Disaster Vulnerability and Understanding Community

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Building Resilient Communities
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Background

- BSEE, Georgia Tech
- MSPP, Georgia Tech
- Ph.D. Oklahoma State University
  - Emergency Management
  - Fire Administratio

- Previous Positions
  - Research Engineer, Mobile Wireless Technology
  - Research Scientist, Emergency Communications

Research Focus

- Disruptive Technology
- Emergency Management
- Socially Vulnerable Populations

Overview

- What is social vulnerability?
- What is community?
- Dimensions of vulnerability.
- Ideas for practitioners.

Exercise!

Boots on The Ground Experience

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U.S. Virgin Islands

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Social Vulnerability (Wisner et al., 2004)

- ■ Characteristics of a person or group and their <u>situation</u> that influence their capacity to <u>anticipate</u>, <u>cope with</u>, <u>resist</u>, and <u>recover</u> from the impact of a disaster.
  - ■ Anticipate = Prepare
  - ■ Cope With = Respond
  - ■ Resist = Mitigate

Social Vulnerability

- Nearly 50% of the US population falls into a socially vulnerable category, e.g. individuals with access and functional needs. (Kailes, 2007)
  - People with Disabilities
  - Children
  - Older Adults
  - Low income
  - Certain ethnic minorities
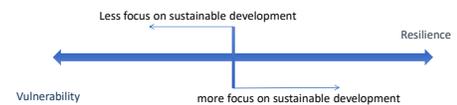 - Transients

Vulnerability

- Being a member of an identified socially vulnerable group does not guarantee individual vulnerability
- Vulnerability is fluid
  - Multiple groups
  - In – and – out of one group

Resiliency, Vulnerability, Sustainability

- Relationship between:
  - Resiliency
  - Sustainability
  - Vulnerability
- Sustainable development is a sliding scale

Less focus on sustainable development

Resilience

Vulnerability

more focus on sustainable development

Community

- Can define many different types of relationships.
  - People who share similarities
    - Place or location
    - Culture
    - Shared interests or values

Community as Place

- Most common use of the word "community"
  - Can be a neighborhood or town
- Why do people live in their neighborhood?
  - Schools
  - Family
  - Affordability

When disasters occur,
community of place is disrupted.

Importance of "Place"

- Place is more than a physical location
  - Gives a sense of identity
    - Orientation ties – knowing how to get around
    - Place role ties – knowing how to act
    - Communal ties – links to family
    - Value ties – desirable and undesirable locations

Community as Shared Interests

- Groups built by shared interests or culture
  - Church groups (religion)
  - Hobby groups (chess, sports)
  - Political or economic values

