

# **Community Diversity, Vulnerability and Resilience**

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# Four talking points

- Foundations of personal and group resilience
- Population trends and social inequalities
- Implications for practice
- Challenges for the profession

# Dimensions of resilience

- Impacts
  - Short and long-term
  - Proximate and dispersed
  - Direct and indirect
- The “post-disaster disaster”
- Future hazards and disasters

- Through the disaster cycle
  - Not just a concern during recovery
  - Mitigation and vulnerability reduction
- Not an outcome but a process
- Not a function of individual attributes, e.g. income level, ethnicity
- Level of analysis
  - My focus today is on social groups

# What promotes resilience?

- Property, savings, credit, insurance
- Diverse income sources
- Secure livelihood, relevant job skills
- Extended households, multiple earners
- Strong kin and social networks
- Time

- Health and nutrition, food security, personal safety
- Safe and secure housing
- Mobility, access to transportation
- Household power
- Social protections/benefits

- Functional literacy, bureaucratic skills
- Social integration, solidarity
- Sense of place, culture, identity
- Political voice, efficacy
- Human rights and self-determination

# High-need groups in disasters

- Renters, public housing, homeless
- Single-headed households
- Low-income, below poverty level
- Home workers, self-employed
- Marginally employed, contingent workers

- Persons living with disabilities
- Persons living with chronic illness
- Newcomers, transients
- Socially or geographically isolated
- Migrant workers

- Street kids, children in care
- Female-headed households
- Residents of institutions, group homes, care facilities
- Multi-family households and those with many dependents

- Marginalized racial/ethnic groups
- Religious minorities
- Members of stigmatized groups
- Residents living alone
- Illiterate in dominant local language

- Functionally illiterate in language of governments
- Frail elderly
- Infants, young children
- Residents dependent upon state resources

- Residents of unincorporated areas
- Undocumented residents
- Recent immigrants
- Sexual minorities
- Women

# Contrary national trends

- Increasing geographic mobility
- Increasing longevity
- Increase in persons with disabilities
- Persistent poverty, economic insecurity
- Eroding safety nets

- Rising income/wealth gaps
- Immigration and resistance to it
- Increasing household size, e.g. among Latino "minority"
- Persistent racial residential segregation
- Increasing dependence on migrant labor

- Increasing dependence on paid caregivers
- Increasing single-headed households, parenting
- Serial marriage
- Erosion of civic culture, common ground
- Political alienation, marginalization
- Technological divide

# Predictable harm from Katrina

- Poor and economically insecure
- African Americans
- Women of color
  - Disproportionately poor
  - Heading households alone
  - Underinsured, medically needy
  - Public housing residents
  - Lack transportation

- People highly dependent upon
  - Public resources
  - Caregivers (family, kin, paid)
  - Functioning lifeline systems
  - Functioning support systems
  - Functioning equipment and medicine

# Others below the radar screen

- Native American communities
  - Especially if not federally registered
- Migrant workers, reconstruction workers
  - Especially if undocumented
- Bayou Cajuns and Vietnamese
  - Especially if livelihoods are resource dependent

- Immigrants
  - Especially if non-English speaking, low income
- Abused women/men
- Institutionalized/sheltered
  - Especially if not in recognized care facility
  - Especially if stigmatized (prisons)

# Lessons—still unlearned

- Reduced information, risk communication
- Less access to funds, skills for self-protection
- Disproportionate death, lasting harm
- Reduced access to emergency relief
- Reduced access to recovery assistance

- Separation of families
- Barriers to participation
- Vulnerabilities likely to be exacerbated
- Human rights abuses
  - Prisoners
  - Immigrants
  - Sheltering conditions

- Racial profiling in shelters
  - Heavy-handed policing, police violence
  - Latinos evicted from shelters as “aliens”
- All DV shelters/services closed
- Lack of provisions for disabled

# One example

- **86% of CBOs reported not knowing how to link to emergency management**
- Under 1/3 of shelters had ASL interpreters
- Only 20% had TTYs
- Only 40% had TVs with open captioning
- Just half of shelters made regular oral announcements

National Organization on Disability, Snake Report, December 2005

# A nation diverse and divided

- Not “private troubles” but “public issues”
- Not diversity but inequality is the issue
- Populations are only “special” against an assumed “normal”
- Community knowledge is the key

# Assessing resilience

- Communities large and small are complex
- Different kinds of communities
- Power relations structure communities
  - Between and within
  - Neighborhoods and organizations
- Within communities, some seek invisibility

