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PROBLEMS OF FIELD RESEARCH: TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES OF THE DISASTER RESEARCH CENTER IN THE 1960S

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PROBLEMS OF FIELD RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES*

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*A talk given on December 3, 1966 at the University of Colorado to staff members of a project studying unidentified flying objects (UFOs).

In August of 1963, we established the Disaster Research Center at Ohio State University. The basic purpose of the Center is to conduct research into disasters. We are not interested in the physical features of disasters, but primarily in their human and social aspects. We have several contracts: one with the Office of Civil Defense, which supports most of our field work, and another with the Office of Scientific Research of the Air Force, which supports what we call the laboratory part of our research. Those were our initial contracts and are still our two basic contracts as of today. Essentially, they call for us to study organizational functioning under stress. That is, we are not interested in victims themselves; rather, our basic objective is to study organizations and their personnel, particularly those that get involved in solving the community problems engendered by disaster. This would include such groups as police and fire departments, civil defense, mass media, hospitals, etc. We are not confined to them alone, although they were our initial focus and are still the major point of interest in our research.

The Center itself is organized in the following way: There are two other co-directors besides myself. We are all sociologists, and our regular positions are on the faculty of the Sociology Department of Ohio State University. On paper at least our work load at the Center varies from quarter to quarter. It may be 20, 50, or even 100% of our time. However, such figures do not necessarily reflect reality. They are administrative arrangements which typically understate the time actually put into the work. In addition, we ordinarily have at the center three full-time research associates, some with Ph.D. degrees, others working for it. One of the research associates is assigned primarily to the laboratory work, and the other two to the field work. (However, their duties, as well as those of

everyone else at the Center, are transferable because we want everyone to get experience in all of our activities. So laboratory assigned personnel will at times work in the field and vice versa). Then we have about ten research assistants who are employed on an approximately half-time basis during the school year and full-time during the summer. Naturally, their schedules vary; for example, when they go out into the field, they may temporarily work full-time. Later, when they return to the Center, their work schedules can be adjusted. Thus, we have about fifteen people whom we could theoretically mobilize at any given time for field work, although we have never found it necessary to do so. In addition, we have a supplementary staff, composed of undergraduate students who do such things as coding, library work, and the like. There is also a whole platoon of typists--transcribers, necessitated by the fact that we tape record most of our interviews. We sometimes need specialized personnel, for example, translators because we have a certain limited mandate to do studies of foreign disasters, and have been to such countries as Japan, Greece and Chile. There are also two full-time secretaries. Obviously, the Center's payroll fluctuates. We have at times as many as fifty people employed, although not all on a full-time basis. This, by the way, necessitates a great deal of administrative time, a fact frequently overlooked in launching a research project.

What are we trying to do at the Center? In a sense, we are operating on two levels. One, of course, arises from the viewpoint of our sponsors. They are interested (the Air Force far less so than the Office of Civil Defense) in practical considerations: what are the problems that arise in a disaster? how do various organizations try to deal with these problems? While our mandate is not necessarily to come up with specific recommendations, nonetheless, it is to try to depict what are the typical problems, for example

that police departments encounter in a disaster. We ourselves at the center are primarily sociologists, and so we are more interested in the basic research content; that is to say, the study of organizations under stress gives us some idea about the structure and functions of organizations at all times. One can simply see the organization better when it is under stress. Consequently, we are more interested, shall we say, in the basic research aspects rather than in the applied.

The contracts themselves, both with the Air Force and the Office of Civil Defense merely call for a series of reports. (There is an informal understanding that both the field and laboratory research will be supported for at least five years). Insofar as the Office of Civil Defense is concerned we reached an agreement with them about a month ago (in November, 1966), that we produce 18 to 24 reports in the next year or two. Some of these will be overall reports, e.g. on the theoretical model we are using in the field work; some of the reports will deal with specific kinds of organizations such as hospitals or fire departments. Some of the reports, the later ones in particular, will analyze particular problems that arise in community emergencies, for instance, the warning process.

Although all our data gathered under the Civil Defense contract has to be initially cleared by them, none of our information is classified. The interviews or transcripts themselves of course are confidential, since we promise this to our respondents. However, everything else is available for use at our center by any interested and responsible party.

The reports we just mentioned will be publicly distributed, some in the professional literature, but most in more general sources. It is in this way we primarily hope to get our findings out to the general public and organizational personnel. Of course we are constantly approached by agency

officials and emergency groups. Thus, we have been to conventions of police chiefs, meetins of the Red Cross, etc. and have delivered at them papers about our findings.

I want to stress again, however, that we are not in the business of making specific recommendations. For example, we are not going to say how civil defense ought to be reorganized in this country so that it can better handle natural disasters. Rather, we will point out here are some of their problems, both internally and externally; here are some of the reasons why they have difficulty along this line rather than along another line; here are some of the ways which seem to enable the organization to handle the problem better than others. And then we will stop.

While we will publish some case studies, we are not interested in case studies per se. We are not concerned with what a specific hospital or a specific police departme t did in a particular disaster. We put all the information together about a particular type of organization so that a specific organization is merely one in the "pile." In short, we are interested in general observations or propositions, not the disaster history of any given group.

Likewise, we are not going to engage in public evaluations. That is, we are not interested for example in stating that Civil Defense in New Orleans handled an emergency problem well or badly. Our personal judgement about this may be one way or another, but public statements will be general descriptions and propositions about conditions leading up to the problems, typical difficulties, etc.

I might inject here that we have produced in the last three years a series of working papers and Research Notes that are not publicly available. These are for avery limited circulation only to persons and organizations that

the Center judges as having a legitimate interest in preliminary, unsystematic, or impressionistic descriptions and analyses of community emergency operations. If you want these reports, we can send them to you.

Before turning to a more specific detailing of our field work, I would like to say a word about our laboratory research. This may be of less interest to you given your concerns, but we do try to integrate our field and laboratory work. As I said earlier, personnel from both projects get experience at both kinds of research.

The lab phase, as we call it, is connected with the field operation in the following way: We have at our Center a large room with one-way mirrors on two sides, closed-circuit television, a number of telephones and the like. What we do there is to bring in actual segments of organizations and to simulate, in a sense, a disaster for them. For example, when we studied the Indianapolis Coliseum explosion the field team focused on the communications activity of the Police Department. They obtained a copy of the tapes of the police communications the night of the explosion, so we knew, for example, all the calls that went into police headquarters (via radio and telephone), and we knew, in a sense, what the police dispatching room did that night. On the basis of this information, we built a scenario of a similar disaster (actually a plane crash rather than an explosion) and brought in to the laboratory the actual dispatchers of the Columbus Police Department--all of the three shifts. As far as they initially knew, we were conducting a communication exercise of some kind. What we did was to run them through two ordinary dispatching sessions, and then during the third session, which they thought was to be the last one, after about ten minutes, we generated a disaster for them in the sense that all the incoming calls were really much like those received by the Indianapolis Police Department during the Coliseum explosion. The object of course, was to study how the different dispatching units handled the stress

generated by the excess of unusual kinds of calls--something we know occurs in actual disasters.

