

2018

# A Faith-Based Organization's Engagement of an African American Community in Disaster Preparation

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Tronda L. Douglas

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2018

Abstract

A Faith-Based Organization's Engagement of an African American Community in

Disaster Preparation

by

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MA, Regent University, 2015

BS, Excelsior College, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Sciences

Walden University

May 2018

## Abstract

Researchers have revealed that rural African American communities, which have been adversely impacted by disasters, could minimize personal injuries and property damage by being prepared before a disaster strikes. Data from past studies have shown that social networks, such as faith-based organizations (FBOs), have been instrumental in assisting rural African American communities recover from disasters such as floods and fires. This exploratory qualitative case study addressed the research question: How a rural, FBO organized resources to build a community based, all-volunteer fire department. The conceptual framework for this study incorporated concepts from social network theory and social capital theory. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 11 participants. Data were collected through interviews, newspapers articles, and church documents. Data were analyzed using inductive analysis and Colaizzi's method for determining emergent themes. Results revealed that community members lacked the knowledge and resources needed to build the fire department. Findings further revealed that the FBO was the hub of activities where social networks organized the social capital needed to engage, recruit, and unite members in building the fire station. The themes of determination, dedication, resilience, and persistence further revealed that community members used social networks and social capital to overcome obstacles to building the fire station. Findings from this study contributes to positive social change by providing information to human services professionals, government agencies, policy makers, and community members on how FBOs can be utilized as social networks that can leverage the social capital needed to prepare isolated, rural communities for disasters.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this achievement to the memory of my father Deacon Sterling W. Taylor, who taught me that there is no limit in God. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

## Acknowledgments

To God be the glory and all the honor for all he has done! First, I would like to thank my children Aquilia and Mark for being so understanding during this new chapter in my life. Thank you for believing in me, supporting me, and not complaining about the lifestyle changes we had to make for me to complete to this project. Your sacrifices are not in vain. There are no words to describe my love and gratitude for you. I also want to express a sincere thank you to my parents, siblings, family members, and friends for all the love, concern, encouragement, and support you provided during this journey. I am forever grateful for all you have done.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Natural disasters have a negative impact on communities (Tuohy, Stephens, & Johnston, 2014) and typically leave residents shocked and confused (Archer & Boonyabancha, 2011). Kapuci, Hawkins, and Rivera (2013) explained that after being impacted by past disasters, community leaders tend to allocate time, money, and resources to prepare for future crises and disaster. However, Muller, Burke, Berg, Lin, and Upperman (2014) argued that disaster preparations must be developed before a disaster strikes, particularly in rural, disadvantaged communities. According to Vance (2014), community social networks such as faith-based organizations (FBOs) offer the most reliable defense in preparing rural disadvantaged communities for disasters. FBOs have historically been known for assisting people who are in need (Levin & Hein, 2012), and communities frequently depend on FBOs in times of despair (Atkinson, 2014). However, empirical studies on disaster preparedness and FBO involvement in African American communities is limited (Bundy, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). According to Bundy (2015) and Lachlan and Spence (2011), more research needs to be conducted on the involvement of FBOs in preparing African American communities for disasters.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how members of a local FBO organized resources to build an all-volunteer fire department. The results from this study provide insight on how FBOs can assist African American communities in preparing for and managing the effects of disasters. This chapter contains background information on the topic, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, the

nature of the study, and definitions of key terms. Also included in this chapter is discussion of the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background**

Disasters are unpredictable and the frequency of occurrence of disasters that negatively affect communities in the United States is increasing (Prelog & Miller, 2013; Rademacher, 2013). Disasters such as hurricanes, fires, tornados, and earthquakes can affect communities at any time (Al-rousan, Rubenstein, & Wallace, 2014). The aftermath of disasters typically results in mass casualties, social disruption in communities, negative changes in the natural environment, and property damage that could take billions of dollars to repair (Chikoto, Sadiq, & Fordyce, 2012; Coetzee, Niekerk, & Raju, 2016; Eisenman, Cordasco, Asch, Golden, & Glik, 2007; Muller et al., 2014). Community members may be able to avoid most injuries and damages caused by natural disasters by being properly prepared before a disaster strikes (Al-rousan, Rubenstein, & Wallace, 2014; Hernandez, 2017; Kaposi et al., 2013).

African American communities in the United States have been hard hit by natural disasters (Prelog & Miller, 2013). In August 2005 Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest natural disasters in the United States, hit the Gulf Coast (Knabb, Rhome, & Brown, 2011; White, Philpot, Wylie, & McGowen, 2007). In the aftermath of Katrina, 80% of New Orleans, Louisiana, was under 20 feet of water; more than 1,800 people had been killed; thousands of people had been displaced; and there was over \$75 billion in property damage (Knabb et al., 2011). Sharkey (2007) confirmed that poor, African

American communities suffered the highest number of deaths and the most excessive property damages as a result of Katrina. Rodriguez and Dynes (2006) argued that community members were unaware of the evacuation routes and the locations of emergency shelters within their areas before Hurricane Katrina approached. Media coverage of thousands of displaced African Americans crowded into a football stadium holding signs begging for help dominated the airways for weeks (Watkins & Hagelman, 2011).

The deadliest and most destructive storm of the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season was Hurricane Sandy, which impacted cities along the New York and New Jersey coastlines. The aftermath of the storm left over \$50 billion in property damages, over 140 people dead, and thousands of families displaced from their homes (Abramson, 2012). Vulnerable, predominantly African American communities such as Red Hook, Brooklyn, were left without electricity, heat, and water for up to three weeks (Schmeltz et al., 2013).

Another tragic disaster that affected rural African American communities happened in Flint, Michigan, the second poorest city in the United States (Morckel, 2017). Derrick (2016) explained that poor communities of Flint, Michigan, were provided contaminated, lead-based water from the Flint River when the city switched utility providers. Hanna-Attisha (2017) confirmed that the lead poisoned water affected members of the community by causing severe rashes, irritations, and Legionnaire's disease.



FBOs played a role in assisting African American community members in the aftermath of these disasters. Members of these organizations provided community members impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy with basic essential needs such as water, shelter, and food (Abramson, 2012; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Members of local and national FBOs collected, delivered, and distributed bottled water to residents of Flint, Michigan, after the water became contaminated (Warikoo, 2016). FBOs continue to be actively involved in providing assistance to community members during and after disasters (Pant, Kirsch, Subbarao, Hsieh, & Vu, 2008).

Because of their close proximity to affected communities, FBOs are often the first responders on the scene to provide food, water, and shelter to victims of disaster (Cheema, Scheyvens, Glavovic, & Imran, 2014; Koenig, 2006; Rivera & Nickels, 2014; Smith, 2012). African American communities often turn to FBOs in times of crisis, even if other government agencies are available to provide assistance (Atkinson, 2014; Cain & Barthelemy, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). In addition, FBOs typically provide resources and assistance to individuals regardless of their background and religious affiliation (Levin & Hein, 2012; Vance, 2014). Using FBOs to promote and engage community members in disaster preparations could significantly reduce the risk of injuries and damages associated with the lack of disaster preparedness (Muller, Burke, Berg, Lin, & Upperman, 2014). FBOs are ideal agencies to offer training, education, and information on disaster preparedness to vulnerable, disadvantaged populations because they function as resources and social networks in African American communities (Lippmann, 2011; Stajura et al., 2012). Schmeltz et al. (2013) contended that vulnerable

communities could coordinate disaster preparedness activities before a disaster strikes by forging collaborative networks and relationships with community-based FBOs.

However, as Muller et al. (2014) observed, it is important to note that FBOs are not officially identified as community disaster preparedness resources; instead, they are recognized as religious organizations who provide services to the community.

Lippmann (2011) asserted that human service providers and disaster relief agency members often lacked training and understanding on the cultural aspects in African American communities. The impact of Hurricane Katrina revealed that there is still more to learn about preparing African American communities for catastrophic events (Muller et al., 2014). Engaging communities before a disaster strikes is essential for members of the community (Flint & Stevenson, 2010). The involvement of community-based organizations in preparing communities before a disaster could potentially save lives and minimize property damages (Bowman & Newman, 2016; Flint & Stevenson, 2010; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). There is little research on how community-based organizations become involved in preparing African American communities for disasters (Atkinson, 2014; Cheema et al., 2014). In reviewing the literature on disaster preparedness, I did not find any studies whose authors directly addressed how FBOs assist rural African American communities in handling disasters. As Atkinson (2014) and Cheema et al. (2014) noted, more research should be conducted on the disaster preparation work of community-based organizations such as FBOs. The findings from this study could assist leaders of other communities with enlisting the aid of community based organizations, such as FBOs, in preparing communities for disasters.

## **Problem Statement**

African American communities in rural areas are at a high risk for experiencing property damage and personal losses as a result of disasters (Davidson, Price, McCauley, & Ruggiero, 2013). Rural communities in the United States encounter problems with obtaining resources before disasters occur, and they typically experience delayed emergency responses due to remoteness and separation from urban populations (Ashida et al., 2016; Levin & Hein, 2012; Prelog & Miller, 2013; Tuohy et al., 2014). As Berg, Musigdilok, and Haro (2014) noted, rural communities cannot depend solely on federally funded emergency services to prepare them for disasters; instead, they must provide for many of their basic needs in preparing for these adverse events. The failure of government agencies to provide immediate assistance to displaced victims after of Hurricane Katrina highlighted the fact that minority communities experience challenges in obtaining federal assistance in the aftermath of disasters (Eisenman et al., 2014; Rivera & Nickels, 2014).

Rural community members are often not involved in disaster planning, and many such communities lack the resources necessary to properly prepare for disasters (Cox & Hamlen, 2015; Smith, 2012). Natural disasters are problematic for African American rural communities due to lack of knowledge on how to obtain disaster preparedness resources, lack of information on what qualifies communities for emergency services, and the underutilization of established social support networks within community based resources such as FBOs (Ashida et al., 2016; Austin, 2012; Carr & Jensen, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011; Prelog & Miller, 2013). The underutilization of community based

organizations, such as FBOs, involved in disaster assistance became apparent after Hurricane Katrina (Pant, Kirsch, Subbarao, Hsieh, & Vu, 2008). FBOs could play a significant role in assisting disadvantaged communities prepare for disasters by disseminating information on disaster preparedness. Further, FBOs could engage community members in disaster preparation activities to significantly reduce the risk of injuries and damages associated with the lack of disaster preparedness (Bowman & Newman, 2016; Muller et al., 2014). Therefore, further research was warranted to determine how FBOs could be utilized to prepare rural communities for disasters (McGeehan & Baker, 2017; Muller et al., 2014).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how members of a local FBO organized resources to build a community based all-volunteer fire department. The community I studied is located outside of the fire department jurisdiction of the nearest local city. Members of the rural community had repeatedly experienced property damages from the impact of fires and natural disasters. Community members also experienced slow responses to their emergencies due to the city having only one fire station. Members of the community became concerned about who would protect their property and assist them in the aftermath of future disasters. A local FBO became involved in the process of establishing a fire department after it hosted a meeting during which community members voiced their concerns and lack of confidence in the city's ability to provide emergency services. Members of the community are closely related and engaged regularly in social activities. Ashida et al. (2016) recommended

strengthening the social connections in rural communities to help communities proactively prepare for disasters. Results from this case study showed that FBOs can serve as valuable resources and assist community members with disaster preparations.

### **Research Questions**

I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What strategies or approaches did an African American faith-based organization in a rural community use to establish a community-based all-volunteer fire department?

RQ2. What recommendations do the organizations have that could be used to assist other communities in preparing for disasters?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used principles from social network theory and social capital theory as the conceptual framework for my examination of how members of an African American rural faith-based community used their relationships and available resources to establish a volunteer fire department. A brief overview of each theory is presented in the paragraphs that follow. Additional information on social network theory and social capital theory is presented in Chapter 2.

**Social network theory.** Barnes (1954) is credited with developing social network theory. Social networks are defined as the relational ties between people, organizations, and communities that allow for the transfer of information and resources (Barnes, 1972). Barnes (1954) explained that social networks are made up of individuals, groups, and relationships that are formed because of the associations between the individuals.

Further, Barnes asserted that social networks often contain individuals who have contacts with people who know of other persons who may share some type of relationship.

Members of social networks embody a sense of unity and trust that is not often found in government agencies (Burton, 2007; Patterson, Weil, & Patel, 2010).

Social networks could be key links for members of African American communities in obtaining disaster related resources (Hurlbert, Beggs, & Haines, 2006; Thiede & Brown, 2013; Thomas, 2012). By using social networks, individuals have the capability to rapidly organize funds and resources to provide assistance in chaotic times (Atkinson, 2014). These informal networks should not be ignored but rather they should be utilized by government agencies to assist communities with planning and coordinating disaster prevention activities (Aten, Topping, Denney, & Hosey, 2011; Eisenman et al., 2007; Lippmann, 2011). Vance (2014) suggested that social networks offer the most protection against disasters because individuals in the networks are likely to seek help from one another before a disaster strikes. Further, Vance explained that trust and personal interactions among key individuals are key ingredients for effective disaster planning. Experts have credited FBOs with building social networks and accessing the social capital within their communities (Cheema et al., 2014). However, the influence of social networks within FBOs to prepare communities for disasters still remains undervalued (McGeehan & Baker, 2017).

**Social capital theory.** French sociologist Bourdieu presented the theory of social capital (Claridge, 2004). Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more

or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248).

Bourdieu proposed that it is unreasonable to live in a community without the exchange of capital or energy used to produce material and services in society. Further, the sociologist posited that the social relationships are necessary for the exchange of the capital. Bourdieu went on to explain that material, information, and services could not be exchanged without the personal relationships that exist between individuals. Bourdieu asserted that the exchange of social capital could only occur if people have relationships with other people that could prove beneficial for all members in the network.

Rivera and Nickels (2014) explained that the concept of social capital inspires community members to trust their neighbors and encourages them to work together for the greater good of the community. The resources generated through social capital are acquired from individuals who have established relationships with other individuals (Putnam, 2000). As Putnam (2000) noted, the relationship of one member to another member outside of the network could prove to be beneficial to the entire community.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study was a qualitative, exploratory case study. Yin (2016) recommended using case studies for analyzing events, programs, or processes. A case study approach is also suitable for examining a phenomena in a real-life setting (Crowe et al., 2011). The event I studied was the role of an African American FBO in establishing an all-volunteer fire department in a rural community. Residents of the community are made up of generations of families who have been negatively impacted by countless disasters such as hurricanes, tornados, fires, and floods. Grynszpan, Murray, and Llosa

(2011) explained that case studies in disaster preparedness could be used to present a better understanding of what it takes for communities to prepare for disasters than by using statistical quotations to examine individual experiences. Qualitative methods in disaster research are used to draw attention to individuals' diverse opinions (Tuohy, Stephens, & Johnston, 2014). I selected a qualitative design because that method allowed me to examine the role of the FBO in establishing the fire department in-depth. I was able to gather rich data through the actual experiences of the faith-based community members.

I used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit 11 participants who were community leaders, church leaders, and essential fire department personnel who had knowledge about this topic. Participant recruitment occurred from an African American rural southern community. I collected data through semi-structured interviews with selected participants, newspaper articles about the fire department, and other relevant sources such as documents about the fire station's establishment.

### **Definitions**

*African American:* A person who is of African descent and who identifies as being Black or African American on the U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

*African American community:* A population of African or Black originated groups who live in the same areas and share a common cultural, ethnic, or historical formation (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017).



*Community-based organizations (CBOs)*: Nonprofits, nongovernmental agencies, and FBOs that provide some type of social services to individuals (Austin, 2012; Stajura et al., 2012).

*Disaster*: A human-made or natural, destructive event that disrupts a community's social, natural, and routine environment and may cause serious injury, death, and extensive property damages (Mayner & Arbon, 2015). Disaster events include fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and terrorism (Koenig, 2006).

*Disaster preparedness*: Actions taken by communal organizations before a disaster to lessen and prevent personal and property damages (Austin, 2012).

*Faith-based organizations (FBOs)*: Organizations such as churches, synagogues, mosques, charitable groups, and programs that have a religious affiliation (Rural Health Information Hub, 2017; Stajura et al., 2012).

*Emergency preparedness*: The capacity to defend against, prevent, and respond quickly to a sudden and unexpected situation and provide care for self and family after the impact of a disaster or destructive event (Nelson, Laurie, Wasserman, & Zakowski, 2007).

*Preparedness*: Individual or group adapted survival behaviors and planning strategies for the anticipation of a disaster (Lippmann, 2011).

*Resiliency*: The ability to return to the state of operation that was in place before being exposed to danger or traumatic circumstances (Kim & Marcouiller, 2016).

*Social capital*: Resources and benefits derived from a community of members which are used to accomplish a shared interest (Rivera & Nickels, 2014).

*Social networks*: Relational ties between individuals, groups, and communities whereby information and resources can be obtained (Casagrande et al., 2015).

### **Assumptions**

A basic assumption of this research was that the potential participants would be truthful about their experiences when answering the interview questions. Another assumption was that the participants would volunteer to participate in the study without being coerced or promised any benefits of any kind for their participation. In addition, I assumed that the sample size of 11 would be sufficient for examining the role of the FBO in establishing the all-volunteer fire department.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was exploring the role of a FBO in preparing African American community members for disasters by establishing a volunteer fire department. The aftermath of disasters could impact all populations. However, the study focused solely on an African American community. Further, this study also focused on a rural population because community members in rural areas may lack knowledge on how to acquire disaster supplies, equipment, and training (Smith, 2012). African Americans who live in rural communities are often at a disadvantage when it comes to preparing for disasters. African American community members cannot depend solely on government disaster relief agencies to prepare them for disasters (Berg, Musigdilok, & Haro, 2014), and they often face challenges obtaining federal assistance in the aftermath of disasters (Eisenman et al., 2014).

