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### **[Abstract Title]**

The Cultural Dimension of Disaster: Beliefs and Behavioral Response

### **[Abstract]**

In a book chapter published in 1945, Kluckhohn and Kelly defined culture as “all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men.” This is one of many definitions of culture, but I particularly like this one which emphasizes the nature of culture as rational, irrational and nonrational. In a recent set of studies, my colleagues and I analyzed data on human behavioral response to a number of earthquakes that occurred between 2005 and 2019. We noted many factors that influenced the behavioral response of people who experienced large magnitude earthquakes including levels of fear, seismic intensity, the observation of damage, and cultural definitions of appropriate actions lodged in regional disaster subcultures. Even in locations like California where an extensive campaign of over a decade has taught residents to “drop, cover and hold on” during an earthquake, older and questionably adaptive responses including standing in a doorway or fleeing to the outside have persisted and, in some cases, dominated even in areas where the preferred strategy was widely promoted and drilled. Our observations led to the conclusion that the cultural dimension of disaster is neglected in current hazards research and deserves greater attention.

### **[Keywords]**

culture, disaster, earthquake response