Very briefly put, this is how we use our field work in part to provide the basis for our laboratory experiments where we can more concretely test and measure responses to stress situations on the part of segments of organizations. The complete audio and video recording we obtain of real people playing their usual organizational roles is clearly something that we can not get in our field work. Obviously also, there are many things that we can not do in the lab that we can do in the field. But to the extent it is possible we try to design our field and laboratory research so that they will be related and complementary.

Now, I want to talk about our field work. Let me first briefly indicate what field teams do, and then go into more details about some of the problems we had to deal with in setting them up. I will follow this with some specific comments about field operations.

We are organized at the Center so that field teams are ready to leave at a moment's notice--that's an overstatement but as I will indicate later we are geared for rapid movement. The basic objective of a field team, in terms of its initial activity, is to go to a disaster area and to make a reconnaissance of the situation. The team then returns to the Center, and on the basis of its recommendations we decide whether we want to make what we call a study-in-depth. A study-in-depth involves going back, singling out those organizations which, from our point of view, were under the greatest stress in that particular disaster, and obtaining extensive data, primarily through interviews and questionnaires. We may, for example, study a hospital and interview, if it is small enough, all of the people in that hospital, using a standardized

interview schedule. If the organization is too large, we will draw a sample of the personnel. Sometimes we study one organization only; at other times we have made in-depth studies of as many as four in one major community disaster. In many situations, however, we do not make any in-depth study whatsoever because the field team reports that its reconnaissance suggests that an intensive follow-up study does not seem worthwhile making.

What determines our initial sending of a team into the field? The occurrence of a disaster, of course. But this is easier said than done for what is or is not a disaster is a rather complicated matter. The labeling of something as a disaster is highly dependent on what one is trying to study. Furthermore, a distinction must be made between the "disaster agent" itself and the possible disruptive effect of that agent.

Let me try to clarify this. At the Disaster Research Center we are primarily interested in disruptions of community life. Consequently, most transportation "disasters" such as airplane crashes or train wrecks do not qualify from our point of view because they generally do not disrupt community life. From our perspective they are not disasters.

Likewise, it can not be assumed that certain kinds of events automatically disrupt community life even though they may affect most of the community. Mine "disasters" such as the recent one in Wales would be a case in point. When I worked for the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago from 1952 to 1954 we studied some such situations. What we found was what is now called a "disaster culture." In most mining areas, catastrophes in mines are expected. When they occur, the total community is affected, but in terms of organizational mobilization and the like there is surprisingly little disruption of community life. Most of the organizational activity will change, but the change is in an expected direction and there is

little confusion in the emergency response. To an outsider, much that goes on will appear disorderly. Outsiders will notice the anxiety and affective reactions of relatives of victims and the like, but this can be highly misleading insofar as disturbance of community life is concerned.

Overstating it somewhat, it can be said that in a "disaster culture" everyone--especially the organizations involved --know what to do ahead of time. In contrast, in a "real" disaster, almost by definition, the groups and persons involved have to work out what they are going to do after impact occurs. Perhaps the point can also be overstated in the opposite direction. If a community is really totally prepared for impact, in a sense a disaster can not occur. No matter what hits the community, both at the individual and organizat onal level, it is prepared to respond. Of course, in actuality, no community can ever totally organize itself in such a way; that is, every possible eventuality cannot be conceived and planned for.

At any rate, the point I am trying to make here is that a disaster from our point of view involves the disruption of community life, If there is no disruption, there is no disaster. If there is a "disaster culture" likewise the chances for a disaster are low.

The presence of a "disaster agent" as such is also no indicator of a disaster. It may be useful to study from some perspective, but not from ours. For example, from a meteorological point of view, a tornado cloud is a tornado cloud regardless of where it occurs; even if it does not hit anything, meteorologists can usefully study it. Given our interests at the Center, however, we have to distinguish "disaster agents" as such (the tornado cloud, the flood of water, the rain and wind of a hurricane, etc.) from the possible disruption of community life such physical phenomena may

occasion.

I would think that in terms of what the UFO project is interested in, that these distinctions we have made in our research might be usefully kept in mind. That is, "agents" can be looked at apart from their effects on social life--in some situations there may be very little direct effect. In some contexts, agents can appear but can be so much a part of the subcultural pattern that the response to them is quite different from what would occur in non-disaster culture areas. Finally, in some situations the "agents" may bring about considerable disruption of normal social life. All of these things can be studied, but they are somewhat different and problems can be multiplied if the distinctions are not kept in mind. In disaster research, at least, they even determine if we will mobilize and dispatch a field team.

As I said before, our research focus is on organizations, and especially on organizations during the emergency period, that is at the time of greatest community disruption. Consequently, one of the main things we are interested in is to get a field team to the site as quickly as possible. Sometimes, as in the instances of hurricanes and floods, it is actually possible, of course, to get a field team there before impact occurs. We have to guess in such situations, but we have managed to get field teams in on the last plane, for instance, before the airport was closed as a hurricane approached.

As an aside I might say that the slower moving the "disaster agent," the less likely it is to cause a community disaster. The reason, of course, is the time allowed for preparations. Floods in many situations are less likely to bring about major community disruptions than more rapidly moving agents. From our point of view, sudden and unexpected events such as earthquakes are more likely to occasion disasters (at least up to now

earthquakes are not predictable).

We do have an advantage that I am afraid that the UFO project will not have. Given our definition of disaster as something involving disruption of community life, we do not have to worry finding isolated organizations under stress (A key assumption here is that if a community is involved, a range of organizations will almost inevitably be differentially stressed). For if a community is involved, rather than just a simple organization, it will quickly come to the attention of the mass media.

Furthermore, in certain situations we are alerted to possible disasters by the issuance of hurricane alerts, flood alerts and now even tornado alerts. We have good relationships with the Weather Bureau and often can obtain additional details from them. They are highly dependable for at least the natural kinds of disasters.

Sometimes we simply depend upon early radio reports, although we have learned to discount initial reports about disasters because they tend to exaggerate the destructiveness and damage that occurs. After a while, with experience, one picks up a "feel" about whether a disaster will be a worthwhile one to study. For example, when I heard the first report from Topeka about the tornado there -- I think I picked it up on an 8:00 p.m. broadcast -- I said to myself, this sounds important, in terms of what was described -- a diagonal path across the city of Topeka -- and I said if this account is anywhere near true, the disaster will involve massive organizational mobilization. So I alerted several members of our staff.

What we do as soon as we hear such an initial report is to check first with a local radio station. This is useful because local radio stations usually do not broadcast all the information they have and you can get additional details from them. Then we check with the AP or the UPI for further details. When possible, we frequently make a phone call to someone we know in that area. Sometimes if it is an area frequently hit by disasters, there may be people we know in certain organizations such as the weather bureau, civil defense, etc. Other times we call sociologists we know in the sociology departments of universities in that area or simply friends and acquaintances.who live nearby.

At any rate, our main objective is to get to the disaster site as quickly as possible so that we can be observing during the emergency period. For example, we had five people in Anchorage, Alaska, within 24 hours of the earthquake (I went up there myself on that reconnaissance). In a big event like that, the emergency period lasts for several days. It is worthwhile to go to such situations, and in a sense simply blend into the background, sit in a corner and observe -- in a somewhat systematic

fashion -- what is going on because the people participating in the disaster operations will never be able to report in a later interview (leaving aside the question of honesty) what you yourself can observe at the time. We are strong believers in participant observations so that we can match up our own field observations against what is then later reported to us.

