Discourses of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors in post-earthquake Haiti: a critical discourse analysis

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DISCOURSES OF DISASTER, RECOVERY, AND RECOVERY ACTORS IN POST-EARTHQUAKE HAITI: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

by

Juliana Svitova

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Abstract

Disasters and post-disaster recovery are socially constructed phenomena. From a social constructionist perspective, this research focuses on the discourse production of disasters that frames interventions. Informed by critical theory, this research is concerned with whose and what discourses dominate the production of disaster, post-disaster recovery, and recovery actors in Haiti. Combining the techniques of grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, and interpretive policy analysis, the research examines the discourses in media, policy documents, and non-governmental organizational documents, using the 2010 Haiti earthquake as an example. The study also offers analysis of the narratives of participation as a cornerstone of disaster recovery.

A key finding is a textual pattern and link between the way disaster is defined and the remedies that are conceived. Disaster in Haiti is constructed as a crisis situation and is predominantly interpreted through pre-disaster risks and vulnerabilities. Overall, discourses frame the earthquake as an opportunity to envision a “new Haiti” and to “build back better.” The researcher deconstructs these discourses and the way they have been used in Haiti’s history, in relation to the outcomes that ensued. In addition, while there is a strong discursive emphasis on local participation, the researcher discusses the materialization thereof in practice. The researcher also identifies and discusses the areas of disaster recovery – psychosocial, disability-related, spiritual, and concern with environmental preservation – that were omitted across the documents as targets of recovery action.

This study illuminates the need for social workers to expand their outlook on natural disasters as crises or emergencies, and to understand the complex network of root causes or vulnerabilities. Thus, the researcher suggests two new areas of disaster social work: critical-deconstructive disaster social work and interdisciplinary disaster social work. Such orientations
would equip aspiring (disaster) social workers to engage in critical, multi-dimensional analyses of disaster events, to seek complex, transformative solutions, and to guard against exploitative practices of disaster opportunists. The research offers specific recommendations for social work practice, policy, research, and education.

*Key words: discourse analysis, disaster, recovery, recovery actors, Haiti earthquake*
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To my grandfather who always dared for more and for better, no matter what.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The occurrence of natural and human-made disasters and the crises that follow them is steadily increasing around the globe (Zakour & Gillespie, 2013). Myriad strategies have been developed to predict and prevent, and respond to and recover from, disasters. Emergency response has become the key modus operandi in post-disaster contexts. Proponents of this model argue that in crisis situations, taking immediate action is more vital than discussing the disaster. This is why the production and operations of discourses in post-disaster contexts have been insufficiently studied and therefore constitute the focus of the dissertation at hand.

Discourse, as defined here, refers to a particular collection of preferred and recurrent language, which reflects and promotes beliefs, values, perceptions, and attitudes. As an ensemble of thoughts, judgments, and feelings expressed in the verbal or overt behavior of individual actors, discourse has also been defined as a set of structures and practices that reflect and constitute social realities, power dynamics, and authority relations (Fairclough, 1995; 2003; Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004). “Discursive practices” make up a related construct, referring to the issues of discourse production, distribution, and consumption.

In the process of policy-making, it is critical to understand the way disasters, disaster recovery, and recovery actors are discursively constructed. I argue that disaster discourses reflect and simultaneously shape post-disaster reality, recovery processes, and recovery policies. Discourses of recovery, including which recovery (e.g. economic versus psycho-social) and whose recovery (e.g. the international community’s or local community organizations’), function to constitute (rationalize, normalize, and legitimize) the recovery process and various orientations toward action or inaction. Discourses can serve as powerful tools to marginalize and
oppres, but also to liberate and empower. Discursively shaped public attitudes can create a rationale for social construction of the affected groups and constitution of recovery process. For these reasons it is imperative to analyze which and whose discourses become the dominant ones and constitute recovery policies and practices.

Building on a perspective that discourses materialize through institutions, policies, and practices, I set out to trace this connection in the context of the 2010 Haiti earthquake recovery. Puzzled by the potential effects of discourses, I have sought to explore the social construction of post-disaster recovery through discourse production and reproduction in recovery policy and practice.

In the ensuing analysis of the literature, I present the need to examine the dynamics associated with disaster-related discursive constructions and practices. Special attention is given to the consequences accompanying discursive dominance and influence. The latter phenomenon is especially important because dominant discourses (e.g. media and political discourse) create mechanisms for social constitution of reality that may serve to marginalize, exploit, and restrict oppressed people in their power and/or construct subject positions of dependency. Conversely, discourses can be empowering too. For example, Haitian peasant discourses can be considered empowering as they contain the means of resistance and opposition to the higher order’s dominance such as dictators, corrupt Haitian elites, and imposing outside actors.

My analysis is based on an important assumption that all social constructions built on widely held perceptions of social groups may promote roles and action orientations (both passive and active) for and towards those groups. Certain social constructions of recovery actors and disaster recovery as a whole may significantly affect the conception of recovery practices and policies which have been shown to function as mechanisms for constructing identities and
opportunities for participation. I therefore argue that the scope of, and opportunities for, participation are very distinct for “victims,” as opposed to “saviors.” For example, when rendered as passive objects (versus active subjects) without active engagement in the rebuilding of their own lives, local people are denied venues for resilience and capacity-building to recover from natural disasters and to resist upcoming ones. Absent these opportunities, a truly sustainable recovery is destined to remain elusive. For this reason, I am particularly interested in how local participation, as an integral fundamental of sustainable disaster recovery, is framed and promoted in the discourses of recovery.

**Background and Context: Haiti and Recovery after the 2010 Earthquake**

To contextualize the study, in this section, I provide a brief description of Haiti’s historical, political, and social background. I also describe the impact of the 2010 earthquake and recovery progress made thus far.

**Background and context.** The need for and importance of exploring discursive factors that may influence recovery after natural catastrophes rests upon and is reinforced by several contextual premises. The historic, political, economic, social, and environmental characteristics of Haiti, the magnitude of the disaster and its consequences may reflect and reinforce recovery discourses and the post-earthquake recovery process in general.

First and foremost, Haiti’s context is an important exemplar of post-disaster recovery in the Global South because its colonial legacy is pervasive in the contemporary life of Haitian society (Buss, 2008; Farmer, 2011; Smith, 2001). Haiti’s history is narrated in part by the colonial domination of Spain, France, and the United States. Breaking the colonial yoke of France indebted Haiti to the tune of 150 million francs, as the French government demanded this “compensation” in repayment for officially recognizing Haiti’s independence and engaging in
trade. Further, after being denied recognition with a “decades-long multilateral blockade,” embargoes, and exploitative international trade policies, Haiti has been continuously relegated to the margins of the world system (Smith, 2001).

In the early 20th century, the U.S. arrived “to civilize, democratize and develop” Haiti while expropriating land for factories and commodity production (Farmer, 2011; Smith, 2001). Some U.S. development initiatives left the country deprived of its key local means of sustainability. For example, the creole pig eradication project and an attempt to replace them with white pigs of the Midwestern U.S. heritage failed greatly as it increased Haiti’s dependency on U.S. imports and resulted in “the Haitian peasants’ Great Stock Market Crash” (Smith, 2001, p. 29). Also, free trade rice policies promoted by President Clinton and other policymakers left Haitian farmers unequipped to compete with cheap U.S. rice imports and thus undermined local rice production. Due to the colonial intrusions and interventions, Haiti rapidly degraded from being the Pearl of the Antilles to acquiring a sticky cliché of being the poorest nation in Western Hemisphere (Farmer, 2011; Katz, 2013; Smith, 2001).

Scarcity of resources heightens disaster vulnerability and negatively affects post-disaster recovery. The aforementioned land expropriation and production of commodities caused deforestation and soil erosion, increasing Haiti’s vulnerability to natural disasters. In the pursuit of better paid jobs and economic opportunities, the rapidly growing urban migration resulted in the overpopulated, disaster-vulnerable area of Port-au-Prince (Farmer, 2011; Katz, 2013). Some authors (e.g. Farmer, 2011; Schuller & Morales, 2012) have suggested that the magnitude of the disaster in Haiti was, in fact, the result of neoliberal initiatives in search of development and modernization. For example, the “structural adjustment” policies enacted by the international
financial institutions turned Haiti into a supplier of cheap labor for assembly industries and the largest importer of U.S. food in the Caribbean (Dupuy, 2012).

Further, suffering from the political instability of a fragile and weakly performing Haitian state and a corrupt, kleptocratic government, Haiti continues to attract the focused attention of foreign actors. This has resulted in the formation of what Smith (2001) calls a “shadow government,” composed of NGOs, religious missions, international development agencies, and financial institutions. Therefore, the country has seen major involvement of outside actors in the relief and recovery efforts, leading to the “NGO-ization” of Haiti’s development and the post-quake recovery (e.g. Buss, 2008; Farmer, 2011; Schuller & Morales, 2012; Zanotti, 2010).

Despite being positioned as powerless victims within this multi-dimensional intersection of oppressive realities and structures, the Haitian citizenry has consistently proven its ability to conduct itself with resistant and highly participatory stances against the systems to which they have been subjected (Farmer, 2011; Schuller & Morales, 2012; Smith, 2001; Smith, Gélineau, & Seligson, 2012; Zéphyr, Córdova, Saldago, & Seligson, 2011). Having the historical legacy of hosting the only successful Black slave revolt, Haitian grassroots actors not only utilize the informal peasant discourse (proverbs, folktales, peasant songs called *chante pwens*) as a weapon against social control (Smith, 2001), but also place Haiti as a leader in civic participation in the Americas (Smith, Gélineau, & Seligson, 2012; Zéphyr, Córdova, Saldago, & Seligson, 2011). Both the marginalized position and the resistant attitude of Haiti’s popular classes intensified even more after the earthquake struck in 2010.

**Haiti and recovery after the 2010 earthquake.** A devastating earthquake hit Haiti on January 12, 2010. About 220,000 human lives were taken by the quake and over 300,000 people
were left injured. An estimate of 105,000 homes were destroyed and over 208,000 were
damaged, leaving about 1.3 million people displaced and forced to seek temporary shelter in
1,300 separate camps, while more than 500,000 people sought refuge with relatives or friends
outside the capital (Government of the Republic of Haiti, 2010). The already fragile
infrastructure of Port-au-Prince was decimated. More than 1,300 educational establishments and
over 50 hospitals and health centers collapsed. Over 20 per cent of civil servants died, while the
Presidential Palace, Parliament, the law courts, and most ministry and public administration
buildings were severely damaged or destroyed, exacerbating existing institutional weaknesses
(Government of the Republic of Haiti, 2010; Oxfam International, 2011). With this enormity of
destruction and devastation, the central question arises: how will disaster recovery occur?

Defining disaster recovery. Disaster recovery, in this dissertation, is understood as a
multi-faceted process. Ideally, recovery should re-stabilize life, perhaps returning it to its former
status prior to disaster. Most of all, the best recovery has been described as “building back
better” and leaving the nation better prepared and equipped to face future disasters (Aldrich,
2012; Miller & Rivera, 2011; Mulligan & Nadarajah, 2012; Phillips, 2009). This latter framing
involves a significant shift in thinking and practice. In the case of Haiti and other developing
countries, disaster recovery becomes a process of development-in-recovery. In other words,
integrated, sustainable social and economic development is intertwined with recovery and the
result is a stronger, better Haiti, not simply a return to the status quo conditions prior to the
disaster (Mulligan & Nadarajah, 2012; Oxfam International, 2011). For example, the Economic
and Social Council of the United Nations (2012) suggests three pillars of sustainable
development that are related to disaster recovery in Haiti: private sector development (the
economic front), improved living conditions of disadvantaged populations (the social front), and addressing environmental concerns (the environmental front).

Some scholars argue, however, that this “building back better” narrative mirrors a neoliberal line of thinking and framing of what has become known as “disaster capitalism” (Klein, 2007; Schuller & Morales, 2012; Timms, 2011). This popular concept popularized by journalist Naomi Klein, and embraced by critical disaster scholars, explains the way policies and reforms favoring elites are pushed through in times of crisis.

Bankoff (2001) and Harwell (2000) note that disasters both reveal and create underdevelopment. Therefore the key solutions by decision makers are related to injecting more development and more technology to conquer nature. Some critics go even further to suggest that the increased occurrence of disasters in the developing world is a result of increased vulnerabilities, which in fact are the repercussions of previous development initiatives that changed access to resources and patterns of social relations (Bankoff, 2001; Harwell, 2000). Harwell (2000) argues that the highly prevalent invisibility of human action in the discourses of “natural disaster” is the consequence of a hegemonic development (or rather modernization) agenda, which conceals its own role in catastrophic events and, what is more, advocates its own necessity and involvement. For example, in the case of the El Niño drought and concomitant forest fires in Indonesia, Harwell (2000) argues that the promotion of remote technology as a solution for controlling the natural causes obscured the social and political context that might have led to the fires (i.e. arson by oil plantation owners). Therefore, Harwell (2000) and Bankoff (2001) propose that we read any disaster and its recovery discourses as reflections of wider political and social agendas. Keeping these two notions of the “potential” for re-development in
Haiti in mind, it is important to remain critical of such appealing framings of recovery and development as a “new Haiti” and “building back better.”

Relief and recovery in post-earthquake Haiti. The international community, the United Nations (UN), Red Cross, MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti), international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private donors, celebrities, missionaries, and many other well-intentioned actors rushed to help in response to the Haitian tragedy. Over 13 billion U.S. dollars were allocated by bilateral and multilateral donors and more than 3 billion dollars were raised through private funds for Haiti’s humanitarian and recovery purposes. The extent of this support, both domestic and foreign, provided the potential for a secure recovery and invoked the promise of a “new, better Haiti.”

Yet this overwhelming response in the first months after the earthquake and the promise of “building back better” are hardly fulfilled 5 years later. However, before voicing a criticism of a slow, poorly-coordinated recovery, one has to also remember that recovery is a process and has been shown to take lengthy periods in developed countries as well (e.g. the earthquake and tsunami in Japan or Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. [Oxfam International, 2011]).

Empirical research on actual post-quake recovery in Haiti is very scarce, and for this reason I draw from the so-called grey literature (e.g. annual progress reports, briefing notes, or policy briefs produced by aid organizations) of the key organizations involved in recovery. Recovery progress in Haiti has been achieved in certain areas; however, much more work has yet to be accomplished. At the infrastructural level, the majority of the debris was removed (Oxfam International, 2011). A rigorous tracking system of displaced persons undertaken by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in Haiti presents the IDP (internally displaced people) movement trend from 1,500,000 in July, 2010 to 810,000 in January 2011, to 347,000 in January
2013 (Haiti Camp Coordination Camp Management Cluster, 2011). Even though the trend reveals a decrease in IDPs, moving out of camps must not be necessarily viewed as a final outcome, as it does not imply that durable solutions have been achieved.

The further exploration of a Displacement Matrix and survey conducted in 2011 reveals that only about 5% of IDPs leave the camps as a result of their houses being rebuilt (Haiti CCCMC, 2011). A stark majority of people surveyed left the camps due to forced evictions (34%), security and safety issues (13.6%), the approaching hurricane season (16.4%), and poor conditions in the camps (13.9%). The report states that many people who left the sites have found themselves in precarious situations with temporary and insecure housing conditions.

Only 16.4% of all recovery funding has been channeled to the government of Haiti, with a quarter of the funds received by multilateral organizations and up to 50% received by NGOs and other private contractors and providers (Economic and Social Council of the U.N., 2012; Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti, 2012). The Ad Hoc Advisory Group of the Economic and Social Council of U.N. (2012, further referred to as the Group) reports on the encouraging reconstruction and recovery as well as progress in politics and the rule of law achieved in Haiti. However, it also emphasizes the need for activities and strategies geared toward strengthening state and national capacities by channeling recovery funds through the Government of Haiti.

The Group reports on the growing rates of participation of local authorities and citizens in the recovery process, collaboration and integration activities with the country team, and the extent of progress achieved in gender equality and the empowerment of women (e.g. 40% of women in appointed positions of the new government; a quota of 30% female representation passed). They further point to the evidence that there is an improved interaction between the
three powers of the rule of law and the way the amended Constitution of Haiti will facilitate their collaboration. Additionally, the Group notes that the majority of the support and recovery work has been done in the area of Port-au-Prince at the expense of rural areas, and thus there exists a need to decentralize recovery efforts. This post-earthquake recovery context in Haiti raises certain questions, which I propose to analyze through disaster discourse production and its reproduction in action.

**Dissertation at a Glance**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter opens this dissertation with an introduction of the thesis and a brief overview of Haiti’s history and political-economic background. In the second chapter I present my theoretical orientation and analytic lens – a combination of critical theory and social constructionism. In the third chapter, I present a synthesis and analysis of the existing literature on disaster discourse production, policy feedback and matters of participation in development initiatives and disaster recovery. I close this chapter with a visual synthesis of the discussed literature. In chapter four, I outline my research design by presenting the guiding research questions and goals and by describing data sources and analytic methods. In chapter five, I offer my findings or deconstructions of the analyzed documents and provide a cross-document comparison in terms of constructions of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors. Chapter six offers a critical discussion of the deconstructions presented in chapter five, followed by a final seventh chapter with conclusive remarks related to the work accomplished and the meaning thereof as well as reconstructive vision for future disaster response and the field of social work.

**Research methodology.** I utilize a qualitative research design seeking to explore the discourses of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors in post-earthquake Haiti with special
attention toward the issues of local participation in recovery initiatives. I seek to answer the following research questions: “What are the discourses of disaster, recovery actors, and disaster recovery in post-earthquake Haiti? In what ways do they relate to each other; how do they converge and diverge? What are their discursive constructions and the practice of participation?”

I use multiple data sources and focus on policy, organizational, and media discourses. I obtained the documents and policies available online and analyzed 168 documents from six different sources of data: Miami Herald news articles; two policy documents produced by the Government of Haiti; the strategy of the U.S. government work in Haiti produced by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); and progress reports and briefing notes of the Red Cross (the IFRC) and Oxfam America. The data consists of documents released in the two calendar years after the earthquake between, January, 2010 and December, 2012. I used Nvivo 10 for conducting textual analyses, utilizing the techniques of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2011), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), and interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 2000). I used the techniques of constructivist grounded theory to organize and develop preliminary understanding of the data. The techniques of critical discourse analysis in tandem with interpretive policy analysis guided me through a focused analysis of data and helped me delve deeper into the themes and meaning thereof taking into account the specificity of each data source.

**Key dissertation findings and critical discussion.** The analysis of the three main discursive categories – disaster, recovery, and recovery actors – reveals a line of significant findings. With regard to the discourse of disaster, I found that the earthquake in Haiti is interpreted in different ways across documents. There are five key lines of discourse constructing this event: as 1) the “killer quake”; 2) a humanitarian crisis and emergency
situation; 3) an example of risk and vulnerability; 4) a window of opportunity; and 5) a threat to U.S. security. The interpretations of Haiti’s disaster, in terms of risk and vulnerability (and hence, as a window of opportunity to ameliorate those problems), prevail across documents. In this view, the disaster of 2010 is a product of political, economic, and social vulnerabilities that at the same time created the opportunity to transform these ills in Haiti.

Further, I identified six themes related to the discourse of relief and recovery: 1) emergency solutions and humanitarian aid; 2) a “new Haiti” and “building back better”; 3) livelihood renewal and community orientation; 4) disaster recovery as an economic development venture; and 5) sustainable disaster recovery. The vision of a “new Haiti” is threaded throughout the data. However, the meaning of a new and better Haiti is different across the documents. The dominant discourse of recovery, for example, is macro-economic in essence and thus envisions the new Haiti as a stable and viable global economic partner. Apart from explicit themes visible in the data, the omissions or silences that I find across the documents speak volumes as well. From a social work standpoint, psycho-social recovery, disability services, spirituality and religious practices, and preservation of the environment are insufficiently visible as integral aspects of recovery.

Lastly, regarding the discourse of recovery actors, I focus on the discursive construction of roles and responsibilities assigned to: (1) local disaster survivors; (2) the Haitian government; (3) the international community; (4) aid organizations and international NGOs; and (5) the Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC). The main finding under this category of analysis is the strong discursive emphasis on the leadership of the Haitian government and active inclusion of its people. However, a closer look reveals exclusive practices on the part of the international community and NGOs. Another critical aspect unveiled here is related to
participation. It is Haitian elites and members of the international community who generally participate in decision-making; it is civil society and the private sector who are assigned key roles in recovery; and it is middle-aged, able-bodied men who perform the relief and recovery work.

Given the complexity of the issue under study, in developing my discussion, arguments, and future recommendations, I draw from multidisciplinary perspectives in political science, communication studies, anthropology, and development and disaster scholarship. The ultimate goal of this empiric inquiry is to further inform and expand the current state of knowledge on disaster recovery within the field of social work, with implications for social policy, practice, research, and education to follow.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Operations of Discourse and Social Constructions

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study comprises critical theory and social constructionism. Critical theorists offer modes of social analyses of knowledge production, power and oppression through language, institutions and practices. Social constructionists provide both an analytic lens, useful for understanding the construction of reality and knowledge creation (though language and meanings), and the analytic means to deconstruct institutionalized daily life and power operations. Understanding discourse production and operation in post-disaster recovery within this unified framework allows for a more comprehensive perspective; these theoretical and philosophical approaches inform and complement each other. In this section I describe the key theoretical postulations of critical and constructionist theorists and relate them to my study.

Critical theory. Critical theorists are concerned with the emancipation of those who are oppressed. They are informed by a critique of domination and driven by a goal of liberation. They are concerned with moving from a society characterized by exploitation, inequality, and oppression to one that is emancipatory and free from domination (Fook, 2002; Mullally, 2007). Marx and Habermas are the so-called fathers of critical theory, with their underlying idea about truth setting people free (Mullaly, 2007). They believed that persons cannot be free from that about which they are ignorant; liberation starts with the recognition of that which “imprisons the human mind or dominates the human person” (Mullaly, 2007; p. 215).

Leonard (in Mullally, 2007) proposes that there are three undertakings of a critical theory: (1) to locate sources of domination in actual social practices; (2) to present an alternative
vision of a life free of such domination; and (3) to translate these tasks into a form that is intelligible to those who are oppressed in society. This theory is deemed critical for a reason: it is critical of society and its existing social, economic, and political institutions and practices as it seeks to change them (Mullally, 2007). Critical theorists posit that domination is structural; that is, people’s lives are affected by politics, the economy, and culture. Per Marx (and later Freire), such structures are reproduced through people’s internalized oppression or *false consciousness*; knowledge of structure can help people change social conditions (Mullally, 2007). And so it seeks to involve people in social analysis and in political practice in order to create a future free of domination and exploitation.

More specifically, people are invited to examine the socially constructed character of society; i.e. the way ruling and powerful social groups are able to justify injustice and inequality by their control of language, the media, education, and the political agenda (Fairclough, 1995; 2003; Fook, 2002; Howe, 2009; Mullally, 2007). Nonetheless, a mention must be made that critical theory is not very participatory as it postulates social analyses from an academic stance and hence an authority position. It is not practical in the sense that it only seeks to understand and explain the operations of power but does not center the voices of the oppressed by naming their reality in their own terms; instead, it relies on an elite rendering as the trusted interpretation.

Additionally, critical theorists interrogate the way power operates in everyday relationships. Foucault sought to explore and understand the way dominant groups and their discourses define social relationships. In Foucault’s view, language is about much more than mere words – it is about power (Fook, 2002; Foucault, 1972; Howe, 2009). He was interested in how particular groups developed ways of thinking about, talking about and defining (and thus acting in) their piece of the world. He posited that people learn to see themselves in terms of
prevailing psychological, sociological and medical discourses about what is “normal” (Fook, 2002; Foucault, 1972; Howe, 2009).

Those without expertise and power, Foucault argued, find themselves being defined, explained and dealt with in terms of the dominant groups’ language and interests (Howe, 2009). He was the first to propose that organized practices, professional language and expert solutions are never neutral and perpetuate oppressed conditions. He termed this phenomenon of mediated meaning, experiences and constructed image of self governmentality, or how people are governed and learn “to govern” themselves (Fook, 2002; Howe, 2009). One example of governmentality related to Foucault’s work is as a way prisoners are controlled. Foucault explained that early prisons were designed as a ring of cells observed by a single guard tower in the center, known as panopticon (Foucault, 1995). Since the prisoners were never sure whether or not they were being observed, they were forced to assume that they were and thus control their behavior, or self-govern.

This example can also be used to metaphorically describe the way the minds of a population are shaped through disciplinary institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools producing knowledge and discourses that individuals internalize and influence the behavior of the populace. In this way, Foucault explained, a population learns to self-censor, or embody forms of social control. Unless questioned and deconstructed, these mediated constructions remain hidden and continue being taken for granted. For example, if Haitian citizens as earthquake survivors are constructed as helpless and violent objects in need of interventions from outside, critical theory suggests that they may experience and perceive themselves through this dominant construction which is reflective of the power imbalance.
Italian political theorist, philosopher, sociologist and linguist Antonio Gramsci made yet another central contribution to this critical discussion of power. For him, the most crucial operations of power happen at the micro and molecular levels of society, which he explained in terms of the political and ideological uses of language through the concepts of *hegemony* and *counter-hegemony*. Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is understood as the promotion, perpetuation and normalization of ruling ideas and dominant ways of being (basic moral and cultural ideas) through private or personal aspects of everyday life (e.g. in workplaces, schools, churches, social welfare institutions, news media, books, and public policy [Ives, 2004]). The concept is meant to explain why people continually accept and conform to conditions and support governments that oftentimes work against their best interests.

In Gramsci’s explanation of power operations, human agency is related to structural arrangements through the prism of language. His contention is that capitalist hegemony structures our lives, feelings and ideas. According to Gramsci, capitalist governments rule rightfully without physical coercion and force because those governed make positive meanings of rules, laws, and societal structures and this therefore forms consent (Ives, 2004). This helps the ruling government to generate citizens’ consent and thus legitimize ideologies and social relations, which can be further disseminated, popularized and normalized.

Counter-hegemony offers a terrain wherein hegemony can be contested. Explaining that our subjectivity is constituted by external forces and constrained by conditions not of our making, Gramsci suggests that we are still subjects with choices and agents of change in the world (Ives, 2004). In this way, our “common sense” (hegemonic) understanding of reality and “false selves” may be liberated. Through enabling, reclaiming and exerting agency, resistance
and opposition to dominant discourse(s) promoted by people in and with power (Ives, 2004), mastery of reality may be achieved.

**Social constructionism.** Social constructionist theory may be joined with critical theory. Social constructionism as a part of the theoretical framework of this study offers possibilities and modes of deconstructing social reality. It uses a postmodern epistemological perspective concerned with the construction of knowledge and deconstructive inquiry. It raises ontological and epistemological questions about social reality, about the essence of knowledge, how we come to know it, and how this knowledge is transmitted.

At the center of social constructionist inquiry lie socio-historical and cultural processes, language, narrative and cognition, communication and interpretation of meaning and further action upon it (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Fairclough, 1995; Rodwell; 1998). These processes, constructionists would argue, create contextually based and situated knowledge. In the context of my study, for example, the interpretation of disaster and subsequent recovery is culturally and contextually determined. For some local Haitians the cause of, and therefore solution to, disaster might lie in God’s hands. Some experts would put forward the overpopulation narrative; others Haiti’s fragile pre-quake infrastructure. They all, however, come from certain contexts, backgrounds, and knowledge bases.

Human knowledge is also understood through the notion of multiple realities, and that it is never final or absolute as it is mediated through the standpoint of the knower and negotiated through the environment (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Fook, 2002; Rodwell, 1998; Searle, 1995). Therefore social constructionism would treat all diverse views of disaster and recovery as legitimate and possible. This notion of multiple realities creates space for negotiation, flexibility, and expanded uses of information (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Rodwell, 1998; Searle, 1995).
Further, the recognition of diverse constructions, theorists believe, may disrupt dominant constructions. Constructionists propose that participatory actions like dialogue, reflexivity and reflective practice render the crafting of knowledge more inclusive (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Fook, 2002; Freire, 2000; Searle, 1995). If all meanings are seen as potentially possible and valid, through the shared exploration of issues, another comprehensive reality can be created (Rodwell, 1998). Rodwell (1998) also suggests that this may lead to the abandonment of the role of expert, resulting in a potential power shift. The negotiation of disaster recovery can be approached in a similar way through the exploration of meanings of disaster and its recovery assigned by diverse actors. For example, by consulting and incorporating local perspectives, disaster management experts, while minimizing their own authority positions, can create inclusive, better informed and culturally relevant solutions.

Fook (2002) proposes that “knowing” is an integral part of “being,” so it is important to understand how what we know affects the way we act in practice (p. 33). Constructionists suggest that what we know is influenced by the contexts and mediating processes of how we come to know it (e.g. mass media, socialization), and how we produce, express and communicate that knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Fairclough, 1995; 2003; Fook, 2002; Searle, 1995). In the context of disaster response, what we know and how we experience disaster is largely mediated by media frames and discourse. For example, the over-accentuated depictions of crime and violence broadcasted by the news coverage in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina created certain perceptions and response reactions in the audience (e.g. Sommers, Apfelbaum, Dukes, Toosi, & Wang, 2006). Furthermore, social constructionism reveals connections between knowledge and power. The knowledge we hold about the world is related to the ways in which power is constructed and exercised (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Fook, 2002; Searle, 1995).
Constructionist theorists draw on this view of power. They challenge claims to exclusive and dominant knowledge in three areas: “external structures, social relations and personal constructions” (Fook, 2002; p.41). Applied in the context of disasters, multiple discursive actors compete for dominance and influence with their understanding of disaster and their related vision of, and propositions for, recovery. For example, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti the United Nations (U.N.), as a powerful actor of international disaster response, introduced U.N. peacekeeping troops as an integral component of its relief efforts. The importance of such an intervention in the context of disasters is often questioned by other relief and recovery actors as it militarizes humanitarian relief.

In the context of post-earthquake recovery, critical theory and social constructionism may be connected and unified. The main connecting link between these two fields is their approach to power, authority and domination as veiled by everyday language and legitimized through institutional practices. These theories also propose a standpoint from which deconstructing discourses and thus unraveling the hidden power dynamics may be transformative. Once united, these two theories provide a lens for understanding social relations and power inequalities, veiled and perpetuated by disaster discourse production. In doing so, they also provide means for deconstructing the dominant and hegemonic knowledge. The key unifying features that I believe make this theoretical framework appropriate for studying discourse and disaster recovery are: 1) bringing to light the importance of language and cognition; 2) emphasizing the interdependence of individual and social reality; 3) highlighting the social contexts of the construction of reality; 4) acknowledging the existence of different realities and thus the diversity of meanings; 5) connecting knowledge and power; 6) focusing on
a shift in power and power relations; and 7) consciousness raising, transformative action and structural change.

Applying these key linkages to understanding disasters and recovery, in my view, serves to comprehensively examine the way disasters are understood and interpreted and what meanings are assigned to post-disaster recovery and by whom. I believe this outlook may help to understand power operations and contests by diverse actors, and the way their widely held assumptions and solutions are constituted and institutionalized through disaster responses, recovery policies, and practices.

**Operations of Discourse and Social Construction**

From the theoretical framework emerge two key mechanisms that serve as a means to construct the world. First, words have power; worlds are created through words. Second, words, language, and broader discourse matter to how humans perceive and interpret the world around them and consequently act upon it. How we think and what we say not only feeds back into and reinforces social reality – it creates, maintains and reproduces it. Similarly, disaster recovery may be shaped by the words being used and the images being put forth producing and perpetuating social constructions of disaster and affected groups. Therefore, it is essential to understand how discourse production and social construction function in post-disaster contexts and how they play out in disaster recovery. In this section I lay out the importance of discourse and social construction by presenting the ways in which they operate.

Understanding discourse as a social practice, Berger and Luckmann (1967) proposed that it serves as one of the means for knowledge development, transmission and maintenance in social relations, as well as a means for it to become socially established as reality. It serves the intermediary role in the “relationship between human thought and social context within which it
arises” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p.4). Common sense knowledge and facts become such by human agreement, as it is only through this fabric of meanings, according to Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Searle (1995), that the complexity of social reality can become manageable and societies can exist. Searle (1995) contends that language creates institutional facts and constitutes institutional reality. The use of victimhood language in relation to Haitians in the aftermath of the earthquake exemplifies such a production of facts and establishment of certain patterns of social order and relations.

