



# Disaster resilience— seeing, measuring & promoting

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# Overview

1. **Dominant approaches in population based social vulnerability research**
  - Who, what, how, why?
  - Problems & opportunities
2. **Critical gaps at different levels of analysis**
3. **Some cross-cutting themes**
4. **Related research concerns**

*With appreciation for all the good research in this area & with special attention to gender analysis*

# 1. Dominant lines of inquiry

## ■ Who?

- Focus on populations
- Stove pipe approach
- Socially visible “special” groups--seniors, minorities, low income, PWD, women

## ■ What?

- Vulnerabilities/needs
- Access to material resources
- Risk perception, preparedness, evacuation
- Risk communication (one-way)
- Short term (impacts, issues, recovery)
- Psychosocial effects



- **How?**

- Disaster case studies
- Survey research
- Census tract data
- Qualitative data/interview & focus groups

- **Why?**

- Our legacy—disaster social science in the US
- Demand for quantitative indicators

# Some pervasive problems

- Capacity, vulnerability reduction, mitigation neglected
- Too little intersectional analysis & disaggregated data
- Complex social relationships overly simplified
- Overly general analysis of households & communities
- Lack of comparative & longitudinal analysis
- Over-emphasis on material resources & losses, on the paid labor force, on established community organizations
- Systemic (re)production of social vulnerability neglected

# Some opportunities for change

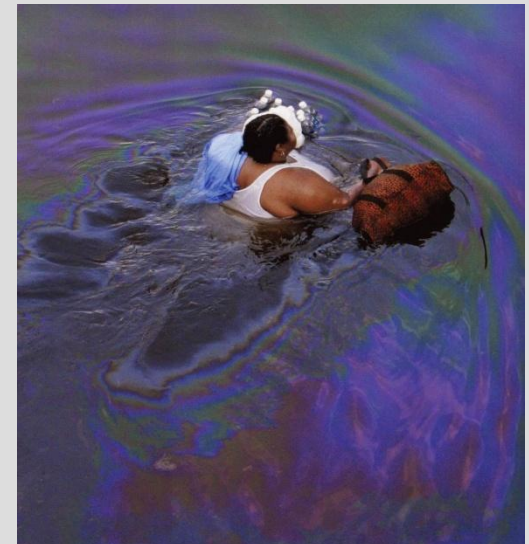
- **Assess & access local knowledge sources, data banks & collection methods**
- **Support participatory action research with CBOs & FBOs knowledgeable about high-risk places/people**
- **Engage local high-risk community leaders in identifying factors undermining & strengthening disaster resilience at different levels**
- **Train and support community researchers to identify and track indicators of resilience at local levels**
- **Build a larger & more diverse pool of vulnerability & resilience researchers**

## 2. Critical knowledge gaps

- We know a lot
- We have a lot more to learn
- We should study
  - the social construction of knowledge in this subfield
  - good/poor practice efforts to apply SV knowledge
- We should address specific knowledge gaps at different levels of analysis

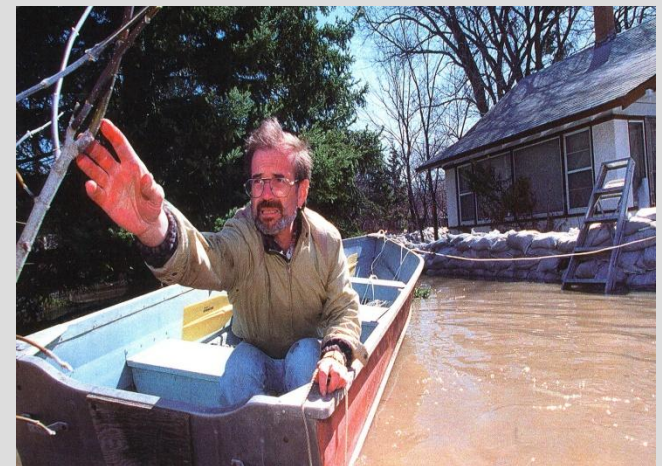
# Knowledge gaps: Individuals

- Multiple statuses—intersecting, conflicting, affirming
- Relationships—intimate partners, friends/neighbors, co-workers, occupational pairs
- Nonmaterial vulnerabilities, e.g. lack of efficacy, little control over time/leisure, fear
- Social networks not based on kin
- Control over resources





- **Decision making—critical disaster decisions**
- **Work-based roles, skills, resources, networks, vulnerabilities**
- **Interdependencies—children/mothers, PWD/care attendants, prisoners/guards**
- **Uncoupled/unmarried/sole household heads**
- **Gender dimensions of men's lives in disasters**