A second reason for getting there early, at least insofar as disasters are concerned, is that being on the scene early enables us to a remarkable degree to get access and cooperation. People are quite candid, cooperative and just simply open to all sorts of things while the emergency is still on, in a way they are not later. Once one has established rapport, I think there is a certain -- you might almost call it therapeutic function involved; people are willing to talk while they are still excited. Besides, usual barriers into organizations are down. For instance, when hurricane Betsy hit New Orleans, I went down there very early and worked my way into the Mayor's office without having to go through a single secretary or anything else of that nature -- just walked in -- because, as I said, the usual barriers were down.

So it is important to have early reconnaissance for these two reasons: to make our own observations, and to establish rapport. The latter is particularly crucial, if as we do, you want to return to the area later and do a more extensive study.

In our initial survey during the reconnaissance trips, as we call them, we do not really try to make any systematic studies as such; the team's major purpose is to make a preliminary survey of the situation, trying to assess which organizations were involved, and then on the basis of certain criteria, coming to a judgment about which organizations have been under the greatest stress. The team then returns to the Center, and on the basis of that judgment makes reports and recommendations. I

may say that we have found it useful, worthwhile, and highly necessary to give the field team the greatest autonomy possible. We have come to the conclusion that trying to run a field team from the home office does not work. You must simply train your people well and then hope they exercise good judgment. Sometimes the people in the field call the Center to ask advice, but basically they have to make the decisions: whether to cut the reconnaissance short, to press a particular point, to try to get certain information which may not be immediately available, etc. So, we try to give our field teams as much flexibility and maneuverability as possible.

Initially, of course, it was primarily the co-directors who made the reconnaissances, taking research associates along. Now the research associates and assistants have acquired considerable experience. In fact, some of the research associates are far more experienced than the DRC co-directors -- some of them have been out in the field as many as 20 times.

Normally we find that for our purposes no more than three persons are necessary to make up a reconnaissance team. Usually too at least one of the research associates or co-directors will be a member of this team. There are a variety of factors besides experience to consider in making up a field team. (I usually make the decision myself on the composition of the team). For example, we have several southerners who are research assistants. Well, it is worthwhile to put a southerner on a field team going to a disaster site in the South. For example, we studied a tornado in Jackson, Mississippi. Our getting cooperation from the police department was undoubtedly helped by the presence of a southerner, using an obvious accent, on our team. We have a Negro too on the research staff. While he can not easily go into certain areas, he

can probably work better than other people in some localities. In addition, some of our people have become -- although this was not by design -- specialists on certain organizations; once these persons have gained experience in writing up reports on police departments, or hospitals, etc., they are much more attuned and sensitive to what to look for and examine. Thus, if it appears ahead of time that in a specific disaster a particular organization may be highly involved, such "specialists" are likely to be assigned to the field team.

Usually our field teams make a relatively quick judgment on whether to recommend an in-depth study. Let me give some background for this. One of the things we have done in terms of the operation of our Center is to invite all research assistants and associates, inasmuch as possible, to all our staff discussions and meetings. In other words, we try to keep everybody as informed as possible about what is going on, what our objectives are, whether there are any changes in methods or theoretical notions, etc. This means, therefore, that our research assistants are not simply interviewers. They are people that have a rather wide background in terms of knowing what we are doing and not doing. I think this is rather crucial in terms of some of the decisions they have to make in the field.

For example, our field people always have to keep in mind two fundamental points. One is, if we do a study-in-depth, we are going to have to go back into that community, and anything that has been said about us or anything that we have done will affect what we are going to get in that study-in-depth. Furthermore, although disasters are irregular and unpredictable, nonetheless there are certain areas of the country that have a much higher probability for disasters than others (such as hurricanes in Florida and Louisiana or forest fires in California).

Thus, we not only may be going back to such areas, but we may be going back there year after year. Consequently, we always have to keep in mind that this may not be the last time that we are in a given area. We have to worry about what our reputation is. We must be very careful about what we say and do not say because we may be returning, and the people there are going to remember. I must say that apparently we have worked rather well because we have always been greeted cordially when we have gone back. People remember us and go out of their way to help us. Often, we go back to organizations, sometimes a couple of months later, and say, "you know we forgot to pick up some information, Do you know whether it is available?" A lot of these people we had previously contacted have gone out of their way to find such information for us. There if of course no real way of judging whether our tactics have worked other than the fact that nobody has ever gotten angry with us. Cooperation has been excellent once an intial contact has been made. There is only one exception to this that had nothing to do with our mode of operation. The only instance when we have been refused permission to do a study-in-depth was in Florida, and that had to do with an electric company which had originally agreed to a follow-up study. Then, when we were ready to make it, we were told "No, Florida doesn't have disasters. This is bad for the tourist trade.And if you people come down, this could be interpreted as saying we had a disaster in this area". That is the only time that we have ever had a flat refusal.

Officials get into an interesting dilemma at times. They often want the federal government to declare a disaster area in a locality in order to obtain federal funds. On the other hand, they do not want it declared a disaster area particularly if it is a tourist region.

Of course, as I said earlier, the mass media tends to overstate

the scope of disasters. Early reports put out have to be heavily discounted. I do not recall the exact figures off the top of my head, but only about one of three of our reconnaissance trips have turned into in-depth studies. That is to say that about two out of three of our field trips have terminated with a reconnaissance trip, they have not had any further pay off. At times we see some single things that might be worthwhile studying, but we have said that on balance it was not worthwhile committing our team for that particular purpose. In other words, we always have to deep in mind that we have limited resources, and that we can not study everything that might be of value.

In the field itself there are two things we especially look for. One is how much cooperation we can expect from different organizations (this has not turned out to be a really major problem, although there have been a few "sticky" situations; police departments, for a variety of reasons, are very difficult to study). The field teams have to make, on the basis of their contact with various groups, a judgment as to which groups would agree to a study-in-depth. We have developed several techniques along this particular line which have turned out to be very effective. For example, if we get a commitment for a later study, from the top officials in the beginning, they are not likely to back down later on. We approach them during the emergency period, tell them that we might want to come back and do a study-in-depth, and obtain a commitment then.

The second consideration is how great will the payoff be from making this particular study? This judgment is dependent upon the team's evaluation of the information and data acquired during the reconnaissance. For instance, we had not been able to study a police department until very redently. So, when a team went to Topeka, Kansas, (during the

tornado disaster) and was able to establish very good rapport and gain entrée into both the sheriff's office and the police department, the field team quickly sensed that we ought to move in and make an in-depth study. We have had prior difficulty researching other police departments. Yet, these people were willing to open the door wide for us. The team made the decision on the spot, and told the sheriff and the police that it was very likely that we would be back to make a study-in-depth. After the reconnaissance, team had returned to the Center and concluded that it was the right decision. As you can see, a judgment may be dependent on, in some respects, what we need to research. Thus, the two determining factors regarding decisions of this kind are primarily how much cooperation we are likely to get and the kind of information we need.