The delimitations of a study are characteristics controlled by the researcher that limit the scope of the study (Simon, 2011). Further, Simon explained that factors such as research questions, theoretical perspectives, and the targeted population describe the researcher's choice to conduct the study. Due to the uniqueness of the case, one delimitation was that participants were only recruited from community leaders, church leaders, and essential fire department personnel that are affiliated to the selected African American community. Also, participants had to have direct knowledge of what it took to establish the fire department. Another delimitation was only one site was chosen to conduct the case study because the purpose of the study was directly linked to that location.

Disasters are impacting communities nationwide. The aftermath of disasters affect all people, regardless of race and gender. Toma (2014) explained that in qualitative research the state of transferability is reached when the findings from the study can be duplicated in a different environment by other researchers. The findings are applicable to other settings if similar research questions and research methods are used (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). This study focused primarily on the role of a FBO preparing an African American rural community for disasters. However, the findings are transferable to other races, cultures, and FBOs involved in disaster management. The findings can also assist government disaster relief agencies and local emergency managers with additional information on the possible usage of FBOs in assisting community members in rural locations.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses that are outside of the researcher's control (Simon, 2011). The purpose of the study was to examine how an African American FBO in a rural community engaged community members in disaster preparedness by establishing an all-volunteer fire department. Therefore, this study had several limitations. The first limitation was only African Americans were included as participants. Another limitation to the study was that the case site and selected FBO are not intended to be a representative of all African American rural faith-based communities.

Lastly, I acknowledge my biases with the study. I share the same race and cultural background as the participants. Also, I have been exposed to the aftermaths of destructive disasters. One technique I used to minimize my personal biases was to keep a reflective journal. In addition, I also discussed the guidelines I used to lessen my personal biases on the study in Chapter 3.

### **Significance**

Disasters are unpredictable and occurring more frequently in the United States. Utilizing FBOs as disaster resource centers to prepare residents for disasters, especially in rural African American communities, could significantly improve disaster resiliency within these communities. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are essential disaster resource tools that could be used to prepare and assist rural community members in recovering from disasters. The findings of this study could be applicable to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), disaster relief organizations, and human

service professionals on understanding how to better incorporate African American FBOs into local disaster management plans.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 included information on the rationale for exploring the impact of disasters on African American communities. In addition, this chapter addressed the problems faced by African American community members in obtaining disaster assistance, and the role FBOs could play in preparing African American communities for disasters. Further, I showed that there is a lack of empirical evidence on the topic and additional research was warranted. During a review of the literature I noted the following:

1. Natural disasters leave a negative impact on rural African American communities within the United States (Prelog & Miller, 2013; Tuohy, Stephens, & Johnston, 2014).
2. Community members, especially in rural disadvantaged locations, should be prepared before a disaster strikes in order to avoid most injuries and property damages (Al-rousan, Rubenstein, & Wallace, 2014; Muller, Burke, Berg, Lin, & Upperman, 2014).
3. Faith-based organizations are located within communities and are not officially identified as community disaster preparedness resources. However, FBOs have a history of providing basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter for people who are affected by disasters (Bundy, 2015; Levin & Hein, 2012; Muller et al., 2014).
4. Rural community members may have problems with obtaining resources before disasters occur and experience delayed emergency assistance due to geographical

separation from urban populations (Ashida et al., 2016; Levin & Hein, 2012; Prelog & Miller, 2013; Tuohy et al., 2014).

5. Natural disasters cause problems for rural communities because members may have a lack of knowledge on how to obtain disaster preparedness resources, lack of information on how to request emergency services qualifications, and may lack information on how to effectively utilize social networks within FBOs to prepare for disasters (Ashida et al., 2016; Austin, 2012; Carr & Jensen, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011; Prelog & Miller, 2013).

6. Disaster research on the topic of utilizing FBOs to prepare African American rural communities for disasters is a topic worthy of discussion (McGeehan & Baker, 2017; Muller et al., 2014).

7. Principles from social network theory and social capital theory could be beneficial to the potential role FBOs could play in preparing communities for disasters.

8. A qualitative case study was appropriate for studying the role of a FBO in preparing the community for disaster by establishing a volunteer fire department (Tuohy, Stephens, & Johnston, 2014; Yin, 2013).

9. This study had limitations that were outside of the researcher's control (Simon, 2011).

In Chapter 2 I provided a comprehensive review of the relevant literature in regards to FBOs and CBOs in African American communities. I also included a review of the principles of social network theory and social capital theory that could be used by FBOs in disaster management. Chapter 3 includes the research methods selected for the study as well as the ethical and trustworthy issues of the research. In Chapter 4 I

discussed the results of the study, and Chapter 5 included a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Disaster such as hurricanes pose a challenge for communities in the United States. Rural communities are often the hardest hit by disasters due to lack of, or minimal, preparation for disasters; lack of knowledge on how to obtain disaster preparedness resources; little information on how to qualify for emergency services, and underuse of the established social support networks of FBOs for assistance in disaster preparation (Ashida et al., 2016; Austin, 2012; Carr & Jensen, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). Natural disasters are particularly problematic for African American rural communities because of limited resources and minimum knowledge of disaster management (Prelog & Miller, 2013). The purpose of this study was to investigate how a local FBO organized resources to build a community-based all-volunteer fire department. This chapter includes a discussion of the search strategies I used to collect relevant literature for this study and an overview of the conceptual framework that I used to guide my research. I also provide a review of the literature on disaster planning and preparation in rural communities. I conclude the chapter with a summary of my literature review findings.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In order to retrieve relevant information on my topic of interest, I reviewed books, peer reviewed scholarly articles, and published dissertations from Walden University and Regent University databases, which included ProQuest, EBSCOhost, SAGE, Wiley, and Google Scholar. The first topic I searched was African American communities and disasters. The key words I used included *African Americans*, *disasters*, *preparations*, and



*planning*. I then searched for literature on community disaster preparation using the key words *community-based organizations, rural communities, disasters preparation, and planning*. After doing so, I tried to find literature on the topic of FBOs and disaster preparation; the key words I used were *faith-based organizations, religious congregations, social support, disasters, preparation, and planning*. For my last search, I used the key words *social network theory and social capital theory* to find research on the study's conceptual framework. I included studies that had been conducted within the United States and in other countries. I also included studies that were than 5 years in order to glean additional insight on the activities of FBOs in helping communities prepare for disasters.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Social network theory (Barnes, 1954) and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) constituted the conceptual framework for this study. The principles established in both social network theory and social capital theory were relevant to my development of interview questions. I used key principles from the theories to explain how FBO members garnered resources for building the fire department.

#### **Social Network Theory**

Anthropologist John A. Barnes developed social network theory in 1954 after he observed societal relationships in Bremnes, a fishing village located within Western Norway. Barnes (1954) concentrated on the organized efforts of the individuals and their interactions within the village. Barnes noticed that the men in the village shared a connection through three different types of social systems. First, the men were linked

territorially through their occupations, religion, and means of caring for their families. Second, they were socially connected by their work in the village's fishing and marketing industry. Third, the men were connected through social ties which were formed through interactions with friends, family members, and other acquaintances. Barnes later referred to those connections as social networks.

Barnes (1954) explained that the social networks consisted of individuals, groups, and outside relationships that were formed as a result of interactions between individuals. The networks included people who had contacts with individuals who knew of other individuals who had some type of connection with one another. Further, Barnes explained that the networks formed in Bremnes extended beyond relational ties or friendships. Individuals were linked to groups through social memberships and shared activities in the community. Barnes suggested that communities could receive some societal benefit from established social networks. Social network theory was appropriate for my study because both FBOs and African American communities consist of social networks that are formed through relationships among people who share similar associations and common interests (Casagrande et al., 2015). My participants lived in a small, African American rural community. The members had deep generational ties, worked in similar occupations, and were locally connected to a FBO that is centrally located within the community.

Social networks can play a role in assisting communities with disaster preparedness. Communities with strong social networks have the capability to acquire resources quickly when preparing for disasters, for example (Murphy, 2007). Yet, the

involvement of social networks in disaster literature remains understudied (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

Paton and McClure (2013) noted that communities with strong social networks have the potential to be better prepared for future disasters. Further, Paton and McClure explained that community members with well-known social relationships connect regularly with one another and are more likely to trust information exchanged through those connections. The sharing of information from the established relationships of community members may not be available to individuals outside of the social network (Hurlbert et al., 2006). Members in social networks are able to obtain generated material, resources, and information before, during, and after disasters (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Casagrande, McIlvaine-Newsad, & Jones, 2015).

Taylor, Chatters, Lincoln, and Woodward (2017) explained that members of African American communities who are involved in effective social networks are able to provide reciprocal support to one another, especially in times of disasters. Social networks within vulnerable communities have the ability to disseminate information and resources more quickly than outside agencies (Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Using the social networks in FBOs can help strengthen community cohesion and give members access to valuable resources and information needed to prepare for disasters (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

Aldrich and Meyer (2015) surveyed the disaster literature presented by different researchers to gather information on the inclusion of community social networks and their functions after disasters. They found that members of social networks provided

food; water; financial assistance; shelter; emotional support; and resource connections to personnel before and after disasters (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). The literature review also revealed that social networks consisting of neighbors, friends, and relatives became activated in emergency situations before emergency rescue personnel showed up on the scene. The findings from the review of Aldrich and Meyer proposed that FBOs are social networks that could be utilized in preparing communities for disasters.

McGeehan and Baker (2017) proposed that FBOs are more than religious institutions; they are also social networks that can be used to create and share disaster specific resources with community members. Further, the researchers asserted that social networks found in FBOs are able to identify detailed requirements of minority community members during disasters because of the trust that has been established within the community (McGeehan & Baker, 2017). McGeehan and Baker recommended that emergency managers use the social networks found within FBOs to gain essential knowledge on how to incorporate disaster plans within diverse communities.

Aldrich and Meyer (2015) recommended several methods social networks could use to improve community resilience, cohesion, and social trust in times of disasters. One method is for communities to implement a currency program to provide incentives or rewards to residents who volunteer for activities such as disaster preparedness events to enhance the community. Another method is that communities could sponsor social meetings and block parties to train and discuss how the community could prepare for disasters. Lastly, Aldrich and Meyer recommended that communities create a plan and opportunities for residents to maintain the structural design of their community which

includes their personal properties and commonly used buildings. Such opportunities could increase social cohesion and bridge social capital networks that could be used to prepare the community for future disaster resiliency.

Bowser and Cutter (2015) reviewed disaster studies to determine where people go for information during disasters. The findings from the review revealed that people were hesitant to trust the media and public officials when official disaster warnings and evacuation orders were issued. However, the findings did show that people trusted and gathered information from social networks made up of family members and friends. The researchers suggested social networks such as FBOs could influence people's decisions by providing information on the locations of emergency shelters. The researchers also suggested that because people trusted social network members, the report of the potential risks associated with the impending disaster could be confirmed and taken seriously. Findings from Bowser and Cutter's research supports the notion that social networks within FBOs could be used to more effectively prepare individuals and communities for disasters.

Casagrande, McIlvaine-Newsad, and Jones (2015) conducted a qualitative study to determine how people use social networks to obtain services, resources, and information about disasters. The data were collected from interviews and focus groups with residents, emergency management personnel, and business owners. Results showed that people requested disaster assistance from family, friends, and other social network members instead of from emergency workers or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The researchers suggested that local emergency managers should

recognize that every disaster will be different; understanding the dynamics of how social networks are organized within the communities could improve collaborations in providing assistance during disasters.

Results from a quantitative study by Taylor, Chatters, Lincoln, and Woodward (2017) revealed that social networks in African American FBOs consist of family members and close-knit friends who normally have direct knowledge of individuals who are experiencing problems within the community. The researchers asserted that social network members should know some details about the problems faced by members in order to provide accurate assistance. The data were collected from The National Survey of American Life Adult Re-interview. The sample included African Americans, non-Hispanic Caucasians, and Blacks of Caribbean descent. The researchers revealed social networks in African American FBOs have been valuable in assisting members with transportation, running errands, managing finances and providing care. Taylor et al. suggested that future studies should examine the ways individuals who are not FBO members request support in times of need.

### **Social Capital Theory**

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is credited with analyzing the concepts of social capital in 1980 through an article publication in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. However, the article was published in a French journal so the concepts of social capital did not gain official recognition in America until an English translation appeared in 1985 (Bourdieu, 1985). Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable

network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...to membership in a group” (p. 286). Bourdieu goes on to describe capital as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form...) when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (p. 280).

According to Bourdieu (1985), social capital is organized from the individual social relationships that have direct access to the resources and the types of resources gathered from these associations. Social capital is not individually derived but it is derived collective through the relationships established within communities, families, and institutions. The mutual exchange of capital established through the social relationships or networks are increased as a result of the social associations. Further, Bourdieu (1985) goes on to say that “the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible” (p. 249). Bourdieu’s ideal of social capital focused on the benefits and the relationships gained by individuals who participated in a social group that have the potential to produce valuable capital that could only be obtained through individual connections. In addition, Bourdieu (1986) stated that the networks of individual relationships do not naturally happen but could be established as a result of the social relations within the organization. In other words, Bourdieu explained that having the knowledge of people that know other people outside of the group could be beneficial in obtaining information, services, and resources.

Bourdieu (1986) asserted that it is impractical to function socially in a world without incorporating the different fundamentals of capital that are identified as

economic, cultural, and social. Bourdieu explained that economic capital is the instantaneous conversion of money that could be institutionalized into the form of material rights. Further, Bourdieu expounded that children are exposed to the cultural aspect of capital early in their childhood. Cultural artifacts, books, paintings, and other objects are different forms of cultural capital as well as the influence of instruction from academic institutions. Lastly, the social form of capital is the connections established to exchange the resources developed from economic and cultural capital.

**Types of social capital.** Aldrich and Meyer (2015) described the three types of social capital that are derived through social networks. They also described how social networks leveraged the social capital to provide assistance to communities during disasters. Those social networks were categorized as bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital.

Bonding social capital, the most common type of social capital, consists of connections between close knit family members and friends who share emotional links (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The individuals in bonding social capital display similar demographic characteristics and normally have knowledge of the same type of information and resources that may be available during times of disasters (Mouw, 2006). Aldrich and Meyer (2015) explained that bonding social capital is achieved because the individuals in the unit display mutual trust, depend on each other. Individuals are likely to volunteer for disaster preparedness activities. Further, bonding social capital is more effective in preparing communities for disasters because of the perception of established trust and sensitivity to community culture.



On the other hand, bridging social capital refers to connections between individuals who developed associations through less structured means such as involvement in social groups in FBOs or other nonprofit organizations (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). In addition, Aldrich and Meyer (2015) explained that bridging social networks often include individuals from bonding social networks. Further, Aldrich and Meyer stated that through bridging social capital individuals and communities may receive support from social ties who have local and national resources connections.

The third form of social capital is linking social capital, which describes the relationships created between regular individuals and individuals who hold positions of authority such as governmental positions (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Connections established through linking social networks could have a positive effect on communities during disasters. Individuals in linking social networks could use their associations with people in authoritative positions to request assistance for disaster relief for their communities.

**Dimensions of social capital.** Narayan and Cassidy (2001) proposed that there are different types of dimensions social capital. While attending a workshop at the World Bank in 1998, Narayan and Cassidy recommended modifications be made to the questionnaires that were being used at the time to measure social capital. The updated questionnaire was piloted in Ghana and Uganda. The revised seven dimensions of social capital as identified by Narayan and Cassidy are, as follows: group characteristics, generalized norms, togetherness, everyday sociability, neighborhood connections, volunteerism, and trust (see Figure 1). These dimensions of are relevant to my study

because they could potentially be used to explain the mechanisms by which FBOs could be utilized in preparing communities for disasters. Previous research has revealed that community members who have frequent contact with each other, participate in community activities, belong to associations such as FBOs, volunteer for charitable associations, and are concerned about the well-being of others are instrumental in obtaining materials and external resources in times of disasters (Bundy, 2015; Ritchie & Gill, 2007; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Narayan and Cassidy (2001) explained that community members who trust in each other and trust in the local government tend to have unified communities. Communities that are unified before a disaster strikes could better assist members of the community with developing disaster plans, acquiring disaster supplies, and are able to bounce back quickly from the aftermath of disasters.

Social capital is not an item that a community owns but it is a result of the established social relationships between the people and the organizations (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Communities that utilize social capital in planning for disasters are not dependent on individualized efforts but the different components developed from the social associations. Social capital is relational and multi-dimensional and occurs between shared relationships (Claridge, 2004). The concept of social capital could not exist without the formation of social relations. Ritchie and Gill (2007) stated that actions taken by community members are made possible because of the flow of information and resources throughout the community before and after disasters. Efforts to successfully bounce back from the aftermath of a disaster depend upon the effective application of principles associated with social capital (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

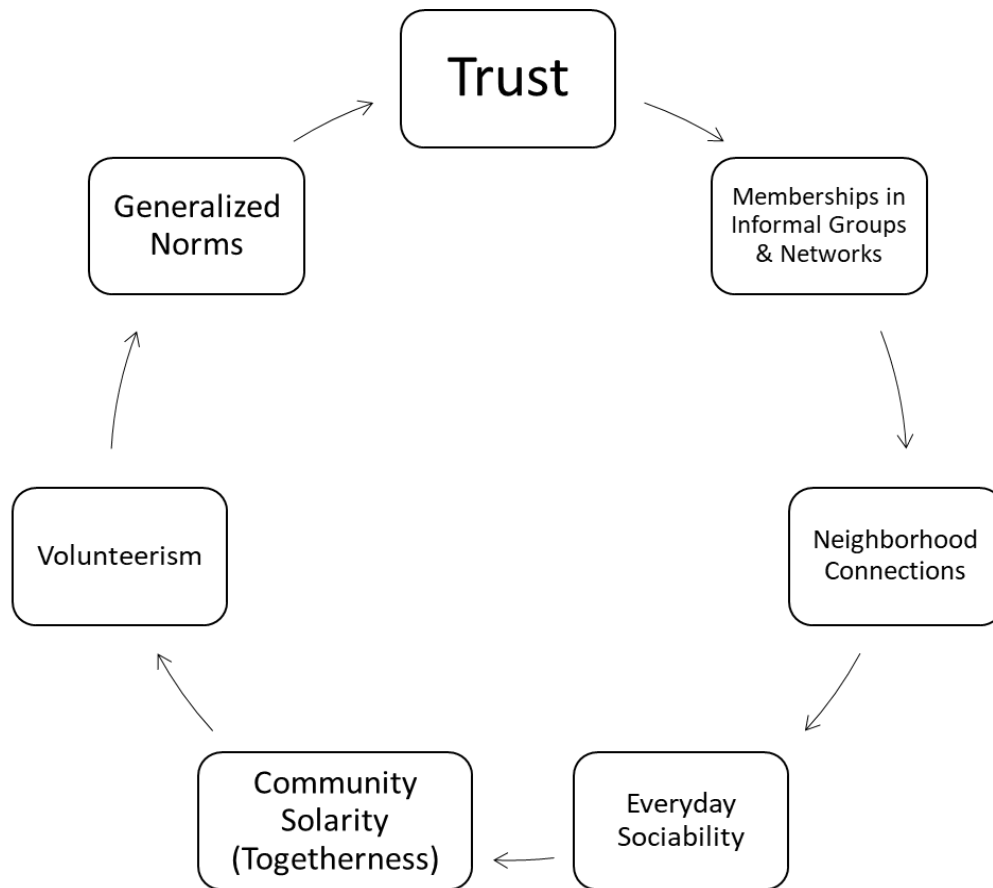


Figure 1. The dimensions of social capital as defined by Narayan and Cassidy (2001).

