

# PREPTalks

New perspectives for emergency managers



## Social Capital in Disaster Mitigation and Recovery

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

## Agenda

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Introductions (5 minutes)

Watch the PrepTalks (20 minutes)

Discussion (30 minutes)

## Introduction



- Dr. Aldrich is a political science professor and director of the Security and Resilience Program at Northeastern University.
- He has published four books, including *Building Resilience*, *Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*, and more than 40 peer-reviewed articles.

# Watch the PrepTalk

<https://www.fema.gov/blog/preptalks-dr-daniel-aldrich-social-capital-disaster-mitigation-and-recovery>

- Topics for Discussion
  - Examine Planning Assumptions
  - Social Capital as the Key Driver of Resilience
  - Promoting Social Capital

## Topic 1: Examine Planning Assumptions

- There are several common theories that are identified as factors that drive the ability for a community to recover. These are:
  - **Money:** Including personal wealth and funding from FEMA, insurance, and other outside aid organizations
  - **Governance:** How well governed the area is
  - **Level of Damage/Destruction:** The belief that a more powerful disaster, such as a massive earthquake, has a slower recovery process than a smaller scale disaster like a tornado
  - **Population Density:** The expectation that dense areas and cities are slower to recover than rural areas
  - **Inequality:** Such as socio-economic disparity in the community

## Topic 1: Examine Planning Assumptions



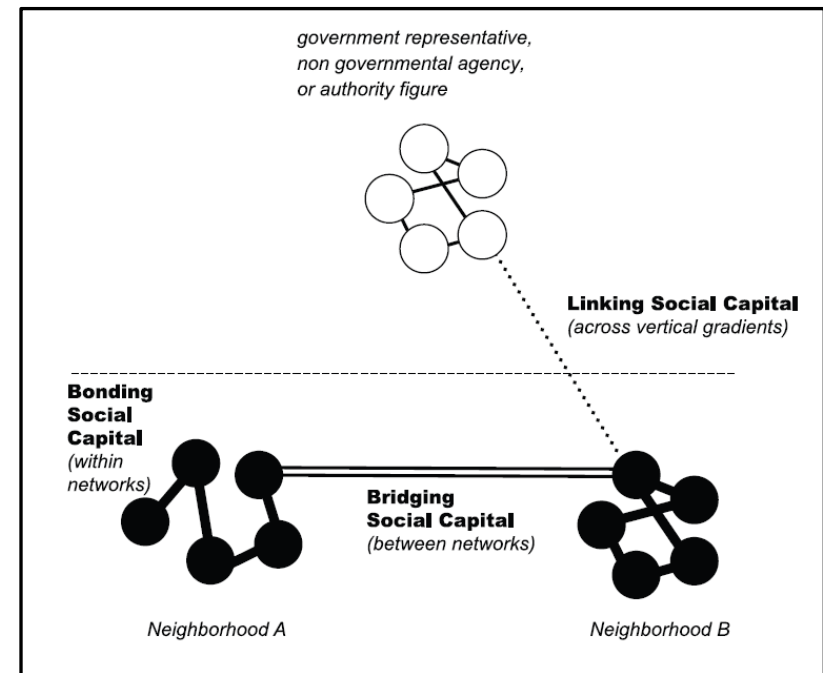
1. How have these factors directly (or indirectly) influenced your plans for the community, as well as plans for organizations, businesses, or other groups?
2. Are there any changes needed in your plans or your planning process as a result of potentially over-emphasizing these assumptions?

A lot of theories we have about recovery focus on the wrong kinds of ideas.

– Dr. Daniel Aldrich

## Topic 2: Social Capital as the Key Driver of Resilience

- The core elements of resilience come from inside the community, from social capital or social ties. The three types of social capital are:
  - **Bonding Social Capital:** Connections among individuals who are emotionally close, such as friends or family, and result in tight bonds to a particular group.
  - **Bridging Social Capital:** Acquaintances of demographic diversity, such as class or race. Often comes from involvement in organizations including civic and political institutions, parent-teacher associations, sports clubs, and religious groups.
  - **Linking Social Capital:** Connects regular citizens with those in power. Interactions tend to occur based on explicit, formal networks of authority.



## Topic 2: Social Capital as the Key Driver of Resilience



1. How can our community's preparedness plans be enhanced by the potential for collective action? For example, how can we incorporate community organizations into our plans to provide greater and more effective pathways for residents to support preparedness, response, and recovery efforts?
2. How do our plans incorporate ad hoc organizing that occurs after a disaster, supporting residents desire to help and provide each other informal mutual aid while also ensuring that this collective action is most effective?
3. How do our preparedness plans acknowledge the stressors placed on our community's social capital post-disaster? What strategies could be deployed to maintain and even enhance our community's social capital during a disaster?
4. How do we encourage our residents to return after a disaster and support the recovery process? Should our communication plan incorporate messaging to remind individuals of their attachments to our community?
5. How can we use our understanding of social capital to reduce the psychological distress caused by a disaster by helping to maintain individuals' social networks, even if they have had to leave the community?
6. What vertical ties does our jurisdiction have with state and federal officials? What connections do we have to officials that would be involved in the recovery process? Do we have the necessary relationships that can help our community post-disaster?