There is no clear-cut typical time "lag" between the occurrence of the disaster and further, post-reconnaissance research. Naturally, there are various elements which contribute to the timing. To do a study-in-depth means that we really have to tie up a great deal of the organizational personnel of the organization to be studied. Incidentally we have always felt that there was no use pretending that an in-depth study will not be very time-consuming. We have always operated on the notion to be as honest as possible about this aspect of our field operations. When an organization official asks us, how many people do you want to talk to and how much time is this going to take, we try to give a fairly accurate estimate. For example, the Topeka Police Department consists of about 120 people. We told them that we would want to talk to about eighty people in the department and that we would probably need each person available for a minimum of two hours, perhaps even longer. Thus, this organization knew ahead of time we were going

to be occupying alot of their personnel's time.

Police however are a little easier than others to interview because they work on shifts. Organizations that do not operate on a shift basis are more difficult to make arrangements with since their people may only have an 8 to 5 day.

An additional factor that has to be considered in timing a return trip to a disaster site is the following. Organizations (particularly those not working on a shift basis) often fully mobilize during a stress period. After the emergency is over they frequently have to let people have time off to straighten out the overtime people put in during the disaster period. Cosequently, we have come to the conclusion, on the basis of our experience, that one usually has to allow a two or three week "adjustment" period before returning to make a study-in-depth.

The decision whether to pursue the study is usually made the day the field team comes back to the Center after the reconnaissance, although it may be deferred from two to four days, depending on how long the team has been gone -- it might be five days from the time the disaster occurs to the time we make the decision. Actually, the field team may already have reached a "preliminary" decision. For example, th e field team that went to Topeka called and told me during the reconnaissance, there are two things to study here: we ought to do a study of the warning system and one of the police department (as I mentioned earlier). In that particular instance the decision was made within 48 hours of the event.

We try to make the follow-up as soon as possible given the aspects I have just discussed. One of the problems, which I think will be more of a problem for the UFO Project than for us*, is that the later one

*[The parallel problem: as reports of sightings are received, the UFO Project must decide whether to pursue them at once--going out immediately on an investigatory field trip sometimes without too much confidence that it will be worthwhile. Others might require bringing people to Boulder for further study.]

goes to the site, the more likely it is that a "collective consensus" has developed about what in a sense should have happened -- not really what did happen, but what should have happened. In other words, one finds that for example, the right persons made the right decisions in the right organizations. There are ways of countering some of this post-occurrence consensus. For example, one of the things we always try to do is to pick up the recorded tapes of various organizations such as the police, the fire, the mass media and the like, because on such tapes we usually find the time sequence. We do not have to ask a dispatcher what time the first call came in; it is right on the tape. We can then match the tape record against whatever is reported. Second, of course, in the interviews themselves, we try to get people to spell out independently of others what happened and then, in a sense, match perspectives. To be certain, they will have forgotten a lot, but good interviewers know how to probe so that it is remarkable how much information can be obtained.

Because of the importance of getting to a disaster scene in a hurry, we have had to work on the mechanical aspects of getting a field team mobilized as quickly as possible. Everybody at the Center, upon hearing of a disaster, is supposed to let the others know. (At one time we thought of having a standby watch, but that did not turn out to be necessary at least during the working day--a secretary listens to the news on the hour.) As soon as a report comes in, if I am not around, one of the other co-directors then makes a quick decision about who is likely to go out and a field team is alerted. Then, if it looks as though the probability for a reconnaissance is high, we start making plane reservations and things of that kind. We travel commercially, although we do have military travel orders; but in this country we

have found that commercial means are good enough.

It is understood from the time they are hired that the people most likely to go out on field trips must be able to move at a minute's notice. For instance, it took the first two people we got up into Alaska after the earthquake, an hour and 45 minutes from the time they heard the news until they got on the departure plane. We are all prepared for such hurried movement in a variety of ways. First of all, it is understood that one may be called out any time of the day or night. On weekends or in the evenings we usually know where we can reach any given individual. A staff members is supposed to leave a phone number if he is out of town and things of that kind, so we always have contact with all of our people. Second, these people, especially the experienced ones, have learned to always keep a satchel packed -- with shaving kits and the like -- things they will need with them. One thing we have learned, especially going on commerical flights, is that the luggage does not always go with you. It is therefore best to keep all the things needed to "survive" with you, because your luggage might arrive much later than you do. Then, of course, there are certain other operations that go into play when we are getting a field team ready. Secretaries, for example, know how to make travel arrangements. (Outside of working hours, we operate in a somewhat different way.) Ordinarily they call a travel agency and work out travel arrangements. (We have what is called a Research Foundation, which is the administrative and financial branch of the research activities of the University. Its personnel had a little difficulty understanding at first that we could not turn in travel requests a month ahead of time. We have had to teach these people that there had to be a certain amount of flexibility in our travel operations.)

Then, of course, we have the gadgets and materials that our field

people take with them. Here are some of the items a field team needs: The Hertz travel card or letter for automobile rental. Actually, you can use Hertz or any other agency with only one card. We have a general university Hertz credit card. Some of our people have their own personal ones. Or you can type up a letter, copy the information off the Hertz travel card, and the letter will be as acceptable as the credit card itself. We are given the educational discount when we use the university credit card. You ought to use that rather than a personal one because the latter sometimes leads to arguments about whether you are eligible for the educational discount unless it is clear that you are a faculty member, Our Research Foundation has its own travel card and we use that as much as we can.

Then there is the matter of travelers checks. When you send people out into the field you have to make certain they have enough money. We worked out informally with our Research Foundation that we, the co-directors, are personally responsible for a certain amount of money which the foundation advanced us. (As I remember, it was $2,000 apiece.) And this fund we in turn allocated by giving each team member at least $150, and in many instances $300. They use the money given to them to purchase travelers checks ahead of time.

The field team, of course, always takes a tape recorder because we do use tape recorders in all situations (although we now use them less in reconnaissance than we did originally). The reason for less use at present is two-fold. First, we have found that the use of tape recorders means extra weight to drag around. People can move a little more quickly without the tape recorder, than if one of them has a recorder hanging over his shoulder. (It is not a question of rapport with people -- we've never had any trouble, at least in this country, of

people being afraid of tape recorders -- it is simply a question of easier physical movement, especially since there are other materials also that have to be carried around). Second, we how play down use of the tape recorder because there was a tendency for the field people to keep the tape recorders on at all times as they were wandering around. This drove our transcribers "crazy" when they attempted to transcribe the material recorded at such times. If you have ever had anything to do with transcription, you know that the time involved to transcribe a few minutes of poor tape can be astronomical. When you have, as we once did, people in the streets with the tape recorder on and picking up all sorts of miscellaneous information, the quality of recording will be very poor. So as to avoid the resulting transcription problemswe told our field people not to use the tape recorders so much; though, again, they have to use their discretion. It is up to their judgment whether they ought to record or not.

We have found that a West German make recorder called the Uher is the best for our purposes, although it is very expensive. The portable,recorder, if I remember correctly, costs $400. But I would say that it is worthwhile. It is very easy to carry around. Moreover, it is a very durable machine. It can take a lot of pounding, and it has four different speeds. And if you buy the thinnest kind of tape, you can get twelve hours of recording on a single spool (six hours on each side). As a matter of fact, there is tape now that goes up to almost seven hours on each side. This means that a field worker can leave a tape on the machine during a whole day and not have to worry about turning it over. I would highly recommend the Uher despite its cost. I would also suggest that one ought to be careful about using different types of tape recorders, about mixing them up in field use.