In the context of disasters, Holm (2012) proposes using the term disaster discourse, signifying “the ensemble of cultural forms – cognitive schemata, scientific concepts, narrative plots, metaphorical images, rhetorical questions, and other devices” that influence the way we perceive and frame disasters (p. 52). He is particularly interested in the disaster discourse that determines how disaster vulnerability and resilience are socially constructed. This understanding of disasters was first put forth by Rousseau (Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012), who was one of the first to propose to interpret disasters through the lens of human agency and cultural meaning, i.e. social construction.

**Social construction of target populations and deconstruction.** The social construction process, per Schneider & Ingram (1997), is one whereby meaning becomes ascribed to, and further serves to interpret, events and groups of people, rationalizing and legitimizing (in)action orientations. They suggest that constructions emerge from imaginations and critique in media coverage, political deliberations, writers, and social scientists through politics, culture, socialization, religion and the like. For example, it has become very common to engage military forces in disaster contexts due to the widely held belief that disaster-affected people become chaotic and violent and therefore need to be controlled. Such a perception of disaster victims is
largely influenced by media portrayals overemphasizing crime scenes. Thus, by enacting perceptions, attitudes and behaviors through meanings (values, beliefs and feelings) discourses construct and constitute reality. Understood this way, discourses function as political forces.

Furthermore, discourse by means of social construction creates groups, reinforces group identities, orientations, and commitments. Schneider and Ingram (1993) delineate the creation of target populations and the implications it may have for said groups in particular and policy making in general. Based on the intersection of political power (weak or strong) and type of social construction (positive or negative), they distinguish four types of target populations: “advantaged” (e.g. veterans, farmers, senior citizens, middle class), “contenders” (e.g. rich people, corporations, feminists, gun owners), “dependents” (e.g. children, mothers, the poor) and “deviants” (e.g. criminals, gangs, kingpins).

This typology allows Schneider and Ingram (1993) to theorize the types of policy treatments through specific tools, rules and rationales, and the impacts of policy design (messages, orientations and participation) on target populations. They contend that these constructions influence policy agendas, selection of policy tools and rationales for policy choices. Moreover, they contain messages and convey lessons about “democracy, justice, citizenship, and the capacity of society to solve collective problems” (Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 104). The critical implication of this phenomenon is reflected in the lives of citizens and their political orientations and patterns of participation. This idea can also be revealed in post-disaster recovery settings. That is, if disaster victims are constructed as “dependents,” for instance, a certain package of messages and treatments is applied. Schneider & Ingram’s (1993) theory holds that although the “dependents” construction has a positive connotation, they are treated with pity as helpless and needy people to be rescued by responsible others. This construction is
also said to limit their political power and civic participation. If this theorized construction is assumed correct, then the action towards rebuilding and recovery ends up in the hands of those with stronger political power and higher civic participation, namely the “advantaged” and the “contenders” (e.g. saviors from the international community and unstable local government respectively). However, some argue (e.g. Lieberman, 1995; Rose & Baumgartner, 2013) that Schneider and Ingram’s theory must be understood as a dynamic, not a static process contingent upon political-economic and social moments. Human reality, in sum, is socially constructed and constituted (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Searle, 1995), and this conception of what we know and how we know it may serve as a source of oppression and liberation (Fairclough; 1995, 2003; Foucault, 1982; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). In this review, however, though social constructions through discourse appear ubiquitous, one need not be trapped in the constructed reality. According to Freire (2000) and Schneider and Ingram (1997), reality is not absolute and is subject to change and manipulation: since it was constructed (created through ideas, beliefs and meaning) and constituted (legitimized, normalized and institutionalized), it can also be de- and re-constructed and de- and re-constituted, leading one from conforming to reforming and then transforming reality. Such is the intention of this study.

According to Wood and Tully (2006), deconstruction is one of the postmodern tools “for seeking and exposing” power relationships veiled by cultural and local discourses (p.17). The theoretical framework of this study explains that power relationships are socially constructed and embedded in language, and are materialized in institutions and practices as they maintain and perpetuate an existing social order. In social work, this understanding of power and discourse is critical because it serves as one of the explanations of how social resources are provided, oftentimes reproducing marginalizing social practices and controlling interventions
This understanding of power relationships may be revealed in the discourses regarding disaster recovery in Haiti once said discourses are uncovered. For example, oftentimes disaster settings are represented as replete with crime, rape and violence (e.g. Solnit, 2010a; 2010b; Sommers et al., 2006). Such representation may serve to construct the image of the undeserving disaster victims and impede relief and recovery efforts, prioritizing some interventions over others; i.e. providing military control over humanitarian supply. The empirical studies of discourse further suggest that discourses operate in a variety of ways. For example, discourses have been found to construct (un)worthy citizens, motivate public judgment, and operate as catalysts of action or inaction (e.g. Schneider & Ingram, 1997; McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis, & Wanta, 2011). Alternatively, such constructions, judgments, and action orientations lead to the existence of certain discourses (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Soss & Schram, 2007). Policy feedback is an example of the latter operation of discourse.

**Policy discourse and policy feedback.** In the field of political science one of the functions of discourse is understood through a phenomenon that became known as mass feedback or policy feedback. The term suggests that prevailing political rhetoric on certain issues resonates with the public and gets reflected in the policies (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Soss & Schram, 2007). In this section, I review studies of how policy feedbacks operate for different target populations.

Mettler and Soss (2004) explain that “democracies, and the citizenries that stand at their center, are not natural phenomena; they are made and sustained through politics” (p. 55). They discuss the way policies (and so also discourse as part of the policy making process) influence publics and affect thought and action in the citizenry. Similar to Schneider and Ingram (1993, 1997), they identify such policy effects on publics as “defining membership,” “forging political
cohesion and group divisions,” “building or undermining civic capacities,” “framing policy agendas,” and “structuring, stimulating, and stalling political participation” (p. 55).

Soss and Schram (2007) propose that policies are political forces in their own right that “change basic features of political landscapes,” set political agendas and shape identities and interests, and advance common public opinion (p. 113). They situate their proposition and examination thereof in the example of the effect of welfare reform under the Clinton Administration on opinion dynamics in the U.S. – more specifically, the transition of public opinion from “speaking for the dependent” to “defend[ing] the working poor or working families,” from “administering welfare checks” to “employment-focused centers” creating a “new consensus in favor of helping poor Americans who work” framing (Kaus 2002 cited in Soss & Schram, 2007). Previous studies (e.g. cited Shapiro, 2002) allow them to propose that welfare reform may change mass opinion and reduce opposition; findings that suggest that negative attitudes about welfare in the mid-1990s softened after 1996 due to the “adoption of stricter eligibility guidelines and work requirements for welfare recipients” (Soss & Schram, 2007, p. 115). However, they further challenge this opinion through statistical analyses and suggest that the public view regarding welfare and its recipients has actually changed very little.

Further, in her study of senior citizens’ political activism, Campbell (2003) grapples with the question of how policies make citizens. She explores the reciprocal relationship between the political participation of senior citizens and public policy, and states that policy influences the amount and a nature of group’s political activity, often exacerbating rather than ameliorating existing participatory inequalities. Like others (e.g. Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 1997; Mettler & Soss, 2004), she argues that “public policies can confer resources, motivate
interest in government affairs by tying well-being to government action, define groups for mobilization, and even shape the content and meaning of democratic citizenship” (p.1).

The power of policies and discourse is both inclusionary and exclusionary. The effects of policies, she argues, are positive for some groups, like senior citizens, increasing their participation levels; for other groups (welfare recipients, for example), policy can have negative consequences for participation because of the difficult and demeaning experience of obtaining welfare. But this positive effect of policy on senior citizens and their activity in relation to Social Security was not always the case. Campbell (2003) claims that in the 1950s, seniors participated at lower rates than younger people. Over time, the growth of the Social Security program drove the increase in senior participation as they “got provided with politically relevant resources like income and free time” (p. 2). She concludes that social policies

… fashioned for an otherwise disparate group of people a new political identity as program recipients, which provided a basis for mobilization by political parties, interest groups, and policy entrepreneurs. Social Security helped create a constituency to be reckoned with, a group willing, able, and primed to participate at high rates, capable of defeating objectionable policy change (p. 2).

Campbell (2003) goes on to suggest that these policy effects feed back into the political system, “producing spirals in which group’s participatory and policy advantages (or disadvantages) accrue” (p. 2). Through these processes as results of policy design, Campbell (2003) argues, citizens experience relationships with government that teach lessons about groups’ privileges, rights and worth as citizens and subsequently determine their participation levels. She further argues that “policy begets participation begets policy in a cycle that results not in equal protection of interests, but in outcomes biased toward the politically active” (p. 2).
Likewise, Mettler (2002), in her study of the effect of the G.I. Bill during World War II on the civic engagement of veterans, establishes the ability of legislative policies to increase levels of participation by more fully incorporating citizens. This becomes possible, she finds, through enhancement of their civic capacity and predisposition for involvement. Soss & Schram (2007) compares felony disenfranchisement laws that make participation in politics restricted and social security programs that political participation of seniors.

All the studies reviewed discuss the way policy discourses construct certain groups and thus create space for the political participation of those groups. In other words, these studies are concerned with how framing of and action orientations toward these groups is determined by policies. There also exists a pathway between public discourses on a certain public issue and the public agenda and possible solutions guided by those discourses. A review of such functions of discourse and social construction follows.

**The effects of discourses and social constructions.** Discourses can be seen as political forces because they carry consequences. Indeed, there is a wealth of literature with specific studies and discussions linking public media attention and different measures of public knowledge, opinion, attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and larger civic engagement extending beyond responses to polls (McCombs et al., 2011; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012; Robinson, 2002). The link between media coverage and broader political action has become known as the “CNN-effect,” a concept that denotes that media is able to influence political decisions (Robinson, 2002). Studies of political and organizational discourses and the effects thereof are less prevalent. In this section I provide a comprehensive synthesis of the research presenting the way discourses and social constructions play out (rationalize, normalize, legitimize) in action and inaction orientations. Special attention is given to such research in post-
disaster contexts. At the end of the section, I present a summary of the reviewed studies and identify some missing links in the current state of knowledge of this subject.

Rose and Baumgartner (2013) provide an example of the links between political and media discourses with regard to welfare policies. Through a mixed method research design and a series of comprehensive research techniques, they establish a statistically significant relationship between poverty frames, poverty rates and governmental spending on social programs in the U.S. from 1960 through 2008. They conclude that the dominant discourse on poverty and the ways in which the poor are framed in the media over the years are reflected in social policies and determine the patterns of public spending.

Similarly, in their study linking political discourse, media and public opinion, Simon and Jerit (2007) conduct a multi-method investigation of framing related to partial birth abortion (PBA). They operationalize framing as the difference between using either the word “baby” or “fetus,” they trace the manipulation of abortion attitudes through these word choices in the abortion “anti-ban/pro-ban” debate. Content analysis shows that opponents use “baby” and supporters use “fetus” respectively in attempts to justify their views and shape attitudes. Further, through time-series analysis they chart the path of “baby’s” discursive dominance from congressional discourse through news and editorials to citizens. They also find that the exposure to articles featuring the exclusive use of “baby” or “fetus,” respectively, increased or decreased support for banning PBA. However, exposure to discourse using both terms produces a public response independent of the words’ frequency and without regard to political loyalties. Additionally, they find a direct relationship between political discourse (but not media) and public opinion. The authors conclude that a kind of public reason can emerge from citizens’ judgment as they accept some and reject other elite communication.
There also exists an extensive body of literature linking discourses, representations and framing and their influences and consequences in the post-disaster contexts. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, Garfield (2007) links the select examples of news accounts from print and electronic media during the first week following Katrina and official decisions. She argues that due to media portrayals and social construction of black survivors as anti-social and deviant (“dangerous looters”, “gun-toting killers”, “rapists,” “out-of-control crazed mob,” “marauding thugs”), decisions of government officials resulted in justifying the increased use of militaristic response that prioritized maintaining social order over humanitarian efforts. She suggests that media portrayals constructed a dichotomous imagery of good/bad citizens and, as a result, prescribed different ways in which they needed to be treated.

Similarly, Sommers et al. (2006), through a Google news search and mass e-mails, sought to examine the relationship between race, popular media and the general public in the aftermath of Katrina. The authors discuss the way language use (“refugees” or “evacuees”) and the story’s angle (“looting” or “finding food”) reflect stereotypical racialized depictions and explore the implications thereof in public attitudes and behavior. They suggest that stereotypical associations breed prejudicial attitudes and behaviors and general public response to disaster survivors, such as rescue efforts, donations, running criminal checks on evacuees, and reinforcing preexisting beliefs about race and crime.

Seeking to document the discursive construction of Katrina survivors, Davis and French (2008), conducted a critical discourse analysis of post-Katrina print news published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and USA Today. They find that news depictions utilize specific rhetorical devices (e.g. overemphasis of race, class, and criminality), semantic strategies (e.g. contrasting “those who could not” and “who would not evacuate” and blaming the
victim) and seemingly value-free terminology (victim and survivor) to portray and discuss Katrina-affected citizens. Constructing citizens as blameworthy criminals, burdens to the response effort, “passive agents with respect to their rescue” and “responsible for their own irresponsibility,” the authors suggest, shifted the blame onto victims. The authors infer that through such mediated understandings, media coverage may play a pivotal role in forming public perceptions and cultivating official responses.

Likewise, Tierney, Bevc, and Kuligowski (2006) come to a similar conclusion in their preliminary analysis of hurricane coverage in *The New York Times, The Washington Post* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. In search for media myths and frames of Katrina, they identify the prevalent media frames of “civil unrest” and metaphors of “war zones” driven by the post-disaster panic myth. They suggest that the media representation of New Orleans as “caught up in a turmoil of lawlessness” and filled with lawless, violent, and exploitative disaster victims was oversimplified and distorted. Yet it served powerfully to mobilize military political discourses and justify military interventions (seventy two thousand military troops were deployed within two weeks). The authors find it troubling, as such disaster framing influences response measures such as (mis)allocation of resources towards public safety instead of direct assistance to disaster victims, hesitance to mobilize by outside actors, and the re legitimation of militarized responses to future disasters.

Cox, Long, Jones, and Handler (2008) sought to uncover disaster recovery discourses as postulated by the local Canadian print-news media following a devastating forest fire. They analyze 250 articles, utilizing content analysis and discourse analysis with special attention to thematic patterns and textual silences. The authors identify two prevalent discourses of recovery within the data. They suggest that neoliberal discourse becomes apparent through such
dominating narratives as economic-material aspects of loss and recovery, constructions of a worthy citizen as good consumer, and celebrating the contributions of experts and expertise. The discourse regarding human suffering, which they classify as “sequestering of suffering,” unravels around psychological functionalism and renders emotions invisible (e.g. avoiding or hiding emotions, returning to normalcy through productivity, and “erasing” the most affected community from the reporting accounts). They find that certain discursive strategies, subject positions, and evocative, emotional and collective language were employed to create normalizing and homogenizing effects of the dominant recovery discourse. Such discourse, authors conclude, serves to homogenize and normalize cultural assumptions about recovery and connect it to the potential well-being of the residents. They speculate that normalization of the recovery process can create a stigma if victims do not conform, result in adoption of cognitive avoidance strategies (traditionally associated with poorer health), and, through excessive reliance on outside expertise, hinder empowerment and local community leadership.

In her ethnography of 1997-8 fires in Indonesia, Harwell (2000) set to uncover how four different actors made sense of the disaster regarding its causes, damages, and solutions. In the analysis of disaster discourses produced by the Indonesian government, international donors and NGOs, environmental activists and local farmers, she identifies the discourse of nature and technology as central in the making of the Indonesian disaster. However, differently positioned and providing different scales of analysis, discourses also diverged significantly in terms of framing nature, development and poverty. She finds that the local government put forth “uncontrollable nature” and the “insufficient development” discourses to frame the disaster and situated the blame upon the “materially and culturally backward” farmers to intervene accordingly.
NGOs shifted the blame onto the industrialized world and frame solutions through the stance of political neutrality, namely “capacity building,” which Harwell (2000) notes as a “band-aid” solution not tackling broader social political issues. Environmental activists, she suggests, pushed the agenda of forest management policy reform, ecological sustainability, and democracy. They also presented a counter-hegemonic use of GIS technology to prove that large plantation owners were to blame for the fires. Likewise, farmers put blame on the land clearing activity of the oil palm plantation. They also suggested that the fires were the result of the ruptured social fabric and social relations within the community. Thus, some of them frame the disaster as a “cosmic dissonance,” wherein political-economic processes are a cause and are a part of a larger cosmology. In conclusion, Harwell (2000) suggests that these different interpretations reveal different relations of power in society that serve to describe but also to form and reproduce two different types of disaster with consequences for the forest and its dwellers. Thus, she calls for careful interpretation of disasters and the pursuit of solutions that might avoid creating new disasters.

In the case of relief efforts after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Motter (2010) deconstructs the legitimation of the U.S. militaristic international involvement. In doing so, he argues that the militaristic involvement was made possible through rhetorical frameworks of American moral exceptionalism and mobilizing citizen virtue nationally. In his analysis of speeches and interviews by U.S. presidents and newspaper articles and editorials, Motter (2010) identifies a U.S. exceptionalist, “Good Samaritan” rhetoric of morality, generosity and compassion and reliance on citizen virtue to motivate, justify, legitimate and normalize state intervention, namely militaristic humanitarianism. The discursive gaze, Motter observes, is set on the Good Samaritan U.S. citizens and their virtuous actions, indicative of moral superiority
through the outpouring of compassion to the helpless suffering (Muslim) tsunami victims. He explains how this rhetorical tactic of invoking the image of as a selfless global leader by the U.S. veils its underlying foreign policy (national mission, ambition and self-interest), serves to enact “soft power,” and thus advance hegemonic operations “when no evil enemy is in sight” (p. 509).

All these research examples drive and support my argument that discourse, with its inherent function of social construction, is a tool for constructing and constituting post-disaster realities in both micro and macro fields of action. On the individual level, discourse produces cognitive, affective and behavioral effects, such as sympathetic feelings and donations or volunteer work to support disaster survivors. It also can to serve to create internalized oppressive images of self and cause exclusive practices toward disaster-affected individuals and communities. On the societal level, discourses serve to contest or perpetuate the status quo, oppressive structures, and power relations. In the context of post-disaster recovery, certain discourses have also shown to motivate disaster response, policymaking, and recovery interventions.

I believe the question of how citizenship is created (or curtailed) and promoted through disaster recovery discourse is closely related to the scholarship on policy feedbacks. Even though said scholarship comes from the field of political science, it predominantly focuses on welfare issues, the disadvantaged and marginalized groups that are constantly excluded from participation. (As will be clarified later on, for the purposes of this review, participation in disaster recovery is understood as the political process integral to citizenship). No such literature on policy feedback or discourses, and the impacts thereof, on post-disaster recovery (individual, community or societal) exist to date within social work scholarship. In addition, while replete
with media transmission of discourses and their effects, the reviewed literature lacks a broader perspective of discourse constitution and institutionalization through policy and practice.

Serving as the primary source of public information, the media have a significant role to play during crises with their inherent power to shape cultural understanding of citizens and the crisis event itself (e.g. Davis & French, 2008; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012). This power includes normalizing cultural assumptions of recovery (Cox et al., 2008), reproducing “disaster mythology” (Garfield, 2007), and triggering related cognitive and emotional appeals and subsequent behaviors of the audience (e.g. engaging in voluntary work, making monetary donations) (Martin, 2013; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012). Johnson-Cartee (2005) calls these influences on the individual level “micro-effects.” With this constitutive power, media coverage impacts disaster response, policies and practices, as well as shapes the future trajectory of disasters (Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012; Robinson, 2002). These broader influences on society, which Johnson-Cartee (2005) terms “macro-effects,” operate to catalyze change or maintain the status quo. Given such powers, critical studies of media discourses are essential.

Yet with fairly strong evidence linking media coverage (through the social construction of disaster and its survivors) and disaster responses, I argue that scant attention has been given to the process of understanding institutional practices, funding allocations and policies that are influenced by social constructions put forth by organizational and political disaster recovery discourses. Alongside media discourse, as I will present in Chapter 3, lie many more discourses competing for power and influence in post-disaster Haiti. Following Pyles (2011b), I begin to address this missing link in the disaster discourse production from a social work perspective. I suggest that discourses affect not only immediate attitudes and action orientations, but through
policy and practice inception, influence long-term recovery. The literature reviewed focuses on the immediate effects of discursive constructions.

To conclude, both pathways distinguished above (policies leading to social constructions and, conversely, social constructions leading to policies, practices and actions) appear to be of high relevance when applied to understanding post-disaster recovery contexts. Therefore, aware of this two-way flow of social constructions and action orientations, in this study I seek to explore a pathway in which social constructions of post-quake recovery by diverse discourse communities are reflected in policies and overall action orientations.
Chapter 3: Review of Literature on Discourse, Representation, and Disaster Recovery

In this chapter I review the literature on discourse production, issues of representation and social construction of disaster situations, actors and recovery. I present previous studies and discussions of representation in the context of Haiti and in post-disaster setting in general. I also review the concept/processes related to local participation that is seen as a building block of post-disaster recovery in disaster management and response planning. I close the chapter by reviewing the literature on disaster recovery produced in the field of social work, and by framing my own contribution to this existing literature.

Representation and Social Construction of Disaster Recovery in Haiti

In this section I begin to identify actors engaged in the discourse production of post-quake recovery in Haiti. I also present previous research regarding discourses of Haiti in general, and post-earthquake recovery in particular. Citing previous studies, I go on to compare the representation of disaster in Haiti with other disaster contexts. I finish the section by summarizing the reviewed studies and identifying missing pieces of the puzzle, where I begin to situate my own study.

Discourse communities in post-earthquake Haiti. The importance of discourse and social constructions as a means of constituting public attitudes and manifesting themselves in action orientations may be revealed in the responses to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. These factors (discourse and social constructions) can serve either as facilitating or impeding factors on the pathway to post-disaster recovery. An ensemble of cultural discourse systems are entrenched in a given material reality and are manifested through a range of practices. That is: the way one interprets disaster events and conceives of recovery channels one’s subsequent reactions,
responses and solutions. These interpretations, and thus, structures of meaning, are rarely similar across different communities of discourse (Paltridge, 2006; Yanow, 2000), as they are negotiated and situated in their specific social, political and cultural realities and knowledge bases. Therefore, in addition understanding meanings of disaster and recovery within one specific discourse community, it is important to do so across them.

Yanow (2000, p.21-22) proposes six analytic steps to interpret the meaning of discourse communities:

1) Identify the artifacts as carriers of meaning (or language, in my study);
2) Identify communities of meaning/discourse (nine communities of discourse identified, four of which I will study);
3) Identify/deconstruct the communities’ “discourses” – how they talk and act with respect to the issue (translated into the terms of my study, I will identify the various meanings of disaster, actors and recovery);
4) Identify the meanings that are in conflict between or among (and within!) groups and their conceptual sources;
5) Intervention: showing different and conflicting meanings, explained as differences in seeing, and the implications thereof;
6) Negotiation or mediation as “an educative process that takes as its goal the fostering of discussion honoring the reality of entrenched viewpoints” while seeking “engaged discourse” and leading to “a new understanding among contesting parties.”

In line with the constructivist notion of multiple realities, and following the second step of interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 2000), in Figure 1, I begin to map some of the discourse communities engaged in the post-earthquake recovery in Haiti.
These fourteen discourse communities include the discourses of bi- and multilateral organizations (United Nations, USAID) and international financial institutions (e.g. World Bank, International Monetary Fund), local government and elite, religious groups and charities, NGOs, and political, media, academic and local people’s discourses. Assigned inherently distinct positionalities, powers, and utilizing different scales of analyses, hypothetically, these discourse communities formulate distinct structures of meaning, and hence, distinct structures of use with regard to the 2010 earthquake recovery (Harwell, 2000). These diverse discourse positions, however, are also said to also have commonalities and similarities in their respective discourses, as well as to converse intertextually; i.e. inform and refer to each other (Cox et al., 2008; Foucault, 1982; Harwell, 2000). A note must be made that each community of discourse is represented by a diverse range of actors and therefore is not a monolith, but is rather contested with conflicting and competing ideas within it. Likewise, focusing on media, policy and
organizational discourses, in this study I seek to examine how they make meaning of the disaster, recovery actors and overall recovery, as well as how they converge, diverge and inform each other.

**Discourses, representations, and social constructions.** A plethora of academic discourse has been produced in the field of Haitian studies with regard to discourses, representations and social constructions of Haiti. To begin, Ulysee (2010) points to the resemblance of the representations that were put forth after the earthquake to those widely held in the 19th and 20th century. She contends that Haitians are stereotypically represented as “representatives of or synonymous with poverty, backwardness, and evil,” “as fractures, as fragments - bodies without minds, heads without bodies, or roving spirits,” “irrational, devil-worshiping, progress-resistant, uneducated” and as “always…in need of an intermediary” (p. 39).

Similarly, through the analysis of five different U.S. newspapers, Potter (2009) finds that the media discourse of the United States accentuates the image of Haiti as a failed state and the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In this framing of Haiti, she identifies the themes of poverty, economy, history, illicit drug use, the landscape (environmental problems and natural disasters), refugees, and also positive news coverage. These frames are exemplified through the narratives and images of Haiti’s poverty, disease, and illiteracy, overall representing Haiti as a “politically unstable place, full of violence, turmoil, chaos, corruption, and a multitude of other problems” (p. 216). She concludes that the media construction of Haiti as a “political, economic, and environmental wreck of the Western Hemisphere” prevails (p. 226).

During her ethnographic work in Haiti, Smith (2001) observed what she calls “a fairly consistent descriptive image of the Haitian poor” that prevails across a number of international organizations (p.31). She encapsulates this image through four characteristics: “a preference for
dependency on more powerful others (a dependency/slave mentality),” “a fatalism leading to apathy and resignation,” “an inability to think analytically or constructively about their situation,” and “a chronic resistance to working cooperatively and effectively in the interest of the collective good” (p. 31). She goes on to suggest that such characterizations and constructions as ways of “othering” the “aided” by the “aiders” bolster aid and development agendas and further development practices.

The tragedy of 2010 appears to have intensified these representations. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the widely spread sentiment about the Haitian state as “incompetent, self-serving, and unaccountable” is further strengthened and perpetuated (Fatton, 2011b, p. 60). Haitians are further negatively represented as looters and as participating in “stampedes” (Mason, 2011; Solnit, 2010b), powerless and dependent objects of pity (Balaji, 2011; Mason, 2011; Solnit, 2010b), “indifferent, even callous” (Ulysee, 2010, p.38), and compliant “noble savages passively awaiting the ‘gift’” (Mason, 2011, p.104). Balaji (2011) argues that mediated and racialized discourse of pity through the images of Haiti as chaotic, violent and hopeless, as “tragic and dysfunctional other” and “desperate and lawless nation” prevails, reaffirming the hegemony of the white reality.

Davis and French (2008) suggest that representation of Katrina-affected citizens of New Orleans was “wed to, and normalized by already existing discourses of …the city of New Orleans” (p.255). Similar intertextual or established ways of narrating and representing Haiti and Haitian victims as passive and blameworthy are also predicated upon trans-historical social constructions. Such representations, therefore, are not “new news;” they simply reproduce and reinforce stereotypical myths and truths about Haiti (Davis & French, 2008).
Conducted within the social work discipline, Pyles and Svistova’s (in press) analysis of *New York Times* articles yielded findings regarding hegemonic and non-hegemonic disaster and recovery discourses. The hegemonic discourse is exemplified through such themes as “outside experts and expertise,” “reinforcing the ineptitude of the Haitian Government,” “recovery, development and disaster capitalism” and “Haitians as victims, ‘the other.’” Importantly, this research also reveals that Haitians and others are creating counter-hegemonic discourse about Haitian realities. Pyles and Svistova (in press) find that in the *Times*, this is evident through the acknowledgement of colonialist and post-colonialist realities, critiques of the current aid structure, the importance of public investment, an emphasis on resilience and resistance, and participation of Haitians in their own recovery.

Through the investigation of various sources of data, Hartwig (2010) lays out a comprehensive qualitative analysis and deconstruction of the dominant (prevalently international political) discourses of rebuilding in post-earthquake Haiti. In the undoing of the prevalent, outsider rebuilding discourses, she scrutinizes the way certain dominant rationalities are transformed into interventions. She identifies three examples of such actions obscured by dominant discourse. First, she decodes the discourse of acting in the name of benevolence and humanitarianism promoted by the international community and proposes that it serves to justify and legitimize their involvement. Further, she suggests that “securitizing” and militarizing the post-earthquake situation under the guise of safety and security, in actuality functions to extend the dominance and control of the international community. Finally, the priority focus on reforming the economic system of Haiti in the discourses of international actors, she contends, furthers neoliberal motives and creates discursive space for implementing neoliberal policies.
This puzzle of disaster representation in Haiti becomes even more challenging once these narratives are understood in a comparative context. A number of studies suggest that the politics of representation matter, as there exists a tendency in the mass media (Olsen, Carstensen, & Høyen, 2003; CARMA International, 2006; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Cottle, 2012) as well as aid organizations (Laursen, 2011) to represent and thus frame disaster victims and suffering differently. For example, through the visual analysis of two U.S. newspapers, Borah (2009) finds that in the case of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, more death and emotions are shown than in coverage of Hurricane Katrina, which featured more depictions of relief work and survivors.

Similarly, Laursen (2011) conducted a comparative study of online Red Cross videos of Hurricane Katrina and 2010 Haiti earthquake. She observes a disaster relief discourse of worthy victims under a neoliberal framework in the former, and the weak, passive mass of victims with neo-colonial sentiment in the latter context. Emmett (2010) further suggests that the images of post-quake Haiti put forth by the U.S. newspapers and websites were overly graphic with deaths and naked bodies and replete with suffering. Cox et al. (2008), on the other hand, conducted a study of Canadian forest fires and found that suffering was sequestered in local coverage. Additionally, some disaster relief and recovery discourses have been found to focus on the “saviors” (e.g. Motter, 2010; Laursen, 2011), not the survivors.

In this respect, speculating what determines the level of emergency assistance, Olsen et al. (2003) conducted a comparative review of international humanitarian crises. Upon analysis of the data on emergency assistance and level of media coverage (two leading TV channels in Denmark, 23 leading European newspapers) in the contexts of two natural disasters and three complex emergencies, they challenge the notion that media coverage plays a key role in attracting political attention, policy initiatives and assistance. They further suggest that only
occasionally does media coverage drive donor decisions; by itself alone it cannot explain the amount of aid. Donor (security) interests paired with the presence and strength of humanitarian stakeholders, they assert, also explain the level of political attention and the volume of humanitarian funding. For example, when comparing emergencies in Angola, Sudan and Kosovo, authors observe that Kosovo leads in media coverage and aid; Angola and Sudan receive little coverage, yet consistent aid. They explain economic assistance in Kosovo by strong media attention and donor security interests (e.g. refugees, violence or civil war). The presence and commitment of stakeholders, they conclude, explains the consistent aid in Angola and Sudan.

Likewise, the CARMA report (CARMA International, 2006) reveals another similar hegemonic, colonial sentiment identified in their study of factors associated with Western media coverage of humanitarian disasters. They analyzed media coverage in 64 daily and weekly publications in nine countries with a total of 1,967 articles in a range of disaster contexts that occurred between 2003 and 2005. They found that it is not the scale of a humanitarian disaster, but rather “Western self-interest” that determines the volume of media coverage; more specifically, their findings point to political and economic dimensions, not human suffering, as factors that substantially increase Western media coverage. They also observed an egocentric tendency such as national identity building through praising donations and using international disasters as a means to do politics locally.

With these explicated links between discourses, media coverage, responses and hidden self-interests in mind, it is curious that the earthquake in Haiti was the top story “to consume” and to “dominate public consciousness” for U.S. Americans in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2010a; 2010b). This statistical fact contains a consequence: a terrain for developing perceptions,
attitudes and actions of U.S. citizens. Indeed, Martin (2013), in his study of the relationship between international news use, online expression, foreign affairs knowledge, and monetary donations, finds that attention to news was the strongest predictor of monetary donation to the Haiti earthquake relief effort after controls and was more than twice as likely as income to predict donation. More than that, similar to Hartwig (2010), I suggest that such dominance of Haiti in the public consciousness might have served to justify and legitimize certain interventions by U.S. actors which served their own self-interests.