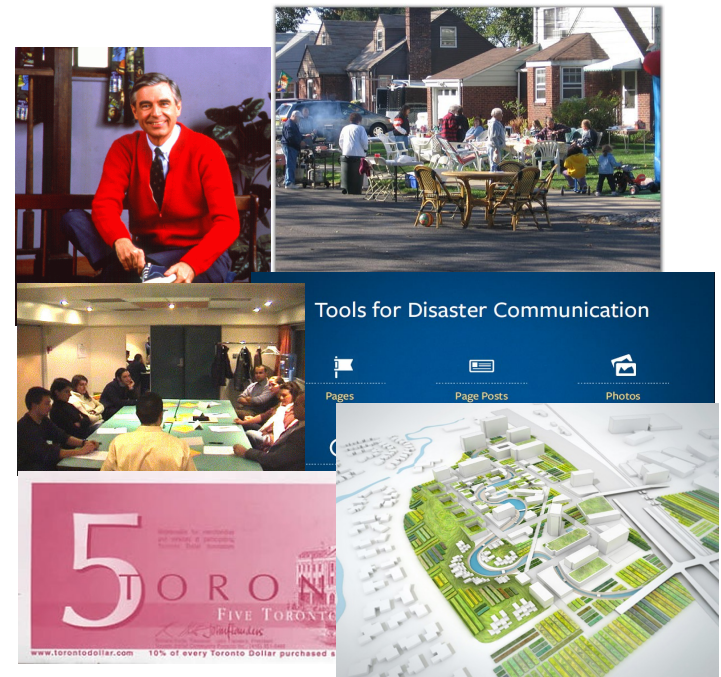
The biggest predictor of [community] recovery was linking ties...how many connections to individuals in power.

– Dr. Daniel Aldrich



## Topic 3: Promoting Social Capital

- When building social capital, it is important to bring preparedness training and demonstrations to existing social infrastructure. Ways to build social capital include:
  - Encouraging people to get to know their immediate neighbors
  - Increasing social ties in neighborhood (e.g., neighborhood block party)
  - Establishing physical infrastructure that builds connections through shared spaces
  - Increasing participation in local meetings (PTA, Zoning meetings, etc.)
  - Creating virtuous cycles (e.g., community currencies to support volunteering)
  - Using social media to support local resource sharing



## Topic 3: Promoting Social Capital



1. Thinking about each type of social capital (Bonding, Bridging, Linking), how can you assess the current status in your community of each of these? What are some strategies to strengthen your community's social capital?
2. Who are the leaders of organizations that build bridging capital that should be included in your planning process?
3. Thinking about each type of social capital, how can you innovate to build social capital in our community?

Reality is that disaster resilience comes from internal factors: How connected are we? How much trust do we have in each other? How often do we work together?

– Dr. Daniel Aldrich

## Discussion of Next Steps

- Revise preparedness plans to incorporate ways to build, maintain, and tap social capital.
- Conduct an outreach campaign to encourage local community and faith-based organizations to develop disaster response plans that support collective action.
- Consider innovative approaches to build neighbor and neighborhood connections, including block parties or a “10 last names” campaign to encourage people to meet their neighbors, set up neighborhood list serves, and hold meetings with the Community Preparedness Toolkit.
- Identify social media platforms that encourage community connections and local resource sharing after a disaster.
- Encourage residents to sign up for local alert and warning systems and other social media platforms.
- Share stories from people in your community who have experienced disasters to showcase local stories about how social capital matters in disaster response and recovery.
- Build neighborhood and community identity and pride to increase the psychological connection to place and people.
- Strengthen emergency management related collaborative groups, and volunteer and training programs, including Citizen Corps Councils, Local Emergency Planning Committees, Community Emergency Response Teams, Medical Reserve Corps, Neighborhood Watch, and You Are the Help Until Help Arrives.

## Discussion of Next Steps (cont.)

- Encourage workplaces, schools, faith-based organizations, and other groups to hold drills, discussion, and tabletop exercises for relevant hazards.
- Hold listening sessions with diverse groups of community members (bridging ties). The meeting summary of a National Disaster Resilience Roundtable held in Australia provides ideas for how to structure these meetings. Questions discussed included:
  - Thinking about each of the forms of social capital – bonding, bridging and linking – what are the formal and informal networks that we can tap into to raise awareness about hazards, and to encourage household preparedness?
  - Considering bonding, bridging and linking social capital, what strengths do people and communities bring into the disaster? How can this be drawn upon to meet people’s immediate safety and practical needs?
  - Considering the forms of social capital – bonding, bridging, and linking – what stressors are placed on a community’s social capital post disaster?
  - What is the impact of external aid (by that we mean funded or donated service support and assistance) in maintaining and building social capital post disaster?
  - What strengths do people who have been identified as ‘vulnerable’ in an emergency bring to the development of networks and relationships?
- Review “Relationships matter: the application of social capital to disaster resilience. National Disaster Resilience Roundtable report, 2012, Melbourne Australia.”
- Review FEMA’s publication “A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action,” especially the sections on Leverage and Strengthen Social Infrastructure, Networks, and Assets, pgs. 16-18, and Pathways for Action, pgs. 19-22.

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