While theoretically the speed is supposedly the same -- 15,16 or 3 3/4's on different tapes -- we discovered that they are not quite all calibrated in the same way. So, if you record a tape, say on a Japanese make recorder at 3 3/4's and then try to transcribe it on the Uher it may not come out quite right. Do not interchange recorders. Make a decision to use one kind and stay with that one.

We also have a checklist that describes what people are supposed to do before they leave on a field trip. For instance, it states on the list to check that all the batteries of the recorder are fully charged (there is a charger for each recorder); tapes, three to a recorder; and empty spools; check to see if the recorder control is working properly -- mikes all right, phone taps, etc. If interviewers go out and the recorders do not work, this can be rather difficult because one can not always find people to repair them. Another advantage of the Uher: you can now buy batteries for it -- not the flashlight type, but other kinds of batteries that even if they run down, the machine can not be damaged. The batteries can always be recharged. They can be plugged in and they will charge up overnight.

Each member of the field team has what is called a field kit, which contains a field kit inventory and checklist for the field. [See examples.] Thus each member of the field team has this checklist for field trips. He is supposed to go through it before he leaves on a trip. It says, carry essentials in the field in case airline luggage is delayed. It says, when established in the field notify the DRC (Disaster Research Center) where located. This is merely to insure that we know where we can reach them when necessary. Now other materials: the checklist says, sun-visor ID cards, take three. What this refers to is that in a disaster situation very often road blocks and the like are established. Our people arrive at a disaster site and usually rent a couple of cars. This

sunvisor ID card is a sign that we devised; it looks quite official: It has the easl of the University and reads Disaster Research Center, Ohio State University. It can be slipped in over the car's sunvisor and the visor dropped. Usually people at roadblocks are impressed by anything that is official and they will let us through, so it is handy to have and it looks official enough. Also, all of us have had billfold ID cards printed up which indicate our affiliation with the Center, and the University. Then we have what is called an OCD identification sheet, a statement about our working under a contract with OCD. Another field kit item is a list of contacts in the disaster area. In other words, when a team is ready to go out somebody takes the responsibility for finding out whether we have been to that area before, what contacts we have had, what the nature of those contacts is, and so forth, and compiles all that information and gives it to the field team at the airport or earlier.

Then, sometimes a radio monitor is taken. As I said before, we are very interested in police and fire tapes. With the monitor we can set up and actually listen in to the police and fire calls as they are made, and it is also possible to hook this on to one of the tape recorders, so that we can actually tape the calls. Camera and film may also be taken. We have gotten to the point now that we have decided many times a picture will tell far more than a tremendous amount of description about, say, the confusion in a particular area. Our field teams now, for example, when they walk into an emergency operated center or a police dispatching room or a hospital, etc., frequently take pictures. Recently we have been in contact with our University department of photography, and we have worked out an arrangement with them so that if we want to take movie cameras into the field they will provide the cameras. We use the

AGFA Selecta camera for still shots. We have a couple of camera specialists, people who are hobby photographers, and they came to the conclusion that is the best for our purposes. They reasoned as follows: some of the Center personnel like myself have no interest in and no capability for operating anything except the most simplest of cameras. So that had to be kept in mind, and then there is the question of weight. Our people are weighed down with tape recorders, radio monitors and the like, and we have to keep that in mind. You can overload field workers with too much equipment. The last item on the checklist is maps of the area if possible. Here again, it is good if the team can get a picture beforehand: for example, where certain organizations' headquarters are. They can look at this type of material while they are flying to the area.

In the field kit there are a variety of things. In each kit there is, first of all (and the team members keep copies of these around their houses), a list of names and phone numbers of everybody on the staff and of all our major contacts. This means that everybody knows where he can reach anybody else. (Incidentally, one thing that we have done to take care of long distance phone calls is to obtain a billing number for ourselves, so that long distance calls are automatically charged to it rather than our trying to pay for them in the field or working out other procedures.) The list gives the home phone number of everybody on the staff, all our contacts in Washington, even some of our contacts in Canada.

Then there is a checklist for initial survey of stress reconnaissance, which indicates some of the points to be covered (of course, by now the experienced people have this down and memorized; they do not have to rely on the checklist).

We also include two different kinds of interview schedules and what

we call an interviewers' field record. /See example appended./ An interviewer is supposed to indicate on a field record form the time, the date, and the person he is in contact with; the length of the contact; what sort of recording used -- that is, by hand, tape, memory; the type of the contact -- formal interview, informal interview, observation, etc.; and remarks. This type of record is particularly crucial if we go back later because the returning interviewers may not be the same as the original ones. A new interviewer can check the field record to discover whether the respondent was cooperative, etc. Furthermore, this is a safeguard if for some reason the information written on the outside of the recorded tape -- who has been interviewed for instance -- gets lost or if it has not been recorded. This can serve as a backup for that kind of information (although one needs some sort of additional system, too, for keeping tape records clearly identified.)

In a kit also go stationery, a copy of our contract, and a set of instructions on how to use the camera. Included, too, is what we call our master questionnaire, to be used for the study-in-depth. We include a group of receipt forms /see example/ because sometimes the people in the field have to purchase items and government, as well as university, auditors want clear-cut records of expenditures; an airline tax exemption certificate; and some folder brochures we designed and had printed. /See example./ We have found this information folder very useful. It tells what the Disaster Research Center is and describes briefly our research. It is helpful in explaining to people who we are and what we are doing, and people interviewed find it handy for later reference so that they can explain to others about our work and so that they can, if they are interested, contact us later on. It is, in a sense, part of our "public relations" approach.

We rarely ever have difficulty establishing good relationships because, in part, we have spent a great deal of time training people how to conduct a reconnaissance trip. While they are supposed to make an initial introduction to people and to try to get some brief interview with them, they are also supposed to use their judgment about whether to press for an interview or not. The thing that we tell them to do is that once you have made an introduction, then simply blend into the background and observe. For example, when I went up to Anchorage I walked into the Public Safety building, introduced myself to the local Civil Defense man, and said, do you mind if I just stay around here and look at what is going on? So I planted myself there in that office for about eight hours and made a systematic record of, for example, what kind of phone calls they were getting, who was walking in and out, (at that time I was making notes only and not using a tape recorder), and so forth. The main thing we stress in training our field people is not to get in people's way.

Then there is the matter of affiliation, and this is very important. The issue arose when we first went out, how should we identify ourselves? We could go under a variety of auspices: The Defense Department, Office of Civil Defense, the University, etc. We have discovered (and I feel very strongly about this) that at least in American society the university identification is the best identification to have -- at least insofar as disasters are concerned. This would appear to be so for a variety of reasons. One is that university people are seen apparently as having a legitimate right to conduct research. Nobody ever raises questions about this. If we tell people we are from a research institute, or Ohio State University, or from the Center, nobody ever raises the question of the legitimacy of our being there. Second, too, apparently not only are university people seen to have the right to do

research, but their veracity is accepted. We explain that the information we obtain (and we also adhere to this policy) will be seen by members of our own staff only and no one else. In other words, any information given us is confidential -- at least the interview transcripts and the like -- it will not go beyond our staff. Apparently the university label carries enough weight so that people believe us. Also, I think the university label (particularly when one is moving outside of his own area -- sometimes people are taken aback and say, you mean you came all the way from Ohio to study us?) is somehow a positive factor in general terms. I think other identifications can lead to problems? identity with the Defense Department, the Office of Civil Defense and the like, could lead to negative images in certain sections of the country; for example, the federal government is not always positively viewed at the local community level or among some organizations.