# Mapping resilience

- Least resilient areas and persons may be difficult or impossible
  - To identify quantitatively
  - To map
  - To access as an outsider
  - To communicate with readily

# Resilience of South Lawndale seniors to Chicago heat wave

- Statistically comparable to North Lawndale with much lower fatality rates
- Infrastructure less degraded
- New waves of immigration
- Strong small ethnic business sector
- Public spaces and amenities drawing seniors out of their homes

- Pattern of visiting local businesses (air conditioned)
- Strong ties to neighbors, less isolation
- Lower crime rates, less fear
- Active street culture based on walking
- Caring for grandchildren so close ties to adult children
- Powerful churches reaching out to seniors

# Measuring resilience

- From whose standpoint?
- With what tools?
- Toward what end?
- The importance of grassroots collaboration

# Vulnerability is not helplessness

- Survival skills
- Self-sufficiencies
- Independence
- Leadership
- Political power

## ■ Self organization

- Support and service providers
- Specialized media, businesses, schools
- Neighborhood groups, tenants' associations
- Civil rights, human rights organizations
- Women's organizations, immigrant groups
- Environmental and faith-based organizations
- Out-of-area networks of support groups

# What CBOs bring to the table

- Connections and access
- Practical and local knowledge
- Perspective, analysis, history
- Credibility, trust, continuing presence
- Commitment to protection and solidarity
- People power

# Opportunities for collaboration

- Hazard and risk assessment, mapping, registries
- Local mitigation and preparedness campaigns
- Awareness, warnings, risk communication
- Identifying high need people and places
- Preparedness exercises, planning groups
- First responders
- Follow up, long-term recovery projects
- Research

# What CBOs need from us

- Recognition
- Respect
- Connection
- Communication
- Integration
- Information and expertise
- Material support to build and grow capacity

# Getting there from here

- Address root causes (a national mandate)
- Identify vulnerabilities and capacities
- Use knowledge to direct resources
- Self-assessment
- The will to change

# Accepting new ideas

- Particular but not “special needs”
- Human rights approach
- Gendered vulnerabilities and capacities
- New “stakeholders”
- Community accountability

# Developing new skills

- Information exchange
- Building and sustaining relationships
- Walking the beat--block by block
- Community-led assessments, planning
- Advocacy with, not for
- Outreach and inclusion

# Setting new standards

- Grassroots based
- Priority to least resilient
- Performance standards
- Training modules, education
- Standards and benchmarks
- Monitoring and evaluation

# Changing the face of EM

- We all bring something important
- But the face of EM in the US must change
  - Recruit in marginalized communities
  - Support nontraditional students
  - Networking and mentoring
  - Internships, scholarships
  - Teach and practice vulnerability reduction

**NEW ORLEANS NEW ORLEANS NEW ORLEANS NEW ORLEANS**

**NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US IS FOR US**

**THE PEOPLE OF NEW ORLEANS WILL NOT GO QUIETLY INTO THE NIGHT BECOMING THE HOMELESS OF COUNTLESS OTHER CITIES WHILE OUR OWN HOMES ARE RAZED TO MAKE WAY FOR MANSIONS, CONDOS, AND CASINOS. WE WILL JOIN TOGETHER TO DEFEND OUR CLAIM AND WE WILL REBUILD OUR HOME IN THE IMAGE OF OUR OWN DREAMS!**

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“Pictures of used-up humanity—the shut-ins and the locked-aways, an incarcerated populace, a concealed people, those who pay the true cost of the expansive maintenance of the American Dream—have been beamed into the gilded dwelling-places of wealth. A majority of those unable to flee the city are the victims of success, the failures and losers of a competitive, individualistic society which chooses to dwell only on achievement, celebrity and glory and to hide away its hopeless and the disappointed in the cellars and attics of forgetting from which they were brutally flushed out by the raging waters of the Gulf.”

Jeremy Seabrook, *New Internationalist*, September 9, 2005

“Failure at this level requires sustained effort. The deepening of the divide between the haves and have nots, the stripping away of social services, the defunding of the infrastructure, mean that this disaster—not of weather but of policy—has been more or less what was intended to happen, if not so starkly in plain sight.”

Rebecca Solnit, *The uses of disaster*, *Harper's Magazine*, October 2005

“ A city is a tapestry of human lives and social networks that are essential to the heart and soul of the place. A disaster can tear at this social fabric as terribly as at the physical infrastructure of a city. . . . Urban recovery occurs network by network, district by district, not just building by building; it is about reconstructing the myriad social relations embedded in schools, workplaces, childcare arrangements, shops, places of worship, and places of play and recreation.”

Thomas Campanella, *The Resilient City*