Through some of these previous findings one can observe signs of a racialized hegemonic disaster relief and recovery discourse revealed in media representations. I propose that such arguably strategic framing of Haiti’s post-earthquake scene contains embedded ways of reacting and acting. Yet this framing is not a complete portrayal of reality, and so it breeds error. Inaccurate or incomplete representations may cause harm, and impede the accomplishment of envisioned outcomes (in this case, disaster recovery). However, according to numerous sources (e.g. Bell, 2010; Dynes, 1970; Holm, 2012; Schuller & Morales, 2012; Smith, 2001; Smith, Gélineau, & Seligson, 2012; Svistova, Pyles & André, 2014), there exists an alternative discourse and thus an alternative reality of post-disaster recovery (in Haiti and elsewhere). In this reality, local people help each other, participate meaningfully in recovery projects and resist oppressive structures (see more in “participation in disaster recovery” section).

Moreover, Smith (2001) observes a disconnect between international portrayals and perceptions of Haitian people and their own narratives of themselves. Along the lines of the discussion on the effects of discourses, she further proposes that if portrayals and framings suggest lines of action, then this (mis)perception might explain why outside interventions have failed persistently in Haiti.
To summarize, there exists a growing interest in exploring discourses of disaster relief and recovery, in Haiti specifically. Nonetheless, existing studies of media coverage, representations and framing of disasters come predominantly from the field of communication studies. I argue that their content, while critical in their exploratory nature, ends at that: the exploration of discourses. I propose a deeper analytic link between discourses and the effects they may engender. Therefore, I offer a unique area of study and suggest a ground for social work action on both policy and practice levels.

I propose that such perceptions and representations by media discourse socially construct post-disaster recovery actors and hence their roles in the recovery process. These, in turn, serve to legitimize social relations, recovery agendas, policies and practices. Despite the expansive knowledge base on media discourses and their potential effects, little research exists on the effects of policy and organizational discourses on post-disaster recovery. This review and subsequent study seek to expand this knowledge base through a deconstructive inquiry. My hope is that through an in-depth exploration of discourse production and by aligning discourse communities in their rationalization of action orientations, this work may lead to a change in social and recovery practices and to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

**Sustainable Recovery and Participation**

In the forthcoming sections I define sustainability in terms of disaster recovery, and its relationship to the local participation. I review existing literature on these factors and how they play out in disaster recovery in general and in Haiti specifically, as well as presenting some critiques of their function in terms of sustainability.

**Sustainable recovery.** Sustainability concerns are being extensively raised within the post-disaster recovery literature (e.g. Aldrich, 2012; Phillips, 2009; Ride & Bretherton, 2011).
Originating in environmental literature, sustainability in post-disaster recovery is concerned with creating resilient environments and building human resilience to natural catastrophes (Aldrich, 2012; Miller & Rivera, 2011; Ride & Bretherton, 2011). Local voices, knowledge and action are widely presented as building blocks of the recovery pathway ideal for achieving sustainable recovery goals (Aldrich, 2012; Ride & Bretherton; 2011).

Local (or indigenous) knowledge and democratic participation have been long acknowledged as critical fundamentals for intervention and necessary preconditions for change to occur in the field of development (Harcourt, 1994; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Long, 2001; Peters, 2000). There is a general agreement that development projects are more successful and effective when community lay expertise and engagement are brought to bear alongside professional intervention, when local actors are placed in a “driving seat” and their realities are placed at the heart of interventions (Cornwall, 2008; Harcourt, 1994; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Long, 2001; Mulligan & Nadarajah, 2012; Peters, 2000). According to Hickey and Mohan (2004), this latter dynamic requires sharing of power and the transformation of development agents from “directive experts” to “facilitators” of the collection of knowledge and the “enablers” of capabilities (p. 11).

This understanding of participation also applies to and is employed in the field of disaster management and recovery. Interdisciplinary disaster management scholarship agrees that for the hardships of natural disasters to become sources of resilience – opportunity, learning, change, improvement, and understanding – discussion and intervention must be targeted towards working for the people and with the people. It emphasizes participatory interventions wherein the needs and strengths of local actors are at the center. Within these models of recovery people develop capacities and take active roles in the rebuilding of their own lives, livelihoods and at
times entire societies. Participation in disaster recovery projects, in sum, builds prepared, empowered and resilient individuals within empowered and resilient communities. Smith and Wegner (2006) suggest that local public participation in collective action is the pre-disaster contextual factor, and resilience and capacity-building approaches are key facilitators, of sustainable disaster recovery. In what follows I review the theoretical and empirical basis of local participation and their relationship to disaster recovery.

**Participation in disaster recovery.** Participation has been understood in many different ways throughout history. Hickey and Mohan (2004) provide a selective history of the conception of participation in development theory and practice. They divide the development of participation thought and schools into nine time periods that represent different participatory development approaches: colonial community development, post-colonial community development, political participation, emancipatory participation, liberation theology, “alternative development,” populist/participation in development, social capital, and participatory governance and citizen participation. In their review, participation in development projects is equated to a political process with an ultimate goal of citizenship promotion varying in forms and content (e.g. as a right or as an obligation of citizenship) and as a means of challenging subordination and marginalization. Similarly, for the purposes of this review, I advocate that political participation be regarded metaphorically for post-disaster recovery participation.

Hickey and Mohan (2004) define participation as the “exercise of popular agency in relation to development... and... recognizing existing capacities of people as active claims-making agents” (p.3) with “bottom-up, people-centered, process-oriented” approaches, as opposed to the “top-down, technocratic, blueprint planning of state-led modernization” (p.4). The ultimate “objective of participation is to ensure the “transformation” of existing
development practice and, more radically, the social relations, institutional practices and capacity
gaps which cause social exclusion (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p. 13). This line of thinking ties into
power and authority concerns raised by critical and social constructionist theorists.

Schneider and Ingram (1993) specify participation as “mobilization potential for
conventional forms, for disruptive forms, and for private provisions of services” (p. 341). They
propose that the level of overall participation of target populations who are socially constructed
as “dependents” and “deviants” is low and conventional, “deviants” (e.g. criminals, illegal
immigrants) having moderate potential for participation in political action. According to them,
the participation of the “advantaged” (e.g. senior citizens, business owners) groups, by contrast,
is high for voting, participating in interest groups and private services, while low for strikes and
riots.

Further, Schneider and Ingram (1993) propose that the underlying social message to the
disadvantaged groups is that they are unable to solve their own problems. They therefore
become visible only through the generosity and heroic deeds of others. In other words, they are rendered passive and dependent, and they are “not much of a player” and renounce “power over their own choices” (p. 342). The advantaged, on the contrary, are portraying themselves as public-spirited (Schneider & Ingram; 1993). They propose that more disadvantaged types of target populations may not participate “because the messages received by these target populations encourage withdrawal or passivity” (p. 334). They speculate that groups portrayed as dependents or deviants do not mobilize and get involved civically due to the stigmatization and labeling by the policy process. They further propose that people in the disadvantaged category of the social construction do not consider their problems to be of a broader public interest, and therefore reject government and policy as remedies for themselves. In addition, the
passive participation styles of the disadvantaged groups, according to Schneider and Ingram (1993), are explained by the fact that they do not perceive “themselves as legitimate or effective in the public arena” (p. 344).

For the context of the present review, this understanding of and emphasis on participation may apply to and explain the roles and engagement of local Haitian citizens in post-quake recovery. Certain portrayals of the Haitian nation and its citizens result in certain recovery practices that may be inclusive and/or exclusive of state and citizenry capacities. Because participatory philosophy is essentially concerned with social justice and radical political change, there exists a need for understanding the ways in which participation relates to existing power structures and political systems. The theoretical framework of this study, critical theory specifically, provides a lens for understanding power operations in society. This notion provides the basis for moving toward a more transformative approach to sustainable recovery that is embedded in the practice of a broadly defined citizenship of local actors (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Pyles (2009; 2013) describing her work in post-earthquake Haiti and post-Katrina New Orleans provides a practical example of such a transformative approach to community organizing in post-disaster contexts.

Within the interdisciplinary body of disaster recovery scholarship, there exists a general agreement that in order for the hardships that natural disasters bestow upon people to become sources of resilience, any interventions must be targeted towards working with the people affected, not on their behalf (e.g. Aldrich, 2012; Osti & Miyake, 2011; Phillips, 2009). For example, based on more than four years of work on a comprehensive cross-case study of communities recovering from the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and an area in Northern Chennai, Mulligan and Nadarajah (2012) conclude that the “building back better” strategy must place
local actors in the “driving seat” of recovery interventions involving and strengthening local knowledge and capacities. They find that the tsunami survivors had no chance of influencing the decisions about their future and disaster recovery oftentimes turned into a practice of “slum clearance” (euphemistically known as urban renewal or deconcentration of poverty). They conclude that many of the disaster recovery weaknesses resulted from a failure to put the disaster-impacted communities in the “driver’s seat” of the relief and recovery efforts. Based on the findings, they contend that simple pre-disaster asset replacement strategy will never lead to sustainable recovery and “building back better;” instead, the capacities of local citizens need to be built.

From a practice perspective, based on a comprehensive study of their tsunami operation in 30 communities, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2012) finds that community disaster resilience can be strengthened through programming factors, one of which is the level of community participation and ownership. They posit that community participation and ownership and an emphasis on communities as empowered decision-makers have a direct effect on the success and sustainability of Red Cross community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) programs. Thus, they recommend consulting communities in the earliest stages of program inception to ensure that it meets their needs and to gain their support and approval. Community action teams and management committees are the examples of community consultation and ownership development practices enacted by the Red Cross. However, they also acknowledge that it is difficult to achieve community ownership over the program.

Additionally, the collection of perspectives from a range of diverse scholars, journalists and activists from Haiti and the Diaspora compiled by Schuller and Morales (2012) is replete
with anecdotal and ethnographic evidence and the stated need of participation, sovereignty and self-determination on the part of the Haitian state and its people. Together, they all call for what Schuller (2012) refers to as the *accompaniment* of local actors.

According to Hickey and Mohan (2004), for participation to be transformative, the wider and broader structures of injustice and oppression need to be at the center of interventions. For this reason, they critique participatory development approaches that focus on “local” concerns and their insufficient understanding of how power operates and is constituted, and thus how empowerment may ensue. They suggest that “local” approaches tend to consider participation as a technical method rather than as a “political methodology of empowerment” (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p.11) and thus fail to transform existing power relations. In their work, the understanding of power operation is rooted in discourse production and its role in constitution of social structures and processes that may be impeding transformation and social change, and, by extension, transformative recovery in Haiti.

Building disaster recovery on and around local expertise presumes participatory approaches and capacity building activities. These are also regarded as the building blocks of resilience and sustainable post-disaster recovery and community social work practice. A strong rhetorical promotion thereof, however, does not necessarily indicate practical implementation. Indeed, literature points to the fact that actual participatory practice in development, and more specifically in disaster recovery projects in Haiti, initiated by some NGOs and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission remains largely symbolic and rhetorical (e.g. Cornwall, 2008; Daly & Brassard, 2011; Dupuy, 2010; Fatton, 2011a; Schuller, 2008; Schuller, 2009; Mulligan & Nadarajah, 2012). Given the importance attributed to participation, concerns about the existence of such exclusionary practices arise.
As stated above, participation in and of itself is not transformative. One of the outcome indicators that makes participation in recovery projects critical and integral to the disaster recovery process is the development of skills and knowledge at the individual, community, and state levels. The skills and knowledge that communities acquire through participation in disaster recovery initiatives have become definitive of capacity and disaster preparedness building.

The ability of disaster-affected communities to identify problems, establish priorities and act, to mobilize, and to request technical advice and support from a range of different actors when needed builds community resilience. According to IFRC’s (2012) findings, the formation and training of community-based groups and self-help mechanisms play an important role in strengthening community cohesion and improving internal community capacity to act and recover from natural catastrophes.

Resilience in the context of natural disasters is tightly linked to capacities and is understood as “the capacity of a community to cope with the emergency, to rebuild, and to learn from the experience, such that the new physical, social, and political structures are better adapted to the environment” (Ride & Bretherton, 2011, p.7). It also encompasses the ability to “absorb disturbances,” to adapt to stress and change and to respond through self-organization (Holm, 2012). Disaster scholarship shows that for this to happen, local communities must be regarded as subjects with agency capable of leadership, placed at the forefront of response and made visible by their own actions in the face of adversity and crisis (e.g. Brown & Westaway, 2011; IFRC, 2012; Ride & Bretherton, 2011).

On the contrary, DARA (2011) provides a critique of recovery activities, highlighting the shortage of community resilience and capacity building activities specifically in post-earthquake Haiti. This critique is based upon field interviews and 133 questionnaires on donor
performance with key humanitarian agencies in Haiti. DARA points to the high prevalence of exclusive recovery practices hindering local participation; examples include reports written and meetings held exclusively in English (see also Schuller & Morales, 2012). They argue that when coupled with the isolation and exclusion of Haitians from key coordination mechanisms and a focus on donors over recipients of aid, the high-level response has done little to build and strengthen local capacities and resilience. This, they conclude, has hardly made Haiti better prepared to face another disaster.

The theoretical and practical evidence outlined here suggests the importance of local participation in disaster recovery practice that builds local capacities and resilience. However, the ways in which such participation may be facilitated or impeded through the broader structures and, more specifically, how discourse and social construction affect that participation, have not been alluded to in any of the literature reviewed. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the relationship between discourses and social construction and the potential impact thereof on participatory recovery practice and policies targeted towards disaster recovery.

**Synthesis of the literature review.** Interdisciplinary literature on disaster recovery traditionally conceptualizes recovery in the following way: debris management, environmental, historic and cultural, social psychological, housing, business, infrastructure and lifelines, and public sector recovery (Phillips, 2009; Rodriguez, Quarantelli & Dynes, 2006). Smith and Wegner (2006) provide a summary of the recovery research across the key dimensions of sustainability: environmental, quality of life, social, economic, disaster resilience, and participation, political process and power. They admit that a comprehensive theory of sustainable disaster recovery does not exist, but acknowledge the need to develop such a theory as having “a great importance both to researchers and practitioners” (p. 245).
Catering to this need and grounded in the literature reviewed and analyzed, I begin to lay out some theoretical underpinnings of sustainable recovery. Figure 2 represents a synthesis of the literature review by articulating a preliminary relational logic between discourse production and post-disaster recovery.

Figure 2. Operations of discourse in post-disaster recovery.

This synthesis of the literature captures the dynamic, iterative, and recursive process of discourse operations – production, distribution, consumption and institutionalization – in the post-disaster recovery context. In line with critical and social constructionist theories, it depicts multiple communities of discourse production with inherently diverse understandings of disaster and post-disaster recovery that compete for dominance and influence. They are separate, but not exclusive, entities as they function to inform, refer to and fit with each other as they disseminate.
knowledge to construct and constitute development-in-recovery. As they reflect reality through discourse production, framing and representation, they simultaneously construct it. This construction occurs through the making of disaster, recovery actors and post-disaster recovery. Such constructions, in turn, serve to constitute (rationalize, normalize and legitimize) sustainable recovery through knowledge production, meaning making, difference creation, public perceptions and behaviors, social relations and structures of power.

Constructed and constituted reality further puts meaning into motion such as treatments, responses and solutions and plays into agenda setting, action orientations, policymaking and implementation in practice. Through these, discourses are institutionalized and further function to affect identity formation by creating (or erasing) spaces for civic action through constructed principles of inclusion or exclusion. The way citizens narrate themselves and act in the world further leads to shaping reality to yet again be reflected in discourses. This discursive cycle changes over time and contexts contingent upon economic and political failures, ideological orientations, scientific and technological advances, and thus narrative and discursive shifts. I propose that this view of recovery is complementary to the traditional one (described in the first paragraph of this section), as the processes of actual recovery are framed and driven by discourses.

**Disaster Recovery in Social Work**

Social work has a long history of engagement in post-disaster settings to assist individuals and communities to regain pre-disaster stability and order (Zakour, 2007). I suggest that the perspective of social work, with its dominant view of disasters as crisis events accompanied by social disruption and collective and traumatic stress (Gillespie, 2008; Zakour, 2007), fits well during the disaster relief phase and in taking action to return back to the pre-
disaster sense of normalcy. This view of disasters frames the way social workers tend to intervene professionally; namely, through the use of stress and crisis intervention frameworks (Zakour, 2007) and clinical approaches such as critical incident debriefing, psychological first aid, and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g. Malekoff, 2008; Miller, 2003; Tan, Rowlands, & Yuen, 2006). The crisis and emergency response of social work is frequently discussed in existing literature (Javadian, 2007; Yanay & Benjamin, 2005). The emphasis in disaster social work, in others words, has tended historically to be placed on the individual, psychological level of intervention.

However, further investigation of disaster social work literature reveals a growing focus on understanding disasters in terms of vulnerability and resilience. Social work’s engagement that corresponds to this view of disasters focuses on community (e.g. Li-ju & Jieh-jiuh, 2009; Mathbor, 2007; Pyles, 2007; Zakour & Gillespie, 2013; Yoon, 2009), global (e.g. IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, 2012; Pollack, 2007; Williams & Tedeschi, 2013), and environmental levels (e.g. Alston, 2013; Dominelli, 2013; Gray & Coates, 2012; McKinnon, 2008) of disaster prevention and response.

All these approaches are certainly central to the mission of the social work profession and need to be studied. However, I suggest that social work has done meager justice to recognize the historical and cultural discursive roots in which disasters are presented and the social practice (discourse) of disaster recovery. These appear to have been overlooked and only indistinctly acknowledged as a background “environment” variable in the psycho-emotional recovery of the “person.” Also, the dominant models of intervention and underlying cultural assumptions that construct normative understandings and meanings of both disaster itself and
recovery from it (individual, community, and societal) remain scarcely examined from a critical social work standpoint.

Situating my study and contribution to the field. Discourse matters as it reflects and shapes reality. Through institutional practices, it may serve as a tool for social change (transformation and liberation) and social control (domination and subjugation) of the people in the grassroots. Yet attempts to understand recovery after natural disasters through discursive production are scarce in existing social work and interdisciplinary disaster scholarship. As has been discussed, understanding social construction and the constitution of disaster recovery through discourse matters because it illuminates the way in which what is known is transmitted into perceptions, attitudes, behaviors and actions that perpetuate dominant ways of being.

Without these analyses, dominant discourses – which can serve to impede a holistic disaster recovery process – remain uncontested and may become institutionalized. Discourses, which are powerful mechanisms for the social construction and constitution of reality, may become deterministic and continue being taken as absolute truth. Yet once made visible and transparent, discourses become arguable. This alone makes critical analysis imperative. I therefore propose that including discourse as one of the recovery-affecting factors may not only offer a valuable contribution to the stock of knowledge about post-disaster recovery, but that it can also challenge the existing one by uncovering the recovery practices and power relations that are embedded within them, and vice versa. Issues of power in recovery practice and process pertain to the inclusion of local knowledge, participation, building capacity, and resilience of the disaster-affected citizens which have been extensively argued as critical and integral preconditions for sustainable recovery (e.g. Long, 2001; Peters, 2000; Philips, 2009). These same conditions are also deemed building blocks of social work practice.
I propose that there are numerous ways to situate my study within the already existent literature. My work will begin to address the missing links in what is currently known about disaster recovery. The key contribution of this study is related to which and how recovery discourses and social constructions are reflected in recovery policies and practices. The literature reviewed scarcely connects representations and discourses and their link to recovery policies and practices. Additionally, no study to date, to my knowledge, addresses the reports of NGOs, policy documents and the *Miami Herald* news articles or compares social constructions of diverse discourse communities in post-earthquake Haiti. Communication and political studies only begin to address the issue of the effects discourses may have on people’s lives; social work, with its mission and values of social justice and empowerment, must join the effort. Following Pyles (2011b), this study begins to disentangle this puzzle in the context of disaster recovery in a developing country from a social work perspective.

Second, this exploration provides another example of discourse production and its related effects by inquiring into the creation of citizen subjectivities (e.g. as “helpers” and “saviors”) in the disaster context. Third, this study employs a unique method of comparison of diverse discourse that has not been previously applied in the field of social work (to my knowledge). Fourth, it adds to the traditional social work outlook on interventions in disaster contexts by placing the focus on the “environment” and macro issues. Additionally, the research method proposed is unconventional and highly promising for the discipline as a research method and an activist tool. Fifth, the study seeks to make a theory-building contribution by explaining post-disaster recovery through production of discourse and social constructions.

Through this review, two central points of exploration emerged. First, under the premise that prevalent discourses and constructions are manifested in action orientations, I seek
to explore what and whose discourses and social constructions of disaster and post-earthquake recovery in Haiti are reflected in recovery policy and practice. Second, given the prevalent, widely discussed, and criticized portrayals of Haitians as passive actors in other discourses, I call for an exploration of this construction in the production of disaster and recovery discourses. This is all with an ultimate goal in mind: to create a better-informed sense of the reality of post-earthquake recovery and to re-create it by potentially aligning the discourse communities in their view of, and action toward, sustainable recovery.
Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I introduce the guiding questions and goals of my research, and describe the particulars of my qualitative research design. I present my data sources (newspaper articles, policy documents produced by the Haitian Government, and USAID strategy and organizational documents) and data collection process. I close the chapter by explaining my data analysis procedure, which consisted of a combination of critical discourse analysis, constructivist grounded theory, and interpretive policy analysis, using NVivo 9 software.

Research Design

In the following section, I present the research questions and goals that emerged from my literature review. I also describe the research methodology, data sample and data collection process that I used in this dissertation research.

Research questions and goals. Combining the identified points of further inquiry, this study seeks to explore discursive constructions of the Haiti earthquake, recovery actors, and disaster recovery in general. I set out to analyze the constructions present in three areas of discourse: what is translated and transmitted by print news media, implicated in national and international policy documents, and implemented in the practices of diverse organizations. Drawing a theoretical connection between the processes of naming and framing a phenomenon and the process of acting, I raise the following questions: What are the discourses of disaster, recovery actors and disaster recovery in post-earthquake Haiti? In what ways do they relate to each other? How do they converge and diverge? What are their discursive constructions in relation to the practices of participation? Given the questions raised, the research goals of this empirical inquiry are as follows: (1) to explore discursive constructions of disaster, recovery
actors and recovery as articulated by print news media, organizational and political discourse communities; (2) to compare these discourse communities in terms of their disaster and recovery interpretation (meanings); (3) to examine the discursive constructions of participation; and (4) to infer the relationship between discourse production and post-disaster recovery policy and practice.

Description of research methodology. This study employs a qualitative research design (also commonly referred to as qualitative inquiry) as the overall inquiry is exploratory and descriptive in nature, while also building on current knowledge. Such designs typically seek to understand how people construct their worlds and social realities, how they interpret, and what meanings they assign to, their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Some characteristics of qualitative research outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and further elaborated by Creswell (2007) are divided along the lines of design strategies, data collection and fieldwork strategies, and analysis strategies (Patton, 2002).

In terms of design strategies, qualitative research is characterized as inquiry that employs “emergent rather than tightly prefigured design,” and purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007, p.38; Patton, 2002). Qualitative data and multiple data sources, as well as a recognition of the researcher as a key instrument, represent the specific nature of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Data analysis in qualitative research is conducted “inductively, recursively, interactively” with a focus on meanings, situating the study within its social, political, and cultural context (Creswell, 2007, p.38; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). It usually offers a theoretical lens, emphasizes the researcher’s voice, perspective and reflexivity, and understands the phenomena from a holistic view (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).
Apart from pure scientific inquiry, in the past decade qualitative research has also begun to be seen through the lens of social justice and transformation of the world (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) put it: “Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). As explained above, the study builds on the constructionist paradigm that stems from the notion of multiple realities and the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and manifests itself in the ways of acting. Translated into my study, four discourse communities (multiple realities) are explored for their construction of disaster and recovery (social construction) and further manifestation in disaster policy and practice (action orientations).

Designed to deconstruct, problematize and question prevailing discourses of disaster and recovery, this study also builds on a critical/postmodern epistemological paradigm. More specifically, it seeks to explore social relations and structures of power in post-earthquake Haiti recovery through identifying dominant groups, ruling ideas and the promotion of dominant ways of being regarding disaster recovery. In short, with an inherent assumption of power and dominance, I am interested in which and whose ideas or interests undergird the process of disaster recovery in Haiti. In my conceptual framework these are delineated as the factors constituting disaster recovery. I believe that in this aspect of my research design rests the transformative power of qualitative inquiry.

Although qualitative research is less concerned with the issues of validity, to keep up with the rigors of scientific inquiry, a number of validation strategies were developed. Creswell (2007) describes eight of them: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick description,
and external audits. Another strategy that is widely utilized for data coding purposes is known as inter-rater reliability. In my study, I use two of the aforementioned strategies. First, I use different sources of data, methods and theories to corroborate evidence on one common theme. Second, I acknowledge my bias(es) as a researcher that have shaped the inception, process and interpretation of my study. I believe my position as a white, European, well-educated female of liberal political world-view biases me with certain privilege, cultural background, academic ideas and expert solutions. I have visited Haiti three times for a short period of time. There, I was constantly reminded of my privilege and that my knowledge about the realities of the Haitian people living in the periphery has many limits. I also acknowledge that the process of this study is value-informed because I perceive this work as not a mere empirical piece but also as a tool for advocacy and activist work.

Further, due to the prior knowledge informed by academic literature and my previous study of the U.S. Congressional Record, I had certain preconceived notions of, and assumptions about, some of the aspects of the study. For example, I conceived of disaster as a one-time event, that each discourse community is an uncontested arena and that negative, imperialist discourses of Haiti and Haitians dominate (Pyles & Svistova, in press; Svistova & Pyles, 2012; Svistova, Pyles & André, 2014). These preconceptions changed greatly through my inductive and deductive analyses, as well as continued work in Haiti.

**Research sample and data collection.** Reflecting the characteristics of qualitative research, this study utilizes multiple data sources and focuses on political, organizational and media discourses. Serving as a key instrument of data collection (another key characteristic of qualitative designs), I gathered the information myself. The data consists of the documents
released in full calendar years, i.e. 2010, 2011, 2012. I analyzed 180 documents from six different sources of data. The overall sample and data sources are summarized in Table 1.

Due to the accessibility of the data, the scope of the study and time constraints, I elected to study four of the fourteen identified discourse communities engaged in construction and constitution of recovery in Haiti. The *Miami Herald* newspaper articles, key recovery policies, and reports of the selected international organizations are assumed here as discourse communities or communities of meaning (Paltridge, 2006; Yanow, 2000). I analyzed an equal amount of text of each discourse community in order to ensure equitable representation. Measuring the amount of text in pages, I analyzed about 200 pages of the *Miami Herald* newspapers, 173 pages of Haitian Government documents, and 125 and 314 pages of text produced by USAID and international organizations respectively.
Table 1 Summary of the Sample and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Community</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Pages/Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>• <em>Miami Herald</em> news articles</td>
<td>• 2010</td>
<td>2,805 (1,257)</td>
<td>125 (10%)</td>
<td>• Each article is 700 words on average (or 1.5 pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>253 (166)</td>
<td>16 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>206 (116)</td>
<td>11 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 3,264 (1,539)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 152</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Miami Herald news articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>115 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2010</td>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2011</td>
<td>• 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 8 pages/Words</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 115 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 57 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>• Post Disaster Needs Assessment</td>
<td>• 2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti</td>
<td>• 2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 pages/Words</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 115 pages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 57 pages</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilateral Organization (USAID)</td>
<td>• U.S. Government Post-Earthquake Strategy in Haiti</td>
<td>• 2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 89 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organizations (Oxfam and Red Cross)</td>
<td>• Oxfam 2 reports/ 3 briefing notes/ 3 briefing papers</td>
<td>• 2010-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The IFRC annual progress reports</td>
<td>• 2010-12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 13</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 13</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 25, 40, 14/12/6, 20/25/6 pages</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 24, 22, 52, 56, 12 pages</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL: 168 documents or around 660 pages of text.**
I also suggest that there exists a rationale for inquiring into and comparing these specific sources of data. Media discourse is one of the focal interests as it not only communicates global threats and crises; it also constitutes them by translating and transmitting political deliberation and representation of disasters to the general public. Media play a leading role in making disasters culturally meaningful and politically important in the global arena (Pantti et al., 2012). Recovery policies and reports published by international organizations serve as good exploratory grounds as they simultaneously produce and reflect political, media and policy discourses of disaster recovery. Overall, I sought to find out how disaster is interpreted, what constructions of recovery actors and recovery itself are used to motivate action, what solutions are promoted and by whom.

**Media discourses.** The media sample is composed of newspaper articles published in the *Miami Herald*. This particular newspaper was chosen based on some distinct characteristics. *The Miami Herald* had reporters based in Haiti, is geographically located closer to the disaster-stricken country and targets the largest Haitian diaspora in the U.S. Potter (2009) states that *Miami Herald* employs reporters who speak Haitian Creole, which allows for interactions inaccessible to English speaking reporters (who must communicate through a third-party interpreter or interview only English-speaking Haitians). I speculate that the *Miami Herald* will provide a more localized perspective and provide slightly different pieces of the puzzle, i.e. different aspects of recovery, as well as different ways of representing and explaining recovery processes than *The New York Times* coverage (Pyles & Svistova, in press). Closer in cultural values, the *Miami Herald* may serve as a cultural resource in determining the “culturally accepted or normalized” way of responding to and recovering from disaster (Cox et al., 2008). However, it must be clarified that although the *Miami Herald* is international, it is representative
of neither the international media, nor the U.S. news media. Rather, I identify *Miami Herald* as a hybrid public discourse of both U.S. and Haitian perspectives in contrast with the *New York Times* as it transmits the perspectives of Haitian people, the Haitian diaspora in Florida, and the Haitian, U.S., and local South Floridian governments. I interpret the *Herald’s* coverage as both a mechanism of free intelligence, critical of power dynamics and structures and as an instrument of power and maintenance of the status quo that reflects voices of the powerful.

Newspaper articles from 2010 to 2012 directly related to post-earthquake relief and recovery in Haiti were used for analysis. A basic search for archived newspaper articles in the *newslibrary.com* using the term “Haiti earthquake” yielded 2,805 results in 2010, 253 in 2011, and 206 in 2012 (N=3,264). I created a document with the titles and first paragraphs of all the newspaper articles and I reviewed them for eligibility. Excluding the duplicate articles and articles that had only indirect references to Haiti’s earthquake and recovery, this review resulted in a sample of 1,539 articles with 1,257 in 2010, 166 in 2011, and 116 in 2012. I then sampled 10% of the eligible news articles in each year, including each 10\(^{th}\) article into the final sample. The final sample was comprised of 125 articles in 2010, 16 articles in 2011, and 11 articles in 2012, totaling 152 articles (n=152). This comes to about 200 pages. I purchased and downloaded the full text of the sampled articles from the *newslibrary.com* online news archive. Since the final samples of 2011 and 2012 consist of only 16 and 11 full articles respectively, I also read through the list of articles (with the title and one paragraph from each) that I created prior to sampling to make sure I was getting a correct sense of coverage.

*Local government’s discourses.* To gain insight into manifestations of discourses in policies, I analyzed the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (hereafter referred to as *PDNA*) and the *Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti* (hereafter referred to as *Action*
Plan), the key policy documents that drive post-earthquake recovery process developed by the government of Haiti. Both documents are available in English from the official website, www.lessonsfromhaiti.org, produced by the U.N. Secretary General’s special adviser. These documents are purposely selected as they identify disaster recovery needs and frame the recovery process on national and international levels.

The PDNA is a document that presents the results of the post-earthquake needs assessment conducted in Haiti from February 18 to March 24, 2010 under the direction of the Government of the Republic of Haiti, with a joint team of national and international experts and active assistance from NGOs and Haitian civil society. The technical support was provided by representatives of the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Bank, and the European Commission. The PDNA presents a multi-sector review of damage and losses incurred following the earthquake and an estimation of the impact of the earthquake on each sector: governance, production, social sectors, infrastructures, regional development, the environment and disaster risk management, cross-cutting themes and a macro-economic analysis (Government of the Republic of Haiti, 2010a).

The Action Plan was developed based on the PDNA. It outlines the requirements to be fulfilled for recovery and rebuilding in the short term (18 months) and long term (10 years) (Government of the Republic of Haiti, 2010b). The plan is considered a joint effort, following reflections by and consultation with Haitian society explaining their preferences for the future in the earthquake-affected areas, as well as calls for structural changes in the entire country. The plan outlines the immediate actions for the future (territorial, economic, social and institutional rebuilding), puts forward the macro-economic framework of development and presents funding
mechanisms and management and reconstruction structures (Government of the Republic of Haiti, 2010b). These two documents add up to 173 pages of text.