Also, another point that I think is very important is that the "magic" word we always use is <u>research</u>. We avoid such a word as <u>investigation</u>. The word <u>investigation</u> to peoples' minds connotes that some sort of judgment will be made about "right" and "wrong": who did the right things, who did the wrong things. So, as a matter of fact, when our people go out in the field immediately after they introduce themselves, they emphasize that we are there to do <u>research</u>. We are not interested in evaluating or judging anything; we simply want to find out the kind of problems "you have and how you attempted to solve them." This sets us apart from newspaper reporters, from insurance investigators, and so forth. Sometimes we have to keep emphasizing the point because people will not understand it the first time and they will say, "Well, you're here to investigate what?" "No, no, we're not here to investigate anybody or anything; we're here to do research."

Also, because we study organizations, we deal mostly with organizational officials and these people are generally, of course, fairly well educated. They have had dealings with all sorts of other organizations and some notion about objective analysis. Sometimes in the middle of an interview officials will turn to us and ask a question, and then they will correct themselves, and say, "Oh, that's right. You're not supposed to make a judgment on that." This, in a sense, recognizes the point that we are supposedly objective and we are not going to pass judgment on them.

We are not much bothered by requests for information from, say, the news media when we are working in the field because we try to detach ourselves as much as possible from them. As I said before, when we go to a disaster area, we tell people, " We know you're busy; we're not going to get in your way; we are going to stay in the background and the like". This can lead to interesting observations. We will be sitting there "in the corner" so to speak, observing, and a newspaperman will come in and bother some official or other. Very often a civil defense official, for example, will turn to us and say, "Look at that -- he wants me to give him some news stories." Yet, this same official will give us information which he refuses the newspaper man or, what is worse (because it raises a very interesting question about research), he will turn to us and ask a question about what he should do. When I was in Anchorage, Alaska, at about 2:00 a.m. 400 messages came into the civil defense headquarters, messages from the other states asking form information about relatives all over Alaska. I am sitting there, and the Civil Defense Director, whom I had gotten to know very well by then, turned to me and said: "You're a specialist in disaster. What should I do with this?" Of course, one of the things that we are very interested in, is communications in disasters, and I though to myself "talk about

contaminating data". So I said, "Well, you know, as I told you, we're not here to give advice; we can't possibly help you in any way. You will have to make your own decisions". He thought it over and eventually he decided to let the Boy Scouts distribute the messages. (As it turned out, he later found that somebody else had already distributed all the messages.)

I admit there is a temptation to offer advice. I have been in situations where I said to myself "why don't they do the obvious?" -- such a simple matter as closing a door to keep out intruders. But we take the view point, like physicians when they are testing some drug, that we donnot get identified in that particular way. We are researchers, first and last.

When we are queried directly by the press, we generally tell them that we are there at the scene on an exploratory visit: "if you are interested, why don't you contact our Center and they will tell you all sorts of things about our work." One of the tactics that our field people have been taught to use is that any problem they run into they do not think they can handle directly, they should refer to the home office. We have been approached very often by newspapermen who want to write articles about our research. Generally we turn them down on the grounds that we are making a long-run study; for the first three years we have not analyzed our data to the extent that we could talk about our impressions -- we do not think they would be worthwhile at this point. Most press people upon hearing this will go away saying they will be back in a couple of years.

Our field teams also have to deal with the problem of what I have already termed "collective consensus". We have no real way of dealing

with the problem except through our interviewing. The thing to do, besides getting coverage on particular points, is to try to obtain from an interviewed person literally a step-by-step chronological account of what happened and to keep emphasizing to him, "Now, putting yourself back at that time, what did you think?" He may say, "Well, I knew this tornado was coming". But earlier he said that all he had heard was a roar in the distance which he had not labeled as a tornado. The interviewer, if he is sharp, will say, "Did you really know it was a tornado at that time?" And the respondent will probably say, "Oh, no not really, I just heard the roar, you know." All I can say here is that there really is no way of getting around the basic problem other than trying to minimize it by constantly reiterating, "Back at that time, what did you think -- not what you learned later."

I have done some studies previously on this problem of consensus developing after a disaster when I worked on disaster research at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. In those studies we were interviewing victims of disasters. Sometimes for example, we interviewed all of the members of a family and matched one interview against another to determine whether there seemed to be any sort of convergence. I can not say that we really came to any concrete conclusion, but we discovered, I think, that there were some differences. Some of the things we discovered were that how people report a disaster is affected by such things as their social class background, which is obviously related to a lot of other things. For instance, middle-class people tend to give an impersonal third-person account of what goes on. Lower-class people tend to give a personal, much more concrete, specific account. They will say, for example, "Well, I went down to the Red Cross and I picked up two doughnuts there," whereas a middle-class person will say, "The Red

Cross moved into town and gave out doughnuts."

I think what happens (and I do not know how this will apply to people in general; I think it applies to organizations), when a disaster occurs, decisions about what should be done are not always made at the time and by the person that should have made them. Now the collective consensus that develops "straightens that out" so to speak. That is to say, the picture one gets if one accepts the overt reports is that the right persons did the right things at the right time. In other words, there is a movement toward what should have been done according to plan. For instance, decision-making in organizations during a disaster is typically made at lower levels, lower echelons of an organization, than is usually the case during normal times. What happens is that people "drift" (after the fact) towards what should have been done -- the right people did the right thing. I would, for example, guess -- this is purely a guess -- that if one is talking about individuals in general and dealing, let us say, with males and females, I would expect that the collective consensus is that the male took the initiative in the emergency, whereas that may not have been the actual case.

What kind of collective consensus will develop is dependent upon such variables as the range of the disaster. That is to say, if it is a large-scale disaster in which many people are involved, I think it may be a misnomer to talk about a collective consensus. I think probably what evolves are "collective consensuses." Different segments of the community may develop different consensuses. Another variable which may affect after-the-fact attitudes (and I think this is an area to which the UFO Project should pay a great deal of attention) is what the mass media are putting out during the emergency period or the period immediately afterwards, clearly feed into the collective consensus that emerges. I am not certain exactly what influences the selective process --

even though mass communication is one of my own areas of interest -- but it is perfectly obvious that the mass media are very highly selective in terms of what they report. I do not know what precisely is the basis of the selectivity, but I should guess that they tend to select the more dramatic kinds of things to report, human interest stories and so forth. I think in the gross sense that is probably correct, although I do not believe that it is really a full explanation of the selective process. Yet, I am fairly certain there is a pattern to it of some kind; it is not totally idiosyncratic or peculiar to a given radio station or a given television station. For example, when I look at some of the messages that are broadcast by radio stations after a disaster (sometimes we have the actual tape of these messages), I sense that there are certain common things emphasized. I do not know whether this has to do with the values and attitudes of mass communicators (that they have learned that certain things should be dealt with) or whether it has to do with the inputs that they get, the kind of information that is turned over to them -- perhaps both aspects are involved.