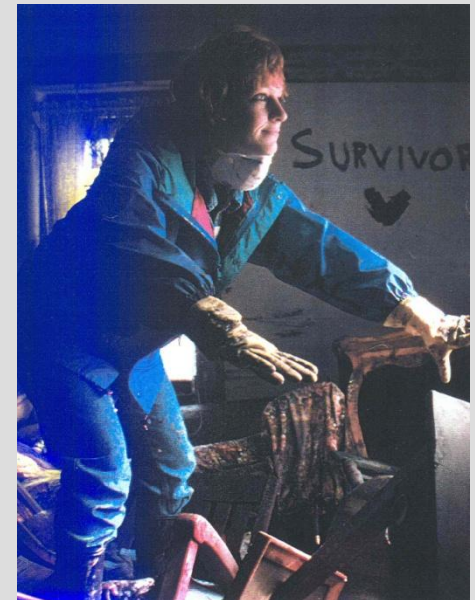


# Knowledge gaps: Households

- Couples (intimate partners)
- Single-headed households
- Single parents—fathers, affluent single mothers
- Lesbian/gay households
- Complex households & transnational families
- Family relationships as barriers to recovery



- **Vulnerabilities of households as work spaces**
  - Residents--domestic labor & income-generating labor
  - Nonresidents—domestic labor, health/service workers
- **Significance of family/community linkages, e.g. to elder/infant day care, social services, schools**
- **Power relations in households**
  - children & adults
  - women & men
  - dependents & earners



# Knowledge gaps: Social groups

- Post-event laborers/families
- Social groups defined by faith, political activism, work
- Marginalized/stigmatized, e.g. GLBTQ, HIV/AIDS, street kids, domestics
- Nontraditional groups, e.g. women emergency managers
- Homebound (all causes)



- Interdependent groups, e.g. workers & managers, owners & renters, children & child care providers
- Age-based gender groups--female/male youth, grandmothers/grandfathers, widowers/widows
- Geographically/ linguistically isolated
- Migrant laborers, transient homeless
- Social groups living with violence/fear
  - Interpersonal violence
  - Street crime
  - Deportation
  - Law enforcement



# Knowledge gaps: Organizations

- **Advocacy organizations, e.g. immigrant rights, labor unions/employer associations**
- **Nonprofit organizations working with high-risk groups**
- **Nonresidential care organizations, e.g. child care centers, halfway homes, drop in shelters**
- **Grassroots women's & community organizations**
- **Youth organizations, e.g. recreational, educational, alternative/street "families"**
- **Small businesses**





- **Organizational networks, e.g. Interfaith Councils, community foundations, social justice coalitions**
- **Organizational learning about preparedness, impact & recovery with respect to resilience building**
- **Organizational environments, e.g. effects of EM policy & practice, resource competition, labor force issues, community trends & power structures**
- **Knowledge base of organizations active in disasters**



# Knowledge gaps: Neighborhoods

- Ethnic enclaves & resilience
- Social divisions/conflicts within & between neighborhoods
- High-income, high-risk
- Low-income, low risk
- Exclusionary practices in “neighborhood based” resilience programs





- Variable neighborhood exposure to environmental hazards
- Difference/inequality between neighborhoods in disaster preparedness/response/recovery resources
- Indicators of vulnerability changing over time at neighborhood level
- Localized effects & disaster recovery, e.g. demolition of public housing & women's mobilization



# Knowledge gaps: Communities

- Cultural diversity as a resource in disasters
- Resilience arising from “communities” based in cyberspace, occupational identity, sexual orientation, etc.
- How communities use (or don't use) knowledge about vulnerabilities & capacities of high-risk groups, e.g. in preparedness





- **Community-based disputes, e.g. water use, immigration, tax base and development choices**
- **Community “stakeholders” from various constituencies—who speaks for whom, how, why, with what effect?**
- **Patterns and trends affecting community-wide resilience, e.g. incorporation, gentrification, privatization**
- **Barriers to inclusive & democratic “community-based” DRR activities**



# Knowledge gaps: Regional

- Regional government services to high-risk groups  
Regional networks of collaboration among high-risk groups and their advocates—population based, issues based (e.g. water/drought)
- Regional socioeconomic population trends
- Regional development patterns, transportation trends, environmental resource management, planning networks, institutional networks
- Cultural/regional norms



### 3. Cross-currents—a few examples

- **Population based research on social vulnerability and resilience relates strongly to**
  - hazard exposure
  - place attachment
  - use of space (changing through the day and over time)
  - health, safety & well being
  - use of environmental resources
  - labor market indicators, e.g. contingent labor, migrant labor, economic security, business recovery, small business planning for service continuity

## 4. Related research concerns

- How should we interpret data points about population groups on our risk maps?
- Why do we still lack sex-specific data & gender analysis?
- How can local knowledge be captured and used? What do advocacy groups know?
- Who speaks for whom? Whose questions are asked and answered?
- How can community partners be engaged in sustained participatory research to assess risk and reduce vulnerability?

## 5. Last words (really fast)

- More R's in resilience? Robust, rapid, resourced, redundant and.....
  - *Related* (to local strengths, relevant community initiatives, local history and culture)
  - *Respectful* (of the human rights of those most at risk, their strengths and assets, their priorities and goals)
- A critical researchable question on a moral issue
  - What promotes the practical use of resilience research in ways that disrupt the inequitable distribution of disaster risk?

# Looking forward to our discussion



Visit the Gender and Disaster Network and the G&D Sourcebook on line: <http://www.gdnonline.org>