Major Synthesizing Works

**Charles E. Fritz.** 1961. “Disasters.” Pp. 651-694 in *Contemporary Social Problems,* edited by Robert K. Merton and Robert A. Nisbet. New York: Harcourt. Placing the study of disasters within a social problems framework, this chapter presents a summary of the major findings and conclusions derived from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) field team studies and other assessments made during the 1950s. This work is the first effort to place “disaster” into a social problems context.

**Allen H. Barton.** 1969. *Communities in Disaster: A Sociological Analysis of Collective Stress Situations.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. This is a revision and update of a monograph published in the NAS series (*Social Organization Under Stress*) which synthesizes empirical studies from the 1950s and early 1960s. Brilliant theory construction is an unique feature, especially pertaining to the emergency social system and the rise of altruism after disaster.

**Russell R. Dynes.** 1970. *Organized Behavior in Disaster.* Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath Lexington Books. Drawing upon over 250 research abstracts of empirical disaster field studies, Dynes integrates the major conclusions regarding organizational functioning and community response. Many of the conceptual tools used in this analysis have become standards in the field.


**Thomas E. Drabek.** 1986. *Human System Responses to Disaster: An Inventory of Sociological Findings.* New York: Springer-Verlag. The key conclusions are listed from nearly 1,000 published studies. They are integrated into a conceptual framework that reflects the disaster life cycle, i.e., preparedness (planning and warning); responses (evacuation and emergency actions); recovery (restoration and reconstruction; and mitigation (hazard perceptions and attitudes toward the adoption of adjustments). Often referred to as “the disaster encyclopedia”, this text summarizes major conclusions on 146 subtopics for which 1,232 empirically supported findings are related.


E.L. Quarantelli (ed.). 1998. *What Is a Disaster? Perspectives on the Question*. London: Routledge. Through this collection of 21 chapters and his own “epilogue,” E.L. Quarantelli pushed numerous scholars to rethink the assumptions implied in their conceptualization of “disaster”. Four (Claude Gilbert, Wolf R. Dombrowsky, Gary A. Kreps and Boris N. Porfiriev) set the stage by articulating their definition of disaster and their approach to its study. Challenges to their perspectives were offered by Kenneth Hewitt. Reactions and rebuttals by each of the four authors comprise the next four chapters. “Future conceptions of Disaster” are then offered in the next five chapters written by another batch of seasoned disaster researchers. These are followed by a reaction paper written by Ronald W. Perry. The author’s of the five chapters then respond to Perry’s reaction paper. Finally, in his “Epilogue,” Quarantelli proposes his thoughts on the matter which reflect his symbolic interactionist perspective, i.e., physical and agent features of disasters will be less helpful in knowledge accumulation than social definitions and attributes.