Also, I think there is another kind of condition which to some extent may become operative in some of the situations that you are going to study. That is, as I mentioned before, some areas around the country which experience a great number of disasters, or potential disasters, develop what we call a "disaster culture" or "subculture." In certain areas of hurricane-hit Florida, tornado-alerted Kansas, and the like, people have become accustomed to disasters. There are all sorts of elaborate plans at the organizational level; there are all sorts of beliefs among the population itself about waht certain disaster agents may do or may not do. In other words, there is a whole panorama of values, beliefs -- myths as well -- about what can happen and not happen. There are also certain kinds of emergency-related behavior that people will

engage in. Fore example, in Cincinnati, Ohio the water comes up every year in February or March; so about that time of the year, specific organizations start to act. Certain people get ready in certain areas to start the move into particular Red Cross shelters; in some instances, they have been going there for the last ten or twelve years like some people go on vacation every year. These people know that for about three or four days around February or March of each year, they are going to go to a Red Cross shelter for a couple of nights.

I do not think that a collective consensus is as likely to emerge after reports of UFO sightings, as in the instance of natural disasters, I think instead you are more likely to encounter something akinto what I have been talking about as a "disaster subculture," say that sightings have been "occurring" in one place more frequently than in others. People, as well as organizations, in such areas will have acquired a whole general orientation about what they should do with such reports; they will have developed knowledge and myths about UFO's. In some respects I would anticipate that a collective consensus would not emerge in such areas, because in one sense it already pre-exists by way of a "disaster subculture." Thus, you may have less of a problem with an emerging collective consensus, but more of a problem with an established set of beliefs, myths and so on. I am not saying you will not get the former, only that it is less likely.

In areas with a "disaster subculture," if disasters provide any clues, the response is rather different along a variety of dimensions from that which will appear in other areas. For example, in such areas people seem to me to be more responsive to warnings, but are less likely to take the warnings as being serious. That is to say, they are more likely to become aware that a warning is issued, but on the other hand,

they are less likely to be worried about it. They will take their time before they act after the warning. And one could go through a variety of other dimensions in which there is variation depending on the presence or absence of a "disaster subculture."

One thing in particular occurred to me when I first heard about the UFO Project. I do not quite know how you would go about it, but I think it would be interesting to try to study a controlled situation. It might be highly informative if you could study two areas not too far apart geographically, where you find people feeling that they have seen UFO's. And as I said befire, I think the crucial variable here is mass communications. Say you could get two areas in both of which there were reported sightings. But in area A, the mass communication agencies disseminate the reports; whereas in area B they do not. I think that you would find in the days that followed many more subsequent reports from area A, fewer in area B (where the local mass communication system did not broadcast information about the earlier sightings). In some respects it seems to me this would be relatively easy to study along some lines. That is, you can go into two areas. You can contact such groups as the police, the weather bureau, the mass media, and ask them, "Over a period of time, how many people have called you up and asked about or reported sightings?" You might be able to determine to what extent the mass media affect the collective consensus and/or the "disaster subculture."*

If you wanted to set it up experimentally, it seems to me that you

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*[UFO Project Comment:] If we were, for example, to study two towns 100 miles apart we might send up balloons at each site. If we could arrange proper cooperation from the mass media, sightings could be publicized in one town but not in the other, and responses in the two areas could be compared and contrasted.

could work out something of that nature. In fact, you could even push it further. That is, you could really control on the communities involved insofar as size and composition and things of that kind. I do not think you would have to be reduced to matching every person with another in terms of personality structure, but it seems to me that you could certainly match a lot of factors. Getting cooperation of the mass media might be difficult, but in ideal terms, it seems to me that a matching community experiment could be made.

/UFO Project member's question: There was another proposal that I just read from a correspondent of ours at Northwestern University. He had a very interesting proposition based on previous studies: that if there is an explanation given for an initial sighting, it tends to lose its credibility because subsequent sightings can't be encompassed under that explanation and therefore the public tends to disbelieve the initial explanation of the original sighting. So it doesn't do much good to give an explanation for a sighting because one is damaging its credibility more than he is helping it. Do you have any comments on that?/

I am a little leary of accepting the notions that the population in an area reporting would all end up with the same explanation (even when they are affected by mass media communications). It seems to me that just is not congruent with a lot of other social-psychological principles. I would tend to think that one would find multiple kinds of explanations arising and being distributed throughout the population, each group with its own favorite or a given group with several explanations.

Let me try to link it to disaster research, not to the current DRC study, but to earlier studies in which I participated. One of the things we were interested in getting was people's conceptions of

disasters, for instance, causality: what the disaster is likely to cause, and so on. The sort of things we were partly groping for was -- do people give a naturalistic or a supernaturalistic explanation? What is the accuracy of people's image about what a tornado can do and not do? We came out with all sorts of interesting findings, one of which is that there are obviously multiple explanations in different segments of the population. For example, certain segments are more likely to have a supernaturalistic explanation of a tornado, whereas other segments are more likely to have a naturalistic explanation. However, interestingly enough, we found that to explain something at the causal level is not necessarily the way it is seen in all respects. That is, people seem to make a distinction between, for want of a better term, what we may talk about as the cause of something and the meaning of something. They may give a naturalistic or supernaturalistic explanation for a casue of something, but may give a supernaturalistic explanation in reverse, for the meaning of it. The tornado, for example, may be naturalistically caused, but the meaning of it is that God is warning people.

A number of these earlier studies were done in the southern states of the United States where one finds more, shall we say, religious beliefs prevailing that lead to supernaturalistic explanations. I can think of certain areas, for example, where we did some of these studies, like in rural Arkansas, where this may have been the most frequent explanation although there were a variety of other kinds of explanations. (But it must be remembered that these were rural areas, and 15 years ago.) In fact, there was a definite correlation between such things as church attendance, degree of education, etc. and types of explanation. One must remember that in the typical disaster individuals can check their sensory impressions as to, for example, where a tornado came from and

what its path was. But when something happens quickly, such as a UFO sighting, there is no way for people to check or recheck their sensory impressions. They may have to depend almost completely onas social consensus of what happened. Something that might come closer to your type of problem is an epidemic of some kind where there is less clear-cut sensory sensation, such as a toxic "disaster" from a substance such as carbon monoxide, or food poisoning. (There have been a few very small-scale studies of this kind of disaster.)

/UFO Project Question: Did your interviews permit the probing for multiple interpretations from a single respondent?/

The only answer I can give is that during the NORC /National Opinion Research Center/ research, unfortunately, although the original interviews did have questions in these areas, they were not really guided by any theoretical notions, but rather by a sort of common-sense notion. The findings discovered a multiplicity of distinctions between causality and tendencies, but these early findings were never incorporated into more systematic studies. In other words, if I were to do a study again of individuals rather than organizations, clearly, I would build into that study questions and methods to probe individual responses involving multiple interpretations.

