

PrepTalks Discussion Guides are companion documents to PrepTalk video presentations and question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions. When used together with the videos, these guides help translate the research and expertise showcased in each presentation into action steps to improve disaster preparedness.

Dr. Daniel Aldrich: Social Capital in Disaster Mitigation and Recovery

Dr. Aldrich's PrepTalk highlights research demonstrating how factors internal to a community are the real drivers of resilience rather than external factors such as outside aid. He breaks down the important role of different types of social capital (bonding, bridging, and linking) and the role each serves to increase community resilience. Finally, his PrepTalk provides examples of how communities are innovating to increase social capital.

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. His New York Times Op-Ed, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/opinion/community-works-best-against-a-natural-disaster.html> summarizes his research, "I've concluded that the density and strength of social networks are the most important variables – not wealth, education or culture – in determining (a community's) resilience in the face of catastrophe." You can follow Dr. Aldrich's research and the release of his newest book, "Black Wave: Connections and Governance in Japan's 3/11 Disasters," at <http://daldrich.weebly.com>

Partners for the Discussion

We encourage you to bring together a diverse group of community leaders for this discussion. This may include other members of emergency management and social service agencies, elected public officials, local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster like the American Red Cross and Salvation Army, faith leaders, business leaders, organizations that support underserved populations, homeowners associations and other people or organizations involved with enhancing the social connectedness or your jurisdiction.

Watch the video together to hear findings from Dr. Aldrich's field research and use this discussion guide and associated resources to start assessing and strengthening your community's social capital.



Discussion Prompts

Topic One: Examine Planning Assumptions

Dr. Aldrich presents 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.

He then presents extensive research that makes the case that these factors are not as related to resilience as social capital.

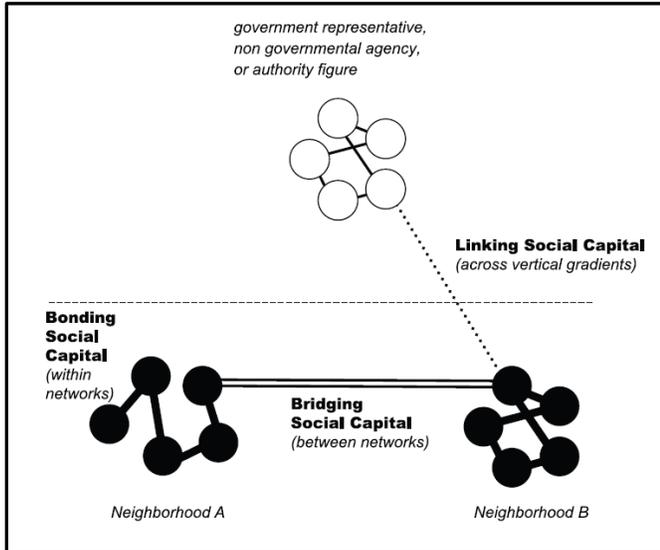
- Discuss how these factors may have directly, or indirectly, influenced your plans for the community, and for organizations, businesses, or other groups.
- Are there any changes needed in your plans or your planning process as a result of potentially over-emphasizing these assumptions?

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

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

Topic Two: Social Capital as the Key Driver of Resilience

Dr. Aldrich argues that the core elements of resilience come from inside the community, from social capital or social ties. Dr. Aldrich presents three types of social capital:



Source: Aldrich Preptalk slide

Horizontal Ties

- **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.

Vertical Ties

- **Linking Social Capital:** connects regular citizens with those in power. Interactions tend to occur based on explicit, formal networks of authority.

Source: American Behavioral Scientist, Social Capital and Community Resilience, Aldrich and Meyer, p. 5-6, http://daldrich.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/5/0/15507740/aldrich_american_behavioral_scientist_2014.pdf

Dr. Aldrich’s research shows that horizontal ties (bonding and bridging ties) are critical in the first stages of survival, in having residents stay in or return to the disaster area, and in mental health recovery. He explains that vertical ties (linking ties) are the best predictor of community recovery.