### **Social Networks and Social Capital in Disaster Preparations**

Researchers have determined that both social networks and social capital are critical in understanding the dynamics of how communities could prepare for disasters. According to Burton (2007), social networks in FBOs create opportunities for communities to benefit from the resources gained through the use of social capital. The researcher explained that there are several different types of social networks found in FBOs that have the potential to acquire the needed resources for communities. The social networks are identified as organizational networks, leadership networks, kinship networks, friendship networks, and neighborhood networks. Burton explained that the

separate networks may have relationships outside of the FBOs that are able to connect with other people outside of the community. The different networks offer members a chance to connect with other individuals, trade contact information, and obtain valuable resources from people outside of the community. The researcher asserted that community members are offered a chance to obtain supplies and information that would not have been likely without the various relationships of the individual networks.

Patterson, Weil, and Patel (2010) posited that organizations that have social networks use the concepts of social capital to acquire and distribute supplies and services to community members faster than government agencies during emergencies. Patterson et al. argued that FBOs are ideal social networks that could be used to relay information, materials, and services during disasters because of their familiarity with community members, and personal invested interests in the community.

Rivera and Nickels (2014) conducted a qualitative case study on a FBO that utilized social capital to assist New Orleans, Louisiana, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Results showed that the FBO utilized social networks by engaging members from the local community to provide valuable services such as food, shelter, clothing, and financial assistance to displaced members in the absence of disaster relief agencies. Rivera and Nickels explained that one benefit of social capital in minority communities was the dissemination of disaster information on evacuation routes and disaster assistance. The researchers further posited that a major benefit of social capital is community solidarity. The researchers suggested that communities that have solid social norms, traditions, and principles are able to develop standards and values to better

recover from the impact of disasters. The researchers proposed that their case study could be used to show how FBOs could use social networks to obtain needed materials and services for use in disaster management plans. Rivera and Nickels suggested that future qualitative methods should examine the role of FBOs and how FBOs could utilize principles of social capital theory to engage in disaster relief, preparation, and management.

Casagrande et al. (2015) suggested that using the principles of social networks and social capital are crucial for communities in developing trust, unity, and obtaining resources, and services during disasters. The researchers stated that the relationships in social networks could be used to acquire supplies, social support, and information. Casagrande et al. explained that minority, rural community members are often hesitant to trust and seek assistance from governmental agencies outside of the community. However, the researchers asserted that before and in the aftermath of disasters, minorities are likely to trust, connect to, and seek help from members of social networks such as FBOs and from other community members even without having a personal relationship with the individuals. Members in social networks are likely to volunteer, distribute information, and establish contact with people outside of the community who could provide beneficial resources to the community. Casagrande et al. (2015) recommended that emergency managers should connect with social networks in communities before disasters to establish trust with the members. Casagrande et al. proposed that reluctance to create trust with social network members could be detrimental to communities obtaining timely resources.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

One common finding during my review of the literature was that community members who engaged in strategic training in disaster planning were able to address their community's needs and capabilities before a disaster strikes (Flint & Stevenson, 2010). Archer and Boonyabancha (2011) noted that community members who sponsored and participated in disaster training had a better chance at minimizing the effects of disasters. This section presents a synopsis of research related to community preparation or disasters in chronological order going from oldest to most recent.

#### **FBOs in Planning and Training for Disasters**

Chikoto et al. (2012) conducted a mixed method study to examine the disaster preparations of community-based organizations (CBOs) that provided shelter, food, and essential resources to displaced residents before public organizations became involved in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The researchers stated that with the increase of disasters happening nationwide, government agencies are overburdened and need additional help with assisting communities with disaster preparation and recovery. The data was collected from interviews and surveys with CBO leaders. The interview and survey questions were about the CBO's level of engagement in disaster preparedness activities. Chikoto et al. pointed out that CBOs that receive proper training and resources have the potential to handle large scale disasters. Also, community members should seek profound knowledge on disaster planning.

Cheema et al. (2014) argued that religious institutions are underutilized and undervalued in regard to their potential utility in disaster preparations. The researchers

conducted a qualitative study of a FBO's involvement in a rural community after the impact of an earthquake in Pakistan. The data were collected through interviews and focus groups of religious leaders from area mosques. The findings showed that local organizations should work with FBOs to share information on disaster relief efforts, obtain resources, and gain trust from community members. The findings also revealed that FBOs could be used as channels to organize and promote material on disaster resources, and to encourage community members to take an active role in disaster planning. The researchers urged FBOs to engage their community members in preparing for disasters to reduce the loss of life and minimize property damages.

Tuohy, Stephens, and Johnston (2014) conducted a review of disaster studies to determine how CBOs could help older adults prepare for disasters. Findings from the review revealed that CBOs should include everyone in disaster planning events, promote the accessibility of resources available from social networks, and provide disaster preparedness programs to older adult communities. The researchers suggested that older adults are likely to request and receive assistance from CBOs and social networks consisting of family and community members, than from governmental agencies during disasters. Tuohy et al. further suggested that disaster researchers use qualitative research methods to gain a rich, comprehensive understanding of the importance of cultural norms, social networks, and community participation in disaster preparedness.

Ashida, Robinson, Gay, and Ramirez (2016) conducted a mixed-method study to examine factors that influenced older adults' decision to prepare for disasters. The sample included members from a senior facility, a church, and a low-income apartment

complex in a rural community in Iowa. The researchers stated the factors that inhibited older adults from being prepared for disasters were limited funds to purchase disaster supplies, lack of awareness of available community preparedness resources and programs, and a lack of knowledge about what to do or where to go in the event of a disaster. The findings revealed that disaster preparedness programs should focus on helping communities develop resources and disaster readiness strategies prior to disasters. The results also showed that having a strong social support network was a must for rural community members in obtaining disaster preparedness resources. Ashida et al. suggested that community involvement and social support are vital to motivating residents in planning for disasters. One limitation to the study was the data was collected from older adults in a small rural community. The findings may not be a general representation of all small rural older adult populations.

Bowman and Newman (2016) reviewed the findings from a resiliency model that was developed to examine the strengths and weakness of a community impacted by Superstorm Sandy. The results revealed that community members who received training in disaster planning improved their community's chances to recover quicker after the impact of disasters. The researchers suggested that community members in disaster prone locations be provided opportunities to participate in disaster prevention and resiliency training activities before catastrophic events occur.

Heagle (2016) reviewed the literature on disaster research and found that community members often misunderstand the importance of being prepared before a disaster. The researcher stated that community members may lack the training and



education on how being prepared could prevent unnecessary injuries and personal property damages. Heagle's review of disaster literature found that community members could be used to distribute detailed information and instructions on how to properly prepare for disasters. Additionally, Heagle recommended that community members should work with FBOs and other community-based organizations to recruit community members to become involved in disaster preparedness activities.

**Collaboration with government agencies.** A second finding from the literature was that community-based organizations (CBOs), which are non-governmental associations such as FBOs and nonprofits that provide some type of assistance to community members, are ideal entities to partner with government agencies to sponsor or foster community disaster preparedness programs.

Lachlan and Spence's (2011) argued that emergency managers and first responders should partner with FBOs to help African American communities prepare for disasters. The researchers explained that in past disasters like Hurricane Katrina, African American community members had relied substantially on FBOs to obtain services and support. Lachlan and Spence stated that due to the cultural significance of spirituality with African Americans, FBOs could provide important information on disaster preparedness programs and resources before the occurrence of disasters. Further, Lachlan and Spence stated that African Americans are more than likely to trust information received from FBOs than from government agencies.

Stajura et al.'s (2012) qualitative study examined the collaborations between FBOs, CBOs, and local government agencies in disaster preparedness efforts. The data

were collected through telephone interviews with representatives from CBOs and FBOs involved in disaster preparedness, relief, and response efforts. The researchers explained that CBOs and FBOs are normally active in assisting communities during disasters. In addition, CBOs and FBOs are trusted within their communities and are ideal sources to assist vulnerable populations in chaotic times. Stajura et al. asserted that partnerships between CBOs, FBOs, and local government agencies are a worthwhile solution for vulnerable community members. The findings revealed that more collaboration is needed between FBOs, CBOs, and local government agencies to develop comprehensive community disaster preparedness capabilities. The findings also revealed that local government agencies should establish quality relationships with CBOs and FBOs to provide additional training and resources to improve services to community members before and during disasters. Stajura et al. recommended that FBOs and CBOs understand the role each organization could play in disaster management.

Eisenman et al. (2014) suggested that government agencies should connect with CBOs to implement disaster planning programs to increase community members' knowledge of disaster preparations. The researchers' mixed method study examined how well CBOs were prepared to handle catastrophes to understand how to properly prepare communities for disasters. The data was collected from surveys and interviews with personnel from CBOs and government agencies. The findings showed that CBOs need more assistance with understanding how to engage community members in disaster planning. The findings also revealed that communities could increase their resiliency levels if both CBOs and governmental agencies worked together.

Koch, Franco, O'Sullivan, DeFino, and Ahmed (2016) conducted a mixed-method study to examine factors that influenced CBOs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to partner with outside agencies to prepare for disasters. The sample included participants from political, religious, and healthcare agencies. Results showed the factors that prevented CBOs from partnering with outside agencies were lack of knowledge of the city's disaster management plan, limited funding, the city disaster management's current disaster plan did not meet the community members' need, and no social communications with the city emergency managers. Findings from the Koch et al. study revealed that CBOs such as FBOs were underutilized as resources for assisting community members with preparing and responding to disasters. Koch et al. recommended that government agencies should include CBOs in disaster planning meetings and disaster preparedness exercises.

Collaboration between government agencies and CBOs could assist community members with vital information and resources to improve disaster preparedness efforts (Kapuci, Hawkins, & Rivera, 2013). Community-based organizations (CBOs) are appropriate sources to assist community members in rural locations with preparing for disasters. Al-rousan, Rubenstein, and Wallace (2014) stated that establishing partnerships between CBOs and government agencies could improve the implementation of disaster preparation programs within vulnerable communities.

**Obtaining/distributing resources for disaster planning and recovery.** A third finding during the review of the literature was that community members need information on how to obtain disaster resources and understanding on how to establish disaster

preparedness plans. Communities, especially in rural areas, should receive detailed directions in what procedures to use to procure disaster necessities and services (Ashida et al., 2016). Not knowing what to do or who to contact in the aftermath of disasters could delay communities in receiving critical help.

Austin (2012) stated that community members could better prepare for disasters if they had proper guidance and understood what to do and where to turn for assistance. The researcher conducted a qualitative study to examine the disaster planning techniques of CBOs. The data were collected from interviews with directors of CBOs, which included FBOs, nonprofit organizations, and housing authorities. The results revealed that CBO members lacked information on how to obtain disaster supplies and equipment. Further, the findings showed that CBO members needed training on how to provide help during emergencies. Austin recommended that members of CBOs seek direction and expertise from external government organizations on how to provide services to personnel during disasters.

**Community-based organizations and faith-based organizations in disaster relief.** Several studies have been conducted to assess the role of FBOs in community disaster relief efforts. A common finding was that FBOs played a vital role assisting community members with recovery after disasters strike (Bundy, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). FBOs have been instrumental in obtaining disaster resources and providing community members with basic life necessities such as food, water, and shelters in the aftermath of a crisis (Pant et al., 2008; Lippmann, 2011; Schneider, 2016).

Atkinson's (2014) qualitative study examined the role that FBOs played in North Dakota after the impact of devastating flooding. The data were collected by interviews with participants from FBOs, local government, businesses, and nonprofits. A community of local FBOs in North Dakota united together to provide shelter for displaced community members and assisted homeowners with clearing debris from their residence. The findings revealed that the city's effort to assist community members would not have been successful without the contributions of FBOs. The researcher indicated that there is a gap in the literature on case studies about FBOs and disasters, and the topic is worthy of discussion. The researcher suggested that future case studies could be conducted to address how FBOs, government organizations, and disaster relief agencies could form collaborative relationship during disasters to assist community residents.

Vance (2014) conducted a qualitative study in New Orleans, Louisiana, Thailand, and Guyana to examine how community members, FBOs, and CBOs of different cultures experienced disaster recovery efforts after natural disasters. Data were collected through interviews and focus groups from religious groups, community members, government leaders, and first responders. Results from Vance's study revealed that community members with strong ties to FBOs were better suited to handle the impact of disasters because of their connections to social networks in FBOs. The findings also revealed that disaster relief agencies should work with FBOs to understand the trustworthiness of social networks within communities. Vance recommended that future studies should be

conducted on different cultures to understand why members of social networks trust each other during disasters.

Cain and Barthelemy (2015) interviewed leaders of FBOs involved in disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to determine the services FBOs provided to their communities after the hurricane. The results showed that the FBOs provided shelter, food, counseling, and relocation assistance to displaced individuals. The researchers also proposed that FBOs should understand the required services needed to properly prepare their communities for disasters. Cain and Barthelemy suggested that FBOs could improve the disaster relief services offered to their community members by using some key principles. The researchers suggested that leaders of FBOs should designate community leaders to establish an emergency plan before disasters happen; assist members in obtaining disaster and trauma training; assign individuals to maintain member contact information that includes their nearest relatives and outside disaster relief agencies; ensure members understand the value of having property insurance; and offer resources to help members return back to their normal lives as soon as possible.

Bundy (2015) reviewed literature related to disasters to determine the level of FBO's involvement in disaster management. The findings showed that in the aftermath of disasters, FBOs provided necessities such as food, water, clothing, and money to displaced community members, regardless of their association with religion. In addition, FBOs connected with government agencies to provide services such as childcare, transportation, and temporary housing for those in need. Bundy suggested that future studies should define the role of FBO involvement in disaster activities. Further,

additional studies should examine ways to integrate FBOs into community disaster preparedness plans. A limitation of the review was that the disaster studies included in Bundy's study did not examine the involvement of FBOs in disaster preparedness events prior to the occurrence in disasters.

McGeehan and Baker (2017) conducted a qualitative study of faith-based communities in the Hawaii Islands to examine how leaders of FBOs understood and responded to disaster management programs. The sample consisted of FBO leaders from four different faith communities. The data was obtained through interviews, questionnaires, and a video simulation of a disaster impacting the island. Results showed that the FBO members believed that their religious beliefs about the principle of taking care of their neighbors were one of the main reasons why FBOs prepared and responded to assist community members during disasters.

### **Rural Communities and Disaster Preparedness**

One common finding during my review of the literature was that members of rural communities experience more difficulties recovering from disasters (Bergstrand, Mayer, Brumback, & Zhang, 2015; Lachlan & Spence, 2011; Prelog & Miller, 2013). Another finding was that members of rural communities lacked training, education and adequate resources for effective disaster management (Cox & Hamlen, 2015; Kapuci et al., 2013; Lippmann, 2011). This section presents a summary of research in sequential order going from oldest to newest on disaster preparations in rural communities.

Kapuci, Hawkins, and Rivera (2013) conducted a qualitative study to examine a disaster management plan from rural communities in Florida. The data were collected

through surveys and focus groups. The sample consisted of personnel from emergency management, FBOs, and non-profit organizations. The results revealed that rural community members lacked funding for disaster preparedness trainings and did not have the ability to manage large amounts of resources. Kapuci, Hawkins, and Rivera suggested that disaster managers should acknowledge that social networks such as FBOs are valuable sources in rural communities for disaster preparedness, relief, and resiliency efforts. The researchers explained that social network members are trusted agents who could be used to share information throughout the community and obtain disaster relief supplies. Also, the researchers recommended disaster managers create and maintain partnerships with FBOs to develop training materials, and provide trainings on how to efficiently use resources before the occurrence of disasters.

Prelog and Miller's (2013) conducted a mixed-method study to determine the factors that hindered rural communities from preparing for disasters. The participants in the sample consisted of residents from rural counties in Texas. The researchers collected information during telephone surveys with first responders in rural communities. The findings showed that rural community members lacked information about how to obtain disaster resources. Also, the findings revealed that rural community members were not aware of the disaster plans for their areas, which included the local evacuation routes, the locations of shelters, and the external services offered by government agencies after disasters. Prelog and Miller suggested that future studies should address ways emergency managers could improve disaster preparedness plans in rural communities.