/UFO Project Question: Do you have any suggestions for us as to how to interview people in such a way that they would admit to doing or thinking things which in retrospect may seem foolish to them?/

As I said before, I would certainly stress that you are doing research and that the research is an attempt to find out what people saw and did at that earlier time. You should try to establish a specific time reference. Try to bring the respondents back to that time and have the interviewer always on the alert for later additions. You might ask, "What would you have been saying if you were dictating

your thoughts into a tape recorder at that time? Try to place yourself there as though you were reporting on the spot." I do not know to what extent it would work, but there is nothing wrong, it seems to me, in trying it. We have the same problem in terms of our organizational research, trying to find out what changes there were in the emergency period compared with the activities of a normal day. We try to get around it in the following way; when we interview a person, we ask this kind of question: "Well, now, you come to this office everyday. Just pick a normal day, say a week before the disaster. Why don't you tell me what you did that day -- when you came in, in the morning whom did you talk to? What did you do? It doesn't have to be a specific day. Just give a general account of what you do normally." Sometimes this line of questioning is difficult to answer because some people apparently have no regular, normal patterns, but most people do have a routine pattern particularly in their work situation.

/UFO Project Question: The CIA has been somewhat concerned about a problem that might arise: if there were UFO sightings all over the country, could they be "planted" by a hypothetical enemy in order to simply clog the communication lines before attack so that when the real disaster comes the communication breaks down?/

I know that not only the CIA, but the Chiefs of Staff have considered this problem on a somewhat broader basis. That is to say, in planning exercises they have dealt with efforts to clog the communication systems of the society and in that sense tie it up. So somebody has been worrying about the problem, but I really do not know any details about the work being done on the problem. I do know that some people are making studies also of ways in which the communication system could break down, but almost all of that research is of a highly classified nature.

On a much smaller scale in both our laboratory and field studies

we have been interested in the problem of communication overloaded. We have particularly looked at police departments. Now there are many differences in the capabilities of various police departments. Some departments have a tremendous capability to expand their communications system to prevent jamming of the switchboard. For example, it would be almost impossible for the New York City Police Department to be overwhelmed because it has such a tremendous reserve potential. In other departments, it does not take more than three simultaneous calls tojam up the system. How the calls are handled makes a difference, too. Do they go through a switchboard or directly to a complaint clerk? Also, the kind of operational instructions given to personnel makes a difference. Some police departments are instructed to keep certain lines clear to the outside at all times.

/ UFO Project Question: In looking for discrepancy between retrospective reports and actual behavior, what other kinds of systematic changes do you look for? /

I think over-simplification, reduction of details to gross kinds of statements, and the collapsing of several events into one. As an example of the latter, I have noticed in participant observations in several disasters that a number of people, for example, might come in and ask a police chief or civil defense man about something -- they needed certain equipment -- and then in a subsequent interview this official would say, "Well, then I got a call for a generator." In actuality, four different people may have asked him for a generator and he may not have answered them in the same way; but he will remember, "Well, I got a request for a generator and I called so-and-so and got the generator." This may be true so far as it goes, but in reality on the first three calls he may have been unable to get the generator. It is not deliberate false reporting, but simply a collapsing of events.

I think there might also be a tendency to remember completed rather than incompleted actions; at least in disasters this may be the case.

/UFO Project Question: Did you ever interject into your system two independent events with the expectation that they would be interpreted as a single one?/

Yes, In fact, one of the things that we did when we created the scenario for the Columbus Police Department in our laboratory experiment was to make the first calls quite ambiguous in respect to what kind of disaster it was (I will send you a copy of a report on the laboratory simulation study and you can read it at your leisure for the details). All the radio room personnel were getting calls to the effect that there had been a big explosion, that there were flames in the distance, lots of smoke, etc. It was interesting that the three shifts varied considerably in arriving at the conclusion that it was an airplane crash, even though there had been an earlier call to the police from the airport reporting a loss of one of their planes on radar, and they did not know what had happened to it. The personnel on the different shifts varied in the time they took to make a connection between the earlier report and the later calls they were getting.

When we studied the Indianapolis Coliseum disaster, we examined the tapes to see what sort of priority was assigned to the incoming calls. In other words, when more than one request for an ambulance came in at the same time what did the dispatcher do? Did he send an ambulance to the Coliseum or did he send it to the patrol car officer who was pleading for an ambulance, saying "I have a heart attack case here." Which got the priority? In our simulation for the Columbus police we built in that sort of problem, too. We hypothesized that generally the police dispatchers would assign priority to the bigger event, and this is what they did.

If I were you people I would make major efforts on obtaining the

recordings of certain kinds of communications by many of the major organizations, (e.g., the weather bureau, the police and fire departments, the mass media, etc.). Incidentally, I should warn you that many of these organizations do not keep their records for too long a period of time. Some of them use the same tapes over and over again. Then, also, there are typically two kinds of transmissions: telephone calls and radio communications. Sometimes you may be able to obtain tapes of one and not the other. From your point of view, I think you would be more interested in the telephone calls into a police station rather than the radio communications going out, although I can visualize situations where a patrolman radios in that a citizen has stopped him and reported a sighting. One major advantage of having a tape is the timing of the call is beyond dispute because almost all of these recorders have timers on them. You can pinpoint the time to within a minute (usually all are timed to the minute; some are even timed closer than that).

Sometimes you may have difficulty obtaining copies of tapes. At one point in our research, I know there was a question about FCC clearance. But we talked to the FCC and found that the tapes are public property: anybody can sit down and just tape them off the air. The police have no general right to hold them but there are local regulations sometimes restricting their public distribution by the police. We also have discovered that whoever is in charge of the dispatching room in many organizations is relatively autonomous/ The communications chief, or whatever title he operates under, in appolice department is typically a man who has a great deal of autonomy. While the chief can tell him to do something, it is always better if the chief does not tell him directly, if the man cooperates on his own because then he will be much more helpful. Sometimes you have to get clearance from the people at the lower level. I mean that the chief may directly order subordinates to assist you,

but it is not a good tactic to have somebody order somebody else to do something for you because he might provide you with minimum help. But if you get him involved directly, then he may be highly cooperative. He may be able, for example, to make certain kinds of arrangements for direct taping and the like, that otherwise you might not be able to arrange. For instance, the quality of police tapes is not always of the best. Now it is possible to work this out with a dispatching personnel of a department. If they want to cooperate they could use a better quality tape for their recordings and that will make later transcriptions easier.

/ UFO Project Question: If we were to go back now and try to check sightings, how far back could we dependably get police tapes? /

In the large-sized cities you might be able to go back years, but in the middle-sized cities you may not have more than a year. Files of tapes are not kept very long. My guess is that it would be cities of half a million and over, that probably would keep them for about a year. However, you may also be able to get the State Police recordings. Every State Police organization that we have dealt with has always had recordings from different substations around the state. For your purposes, this really might be a better source of tapes. They are usually quite cooperative -- one of the more cooperative groups we have encountered. In fact, usually with them we say "why don't you send us a copy of the tape, or send us the tape itself -- we will make a copy and send it back to you." City police departments, on the other hand,-- perhaps because they operate on a tighter budget -- worry about the most of the tapes, and some of them do not want to let tapes out of their hands. We have had, at times, to send a man to a place simply to record tapes because, while the police were quite willing to let us record for days, they did not want to let the tapes out of their