

Melissa Resnick, AEM

Research Scientist, University at Buffalo

COMPETITIVE DIVISION- ACADEMIC

Sociology of Disasters and Disability: The Behavior of the Extended-Self Theory

Studies have shown the impacts of disasters on individuals or communities due to age, income, gender, or race¹. Despite these studies, there is a dearth of research demonstrating the impacts of disasters on disabled individuals or communities. In these studies, it has been found that those with disabilities were less likely to evacuate, believing that shelters did not have proper accommodations². This was especially true for those with assistance dogs². The lack of evacuation by disabled individuals with assistance animals can be seen through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Attitudes is one of the four constructs of TPB³. In the TPB, attitudes are one's 'favorable or unfavorable evaluation' of a behavior, such as evacuation³. We also know that beliefs toward objects can influence attitudes. However, TPB represents attitudes toward behavior. Thus, TPB lacks the representations of beliefs toward objects which can influence attitudes toward a behavior. To compensate for this gap, the authors propose the Behavior of Extended-Self Theory (BEST), which combines TPB and the Extended-Self Theory. The Extended-Self Theory states that 'our possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities,' which then become the extended-self⁴. In this way, an assistance animal becomes a disabled person's extended-self. In the BEST, attitudes refer to

a person's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a particular behavior as influenced by the extended-self.

Presentation Theme: A disabled person may have an unfavorable attitude toward evacuation due to the lack of accommodations in the shelters for him and his extended-self (his assistance animal). On the other hand, the sociological Theory of Planned Behavior only represents the unfavorable attitude toward evacuation, lacking the representation of the object (assistance animal) influencing the unfavorable attitude toward the behavior, evacuation. The proposed Behavior of the Extended-Self Theory (BEST) provides an explanation for the lack of evacuation by disabled persons with assistance animals.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: Joseph Richmond, DLP, MPA Department of Emergency Management and Occupational Health College of Nursing and Health Professions Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR USA Frank S. Shamenek, JD, MLS Consultant Buffalo, NY USA