Bergstrand, Mayer, Brumback, and Zhang (2015) conducted a quantitative study to examine how vulnerable, minority communities in the United States coped, recovered, and adapted after disasters. The researchers analyzed data collected from the Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI), the Community Resilience Index (CRI), and published findings from literature on disaster related literature. The researchers stated that minority community members may have less resources and experience more barriers during and after disasters than other ethnic groups. The findings showed that rural community members were more than likely be unprepared for disasters. The findings also revealed that vulnerable populations could face difficulties recovering and returning to normal conditions if the necessary resources are not in place prior to a disaster. Bergstrand et al. asserted that rural community members, because of their low resiliency levels, should be the first applicants to receive assistance from government agencies after disasters. However, the researchers noted that members in rural areas may require additional assistance from government agencies on how to fill out insurance claims and the federal emergency forms to request financial assistance as well as knowledge on how to gather disaster supplies and equipment.

Cox and Hamlen (2015) conducted a mixed-method study in Canada to examine the capacity of members in rural communities to recover from disasters. Data were collected from interviews with community members and responses from the Rural Resilience Index (RRI) assessment. The researchers noted that members who lived in rural areas lack the ability to obtain suitable resources that met the unique requirements of their communities. Further, Cox and Hamlen emphasized that members in rural

locations lacked strategies for effectively planning and engaging in local disaster management procedures. The researchers further indicated that members in rural communities could recover quicker from catastrophes if they were provided training on the supplies and equipment needed for their area before a disaster strikes. Cox and Hamlen proposed that disaster relief agencies should focus on the strengths, skills, and experiences of rural populations to develop disaster training and implement techniques that are unique to rural locations.

### **Summary**

After reading the literature on the role of FBOs involved in disasters I noted several emerging themes. Faith-based organizations contain social networks of individuals with information and resources that could be instrumental in preparing African American communities for disasters (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Ashida et al., 2016; Paton & McClure, 2013). The social networks in FBOs could provide insight to community leaders on how to address community vulnerabilities and misunderstandings about disasters (Casagrande et al., 2015; McGeehan & Baker, 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). Community-based organizations could also use the dimensions of social capital to understand how to utilize the skills and experiences of community members to become better equipped to handle disasters (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; Patterson et al., 2010; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Rural community members could partner with FBOs and government agencies for disaster preparedness programs and trainings on how to acquire and manage resources (Lachlan & Spence, 2011; Eisenman et al., 2014; Stajura et al., 2012). African American rural communities and the significance of FBOs are two areas

where cultural comprehension is critical for service providers who provide disaster relief (McGeehan & Baker, 2017; Vance, 2014). Further, FBOs could be vital assets to emergency managers and disaster relief agencies (Atkinson, 2014; Cain & Barthelemy, 2015). Bundy (2015) stated that FBOs are an extensive presence within communities, and should be involved in disaster planning and response events.

In this chapter, I presented a review of relevant literature to address the role of FBOs in preparing African American communities for disasters. I explored the literature to examine how social network and social capital theories could be applied to FBOs assisting members in disaster preparations. I identified several studies on the involvement of CBOs actively participating in disaster planning as well as literature on the lack of resources available to rural community members. I also noted the recommendations of various researchers on how disaster preparedness could be improved in vulnerable communities as well as additional resources that could be beneficial to FBOs preparing their members for disasters.

In chapter 3, I present an explanation of the research design and methodology I used to examine how a local faith-based organization (FBO) organized resources to build a community-based all-volunteer fire department. I also address my role as a researcher, the instruments I used to collect the data, and the ethical and credibility issues of my study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a local FBO organized resources to build a community-based all-volunteer fire department. In this chapter, I provide information regarding the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology and justification for participant selection, and instrumentation. I also discuss the techniques I used for data analysis. After doing so, I describe how I assessed the trustworthiness of the data collection and data analysis. In addition, I address ethical considerations related to the study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research design for this qualitative study was an exploratory case study. Hyett, Kenny, and Dickson-Swift (2014) stated that researchers used case studies because of the flexibility of the design for examining the topic of interest. The following research questions guided my selection of the qualitative case study approach:

RQ1. What strategies or approaches did an African American faith-based organization in a rural community use to establish a community-based all-volunteer fire department?

RQ2. What recommendations do the organizations have that could be used to assist other communities in preparing for disasters?

### **Research Design**

I selected a qualitative design to gain information about how a community and a local FBO organized resources to build an all-volunteer fire department. Yin (2016)

suggested that researchers often have personal reasons for using qualitative designs; their identity is key to understanding the study. Furthermore, Yin explained that researchers use qualitative designs to understand the process a specific population. According to Zainal (2017), case studies allow qualitative researchers to explore a phenomenon in a natural context. A qualitative research design allowed me to examine a topic that is of deep personal interest and provide an opportunity for self-expression to community members. Sutton and Austin (2015) stated that one goal of qualitative research is to understand the opinions of the participants. Yin further explained that qualitative designs offer alternative ways for researchers to connect their passion to social research. In addition, Yin proposed that qualitative designs allow researchers to examine the actual thoughts and feelings of the participants in real-life situations. The qualitative method is suitable for studies of cultural and social organizations (Yin, 2016). Use of this method allowed me to build a rapport with members of the predominantly African American community I studied.

Other qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches have an appropriate place in disaster research. For example, Atkinson (2014) conducted a qualitative study on FBOs that provided assistance to a flooded community. Using a quantitative approach, Al-rousan et al. (2014) examined the ways FBOs could be used to aid communities impacted by disasters. In their mixed-method study, Muller et al. (2014) examined the effectiveness of FBOs in preparing communities for disasters. However, Jacob and Furgerson (2012) asserted that using the qualitative method will help researchers reveal the intimate details of participants' stories that cannot be explained

through surveys. I chose to use a qualitative method instead of quantitative one to gain an in-depth information on the process used by members of an African American FBO to protect their community from disasters.

A quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, using a quantitative method such as surveys would have been impersonal, and it would have limited the richness and variety of the data that were collected (see Hyett et al., 2014). Second, potential participants would not have been able to articulate their feelings, thoughts, and experiences through their responses to survey questions. Third, I would not have been able to gather information regarding the actual process used by the FBO and the community to organize resources to build an all-volunteer fire department using closed-ended survey questions.

A case study allowed me to analyze the data from different sources, build rapport with the participants, and ask why and how questions. Yin (2013) suggested that case studies are a way to gather information about circumstances that impact individuals, communities, and organizations in a natural form. Further, Yin explained that case studies are suitable for gathering information that can be used to explain actual events. By using the case study design, I was able to capture the details, procedures, and services that the participants used to organize resources to build an all-volunteer fire department.

The unit of analysis in a case study can be an individual, a group, an agency, a program, a community, or a culture (Toma, 2014; Yin, 2014). I selected a FBO in an African American rural community as the unit of analysis for this study because the establishment of the fire department is unique. The fire station has received recognition

as the first fire department with all African American volunteers to become certified in the state. Initially, the community members did not receive the funding and support from the city to start the fire station. However, the community members were able to receive assistance from the local FBO to create the fire station. Leaders of the FBO recruited volunteers to obtain emergency service qualifications and provided funding and property to build the station. In addition, leaders of the FBO allowed members of the community to access the FBO's building to hold meetings to inform residents about the details of the fire department. Information gained from the involvement of the FBO in organizing resources to build an all-volunteer fire department could benefit other small, rural communities in disaster preparations (Grynszpan et al., 2011; Yin, 2013).

### **Role of the Researcher**

I was the sole researcher throughout the research process. I collected, coded, and analyzed the data for relevant themes. Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) stated that in a qualitative study the researcher serves as the primary tool for collecting and interpreting data from the participants' responses. Yin (2013) explained that in a case study a researcher should have some knowledge of the potential case. Sutton and Austin (2015) agreed that having some preconceived information about the topic can assist the researcher when analyzing the data. I was raised in the community and attended the local FBO where I recruited participants for my study. I have been exposed to hurricanes, floods, and seen properties being destroyed by fires. I have some familiarity with participants. However, I had not lived in the community or had personal contact with the residents in over 28 years. The limited information I had of the fire department's

establishment came from knowing of my deceased father's involvement with the fire station and reading newspaper articles written about the community. My father was the automobile mechanic who worked on the firefighting trucks given to the fire department.

The researcher should acknowledge any biases upfront that could influence the case (Hyett et al., 2014). Ortlipp (2008) explained that the researcher's opinions, feelings, and assumptions could affect the study. Sutton and Austin (2015) asserted that the researcher should not try to hide his or her personal thoughts and preconceptions. The biases I had about the case are evident in the findings. I believed that members of the rural community I studied experienced racial discrimination while trying to establish the fire department. All of the members in the community are African Americans. I personally experienced racism and saw the mistreatment of African Americans from community members of other races as well as municipal personnel while growing up in the rural community. Racial tension was constantly present within the community and surrounding areas. Findings from my analysis of the data revealed that race could have been a factor in hindering the community members from receiving assistance with starting the fire department and obtaining proper emergency service qualifications.

I used a reflective journal to record my personal assumptions, experiences, and preconceptions to lessen my biases about racial discrimination in the community (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murpshy, 2013). I still have personal feelings about experiencing racism. Journaling about my emotions while collecting the data helped me recognize any hostile or negative feelings that arose in me while collecting the data. Ortlipp (2008) identified reflective journaling as a visible resource for keeping the



researcher focused on the study's methodology. I was able to maintain my focus on the purpose of the study by using a scripted interview guide with interview questions that were aligned with my research questions.

Another way I minimized my biases were to use the interviewing the investigator technique. Chenail (2011) explained that the interviewing the investigator technique is one process a researcher who has some commonality with the participants can use to determine researcher biases. Further, Chenail explained that the researcher takes on the role as the participant and recruits a colleague to conduct the interview. I recruited a colleague who did not have a personal role in the findings of the study and who is familiar with qualitative research to interview me. The interview consisted of the questions I asked participants in the study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). In addition, I also videotaped the interviewing the investigator conversation to examine what preconceived knowledge I knew about the case and to capture any nonverbal cues and reaction to questions that might bring up any negative feelings. The interviewing the investigator technique allowed me to identify my biases and acknowledge what I knew about the FBO's role in establishing the fire department (Chenail, 2011; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). I reviewed the videotaped interview to acknowledge my personal reactions. The interview the investigator technique revealed I did not know much about how the FBO engaged community members to organize the resources to start the fire department. Therefore, I did not have any frustrations or concerns while viewing the video recording. I also reviewed the interview questions to make sure the questions were fair and aligned with the purpose of my research (Glesne, 2016). Chenail (2011)

suggested that using these techniques could produce ethical and credible research as well as assist the researcher with minimizing biases with the study.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) explained that participants for a study are recruited based on a predetermined criteria that is pertinent to the purpose of the study. O'Reilly & Parker (2012) suggested that the purpose of recruiting participants for qualitative studies differs than in quantitative studies. Further, O'Reilly & Parker explained that qualitative studies are more concerned with exploring different individual's opinions on a particular subject. I used the procedures of snowball sampling and purposeful sampling to recruit the participants. Toma (2014) described snowball sampling as a process whereby a researcher asks each participant to identify and refer others who might have information about the study. The individuals could refer other individuals who may have information about the case (Suri, 2011). I purposefully recruited individuals who had direct knowledge about the process and procedures involved in establishing the fire department to participate in this study.

Anderson (2010) stated that in qualitative studies "individuals are chosen with characteristics relevant to the study who are thought will be most informative" (p.4). The criteria for including the participants in this study were that participants must: a) have direct knowledge of the process and procedures involved in establishing the fire department; b) be at least 25 years old; c) currently live in or previously resided in the community where the FBO is located; d) currently serving or have served in the role of a

community leader, church leader, or fire department personnel in the community; and e) be available to participate in an interview lasting up to one hour. Participants with key information referred other individuals to me who had knowledge of the case. Individuals who did not meet all criteria requirements were not eligible to participate.

### **Sample Size**

Qualitative studies tend to use smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies (Mason, 2010). Bowen (2008) stated that an ‘appropriate sample is composed of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic’ (p.140). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggested that sampling at least 10 participants will help the researcher gain an understanding of a group of individual’s shared experiences. I conducted interviews with the participants with intent of achieving saturation of data. Bowen (2008) proposed that saturation can be reached when during data no new themes emerge from the participants. Further, Bowen (2008) clarified that saturation is more than likely obtained when the data is rich and comprehensive. Fusch and Ness (2015) contended that saturation is not a “one-size-fits-all method” (p.1409) and will differ depending on the design of the study. A sample size of 11 adults from the community gleaned sufficient data to reach saturation in my study. Suri (2011) noted that the chances of attaining saturation is greater if the data that was collected is meaningful. I purposely recruited 11 African American adults from a coastal rural community for my study. I gathered adequate data from a sample size of 11 participants to reach saturation so other researchers can duplicate the study. Also, the sample size were appropriate because I obtained similar information from participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Further,

I analyzed the data until no new codes emerged from the transcribe data (Guest et al., 2006).

### **Participant Recruitment**

Meyers and Newman (2006) recommended that a researcher obtains permission from appropriate members before conducting a study. I prepared a letter of cooperation addressed to the leaders of the FBO and the fire department to request permission to conduct my study in their community (see Appendices A and B). O'Doody (2013) suggested that the researcher establish rapport with key individuals and the agency involved in the proposed research. I scheduled a meeting with the leaders of the FBO and the chief of the fire department to introduce myself. I discussed the nature and purpose of my study within their community, and asked if they were willing to participate in the study. At the meeting I explained the letters of cooperation in detail and received permission from both the pastor of the FBO and the fire chief to conduct the study within the rural community.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I recruited and invited individuals to participate in the study. Because the community is small I anticipated that individuals who knew about the FBO's involvement in the fire department's establishment would be identified rapidly with the help of the current members in the FBO and fire department personnel. I also reached saturation in a short time due to the fact that participants reside in the same community and had similar descriptions about the process used for the fire station.

## **Instrumentation**

I was the only researcher collecting the data for this study. The researcher is the main instrument in gathering the data in qualitative research (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). The researcher is instrumental in collecting and coding the data obtained from the participants. Toma (2014) indicated that data in case studies could be collected through interviews, documents, observations, and historical documents.

**Interview guide, notes, reflective journal, and other relevant sources.** The sources that I used to collect data for my study were an interview guide, interview notes, newspaper articles, a reflective journal, and other relevant sources such as copies of participants' certificates and qualifications for required firefighting training, and historical documents such as quarterly reports about the fire department. A detailed interview guide helped me to remain focused. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) explained that an interview guide is used to remind the researcher to discuss pertinent details of the study such as the purpose, nature of the study, the reason the participant was recruited for participation, and details of the consent form. I developed an interview guide that contained an introduction, a description of the nature of study, the interview questions, and prompts for follow-up questions (O'Doody, 2013). A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix C.

I used the interview notes to annotate details that were not captured in the interview guide such as date and location of each interview, time of each interview, noteworthy observations, suggestions participants gave outside of the interview, questions asked by participants, and notes to remind myself of anything else that could be

related to the case. Sutton and Austin (2015) described interview notes as being an essential tool for documenting the behavior and expressions of participants and the surroundings that are not captured by an audio recording. Opdenakker (2006) asserted that interview notes are vital if there is a malfunction with the recording device.

I used a reflective journal to record my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions during the data collection stage. Chenail (2011) suggested that researchers should journal their opinions and feelings before and after an interview to acknowledge any unrecognized thoughts that could lead to researcher bias in the data analysis and interpretation. I notated my interview experiences in the journal and reflected on the participants' responses during the interviews when analyzing data. Ortlipp (2008) recommended that the reflective journaling be used to assist the researcher with data analysis and interpretation development.

Other relevant sources I used to collect data were newspaper articles, copies of participants' qualifications and certifications for required firefighting training, and historical documents such as quarterly reports about the fire department. Yin (2013) recommended that research using the case study approach gather data from historical documentation. I visited the public library near the community I researched to view old newspaper articles written about the fire department. I also searched the state's archival database for any information about the fire station's historical significance of being the first fire station to become certified with all African American volunteers. Further, I asked participants during the interviews if they had any personal records on the process that were used in the fire department's establishment process. I received several

photographs of the fire station being constructed and personal copies of training qualifications earned by participants while becoming volunteer firemen.

**Recording Device.** Another tool I used to collect the data was an audio recording device. I used a voice actuated audio recorder to record the interviews. Also, I used a recording application on my cellular phone as a secondary audio recording device. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommended researchers have a back-up plan in case the primary recording device fails. I had extra batteries and a phone charger onsite during interviews. O'Doody (2013) stated the participant must give permission to record the interview. When scheduling the interview, I informed participants that the interview would be recorded. I also asked participant for permission to record the interview before asking interview questions. The informed consent form also indicated that the interviews would be recorded.

**Interviews.** I used in-depth interviews to collect the data from participants. Fusch and Ness (2015) stated interviews are one of the main instruments used by qualitative researchers to collect the data. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2012) asserted that data generated by interview questions enables the researcher to hear the participants' perspective of the topic being investigated. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Turner (2010) suggested using a quiet space with minimum distractions for the interviews. The interviews were held in an office provided by the local FBO as noted in the letters of cooperation located in Appendix A and B. The interviews lasted up to one hour. I scheduled the interviews around the participants' availability. I conducted all of the interviews face to face with the participants.

After receiving approval to conduct the study from the IRB, I hand delivered the participant recruitment flyer to the leaders of the FBO and the chief of the fire department to post on bulletin boards within the fire station and FBO. A copy of the participant recruitment flyer is included in Appendix D. The participant recruitment flyer was used to invite individuals to participate in the study. The participant recruitment flyer outlined the eligibility criteria for participation, my personal contact information, as well as the nature and purpose of the study. When individuals contacted me about the study, I determined their eligibility to participate by asking them the criteria questions. I also maintained a participant questionnaire that included contact and demographic information for each individual who contacted me. A copy of the questionnaire is available in Appendix E. After individuals contacted me about participating in the study, and their eligibility had been verified based on the predetermined criteria, I contacted them to schedule an interview. I also asked the individuals I scheduled for interviews if they knew of other persons I could invite to participate in the study. Other individuals were identified therefore I asked participants to give the named individuals a copy of the participant recruitment flyer.