- 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?
- 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?

Many of the challenges that we face post disaster cannot be solved by one individual or one family themselves. Social ties give us this kind of informal insurance or mutual aid.

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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

The Kessler-6 or K-6 Distress Scale

The K-6 is a 6-item inventory rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. It is a truncated version of the K-10 and its purpose is also to function as a global measure of distress drawing from depressive and anxiety related symptomology. It measures distress over a period of four weeks prior to administration of the test. The K-6 contains several additional questions; however, these are supplementary and are not required for scoring the K-6.

http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/k6_self_admin_updated_08-08-11.pdf

The only factor that consistently helped reduce anxiety post a nuclear evacuation was having friends and family nearby...to help you feel normal again.

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

Topic Three: Promoting Social Capital

In his book “Building Resilience, Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery,” Dr. Aldrich tells us that “post-disaster social networks are likely to tightly mirror pre-disaster conditions.” (p. 53) Given the clear benefits from high levels of social capital presented in Dr. Aldrich’s PrepTalk, investing in building social ties will pay significant dividends for emergency managers.

- 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?
- Who are the leaders of organizations that build bridging capital that should be included in your planning process?
- Thinking about each type of social capital, how can you innovate to build social capital in our community?

Dr. Aldrich highlights some innovative examples of ways to build social capital. He recommends bringing preparedness training and demonstrations to existing social infrastructure.



Building Social Capital

- Encourage people getting to know immediate neighbors.
- Increase social ties in neighborhood (e.g. neighborhood block party).
- Physical infrastructure that builds connections through shared spaces.
- Increase participation in local meetings (PTA, Zoning meetings, etc.).
- Create virtuous cycles, e.g. community currencies to support volunteering.
- Social media to support local resource sharing.

Recommended Next Steps

Create a plan and timeline with your working group to:

- 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: <https://www.ready.gov/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.
- 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?

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

Social ties are the critical aspect of resilience.

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

- 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?

The core elements of recovery don't come from outside the community or outside an organization, they come from inside it.

Dr. Daniel Aldrich

“Relationships matter: the application of social capital to disaster resilience. National Disaster Resilience Roundtable report, 2012, Melbourne Australia.”

https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/a0bcd3b4-72cb-485b-a319-2545479b4af9/12-011-RED-Roundtable-Report-v3-F-web_1.pdf.aspx

- 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. https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1813-25045-0649/whole_community_dec2011_2.pdf

Additional Resources

- Aldrich New York Times Op-Ed: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/opinion/community-works-best-against-a-natural-disaster.html>
- Aldrich Research and Publications: <http://daldrich.weebly.com>
- Social Capital and Community Resilience, American Behavioral Scientist: http://daldrich.weebly.com/uploads/1/5/5/0/15507740/aldrich_american_behavioral_scientist_2014.pdf
- Fixing Recovery: Social Capital in Post-Crisis Resilience: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=http://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1002&context=pspubs>
- Kessler-6 Distress Scale: http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/k6_self_admin_updated_08-08-11.pdf
- Community Preparedness Toolkit: <https://www.ready.gov/community-preparedness-toolkit>
- Emergency Management Community Engagement Programs:
 - Citizen Corps: <https://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps>
 - Community Emergency Response Teams: <https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team>
 - Medical Reserve Corps: <https://mrc.hhs.gov>

- Neighborhood Watch: www.nnw.org
- You Are the Help Until Help Arrives: <https://www.ready.gov/until-help-arrives>
- Tabletop exercise materials: www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/100098
- Relationships matter: the application of social capital to disaster resilience. National Disaster Resilience Roundtable report, 2012, Melbourne Australia:
https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/a0bcd3b4-72cb-485b-a319-2545479b4af9/12-011-RED-Roundtable-Report-v3-F-web_1.pdf.aspx
- A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1813-25045-0649/whole_community_dec2011_2.pdf