**Bilateral organization’s discourses.** I analyzed the “Post-Earthquake U.S. Government Haiti Strategy: Toward renewal and economic opportunity” (hereafter referred to as the *U.S. Strategy*). It was issued in 2011 by the bilateral organization USAID (United States Agency for International Development), an organization that provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance worldwide in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. USAID was chosen because it is a bilateral organization funded by the U.S. government that provides development initiatives and advances the goals of the U.S. foreign policy. It therefore reflects, supports and enacts U.S. political discourse. Moreover, USAID has been engaged in the social and economic development of Haiti for the past 50 years. As stated on the official website, the goals of the organization’s work in Haiti remain unchanged the earthquake; however, they reflect the post-earthquake realities.

The *U.S. Strategy* serves as a key policy driving the U.S. government’s work in Haiti. This policy document outlines the objectives and the goals, the principles of assistance, the core development pillars, and the territorial areas of development as the composites of the strategic framework of the U.S. government in Haiti. The key foci of the *U.S. Strategy* are “infrastructure and energy,” “food and economic security,” “health and other basic services,” and “governance and rule of law.” This document is 89 pages long.

**International aid organizations’ discourses.** To explore disaster recovery practices, I obtained reports and updates from the years 2010-2012 from a range of development organizations, accessible online from their respective websites. I reviewed the reports of two purposely selected international development organizations to ensure variability of
organizational discourse and practice. I selected reports produced by the Oxfam (an international NGO) and the Red Cross (part of the International Federation of Red Cross Societies [IFRC], an international humanitarian network).

Oxfam is an international non-governmental organization consisting of 17 members of the international Oxfam confederation. Its broader work is geared towards alleviating poverty, hunger and injustice through long-term solutions and campaign for social change. In post-2010 Haiti, it not only provides recovery and development services, but also conducts research and puts forward recommendations and policy proposals. Oxfam, according to the official website, aims to provide long-term post-earthquake recovery solutions. It is funded through individual donors, foundations and corporations and eschews U.S. government funds in order to maintain its independence.

The IFRC is the international humanitarian network that operates in three key services areas: disaster response and recovery, development, and the promotion of social inclusion and peace. Regarding disaster response, the IFRC was actively involved in disaster relief immediately after the earthquake and remains involved in rebuilding efforts. Red Cross operations in disaster contexts predominantly focus on short-term recovery; emergency solutions such as humanitarian assistance and provision of relief supplies are at the core of its intervention. The operations of the IFRC are funded by statutory contributions from local National Red Cross Societies, voluntary donations from donors such as governments and governmental institutions, corporations, NGOs, foundations and the general public, as well as reimbursements for service delivery and grants from local, state, and federal governments.

The IFRC’s website features four special reports published at various points in Haiti’s recovery: one month post-earthquake and six months post-earthquake in 2010, a one-year


In sum, all these data sources will represent four discourse communities (international media, local government, a bilateral organization, and international NGOs) and are expected to shed light on the representation and construction of the disaster, recovery actors, and post-disaster recovery in general. The meaning assigned to the disaster and recovery process, contested issues, subject positions and silences of these discourse communities are analyzed. The meaning of participation was interrogated with an eye towards their construction as acts of
empowerment vs. perpetuations of the status quo. Additionally, special attention was paid to ruling ideas, organizational practices, expert solutions and professional language of disaster recovery as expressions of power. The organizational documents were scrutinized in terms of actual participatory practice such as capacity and resilience building activities, as well as for their overall discourse and rhetoric around disaster, recovery actors, post-disaster recovery and the recovery practices of the respective organizations. These documents were also scrutinized as to how they reinforce recovery policies and broader disaster and recovery discourses.

**Data Analysis Methodology**

In the following section, I introduce and explain my analytic process that occurred in two stages using the techniques of constructivist grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, and interpretive policy analysis. I also discuss the limitations of my research design and methodology.

Relating back to the visuals of discourse communities and operations of policy feedback (see Figures 1 and 2), I sought to explore discourse communities and their social construction of the 2010 disaster in Haiti, its recovery, and individuals and groups who play key roles in disaster recovery. Specifically, I present my analysis of the discourses of four (local government, media, NGOs, and bilateral organizations) out of the fourteen identified discourse communities (Figure 1). Considered terrains for discursive exploration, organizational discourses simultaneously serve as evidence of certain agendas and actual disaster recovery practices (relief efforts, the methods of implementing recovery projects, funding distribution, etc.).

All the data was uploaded into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 9. The data was analyzed in two stages, utilizing techniques of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz,
2011), critical discourse analysis (CDA, Fairclough, 1995; 2003; Richardson, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), and interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 2000). These qualitative methods were chosen for this study because it seeks to reach a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. The details of my analytic approach are described in detail below.

First stage – constructivist grounded theory. During the first stage of the analysis I used the techniques of constructivist grounded theory. The grounded theory method was only partially adopted. Acknowledging that researchers do not conduct analyses with “empty heads,” but rather hold prior ideas and skills, Charmaz (2011) suggests that they do need to keep “open minds” when analyzing qualitative data. Such an approach, she argues, helps the researcher to remain open to seeing ideas that emerge from the data and to not be dictated by the preconceptions about the topic.

The traditional analytic process of grounded theory consists of three phases of coding: initial, focused, and axial coding (Charmaz, 2011). Grounded theorists use initial coding to explore theoretical possibilities while staying close to the data (word by word, line by line, incident by incident) and suggest coding the data as actions (with gerunds). The codes are to fit the data, not otherwise. Initial codes serve as provisional, comparative tools to distill and organize data to be able to develop categories further (Charmaz, 2011).

The second phase involves focused coding that is more “directed, selective, and conceptual” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 57). In this phase, the most frequent or significant codes obtained during the initial coding are used to filter and categorize the data. Through focused coding, the researcher moves across data and begins to compare experiences, actions and meanings. Lastly, during axial coding, the researcher links categories with subcategories and sorts, synthesizes, organizes, and reassembles data that was fractured during the initial coding in
new coherent ways. Overall, Charmaz (2011) argues that codes help bridge events and descriptions in the data with theoretical insight. Memo-writing is another central technique of grounded theory as it prompts the researcher to stop and analyze ideas, keeps the researcher involved in the analysis, and helps new ideas and insights emerge in the act of writing (Charmaz, 2011).

In my analysis I used a partially adopted approach of constructivist grounded theory, using a deductive conceptual framework and a generic, preliminary set of codes. Yet as proposed by grounded theorists, I stayed close to the data and open to the theoretical possibilities it may offer. The more precise and detailed properties of these codes and categories were informed through the inductive analysis. For example, reflecting my research questions, the \textit{a priori} set of codes included construction of disaster, construction of recovery and construction of recovery actors, as well as codes for participation. The specifics of these codes (sub-codes) emerged from the data.

Throughout the initial coding of the data, I wrote extensive memos and developed a set of codes based on the patterns in the text (Charmaz, 2011; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As I organized data by assigning codes, I considered a paragraph to be a unit of analysis used to capture the underlying meaning properly and adequately. Through initial coding and memoing, themes (or discourse strands) relevant to my research questions and conceptual framework started emerging. I consulted the relevant literature as I proceeded with the coding.

\textbf{Second stage – critical discourse analysis and interpretive policy analysis.} The deconstruction of discourses and power operations in disaster recovery contexts can be conducted by means of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Once the data was organized into codes, I further analyzed it applying the techniques of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA,
some claim (e.g. Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004), is both a method (technique) and a methodology (the underlying logic of method). It is a practical and research method that is ontologically constructionist: it assumes that reality is socially constructed and constituted. From an epistemological perspective, it postulates that “meaning is fluid and constructs reality in ways that can be posited through the use of interpretive methods” (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004, p.21). This approach to data analysis is of an interpretivist nature that presupposes the multiple possibilities of knowing and interpreting the world (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004; Rodwell, 1998; Yanow, 2000).

An interpretive stance urges the researcher to treat differences in meaning-making as “ways of seeing, understanding, and doing, based on different prior experiences” (Yanow, 2000, p.8). This interpretation of multiple realities in my study is reflected in studying four different communities of discourse and interpreting the construction of disaster and recovery by each of them separately. The underlying idea is that diverse contexts and situated bodies of knowledge of each discourse community result in a different manifestation of disaster and recovery and therefore different solutions and action orientations. Once studied separately, communities of discourse can be united in their making of disaster and recovery to better inform disaster recovery processes in order to improve recovery efforts overall.

In line with social constructionism, CDA is also critical as it calls for exploring power structures veiled by everyday language. In this regard, CDA allows a researcher to decode socially constructed and agreed upon meanings that may be veiled by taken-for-granted everyday language and reality (Fairclough, 2003; Yanow, 2000). The ultimate goal of such decoding is to transform dominant and dogmatic meanings of reality. The method delves into the underlying beliefs, assumptions, perceptions and meanings conveyed by cultural and local discourses, as
well as allowing one to explore various frames of the issue under study (frames which are frequently articulated through language). Applied to my study, this function of CDA serves to decode different constructions of disaster and recovery in Haiti, but also to trace the dominant among those constructions that dictate social relations and structures and the recovery process in general. In line with my research questions, I view discourse as a set of reflections of social practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and therefore focus on actions and actors.

Understood both as a research method and an activist tool, CDA is concerned with the ideological use of language and needs to be distinguished from simple discourse analysis (DA), which analyzes and interprets the world through linguistics alone. According to Marx, however, “philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the, point, however, is to change it” (cited in Jaggar, 1983, p.63). CDA functions against essentialism and, upon critical exploration, oftentimes breeds change. Following Yanow’s (2000) third step of interpretive policy analysis, I used CDA to identify discourses, or how each community of discourse talks and acts with respect to the 2010 earthquake disaster, recovery, and recovery actors.

Based on the findings of the multiple meanings, Yanow (2000) also suggests to initiate negotiation and mediation between the discourse communities. She proposes that this last step of the analytic practice helps to explain conflicting interpretations, to encourage engaged dialogue honoring the reality of the embedded perspectives, and to arrive at a new understanding and action orientations.

Because no rigid analytic strategy of CDA has been developed and a flexible and creative approach is promoted (Wodak & Mayer, 2009), I utilized constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2011) with some CDA procedures offered by Jager and Maier (in Wodak & Mayer, 2009) in the overall analytic process of this study. During the second stage of data
analysis, in line with CDA technique, I identified the sub-topics of the discourse strand/topic and examined their frequency of appearance (how often they were coded). For example, under the discourse strand of recovery actors I identified myriad actors (sub-topics) but further examined the ones that documents focused on the most, while keeping in mind those actors that were less visible in the discourses.

Fairclough (1995) conceives of discourse as three-dimensional, composed of text, discursive practice (production, distribution, consumption), and social practice. Analysis of discourse seeks to uncover textual meaning, as well as practices of production, dissemination, and consumption to understand text in its social context and in relation to other texts and discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004). In Fairclough’s (1995; 2003) terms, analysis of discourses is concerned with *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. *Intertextuality* is understood as an interconnection between texts and how they inform, mirror and repeat/reuse each other, while *interdiscursivity* is concerned with ways in which identities are textually mediated. Oftentimes, different thematic texts may be linked by discourse. For example, the documents produced by the Haitian Government might build their disaster recovery narratives by centering the role and initiatives of the government.

In keeping with this understanding of discourse and constructionist perspective, I did not analyze the four data sources as a composite; I rather viewed them as separate entities as well as the parts of the larger reality that they co-create. For example, I coded all the *Miami Herald* articles in 2010 first. Once the data was coded, I read through the coded text again to identify discourses of disaster, recovery and actors (CDA and step three in Yanow, 2000). I applied this two-stage analytic process to each data source by year. Lastly, I compared all the data sources
for their discursive construction of disaster, disaster recovery, and actors (step four in Yanow, 2000).

Given the intertextual qualities of discourses, I also explored these discourse communities for variation and cohesiveness, similarities and differences within and between them. Additionally, in studying diverse communities of meaning it is important to understand the discourse areas that converge and/or diverge regarding content (what needs to be done) and agreement (how it ought to be done) (Yanow, 2000). In the case of disaster recovery discourse, for example, this may be related to ways of representing recovery actors, issues of participation and conception of disaster recovery in general, in the texts produced by media, political figures and organizations engaged in disaster representation and recovery work. Embedded in their own specific contexts, these texts need to be explored for similarities and differences, convergence and divergence in their construction of disaster and recovery.

**Limitations.** The limitations of the proposed research design must be acknowledged. First, it includes only four of the fourteen identified discourse communities related to post-earthquake recovery in Haiti. This limits the representation of meanings used and produced by different communities of discourse. Second, this design will not establish a chain of causality between discourse production and post-disaster recovery outcomes. As a result, I will only be able to make analytic connections, not claims of causality. The empiric goal, however, is to use this analysis to untangle the diversity of discourses of disaster and recovery (and in them embedded power dynamics) and trace their manifestation (not direct translation) in policy and practice. Thus, this research design allows for the development of a theory of discourse operations in relation to policy and practice in post-disaster contexts which can later be further empirically tested and expanded. Lastly, my study only focuses on the two years following the
earthquake; thus a comprehensive exploration of discursive development, and the shifts and consequences thereof, will remain a subject for subsequent study. In addition, only 10% of the eligible *Miami Herald* articles were analyzed, limiting the representativeness of the sample. These limitations notwithstanding, the design of this study is tailored to the richness of the data, and intended to produce the kind of knowledge that is needed to build disaster preparedness and to develop effective policies and interventions in post-disaster contexts. I believe the exploratory design may help make visible power operations and contests by diverse recovery actors and how their widely held assumptions and solutions get constituted and institutionalized through disaster responses, recovery policies and practices.

To summarize, in my search of disaster discourses and their interplay, I analyzed documents produced by the Haitian Government, the *Miami Herald* newspaper, USAID, Oxfam and the IFRC. The techniques of constructionist grounded theory, critical discourse analysis, and interpretivist policy analysis all guided my two-stage analytic process. The findings that emerged through my analytic-deconstructive investigation of these documents are presented in detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: The Deconstructive Findings of Discourses of Disaster, Recovery, and Recovery Actors

Introduction

In the previous chapter I described the design and goals of my research. I proposed an exploration and comparison of discursive constructions of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors produced by news media, organizational and policy documents. In this chapter I present the findings that emerged from my data analysis in relation to these three major categories of disaster production. I provide a condensed summary of the key themes that were revealed in each data source in Appendix A.

There are numerous findings that merit a thorough introduction. First, as anticipated, I found that there are different, and at times contested, ways in which disaster, recovery, and recovery actors are constructed across the documents. The first major category of analysis, constructions of disaster, that were revealed across the documents were: 1) damage and loss wherein blame is ascribed to the “killer quake”; 2) a humanitarian crisis and emergency situation; 3) a result of risk and vulnerability; 4) the earthquake and its aftermath as a window of opportunity; and 5) a threat to U.S. security.

The constructions of disaster recovery, the second main category of analysis, were diverse in vision of and approach to recovery. The themes of emergency and relief efforts, economic renewal and growth, sustainability issues and long-term development, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, deconcentration and decongestion of Port-au-Prince, capacity-building, and participation constitute the discursive strand of recovery across all the documents overall. The decentralization of economic activity and public administration, along with macro-
economic development, are prescribed as solutions in the policy documents. The organizational documents concentrate on capacity-building activities, disaster preparedness, community-level solutions, and inclusion of Haitians in their own recovery as pillars of sustainable recovery. The constructions of participation and capacity-building differ across the documents.

The prevalence of technical terms such as *rebuilding* and *reconstruction* is consistent throughout the documents, while psycho-social aspects of recovery are largely ignored (though they appear in both the organizational documents and the *Miami Herald* news articles in a few instances). For example, there is very little mention of services geared towards psycho-social recovery and mental health of the disaster-affected individuals and communities. The documents also fail to mention service provision for people left disabled after the earthquake and their inclusion into recovery. Spiritual and religious aspects of recovery are also largely invisible in the documents under study.

One unifying theme that ties all the documents together and frames the conception of disaster recovery is a grand narrative of a historic opportunity for a new start and a chance to envision a new Haiti. However, the perspectives on such a vision differ according to the discourse actor in question. For example, Oxfam paints a vision of a socially equitable and just Haitian society, while the *Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti* (hereafter referred to as the *Action Plan*) and the *U.S. Strategy* envision an economically viable and globally competitive Haiti.

*Recovery actors* constituted the third main category of my analysis. There are five key groups among recovery actors in post-disaster Haiti: 1) local people, the private sector and civil society; 2) the Government of Haiti; 3) the international community (foreign countries and bi- and multi-lateral actors); 4) international non-governmental organizations; and 5) the Interim
Haitian Recovery Commission. There are essentially two lenses that shape the representation of local Haitian people and civil society: targets of change (predominantly in policy documents and news accounts) and agents of change (organizational documents and news articles). When local citizens are seen as helpless victims, lawless masses, border threats, aid recipients, patients, single mothers, children, and/or internally displaced persons, they simultaneously are constructed as targets of change in need of outside interventions. Haitian people are constructed as agents of change, on the other hand, when represented as resilient survivors, volunteers, community leaders and organizers, knowledgeable actors and architects of their own futures. The latter perspective is most prevalent in the organizational documents (Oxfam and The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) and in the Miami Herald.

Across the documents, except the PDNA and the Action Plan, the Government of Haiti (hereafter GOH) is largely criticized for its slow disaster response and decision-making and is seen as incompetent, absent and paralyzed. Organizational documents counter this image by presenting a number of examples wherein local and national authorities took the lead. There is a general agreement across documents (including PDNA and the Action Plan) that the GOH needs its own capacity-building activities and decentralization. Yet GOH sees itself and is seen by others as a leader with a major role and the responsibility to dictate recovery efforts. However, reality contradicts this discourse. For example, the postulations and actions of the IHRC (Interim Haiti Recovery Commission) seem to point to the need for outside interveners.

The international community, in the form of bi- and multi-lateral organizations, across the documents is largely constructed as a group of financial providers and experts who are essential partners for Haiti’s recovery. Organizational documents especially emphasize that the
international community needs to commit to long-term engagement with and support of the GOH in order to build state capacity.

International NGOs are also seen as relief heroes and providers of much-needed supplies and services. They are positioned as the major implementers of the *Action Plan*, yet are assigned no voting rights in the Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC). NGOs are also criticized for failure to coordinate efforts effectively (guilty of duplications and gaps in service provision), bypassing local authorities and community organizations, and hampering the local economy.

**Discourses of Disaster**

I have identified four main themes that constitute the discourse strand of disaster. Across the documents, the disaster in Haiti is constructed as: 1) the “killer quake”; 2) a humanitarian crisis and emergency situation; 3) an example of risk and vulnerability; 4) a window of opportunity and 5) a threat to U.S. security.

**The “killer quake.”** The 7.0 Richter scale earthquake of 2010 brought to Haiti an unprecedented level of devastation and chaos, “turning people’s lives upside down” (the IFRC). The newspaper articles and organizational documents portray the disaster as a humanitarian crisis, chaos and utter devastation. All the documents analyzed recount the magnitude of damage in terms of the number of bodily injuries and lives lost, loss of economic flows and revenues towards the GDP and financial costs that accrued, as well as the percentage of buildings collapsed, damaged infrastructure and the amount of rubble. In one of the reports produced in 2010 the IFRC describes the “horrifyingly visible” effects: “aid agencies arrived en masse in a capital in ruins, a government crippled and a population shaken to the core.” The unbearable
stench of dead corpses and bodies being thrown into mass graves completes the snapshot of the disaster scene.

The documents often state that the earthquake impeded the economic progress that was slowly picking up prior to the earthquake. The following excerpt from the Miami Herald serves as an example that depicts Port-au-Prince in ruins:

Haiti's earthquake pulverized concrete and twisted metal, but it also distorted the nation's economy, as it wiped out thousands of jobs and sparked a rush on humanitarian aid. …"Downtown was the lung and heart of the economy of Haiti and now it's completely a ghost town," said Reginald Boulos, president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce.

In these constructions of disaster, the blame and the action are consistently assigned to the earthquake as a natural force as opposed to, for example, human exploitation of the natural world. For example, it killed, damaged, devastated, ravaged, “robbed many of already limited means” and “put a strain on the healthcare system” (the IFRC). The same but differently stated rhetorical construction – “the tremor claimed more than 230,000 lives and made 1.5 million people homeless” (Miami Herald) – weaves through the documents under study. The IFRC states that “the scale of the disaster left even veteran disaster responders stunned, people who had seen firsthand the savagery of nature elsewhere.” In these portrayals of the earthquake, people seek ways to confront and control the fury of nature, presented as a faceless entity capable of taking direct action.

**A humanitarian crisis and emergency situation.** I find that disaster as a crisis event with attention spotlighted on the short-term dominates the discursive construction of the earthquake (especially in the Oxfam and IFRC documents and the Miami Herald accounts). This
dynamic is revealed in three key ways. First, the earthquake-related coverage in the *Miami Herald* is ten times more prominent in 2010 than in 2011 and 2012. This means that the attention was focused on the immediate post-earthquake situation and decreased significantly in the following years. I suggest that this dynamic frames disaster as merely a crisis event with limited continuity in the years following its occurrence, and thus accentuates the need for relief in the form of short-term solutions. In both 2011 and 2012, the consequences of the 2010 earthquake are visible in the press, but begin to be diluted as attention shifts to other events. Presidential elections and “political paralysis,” the cholera epidemic, and the hurricane season in the Fall of 2010 begin to change the focus on the post-disaster scene. Short-term and long-term recovery, as next phases of disaster response, are not at the center of narratives and appear in light of these current events. New concerns arise as the cholera epidemic; hurricane Sandy and tropical storm Isaac bestow more deaths and devastation.

Second, the documents construct disaster as a sensational event, an unpredictable fury of nature. The way these narratives are constructed assigns the blame solely to forces of the physical, natural world – a world whose actions, importantly, cannot be altered or held accountable (Stone, 2001). Such constructions shift the blame from key socio-political actors who, in fact, can and should be held accountable.

Third, the dominant narrative and depiction of chaos and disrupted social order also mark the construction of disaster as a humanitarian emergency. More specifically, it is narrated as a humanitarian crisis due to the extent of the devastation, high death toll, number of people left homeless, lack of supplies (primarily medical), and damaged infrastructure (port and airport) impeding aid delivery and distribution. The lack of government action, “the homeless”, the injured, “the desperate”, the lack of resources, the piles of rubble, the weeping from under the
rubble, the piles of corpses and the smell of the dead make the scene of the crisis come fully alive. In 2010, the IFRC reports: “people are reported to be sleeping…in appalling, flimsy shelters, packed together like sardines.” In such constructions of disaster, the action is oriented towards keeping survivors alive and providing “bare essentials,” such as emergency supplies, food, water, hygiene kits, tents and tarpaulins.

A result of risk and vulnerability. Risk and vulnerability discourse is evident in all of the documents; however, it is less pronounced in the *Miami Herald*. Contrary to the discourse of damage and loss, blaming nature’s fury, the discourse of risk and vulnerability removes the blame of the magnitude of devastation from the natural hazard, namely the earthquake. Rather, it focuses on the social, economic, historic and political conditions and dynamics that, when faced with the 7.0 Richter-scale earthquake, *resulted* in a disaster of such proportions.

The discourse of risk and vulnerability is especially prevalent in the *PDNA*. Throughout the *PDNA*, the authors acknowledge that it is not mere shifting of the tectonic plates and subsequent land shaking that created the disaster; rather, conditions of socio-political and environmental vulnerability served to contribute to the magnitude of the disaster. The following passage from the *Action Plan* summarizes the explanation of disaster that is consistent with the one presented in the *PDNA*:

Very soon after the earthquake it was obvious that such a toll could not be the outcome of just the force of the tremor. It is due to an excessively dense population, a lack of adequate building standards, the disastrous state of the environment, disorganized land use, and an unbalanced division of economic activity.

I identified nine key categories of imbalances that were present and factored into the magnitude of disaster: 1) centrality crisis; 2) acute poverty; 3) “chronic inability of governance systems”; 4)
urbanization and overpopulation of Port-au-Prince; 5) people living in precarious conditions; 6) environmental degradation; 7) Haiti as a natural disaster-prone area; 8) lack of disaster preparedness; and 9) poor infrastructure for sanitation, hygiene and health. According to the IFRC, these are the “roots of catastrophe” on which disasters “feed.” A note must be made that these themes are very clearly outlined in the PDNA and are also present and threaded throughout other documents, yet with less structure (they are implied, rather than explicitly stated).

I will briefly describe each of the nine aforementioned themes. Centrality crisis is one of the binding points of the discursive strand about risk and vulnerability and refers to the centrality and concentration of services, political decisions, and economic activity in Haiti’s capital. Due to such concentration of the economy and basic services, Port-au-Prince became a population magnet and grew highly overpopulated, which led to a heightened risk and vulnerability to experiencing negative effects of disaster situations. Many documents, but especially policy documents, suggest that centrality crisis has significantly contributed to the magnitude of devastation and deaths.

Extreme underdevelopment and chronic poverty in rural areas make up another factor that contributed to Haiti’s vulnerability to disasters. The PDNA explains that the economic insecurity and high rates of unemployment (stated at “35% of the working population”) and underemployment resulted in extreme vulnerability of the people to the consequences of the earthquake. Economic poverty in the PDNA is understood as both a factor contributing to the depletion of natural resources (contributing, for example, to the overuse of wood and charcoal due to the high prices of oil and gasoline) and an outcome of scarce resources (e.g. the low productive capacity of soil due to deforestation and erosion and subsequent low incomes of
peasants). The latter, as suggested in the PDNA, affects outmigration from the rural areas, further perpetuating the concentration and congestion of the population in the urban setting.

Another theme of the risk and vulnerability discourse is related to the pre-earthquake fragile nature of the Haitian State and the “inability of governance systems” to provide essential basic services to the population, especially in the rural areas. The latter dynamic exacerbated outmigration to Port-au-Prince causing rapid urbanization, high population density and the spread of uncontrolled settlements.

The location of dwellings, the lack of a land tenure registry and zoning, and the absence of building codes all produced precarious living conditions and thus exacerbated Haitians’ risk and vulnerability to disasters. The PDNA document states that the location of dwellings “on steep slopes” or “at the foot of the drainage basin” compounds residents’ vulnerability to natural hazards. The document goes on to explain that such locations are prone to flooding and can result in houses being swept away during heavy rains or hurricanes. The PDNA further proposes that the “proliferation of flimsily-constructed buildings” and “overall fragility of the infrastructure” with no earthquake-resistant materials and unauthorized development increases the population’s vulnerability to earthquakes.

Further, the PDNA identifies environmental degradation as yet another crucial factor in Haiti’s vulnerability to disasters, both past and future. The PDNA explains that human activity and resultant deterioration of natural resources have led to environmental vulnerability to natural hazards. One example of environmental degradation is the depletion of natural forest land or deforestation due to the use of firewood and charcoal for domestic energy purposes. All of the documents fail to acknowledge historical external influences on environmental degradation such
as “intensive monocropping of export commodities” (p.1) under the colonial plantation system (McClintock, 2004) or the U.S. production of rubber trees that caused soil erosion (Danto, 2008).

High winds, floods, landslides and mudflows wrought by hurricane season from May to November and Haiti’s location in the seismic activity zone characterize the country as disaster-prone. The PDNA reports that “Haiti has the highest index of vulnerability to cyclones of all the developing small island states” and “has recently been identified as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.” Human-caused modification of nature, such as deforestation, air pollution, watersheds, and soil erosion, has further aggravated the predisposition to natural calamities in a country already prone to natural disasters due to its geography. To avoid the harsh consequences of natural hazards, disaster-prone areas require special disaster preparedness and a crisis management system. The PDNA and other documents regard the lack of such preparedness to withstand and respond to the 2010 earthquake as one of the factors that contributed to the risk and vulnerability of Haitians.

The final theme of the risk and vulnerability discourse is poor sanitation, hygiene, and health infrastructure. Before the earthquake, safe water access in Haiti was amongst the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean and access to sanitation was amongst the lowest in the world (the IFRC). According to the IFRC, the cholera epidemic in the aftermath of the earthquake was a result of poor hygiene practices and the weaknesses in the water and sanitation system, as well as a “fragile and unequipped health system” (the IFRC). In contrast with the Miami Herald, the IFRC fails to acknowledge, however, that cholera was brought by U.N. troops.

Summary of risk and vulnerability discourse. In summary, it is the “chronic under-resourcing” and “chronic under-development” combined with the natural disaster that made the
nation, which “was already on its knees,” lie prostrate (the IFRC). The IFRC summarizes the production of disaster in the following manner:

Take an urban setting in one of the world’s poorest countries, add a couple of million people packed tightly together in poorly constructed dwellings built on steep or otherwise hazardous sites, omit enforced building codes, construction quality inspections, adequate urban planning, sewerage systems and municipal solid waste management and shake. Hard. – outcome: lives lost, over a million displaced, 80-90% buildings destroyed…

The documents that emphasize the risk and vulnerability discourse promote the need “to spend more development assistance on proactive attempts to reduce vulnerabilities that can lessen disaster impact” (the IFRC). In such a construction of disaster, the vision for action is less linear and technical than in other conceptions. It suggests comprehensive, multi-layered and transformative change where action needs to be taken in each of the nine areas of risk and vulnerability.

A window of opportunity. The documents under study bring up yet another perspective of the 2010 disaster wherein it is seen as a window of opportunity to reconstruct Haiti “on new foundations” (the Action Plan), “to build back better” and to “to enable new communities to flourish” (U.S. Strategy). This understanding of disaster appears to be intertextual across the documents under study and frames the vision of post-earthquake recovery.

However, the angles of this discourse strand of disaster differ depending on the data source. For example, in the U.S. Strategy and policy documents produced by the GOH, the opportunity for change is seen through an economic lens; i.e., the goal is to become a more economically stable and viable nation, a competitive partner in the global market. In the Oxfam
documents, the view of disaster as opportunity is concerned with the movement toward a more socially equitable and just society. Similarly, the IFRC sees the post-earthquake situation as “a chance to rise,” “a rare opportunity to effect large-scale change” and an “opportunity to put power into the hands of the people affected by the disaster.” Integrating sanitation into the larger development efforts is one example of an opportunity that the IFRC sees in the post-disaster situation. That is to say that organizations appear to have similar visions of recovery, distinct from the policy documents.

Discourses of Recovery

I have identified five main themes that constitute the discourse strand of disaster recovery. Across the documents, the process of disaster recovery in Haiti is constructed through: 1) emergency solutions and humanitarian aid; 2) “new Haiti” and “building back better”; 3) livelihood renewal and community orientation; 4) disaster recovery as an economic development venture; and 5) sustainable disaster recovery.

Technical terms such as “reconstruction” and “rebuilding” prevail in defining and naming the recovery process, thus framing it as a restoration and development of the physical environment. Perhaps an indicator of such a preoccupation with the material aspects of recovery, capacity-building, participation and the resilience of local citizens are underdeveloped in the policy documents. Nevertheless, the recovery process is referred to as a “historical duty for each Haitian.” Similarly, the issues of mental health and psychosocial recovery are invisible in the Action Plan of the Haitian Government.

Emergency solutions and humanitarian aid. Short-term visions and emergency solutions prevail in the narratives of disaster recovery. This theme is most visible in the Miami Herald and organizational documents. The Miami Herald focuses on short-term, emergency
action orientations such as rescue efforts, debris and corpse removal, the provision of humanitarian supplies (food, water, tents and medical supplies), emergency medical assistance, emergency evacuations, temporary protection status, military troops, donations and fundraisers. Port-Au-Prince is at the focus of such emergency solutions, while relief and recovery work outside Port-au-Prince is largely invisible across the documents. In addition, in light of growing despair, scenes of looting and violence at the sites of aid distribution, military troops are put into action as yet another humanitarian short-term solution. However, the Miami Herald also acknowledges that troops are welcomed by the Haitian people.

Temporary housing and shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene provision, sexual assaults and safety, disorderly distribution of emergency supplies and preparedness for the hurricane season are all components of the immediate needs on which Oxfam, the IFRC and the Miami Herald focus. The continuous focus on emergency camps, provision of emergency sanitary and medical supplies and accounting for money spent on relief efforts all testify to the emphasis on crisis response made by the IFRC and Oxfam until 2012. These organizations are also concerned about people staying in the camps longer than needed and seek ways to ensure a better “balance between essential assistance and not encouraging people to stay.” Oxfam and the IFRC consider the lack of land registers as the greatest impediment to the implementation of relocation programs for IDPs.