After the participants were scheduled for interviews, I met them at the specified location to conduct the interviews. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) warned researchers not to start the interview without a signed consent form. I hand delivered the consent form to each participant scheduled for an interview. The consent form included information about the study and the participant's right of refusal to take part in the interview. I clearly explained to the participants the procedures I would use to safeguard and protect



their information. Furthermore, I stressed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse at any time (Sutton & Austin, 2015; Tracy, 2010). I asked the participants for permission to record the interview. I also asked the participants if they had any questions before starting the interview. I collected the consent form before starting each interview.

In case studies, Yin (2013) explained that interview questions should be open-ended so the interviewer can ask about the facts and the participant's opinion during the same interview. My questions were prepared before the interview but additional follow-up questions were asked for clarification. O'Doody (2013) highlighted the use of open-ended questions for clarification and follow-up questions. My goal was to allow the participants to view me as someone who is trustworthy to report their responses accurately (Yin, 2016). The interview questions are included in Appendix F.

Before closing the interviews, I asked participants if they had any questions for me. I described the process I would use to transcribe the data. Also, I explained to the participants that I would use pseudonyms for their names to maintain confidentiality and their anonymity in the study. I asked the participants for permission to contact them for any follow-up questions that may come up after the interview.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I used Colaizzi's method to analyze the data collected from the interviews. Colaizzi (1978) suggested that the researcher read the transcripts for descriptive statements that are connected to the phenomenon; then group into significant statements, word cluster, or categorical themes. Further, Colaizzi recommended coding the

statements into descriptive themes until no new themes emerge. I read the transcripts several times to identify any passages that stood out (Bowen, 2009). After reading through each transcript, I identified and highlighted passages to develop an initial set of codes. I used an open coding approach, which allowed me to create additional codes from passages that were interesting and relevant to examining the research questions (Carpendale, Hinrichs, Knudsen, Thudt, & Tory, 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), researchers should focus on organizing the codes into categories or themes. I grouped the selected passages into themes to create a visual interpretation of the data (Guest & McLellan, 2013). I used the identified themes to present the findings in the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I used the NVivo software to assist with coding the data. Further, I used axial coding and selective coding to choose codes that illustrated noteworthy segments of data (Boeije, 2010). Also, I checked the data by using strategies such as triangulation, feedback from my dissertation committee, and acknowledged my biases when reporting the findings.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Tracy (2010) stated that the trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative research is achieved through detailed accounts in the study's findings, triangulation, and revealed biases. The findings of the study are truthful. Trustworthiness of the findings should be validated by how proficiently and ethically the study was conducted (Rallis, Rossman, & Gajda, 2007; Toma, 2014). The trustworthiness of qualitative research should also include a detailed account of the research design. Guba and Lincoln (1994)

proposed that qualitative researchers use the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to evaluate the trustworthiness of their research.

### **Credibility**

Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that credibility is one of the most important elements needed to establish trustworthiness of the study. Tracy (2010) defined credibility as the integrity of the data. Toma (2014) explained that the credibility of the study is obtained when participants agree with the interpretations of the researcher's findings. To establish credibility I used data triangulation, audit trails, and member checking. I also journaled my observations, thoughts, and feelings to recognize my biases, and used debriefing feedback from my dissertation committee members. Casey and Murphy (2009) described data triangulation as the use of different methods to collect data to determine the findings. Shenton (2004) explained that the different viewpoints and experiences of the participants can be used for triangulation. Further, Shenton went on to explain that the data should only be collected from individuals who willingly participate in the study. The methods I used to confirm triangulation were data transcribed from interviews, notes from the interview guide, and a reflective journal. Triangulation methods help researchers minimize biases in the study, increases understanding, and allow different exploration of problems in research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Tracy, 2010).

Another method I used to establish credibility of the results and interpretation of findings were an audit trail. Bowen (2009) explained that an audit trail is an examination of the procedures used to confirm that the data is truthful. Further, Bowen explained that

in an audit trail the researcher validates the choices used to collect, record, and analyze the data. I maintained documents on all aspects of the research to ensure credibility.

I used the process of member checking to allow the participants to review their transcribed responses for truthfulness. Member checking allows participants to review the researcher's interpretation of the interviews (Anney, 2014). After analyzing the data, I contacted each participant to schedule a time and place to hand deliver a copy of their individual transcribed interview. Participants only reviewed my interpretation of their responses. When delivering the transcript I asked each participant to read the highlighted section, confirm the accuracy of data, and to contact me when completed. Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that the credibility of the study is enhanced if the findings are confirmed by participants. I picked up the transcript from participants at a specified public location after contact was made that the review was completed. If a participant rejected the interpretation of their responses, I would compare the transcript against the initial recording of the interview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Further, I would contact the participant and schedule a telephone conference to clarify their intended communication. I would then repeat the steps as described earlier to ensure accuracy of the findings by the participants.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is achieved in qualitative research when researchers from other settings can transfer the findings to similar research questions or problems and readers can relate the research to their own circumstances (Bowen, 2009; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Tracy, 2010). Toma (2014) further

proposed that to reach transferability in case studies, the researcher must use detailed descriptions of the findings and the case. Denzin (1989) described thick descriptions as a full explanation of the investigative phenomenon in transcribed form. Readers should be able to identify with participants' emotions and perspectives (Tracy, 2010). I used thick descriptions to illustrate the findings so readers can emotionally connect to the research (Ponterotto, 2006). However, Shenton (2004) asserted that findings of case studies conducted with small samples and peculiar situations may not be applicable to other circumstances and populations. I provided a detailed explanation of the findings and why I purposely recruited the participants for the study (Anney, 2014). The findings should be applicable to other individuals who may be involved in similar circumstances as the participants in the study (Cope, 2014). I used an audit trail to provide an in-depth description of the entire research process. The audit trail consists of documents on interview notes, interview recordings, and my reflective journal. I also maintained documents on an explanation of why I chose the research design and method, how I selected the participants, as well as a description of the process I used to collect, code, and analyze the data.

### **Dependability**

Shenton (2004) explained that dependability is reached when the researcher's process is detailed enough to be duplicated by future researchers. Other researchers should receive similar results if conducting the study using the same participants and research methodology (Cope, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I outlined and documented my methodological decisions on the research design, my role as a researcher,

and the logic I used to recruit participants so other researchers can duplicate the study (Houghton et al., 2013). I also implemented the same triangulation methods I used to establish credibility as well as maintained documents for an audit trail. Anney (2014) explained that an audit trail documents the researcher's decision about the recruitment of participants, the methodological choices, and how the data was collected, recorded, and analyzed. I maintained the interview notes, interview recordings, and transcribed data used in the study. All documents are kept locked in a file cabinet. I used comments from my dissertation committee to help identify any questions or concerns in the study.

### **Confirmability**

Polit and Beck (2012) explained that confirmability is the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data is completely based on the participants' responses and not the researcher's opinion. Houghton et al. (2013) claimed that confirmability and dependability have similar processes. Confirmability confirms that the findings are not fraudulent. Sutton and Austin (2015) asserted that the participants must be accurately represented in the quoted passages. To ensure that the findings are based on data collected from participants I maintained documents of the methods used to collect data that could be examined in an audit trail (Bowen, 2009). The findings, interpretations, and recommendation should be grounded on participants' responses (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). An audit trail included audio recordings of interviews, transcripts of interviews, and interview guide notes. I also maintained a reflective journal. Anney (2014) explained that the reflective journal should include notes of the researchers'

personal thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and of any observations of events while collecting data.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The trustworthiness of the research is based on the chosen research methods and the ethical standards used to conduct the study (Rallis, Rossman, & Gajda, 2007; Tracy, 2010; Wiles, Charles, Crow, & Heath, 2011). The procedural ethics of the Walden University IRB mandates that researchers should not harm or deceive participants (Tracy, 2010). Also, informed consent should be received from the participants before collecting data. I followed the specific guidelines for research as established by the Walden University IRB. When submitting my application to the IRB to conduct my study I attached my proposal; the letters of cooperation addressed to the leaders of the FBO and fire department of the community where I recruited participants; the participant recruitment flyer; the interview guide, the consent form for participants; the participant questionnaire; and the interview questions. After receiving approval to collect data, I included a copy of the IRB approval number with the consent form given to the participants before conducting interviews. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is **02-08-18-0641633** and it expires on **February 7th, 2019**.

I ensured that the recruitment materials were in compliance with the guidelines as stated by the IRB. I did not distribute any recruitment material until after I received approval from the Walden University IRB to collect data. All individuals who were eligible participated in the study. There were no refusals or early withdrawals from the

study. Further, there were no adverse activities or circumstances that occurred while conducting this study.

All data collected and archived were treated according to guidelines set forth by the Walden IRB. I concealed the identity of participants by using pseudonyms instead of their names. I also maintained confidentiality of the participants by not revealing the location where the study was conducted. While collecting the data I utilized a briefcase with a lock on it to maintain documents and tools used to record audio during interviews. The brief case was kept secured in the residence where I stayed while collecting data. Data recorded on my audio recording device were transferred to a data storage USB drive after each interview and locked in the brief case. Data were erased from my audio recording device after each download. The audio recording device was maintained in the locked briefcase when not being used for interviews.

The research data is stored and protected in a secured locked file cabinet in my residence. The data will be kept for at least three years after the study is completed. I am the only person with access to material and data collected during and after the study. Data collected will be destroyed according to IRB guidelines after 3 years. I will contact my dissertation committee and the IRB if any adverse ethical issues arise as a result of the study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I discussed the research design, methodological choices, and possible issues of trustworthiness. I also discussed the procedures used to collect the data for this case study on the role of FBOs in preparing African American communities for



disasters and how I addressed ethical concerns. In Chapter 4, I further discuss the research setting, demographics of participants, data collection methods, trustworthiness of the study, and a detailed thematic analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a local FBO organized resources to build a community-based all-volunteer fire department. Specifically, I examined how a FBO in a rural location engaged members to prepare their community for disasters. I used the following research questions to guide the study:

RQ1. What strategies or approaches did an African American faith-based organization in a rural community use to establish a community-based all-volunteer fire department?

RQ2. What recommendations do the organizations have that could be used to assist other communities in preparing for disasters?

In this chapter I discuss the research study setting, the demographics of participants using pseudonyms, and how data were collected. I also describe the data analysis procedures I used. Further, I present evidence of trustworthiness, the themes that emerged from the data analysis, and a summary.

### **Setting**

I conducted the interview sessions inside an office space located at the FBO during normal business hours. There were no other occupants in the office wing, and there were no outside distractions during the interviews. To my knowledge, there were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their knowledge of the study and my subsequent interpretations of the data.

The rural community is in a low-lying area and prone to hurricanes and flooding; the income level in this community is considered at or below the federal poverty line; and residents primarily live in single family homes and mobile homes. To ensure confidentiality, participants are identified by pseudonyms in the study. The fire station has been in existence and actively serving the rural community for over 30 years. The time frame from when the community members formed the idea to establish a fire department to when the fire department was built was approximately 2 ½ years. During that time the community had to become incorporated as a franchise and qualified to respond to emergency service calls.

### **Demographics**

The data collection involved gathering basic demographic information for each participant such as gender, age, years lived in the community, highest education completed, and role(s) within the community. The individuals were all African Americans between the ages of 50 and 85 years who live or previously resided in the rural community (see Table 1). Eleven individuals, 7 of whom were men and four of whom were women, participated in the study. Five individuals are or have been a community leader; nine individuals are or have served in the role of a church leader; and all participants except one are or were fire department personnel. The length of time the participants had lived in the community ranged from 28 to 85 years.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Years lived in community	Role in community
Jim	Male	78	Community leader, church leader, fire department personnel
Joe	Male	68	Community leader, church leader, fire department personnel
Phillip	Male	85	Fire department personnel
John	Male	50	Fire department personnel
Susan	Female	47	Church leader, fire department personnel
James	Male	70	Community leader, church leader, fire department personnel
Kathy	Female	78	Community leader, church leader, fire department personnel
Michael	Male	62	Church leader, fire department personnel
Karen	Female	81	Church leader, fire department personnel
Samantha	Female	28	Church leader
Peter	Male	78	Community leader, church leader, fire department personnel

**Data Collection**

I posted recruitment flyers on bulletin boards at the local FBO and community fire station. Individuals interested in participating in the study contacted me by telephone. I verified the eligibility of all participants in the study using predetermined criteria and scheduled interviews. I asked the individuals who contacted me if they would refer other individuals who may have knowledge about the process and procedures involved in establishing the fire department to participate in the study. I used snowball sampling throughout the recruiting process. I conducted face-to-face interview sessions at the local community FBO over a period of 2 weeks.

I used a voice actuated audio recorder to record the interviews. I used the interview guide to notate significant information mentioned by participants during the interviews. Other data collected over a 5-week period included newspaper articles about the fire department, photographs, copies of participants' firefighting training certifications, copies of the fire station's qualifications, and quarterly reports from the fire

station. The data collection procedures did not deviate from the plan presented in Chapter 3. However, I did encounter one unforeseen situation during the process of collecting data. Three of the participants notified me before their interviews about their inability to read and their fear that they would not be able to complete written documents. To ease these participants' fears, I read the consent form out loud and assured them that no reading would be required on their end for the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

I took an inductive approach to the data analysis that allowed the themes to emerge from the data. Jebreen (2012) explained that an inductive approach allows the researcher to interpret the raw data and generate themes. Further, Jebreen stated that researchers using an inductive approach focus on understanding the data instead of testing a theory. I used Colaizzi's (1978) method to analyze the data. Colaizzi (1978) recommended that the researcher read the transcripts for descriptive statements; then group into categorical themes no new themes emerge. I read the transcripts several times and highlighted descriptive statements. I used an open coding approach to identify and create codes for recurring words and phrases. The descriptive statements were grouped into word clusters and categorical themes. The statements were then reorganized and coded into descriptive themes until no new themes emerged. I used NVivo software to assist with coding the data. Participants often referred to the name of their city, their county, and other individual's names in their responses. Therefore, I used brackets around some of the participants' responses for clarity of the data and to protect the privacy of the location and other individuals.

During the open coding process, the following themes emerged from the participant's responses: determination, the FBO as center of activities, dedication to building, resilience, persistence, and recommendations for other FBOs preparing their community for disasters. I used axial coding and selective coding to code passages of text that corresponded to the themes. The codes I selected were motivation, togetherness, supportive, effectiveness, hub center, persistence, and distrust. The word "together" was consistently used by participants to describe the importance of community members being united. Next, I grouped the codes into the following categories: community members motivated to protect their community; FBO as hub center for information; FBO organized resources and materials to build the fire station; internal and external challenges with establishing a fire department in a rural location; and training requirements for volunteer fire fighters.

While engaging in casual conversations, participants mentioned the names of other individuals in the community they knew who had specific knowledge about the process of starting the fire department. I asked participants to give the named individuals a copy of the recruitment flyer. However, participants stated that the named individuals would not reveal what they knew because of fear of country officials.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Rallis, Rossman, and Gajda (2007) suggested that the trustworthiness of the study should be evaluated by the researcher on the technicalities of the research and the ethical treatment of the participants. The findings of this study are based on true accounts as expressed by participants and other data sources. I followed the criteria established in

Chapter 3 to evaluate the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of this study.

### **Credibility**

Tracy (2010) stated that creditability is achieved when readers can use the findings from the study to make an informed decision. I journaled my observations, thoughts, and feelings to recognize my biases. Individuals with vital information were purposively recruited to participate in the study. I used the methods of triangulation which included transcribing the data, interview notes, thoughts from my reflective journal, and public records. I asked open-ended questions that engaged the participants in conversations that often produced an overwhelming amount of information. I used the process of member checking to provide participants with a copy of their transcribed interview to make sure I captured their experiences accurately. I also maintained an audit trail of all the documents related to the research.

### **Transferability**

Shenton (2004) explained that findings in a study should be detailed enough so readers can emotionally connect to the research. I used thick descriptions to describe the findings so readers can emotionally connect with the study. I captured the array of emotions expressed by participants through their responses (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2013). I explained how the participants were recruited to participate in the study as well as how the data were collected, coded, and analyzed. I also maintained an audit trail of the interview recordings, interview notes, and my thoughts while conducting the research.

**Dependability**

Cope (2014) stated that a study is dependable if the results can be duplicated with similar members. I noted the method I used to recruit participants so other researchers could use the same process. I explained my role as the researcher and the methods I used to recruit participants so the study could be replicated by other researchers. I maintained all research documents required for an audit trail related to this study such as the transcribed interviews, notes, and interview recordings in a secured location. I used the procedures of triangulation which included transcribing the data, interview notes, and public records. I also used feedback from my dissertation committee to acknowledge any concerns in the study.

**Conformability**

Anney (2014) explained that conformability is when the findings are not based on the researcher's imagination but are grounded on the participants' responses. I listened to the interview recordings several times to accurately transcribe the participants' responses. I maintained an audit trail of the interview notes, recordings and transcripts of the interviews with participants in a secured manner. I also journaled my thoughts, feelings, and observations of participants and my surroundings while collecting the data.

**Results**

The first research question I addressed asked the following: What strategies or approaches did an African American faith-based organization in a rural community use to establish a community based all-volunteer fire department (see Table 2). Each result is



introduced by a brief narrative related to examining the research question. The findings are structured around the process it took to establish the fire department.

