## Written Assignment–Surviving Disasters & Community Trauma

By this point in the class, you will have learned about different disasters that have affected communities around the world. Though we have had some time to hear the voices of those who have survived some of these events, we don’t have the time to thoroughly investigate a wide array of possible kinds of disasters and the stories of those who have survived them. **This assignment presents an opportunity to learn more about the experiences of Survivors and to consider what variables may have impacted that experience.**

**Step one:** Decide on a particular disaster event (through research, experience, or something you’ve heard about in class or through the media)

**Step two:** Gain some understanding through some nominal research about this precise event. You might delve a little further into how events like this one impact people more generally (e.g. is it an Earthquake? A Tsunami? A terrorist incident? A plane crash?). Each type of event can have different repercussions. Keep in mind that every event is unique and every individual experience is unique, though some patterns do exist when looked at the population-level.

**Step three:** Utilize web and scholarly research to identify articles, videos, radio broadcasts, interviews, etc, to learn about the event and hear Survivor stories.

**Step four:** Think about how you might personally have been impacted by such an event. Think about the story the Survivor is telling, and drawing from lectures on *Common Reactions to Trauma* . try to **identify the expressed needs and/or outcomes of individual stories.** You may zero in on one or two stories, as it might not be easy to find Survivor stories or interviews. But you need to listen to or watch at least one. **Take notes.**

I realize that you will not be able to ascertain a lot, necessarily, about an individual’s history or experiences, but you may be able to pick up on someone’s age, previous experiences, temperament, spiritual orientation, worldview, or outlook on life more generally. **Based on those factors, do you think this person may be at risk for further mental health issues or does this person’s story reflect a high level of resilience?**

Try not to project your own fears or your own experiences onto that of the Survivor. In fact, aside from minor reflective comments, try to **keep all of your focus on the understanding of the Survivor experience** for that event.

**Step five:** Write a synopsis of the disaster incident. Write about the survivor story and 1) what makes those experiences & reactions generalizable (as commonly seen reactions), and 2) and also unique (based on that person’s own history, risk factors, or whatever you can actually glean from the story).

**Step six:** Look through your notes and/or listen to the story again. Take note of **emergent themes** that are raised in the conversation, i.e., the emotional reactions given the nature of the event (positive? Negative?); coping styles or strategies; emotional changes over time; access to resources; financial burdens; bereavement or loss; etc. and take note of how and when these themes come up.

**Step seven:** Write your narrative paper with a clear introduction, background section, methodology section, and discussion section and write a concluding statement.

*What can you bring to this situation and analysis? What have you learned so far in the course to inform your view of this individual’s narrative?*

**Structure of the Paper:**

**INTRODUCTION**– Write a very brief, introductory summary of the event of you are writing about and some of the reactions you identified in the Survivor story (or stories).

**BACKGROUND** – Describe the event (or kind of event) and typical impacts on the quality of life (including emotional state) of individuals and/or communities who experience events like this

**METHODOLOGY** - Simply state what methods you undertook to further understand the event, the way events such as this impact individuals and/or communities, and how & where you found specific Survivor stories.

**DISCUSSION** – (The “meat” of your paper) Provide a narrative of the Survivor’s story. It is okay to include direct quotes from the individual. It is also appropriate to include body language or tone of voice. Be selective with your material by only including information that best illustrates this person’s experience. Indicate any themes you identified. Compare these to “Common reactions” and make some linkages between some of the things we have covered in class or was covered in your reading. Make an attempt to explain and distill the Survivor’s experience and reactions.

**CONCLUSIONS** – Conclude with what you have discovered about the impact of this kind of event on a single individual, but also what makes this person’s reactions unique to him or her. If it contributes to the overall narrative, you may very briefly reflect on your own personal reaction to the story and/or anything you may have personally experienced when listening to this person’s story.

**Writing Style:** Remember to keep your writing clear and concise. Eliminate anything that is superfluous to the story you are focusing on.

**Format:** This paper must be written in Times New Roman, 12 point font, single spaced, and can be no more than three pages, *not including* any references you might have. Use APA Style to write references. (See APA Style Guide).

**References:** Include each and every reference you used, including YouTube videos and media clips. Be sure to include **at LEAST 3-5** references and sources.

**Rubric:** Total of 15 points possible

5pts - **Content / Material** used --richness of research and content.

5pts  - **Analysis/Discussion** --What can you bring to the table? What have you learned? What observations can you make based on your knowledge, experience or intution?

2 pts - **Format/Structure/Organization** -- Is this paper clear, concise and carefully organized?

2 pts -**Grammatical construction** - Grammar is very important for your writing! If you are unsure, make sure you have others review and edit your writing.

1 pts - **Citations/References**  - This includes citations & references and whether they are cited properly (APA style)