The Miami Herald criticizes the nature of expenditures made by aid organizations and slow disbursement of money pledged for disaster recovery purposes. Overall, the Miami Herald with the question of where all the money went. The following excerpt from the Miami Herald explains the (mis)allocation of funds to administrative costs and salaries and “band-aid” solutions:
More than 200 nonprofit groups and governments around the world rushed to Haiti’s aid after the Jan. 12 quake. But the absence of construction cranes and stalled progress on major projects such as hospitals and schools has many people wondering: Where did all that money go? The short answer: Keeping people alive. It went to employing Haitians in short-term low-paying jobs, providing tents and tarps, and supplying food for four months. It paid for amputations, vaccinations of a million people and rubble removal. But Haitians, watchdog groups and other critics complain that much of the money raised went toward foreigners' salaries, expensive vehicles or sits in the bank waiting for projects to get moving.

This criticism supports the point that recovery was largely addressed through emergency solutions without long-term vision and planning.

“New Haiti” and “building back better.” In line with the construction of disaster as a window of opportunity, the vision of recovery that unites the discourse production in all the documents is related to the idea of a “fresh start” for Haiti (PDNA), a hope for change and improvement. This narrative is concerned with the grand renewal of Haiti, a “re-envisioning” (Oxfam) and “re-shaping” (PDNA) whereby new foundations will be laid in order to become “an emerging country” (Action Plan). This is echoed in the discourse of “building back better” and affirming the need for a “new foundation of the State” (PDNA) and a “complete reconstruction” (the Miami Herald) that can be found in the news media, organizational documents and especially the policy documents.

Despite what can be perceived as a unified vision for change across the documents, the angles of this narrative of, and actual action towards, recovery are quite distinct. The “new society,” for example, is a component of this grander vision and appears in the Action Plan and
the Oxfam documents. For Oxfam, the grand renewal is about building a “more equitable Haiti.” In light of the high social divide in Haiti and their concern that the “haves” will benefit more and more quickly than the “have-nots,” Oxfam implies a commitment to social change by their focus on eliminating gender violence and fostering the inclusion of women and a pro-poor reconstruction process.

For the Haitian Government, as is postulated in the Action Plan, re-creating Haiti anew is about “a fair, just, united and friendly society”; “a society with a modern, diversified, strong, dynamic, competitive, open and inclusive economy”; “a society in which people’s basic needs are met quantitatively and qualitatively”; “a knowledge-based society with universal access to basic education… and the capacity for scientific and technical innovation.” The very title of the Action Plan states that it is not simply a plan for post-disaster recovery or returning to pre-disaster equilibrium, but also a plan and an opportunity “to re-launch the country on the path of development.”

To this end, finding “new types of action” and “new ways to cooperate,” breaking “with previous approaches” and making “a qualitative change,” and setting a “genuine fresh foundation of the State” demarcate the social discourse of Haiti’s proposed revival. Decentralization and de-concentration of economic activity in Port-au-Prince and public administration, as well as macro-economic development, drive the vision of a “new Haiti” in the policy documents produced by the Haitian Government.

Similarly, the U.S. Strategy envisions “Haiti to stand in the hemisphere as an ally for regional security, an important partner in trade, and a valued neighbor.” This vision is to be achieved through “a new course of US engagement in Haiti, a course that will eventually allow”

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Haiti to become a “thriving emerging market,” an economic partner that contributes to the global economy (the *U.S. Strategy*).

It appears that the common concern across all the documents can be reduced to micro- and macro-economic and political improvement in Haiti, rather than a simple “return to semblance of normal life” (the IFRC). Perhaps this fact explains why psychosocial recovery and issues of mental health are largely ignored in the documents under study.

**Livelihood renewal and community orientation.** In contrast to policy documents, the documents produced by the aid organizations construct disaster recovery as a micro-economic, community support and community-building undertaking. The IFRC and Oxfam see post-earthquake recovery as a “new start” and an opportunity for livelihood renewal and community support and further development in terms of micro-economic activity and the establishment of sustainable water sanitation and hygiene practices. In terms of sanitation services and hygiene, the IFRC regards the reconstruction period as a time of opportunity to not only “integrate sanitation together with plans for houses, roads, water, electricity and communication improving lives for many Haitians,” but also an opportunity “for sanitation systems to provide sustainable livelihoods, converting the health risks that excreta represent into jobs tomorrow.”

Both humanitarian aid organizations focus on the community-based nature of prevention and recovery, but also emphasize long-term community development. They agree that “adhering to a community-based approach supports those affected in driving their own recovery based on their humanitarian needs and capacity while ensuring their protection and dignity” (Oxfam). They model this standpoint through the discourse about their own work: consulting, training, “encouraging communities to participate in discussions and decisions,” and encouraging “active and responsible citizenship and the participation of civil society in the
process of reconstruction” (Oxfam). Likewise, the IFRC aims to incorporate local knowledge and practices and to “improve on what exists.” They advocate for “putting [Haitians] in charge of their own development” and assert that “the Haitian population must be architects of their own recovery.” They suggest that “meaningful engagement” helps to empower beneficiaries in their own recovery.

However, the IFRC warns that it is important to keep in mind that not every community or camp is alike. A context-oriented approach is critical. Different characteristics of camps and communities may require different approaches in determining the most appropriate solutions to residents’ needs. They suggest that camps are not close-knit established communities but “collections of displaced people”; thus, communities need to be built. They present an example of a camp where residents organized “clean-up days” and competitions with dance and music at the end of the day to foster a sense of community. According to the IFRC, camp committees are yet another manifestation of collectivity, and members are generally genuinely concerned about the well-being and the best interests of the camp residents. However, they also observed self-appointed (i.e., non-elected) individuals seeking to satisfy their own needs rather than those of the communities’ which they claimed to serve.

Both aid organizations see job creation and cash-for-work programs as intermediary instruments to support livelihoods economically. They also claim having used short-term employment opportunities to provide residents with short-term salary support and to engage local citizens in the relief and recovery efforts and provide transitional support to foster livelihood renewal in the long-term. Both organizations sought to engage local people in “on-the-job training and skill-building activities to enhance people’s job prospects in the future” (the IFRC).
Catering to the expressed need for jobs or income “as a priority over immediate survival needs such as food,” both organizations also sought to improve access to credit in order “to safeguard short-term welfare and generate economic activity.” Cash inputs, such as grants or loans, were also used to help people meet immediate needs and restore their abilities to generate income. Unconditional grants, such as cash support for families in the rural areas hosting displaced from Port-au-Prince, are an example of creating opportunities for people to set their own priorities. Some families used this money to buy things to resell. For example, Oxfam provides an example of an elderly couple buying coffee in the high season to sell for a better price during the low season. Conditional grants were given out in combination with training and technical advice. Examples of support include vocational and business training on how to calculate profit and manage capital. Also, organizations consider it very important to assist small businesses as potential future sites of job creation through financial and training assistance.

**Disaster recovery as an economic development venture.** Since the 2010 earthquake is generally seen as affecting economic flows (production losses and wage loss) and slowing down economic activity and performance (production and employment), a top-down economic and macro-economic master narrative frames action towards disaster recovery in the policy documents. In short, according to this narrative, it is the return to productive economic activity and further “economic growth” that should guide the recovery process and define its success. In the words of the *Action Plan*, the goal of the recovery process is “to pursue efforts to restore a sense of normality to economic life.”

The vision of disaster recovery in the policy documents is generally constructed as an economic development venture. In such a vision of recovery the re-creation of the image of Haiti as aid-dependent and re-branding it as a more business-friendly environment open to
foreign investment is central. Such a dominant, aid-negating perspective promotes development megaprojects and job creation, through industrial parks and otherwise, as leading recovery solutions. This discursive strand of disaster recovery is represented through three key themes: 1) development in recovery; 2) job creation; and 3) de-concentration.

**Development in recovery.** Across the documents analyzed there is a unifying assumption that Haiti cannot and will not simply go back to what it was before the earthquake. To this end, development initiatives have to guide recovery. The areas of development in recovery on which the documents focus include addressing infrastructural, economic, environmental, social and political vulnerabilities. While these vulnerabilities are not necessarily the result of the earthquake, all documents assume that addressing them will bring about sustainable development and, by extension, post-earthquake recovery.

Yet a closer look reveals that that the betterment of Haitian livelihoods is not the only, or even the primary, driver of the macroeconomic narrative; it is some form of economic growth that underlies these general areas of development. For example, port construction is designed to “enable the facilitation of imports and exports and encourage the emergence of industrial and commercial activity in the other regions of the country.” The **Action Plan** states that “implementing economic infrastructure” (roads, energy and communication) is “required for growth.” Similarly, the **Plan** views “administrative reorganization” and institutional rebuilding as a means to develop new economic centers and to balance the division of economic activity.

Similar to these examples from the **Action Plan** and **PDNA**, the **U.S. Strategy** states that “the animating ambition of the new USG strategy for Haiti is economic growth.” The strategy envisions its development priorities as building blocks for economic expansion. For example, power grids are to be built to make “Haitian industry competitive.” Roads and ports are needed
to transport produce to the markets. Housing and health are critical to “create jobs and sustain households.” Governance and rule of law are prerequisites needed to “provide stability for economic production, foreign investment.” All of these examples of development reflect a neoliberal agenda whereby actions are promoted that can pave the way for free market activity to flourish.

A number of steps have been taken towards this goal of economic renewal and development, such as private investments to build a “state-of-the-art” hotel and the erection of an all-glass business complex in Port-au-Prince (the *Miami Herald*). Another example of this “rebranding” of Haiti is the heavily emphasized $85 million international investment, Caracol Industrial Park, which hopes to provide 20,000 jobs and “represents a new era in international cooperation and assistance in Haiti — aid for trade” (the *Miami Herald*). Below is President Michel Martelly’s expressed support for such a model of recovery:

As Haitian and foreign officials laid the first stone of a new 605-acre industrial park on a bulldozed bean field this week, they each heralded it as not just a foundation for job creation but a new model for economic development. “This is the change we need. This is the development we need,” a dressed-down President Michel Martelly told the crowd gathered in Caracol, a rural community in northern Haiti that will soon be transformed by 65,000 new jobs in apparel, furniture and paint-making that the internationally financed but state-owned park is expected to attract.

Further, a new $59.5 million electricity plant – financed in part by South Korea's East-West Power company – was installed to supply power to the industrial park. Furthermore, international partnerships are put in action to improve the quality of Haitian products, such as a partnership of Haitian coffee growers with the Colombian Coffee Federation and Nestlé. The
Haitian Government has also signed contracts with international companies to manufacture products in Haiti. An agreement with a Korean firm that wants to manufacture medium and high voltage cables in Haiti is one example. This evidence suggests that the disaster situation in Haiti was not only interpreted as a window of opportunity in many documents under study; it also is used as such by many local and external actors pursuing economic gains.

**Job creation.** Similar to organizational documents, policy documents promote job creation as a mode of macro-economic recovery (as opposed to a more micro-economic focus of cash-for-work programs to support livelihoods in transition) through the creation of industrial parks, textile and garment factories. The economic productivity of the nation and the economic security of its citizens are additional elements of macro-economic recovery. The objective of creating jobs is seen as central; indeed, as a matter of urgency. In the short-term, for example, support programs for re-starting businesses or emergency employment services are proposed as a means of accomplishing such objectives.

In the policy documents of the Haitian Government, “massive job creation” programs are also seen as an integral component of the economic renewal and development theme. Job creation also appears as a key to implementing the de-centralization process successfully and keeping people in the new development regions. In addition, the need for job creation is framed as a means to shortening “the humanitarian aid phase” and restoring “meaning and dignity for all Haitians” (the Action Plan).

**De-concentration.** Since Haiti’s centralized political administration and concentration of economic activity and services in the capital, and the subsequent urbanization of the population, had been identified as disaster-related culprits, in the policy documents de-centralization and de-concentration are promoted as one of the central cures for Haiti’s ills. The
underlying logic of this solution is to “unblock the capital,” to spread the population more evenly and to distribute economic activities throughout the country.

*PDNA* proposes that the decentralization process will happen through: 1) spatial intervention “to prevent fresh population flows towards the metropolitan region”; 2) “keeping people away from Port-au-Prince” by creating better economic opportunities and quality of life; and 3) de-centralizing and de-concentrating governance and public administration of services across sectors and systems of basic services (education, health, information, sport and leisure, and protection).

In summary, a focus on development, foreign investments, and general “wealth creation” as a means towards economic revival and growth all speak to the vision of recovery that dominates the *Action Plan* and *PDNA*. The *U.S. strategy* also consistently emphasizes job creation, efficiency and productivity through modernization, loans and “incentives for more open, transparent, and competitive economic opportunity” as a means towards economic renewal and development.

**Sustainable disaster recovery.** Apart from the *Miami Herald* discourse, which has crisis solutions at the center of its narrative, the rest of the data center the need to transition eventually from “keeping people alive” and providing “substitute services” to long-term sustainable solutions. In this regard, Oxfam contrasts the “program” (long-term organization and development) and “project” (palliative aid, with no lasting solutions) approaches to tackling the problems facing Haitian agriculture. One of the Oxfam reports laments the fact that project or palliative approaches are in favor and tend to dominate recovery efforts, while more critical, lasting solutions are less common.
The theme of sustainability is represented in four key ways: 1) acknowledging pre-disaster risks and vulnerabilities; 2) stating the need to transition from emergency to long-term, sustainable solutions; 3) emphasizing the importance of disaster preparedness and risk management; and 4) promoting local participation and capacity-building. It is understood here that addressing and eradicating risks and vulnerabilities that existed before the earthquake would result in a sustainable recovery. Since I have already extensively covered the issues of risk and vulnerability while describing the discourse strand of disaster, I will now turn to describing the other three categories of sustainability.

**Transitioning from sustaining lives to sustainable solutions.** The discourses of recovery across the documents analyzed suggest that substitute services, such as temporary housing and emergency supplies, provided by the aid organizations and others are not the answer and cannot continue long-term. The *Miami Herald* raises the concern (and Oxfam and the IFRC allude to it) about the creation of long-term slums. Oxfam and the IFRC bring up the accusations of landowners, who claim that the international organizations are keeping people in temporary camps and creating long-term slums as an indirect outcome of their service provision. The dilemma here, according to both aid organizations, is related to how to strike a balance between providing essential assistance and access to aid and avoiding inadvertently contributing to the creation of long-term slums.

It is in 2011 that the IFRC begins to plan the transition from its temporary sanitary services to a full control and management by local authorities and communities. Due to already weak pre-disaster conditions, and compounded by the cholera outbreak in 2011, emergency water and sanitation services lasted “considerably longer than most operations would.” Desludgable toilets are suitable for the emergency and recovery phases, but are not sustainable in
the long term because of cost and logistics. In 2012 the shift from providing relief items to supporting communities in building resilience and taking ownership of their own recovery is evident in both organizations. Organizations see these transitions to long-term solutions as integral to sustainable disaster recovery.

Disaster preparedness and risk management. Disaster preparedness is another aspect of sustainable recovery. In light of the two identified points of vulnerability, i.e. Haiti’s vulnerability to disasters and the lack of disaster preparedness system, disaster preparedness and risk management are at the center of the post-earthquake recovery discourse in the policy and organizational documents. The policy documents predominantly refer to this process in terms of management as opposed to preparedness. The PDNA encourages all involved to learn to live with risk, rather than fearing it; they advocate for the creation of “a culture of risk within the nation.”

Helping communities to prepare for and manage disasters remains a key priority, as each year rainy hurricane seasons bring risks of flooding and landslides, threatening lives and livelihoods. The organizational documents put forward a few steps to ensure community-level disaster preparedness: 1) securing food stock, relief items and emergency shelter; 2) organizing outreach activities to increase awareness about the steps that can be taken to reduce risks; 3) training disaster responders and establishing community-based early warning systems (text messages, sirens, and megaphones); 4) reducing precarious living conditions; and 5) preserving the environment.

Discursive constructions and practice of participation. Local participation and capacity-building activities are practices related to sustainable recovery. All the documents under study, some to a greater extent than others, engage in the rhetoric of local inclusion and
participation. In this rhetoric, the emphasis is on the need to center the Haitian Government and Haitian efforts, guided by Haiti’s visions and post-disaster reconstruction needs. Examples of common and intertextual proclamations include: “with Haitians in the lead”; “in line with Haitian guidance,” and “Haitians…must steer the future of their country.” In these statements, “Haitians” is generally used as a homogeneous term without specification of who they are exactly (e.g. Haitian poor, elite, politicians, women, youth, or older adults).

In the PDNA, the importance of local participation is expressed in terms of the need to include local residents and what is broadly referred to as “civil society” (youth and community organizations) in the reconstruction process. The PDNA particularly accentuates a space for women to participate, be it in reconstruction, politics or the job market. In the organizational documents, participation and inclusion of local non-elite disaster survivors surfaces through specific stories from the grassroots, and is cast both as an absolute moral and ethical obligation. The anecdotes provided in the organizational documents reveal that to the local survivors, micro-level acts of participation (e.g. translating, volunteering as nurses or distributing water), as contributions to recovery efforts and helping others appear to have a type of spiritual meaning, i.e. they are inspired to participate for spiritual or religious reasons.

For the IFRC and Oxfam, including and centering local actors in the recovery process is a moral obligation. The Oxfam progress reports strongly advocate for a “Haitian led recovery” and the inclusion of local people. Both organizations report engaging in community outreach, consultation, hiring and training of local residents “to empower and to equip people to be true partners in their recovery” and to identify “what would best help them to return to a semblance of more normal life.” For example, the IFRC reports using an “improve what exists approach.” They describe consulting camp dwellers to learn about and to improve their own practices (e.g.
improve the *bayacou* system of toilet clearance by installing manual de-sludging pumps and toilets that use little or no water). Cash-for-work programs serve as another example of engaging local people in the relief and recovery efforts, but the way the organizational documents present them also imply a sustainable recovery component. For example, both Oxfam and the IFRC hired camp residents to keep the latrines clean, “generating much-needed income” and stimulating community involvement.

The IFRC promotes the discourse of community engagement and portrays local participation in major ways: (1) by engaging the population in cash-for-work programs to improve sanitation and hygiene; (2) by installing “volunteer camp security systems”; (3) through the use of nurses or translators; (4) through community-building activities like a camp cleaning competition or dances and musical events; and (5) by setting up committees in the camps. As mentioned above, however, the document warns that camp committees may be “self-appointed rather than representative” and led by self-interest. However, they provide no evidence to support this argument or opinion. To bypass and delegitimize such undemocratic establishments, the IFRC suggests working through and with women’s groups who, according to the IFRC, tend to be more reliable and community-oriented.

The *PDNA* and Oxfam give special attention to the participation of women. The need for cultural change in terms of gender equality and special attention to the needs of women is woven into each sector of needs in the *PDNA*. The *PDNA* prescribes a solution for such change in four key ways: 1) ensuring equal representation of women in politics and the judicial system, 2) promoting inclusion of women in the job market, revenue-generating activities and recovery/reconstruction process, 3) attending to women’s special health needs and 4) providing protection to girls and women against violence in the tent camps.
Neither the U.S. government documents nor the *Action Plan* place significant emphasis on participation of local citizens in the recovery strategy. Only towards the end of the document does inclusion of Haitians – or rather, “greater use of Haitians and Haitian-American firms, local NGOs, and U.S. small, minority and women-owned businesses” – appear in the discursive construction of recovery produced by the *U.S. Strategy*.

The exclusive practices of powerful recovery actors are also visible, which, in effect, weakens participation. Oxfam provides a variety of examples in which development organizations bypass local actors, actively undermining and excluding them. Examples include the U.N. holding meetings in French, rather than Haitian Creole, or the Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC) allowing only two representatives of Haitian civil society – “one representative appointed by the unions and one representative appointed by the business community” (compare this to allowing ten representatives from the international donor community) – to serve as voting members of the IHRC. Lastly, according to one of the Oxfam reports, the *Action Plan* was predominantly prepared by the World Bank and endorsed by Haitian elites. Oxfam explains that “the process was top-down, non-consultative, and not owned by the Haitian state or people.” I find that the way participation was constructed and framed might be related to the way diverse recovery actors were represented or constructed in the analyzed documents, which I will discuss further below.

**Discourses of Recovery Actors**

There is a variety of diverse actors that were and are still engaged in disaster relief and recovery in Haiti. I have discerned a number of recovery actors: celebrities, foreign countries, for-profit industries, members of the Haitian diaspora in the U.S., the Haitian Government, local residents, the U.S. government, international financial institutions, multilateral and bilateral
organizations, NGOs and religious and missionary groups. However, I will concentrate on the five most frequently coded categories of recovery actors: (1) local disaster survivors; (2) the Haitian Government; (3) the international community; (4) aid organizations and international NGOs; and (5) the Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC).

**Local disaster survivors.** I find that in the policy documents there exists a tendency to portray local disaster survivors as homogeneous. Policy documents generally conceive of local people as representatives of one of the three clusters: civil society (e.g. youth associations), vulnerable groups (e.g. women, children and older adults) and the private sector. In contrast, the organizational documents illuminate the heterogeneity and, in fact, inequality of Haitian society. In this regard, Oxfam advocates for poor communities to be prioritized, explaining that “in a socially divided society such as Haiti, there is a real danger that the better off and politically influential will secure their needs first.” The *Miami Herald* provides a nuanced, heterogeneous representation of Haitian people.

**Civil society.** I observe a two-fold narrative pattern with regard to civil society, wherein the sector is seen as a development target that needs strengthening, and at the same time is regarded as an integral actor in recovery. Seen in these two simultaneous ways, civil society is perceived as in need of strengthening its role and capability of rebuilding community infrastructure. Strengthening local community and civil society organizations are also a part of a larger strategy to improve democratic processes. In this light, the *PDNA* proposes supporting civil society, especially “young people’s associations,” and to promote “dialogue on public policies.” Indeed, the policy documents emphasize the role of youth and student organizations; for example, to mobilize in disaster prevention or “recover documentary assets… and rescue cultural property.”
The policy documents also discursively assign civil society with roles and responsibilities as an active actor of recovery. They see “organized civil society” as a key support in preventing, providing care pursuant to, and punishing violence against women. Concerning local residents of the communities, the following passage from the PDNA rhetorically assigns them the key role of rebuilding; however, I find that this narrative is not consistent (there is evidence that suggests that external actors have an active role) throughout the PDNA:

Residents are and will continue to be key players in rebuilding their homes and neighborhoods, whatever the amount of the aid provided by the Government and the international community. The aim of neighborhood reconstruction must therefore be to support strategies and initiatives put forward by the people themselves. Communities will be encouraged to work in organized groups to settle questions of land tenure, to prepare community projects, to organize local savings, to make decisions about housing design and the use of building materials, and to manage financial aid for reconstruction.

The PDNA anticipates that civil society will become more responsible for disaster prevention and response. While civil society is given a fair amount of attention in the PDNA, its visibility disperses in the Action Plan. Its mention is limited to a passing reference as a partner in regional development and potential consensus builder regarding democratic institutions.

**Private sector.** The private sector plays one of the central roles in the discourse of recovery put forward by the Action Plan. However, before serving as an “essential player of Haiti’s renewal,” it has to be rehabilitated from the destruction of 2010. As a sector that experienced the most losses and damage from the earthquake, the private sector (medium and
small sized businesses) is also seen as a target of reconstruction and is prescribed modernization activities, “palliative loans,” and investment as rehabilitative remedies.

The PDNA outlines different capacities of the private sector that need to be strengthened: its capacity for creating jobs, its capacity for using new techniques and building regulations in the reconstruction process. However, the exact ways in which building or strengthening the capacities of the private sector will occur remains unclear.

On the other hand, the policy documents view the private sector as an active agent responsible for recovery and development. The Action Plan has a grand vision for the private sector once it is rehabilitated. In the long run, the private sector is to operate as an “engine of wealth” and a funding source, a job creator and a partner for the government and the international community. The Haitian Government envisions the following future for the business sector as a recovery agent:

First, the private sector plans to create an estimated 500,000 jobs, in particular through the strengthening and creation of small and medium businesses, including in the construction and agricultural sectors. To achieve this objective, the rebuilding of Haiti will need to be inclusive and to favor local labor and business, as well as local production, irrespective of the financing source.

Also, the Haitian Government assigns the private sector a partner role in “rehabilitation/reconstruction activities” and regional development through providing jobs and investing in development such as port infrastructures, renewable energy, and water sanitation facility construction, among other areas. The Haitian Government emphasizes the job creation function of the private sector in the agricultural, construction, civil engineering, crafts and tourism sectors. However, a caveat here is that as the Plan itself states, some forecasts predict that the re-
construction business “over the next five years” will be dominated “by foreign firms and a small minority of Haitian firms.”

**Haitians who lived and who died: patients, corpses, and helpless objects of aid.** This discursive dynamic prevails in the policy and organizational documents and the *Miami Herald*. In this perspective, local Haitians are depicted as helpless victims, lawless masses, border threats and nameless corpses that need to be rescued, saved, or buried.

In 2010, the victimizing narratives of local earthquake survivors prevail in the *Miami Herald* coverage and in the reports of the organizational documents. Haitian people are portrayed as helpless and powerless victims, specifically as: rescued, injured, amputees, patients, bereaved, homeless and internally displaced, jobless, hungry, desperate mothers giving away their children, and orphaned, trafficked or adopted children. Injured with “scrapes and scratches … deep gashes, open head wounds, crushed bones and badly fractured arms and legs” is what the IFRC observed in the post-disaster scene in the first months. In addition, the plight of nameless dead bodies permeates the narration of the post-disaster scene in 2010. Only a couple of them are personified in the *Miami Herald*, such as the following:

For Mirkerlange there will be no church service, no running your hand along the closed casket in disbelief. For her there will be no procession, no family members and friends lined along the street, some crying and wishing her a bon voyage. No singing "Dieu tout-puissant, quand mon coeur considère . . . ", a solemn French funeral song. She, like many others who have died in the earthquake, will likely be picked up along with the rubble by a bulldozer and flung into a mass grave with other broken bodies.

In the *Miami Herald* coverage in 2010, the survivors are also discursively constructed as lawless masses: chaotic and disorganized aid recipients or “unruly crowds,” looters desperate for food,
squatters, violent protesters, child traffickers, illegal refugees fleeing to the U.S. and Dominican Republic, and criminal deportees from the U.S. The protests and demonstrations are most often portrayed as violent and aggressive by the Miami Herald. In addition, in the narratives of the U.S. government, which the Miami Herald seeks to deconstruct and criticize, earthquake survivors are both “othered” and discursively constructed as an unwanted threat.

The U.S. Strategy echoes this position, stating that the “future of Haiti implicates specific American interests,” i.e. “security at home.” Similar concerns of Haitian earthquake survivors as threats and actual Draconian border protection policies and practices are echoed in the Dominican Republic. Examples of precautionary measures include the strengthening of border control, creating space (e.g. tents set up in the Guantánamo Bay naval base in Cuba and the Krome detention center in Miami) to shelter, and preparing to interdict and repatriate, those fleeing from Haiti.

Local disaster survivors: resilient and resistant. While policy documents generally see disaster-affected individuals and communities as targets of help and interventions, the organizational documents and the Miami Herald articles also portray the same population as resilient and resistant recovery actors with agency. In the narratives wherein local survivors do express their agency and are indeed active citizens, it is through self-organized and self-mobilized participation in relief and recovery that earthquake survivors engage. The participation of local recovery actors is visible through the news stories of people helping each other, protesting and resisting unjust and unsatisfying practices (e.g. against fraudulent presidential elections, and U.N. military troops) and organizing informal businesses of street vendors in the place of absent government services and limited international aid delivery. Also, with the lack of government action, the “vocals within locals,” like the president of the Haitian
Chamber of Commerce or the restaurant owner with the help of others in the community, the *Miami Herald* depicts people taking planning and action into their own hands.

The organizational documents report on internally displaced people (IDPs) organizing against forced evictions from the camps, resisting money give-outs for “relocation” purposes, and organizing to defend their right to housing. Organizational documents also highlight the unity and teamwork of sanitation committees, volunteer camp security systems, hygiene promoters and volunteer translators. For example, the IFRC cites a president of a camp committee:

> People have been working very hard together in the last couple of weeks to clean up the camp and to encourage everyone to apply basic hygiene promotion practices. Before the earthquake, they didn't know each other, and they had their own way of doing things. Now they have learned to work together for the better of the community.

In the news articles, there also is a strong discursive strand that constructs earthquake survivors as spiritual and hopeful. For example, they are portrayed as remembering and honoring the dead, making sense of it all, doing the right thing, finding ways to get by and move on. In such portrayals, earthquake survivors come together to mourn, pray, dance, sing and celebrate life. The resilient spirit of earthquake survivors is reverberated in the meanings they make of this tragic experience, such as: "it's important to unite as one, pray as one, and do everything as one," "every person has to find a way to keep his chin up," or "we are tired of people always saying 'Haiti is a poor child.' We need to rise." There are several allusions to Haitian survivors as active agents taking fate into their own hands because of the weak performance of the government.
**Government of Haiti (GOH).** I find that two distinct views of the GOH exist: in its portrayals of itself in the *Action Plan* and the *PDNA* and in the perceptions of aid organizations, media and *U.S. Strategy*. The dominant theme of this latter discursive category is the critique of the absent, paralyzed and passive Haitian Government in need of capacity-building activities. On the other hand, the Haitian Government positions itself as a determined leader, a proactive agent in the driver’s seat of the recovery effort. Both the IFRC and Oxfam strike a balance between their critique and an acknowledgement of the Haitian Government’s productive actions, perhaps an indicator of their conscious choice not to perpetuate the government’s ubiquitous incapability narrative.

In the stories produced by the *Miami Herald*, the Haitian Government is portrayed as largely ineffective. In each of the three years studied, the reporters portray the government as chaotic and incapable in some way or other. The administration of President René Préval is blamed for inaction and deemed slow, shattered, absent, lacking leadership, and planning initiative in its response to the 2010 earthquake. A woman interviewed by the *Miami Herald*, Marie-Carmel Plasir, a 47-year-old woman living in a makeshift encampment, indeed wonders: "Government? Do we have a government?"

On the contrary, the Government of Haiti, through the discourse in the *PDNA* and the *Action Plan*, suggests that it has the recovery process under control and knows what needs to be done and how to do it. As if to reclaim its lost legitimacy during the disaster response phase, the way the *Action Plan* discusses and positions the government paints an image of an intact, responsible and organized actor.

I find that in the documents produced by the Haitian Government, the majority of the roles and responsibilities for the recovery process are discursively assigned to the government. It
is affirmed that the government played the key role in the immediate disaster response “without delay.” The main objective of the government in the recovery process, as stated in the PDNA, should be to create jobs and income “as a matter of urgency.”

The government is also represented by the organizations and news media as making steps towards rebuilding and economic development through building international partnerships and passing legislature to make Haiti more business-friendly. Oxfam and the IFRC also strike a balance between their critique of the Haitian Government’s inactions and acknowledgement of the actions taken. They emphasize the proactive and effective response of the DINEPA (National Water and Sanitation Directorate) and the Housing and Public Building Unit’s 16/6 project relocation program for displaced persons. Additionally, both organizations in their reports seek to center the need for partnering with local authorities and advocate for Haitian authorities to receive the funding and support that they need. The U.S. Strategy also shows how the government of Haiti engages, e.g. Ministry of Public Works, working together with the U.S. Government and the U.N. to assess 377,000 buildings for safety and habitability.

Lastly, all the documents also view the Haitian Government as a target in need of change. The devastation and shock that the Haitian Government experienced (ministries collapsed, employees killed, documentation and equipment lost) after the earthquake, in the words of the Action Plan, presented an opportunity for reforming existing structures. More specifically, the disaster of 2010 created an opportunity to envision the Haitian state anew and restart democratic institutions and general governance at ground zero. Policy documents state that institutional capacities, such as computerization, as well as the human capabilities of personnel, need to be built. The need for decentralization of government also serves as such an example. All documents consistently allude to the need for reducing dependence on
international funds as one of the responsibilities of the Haitian Government. In summary, across the documents the authors construct the government of Haiti as the leader of recovery efforts and simultaneously as one that needs outside help and capacity-building activities.