Table 2

*Primary Themes for Research Question 1*

Major themes	Subthemes	Key words/Phrases
Determination	Necessity for protecting community	Needed to protect Houses burned to ground Fire department to far away Took too long to get emergency services from county
	Overcame internal challenges	Lack of knowledge where to star Lack of money Lack of equipment Lack of training Lack of guidance/direction
	Overcame external challenges	Lack of support from sate Lack of support from county Lack of support from city Obstruction at county level
FBO center of activities	Space for various meetings	Announcements during church services Business meetings held at church Disseminate information Organize work groups
	Fundraising	Church offerings Bake sales/garage sales Gospel concerts FBO provided financial support Community fund raisers
Dedication to building	Organized labor	Church members in skilled occupations donated skills to build
	Bought land	Community members raised funds to purchase land
	Obtained building material	Local businesses donated material
	Obtained equipment	Initially received faulty equip Eventually purchased new equipment
	Fulfilled legal requirements	Became a charter Obtained franchise
Resilience	Obtained required training	Firefighter training CPR training
	Community members united	People in community come together to help those in need
	Rebounded from disaster	Newly built fire department destroyed Lost franchise
Persistence	Assists other communities	Fire department provides services to other communities
		Overcame challenges Obtained required resources Rebuilt after disaster

**Theme 1: Determination**

One interview question asked participants to describe what motivated the community to build a fire department. The primary theme to emerge from this data was determination to protect the community. The participants revealed that having a fire department was necessary to protect homes in the community. Participants provided several accounts in which they described the reasons the rural faith-based community established a community based fire department. County records showed that the community is home to about 750 residents who live mainly in mobile, modular, and single family homes. Community members were motivated because of adverse circumstances which created the necessity for members to take matters into their hands. Quarterly reports held at the volunteer fire station revealed that the rural community experienced an average of 40 emergency services calls annually. Emergency service calls consisted of fires, car accidents, medical assistance, and other emergencies. James stated:

The fire service from the county were all volunteers. They were taking too long to get here when fires started. Sometimes it would take them [the county fire service] 20 minutes to arrive. By the time they got here they could not save the structures, everything would be completely destroyed. People in the community started talking about the fires, we wanted to help ourselves.

Jim described why community members were so motivated to assist each other. He said:

We had a lot of houses in the community and we didn't have no way to help put out the fire or anything with the fire truck coming all the way from [the county] to

here. People would be done lost everything they had before the fire truck could get here. So, then we decided to start our own department.

John recalled instances that motivated the need for a community fire station. He noted:

When the fires would start it seemed like the houses would burn down before the fire department [from the county] could actually get here and try to put the fire out. Someone's house would catch on fire and stuff like that there and having something right here was quicker than waiting on the truck to come from [the city] so it was a big cause and a big need.

Karen noted that when the county fire trucks got there most of the houses were already gone. She noted that the community members could respond quicker if they had their own truck. Kathy asserted that the fire trucks had to come about 7 miles from the community and a lot of people lost their homes. She said, "We decided that if we had our own we could help ourselves." Samantha shared that by the time they [the county] got here it was too late. She said, "Most of the houses were engulfed in flames and were burned down so the community decided that the best thing we could do was to start our own fire department." Susan stressed how community members tried to help themselves. She stated:

It took so long for somebody to come from [the county] down here so we decided to do our own to help our own people. Some of the members got together and tried to help people put out fires. They felt like they could help their community put the fire out because the other department took so long to get there so they could have the fire out by the time they got here.

Peter stated that he was out of town on a business meeting when he met a state official.

Peter said:

I told him we need a fire department, but how could we go about getting one? And he said you don't have to worry about that I'll tell you and he said if you want just take it back to the community and let them decide. Then we called a meeting and that's how we decided to get started on the fire department.

Phillip paused for a few minutes before he responded to the question about why the community members felt motivated to establish a fire department. He remarked:

Well, it was something that had never been seen, really I don't think it was many, and there was no black fire men that I know about. And it was something that we were doing, something to give the community, something that had never been here before. To tell you the truth, this whole community was all black and really considered nothing but hard workers and bootleggers. I wanted to see that changed.

**Overcame many challenges.** Members of the community were determined to overcome the challenges they encountered in building the fire department. Those challenges were both external challenges and internal challenges. Details of each type challenge are presented below.

**External challenges.** Participants were asked to describe any obstacles or problems that came up during the process of starting the fire department. Individuals mentioned that the difficulties were not with the people from the rural community, but with roadblocks from county officials and other outside sources. James expressed his

concern with some of the complications the community members experienced. He stated:

We would go to them [the county] for help but they said they didn't have time to get involved – figure it out everybody else is doing it so we should to. We didn't have no financial support except from the church to purchase hardly anything so we did the best we knew to do. We wouldn't have made it if it had not been for the members in the church.

John recalled men having to go down to the county offices to stand there to push the process through. He said, "We try to talk to who we could talk to really get this thing going." Kathy remembered some of the hard times. She stated:

It was hard, it was hard you know we had to go in front of the county. The commission and all of them, and they wasn't for it. It was very hard, it was very hard on some of the men and but they stood it, they stood it. They gave us a hard time. Like I said those county commissions. They were holding back from us to move in it [the fire station] and it was like it was like we weren't capable of having a fire station but we were. They just didn't want us to they just didn't want us to have it.

Samantha claimed most of the obstacles came from the local county fire department that was originally responsible for covering fires in the rural community. She explained: "I don't know why but they seemed to not want our community to want to take care of itself. For some reason they felt offended that we I don't know if it was because we were

a Black community or what but that we had the audacity to start a fire department to take care of our own community.” Susan stated:

Yeah, we had a lot of meetings and we went down to the White people to the community meeting and stuff and the government people, the people in the [county] they didn’t really didn’t want us to build a fire department but they didn’t try to help us they did more to hinder us, they wouldn’t help us they wouldn’t give us anything.

Phillip contended that the issues were not within the rural community, but it was with the county. He stated:

They didn’t want us to have anything, stuff like that. Well, the things some of them had said some of them done like we want to different offices down there and some of them saw us coming in and closed their doors. They really didn’t want a black fire department that was just my thinking. We had one man and I think he was county manager, he said we didn’t have no business doing that.

**Internal challenges.** Participants expressed concern that members did not know where to turn for help when starting the process of establishing a fire department.

Individuals were asked the question: what outside agencies did the faith-based organization get to assist in building the fire department? Phillip mentioned the county fire marshal was the only person to assist them. He said, “He [the county fire marshal] was the main one to tell us what we needed to do. We didn’t know where else to turn. He guided us through the steps in the beginning.” Participants were asked about

obtaining any grant money or government subsidized loans to assist with the process of establishing the fire department. James explained:

In the beginning we didn't know where to go for grants. We didn't think we qualified for any grants. I kept asking the county about it and they never answered. Later on I came across a grant offered by the state Forestry department. The grant was simple and I applied. The forest ranger answered any questions I had. The only problem with that grant was we had to use the forestry equipment, it was used and worn out, and mainly used for large forest fires. I didn't bother filling out the federal grants, they were difficult, totally different from the forestry grant. We never had no loans. We couldn't afford it if we wanted to take out a loan, we had to pay the emergency service insurance.

Jim asserted that the members tried to get some grants. He stated, "We didn't have no one to write them. No one know nothing about it. When you want something like that it's hard to get people to do something like that and we didn't think it was hard until we started getting out to do it. Nobody help [us], nobody helped." Joe remarked, "I can't recall any grants and we really didn't have anybody who could write a grant. The county they sorta like they wouldn't help us. I don't think they thought we were serious but they wouldn't write anything for us." Peter reiterated the support of the FBO:

No loans or nothing, just the people in this community and this church helped us. We still ain't never had a grant, all those many years we ain't never had a grant. Every time we put in for one and we get told you was a day or two late. Oh yeah, we did try a many a times but every time we put in for one just like they say its

time now to put in for next year's grant and when we go down there about it we're told no y'all just missed it by a day. We just told them no we're just not going to mess with it.

Samantha expressed why she thought the community members worked so hard to raise money. She stated, "I don't recall that building having any loans on it. I think that one of the reasons why they relied so having on the community was to make sure that we didn't have to take out any loans for that property and for that building." Susan contended, "Other fire departments in the community the White fire department would get loans and stuff but we didn't. We had a time trying to get help building the fire department, that's why we had to take up a lot of money. We put a lot of money and the church took up a lot of money to help with the fire department." Peter described instances when people who lived outside the community would drive through and stop by the fire station when men were working on it. He said, "They would come by and see us working and give us a donation, and church members always would have somebody to feed, cook, and do for us that Saturday."

## **Theme 2: FBO Center for Activities**

After the seeds were planted to build a community fire department, community members used the local FBO to spread news and information about the fire department. One church was centrally located in the community. Members came together weekly to worship and to attend other religious engagements such as prayer meetings, bible study, choir rehearsals, and youth involved activities. Numerous opportunities were offered



through the members of the church to disseminate information to all community members about the fire department. James explained:

Most people in the community were members of one church, at that time there were two churches in this community but most people belonged to one church. We announced it in church, and the community came together, even from the other church. Through announcements made in the church and word of mouth, everybody knows everybody in this community. We look out for each other here.

Joe shared that church services were held every Sunday, and they would get a chance to announce information about the fire department in church. He said, "People spread the word, the word just got around." Announcements were made by the church secretary during the Sunday morning worship service that a meeting would be held at the church on a specific date to discuss the preliminaries of starting a community volunteer fire department. John noted:

The announcement was made in church that they were going to try to do something to start a fire department. They just announced it and anybody who wanted to join could come. They would say we really need people to really come out and try to get this thing started. And that's how it all started. People came and people supported it.

Jim stated, "I was trying to recruit people in the community to have a better community not just the fire department but other areas in the community. If they are a part of the community they would be a part of everything else in the community." Kathy shared that the move to build the fire department was announced in church, and they passed out

flyers to everybody. She explained, “We always had community meetings once a month and it [the fire department] was discussed in the community.” Samantha recalled how the announcement about the fire department was made during services. She emphasized:

Come one, come all, male, female, and children. I mean it was all really done through the church and word of mouth and they just started adding on and people started coming. They started going to the [firefighting] trainings and everything and it just built up from there. The church was the hub of it all.

**Faith-based organization was a gathering place for conducting business.**

Individuals described the local FBO as a place of worship where residents would go for spiritual support and fellowship with other believers. However, participants in the study referred to the local FBO as the main place to engage personnel for community activities. Participants also stated that members were recruited for the fire department through the local FBO. Individuals identified the local FBO as a place where community business meetings were conducted since the community no longer had an available meeting location. Unfortunately, the community’s center was among one of the properties destroyed by fire before the FBO established the fire department. James said, “We petitioned the church for help, the church leaders agreed to assist the community with letting us use the facilities.” Kathy explained, “We didn’t have anywhere to go, first of all we were going to the community center but you know it burnt down and the church would let us use a room to have our meetings and they still do.” Joe recalled that the church got involved because there was nowhere else to meet.

**Faith-based organization focal point for fundraising.** Individuals stressed the fact that the attitude of working together to establish the fire department was evident in the FBO and throughout the community. The church members participated in fundraising activities during worship services and within the community. The fundraisers were earmarked for the establishment of the community's fire department. James explained, "All the money that we needed came from the church and the community. Everybody got involved, even the women who cooked meals so we could have fundraisers. The biggest thing that helped this fire department was the church right here, I mean the people in this community but that's the church anyway." Jim stated, "The money you know it all came through the community, we worked and we sold stuff you know, we just all worked together until we got enough money to get started." Peter discussed his role in engaging members of the local FBO. He explained:

When I brought it to the church, most of the people who helped was a member of this church and they know they was living in this community and that's how we got started so quick. The church allowed us to put a collection pan out every Sunday that we had church and people dropped money in there and that's how we build the first building. It looked like to me the more they give the more we would get. We would just ask for a dollar if you could give a dollar, give a dollar or give what you could give and most of the time it would be nothing but dollars. You know some would give five, ten, twenty, but like change money we didn't get much change money.

John shared how the money to establish the fire department came from the people collecting money in the community and in church. He stated, “It was a real good effort, it was a big thing and the people really wanted it because they felt like it would help the community.” Jim emphasized the role that the FBO played in supporting the community.

Well, there’s one thing about this community, everything in the community we do it through the church and the church people of the community get involved in what happened and seemed like everything that we do you know the church support it and we have good preachers and good pastors and stuff and they helped us and worked along with us.

Joe noted how the FBO provided financial support to establish the fire department. He explained:

They [the church] were taking collections by putting a special pan out to let people donate. They had little fund raisers so we could get together any kinda of way. A matter of fact I think they kinda asked a certain amount if a family could give, if you couldn’t give what you could give and that’s basically how we got started with that building, we just built a little bit at a time until we got that fire department built.

Samantha enthusiastically shared how the FBO used different means to collect funds for the fire. She said, “We used all sorts of activities like different gospel groups to come in and sing and they would do some type of fundraising or something but all of that really started at the church.” Phillip mentioned that people in the community donated at the church. Susan explained, “On Sundays sometimes we would go around raising money.

Sometimes the members of the church would take up money or take it out of pocket. We do our role first, our church business first then what money would go to help the fire department was put in a pan to help the fire department.”

### **Theme 3: Dedicated to Building**

#### **Community members organized resources to build the fire station.**

Individuals in the community experienced adverse challenges with establishing the fire department. However, members were dedicated to overcoming those challenge.

Participants indicated that the members of the local FBO provided financial, physical, and spiritual support towards the building the fire department. Members of the community came together and being united for a worthy cause. Participants explained how community members gathered resources to build the fire station. James said:

The church took up an offering every Sunday to purchase the land. The materials were obtained from the community and donations from the church. No labor was paid, the labor came from men in the community and the church. Everybody knew somebody who knew how to do something to contribute to building the fire station. Our Pastor owned a landscaping business and he came and brought piles of dirt to build up the foundation for the building at no cost. This community is full of men who were general contractors and they came out to help at no cost to us. We even had certified electricians in the church, everybody gave labor free. Everybody came out, we had at least 70 people [come out to help build] which was too many, we had to cut it down to 40 people.

Susan said, “We had members who could do work like brick mason and building and

stuff and they would volunteer their time to work on the fire department.” Peter discussed how the community obtained the bricks to lay the foundation for the fire station. He stated, “We started buying the blocks and the community come together. They brought blocks, bricks, and that’s what we done. We brought two or three hundred dollars’ worth of bricks at a time and laid them that Saturday.” Jim discussed who participated in building the fire station’s foundation. He said that, “We had contractors in the community, we would get together and lay the blocks and pour the concrete and we had everything right in the community. Everybody could do different work.” Joe shared that the whole community was involved in building the fire station. Michael identified some of the resources available within the small, rural community. He stated, “We have a bricklayer, we have a carpenter, we have people with many talents, the labor came from the community.” Samantha shared how community members used their skills to construct the fire station. She explained:

That [the material and resources) was also from people from the community, [this] is a very talented community. A lot of the gentlemen who live there they are carpenters, they’re brick masons, they’re concrete workers, so once they received the supplies, labor wasn’t an issue because the members in the community had the skills that were needed to build that building.

**Raised funds to buy land.** The community members collected funds to buy property for the fire station. All of the participants agreed that the church played a vital role in assisting community members with monetary contributions to obtain the land to build the fire station. Individuals named particular people who were instrumental in

locating the property owner to purchase the land. The property is located directly across the street from the FBO. Members agreed that the location across from the church is a symbolic expression of their faith and commitment to protect their community from disasters. James stated:

The men and women from the church contributed money to start and sustain the fire department. Through the church and support of the community we were able to save enough money to even purchase the land for the building right across from the church. The income was budgeted from donations from the church and community. Later on through the years [after the fire department was established] the church stopped providing financial support after the fire department started receiving \$1000 per year allocation from the county, which is nothing to run a department on. That money comes from the tax revenue that the county collects from property taxes from people in the community.

Susan stated, "They [the church] bought it [the land], we raised the money, saved the money to buy the land." Peter shared that because of legal reasons the property purchased for the fire station was deeded in the names of two members of the community. The property's deed has since been changed to reflect the name of the community. The change was made to protect outsiders from acquiring the land through tax litigations.

**Obtained required certifications.** Several items needed to be addressed before community members could be certified and obtain the franchise of incorporation to become a volunteer fire department. One requirement was that the community members

had to be recognized as a charter, which required the establishment of a board of directors. Another requirement was that members had to obtain fire fighting vehicles and the proper equipment. The vehicles had to be housed in a garage which was a problem for the community because the community did not have a fire station. Another condition was that the community members had to acquire and maintain qualifications and certification through the Department of Insurance. James explained:

You know there is a separation between state and church. We had to deal with a bunch of requirements. Most members knew it would be hard and nearly impossible because we didn't have nothing to start with. We had to deal with establishing a building, get certified, and deal with Department of Insurance. The first thing we did was to establish a executive board of officers. We needed training, certification, and a housing area for our vehicles. The trucks were housed in fire members' garages. That was one requirement to get certified, the trucks had to be housed.

Joe asserted that community members assisted with maintaining the vehicles. He said, "We were building the building to house the truck, the boys they kinda kept the trucks to their house." John said, "A lot of people who was in the fire department it was serious, people really helped people out starting out this fire department."

**Inadequate equipment.** One challenge community members had to overcome was working with inadequate equipment. Individuals explained their difficulties in obtaining the proper equipment. Participants claimed that the equipment they received from the state's forestry office and from fire departments outside of the county were



faulty and ineffective. Peter said, “We didn’t have money enough to buy a decent fire truck, we brought an old ’47 Chevrolet truck, we put a tank on it, a water tank on it and brought some hoses that’s how we started.” One individual shared how the county fire department offered to sell them some used firefighting equipment at twice the amount of purchasing new equipment. Community members were just starting out with limited funds. Jim explained that the equipment for the fire station was purchased with the funds collected from the community and FBO. He stated, “Other departments that had hoses and stuff they let us have it, old suits and stuff they let us have it and we took it and went on to do the best we can. It was a struggle, it was a struggle in the beginning because it looked like it seemed like you know people weren’t with us they didn’t think we could do it.” John described using old equipment. He recalled, “We started out with a bunch of old fire trucks. I remember a couple of fires starting out, the truck was losing water and all that stuff, they get to the fire sometimes and they still were burning down so they went through some complications before they really got stuff together.” Samantha remembered that some fire departments donated or sold some older equipment at a discount price but she stated, “If I’m not mistaken the majority of the money to build the fire department and get equipment came from the community.” James discussed the condition of most of the equipment that was donated to the fire station. He explained:

We got a lot of stuff from the state forestry office, they gave us hoses, and water packs. We were given an old 1948 international truck by a neighbor fire department, it was useless to them and barely running but we had a mechanic in the community who made it work. We added hoses to it and a water tank.