This type of community can provide
support in the disaster area

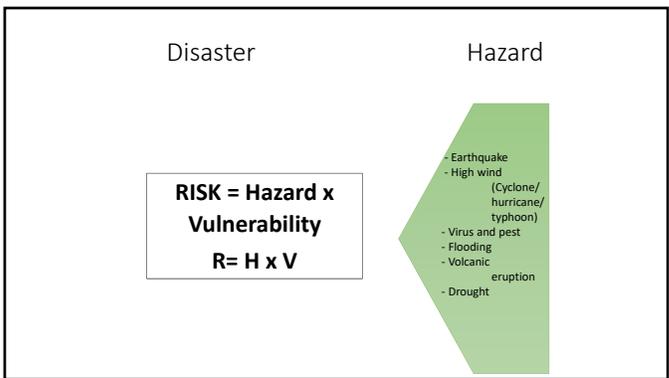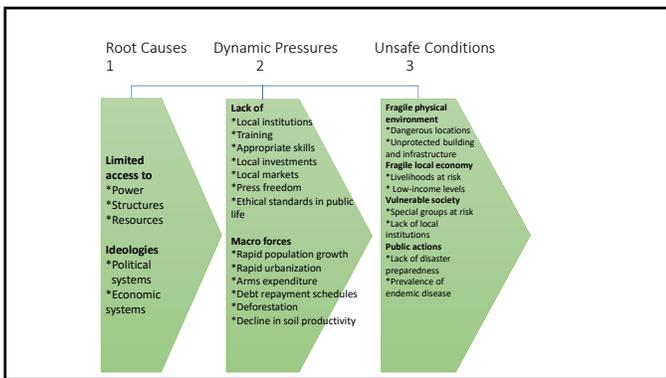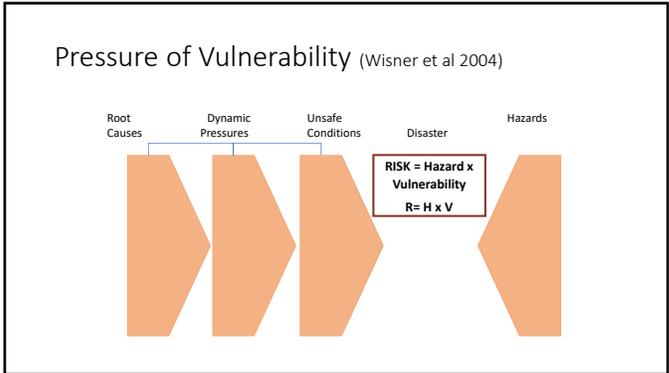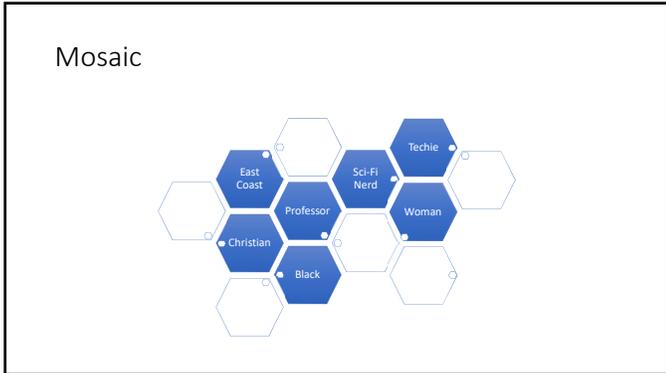## Community as Attachment

- People in one's life linked by care
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Loved ones

Can be a support to those
impacted in the disaster area

Your community

- In which community do you belong?
  - May be multiple communities.
    - Race/ethnicity
    - Religion / or non-religious beliefs
    - Family
    - Age group (Baby boomer, Generation X, Millennial)
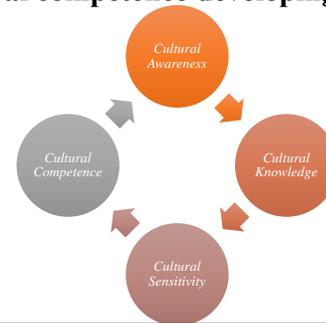   - Nebraska

Mosaic

Techie
East Coast
Sci-Fi Nerd
Professor
Woman
Christian
Black

Pressure of Vulnerability (Wisner et al 2004)

Root Causes	Dynamic Pressures	Unsafe Conditions	Disaster	Hazards

RISK = Hazard x Vulnerability
R= H x V

Root Causes 1	Dynamic Pressures 2	Unsafe Conditions 3

Limited access to
*Power
*Structures
*Resources

Ideologies
*Political systems
*Economic systems

Lack of
*Local institutions
*Training
*Appropriate skills
*Local investments
*Local markets
*Press freedom
*Ethical standards in public life

Macro forces
*Rapid population growth
*Rapid urbanization
*Arms expenditure
*Debt repayment schedules
*Deforestation
*Decline in soil productivity

Fragile physical environment
*Dangerous locations
*Unprotected building and infrastructure
Fragile local economy
*Livelihoods at risk
*Low-income levels
Vulnerable society
*Special groups at risk
*Lack of local institutions
Public actions
*Lack of disaster preparedness
*Prevalence of endemic disease

Disaster   Hazard

RISK = Hazard x Vulnerability

R= H x V

- Earthquake
- High wind (Cyclone/ hurricane/ typhoon)
- Virus and pest
- Flooding
- Volcanic eruption
- Drought

Who are we concerned about?