**International community.** Generally speaking, foreign actors such as foreign countries (especially the U.S. Government and nation) and multi-lateral organizations (U.N. and World Bank) constitute “the international community” in this data. The Action Plan views foreign actors or donors as financial providers that have expressed solidarity in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and are expected “to reiterate [their] long-term commitment to support the country during reconstruction and to do so with respect for the Haitian leadership.” Perhaps aware of the need to break through the old and ineffective ways of “partnering,” the involvement of the international community, according to the Action Plan, cannot be the same as it has always been prior to the quake. Therefore “new types of action” and “a new form of cooperation and joint responsibility between Haiti and the international community” are to map the trajectory of this partnership.

The U.S. government is one of the key foreign actors involved in Haiti’s recovery. The discursive construction of the United States (government and nation) as a benevolent neighbor prevails in the Miami Herald and U.S. Strategy. In these constructions, by providing emergency supplies and temporary protection statuses, providing emergency evacuations and treatment of severely injured Haitians in U.S. hospitals, the U.S. government performs the role of the benevolent neighbor concerned with the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. However, some statements by the U.S. government that are revealed by the Miami Herald and stated in the U.S. Strategy, point to an internal self-interest in performing these benevolent deeds, namely keeping Haitians away from the U.S. borders.
The *Miami Herald* further constructs the U.S. as a generous benefactor, especially when it comes to “saving” children. Such benevolence and generosity are exemplified by the U.S. government issuing temporary protections status (TPS), American families adopting orphaned Haitian children, South Florida’s community taking Haitian children into local schools, and U.S. missionary groups rescuing children from the streets of Port-au-Prince.

The involvement of the South Floridian community in Haiti is especially spotlighted in the *Miami Herald*’s coverage. For example, Floridian volunteers are putting resources together and flying to Haiti to help, holding numerous fundraiser events, and helping Haitians to apply for temporary protection statuses. Also, the mayor of Miami is portrayed as actively involved in earthquake relief and recovery. A note must be made, though, that he is also critiqued for his over-concern and over-involvement with Haiti at the expense of his own constituency. The critique goes so far as to suggest that he is running the Haiti consulate in Miami and that the Floridian community’s generosity “must not be abused.”

Interestingly, the Haitian Government does not regard the international community as a key recovery actor. The authors of these policy documents make clear that the government of Haiti is a leader dictating disaster response and recovery efforts. To this end, the *PDNA* document explicitly states up front that it (the *PDNA* document) was created by the “Government and members of the International Community, under the direction of the Government of the Republic of Haiti.” The policy documents regard the international community as a side actor providing necessary support and assistance to the government, private sector and civil society of Haiti. And yet a closer scrutiny suggests that in actuality foreign actors had a major role to play such as the World Bank leading the post-disaster needs assessment efforts and administering the
Multi-Donor Trust Fund. Below I present evidence to further counter the rhetorical façade of foreign non-involvement in describing the IHRC as one of the recovery actors.

**Aid organizations and international NGOs.** The *Miami Herald* and organizational documents predominantly construct international non-governmental organizations as relief heroes, but are also largely criticized them as “bad Samaritans” (Chang, 2008) who offer “band-aid” solutions and a kind of aid that harms. The wide criticism of foreign humanitarian aid operations is expressed by local people, local Haitian business people, and local professionals, as well as the *Miami Herald* reporters. The key dissatisfaction lies in the fact that supplies, expertise and technology came from foreign countries rather than locally, and that relief efforts were concentrated in Port-au-Prince.

**Relief heroes and providers.** In 2010, aid organizations are constructed in the *Miami Herald* as hardworking relief heroes operating under extreme conditions with limited resources and also as resourceful providers of expertise, technology and emergency supplies. Such discursive constructions are common; consider as example the following snapshot from the disaster scene written in the *Miami Herald*:

> But hospitals, which saw an influx of severely injured people descend on their lawns, said they were still short the most basic supplies. "I have enough in that UNICEF kit we got from the President's wife to last until about 2 p.m.," Samedy said Monday morning." After that, our work here is done, because we have no supplies." His needs: oxygen, Band-Aids, iodine, syringes and pain medication… In the meantime, he is making do: He and other doctors fashioned a homemade cast and traction device out of rubble and branches for a young boy.
The reports produced by Oxfam and the IFRC exemplify the hard work of the international NGOs that extend beyond the relief phase. What is different in their stories, compared to heroic narratives of international NGOs in the news media, is that they accentuate the need for partnership and collaboration with local citizens and government authorities. Their narrative strands emphasize that the way they operate differs a lot from other aid organizations. That is, they claim being socially responsible (e.g. Oxfam providing “food kits” made up of local food instead of “foreign donated food”), cooperative (e.g. working closely with DINEPA, a national water supply and sanitation agency) and sustainability-driven (e.g. putting in place lasting solutions such as water and sanitation infrastructure). I provide examples of organizational discourses of other organizations in the following section.

**Bad Samaritans.** In the *Miami Herald* and organizational documents there also is a strong sentiment of criticism towards international aid organizations deeming them as bad Samaritans (someone who acts with good intentions but indirectly causes harm). While the newspaper articles predominantly criticize the misuse of funds, the organizational articles compare their own operations to those of other organizations. In such discursive constructions, aid organizations are accused of using funds for their own salaries and are criticized for incompetence and causing harm, such as by competing with Haitians for scarce resources or “working at cross purposes.” The *Miami Herald* summarizes such accusations and the effects of such practices by criticizing “foreign NGOs, some of which undermined local institutions by diverting resources from their coffers.”

There are two common critiques of the international NGOs. The first is related to aid groups failing to reach out to the private sector or to utilize local medical facilities and local expertise (e.g. medical staff), thus creating competition and hampering the local economy. The
following depiction of the post-earthquake realities provided by the *Miami Herald* reporters exemplifies a harmful effect of aid orientations on local medical professionals and staff:

One [hospital] closed its doors, forcing 177 nurses, doctors and staff out of work. Another slashed staff in half. A third resumed charging fees. Many employees and suppliers haven't been paid since the end of last year… "A private hospital that now wants to survive is facing [competition from] free medical care, which is OK. But it's a new challenge for survival.’” … "The foreign doctors came. They gave the medicine. But what about the employees, who were working 24 hours, what about the equipment…? Unable to pay bank loans and three months of salaries, Savain closed the hospital…

A second critique is related to international organizations importing relief supplies and failing to purchase goods and products from local farmers and producers (e.g. local water-bottling companies, bakeries and pasta factories). Such an approach to relief efforts is found to be problematic because it increases inflation and further hampers the already feeble local economy. In this regard, Oxfam serves as an example by not simply distributing imported food, but purchasing it from local farmers and businesses for “food-kits” distribution. According to the IFRC, the “aid process and the potential for inflation and the consequent impact on food security may produce counter-currents to successful recovery” due to food prices rising and putting a strain on rural areas.

Further, Oxfam and the IFRC suggest that different agencies have differing approaches to engaging local community residents such as paying for work vs. using voluntary “community support approach.” While they didn’t offer any examples of difficulties, according to the IFRC, this difference in approaches can lead to difficulties and tensions between agencies and within
communities. They advise that a unified approach should be taken, led by the needs on the ground. Also, the IFRC acknowledges that “limited space and opportunity for implementation may bring significant competition among agencies.” According to the recovery plans of the Haitian Government, aid organizations also require better coordination and management to avoid duplication of services and excessive spending and need to be in better tune with national programs. Oxfam and the IFRC are strong advocates for partnerships, with different organizations pooling their expertise.

**Interim Haitian Recovery Commission (IHRC).** The *Action Plan* conceptualized IHRC, a 20-member board made up of Haitians and foreign donors, as a recovery mechanism. The *Action Plan* proposes that the IHRC should serve the function of “effective co-ordination and deployment of resources” and respond “to concerns about accountability and transparency in order to maximize support provided by international donors.” It is important to present this recovery actor for several reasons. For example, according to Oxfam, the IHRC was established “under pressure from international community” as a central recovery mechanism and “under considerable U.S. influence” was failing to fulfill its function.

What appears most significant about the IHRC is related to the politics of representation and participation, namely who is represented, and thus who has the power to decide Haiti’s future. The *Action Plan* states that Haiti’s Prime Minister and “an eminent foreign figure” would be the chairs of the IHRC. The members of the IHRC who are entitled to voting rights consist of the representatives of: the Haitian Government, the business community, the donor community (who have donated at least $100 million U.S. dollars over a period of two years or at least $200 million for debt reduction) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
The rest of the members, such as one representative of the NGO community in Haiti and one representative of the Haitian Diaspora are not prescribed voting rights in the IHRC.

I find a solid representation of elites, experts and power holders; while the representation of the voices from the margins is unaccounted for in the composition of the IHRC. Also, it is puzzling that neither the main implementers of the Plan (i.e. NGOs) nor the objects of implementation (i.e. the larger disaster-affected public) are granted any say in decisions of any kind.

**Summary of the chapter.** Throughout this chapter I have compared the four communities of discourse (Yanow, 2000) – news media, international organizations, Haitian Government, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) – in their discursive production of disaster and recovery. The discourse communities converged in their conception of recovery with regard to the discourses of “new Haiti” and “building back better.” However, the meanings of “new Haiti” and “building back better” were different. In addition, each community of discourse brought up issues of sustainable recovery, albeit from different points of reference. All communities of discourse emphasized local participation and centered local actors in their visions of the recovery process. Spirituality and religion were consistently invisible across the communities of discourse.

The interpretations of disaster, conceptions of recovery, and constructions of recovery actors were divergent. Policy documents constructed disaster predominantly as a window of opportunity and in terms of risk and vulnerability; aid organizations and news media constructed disaster in terms of crisis and emergency and blamed the furious natural world for disaster’s consequences. Long-term economic development and a macro-economic framework guided the vision of recovery in the policy documents, while organizational documents and news media
focused on short-term humanitarian solutions and livelihood renewal. The Government of Haiti (through PDNA and the Action Plan) saw itself as a leader in the recovery efforts, while others saw it as paralyzed and in need of capacity-building interventions. Local disaster survivors as active and resilient actors of recovery were extensively emphasized in the discourses of aid organizations, but were largely invisible in the discourses of policy documents. The construction of local survivors as passive objects of help was prevalent in the news media accounts and at times in the narratives of aid organizations. The Haitian Government, USAID, and *Miami Herald* all constructed the international community as a group of benevolent actors, experts, and funders. Both aid organizations and news accounts provided a balanced construction of aid organizations and NGOs as relief heroes and providers on the one hand, and as “bad Samaritans” (Chang, 2008), hampering the local economy and misappropriating funds, on the other.

To summarize, in this chapter I have presented my findings related to the discourses of disaster, recovery and recovery actors produced by the *Miami Herald*, Oxfam, the IFRC, the Haitian Government, and the U.S. Government. I have uncovered a multitude of interpretations of the disaster event and a range of perspectives on post-disaster recovery and recovery roles. I have revealed the strongly prevalent discourses of crisis, risk and vulnerability and window of opportunity in framing the disaster. The discourse strand of recovery was evident through themes such as “new Haiti” and building back better, and economic renewal and development. I have also touched upon the discursive constructions of recovery actors (the Haitian Government, the international community, local disaster survivors and others) and issues of participation and capacity-building. In the forthcoming chapter, I discuss the meaning and implications of these findings in relation to my research questions and provide recommendations for future disaster response and research initiatives.
Chapter 6: Critical-Deconstructive Discussion

In this chapter I summarize and discuss the stakes involved in understanding the findings that emerged in my analysis of the discourses of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors. I develop my discussion into five sections around the research questions that I raised and the research goals that I set out to accomplish. To remind the reader, I set out to find answers to the following questions: (1) What are the discourses of disaster, recovery actors, and disaster recovery in post-earthquake Haiti? (2) In what ways do they relate to each other? (3) How do they converge and diverge? and (4) What are their discursive constructions in relation to the practices of participation? In terms of research goals, I sought: (1) to explore discursive constructions of disaster, recovery actors, and recovery; (2) to compare these discourse communities in terms of their disaster and recovery interpretation; (3) to examine the discursive constructions of participation; and (4) to infer the relationship between discourse production and post-disaster recovery policy and practice. To guide the reader through my discussion, I will indicate places where I am addressing a particular research question or goal.

I begin the chapter by corroborating my findings with existing literature on the interpretation of disasters. In this section, I also discuss the discursive pattern or logic that links discursive constructions of disaster (such as disaster as a window of opportunity) and related recovery interventions (such as economic development and modernization). I also offer a discussion regarding the implications of the diverging and converging discourses. Second, I discuss the discursive constructions of disaster recovery. Here, I focus on the grand narratives of the “new Haiti” and “building back better” that broadly populate the discourse of recovery in the data under analysis. In this section, I also unpack the discourse of economic development and discuss its relation to disaster opportunism (Klein, 2007). I also unveil those aspects of recovery
that are rendered relatively invisible in the discourses, such as psychosocial recovery, spirituality, and disability issues. Third, I discuss the discursive constructions of recovery actors through the lens of representation and policy feedback (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Soss & Schram, 2007). In this section, I also discuss constructions of participation. In each of these three sections, in the tradition of critical theory, I identify whose and what discourses are dominant and silenced.

**Discursive Constructions of Natural Disaster**

In this section I present a brief review of the way disasters are understood in different professional fields and in my data as well as what these constructions or interpretations mean in terms of solutions. In this section, I address questions 1, 2 and 3, and goals 1, 2 and 4. Here I expand on my previous literature review about the social construction of disasters in the media (Cox, et al., 2008; Mason, 2011) and how policies create citizens (e.g. Campbell, 2003). This discussion, grounded in the data, supports the visual representation of how discourses operate that I articulated in Chapter 3 (Figure 2); namely, that there indeed is a link between discourses of disasters and actions/interventions.

Through my data analysis, I identified five different discursive constructions of disaster across the documents under study: 1) crisis and emergency; 2) Nature’s fury; 3) window of opportunity; 4) risk and vulnerability; and 5) threat and criminalization. The construction of disaster as a *window of opportunity* and *risk and vulnerability* dominate the discourses of disaster across documents and are heavily employed by the Haitian Government and USAID. The *crisis and emergency* construction of disaster is especially visible in the discourses of the *Miami Herald* and aid organizations. These discourses and interpretations of disaster revealed in my
study reflect and complement previous interpretations of natural disasters in a diverse range of scientific fields, as I will discuss in greater detail below.

**Previous interpretations of natural disasters.** The discussion about social construction and interpretation of disasters is certainly not new. Historically, natural disasters have been understood through religious and spiritual lenses (e.g. Payton, 2013; Schencking, 2013). Interpreted as acts of God, for centuries disasters were assigned spiritual or religious meaning until the hard sciences appeared on the scene. When scientific reason began to dominate, it became possible to study physical agents of natural events scientifically and render them predictable, quantifiable, measurable, and thus controllable (Wisner et al., 2003; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999).

To date, numerous social scientific attempts have been made to understand and to deconstruct natural disasters as “unpredictable and extreme happenings” (Oliver-Smith & Hiffman, 1999, p.1). The fields of anthropology (e.g. Bollig, 2012; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999) and geography (e.g. Bankoff, Frerks, & Hilhorst, 2006; Blaikie, Cannon, Davis & Wisner, 1994) were pioneers in, and are at the vanguard of, these efforts. This scholarship has suggested that we need to cease interpreting disasters as simply natural events or predictable, technical-linear problems. Rather, these authors point out that disasters are actually complex consequences of a clash between the material and non-material worlds: natural hazards and social-cultural processes.

Anthropologists and geographers also advocate for focused attention on human activity (i.e. human modification of the environment) in seeking to understand what causes disasters and how to prevent and respond to them. The concept of vulnerability and risk was coined through these scholarly efforts and intellectual developments. These scholars have also studied cultural...
interpretations of risk and disaster, namely how “people view hazards, calculate risks, and assess what…constitutes a disaster” (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999, p. 8).

Political scientists and others have also recently embarked on the project of interpreting disasters through the lens of political economy. Here disasters are seen as political-economic opportunities (e.g. Klein, 2007) and as political events that impose political costs and trigger political change (e.g. Cohen & Werker, 2008). Political economist Mats Lundahl (2013) sees the earthquake in Haiti as “an example of how a protracted potential crisis was converted into an actual and accelerated one” (p. xv). He posits that the magnitude of disaster in Haiti can be explained through the clash of economic (population growth and resulting soil erosion) and political (“a predatory state” and “faulty institutions”) forces. Motter (2010), based on his analysis of the discourse of U.S. relief efforts after the Indian Ocean tsunami, has also suggested that disasters have political meaning. He explains that the aftermath of the tsunami presented an opportunity for the U.S. government to engage in the exceptionalist, nation-building discourse (through the rhetoric of compassion, generosity, and global leadership) to legitimatize humanitarian militarism in Indonesia. Svistova and Pyles (2012), in our analysis of U.S. Congressional Record hearings, reveal a similar dynamic in relation to the earthquake in Haiti.

In summary, disasters have been generally understood in terms of external occurrences to blame such as Acts of God, Acts of Nature, or Acts of Men and Women to use Payton’s terms (2013).

**Discourses of disaster and recovery interventions.** In framing the rationale for this study and drawing from critical theory and social constructionism, I have suggested that it is important to interpret the meanings of disasters and determine which interpretation(s) are dominant. In Chapter 3, in the visual synthesis of the literature, I articulated the importance of interpretation or deconstruction lies in the fact that these meanings are directly linked to the
exercise of action (or inaction), policy-making, and subsequent social and political outcomes. I presented numerous studies that reveal this link in relation to media discourses regarding a variety of social issues. For example, a strong media emphasis on crime has been associated with heavy police and military interventions in post-disaster settings (Sommers et al., 2006; Tierney et al., 2006); negative framing of poor people in the media has been associated with lower levels of allocation for social protection (Rose & Baumgartner, 2013). In addition, Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) have previously suggested that framing of calamities is an essential topic for study not simply in terms of how it arises, but also who takes command of the frame construction.

Through my research, I identify a textual pattern of, and a link between, naming disaster and framing action. In Table 2, I offer a synthesis of my findings in terms of constructions of natural disaster in Haiti (crisis/emergency; risk and vulnerability; window of economic opportunity; Nature’s fury and threat to U.S.) and subsequent interventions that surfaced in the data. I began to notice this pattern while analyzing my first source of data, the Miami Herald, and then applied the same hermeneutic method of analysis (Kinsella, 2006) – read the text, identified the plot, and traced patterns of logic within the text – to the remaining documents. I conceived of discourses as systems of thought with logic patterns and established connections whereby one line of thinking is associated with a certain pattern of action.

To ensure a detailed account of disaster interpretations and possibility for further theoretical developments, I complement the synthesis of my own findings with disaster interpretations that have been previously identified in the literature (i.e. political opportunity and acts of God). This list of disaster interpretations can be further broken down into understanding
disaster in terms of its causes (nature, risk and vulnerability, God’s act), consequences (emergency situation, heightened violence and crime) and opportunities (economic, political).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Discursive Constructions of Disaster</th>
<th>Recovery Interventions</th>
<th>Discourse Community</th>
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| Crisis/emergency or disrupted equilibrium, departure from the norm (physical and social disruption) | Return to a pre-disaster status quo: Emergency supplies, crisis intervention and psychological first aid, temporary solutions to ensure survival (emergency shelters, medical supplies, food kits, etc.) | • International NGOs  
• Miami Herald |
| Act of Men and Women/Risk and vulnerability; cause of underdevelopment and development. | Addressing pre-disaster conditions: e.g. deconcentration of economic activity, institution of disaster-resistant building codes and housing, land registry, reforestation projects. | • Haitian Government (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Action Plan)  
• USAID (U.S. Strategy)  
• International NGOs |
| A window of economic opportunity | Shock therapy: Modernization, privatization, foreign direct investment (FDI), development, economic growth (e.g. garment factories, industrial parks, power plants). | • Haitian Government (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Action Plan)  
• USAID (U.S. Strategy) |
| Act of Nature (“The angry earth”)/Nature’s fury | Technocratic solutions to control nature or disaster risk reduction (e.g. “rebuilding” and “reconstructing” the physical environment, extensive use of technology for mitigation, forecasting, prevention, and adaptation). | • Haitian Government (Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Action Plan)  
• USAID (U.S. Strategy)  
• International NGOs  
• Miami Herald |
| A threat to law and order/criminalization of the populace | Humanitarianism and militarism (e.g. military troops and humanitarian aid to keep people from emigrating). | • U.S. Strategy  
• Miami Herald |
| Act of God (cultural, spiritual/religious perceptions) | Spiritual and religious practices. | • Academic literature  
• Miami Herald |
| Political event and opportunity | Nation-building rhetoric; political change (e.g. emergence of social movements) or change in leadership. | • Academic literature |
A wealth of literature has been produced seeking to define and uncover meanings behind disasters. Many disaster scholars have pointed out (e.g. Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999; Perry & Quarantelli, 2005) that there exists no consensus on the concept of disaster. The lack of a unified definition (and interpretation) testifies to the fact that disasters are complex phenomena that cannot be eliminated by linear, technical solutions. But what interpretations or constructions of disasters frame the interventions that are put into action?

As I have presented in Chapter 3, there are numerous attempts in the disaster scholarship to link media representations of disasters to subsequent relief and recovery solutions (Cox et al., 2008; Mason, 2011; Motter, 2007). These scholarly attempts have been fragmented, however, and to my knowledge, no meta-reviews or studies have been previously conducted that discuss the link between discursive constructions of disasters and subsequent interventions in a systematic way. Similarly, there are scant theoretical developments that seek to establish this link between discourses and interventions or actions undertaken.

I begin to chart such a theoretical development in Table 2 and believe that it is significant in a number of ways. First, this theoretical development acknowledges that there exist diverse, and often competing, constructions of disaster situations. Second, in a systematic manner, it identifies the toolbox of disaster interventions that is put into action depending on which discursive construction of disaster is employed. It can serve as a tool for aligning recovery actors in their view of disaster and envisioning a comprehensive and united trajectory of disaster recovery. In addition, it reflects the complexity of post-disaster situations and supports the idea that disasters are wicked problems that necessitate complex solutions (Pyles & Svistova, 2015).
In addition, Stone (2001) argues that identifying causes of problems and causal stories serves not only to advance understanding and to seek solutions, but also to place blame, responsibility, and accountability for problems. According to her, causal stories are political instruments in that they are “strategically crafted” and manipulated by political actors “to make their versions [of stories] the basis of policy choices” (p. 189). This explanation of how causal stories operate is particularly compelling in understanding disasters as solely caused by natural forces that cannot be held responsible or accountable. And, as Stone (2001) sharply notes, such understanding or framing of disasters politically is “a good place to retreat” (p.191) when one is being blamed for causes and charged with responsibility.

The implications of diverging and converging discourses. The findings regarding the converging and diverging discourses of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors are significant for future disaster response and recovery planning. From a social constructionist standpoint, all these diverse discursive constructions are valid as they are derived from distinct knowledge bases and professional standpoints. However, they are neither complete nor comprehensive when standing alone. Therefore, the ultimate goal of deconstructive practice and interpretive policy is to create dialogue and build aligned collaboration among communities of discourse (Yanow, 2000). The negotiation of disaster recovery and synchronization of action across the field would strengthen recovery efforts in their effectiveness and impact, and help avoid duplication of services and working at cross-purposes. An example of such an effort is the “Harmonizing Agencies’ Initiatives for Post-Yolanda Actions” (HAIYAN) project launched by the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in the Philippines (UNDP, 2014). This project aims to provide an avenue for national and local government agencies and international donors to discuss and plan the implementation of recovery and rehabilitation projects.
Moreover, identifying which discourses (e.g., economic development and renewal in Haiti) and whose discourses (e.g., elite actors with resources, expertise, and power) dominate is a powerful practice in and of itself. Social constructionists believe that such deconstructive processes may disrupt dominant discourses and ways of being (Wood & Tully, 2006). In the case of Haiti, by consulting and incorporating perspectives of diverse recovery actors (especially those of local disaster survivors), inclusive, better-informed, and more culturally relevant solutions can be put into action. The “Voice of the voiceless” (HELP et al., 2010) project is an example of such an incorporation of the perspectives from the grassroots in order to balance the ideas of recovery conceived of by “experts” and outsiders.

Also, being a complex, multi-faceted and multi-layered problem, post-disaster situations call for complex, multi-dimensional views and solutions that are formulated by collaborative efforts. In practice, it might look like an integrated and holistic approach, wherein multi-actor recovery action is driven by multiple interpretations of disaster and conceptions of recovery. For example, Coles and Zhuang (2011) suggest building multi-actor integrated recovery action by first identifying similarities in organizational objectives and then building a common operating perspective. They propose an application of game theory to improve organizational cooperation and decision-making in post-disaster contexts.

However, previous experience shows that developing a common operating perspective is a challenging practice in post-disaster settings. Competing interpretations create a terrain for competing interests that are hard to accommodate in crisis and with limited resources (Davidson, 2010). Also, a cross-cultural context, complex relationships among recovery actors, and differences in the way diverse actors measure success of disaster recovery have been discussed
as barriers to building truly integrated systems of recovery (Coles & Zhuang, 2011; Davidson, 2010).

In summary, I argue that disasters in popular understanding are far too often interpreted simply as natural occurrences. Reducing natural disasters to their “natural” essence might mean that they can be understood scientifically and hence be easily predicted and controlled. But this common, rational-technical conception permits humankind the delusion that it has the ability to control the natural world as we continue to exploit it, thereby trapping ourselves into a growing vulnerability to natural disasters. My findings and previous literature on interpretations of disaster occurrences suggest that disasters need to be seen as complex phenomena, specifically in terms of vulnerabilities that were rampant before the disaster event (Pyles & Svistova, 2015; Stone, 2001).

**Discursive Constructions of Disaster Recovery**

In this section I discuss the discursive constructions of disaster recovery (Questions 1,2,3 and Goals 1,2, 3, and 4) that emerged through my data analysis: 1) emergency solutions and humanitarian aid; 2) sustainability issues; 3) livelihood renewal and community orientation; 4) disaster recovery as an economic development venture; and 5) “new Haiti” and building back better. I also discuss the areas of disaster recovery – psychosocial, disability-related, spiritual, and concerned with environmental preservation – that are either insufficiently developed or are entirely silenced across the documents. I close this section by discussing the potential implications of these contested discourses and discursive silences on sustainable recovery. Throughout the section I suggest that some of these constructions and discourses have a direct and explicit link with action orientations, while others serve as rhetorical facades to rationalize and legitimize practices that do not directly correspond to these constructions and discourses.
The central finding regarding construction of disaster recovery is that the rhetoric of building back better and envisioning a new Haiti prevail across the documents. All communities of discourse under analysis see sustainability issues as integral parts of “new” and “better” Haiti. However, the meanings of “new” and “better” are contested across the documents. The vision of disaster recovery as an economic development venture by the Haitian Government and USAID is contested by the short-term solutions and livelihood renewal envisioned by Oxfam and the IFRC.

**Deconstructing “building back better” and “new Haiti.”** The building back better framework emerged following the Indian Ocean tsunami and was first used in international relief and recovery efforts by Bill Clinton, who at the time was a U.N. Special Envoy for tsunami recovery (Fan, 2013). It since has been reused in post-disaster settings such as the 2005 Kashmir earthquake in Pakistan, Hurricane Katrina in the United States in 2005, and Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008 (Fan, 2013). The same rhetoric, or in Fan’s (2013) words, “recovery efforts’ mantra, guiding principle and enduring promise” (p. 1), began to circulate after the earthquake in Haiti. In the case of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, this discourse is invigorated through the narratives of “re-envisioning” and ”re-shaping” Haiti, affirming the need for a “new foundation of the State,” transforming Haiti into a just society and an emerging global partner (*Action Plan* and *PDNA*). Seeing the earthquake as an opportunity to develop, to strengthen and to generally improve Haiti, as opposed to simply returning to pre-quake conditions, is also highly prevalent across the documents under study.

My findings reveal that across the communities of discourse the dominant view of disaster recovery in Haiti is that of physical rebuilding and economic development. This view of recovery essentially defines the “better” aspect of the building Haiti back. However, Fan (2013) suggests that the idea of “better” can be polarized, divided between life-saving solutions today
for some and luxurious lifestyles tomorrow for others. Oxfam expressed a similar concern at the outset of relief and recovery efforts by stating that in Haiti the “haves” will benefit more and more quickly than the “have-nots.” Further, building on Klein’s (2007) work, I suggest that the building back better discourse may serve to rationalize and legitimize what she calls the shock doctrine and disaster capitalism.

In her case study examination of the building back better application after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in Aceh, the cyclone in Myanmar, and the earthquake in Haiti, Fan (2013) found that building back better meant different things to different actors. She suggests that building back better was used as a new “label that served to underline the importance of issues, approaches and initiatives in which they [actors] were already engaged” (p. 16). In essence, things were done in the same old ways, but with renewed and re legitimated emphasis. However, on a brighter side, she also acknowledges that the attempts of doing some things differently were evident, such as efforts by the international community to engage the Haitian Government in order to change the decades-long dynamic of aid bypassing local authorities.

Fan (2013) provides an example wherein the American Red Cross committed an unprecedented amount of direct budget support to the government. In my analysis, the efforts of direct collaboration with the local authorities were also evident in the reports produced by the IFRC and Oxfam. Nevertheless, Haitian authorities were left without full ownership of, and authority over, the recovery process. An estimate of 90% of funding was channeled outside of state institutions, while NGOs disbursed less than 1% of the funding to the government (Fan, 2013).

**“Building back better” and “new Haiti” in history.** The discourse of ending the old ways of being and doing through such narrative constructs as “new foundations of the state” and
“building back better” has previously helped to rhetorically frame collective hope and the trajectory of complete renewal after disasters. For example, after both the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake and the Great Tōhoku Earthquake, many people believed that Japan would be forever transformed (Schenckling, 2013). These views of, and hopes for, transformation ranged from a newfound sense of citizenship and nationalistic pride to economic stimulus and a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebuild Tokyo as a modern metropolis” (Schenckling, 2013, p. xvi). As I have shown in the description of my findings, Haiti after the 2010 earthquake was no exception in this regard. And yet Schenckling (2013) shows that these dreams of transformation did not materialize.

These narratives of transformation in the aftermath of disasters appear to be intersubjective and commonly accepted with an underlying logic and motto of building back better. The principles of building back better and the grand visions of a new Haiti (or any other post-disaster nation [see Fan, 2013]) serve to set recovery goals for the government, to create hope for a better future, and to unite people, and hence are hard to disagree with and disapprove of. Most importantly, the building back better narrative frames a response to the vulnerabilities in terms of which modern day natural disasters are commonly understood. I am inclined to pose the same rhetorical question as Fan (2013) does: “…after all, who would want to build back worse, or simply reinstate conditions of inequality, poverty and vulnerability?” The desire and aspiration for better lives and livelihoods is self-evident. And yet what is of concern is what happens in practice. The answer to this question is beyond the scope of my study; however, previous research sheds some light on this matter.

Schenckling’s (2013) search through the history of the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake is perhaps the most thorough scholarly account seeking to understand whether the ever-present
hope for complete transformation after disaster comes to fruition. Through a ten-year-long investigation of a multitude of visual and textual documents produced by a variety of actors, he finds that the dream of transformation in post-earthquake Japan did not materialize. His conclusion is that “the handmaidens of disaster opportunism – namely, contestation, resistance, and the desire for a quick return to routine and familiarity – tempered dreams of lasting, transformative reconstruction” (p. xvi).

To replicate Schenckling’s (2013) study of Great Kantō Earthquake in the context of Haiti’s transformation, one would have to ask: “Is Haiti less poor today and more socially just? Is it more economically viable and more developed in terms of infrastructure? Is its government stronger and more stable politically? Has it indeed become an emerging global partner?” This set of questions is certainly an intriguing one and could frame research questions that might take an entire career to answer fully. It would be helpful to re-visit and find answers to these questions ten years after the disaster event, given the general agreement that recovery from disaster occurs in this time frame (e.g. Schwab, 2014).

Farmer (2011) also points out that the rhetoric of building back better and breaking with the old ways of doing things is not so new to Haiti. After the 2008 tropical storms in Haiti, the donor meeting aimed at recovery was called “The New Paradigm” and was in fact, Farmer argues, “redolent of the old” (p.152). He speculates about the outcomes and impacts of the 2010 post-earthquake donor conference, titled “Towards a New Future for Haiti,” that is so reminiscent of the broken or unfulfilled promises made back in 2009 after the devastating storms.