Someone gave us 35 new fire suits but the suits were useless. They had asbestos in them.

The volunteer firemen decided that after much frustration, the best way to receive an adequate fire suit was for each man to sacrifice and purchase their own fire suit, helmet, and boots. At that time the price of the suit was \$245, and the boots averaged about \$60. Individuals shared how the men in the community showed pride in their jackets that displayed the community's name on the back.

**Fire fighter training effective training.** Individuals discussed the requirements to be a volunteer fireman. Every volunteer must have at least 35 hours per year of recorded training. Volunteers must know how to handle a hose, a pump, a ladder, and other required tools to assist victims in emergency situations. The fire chief is responsible for making sure every man on the roster has the proper training. Peter explained, "You must be in this district paying taxes but you might not be paying taxes but as long as your daddy and mommy are paying taxes on a house you can come be a fire fighter, but you got to get qualified, you got to go through the training and everything before you can get on the hoses and stuff." James asserted that all volunteers [firemen] must live in this community and pay property taxes.

Participants emphasized that the fire chief was responsible for providing training for all volunteers. The fire chief has to contact the community college and request a certified instructor to come out to the community to provide the training. Joe shared: "We had a certified fire fighter that would show up, we had a lot of classes. We watched a lot of film and we done a lot of training inside the fire department, crawling through

ladders, climbing ladders, pulling hoses, what would we do in certain situations, stuff like that and that was a part of a lot of the training and CPR classes, stuff like that.” Peter commented that the trainer came from the local community college. He said, “That’s where you had to go to get all of them to come out to do it for you, the community college.” John expressed his gratitude for the trainers by stating, “They gave them real good information and they had real good trainers and they taught the people well they taught them real well.” Jim shared how he recently completed some of the training requirements. He said, “Yes, I just went through regular fire training the week before last, I just took another training, yeah in case somebody get a heart attack that we can bring them back to help them survive.”

#### **Theme 4: Resilience**

**Community members came together to establish the fire department.** The community is full of individuals who seemed friendly and willing to help. Michael said, “We do what we can to help everybody, whatever the need is, we do something for the kids every year like a carnival on the church grounds. We all come together as a community to celebrate with food and fellowship.” Joe described the conditions and the perseverance of members in the faith-based community. He shared, “This is a really good community, we are a poor community but we hang together, we stick together and sometimes things don’t go like we think it ought to go but one thing about it is it’s in God’s hands, we trust him that things are not where we want it but they will get better.” Phillip noted:

Black people, their opportunities are not real big and when they get the opportunity to do something like this here like that fire department over there is outstanding to this community and if we can't keep the fire department they will shut it down, any kind of way whether its local government or federal government, you didn't do this or you didn't do that. You see that building over there when you come by that building that building is outstanding in this community and quite naturally you got a lot of people who don't like it. I mean that just the way the government is.

James expressed his gratefulness for the community. He said:

There have been some good things that come out of this community, we've been blessed, a lot of our members is memories but we have good memories and the part that they played and hoping that their offspring and siblings can understand the sacrifices and stuff that were made in the middle of the night, freezing rain and stuff going down and you asked to go on a call when it's raining, and snowing and lighting and you know that the roads and highways and stuff is not safe but you committed yourself to this whether you're going to a fire or whether you're going to first responder it's definitely something to be proud of and then again thankful.

**Rebound from disaster.** The rural community experienced a major setback after building the fire station. Early one Sunday morning the fire station that community members worked so diligently to build burned down. The act was considered a force of nature. When discussing this subject all, of the participants expressed their responses in a

grave tone. Michael explained, “The fire station that we had worked so hard to build burnt down with all our trucks and all our equipment inside. I cannot begin to tell you what we felt on that Sunday morning coming to church and seeing everything we sacrificed for destroyed. That was a sad day.” Kathy looked tearful as she shared her account of seeing the burned structure as she drove on the church grounds to attend Sunday school. She shared, “It was very hurtful. I had to stand there and look at it, you know because it had been a lot of hours put into for that, anyways we stood together and got it cleaned up.” Peter gave his account of that disastrous event that rocked the community. He explained:

I came in here that Sunday morning. I was driving taxis and when I come home I didn't see no fire over there, just soon as I got home good I had never pulled my clothes off and I heard the alarm go off it said [our] station fire department is on fire. It can't be, I just passed by there, they said the lighting struck it. I heard a loud boom and when I got closer the top was falling in, I don't understand, I still don't understand it. It was a hurtful time you know, I had to think about how hard we had to get it. I had no ideal we would lose four trucks, we lost four trucks.

Members did not give up despite the devastating circumstances that rattled the rural community. The Department of Insurance stripped the fire department of its franchise to respond to calls. Community members were once again at the mercy of the county fire station. However, this time community members experienced a different perspective on how to obtain materials resources.

**Community members established contacts for assistance through social media outlets.** The news of the burned fire station traveled far. Someone in the community posted the story on social media. News reporters from local cities gathered outside the FBO to report on the fire. The community member began to experience an outpouring of support and resources from different agencies nationwide. However, participants in the study did not mention receiving any funds or materials from the local county. Michael exclaimed, “We got everything back and more, you see we had an insurance policy. We didn’t know that when we was paying that insurance policy that it would one day pay us back more than we expected.” Samantha shared, “I’m just very proud of [this community] and we had a fire not too long ago and it burned our building down but we’ve rebuilt and we are as strong as ever.” Peter expressed how some of the community members in the beginning of the process felt the insurance was not needed and would be a waste of money.

The newly constructed fire station is like a jewel in a midst of the rural community. Today, the building stands two stories high and is three times the size of the original construction. The fire station almost seems out of place when driving through the rural area. The bright color of the building is a striking contrast to the basic brick foundation originally laid by the brick masons in the community.

**Provides assistance to other communities.** Even though the fire department in the faith-based community was impacted by adverse circumstances, volunteers were still persistent in assisting others. The fire station responds to an average of 15 calls annually to provide aid to other communities including the local county who did not want the rural

area to build a fire station. The rural community has been impacted by many deadly fires. Several residents, including some of the volunteer firemen have been killed in car accidents along the narrow, winding roads located throughout the community. Phillip commented, “I help to load the sick and I helped to carry the dead, a many a one.” Mobile homes are positioned throughout the rural community. Peter said, “The first call we got was a trailer and we saved part of that, [the county] had never saved a trailer or nothing and we got certified and when we got certified we come from under [the county] and [the county] still don’t like that we come from under them. We got our own franchise and stuff.” John described the type of calls the fire station receives. He stated:

We respond to any kind of call dealing with a home, smoke, even if the house is not on fire. We assist people in sickness when the rescue squad has to come pick up people, we also assist in that. Any car accident we do the same. Sometimes we get called out to help people with situations outside of town that might occurred or a situation in town we might get called out to direct traffic until stuff gets situated. We do like mutual aid to [the county], and provide mutual aid to anybody who calls us so we all work together in assisting in everything if the need is there.

### **Theme 5: Persistence**

Community members had to overcome internal and external challenges to establish the fire department. Jim recalled how the members were treated when they went to the county for help. He said:

We would go down to the courthouse and we would worry them and sometimes they act like they want to help us and sometimes they didn't and uh we had to you know meet the qualification of what we had to do and sometimes it were hard but we made it. The Lord was with us. It was a struggle but we got this far.

Joe also remembered how community members were treated. He stated:

The boys kinda had a problem about the county helping us out, they didn't want to. The [county] is kinda you know Republican and is white, basically white and they didn't want we were I think at that time we it might be still now that we there are just two black organizations fire departments in [the state]. So they didn't really stick their hand out to really help. We had to go basically on our own to try to get it done.

John discussed how the men in the community had to go down to the county offices and stand there for hours. He discussed how the men tried to talk to whomever they could to push the process through so the community could become certified to respond to emergency calls. Kathy shared, "They didn't want us to have the fire department. They didn't think we could get qualified enough to do it." Members in the community were able to push through the obstacles and problems to continue on with the process of building the fire department.

Even though the community did receive adequate training from the county, two members discussed their difficulties with understanding the material provided by the trainer due to their inability to read. The highest education completed for four participants interviewed for this study was 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Karen shared her story:



I was one of these kind of people I didn't go to school and learn what I should you know, and I when they got to that part [taking the test to be qualified] where you know to get a certificate and learn I backed out, I didn't go any further. I should have done more than I did about when I found out about I wouldn't be able to read and I still should have stayed in there and you know pushed. Sometime now I still come to some of the meetings, but I just wished that some of the young people would come and join in and you know help to keep what we got.

Peter expressed his concern about the knowledge section of becoming qualified as a fireman.

You have to take all the tests and stuff, you have to pass the tests and they show you films and stuff what you have to do and how you have to do it and when the time come to do that that's what we had to train on then. The county would send a teacher up to test us to see if we were capable to do it and that's what surprised them. They didn't think we were able to do it because they figured [the community] was slow in education you know. But we had right many people who had good education and so that's how that went and that went pretty good because we had a lot women in there and that helped us on the education because back then us men didn't have no education.

### **Recommendations for Other Faith-Based Organizations**

The second research question I examined was: What recommendations do the organizations have that could be used to assist other communities prepare for disasters? Participants seemed shocked and puzzled about the question. Individuals later confessed

that they assumed that no other African American FBO would want to tackle the process if they knew about the racial discrimination experienced by community members.

Participants were asked to share some recommendations and advice to other FBOs.

Individuals also expressed the fact that trials and tribulations will come but nothing is impossible if community members have faith and determination. Jim stated, "It might seem hard but keep trying, keep trying because there is always ways and people who will help if you would start it. If you want to do something just act towards that and that's what we did and it wasn't as easy as we thought it would be but it still wasn't hard but we kept striving."

**Community Solidarity.** Phillip's warning was FBOs is to get together and stick together. He stated, "It's a lot of obstacles come up through county leaders and stuff like that." Karen suggested that community members should get together and stick together. Kathy said, "I would tell them to work together, united we stand divided we fall. If you don't work together you're not going to make it. And get your community involved, you got to hold on to your faith, when things look dark you go to hold on and remember that all things are possible." Michel's advice to other FBOs is to come together with a plan and work together. He asserted, "Walk by faith and not by sight. I think we were pretty successful [with the fire department] being that we was people that were seeking the help of the Lord to guide us, pray for guidance and then being ready to put our faith in action." Peter cautioned FBOs to take advantage of any available opportunities to prepare their communities for disasters. He said, "Go through the proper channels you know because if you go half-handed you're not going to make it. And if the people in the community

go along with it they will see just like we did that we did have some who was negative but there was a few of them in there who said let's go for it we can do." Samantha's recommendation is that communities should be self-sufficient and independent when preparing for disasters. She stated:

You cannot wait for someone else to take care of you or save you, you have to do that for yourselves and the only way you can really do that and know exactly what needs to be done is through knowledge. I think the more knowledgeable the communities are as far as what's available to them as far at the resources available to them you know what's in their reach and what they can do for themselves the better off they will be.

James' suggestion is that members should check all the available resources from the professionals, the government, and volunteer organizations. He said:

I would check everything, in other words, dissect the project because there is so much out there now that can help anybody who want to organize or set up something. If you in a community and you are a person of faith feeling like you're being led to act, I would go in to looking at all the possibilities, get all the information that you can to pile it together to outline a plan, a method of how you want to move.

Joe recommended that community members unite, organize, and use social networks in FBOs. He stated:

Come together in the church, get together, organize out the church because that works best, that's what worked best for us and it got the community, the news out

because a lot of people come to church and they listen and my advice would be to just come together, fellowship, and try to find a good somebody who is serious about leading and I believe it would work.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings revealed that an African American faith-based community faced difficulties, challenges, and struggles to prepare their community for disasters. However, the data revealed that the adversities experienced by community members proved that undesirable conditions can produce remarkable results. The findings showed that faith-based organizations can use determination combined with the principles of social networking and social capital to engage community members in disaster preparations. The following chapter will provide a detailed interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, conclusion, and implications for social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate how a local FBO in a rural community organized resources to build an all-volunteer fire department.

Specifically, I wanted to gather information on how an African American FBO engaged residents to prepare their community for disasters. The major themes in the study were determination, FBO as center of activities, dedication to building, resilience, and persistence. Findings from the study revealed that the FBO used principles of social network theory (Barnes, 1972) and social capital theory (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001) to engage, recruit, and unite members to protect their community from disasters. Findings also revealed that the community members lacked support and knowledge on how to obtain resources and information from local county officials.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The results of the literature review in Chapter 2 revealed that rural community members with strong social networks interact frequently and are able to distribute information quickly (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Casagrande et al., 2015; Murphy, 2007). Furthermore, members in social networks have the potential to obtain materials and resources rapidly and are better equipped to handle disasters (Paton & McClure, 2013; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). The findings from my study confirmed that individuals who belonged to social networks were active in charitable organizations, trusted and depended on one another, and volunteered for disaster preparedness activities. The data showed that a few individuals outside the rural community provided members with the

information needed to create a fire department. However, the strength and unity of the members was a direct result of the social networks established throughout the community and the local FBO.

The findings from my study showed the importance of spirituality in the community. Lippmann (2011) stated that members of African American faith-based communities view disasters differently because of their religious beliefs. The findings in the study were consistent with those of McGeehan and Baker (2017) who found, in their qualitative study, that FBOs were committed to helping others because of their spiritual values. The leaders of the church and the leaders of the community who participated in my study stressed that spirituality is significant in their small community. Members credited their faith in God as an important factor in the process, especially when encountering obstacles and problems.

### **Strategies Used to Build a Fire Department**

The first research question was, what strategies or approaches did an African American faith-based organization in a rural community use to establish a community-based all-volunteer fire department? The following seven dimensions of social capital as defined by Narayan and Cassidy (2001) were evident in the findings: trust, membership in a group, neighborhood connections, every day sociability, togetherness, volunteerism, and generalized norms. The process used by the FBO to engage community members to organize resources revealed the following: community members trusted each other; members belonged to a social network at the FBO; residents were relationally connected; members were on one accord throughout the entire process; volunteers were recruited

throughout the community thru the FBO; and members wanted to protect their community at all costs. The members were proud of their community and showed a sense of togetherness. Establishing the fire department was essential for the well-being of the entire rural area, including connecting counties. The community experienced negative circumstances from outside sources throughout the process of starting a fire department. However, the members of the FBO were still determined, dedicated, persistent, and resilient to make a difference in organizing resources to prepare their community for disasters.

**Determination.** Berg, Musigidlok, and Haro (2014) asserted that African American community members should not wait for government agencies to prepare them for disasters. The findings from this study revealed that neighbors lived in close proximity to one another and were normally the first to arrive on the scene when a disaster occurred. Community members who became actively involved when the disaster occurred were able to help residents minimize property and personal damages. Results from the study revealed that community members frequently experienced delays in receiving emergency assistance due to their remote location. Members in the community had obstacles and challenges with establishing the fire department. When analyzing data, I found that members had lack of knowledge of the procedures required to start a fire department, lack of money, lack of equipment, lack of training, and lack of guidance. Further, members said they experienced a lack of support from the state and city, and faced obstruction at the county level. However, members said they were still determined to overcome the problems to build the fire station.

Findings from this study confirmed results from previous studies which indicated that residents in rural communities frequently experience delays in receiving emergency services because of their remoteness from a city (Ashida et al., 2016; Davidson et al., 2013; Levin & Hein, 2012; Prelog & Miller, 2013; Tuohy et al., 2014). The community members who participated in the study were often first on the scene when the disasters occurred, and they witnessed first-hand their neighbors' properties being destroyed according to the interview responses. Members of the African American rural community often tried to extinguish the fires themselves, but they were unsuccessful. The problem was that the existing fire station that was staffed by volunteers took too long to arrive at the rural community when emergency services were needed. Community members determined that they were capable of fighting the fires themselves because members lived in close proximity to one another. Therefore, community members became determined to establish a local, all volunteer fire department even though no one in the rural community had any professional firefighting experience.

**Faith-based organization as center of activities.** The FBO was committed to the process of starting the fire department. All community activities are held at the FBO because the community center was destroyed by fire before the fire department was established. The leaders of the FBO supported allowing fundraising activities to be held during worship services, and they allowed community members to hold meetings to discuss details about the fire department. At these meetings, residents collected and shared vital information about starting the fire department. Furthermore, residents disseminated information using the church's social networks regarding the requirements



to be a volunteer firefighter. Members of the FBO funded the seed money to purchase the emergency services insurance that was required for all fire stations, property, materials, supplies, and essential equipment for the fire station. Results from the study revealed that it would have been impossible for the members in the rural community to start a fire department if the FBO had not assisted the community with the process.

The results from this study confirmed findings from previous research which showed that FBOs play an integral role in disaster planning in rural communities (see Koenig, 2006; Lippmann, 2011; McGeehan & Baker, 2017). In the past, FBOs have been known to provide shelter, food, water, and money to displaced personnel before and after disasters (Chikoto et al., 2012; Lachlan & Spence, 2011). In addition, in the aftermath of disasters, FBOs have provided community members with resources for essential services such as childcare, transportation, and emotional support (Bundy, 2015; Cain & Barthelemy, 2015).

**Dedication to building the fire station.** Findings in the study confirmed that the community is full of family members who are dedicated to working in the local church. Community members were also committed to completing the qualifications for firefighting to become a certified fire station. Members of the FBO dedicated their free time on Saturdays to work towards building and establishing the fire department. The community is full of skilled laborers who are brick masons, carpenters, and contractors who own their businesses. The laborers worked 5 days per week, yet dedicated their Saturdays to work free of charge to construct the fire station and attend training and certifications to become qualified firemen. Countless hours were spent collecting funds

at the church and throughout the community to purchase equipment, materials, and property for the fire station. Members of the low-income community were so dedicated to making the fire station a success that they volunteered to pay for their personal fire suits and equipment after receiving firefighting gear that was unusable.