- Bedridden
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Homeless
- Single parents
- Women
- Low income homes
- Persons with disabilities
- Persons who are deaf
- Persons who are blind
- The elderly
- Non-English speaking
- Recent immigrants
- Any combination of the above

How?

- Your understanding, empathy, and compassion impacts how you do your job!

- You will never really "know the community" if you can't understand these issues.
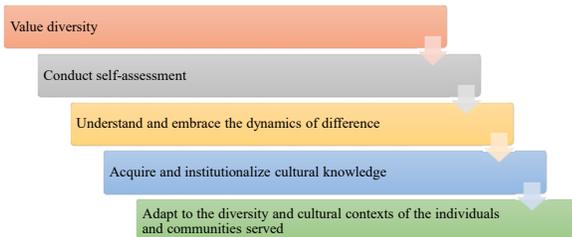
Cultural Competence

- Cultural competence is a set of **congruent behaviors, attitudes, and politics** that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross, et al., 1989)

- The **knowledge and interpersonal skills** that allow providers/researchers to **understand, appreciate, and work with individuals from cultures other than their own**. It involves an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences; self-awareness; knowledge of clients' culture; and adaptation of skills. (American Medical Association, Culturally Competent Health Care for Adolescents, 1994)

Cultural competence developing model

Cultural Awareness → Cultural Knowledge → Cultural Sensitivity → Cultural Competence

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Cultural Competency – essential elements

- Value diversity
- Conduct self-assessment
- Understand and embrace the dynamics of difference
- Acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge
- Adapt to the diversity and cultural contexts of the individuals and communities served

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What emergency managers and planners can do

1. Be a part of creating community knowledge
2. Build partnerships that increase knowledge and participation
3. Build new norms around disaster
4. Increase civic participation in disaster planning
5. Move inequality to the center of the discourse
6. Participate in land-use and environmental decisions
7. Build trust in institutions

Sustainable Environment

- There are 6 principles necessary to achieve community sustainability.
  1. Maintain and, if possible, enhance, its residents **quality of life**.
  2. Enhance local **economic vitality**.
  3. Ensure **social and intergenerational equity**.
  4. Maintain and, if possible, enhance, **environmental quality**.
  5. Incorporate **disaster resilience** and mitigation.
  6. Use a consensus-building, **participatory process** when making decisions.

Community Sustainability

Community Sustainability: Environmental Quality, Social & Inter-generational Equity, Quality of Life, Disaster Resilience, Economic Vitality, Participatory Process

Social Empowerment?

1. Know the community
2. Include the community
3. Engage the community
4. Further professionalization
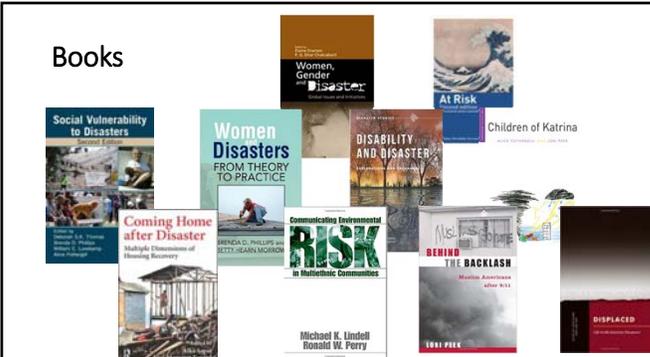5. Leverage new tools and technology

Know the Community

- Understand the gender, racial, and class biases that impact vulnerability among some groups
- Be sensitive to the needs and capabilities of people with disabilities, children, and older adults.
- Identify ways of minimizing the various forms of disaster violence.
- Incorporate plans that consider the needs of those with health disparities, literacy and language barriers, as well as the evolving changes in household (and family) composition.
- Properly consider, include, and leverage the capabilities of the various religious and faith-based organizations.
- Don't forget about the social and economic considerations for including (or neglecting to include) animals in disaster planning.

Tools and Technology

Books

Thank you!

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