Digging even further back into history, Polyné (2011) explains the way a similar rhetoric of a new Haiti was employed after the Haitian revolution in 1946 that resulted from the
grassroots strikes and protests organized by the ordinary public against the dictator of the time, Élie Lescot. Then, a “new Haiti” signified the promise of the post-occupation period. Under the rhetorical umbrella of Pan-Americanism that was broadly employed by “many power-wielding Haitians and US state officials and intellectuals,” the shifting meaning of a new Haiti essentially promoted “technical, industrial and cultural modernization” (Polyné, 2011, p.170). This language of modernity and progress has persisted through time and was employed again after the earthquake. I will demonstrate this in the following section.

However, it is important to note that some post-disaster initiatives did embrace the notions of “new Haiti” in the sense of decentralized provision of integrated services and close collaboration of government and local agencies with international partners. One such example is the Kore Fanmi program (“family coaching/support” in Haitian Creole), an innovation developed through a collaborative effort of the Government of Haiti, the World Bank, UN/UNICEF and a network of local NGOs (World Bank, 2013). The program hires local community workers who identify the most vulnerable communities and individuals and connect them to basic services related to healthcare, nutrition, and education, and provide them with essential commodities such as mosquito nets and water purification tablets. In its essence, Kore Fanmi encourages a new approach for the diverse stakeholders to collaborate and for the government to deliver services.

The dilemma remains, however, that there exists a pattern: once the crisis recedes and sensational disaster stories are replaced by new ones, the rhetorically well-paved story of transformation seems to disperse as well. This is certainly the case in the documents (Miami Herald, Oxfam, and the IFRC) that I analyzed chronologically (2010-2012). With this awareness, what do disaster-affected communities, societies, and their governments, humanitarians and social workers, developers, and policy makers do to ensure that building back
better does not become an empty concept to simply re-use and re-cycle when talking about disaster recovery?

Both “building back better “and the “new Haiti” discourses have become rhetorical political tools that never seem to congeal into truly strategic methods of intervention. To ensure that the opportunity of “a better future” and “not turning the opportunity into a missed one” are not empty concepts, recovery actors, including social workers, need to find ways in which to use the ideas of building back better more strategically and practically, not simply rhetorically (Fan, 2013). But translating rhetoric into policy is difficult, not the least because actors disagree on what “better” means and for whom it will be “better.”

In this vein, I will now turn to a closer look at the “better” aspect of building back Haiti after the earthquake that was revealed through the discourses of recovery. The findings revealed in my analysis suggest that the notion and meaning of “better” are contested. For example, the notion of recovery as an economic (neoliberal) development venture was contested by the discourse of livelihood renewal. This finding is not surprising, since the former was generally put forward by the policy documents and the latter by the organizational documents. These two communities of discourse seek to achieve sustainable results through diverse mechanisms. However, in the discussion that follows, guided by critical theory, I chose to concentrate solely on the recovery discourse of the economic development venture.

**Disaster recovery as economic development venture.** I found that policy documents predominantly understand the “better” aspect of disaster recovery in economic terms. The use of such technical terms as “rebuilding” and “reconstruction” across the documents under study reveals a preoccupation with the physical environment that extends far beyond the provision of shelter. Most of the time when reconstruction (or rather, construction that was not directly
related to disaster rebuilding) is brought up, it is under the guise of the development and modernization of Haiti. These latter two concepts are understood by the policy documents as foundations of economic prosperity.

But according to Fan (2013), Schuller and Morales (2012), and my own findings, the building back better offered an opportunity for the projects unrelated to disaster recovery to materialize. For example, Fan (2013) argues that expensive construction projects were built at the expense of permanent shelter solutions. In my analysis, some of these examples include a “state-of-the-art” hotel, an all-glass business complex in Port-au-Prince, and the $85 million international investment, Caracol Industrial Park, that is to provide 20,000 jobs and “represents a new era in international cooperation and assistance in Haiti – aid for trade” (the Miami Herald).

Many scholars have posited that such practices are indicative of the opportunistic and self-interested exploitation of “opportunities” that arise in crises (e.g. Broome, 2011; Farmer, 2011; Fletcher, 2012; Klein, 2007; Pelling, Manuel-Navarrette, & Redclift, 2012; Schuller & Morales, 2012; Timms, 2011). The concepts of disaster capitalism and shock therapy (Klein, 2007) illuminate the way disasters and crises in general present opportunities to enact neoliberal policies and implement disruptive economic interventions that would not have been endorsed at any other time. In short, in the time of crisis, opportunist forces thrive on a physically and psychologically vulnerable general public and government. Moreover, critical theorists’ contention is that capitalist hegemony structures our lives, feelings and ideas (e.g. Fook, 2002; Ives, 2004); local governments’ “choices” to accede to lenders’ pressures to restructure their economies, and the public’s “choices” to support those decisions, must be understood within a broader framework of that hegemony. Social work’s attention to, and involvement in guarding against, the exploitation and exclusion of the vulnerable and oppressed populations in post-
disaster situations must extend beyond the individual arena and address these broader structural concerns.

Many authors have suggested that capitalist-opportunist practices and dynamics were present in post-earthquake Haiti (Dupuy, 2010; Farmer, 2011; Katz, 2013; Pyles & Svistova, in press; Schuller & Morales, 2012). Schuller and Morales (2012) distinguish two components of disaster capitalism, i.e. “(non)profiteering” and “shock therapy in the form of austerity measures, privatization, trade liberalization and the like” (p.76). The former component of disaster capitalism, which signifies the growing number of non-governmental and for-profit organizations receiving no-bid contracts, was well documented in Haiti’s disaster (e.g. Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2011). Despite their stated determination to center Haitians as protagonists in the recovery process and to build institutional capacity, many international organizations were bypassing the Haitian Government and local community organizations and businesses.

According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research (2011), by April 2011 only about 2.5 per cent of donated funds went to Haitian companies. The major share of the recovery funds was split between the “non-profiteers” and “profiteers” alike in the “gold rush” for Haiti’s contracts (Schuller & Morales, 2012, p. 77). My findings also reveal that by providing free, imported supplies and services, humanitarian efforts were hampering Haiti’s economy and sustainable recovery. For example, local medical doctors were going out of business because of the free medical services provided by international organizations.

In addition, one can argue that the technical-incremental solutions that aid organizations promoted and acted upon (e.g. cash-to-work programs and capacity acquisition) can be regarded as ramifications of the neoliberal policy context. For example, Kamat (2003)
explains that a modern-day global economy and neoliberal policy context result in a tendency of NGOs and CBOs (community-based organizations) to depart from their erstwhile orientation toward radical change in favor of a more apolitical outlook (Kamat, 2003). In the context of disasters, this dynamic can be related to, for example, providing band-aid solutions to arm communities against nature, as opposed to undertaking radical change such as the transformation of human-nature relationships. (I discuss this idea in more detail below.)

The second component of disaster capitalism, or shock therapy (Klein, 2007; Schuller & Morales, 2012) essentially signifies a neoliberal economic development agenda that is subtly inserted in the time of crisis. In my findings, this phenomenon is exemplified through the policy discourse and its widely-promoted idea of re-branding Haiti as open for business, foreign investment, modernization, and tourism. I suggest that this idea of “openness” is equivalent to the (trade) liberalization and privatization logic that neoliberal economic orthodoxy seeks to advance (Chang, 2008). In the case of the Haiti earthquake, for example, apart from the grand modernization projects in Port-au-Prince, a perfect example of using disaster for neoliberal operations was the privatization of Haiti’s state phone company to a subsidiary of the Vietnamese army (Schuller & Morales, 2012).

Pushing for development of the Île à Vache (an island in Haiti, barely touched by the hands of developers prior to the 2010 earthquake) for tourism purposes, and under the guise of job creation, is yet another example of disaster capitalism at work in Haiti (Bell, 2014; Île-à-Vache Development Group, n.d.). In reality, this development project became possible because of the crisis situation and allowed for the manipulation of good intentions, i.e. pushing local residents out of the area to make way for development. This case exemplifies a controversy that the concept of shock therapy attempts to capture. Similar practices have been previously
observed in a number of post-disaster situations. The misuse of Hurricane Mitch as an opportunity in Celaque National Park, Honduras is a sterling example (Timms, 2011). In this case, under the guise of natural preservation, the moment of crisis was used to coerce park residents to relocate, while in reality using this as an opportunity to advance “capitalist interests of international conservation and the agro-export coffee industry” (Timms, 2011, p. 1357). In conclusion, I argue that these operations of economic forces silenced several aspects of disaster recovery that are crucial from a social work standpoint.

Invisible aspects of recovery: The recovery that shall not be funded? There are four areas of disaster recovery that I believe, from a social work perspective, are either insufficiently developed or are entirely silenced across the documents: 1) the preservation of nature and transformation of human-nature relationships; 2) the needs of people with disabilities and disability services; 3) psycho-social recovery; and 4) religious and spiritual aspects of recovery.

Preservation of the environment and transformation of human-nature relationships. Many disaster scholars posit that the prevalence of disaster in the modern world is in fact the result of fascination with, and promotion of, modernization and development agendas through human modification of nature (e.g. Bankoff, Frerks, & Hilhorst, 2004; Harwell, 2000; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999). And yet the prevalent discourse of recovery that I have identified in my data is precisely that of development and modernization. Policy documents in particular espouse this recovery trajectory.

Development appears as a mantra for advancing progress, building resilience, and eradicating vulnerabilities. Here, as well, the “nature’s fury” trope leaves humans blameless, assigning blame to forces of the physical, natural world – a world whose actions, importantly,
cannot be altered or punished. Nature, in this discourse, assumes all the blame for human suffering. This construction promotes, moreover, a recovery discourse driven by neoliberal and modernizing ideologies that espouse a defensive posture against a “nature” that dares to hamper economic progress. Words such as “mitigate,” “reduce risk,” “forecast,” “prevent,” “adapt,” and generally “control” sketch a type of defensive relationship between humans and the natural world. In light of this recovery vision, I argue that preservation of nature and transformation of human-nature relationships are not sufficiently addressed from the standpoint of radical change. In other words, addressing disaster mitigation and emergency management at the root cause of crisis (e.g., reducing environmental degradation) would help prevent disasters in the long run and for the generations to come. From the social work perspective, a focus on human-nature relationships is imperative, given that nature has a tremendous impact on human health and well-being. In this regard, social work’s theoretical and practical contributions to issues of environmental justice are growing (e.g. Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2013).

Needs of people with disabilities and disability services. Evaluating from the social work professional values and theoretical standpoint of my research – participation, capacity building, and resilience – I argue that the discourses of recovery across documents did not sufficiently account for people who were injured in the disaster and will suffer long-term disabilities. For example, the analyzed documents that discuss and prioritize disaster-resistant construction do not prioritize the accessibility of the physical environment for individuals with disabilities. This is in spite of the fact that the prevalence of new disability cases and the need to improve rehabilitation services, assistive technologies, and accessibility of the physical environment after the Haiti earthquake have been previously established in the disaster scholarship (Iezzoni & Ronan, 2010, p.812; Landry, O'Connell, Tardif, & Burns, 2010). If a new
start and a new vision are on Haiti’s horizon, I suggest that all recovery actors must incorporate the perspectives and needs of Haitians with disabilities.

Psychosocial recovery. Many studies after the earthquake documented the high rate of mental health and psychosocial needs (e.g. Cerdá, Paczkowski, Galea, Nemethy, Péan, & Desvarieux, 2013; Cénat & Derivois, 2014; Raviola, Eustache, Oswald, & Belkin, 2012). However, this aspect of disaster recovery was largely invisible across the documents under study. According to other research, the psychosocial response was visibly present on the ground. For example, the International Organization of Migration (Schininà, Hosn, Ataya, Dieuveut, & Salem, 2010) and Partners in Health, in collaboration with a local organization, Zanmi Lasante (Raviola, Eustache, Oswald, & Belkin, 2012), provided psychosocial and mental health services to the victims of Haiti’s disaster. The question is then: if action was taken to address psychosocial needs of the survivors, why did discourse communities under study fail to frame it?

In addition, the commonly promoted (across the documents) versions of the “from tragedy to opportunity” (the IFRC) mantra that circulated in the post-earthquake milieu, while hopeful, were rife with normalizing and imposing assumptions that there is only one proper way to recover from a disaster (Cox et al., 2008). I believe this widely circulated recovery mantra, which was conceived by non-local non-survivors, essentialized (attributed natural, essential characteristics of recovery that are to fit everyone) and simultaneously imposed what recovery is and how and when it is to happen. In my interpretation, the “from tragedy to opportunity” mantra essentially postulated that the disaster situation was not the time to be weak and to mourn and grieve; it was the time “to pull oneself up by the bootstraps” and benefit from the crisis.

Religious and spiritual aspects of recovery. Perhaps related to the invisibility of interpretations of the disaster as an Act of God, none of the documents analyzed (except
occasional mentions in the *Miami Herald* discussed or even simply acknowledge disaster recovery in spiritual and religious terms. While it is predictable that the sources that I chose to look at and what they reasonably are expected to cover would not extensively focus on spiritual matters, such secular projections arguably exclude local religious organizations and spiritual leaders from a broader recovery discourse and action. Only once does Oxfam mention the need to consult church organizations. On the other hand, the fact that religious missionary organizations “descended en masse” to Haiti to “help” and “save” with humanitarian aid and to preach to Haitians is another serious issue (the *Miami Herald*). And still, in a country widely known for its spiritual and religious practices, the exceptionally secular discourse production is nothing short of problematic.

This discursive silence is even more problematic given that there exists an extensive body of research (e.g. Alawiyah et al., 2011; Dueck & Byron, 2011; Payton, 2013; Schafer, 2010) that affirms the role of faith and spirituality in making sense of disasters, survival and subsequent healing, and psychological recovery. For example, Payton (2013), through over a hundred interviews with earthquake survivors in Haiti, found that spiritual dimensions prevailed in the experiences of disaster narrated by the non-elite, popular Haitian classes.

With these four discursive silences in mind, I speculate about frame bridging (e.g. Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986), the linkage between seemingly unconnected, yet ideologically congruent, frames regarding an issue. That is to say, it appears to me that these four discursively invisible components of recovery are not seen as key elements of economic renewal and development. If a strong case were to be made that these recovery components are integral to economic development, would they attract more attention and funding? Or do they fail to interest and benefit those comfortably located at the top and in the center of the global
market? Or did the sources I analyzed simply not bother to talk to people and see what they thought?

More critical questions also arise: On whose interpretation of disaster and on whose ideas of “better” is disaster recovery based? Are these interpretations valid? Who benefits from them? This significant finding regarding discursive silences speaks volumes in regard to whose voices were excluded from the creation of dominant recovery ideas. It is people with disabilities and advocates for their rights, faith-based organizations and their adherents, mental health patients and professionals, and seekers of environmental justice whose voices remained on the margins of recovery making.

In short, in this section I have shown how conceptions and practices of disaster recovery are manipulated through language and discourse production. While some of these constructions and discourses have a direct and explicit link with action orientations, others may serve as rhetorical facades to rationalize and legitimize unrelated practices. The latter dynamic tends to benefit selected few, justifies and perpetuates injustices and vulnerabilities of those most severely affected by the disaster.

**Discursive Constructions of Recovery Actors**

In this section I discuss the discursive constructions of recovery actors (Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and Goals 1, 2, 3, 4) that emerged through my data analysis and their link to participation in recovery efforts. In doing so, I continue to develop my thesis regarding the use of empowering discursive constructions as a misleading façade for oppressive practices. There are five key recovery actors that I identified through my data analysis: 1) local people, private sector, and civil society; 2) Government of Haiti; 3) international community; 4) aid organizations and NGOs; and 5) Interim Haitian Recovery Commission.
The key finding regarding recovery actors is that the Haitian Government and its people are discursively constructed and centered as leading recovery actors. This finding has a strong implication when understood in terms of policy feedback (Mettler & Soss, 2004; Soss & Schram, 2007). Policy feedback is employed to explain that policies and discourses serve to set political agendas, create citizens and their identities and political participation. However, it is important to corroborate this discursive stance with its implementation in practice. Therefore, I discuss the discursive and practical incongruence regarding the Haitian Government’s and its people’s participation.

In this section I emphasize the importance of representation and the making of recovery actors and its link to participation. In Chapter 3, I discussed the way disaster victims are portrayed in the mass media and how Haiti in particular is represented in the international media and elite narratives. I also alluded to the potential repercussions of the act of representation, namely, that portrayals and constructions serve to rationalize and legitimize (in)action orientations. In the section that follows, I problematize the representation of recovery actors in the analyzed documents and attempt to link these dominant representations to the practices of participation.

The acts of representation and the making of recovery actors. The analysis of the documents under study revealed that there exists a polarized way of representing recovery actors. In general terms, this dynamic can be described as saviorhood or saviorship, a kind of relationship between the group that is being saved (earthquake-stricken survivors/nation) and those who do the saving (aid organizations and the international community). This phenomenon has been previously extensively discussed in communications research on disasters (e.g. Balaji, 2011; Laursen, 2011; Motter, 2010).
Helpless victims. I observed a link between employing the discursive construction of disaster-affected individuals as helpless victims and framing the action of powerful actors such as the government, foreign experts and professionals, and aid and military workers. Here, the narrative predominantly has it that it is the outside actors who perform rescue, offer relief, and save lives. It is the foreign aid workers who bring emergency supplies and distribute humanitarian aid. It is the foreign medical experts who treat patients. It is the U.S. and U.N. military troops who ensure safety and security. In short, all the discourse communities predominantly conceive of the international community as a benevolent relief actor who provides much-needed support and financial assistance.

I suggest that this dynamic between outside experts and victims to be saved is a manifestation of neocolonial sentiment. For example, certain NGO practices (such as hiring local people to clean latrines instead of hiring them to manage NGOs) and the tendency to render Haitian poor people responsible for Haiti’s many ills (alluding to the use of charcoal in cooking as the prominent factor in subsequent deforestation, for example) are reminiscent of the narratives of benevolence, imperialism, and expertise of “saviors” in colonial times (Bankoff, 2001; Haslam, Schafer, & Beaudet, 2009). One such example is colonizers treating the colonized as “backward” and ignorant peoples who needed to be uplifted and taught the right way of doing things (Haslam, Schafer, & Beaudet, 2009).

Indeed, many authors have previously suggested that this dynamic might be specific to certain (non-“Western,” colonized) cultural groups and regions. Bankoff (2001), for example, provides a compelling explanation of Western power operations in natural disaster contexts. Suggesting that historical, cultural and political discursive roots of natural disasters have been largely overlooked in Western disaster discourses, he undertakes an intriguing exploration and
explication thereof. Tracking Western discourses of dangerousness and vulnerability with regard to the developing world, he observes the pattern of “rendering the world unsafe” that transmits through time. He suggests that from the 17th to the early 20th century Western/Northern countries (colonizers) constructed danger and vulnerability through climatic and disease framing and thus advanced Western medicine as a cure. In the post-World War II period, the constructions of danger and vulnerability through the issues of poverty and underdevelopment prevailed, suggesting Western investment and aid as remedies. In the late 20th century, according to Bankoff (2001), the constructions of danger and vulnerability through natural hazards and disasters dominate and promote Western expertise, science, and technology as solutions.

To be sure, these constructions are based on reality: many developing countries, including Haiti, indeed are extremely poverty-stricken and vulnerable to natural disasters (e.g. Pelling & Uitto, 2001). However, the problem of these representations of the developing world is twofold. First, they are linear, one-sided views of them, the “non-Western” world, maintained by the Western world throughout history. These views are maintained through the same essentializing cultural discourse, i.e., attributing natural, essential characteristics to members of specific cultural groups. Such discourse, Bankoff (2001) continues, perpetually degrades the former as “disease-ridden, poverty-stricken and disaster-prone” (p. 27), its dwellers as forever marked by “powerlessness, passivity, ignorance, hunger, illiteracy, neediness, oppression and inertia” (p. 23). The second problem with these representations is that they tend to blame local people for disaster vulnerability (e.g. charcoal cooking practices, in the case of Haiti) and fail to acknowledge the harmful environmental practices of the Northern countries (from coal-fired power plants to the overreliance on sugar as a monocrop that we in the North consume).
Additionally, Bankoff (2001) illuminates the way this essentialized and generalized view of the developing world serves to justify Western interference and intervention and to maintain influence and power over non-Western societies and their resources across centuries. In particular, this hegemonic, ethnocentric construction of knowledge, he posits, contributed to the employment of technocratic, “expert” solutions, consequently negating local knowledge and coping practices. In such constructions, there is little space for agency and action by survivors themselves. I suggest that such social relationships constitute and reproduce power operations and factor into the politics of representation and participation of the citizenry in the grassroots.

In his conclusion, Bankoff (2001) calls for attention to culture’s adaptability to natural hazards. Conceived of this way, natural hazards and embedded dangers and vulnerabilities occlude the need for and delegitimize Western intervention. Similarly, Fan (2013) suggests that perhaps if both Haitian citizens and the government were represented differently and were not bypassed, the nature of interventions would have been different.

I tend to agree with both perspectives and provide rationale in the section that follows. I suggest that the way recovery actors are constructed plays into the ways in which they are represented and, by extension, the ways in which they actually participate in decision-making and recovery efforts. The discourse of recovery across the documents also reveals a strong emphasis on the inclusion of local actors and local participation. However, it is critical to inquire more deeply into the actual practice of engagement and participation beyond mere discursive claims.

**Haitians in the driver’s seat of recovery.** In contrast to the essentializing and blaming discourse which is prominent in many documents, there also are stories and images from the post-earthquake context that portray local disaster survivors as resilient and resistant active
agents of recovery. From these perspectives, local Haitians are entrepreneurs, volunteers, and caring neighbors united in solidarity. The tradition of solidarity among people in the Haitian grassroots has been previously well-documented (e.g. Lundahl, 2013; Svistova, Pyles, & André, 2014; Smith, 2001); moreover, the outpouring of solidarity in disaster settings is not solely a Haitian trait. Many studies have shown that solidarity is “built in hell,” to use Solnit’s (2010a) words, to essentially signify that there is a positive side to negative situations. That is to say that disaster situations initially erase social structures and create a liminal phase wherein solidarity prevails (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999; Solnit, 2010a). I proceed by discussing the meaning and practice of Haitians in the driver’s seat of recovery.

_Haitians in the driver’s seat of recovery: Evidence in Practice._ The existence of counter-hegemonic realities and attempts to include Haitian voices and choices needs to be acknowledged as well. Some of these attempts were made in preparation for the International Donors’ conference in 2010 (organized by the U.N. and the U.S. government in New York in order to mobilize international support for Haiti). A group of organizations undertook a post-earthquake research project called “The Voices of the Voiceless.” It captured Haitian perspectives on disaster recovery and development through 156 focus groups in ten departments, conducted with 1,750 Haitian citizens (HELP, KOZEPEP, ATD Quart Monde, Partners in Health, The Office of the Special Envoy, and MINUSTAH, 2010). The findings of the study indicate Haitian resilience and renewed solidarity among the people. The study illuminates local Haitians’ demand for participation and inclusion as equal actors. Haitian citizens call for investment in Haiti’s people and capacity-building activities, and request strengthening of Haiti’s sovereignty.
Under the guise of “giv[ing] citizens a voice on a broad range of issues,” another study conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), sought to examine the impact of the 2010 earthquake on Haitian citizens’ lives and perceptions (Zéphyr, Córdova, Saldago, & Seligson, 2011). One specific goal of the study was to explore citizens’ political views and behaviors before and after the earthquake. The results from a survey of a representative national sample of 1,752 voting-age Haitians show that in the post-disaster context, public trust in political institutions significantly declined, and more citizens turned to demonstrations and protests and engaged in citizen-based organizations to demand action. Internally displaced people were identified as a strong political force, showing the highest proportion and rate of protest participation. This statistic positions Haiti as a hemispheric leader in terms of the rate of participation in street demonstrations (Zéphyr, Córdova, Saldago, & Seligson, 2011).

While it is an important practice of citizenship, on one hand, and a sign of complete disenfranchisement, on the other, this manifestation of political participation is not sufficient for sustainable recovery; citizen participation in the recovery process itself is needed. In this respect, the study finds that participation in community improvement associations increased from 34.9% in 2008 to 45.6% in 2010 in earthquake-affected municipalities. Likewise, participation in meetings of work-related organizations increased from 26.3% to 39.2%. With these indicators Haiti also scored the highest rate of participation in civic organizations in the Americas, with 76.6% of the population reporting participation in at least one civic association in 2010 (Zéphyr, Córdova, Saldago, & Seligson, 2011).

Importantly, this statistic holds true and even stronger in the Latin American Public Opinion Project of 2012 (Smith, Gélineau, & Seligson, 2012). LAPOP finds that Haitians are
“exceptionally participatory” in terms of their attendance at local government meetings and other forms of community participation, with the highest participation rate in the Americas. The report from the 2012 LAPOP survey indicates that the average Haitian scores 41.6 on the community participation index, which is the highest in the Americas – significantly higher than in every other country but Guatemala. The types of community groups in which Haitians participate the most include women’s groups, groups working towards solving community problems, community improvement committees, and election campaigns.

These findings constitute a counter-hegemonic (Ives, 2004) perspective, one that balances negative constructions about Haitians and post-disaster realities. Entrepreneurship, resistance, and civic engagement appear to be growing in spite of, or perhaps caused by, calamity and in opposition to the dominant, outsider narratives of and practices in Haiti. However, while these findings are important, participation alone must not be regarded as a panacea; while significant, it is not automatically empowering in its orientation or transformative in its effects (Cornwall, 2008; Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

*Haitians in the driver’s seat of recovery: A rhetorical façade.* A strong rhetorical promotion of participation, moreover, does not necessarily indicate practical implementation of public demands. Cornwall (2008) and Peters (2000) note that not all participation is alike; rather, the *nature* and *scope* of participation matters. *Who* participates becomes important as well. Some kinds of participation (e.g. “interactive participation” and “self-mobilization” [Pretty, 1995, cited in Cornwall, 2008]) have the potential to build capacities, empower, transform power dynamics and consequently bring about desired change.

Likewise, it appears in my analysis that community organizations are the ones that frame and create space for local participation and community capacity building, not the policy
documents per se. There is abundant evidence revealing active engagement of Haitian citizens in the recovery efforts (especially in the Miami Herald and organizational documents and the reports of other scholars). The anecdotes provided in the organizational documents and the Miami Herald reveal micro-level acts of participation, such as removing debris, translating, providing food for the displaced, volunteering as nurses, distributing water, or participating in the informal economy. In these depictions, organizations do claim to train, hire, and involve local people in recovery efforts, but they never really represent them as legitimate decision-makers.

Indeed, previous literature points to the fact that actual participatory practice in development, and more specifically in disaster recovery projects in Haiti, initiated by some NGOs and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission remained largely symbolic and rhetorical (e.g. Cornwall, 2008; Daly & Brassard, 2011; DARA, 2011; Dupuy, 2010; Fatton, 2011a; Schuller, 2012). Some, furthermore, suggest that the participation rules instituted during the International Donors’ Conference sidelined and thus excluded voices of many state and non-state actors (Farmer, 2011; Hartwig, 2010; Schuller & Morales, 2012).

According to one of the Oxfam reports, the Action Plan was predominantly prepared by the World Bank and endorsed by Haitian elites, continuing a centuries-old pattern in which international actors and local elites hold decision-making power in Haiti (Schuller & Morales, 2012). Oxfam explains that “the process was top-down, non-consultative, and not owned by the Haitian state or people” and that only 17.5% of people supported the plan as it did not reflect their needs. Many other exclusionary practices, such as meetings being held in English and French, rather than Creole, and strict security control at the U.N. (DARA, 2011; Fan, 2013), obstructed the participation of non-elite Haitians. DARA (an independent non-profit
organization that conducts evaluations of humanitarian action in the contexts of armed conflicts and natural disasters) (2011) also reveals that many donors did not fund local NGOs and were inflexible about allowing Haitian NGOs even to be sub-grantees. Given the importance attributed to community participation in disaster recovery and development literature, the existence of such exclusionary practices is concerning.

With regard to the aforementioned inquiries into “citizen opinions” (i.e. the “Voice of the Voiceless” project and LAPOP surveys), Hartwig (2010) notes that 1,750 citizens make up only about .02% of Haiti’s population. She argues that this acknowledgement of civil interests under the premise of a democratic ideal in which citizens’ priorities drive government action serves as a rhetorical façade for decisions that these citizens have not made and of which they were not actually a part. Smith (2001) recalls one female Haitian community leader cleverly referring to such consultative practices as *envelopment* rather than *development*. Questions about the ways in which these and similar consultative inquiries and findings translate into recovery policies and practices are left for researchers and aid workers to answer.

Moreover, even though the rhetoric of engagement and participation of local disaster survivors is strongly apparent in the narratives of organizations that I analyzed, the reality of who participates and who is included remains problematic. In the images propagated by the IFRC reports, for example, reconstruction work is generally performed by 20-45 year old males; when females appear in the images (albeit in equal amounts as males), they are portrayed with their children, making food or cleaning houses. This evidence reveals and is certainly problematic as it indicates that participation is not absolute and equally available to each and every Haitian.

**Participation and policy feedback.** All the documents in my study engage in the rhetoric of local inclusion, such as the need to center the Haitian Government and its people in
creating the vision for, and taking action toward, recovery. This finding is especially significant when understood in terms of the way policy feedback operates. In the description of my theoretical framework I have introduced a concept of policy feedback that was coined in the field of political science (Mettler, 2002; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Soss & Schram, 2007). All the studies that I reviewed in presenting my theoretical framework discuss the way policy discourses construct certain groups and thus create or deny space for the political participation of these groups (e.g. Campbell, 2003; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). In turn, these constructions affect actual rates of civic participation. Although these studies draw from examples in the U.S. political system and citizenry, I argue that their theoretical propositions hold true in Haiti and other post-disaster settings as well.

In line with propositions’ underlying policy feedback, I am also curious to see whether policy and organizational discourses purposefully positioning Haitians as leaders of their own recovery have any connection to the increased rates of post-disaster civic engagement revealed in the LAPOP study. The findings in the LAPOP study may also indicate the revival of civil society. There are previous examples in history, such as the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, wherein Mexican earthquake victims emerged as a strong political force (Tavera-Fenollosa, 1998).

Conclusive Remarks

In conclusion, in this chapter I have synthesized and discussed five key findings of my study that relate to: 1) diverse disaster interpretations and interventions, 2) the “building back better” framework and grand narrative of a “new Haiti,” 3) economic development and disaster opportunism, and 4) issues of representation, participation, and policy feedback. I have also
discussed the implications of my study in relation to social welfare in Haiti, disaster response and recovery planning, and social work’s role in disaster contexts.

In my perspective, this work carries a number of significant meanings and implications. First, to my knowledge, no previous attempts have been made to draw links between discourse production and recovery action in a systematic way. The innovative theoretical development that I offered at the beginning of this chapter may also inform future disaster response and interventions. Second, the finding regarding diverse and competing constructions and visions of disaster recovery suggests that important work focused on aligning these constructions and vision needs to be done in future post-disaster contexts. Namely, key actors need to be brought together to build intersubjective understanding and a shared vision for disaster recovery. Third, in order to be effective responders, social workers should consider rethinking the way we conceive of disasters, or at least develop a balanced, integrated view of, and plan for intervention in, disaster situations. Lastly, constant critical-analytic work needs to be accomplished by social workers and other concerned actors in order to guard against subtle forces of disaster opportunists and capitalists. I offer a line of recommendations for addressing the latter two implications in the following chapter.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this dissertation I have sought to explore the discourses of disaster, recovery, and recovery actors in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In this exploration, I was guided by social constructionism and critical theory, in their assertions that reality is socially constructed and can be deconstructed through critical analysis; it implies that social conditions can ultimately be reformed and transformed. I was also informed by the existing literature on policy feedback and the way discourse production affects the conception of policies and practices. With this theoretical base, I conducted constant-comparison textual analysis of the documents related to Haiti’s disaster relief and recovery that were produced by the Haitian Government, USAID, the Miami Herald, Oxfam, and the Red Cross (the IFRC). To analyze this wealth of textual data, I used a combination of techniques adopted from critical discourse analysis, grounded theory, and interpretive policy analysis.

From a theoretical perspective, I explored the way the disaster of 2010 was constructed across the documents; how post-disaster recovery was constructed across documents and actors; and how recovery actors were constructed and what recovery roles they were assigned. Special attention was given to the discourse and practices of participation. A number of interesting findings were revealed. Perhaps the most compelling is the finding regarding diverse interpretations or constructions of disaster. In contrast to the definition of disaster as a one-time event that is widely prevalent in popular parlance, I found that the documents under analysis predominantly constructed Haiti’s tragedy in terms of social-economic vulnerabilities and as a diachronic event. More specifically, there is an agreement that the disaster in Haiti was a product of political, economic, historic, social and environmental factors (vulnerabilities) that
had been accumulating since colonial times, but that was triggered by the 7.0 Richter scale earthquake (natural hazard).