Results from the data showed that members in the entire community, including the local FBO were committed to building a local fire department. Not only did the men get involved with the physical labor but the women were engaged as well. Women in the FBO organized fundraisers and cooked meals for the laborers who worked to construct the fire station. Members in the community spent their Saturdays laying bricks for the fire station. Additionally, members found time to attend trainings and certification classes on how to handle firefighting equipment and emergency service calls. Findings revealed that some of the members had limited education and had difficulties with the firefighting qualification exams. However, the data revealed that the women in the community assisted the men with understanding the material to pass the qualification tests.

**Resilience.** The community is resilient in several ways. First, the community members survived previous disasters such as hurricanes, floods, tornados, and fires. Secondly, the community was resilient in building the fire department despite all the challenges received from outside sources and limited funding. Thirdly, the community was resilient in bouncing back after enduring the irony of having a fire destroy the fire station that they worked so hard to build. Not only did the community members lose the fire station but also the franchise to respond to emergency service calls.

The fire station, all the equipment, and materials were destroyed by a fire shortly after being built. The findings revealed that community members were shocked, disappointed, and sad about the fire station burning down. The very thing the members of the FBO had worked so hard to prevent from happening had occurred in their own yard. The Department of Insurance authorized the county to strip the fire department of their franchise license to respond to any emergency service calls. The rural community members were again at the mercy of the local county's fire station. However, the faith-based community members did not give up and resolved to start the process again a second time. The fire services insurance that the members purchased when starting the procedures to start a fire department paid off. The community ended up with a fire station twice the size of the original building, brand new equipment, new vehicles, and new firefighting suits for every volunteer. Additionally, the fire station received their franchise again to respond to emergency service calls within the community and surround counties.

**Persistence.** The findings in the study showed that the community members did not receive assistance from the local county but experienced opposing reactions from the city officials with the process of creating the fire department. The area where the case site was located is known for racial discrimination. Members in the rural community are predominantly African American while the individuals in the local city are primarily White. The participants described instances where community members spent hours requesting and seeking information from county commissioners and attended city council meetings to discuss the progress of emergency services within the county. Members of

the FBO were persistent in their pursuit to gather information regarding the processes required to establish a fire department. However, they continually had doors slammed in their faces when they attempted to obtain information from government officials. The findings did not reveal that members obtained the information on how to start the process of establishing a fire department easily. The community members had to figure out the procedures themselves on how to become incorporated, certified, and qualified to respond to emergency service calls.

Community members lacked information on how to apply for grants and resources from outside sources. The results confirm the review of the research literature that African Americans in rural communities lack information on how to obtain resources and supplies to prepare for disasters (McGeehan & Baker, 2017; Muller et al., 2014; Prelog & Miller, 2013). However, with the aid of the local church, community members were persistent in obtaining the resources and capital from within the community to purchase the land for the fire station. Members in the community were also able to buy the required equipment to become certified. Community members were finally able to gather the information they needed to establish the fire department after receiving the run around from the county. Members in the community persistently made numerous telephone calls and personal trips to the office of Department of Insurance (DOI) to ask specific questions on how to become incorporated and certified to respond to emergency calls. Further, community members contacted a county fire marshal recommended by the DOI to receive instructions on how to set up the necessary certification training. The findings revealed that community members did not receive any other additional

assistance from outside sources. However, members still insisted on carrying out the procedures to create a fire department in their community.

The results revealed that community members did receive some equipment from fire stations outside of the county. Members were given an old 1947 fire truck that did not work, water hoses, a water tanker, and some firefighting suits. However, most of the equipment received were faulty and the firefighting suits were unsuitable because they were lined with asbestos. Yet, the men were persistent and determined to obtain the equipment needed for the fire station. The men dedicated numerous man-hours to replacing and repairing parts on the truck to make it drivable.

The findings did not support with the review of the literature research on disaster preparedness trainings in rural communities. A review of the literature revealed that members in rural communities lacked funding for disaster training resources required for proper disaster management (Cox & Hamlen, 2015; Kapuci et al., 2013; Lippmann, 2013). Further, Bergstrand, Mayer, Brumback, and Zhang (2015) stated that minority communities were less resourceful in obtaining disaster trainings than any other ethnicity. The data showed that the volunteers received more than enough adequate trainings from qualified instructors from the local community college. The community members were not charged for the training. The only requirement was that the fire chief had to request the instructor from the community college at least 30 days in advance of the scheduled training. Also, 10 members had to be signed up for the training date. The training was held at the community's fire station and on the property of the burnt down community center. However, the findings in this study did find that the training material was above

the educational level for most members in the rural community. Nevertheless, members were persistent in their endeavors to pass the written exams to become qualified firemen.

The faith-based organization were successful in engaging community members to organize resources to start a fire department despite all the challenges that came up during the process. The community members were finally in position to prepare their community for disasters. The fire station become certified by the Department of Insurance (DOI) to respond to emergency service calls within the community. Additionally, the fire station were authorized to provide mutual aid to neighboring rural counties.

**Recommendations for Other Communities.** The second research question I asked was: What recommendations does the organizations have that could be used to assist other communities prepare for disasters? Findings revealed that participants primarily recommended that other communities would need to have faith in God and community solidarity in order to be successful in preparing their community for disasters. Results also revealed that communities would need to have strong social networks in the church to collect and disseminate information. Additionally, participants recommended that community members have knowledge about all disaster preparation resources available from government sources before starting the process.

### **Connections with Theory**

Members in the rural community utilized broad strategies that allowed them to build the fire station. In order to achieve these strategies participants used social networks in the FBO and social capital. Principles from both social network theory and

social capital theory were evident in the findings. Both theories are relevant to understanding the findings of this study.

**Social network theory.** The findings from this study confirmed that members of a close knit faith-based organization used principles of social network theory to organize resources to build a fire department. Barnes (1954) explained that social networks are created from the interactions of individuals who are family members, friends, and associates. Participants in this study agreed that the church was the hub for collecting and providing information to members throughout the community. Social networks in the church were actively involved throughout the entire process of creating the fire department. Findings showed that volunteers were recruited from established social networks to participate in fundraising activities and trainings to become firemen.

Findings from this study revealed that members in the community were connected relationally, shared similar occupations and have a spiritual bond to the local church. The community in this study closely resemble Barnes' (1954) description of the fishing village in Bremnes where interactions of social networks were first recognized. Findings also revealed that the social networks in this community were determined, dedicated, and persistent in obtaining essential resources to prepare the community for disasters (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Community members in this study displayed characteristics of a strong social network as defined by several researchers. For example, members in the community interacted with each other frequently, trusted each other, and exchanged information quickly (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Paton McClure, 2013; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Also, members in the social networks were able to provide emotional support to

each other during the challenging times (Taylor, Chatters, Lincoln & Woodward, 2017). Further, findings showed that the members in the social networks in the FBO were all African Americans. Social networks in minority communities are trusted more by diverse communities in the aftermath of disasters because of shared cultural identities (Browser & Cutter, 2015; McGeehan & Baker, 2017). The results add to the research on disaster studies that social networks in FBOs could be a key resource in preparing rural communities for disasters (Airriess, Li, Leong, Chen, & Keith, 2007; Murphy, 2007).

**Social capital theory.** Bourdieu (1985) explained that social capital theory is a result of social networks and their abilities to obtain resources because of those relationships. Aldrich and Meyer (2015) stated that community members could use social capital bonding, bridging social capital, and linking social capital to provide assistance during disasters. Findings revealed that community members used all three types of social capital to organize resources in the community. Bonding social capital and bridging social capital occurred through community members trusting each other and sharing an emotional connection. Findings showed that members participated in disaster preparedness activities because of the close knit bond within the community and the social networks in the FBO. Findings also showed that members in the community used linking social capital to acquire the firefighting equipment through outside authoritative connections from the social networks.

Findings showed that community members used the following principles of social capital: a) volunteerism; b) trust; c) membership in a network; d) neighborhood connections; e) togetherness; f) everyday connections; and e) generalized norms within



the community (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Community members were trustworthy and unified during the process of organizing resources for the fire department. All of the resources needed to build the fire station such as free labor and materials were easily obtained from community members because of established social networks (Ritchie & Gill, 2007; Rivera & Nickels, 2014). Recruitment of volunteers to become firemen came directly from within the community. Also, the involvement of the FBO was a generalized norm. Findings showed that the faith-based community members believed they were doing the right thing by establishing the fire department as mandated by their spiritual beliefs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitation of this study to take into consideration include the sample of the population. The sample were limited to only African Americans because no other ethnicity groups are represented within the selected community. Also, this case study specifically addressed the issue of disaster preparations in African American communities. This sample population does not represent all African Americans. Therefore, findings may not be generalized to other cultural populations outside of this study.

Another limitation was that the case site selected was a faith-based organization. The sole purpose of this study was to investigate the involvement of a faith-based organization in establishing a fire department. A review of the literature did not reveal any studies on FBOs establishing volunteer community-based fire departments. Because the case is unique, transferability of the findings in this study may limited.

Another limitation was that the demographics of the participants showed an age and generational difference. All participants in the study were over 50 years of age. Participants may experience community living different than a younger generation. Also, participants may have different perceptions of dedication and commitment when it comes to the community and faith-based organization. Transferability of the findings may not be generalized to other communities.

### **Recommendations**

The impact of disasters can cause bodily harm and excessive damages to properties (Tuohy, Stephens, & Johnson, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that community members understand the importance of preparing for a disaster before it strikes. A review of the literature revealed that all communities need some level of disaster training to prepare for and cope with the aftermath of disasters (Bowman & Newman, 2016; Muller, Burke, Berg, Lin, & Upperman, 2014). Community members are able to bounce back quicker from the impact of disasters if preparations are made in advance (Browser & Cutter, 2015).

One recommendation for future research is to conduct a quantitative study of social networks and social capital resources in rural communities after an impact of a disaster. Social networks and social capital resources are located among different entities within rural areas (Burton, 2007; Kapuci et al., 2013; Krause & Hayward, 2012). A survey could be administered to a community to specifically identify the different types of social networks and social capital resources that were available within a rural area after the disaster occurred.

A large portion of the review of disaster literature focused on the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. However, in 2017, the media broadcasted news stories about FBOs assisting disaster relief agencies with disaster preparedness, recovery, and relief activities (Singer, 2017). Therefore, another recommendation for future research is a study that investigates the preparation requirements of a community before a disaster strikes. For example, a future study could focus on what a community in a rural area needs to do to establish a fire department.

### **Implications for Social Change**

It is crucial that community members be properly prepared and informed of how to become prepared for natural disasters. Findings from this study could add information to disaster relief agencies, emergency service managers, and human service professionals about the role that faith-based organizations play in disaster assistance. Community members could be provided assistance before and after a disaster strikes. In the event of a pending catastrophe, faith-based organizations could be formally recognized as disaster assistance resource centers. Disaster relief agencies could equip faith-based organizations with disaster preparedness kits to pass out to community members, provide faith-based organizations with enough supplies to establish an emergency shelter within their building, and train members of the faith-based organization how to use basic emergency and first aid skills.

My implication for social change is to provide information to human services professionals, government agencies, policy makers, and community members on how social networks can be galvanized to leverage the social capital needed to prepare

isolated, rural communities for disasters. Findings from this study showed that social networks actively engaged community members and were able to obtain, disseminate information, and acquire resources quickly from within the community for a particular purpose. Community leaders, disaster relief agencies, and human service professionals who are aware of the social networks within a community before a crisis begins are able to tap into a myriad community-wide social capital. Being aware of these often hidden social networks in FBOs could save lives, time, and property.

Further, social change could occur by bringing awareness to community members, especially in rural communities of the magnitude of resources available from the internet on disaster preparations. Findings from this study revealed that community members lacked knowledge of how and where to start with building a fire department. Also, use of the internet and availability of resources were not available to community members during the fire department's establishment. Helping community members in rural areas understand how to use the internet to find resources, state guidelines, and instructions on how to prepare their community for disasters could assist residents immensely. Communities who are aware of the social networks, social capital, and internet resources within their community are able to bounce back quicker. Further, community members who are properly prepared may require less resources and manpower from governmental and disaster relief agencies after experiencing the impact of a disaster.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study, recommendations, and implications for social change in rural communities. Recent disasters have demonstrated that no community is safe from fires, tornados, hurricanes, and snow storms. Being prepared is one key ingredient to community members surviving the impact of natural disasters. Therefore, social networks within faith-based organizations must be recognized as valuable disaster preparedness tools within rural communities. Community members that are united, informed, trained, and aware of available disaster resources are better equipped to prepare and protect their community from disasters.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation from the Faith-Based Organization

**Letter of Cooperation**

Date

Dear Tronda Douglas,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the case study entitled A Faith-Based Organization's Engagement of an African American Community in Disaster Preparation within [REDACTED]. As part of this study, I authorize you to post recruitment flyers on church bulletin boards and recruit participants from the congregation for interviews. I also authorize you the use of a classroom within the administrative building for interviews with participants. I understand that individual participation will be voluntary and at the participants' discretion.

I understand that the organization's responsibility in this study includes: Opening the building to allow access to a classroom for interviews during business hours. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that you will not name our organization in the doctoral project report that will be published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

## Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation from the Fire Station

**Letter of Cooperation**

Date

Dear Tronda Douglas,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the case study entitled A Faith-Based Organization's Engagement of an African American Community in Disaster Preparation within [REDACTED]. As part of this study, I authorize you to post recruitment flyers on bulletins within the fire station and recruit participants from fire department personnel for interviews. I understand that individual participation will be voluntary and at the participants' discretion.

I understand that the organization's responsibility in this study includes: Allowing access to the fire station to post recruitment flyers. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that you will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that will be published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

## Appendix C: Interview Guide

## Interview Guide

**Participant's Information**

Name	
Community Role	Church Leader    Community Leader    Fire Department
Interview Location	
Interview Date/Time	

**Introduction:**

Hello, my name is Tronda Douglas. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. My study is investigating how a local faith based organization (FBO) organized resources to build an all-volunteer fire department. Please understand that this interview can take up to 1 hour. I want to remind you that you can end this interview at any time for any reason. Throughout the interview you will see me taking notes as you respond to the questions. Please feel free to stop me at any time if you have any questions about what I am asking you. Also, please let me know if you do not want to answer a particular question and I will move on to the next question. I also want to remind you as stated in the consent form that the interview will be recorded for accuracy of the data. At a later date you will have a chance to review the transcript to validate that the data is correct. Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

**Notes:****Interview Questions****Notes**

1. Describe your role in the faith-based organization /fire department.	
2. Tell me what motivated this community to establish their own fire department.	

3. How did the suggestion/idea of establishing a volunteer fire department come about?	
4. Who initiated the discussion about building a volunteer fire department?	
5. How did the faith-based organization become involved in establishing the fire department?	
6. How did the faith-based organization go about gathering information on how to establish a fire department?	
7. How did the faith-based organization obtain the resources needed to build the fire department?	
8. Describe any obstacles or problems that came up during the process of starting the fire department.	
9. Describe how people were recruited from the faith-based organization/community to volunteer for the fire department.	

<p>10. What outside agencies did the faith-based organization get to assist in building the fire department? How did the faith-based organization get those outside agencies involved?</p> <p>11. What is the role of the faith-based organization in obtaining the resources needed to sustain the fire department's daily operations?</p>	
<p>12. What suggestions or recommendations would you give to other faith-based organizations who want to become involved in preparing their communities for disasters?</p>	

**Closing:**

Thank you \_\_\_\_\_ for participating in this study. Do you have anything else you'd like to share? Do you have any questions for me? With your permission I would like to contact you if any questions come up while I'm transcribing the interview. I will also contact you to review the transcript of your interview. Again, thank you. Enjoy your day.

## Research Study Recruitment

Recruiting participants for a research study entitled:

### **“A Faith-Based Organization’s Engagement of an African American Community in Disaster Preparation”**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how [REDACTED] organized resources to build an all-volunteer fire department. This study could provide valuable information to disaster relief agencies and emergency managers on how faith-based organizations could play a role in preparing communities for disasters.

### **Eligibility to Participate**

- ❖ Have knowledge of the process and procedures involved in organizing resources to build the fire department
- ❖ Be at least 25 years old
- ❖ Currently or previously resided in the community of [REDACTED]
- ❖ Currently or have served in the role of a community leader, church leader, or fire department personnel in the community
- ❖ Be available to participate in an interview lasting up to one hour

**For more information contact:**

Tronda Douglas



## Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years lived in the community: \_\_\_\_\_ Highest Education Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Role in the community:

\_\_\_ Church leader \_\_\_ Community leader \_\_\_ Fire department personnel

1. Do you have knowledge of the process and procedures involved in organizing resources for the [REDACTED] fire department? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you at least 25 years old? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you currently reside in the community of [REDACTED]? If not, did you previously reside in the community? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you currently serve in the role of a community leader, church leader, or fire department personnel in the community of [REDACTED]? If not currently serving, have you previously served in any of those roles? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you available to participate in an interview lasting up to an hour? \_\_\_\_\_

Questions:

## Appendix F: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

1. Describe your role in the faith-based organization /fire department.
2. Tell me what motivated this community to establish their own fire department.
3. How did the suggestion/idea of establishing a volunteer fire department come about?
4. Who initiated the discussion about building a volunteer fire department?
5. How did the faith-based organization become involved in establishing the fire department?
6. How did the faith-based organization go about gathering information on how to establish a fire department?
7. How did the faith-based organization obtain the resources needed to build the fire department?
8. Describe any obstacles or problems that came up during the process of starting the fire department.
9. Describe how people were recruited from the faith-based organization/community to volunteer for the fire department.
10. What outside agencies did the faith-based organization get to assist in building the fire department? How did the faith-based organization get those outside agencies involved?
11. What is the role of the faith-based organization in obtaining the resources needed to sustain the fire department's daily operations?
12. What suggestions or recommendations would you give to other faith-based organizations who want to become involved in preparing their communities for disasters?