participation of community residents in recovery program design, implementation, and oversight responsibilities? The creation of jobs that pay a living wage, adequate benefits for those who cannot work, access to affordable health care, and increased supply of affordable housing might improve the effectiveness of disaster recovery programs for low- and moderate-income communities struggling to rebuild. Developing public and private sector funding criteria to match communities' evolving recovery needs could enhance prospects for achieving equitable recovery outcomes for communities. While these policy recommendations would not solve all the problems of disaster recovery, they could help reduce unpredictability and uncertainty and help promote greater efficiency, equity, transparency, and accountability in the delivery of aid and the rebuilding of disaster-impacted communities.

## References

- Adams, Vincanne. 2013. *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Arena, John. 2012. *Driven from New Orleans: How Nonprofits Betray Public Housing and Promote Privatization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brunsmas, David L., David Overfelt, and J. Steven Picou. 2007. *The Sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gotham, Kevin Fox. 2015. "Limitations, Legacies, and Lessons: Post-Katrina Rebuilding in Retrospect and Prospect." *American Behavioral Science* 59(10):1314–26.
- Gotham, Kevin Fox, and Miriam Greenberg. 2014. *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Cedric, ed. 2011. *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Olshansky, Robert B., and Laurie A. Johnson. 2010. *Clear as Mud: Planning for the Rebuilding of New Orleans*. Chicago: American Planning Association.
- Spader, Jonathan, and Jennifer Turnham. 2014. "CDBG Disaster Recovery Assistance and Homeowners' Rebuilding Outcomes Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." *Housing Policy Debate* 24(1):213–237.
- Tierney, Kathleen. 2007. "From the Margins to the Mainstream? Disaster Research at the Crossroads." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1): 503–525.

## Wanted: More Climate Change in Sociology; More Sociology in Climate Change (Policy)

DEBRA J. DAVIDSON  
University of Alberta  
ddavidso@ualberta.ca

The publication of three major volumes on the sociology of climate change in 2015 is an indication of the rise to prominence of this topic in the discipline. Readers might presume some degree of overlap among three contemporary sociological texts all focusing on the same issue. These three books, however, offer entirely unique contributions, albeit complementary ones. In *Power in a Warming World*, David Ciptet, Timmons Roberts, and Mizan Khan offer readers a rich, theoretically informed empirical account of two central social dimensions of climate change: inequality and international governance. Alexander Stoner and Andony Melathopoulos, in *Freedom in the Anthropocene*, provide a much-needed critical theory contribution to our sociological inquiries into climate change and, importantly, the sense of helplessness that pervades our confrontations with it. Riley Dunlap and Robert Brulle's *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*, on the other hand, compiles a comprehensive synthesis of sociological attention to climate change to date, offering both reason to commend the valuable contributions made and a roadmap for future research. More detailed reviews of each book follow.

*Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*, by **David Ciptet, J. Timmons Roberts, and Mizan R. Khan**. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. 328 pp. \$26.99 paper. ISBN: 9780262029612.

*Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*, edited by **Riley E. Dunlap and Robert J. Brulle**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 460 pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780199356119.

*Freedom in the Anthropocene: Twentieth-Century Helplessness in the Face of Climate Change*, by **Alexander M. Stoner and Andony Melathopoulos**. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. 125 pp. \$67.50 cloth. ISBN: 9781137503879.

The core premise asserted by Ciptet, Roberts, and Khan, on the basis of decades of participatory research among the three of them, is that continued efforts at