Related and equally important was the finding regarding the interpretations of disaster and the link between these interpretations and the recovery interventions that were conceived. Namely, the constructions of disaster generally coincided with solutions put forward by adherents to those constructions. For example, if the disaster was seen as a crisis and emergency situation, humanitarian supplies and short-term emergency interventions were the proffered responses. If disaster was seen as Nature’s fury, linear and technocratic solutions prevailed in an effort to restore things to normalcy and to prepare for and mitigate future natural catastrophes. If disaster was seen as an opportunity for renewal and growth, it usually was approached with micro- and macro-economic solutions.

In my discussion I have further suggested that the discourses of a “new Haiti” and “building back better,” are particularly noteworthy. Difficult to refute at their essence, they can rationalize and legitimize a broad variety of recovery policies and practices. These discourses carry different meanings for different actors and therefore not all recovery solutions conceived under them work in the best interests of all disaster-affected individuals and communities. One such phenomenon in post-disaster settings has become known as “disaster capitalism” through shock therapy and “non-profiteering” (Schuller & Morales, 2012). This phenomenon represents problematic misuses of disaster as opportunity to advance agendas not directly related disaster recovery. By providing examples, I suggest that this phenomenon might have occurred in post-earthquake Haiti under the guise of the discourses of the ”new Haiti” and “building back better.”

From a practical and policy perspective, I also sought to understand whose and what discourses translate into action orientations targeted towards disaster recovery. Here, I
specifically focused on the matters of local participation, including capacity-building, and resilience as the building blocks of sustainable disaster recovery. This focus revealed an unexpected prevalence of discursively framed inclusion and participation of local government and its people. And yet, in reality, it was the view of disaster as an opportunity and the macro-economic framework conceived by the Haitian Government (elites) and the international community that predominantly guided recovery efforts. The concern here is whose definition of “better” guided recovery efforts. Promoted as an appealing idea with a hard-to-refute logic, “building back better” in post-earthquake Haiti was the discourse of recovery produced by elites and powerful international actors. Another concern regards who actually gets to participate in recovery efforts. My data points to the fact that middle-aged, able bodied men, or generally members of civil society and the private sector, are assigned active recovery roles, to the exclusion of the rest of society. The latter evidence demonstrates that the idea of Haitian participation, widely held and promoted by powerful actors, was (and is) not equally available to each and every Haitian.

Other significant findings of my research that directly relate to the field of social work include the aspects of recovery that are largely invisible across the documents under study. Psychosocial recovery, special needs of (and services for) people with disabilities, spiritual/religious practices, and the preservation of the environment are not visible as integral parts of disaster recovery. These aspects of recovery are central from social work’s point of view, in that they determine the health and wellbeing of humans. I have also speculated that these discursive silences may be an indicator of who was not invited into the decision-making process and that social work’s role on the global disaster agenda must be amplified.
I believe that there are several ways in which my dissertation research makes a significant contribution to the field of social work. First, the key novelty of my research is its comparison of discourses of disaster and recovery produced by five different actors. This knowledge of converging and diverging perspectives can lead to building an intersubjective understanding between actors and pave the way toward integrated cooperation and common objectives. The constructions of disaster and recovery revealed in this study may be informative for a diverse range of stakeholders in search of effective, culturally and contextually bounded, and ultimately sustainable solutions.

Second, as a part of reconstructive practice, I envision the expansion of disaster social work’s knowledge and skill base. Based on my findings, I suggest that critical or deconstructive disaster social work and interdisciplinary disaster social work are necessary expansions of the already existing professional knowledge base. These social work developments are also imperative in the context of rapid globalization, growing global interconnectedness, and complexity of (power) relationships among nations, as well as the subtle dominance of neoliberal powers.

Third, the research methodology proposed is unconventional yet highly promising for the social work discipline. Discourse analysis of disasters in the developing world is rarely performed in the field of social work. The deconstructive inquiry can be used as a method in social work practice, research, and pedagogy. Critical-deconstructive practices, regardless of the target and purpose, can help social workers guard against misleading discourses that at times cover oppressive and opportunist social practices related, as well as unrelated, to disaster contexts. Such skills would also assist social work researchers and practitioners in being aware
of negative social constructions of populations we serve and in advocating for balanced and strength-based framings.

In conclusion, a line of significant findings was revealed in this study that can inform future interdisciplinary efforts in disaster response, policies, and practices. Issues of social and geographic vulnerability; political tools, such as building back better, and their broken promises; disaster opportunism and subtle exploitation of the disaster situations; and essentializing and imposing views of recovery, among others, are all informative of how to avoid perpetuating a vicious cycle of ineffective disaster response in the future, in Haiti and elsewhere. These findings can inform and guide further knowledge advancement and the activist work of deconstructing discourses while offering more suitable alternatives that I begin to provide in the following section.

So What? What’s Next?

In this section I discuss the implications of my dissertation research and begin to map further directions. I discuss the current status of social work’s understanding of and interventions in post-disaster contexts and suggest a trajectory for the future role of social work in disaster prevention, production, and recovery. I discuss the implications of my study for the field of social work in terms of practice, policy, research, and education. I also suggest that this study might be helpful for concerned actors and advocates seeking to change pervasive misrepresentations or one-sided representations of Haiti and its people.

Disaster prevention, response and recovery: situating social work. Currently, social work’s role in disaster contexts is represented through five branches of professional expertise: (1) clinical practice (e.g. Malekoff, 2008; Miller, 2003); (2) community practice (e.g. Pyles, 2007; Tan, 2009; Zakour & Gillespie, 2013); (3) green social work (e.g. Coates, 2003; Gray &
Coates, 2012; Dominelli, 2013; McKinnon, 2008); (4) international social work (e.g. Pyles & Svistova, 2015; Tan & Yuen, 2013); and (5) media analysis (e.g. Pyles & Svistova, in press; Pyles & Harding, 2011). Zakour (2007) suggests that social work has contributed to the disaster knowledge base through its research on disaster volunteerism, vulnerable populations, organizational and inter-organizational networks, environmental issues, and cross-cultural and international disaster interventions. In defining the practical role of social work in disaster situations, Zakour (2007) emphasizes the involvement of social workers in emergency preparedness and management through case management, outreach, advocacy, and brokering, reduction of vulnerabilities, and the prevention of psycho-social problems that ensue due to disasters.

There is merit in connecting my findings with the social work literature on disasters. As I have discussed in this chapter, with its focus on psychological aspects of human well-being, social work fits well under the emergency/crisis frame of disaster and recovery (Table 2). Further, I believe disaster social work fits with the discourse of risk and vulnerability and related recovery interventions revealed in my study. Social work is actively engaged locally, nationally, and globally in eradicating poverty, a factor that has been found central in predicting vulnerability to disasters. Zakour and Gillespie (2013), for example, have advanced and adapted the concept of disaster vulnerability in social work community practice.

Based on a careful review of the existing disaster social work literature (primarily in the U.S.), I made an observation that is consistent with one of the findings or discursive silences revealed in this study. Namely, despite the efforts of “greening the profession” (Dominelli, 2013), there is a lack of emphasis on radical change in terms of human-nature relationships. I argue that despite the person-in-environment framework (Kondrat, 2008) so deeply rooted in
social work’s professional discourse and practice, it seems to omit the meaning of “environment” as that of the natural world. In addition, the discourse of academic social work seems to espouse the discourse of disaster and emergency preparedness and management, a discourse that renders the natural world controllable.

McKinnon (2008) and Alston (2013) have made a similar observation from an Australian social work standpoint. They suggest that the “environment” domain of the professional “person-in-environment” paradigm traditionally focuses on social networks and relationships and fails to acknowledge the impact of the physical environment on the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and entire nations. Citing a growing concern about climate change and environmental crisis, some social work scholars (e.g. Alston, 2013; Coates, 2013; McKinnon, 2008) have begun to challenge, and invite the profession to reconsider, the dominant definition of “environment.” They suggest that social work has an important role to play in facilitating “social transformation” (Coates, 2013) with regard to the preservation of the environment and building interconnectedness between the human and natural worlds. I fully concur with this perspective and will seek to contribute to this strand of academic social work discourse production through my future scholarship.

**Expanding disaster social work.** This study is meant not only to deconstruct discourses, but also to envision and imagine new possibilities. Based on my work and findings, I see two possibilities for the expansion of disaster social work. One branch that I envision is critical/structural (Mullaly, 2007) or deconstructive disaster social work that engages in critical analyses of oppressive economic, political, and social structures; neoliberal policies of social development; and the role of media in disaster contexts.
The depth and complexity of disasters and recovery in their aftermath necessitate complex analytic lenses and solutions. Building on the community- and society-oriented line of disaster social work literature (e.g. Pyles, 2007), I argue that (U.S.) social work’s focus on global economic, political, and historic forces that create social and spatial-geographic vulnerability to disasters is underdeveloped. The global agenda of the International Federation of Social Work and partnering organizations (IFSW, IASSW, and ICSW, 2012) begins to address this gap. I believe that such a discursive shift would result in more effective and sustainable interventions and policies.

Another branch of disaster social work that is directly linked to the critical/structural arena is interdisciplinary (disaster) social work. Logically, these two potential expansions of disaster social work are not mutually exclusive. I imagine the key premise of this line of disaster social work in terms of interdisciplinary training in disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery, one that is guided by the values and ethics of the social work profession. Such a branch of disaster social work would help to address the complexity of disaster situations through a holistic approach. The wisdom regarding disasters and disaster response acquired in political science, public health, communications, international development, psychology, gender studies, anthropology, geography and other disciplines would complement and guide that of social work. The combination of these two expansions of disaster social work practice would look much like the work accomplished in this dissertation allowing for policy and practice recommendations.

**Implications for social policy.** There are a variety of ways in which the findings of this study can inform social policy. First, the competing interpretations of disaster and subsequent responses to it appear to be a common theme in post-disaster settings. Perhaps one
of the implications of my research and similar studies of discursive constructions in post-disaster settings (Cox et al., 2008; Dove & Khan, 1995; Motter, 2010; Pyles & Svistova, in press) is that very acknowledgment of competing views. I also argue that understanding how interpretation of disasters plays into disaster response and recovery is critical for future theoretical and practical developments.

According to Yanow (2000), the awareness of diverse interpretations of subject matter can serve as an instrumental outcome of interpretive policy analysis. Applied to social policy making in disaster contexts, this practice of policy analysis can assist in building intersubjective understanding and aligning actors for a common recovery goal. In terms of social work practice, this might mean that a space for deliberation would be created whereby a diverse range of recovery actors would be invited to participate in consensus-building activities. Social work’s skills in group work, such as group dialogue (e.g. Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006), can be put into practice in negotiating shared visions and actions in the disaster recovery process. Also, the aforementioned game theory approach (Coles & Zhuang, 2011) could help identify common objectives among various actors.

The findings of this study are also significant for social policy-making, more specifically with regard to “building back better” and the operations of policy feedback. I have shown that discourses have power and serve to frame action and inaction based on their meanings and constructions of disaster. My research findings and previous literature caution against using the popular framework of “building back better” indiscriminately, as it can create prospects for disaster capitalism and legitimize the actions of disaster opportunists. Disaster responders, aid and relief workers, developers, and others need to be aware of the nuances of what “better” means, and for whom, through a dialogue with disaster-affected communities.
In line with the theoretical propositions of policy feedback, there is also plenty to be said about the discursive constructions of recovery actors and their effects on actual participation in disaster relief and recovery. There appears to be a link between the way disaster-affected individuals and communities are portrayed and how they become engaged (if at all). In the case of this work, I observed a strong discursive emphasis on local participation and centering Haitians in the driver’s seat of the recovery efforts. I corroborated this evidence with the findings of the LAPOP study revealing the growing rates of civic engagement after the earthquake in Haiti. And yet at the same time, discourses can serve as rhetorically misleading façades, obscuring what is happening in practice. This is a significant finding that can inform future policymaking in regard to local inclusion and participation and the practical enforcement thereof.

**Implications for social work practice.** One of the key implications of my findings for social work practice is related to the aspects of recovery that are largely invisible across the data: psychosocial recovery, disability services, and spirituality. I suggest that social workers could contribute their skills and advocate for stronger attention to these aspects of disaster recovery. On the other hand, I would argue that these discursive silences revealed in my study are not only indicative of aspects of disaster recovery that need to be amplified, but also of who needs to be invited to the table when making decisions and planning recovery. Fortunately, it seems that social work is gaining more of a presence at the table of global interdisciplinary discussions, decision-making, and planning regarding disasters and disaster response (IFSW, 2012).

Social work could also contribute to disaster recovery efforts by challenging the prevalent economic and physical rebuilding solutions in post-disaster settings. Critical/structural social work (e.g. Coates, 2013; Mullaly, 2007; Jayasankar, & Monteiro, 2000; Pyles, 2007; Pyles
& Svistova, 2015) is well equipped for this kind of disaster social work practice. Social workers can put into action social justice values driven by empowerment and active inclusion of the most vulnerable (e.g. Zakour & Gillespie, 201; Tan & Yuen, 2013). In this regard, building on the images of local survivors as active agents of recovery and using the discourse of hope and renewal as a tool for empowerment is essential. Building people’s capabilities and resilience while promoting local participation are antidotes to vulnerabilities and risk and could help people not only to recover from disasters, but to prevent them and prepare to withstand them in the future. There is an abundance of literature that discusses this kind of social work in both disaster and non-disaster settings. For example, a special 2013 issue of the *Journal of Social Work in Disability and Rehabilitation* offers a collection of experiences regarding responses to disasters guided by the strengths perspective. The accounts shared in this collection sought to incorporate community capacities and spiritual and contextual resources into the disaster management efforts in the Asia-Pacific region.

In short, I suggest that in order to be effective preventers, responders, and recovery actors, we need to expand our knowledge and professional toolkit in preventing and resisting natural disasters. Returning to the semblance of normal life is simply not enough, especially in the economically marginalized regions of the world where extremely vulnerable populations reside, such as Haiti.

**Implications for social work research.** With regard to social work research, I believe my study has offered a unique research methodology that can be used in studying similar social issues. The key contribution of my research is related to comparing discourses of disaster and recovery produced by five different actors. Critical discourse analysis (e.g. Fairclough, 1995; 2005) is rarely used as a research method in the field of social work. I suggest, however, that
while unconventional, it can be highly promising for social work practitioners and researchers alike as a research method and practice tool for social justice. It helps to identify dominant ideas and reveal practices that keep individuals, communities, and entire nations in oppressed and marginalized conditions. Critical discourse analysis can be taught by social work educators and employed by practitioners as a critical literacy skill to deconstruct discursive formations in media, policies, and other influential texts and can ultimately be used as an advocacy tool as well (Jayasankar, & Monteiro, 2000; Reisch, 2013; Zufferey, 2008).

As an extension of this dissertation research, there are multiple directions that future research could take. To expand the data sample used for this study, it would be interesting to see the development of recovery discourse in the *Miami Herald* and organizational documents in years 2013, 2014, and further. I believe that Schencking’s (2013) historical study of the Great Kantō Earthquake and discursive changes has proven to be helpful in understanding the discursive production of disaster and recovery through time. The key finding of his study is that discourses of hope and transformation did not materialize, which is an important implication for disaster management in assuring that discourses of hope, such as “building back better,” come to fruition. Analyzing other news media accounts of disaster and recovery in Haiti, both nationally and internationally, would also shed light on local perspectives and the diversity of international renderings and involvement. Additionally, the analysis of discourses produced by other local and international organizations (e.g. Partners in Health, U.N., World Bank, Human Rights Watch, World Vision, and Save the Children) would greatly complement the findings of my study.

The data used in my study represents international voices and constructions as intermediaries narrating and representing disaster, recovery, and actors. Given this fact and the
scant availability of studies of Haitian views on disaster and recovery, exploring people’s perspectives is an absolute imperative. More broadly, for culturally appropriate disaster response planning, more research is needed on interpretations of disasters and psychosocial loss and recovery in the cultures of the Global South. Building on the work of Zakour and Gillespie (2013), studying the mediators of social and spatial vulnerability is another direction that both disaster scholars and scholars of Haiti can undertake. This kind of knowledge would help social workers to identify essential components of disaster prevention, response, and recovery and design effective and sustainable interventions.

From a policy perspective and along the lines of policy feedback literature, another direction for future research would be an empirical exploration of the relationship between the discourse of local engagement in recovery process and the actual engagement of local citizens in the recovery process. Regarding Haiti, I would be interested to explore the sources of increased rates of Haitian civic engagement after the earthquake. It would also be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis across other post-disaster contexts in both the Global South and North. Even more broadly, studying the effects of the discourse of local participation and empowerment (which is widely used in the field of development) on actual levels of civic engagement in developing countries is another recommendation for future research.

**Implications for social work education.** One of the recommendations for the field of social work that emerged from my study is the need to incorporate a political-economic lens into social work’s conception of disasters and disaster prevention, response, and recovery. Therefore, the contributions of political economy and cultural renderings of disasters need to become critical components of social work training. Critical inquiry into existing practices, knowledge, and discourses and unveiling the dominant constructions and images circulating in the media can
be transformative for budding social work professionals. An analysis of discursive constructions can foster fruitful discussions about factors that keep some people oppressed and others in power, thereby cultivating an awareness of power. I believe this critical literacy skill would help social work practitioners to guard against the detrimental impacts of disaster capitalism and opportunism.

Reisch (2013) recommends a similar reform of social work education in response to the neoliberal challenge and growing global inequality. Given that neoliberal and capitalist recovery solutions are strongly pronounced in disaster situations, social workers must also be better equipped to understand economic development and to engage in critical analyses of such solutions (Reisch, 2013; Pyles & Svistova, 2015). To this end, Smith, Houston-Vega, and Mikow (2007), for example, began the development of a social justice-oriented disaster framework for social work education.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned from my research is that not everyone suffers in disaster situations. In fact, many are able to benefit from it. The operations of discourses have a role to play in fostering conditions conducive to disaster misuse and opportunism. In post-disaster settings, or otherwise, and in impoverished nations in the Global South or elsewhere, social work’s role is to keep a critical-deconstructive eye wide open in order to guard against the further exploitation and exclusion of historically oppressed populations through the subtle power of dominant ideas and discourses.


International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2012). *Understanding community resilience and program factors that strengthen them: A comprehensive study*


http://www.ncsu.edu/project/cnrint/Agro/PDFfiles/HaitiCaseStudy041903.pdf


United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2014). In partnership with UNDP, Gov’t agencies and LGUs come together to discuss how to fast-track implementation of recovery plans in nine hard-hit municipalities of Eastern Samar. Retrieved from:


## APPENDIX A
Summary of the Findings by Data Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourses of Disaster</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami Herald</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Damage and loss, wherein the “killer quake” is to blame;</td>
<td>- Short-term: humanitarian aid, emergency supplies, “keeping people alive”;</td>
<td>- Local quake survivors: helpless victims, nameless bodies, lawless masses, border threats and resilient survivors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Disaster as humanitarian crisis;</td>
<td>- Long-term: “complete reconstruction” and an economic development venture, allusion to the need for a functioning government and political stability;</td>
<td>- Government of Haiti: incompetent, absent, paralyzed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Threat to U.S. security.</td>
<td>- Psychosocial - stories of troubled mental health and psychosocial recovery; changing attitudes towards mental health.</td>
<td>- U.S. nation/government: self-interested benevolent neighbor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Capacities, participation and resilience - capacity-building and resilience – invisible;</td>
<td>- Haitian diaspora: resource, blans (Whites in Haitian Creole) and victims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- participation – self-organized and self-mobilized actions of local citizens (e.g. people helping each other, protesting, organizing informal businesses in the tent cities)</td>
<td>- International aid organizations: relief heroes, providers and do-gooders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The grand vision of “fresh start,” “re-shaping Haiti,” “reconstruct State,” “founding a new Haiti,” “build back better” strategy, “new foundation of the State” (new democratic order).</td>
<td>- Government of Haiti as a leader with major role and responsibility dictating recovery efforts, but also in need of capacity-building;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Word choice: reconstruction and rebuilding vs. recovery.</td>
<td>- Private sector as target of change (credit and subsidies, regulatory framework, capacity-building) and a means for recovery (responsibility for disaster prevention and “reaction capacity,” provision of workforce);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Disaster Needs Assessment/ policy document</td>
<td>1) Decentralization and deconcentration - Spatial intervention – “development hubs”</td>
<td>- Civil society: target of change (needs to be strengthened to improve democratic process) and agent of change (role and capability for reconstructing community infrastructure, mobilize for disaster prevention);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keeping people away from PAP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Restructuring governance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Disaster preparedness and risk management - create a “culture of risk within nation” (e.g. building codes, land tenure registry, decongestion of PAP, educational curriculum and professional training, fund for security of the vulnerable neighborhoods, hazard monitoring, early warning systems and local emergency response capabilities).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3) Development in recovery - infrastructure (housing, roads, electricity, telecommunications, water sanitation and hygiene,</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Action Plan/Policy document</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Risk and vulnerability discourse prevails wherein pre-disaster political, social and economic conditions are acknowledged</td>
<td>• The grand narrative of Haiti’s renewal: “genuine fresh foundation of the State” through “new types of action, a new form of cooperation and joint responsibility between Haitian and international community” and “the economy, society, and the territory on better-balanced and sustainable foundations”</td>
<td>• Government of Haiti: - leading recovery actor; - target of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Magnitude of damage and loss frame wherein the quake is to blame</td>
<td>• Deconcentration and decentralization - Growth areas and regional development, urban renovation</td>
<td>• Private sector as - Partner of recovery efforts; - job creator; - “wealth engine” and funding source; - disaster-damaged and in need of modernization, guarantee funds and investment, regulatory framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disaster situation as a window of opportunity to reconstruct Haiti into an emerging country</td>
<td>• 4 areas of recovery: institutional, territorial, economic and social; yet economic renewal and macro-economic framework dominate</td>
<td>• International community (bilateral donors, WB, UN etc.) as financial providers; need for long-term commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>preparation.</strong></td>
<td>• The prevalence of technical terms such as “rebuilding” and “reconstruction”; psychosocial recovery issues are invisible.</td>
<td>• Haitian diaspora: skills, remittances, held meetings and mobilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation);</td>
<td>• Disaster preparedness: developing professional construction sector; risk and vulnerability reduction (e.g. re-routing ravines); management mechanisms –</td>
<td>• NGOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Oxfam** | **contingency plan, emergency policies and authorities in charge of risk and disaster management; change current harmful practices.**  
- **Political stability**: rare mention; need to continue the constitutional rule restored in 2006, “building a democratic Haiti, that is inclusive and respectful of human rights,” anti-corruption and transparency mechanisms.  
- **Capacities, participation and resilience**: Capacity-building – organizational and institutional (technical equipment and human resources); participation – recovery jobs, mobilizing civil society, only 2 voting members on the IHRC; resilience – is not explicitly addressed but is implied in the risk and disaster preparedness discussion in terms of capacity to respond and manage risk.  
- **IHRC**: Coordination and management of recovery funds; representation: elites, experts and power holders.  
- **Civil society** and local people are mostly invisible. |  
- **Oxfam** | **Crisis and emergency situation** in which survivors need to be kept alive.  
- **Risk and vulnerability** (poverty, deforestation, corruption, political instability and weak governance, growing population, societal inequality, poor housing conditions).  
- **Disaster as opportunity** for a new start, “once-in-a-century chance for change”; “historic opportunity to make a break with the past and build a better Haiti.”  
- **Damage and loss** Magnitude of devastation caused by the earthquake. |  
- **The vision of new start for Haiti**  
- A vision of more equitable and socially just Haitian society;  
- “re-envisioning Haiti”; “build back better”  
- **Emergency response**  
- “bare essentials”: emergency supplies, food, water, hygiene kits, water and sanitation services, tents and tarpaulins.  
- **Areas of recovery**: Agriculture, livelihoods, alternative energy, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food security, advocacy and campaigning.  
- **Community level (micro-economic) solutions**  
- Livelihood improvements (cash-to-work initiatives; assistance to small businesses; basic needs grants, cash grants; seeds and agricultural tool kits).  
- **Sustainability**  
- Food kits for distribution made of local produce, contracting local street food sellers and use of good manufactured in Haiti;  
- Reducing vulnerability to future disasters by  
- **Government of Haiti**  
- Its capacities emphasized (e.g. collaboration with DINEPA, ministries of health and agriculture; local administrations took lead and basic initiatives);  
- Criticized for weak disaster response, slow decision-making and corruption;  
- Government should lead the reconstruction and be accountable to the people;  
- Center the need for partnering with local authorities and government;  
- Government capacity and governance, as well as technical capacity need to be strengthened;  
- “Republic of Port-au-Prince” in need of |
addressing risks and vulnerabilities (building codes, disaster management plans, re-forestation)
- Need to move from “the republic of NGOs” cliché;
- Palliative approaches vs. lasting solutions.
- **Participation**
  - A strong discourse of inclusion and participation of local citizens and organizations in decision-making and recovery efforts; over 90% of staff are Haitian;
  - Provide numerous examples of exclusive recovery practices;
  - “Haitian-led recovery” (state institutions as leaders of recovery, people consulted, Haitians as active citizens)
  - Examples of grassroots initiatives that need to be further strengthened;
  - Special emphasis on the inclusion of women in reconstruction process;
  - Pro-poor approach to reconstruction;
  - Cash-to-work programs to engage local citizens.
- **Capacity-building**
  - Advocate for capacity-building in the civil society and free press alongside government
  - Resilience is implied through building capacities, raising awareness and reducing vulnerabilities;
  - Locals trained, e.g. as health promoters, “mobilizers”, business training, waste collection and recycling projects.
  - Provided support for technical capacity (chlorine dispensers, bio-digesters, seeds and agricultural kits).

- **Local people**
  - Centering local people as key actors; strong discourse of inclusion and participation, “Haitian ownership, leadership and engagement”;
  - The need to consult people at all levels;
  - Examples of local community organizing efforts;
  - Focus on the most vulnerable, including women (gender inequality) and IDPs. Haves vs. have-nots.
- **NGOs**
  - Serve as a bridge between people in the grassroots, government and international community;
  - Hamper local economy by providing imported goods and services;
  - Concern about the creation of long-term slums; a dilemma of providing essential assistance vs. encouraging people to stay in the camps;
  - Too many NGOs doing the wrong things and focusing on cities instead of rural areas;
  - Criticized for bypassing local and national authorities;
  - Gaps and duplication in services need to be avoided;
  - Need to coordinate and cooperate with the GOH and Haitian people, and support public forums.
- **International**
  - Decentralization.
  - Local people
  - Need to move from “the republic of NGOs” cliché;
  - Palliative approaches vs. lasting solutions.
**Red Cross/the IFRC**
- Crisis and emergency situation discourse prevails
- Risk and vulnerability discourse unveiling the underlying causes of disaster and its magnitude
- Disaster as opportunity discourse wherein disaster situation is seen as a chance to re-envision the country and nation
- Magnitude of damage and loss frame wherein the quake and the nature are to blame

**Community**
- Need to commit to long-term engagement and support to the GOH that builds state capacity; “supporting, not substituting for Haiti’s state”;
- Support through a sustainable development model, an integrated approach and accountability measures.
- Special emphasis on U.N. efforts (criticized for lack of leadership and ineffective coordination, meetings held in French)

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<td>Response weaknesses and criticism;</td>
<td>incorporate local knowledge and practices and to “improve on what exists”;</td>
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**Disaster preparedness** (e.g. training; community outreach and beneficiary communications; prepositioning emergency supplies; reforestation projects).

- **Community**
  - An opportunity for a new start; “turn tragedy into opportunity”
  - Areas of recovery: livelihoods, water and sanitation shelter, healthcare, disaster preparedness, community and social infrastructure.
  - Emergency/crisis response and humanitarian assistance (hygiene, sanitation, cholera prevention) is the major focus of action.
  - Micro-economic renewal and livelihood improvement; job creation through cash-to-work programs; grants and loans.
  - Disaster preparedness (“vigilance committees”; teaching kids how to prepare, community outreach and beneficiary communications; prepositioning emergency supplies; reforestation projects).
  - Psychosocial recovery (acute stress and trauma; healing through helping others)
  - Community level recovery (context-oriented approach and community-building in camps)
  - Intentional inclusion and participation of local people (e.g. community construction teams; health educators; hygiene promoters)
  - Sustainability issues begin to appear in 2012 (e.g. sanitation services transitioning to the GOH or camp

**Local people**
- the rhetoric of inclusion and putting the people at the driving seat, “the Haitian population must be architects of their own recovery”;
committees); shift to supporting communities to build resilience and take ownership of their recovery; behavior change (e.g. hygiene practices) as a component of resilience.

- **Capacity building:**
  - strengthening people’s knowledge and skills to change behaviors;
  - on-the-job training activities;
  - organizational capacities of the IFRC;
  - need to strengthen the state response and long-term recovery programs.

- **NGOs**
  - Providers of emergency services, supplies and equipment “arrived en masse.”
  - Landowners accuse NGOs of keeping people in camps and occupying their land and creating long-term slums.
  - Emergency healthcare hampering local health providers.
  - A unified approach and pooling of expertise is needed.
  - In 2012 funding decreases, programs close.

- **IFRC itself and local Red Cross**
  - in need of capacity building, infrastructure strengthening and developing human capital.
  - committed to working in partnership with the GOH.

- **New Haiti:** New, stable and economically viable Haiti; “new, more robust Haiti”; “more stable and self-sustaining Haiti”; building back better.

- **Holistic, comprehensive, integrated plan; 4 essential pillars:** infrastructure and energy, food and economic security, health and basic needs, rule of law. Short- and long-term objectives are specified.

- **Only certain areas, “priority development corridors” designated by the GOH plan for action as “poles for growth”**

- **Haiti’s recovery as a “strategic imperative for the U.S.”** “future of Haiti implicates specific American interests” i.e. “security at home”

- **U.S. government**
  - historical relationship and hence responsibility as well as self-interest to engage - national security
  - use political capital and diplomatic resources
  - knowledgeable and resourceful actor

- **Government of Haiti**
  - Assigned a leading role in partnership with others
  - Its capacity and...
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- **Economic growth** is the ultimate goal of the USG strategy. Recovery is seen as development-in-recovery.
- **Sustainability** through assistance and investment reach “wide swaths of Haitian society”; decentralization as critical for sustainability; build capacity as one of the USG principles, “regeneration and stabilization of the public sector.” Exit strategies constantly mentioned.
- **Capacity-building** in each pillar of recovery/development:
  - Capacity of state and local institutions to respond to local constituencies;
  - Strengthening capacity through training, equipment and technology provision and infrastructure building;
  - Mostly institutional: infrastructure, equipment, technologies, human capital.
  - Resilience is implicated as institutional and economic capacity.
- **Participation**
  - Is focused on the GOH as a leading actor of recovery;
  - Local Haitians are generally seen as targets of interventions and development agenda;
  - Participation of the private sector emphasized;
  - Scarce mention of including locals in decision-making and active participation in recovery process. Only at the end of the document there is a statement about “greater use of Haitians and Haitian-American firms, local NGOs, and U.S. small, minority and women-owned businesses.”

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- **Leadership** need to be developed and developed;
- Need for decentralization and institutional capacity-building (infrastructure, human capital, regulatory frameworks and laws, technology and equipment).
- Need to hold GOH accountable to its commitments
- IHRC and HDA build capacity to coordinate recovery efforts
- **International community** (bi- and multi-lateral donors)
  - Knowledgeable and resourceful partners eager to invest in Haiti;
  - Partnership among international actors is emphasized;
  - Holistic approach is needed;
- **NGOs**
  - For years “filled the vacuum” of public administration;
  - Involved in relocating people from camps to transitional shelters and provision of health services;
  - Expanded free health services by NGOs (more than 250) hamper local private health sector;
  - Otherwise are not mentioned often; local NGOs are mentioned once as evidence of inclusion.
- **Local people**
  - The principle of close partnership with the people ("encourage greater use of Haitians");
  - Provide training to local people; impart lasting skills and knowledge to Haitians;
  - Targets and recipients of interventions and development agenda;
  - Women are often separated out as a vulnerable group in need of focused assistance and inclusion (women in camps; women-headed households; security of women; links between farm and market)
  - Protection and inclusion of most vulnerable (children, youth, IDPs, people with disabilities, and women).