

BOOK REVIEW
**Surviving Disaster:
The Role of Social Networks**

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Surviving Disaster: The Role of Social Networks

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Disaster is a sudden event that has significant effect on the human population. It can be manmade or natural; manmade disaster is as a direct result of an accident or human errors done by the action of men whilst natural disaster is a result of natural forces of nature for example a tornado or a hurricane (Kruks-Wisner, 2011; Doreian & Conti, 2012).

The main focus of this book is to inform readers of the relationship between social networks and natural disaster. It tells how social networks can be used to mitigate the effect of a disaster on people and their communities by promoting survival and sustaining recovery efforts. It explains how models are developed to assist with the process of social network and is used to assess the strengths of the social

network in the communities. The purpose of this book is to stress the importance of social networks and to give practical advice to those that have been affected by a natural disaster and others that may need to be educated as a precautionary method.

Social Network is an invisible force that binds society; it is established through the relationship of families or groups such as churches, communities, or workplaces (Duncan et al., 2011). Social Network plays a very important role in saving the lives of people in all society; the collective actions of a community have the potential to reduce social vulnerability and increases chances of survival. Ersing and Kost state that “evidence suggests that communities that promote the inclusion of disaster risk management activities among diverse neighborhood groups may be more successful in protecting vulnerable citizens” (p. 9). Communities have different cultures and as such social networks must be able to deal with each different cultural group effectively so as to build competence and community preparedness to act in response to natural disasters both in the United States and other countries that were studied.

Chapter 1 gives an understanding of disaster and the role social network plays in

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lessening the effect of a disaster on a community. It describes the four different phases and classification of disasters such as mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. It speaks about the power of bridging social networks in communities. This relationship of bridging social network within a community strengthens the effort to effectively execute health service and public safety to members. Natural disasters are easier to predict than manmade disasters; geography and meteorology combined increase the probability that a natural disaster may occur whilst human errors, such as airplane or automobile crash tend to be occurrences that have a lower probability rate.

Chapter 2 describes a social network model that can be used to guide the effort of surviving a natural disaster. The model has three components: “input, or the action that happens naturally or through intervention in communities; output, the immediate results of such natural actions/interventions; and outcomes, the short and long – term consequences of those outputs” (p. 22). The model being used to test Hurricane Katrina has a case study; it shows that there was a lack of social network in certain communities and raises many questions to which the answer given suggests changes in the economic conditions in New Orleans. The model further shows the importance of social interactions that exist between individuals, families, organizations and communities; and how this can be used as an advantage for disaster management and control.

Chapter 3 concentrates on applying the concepts of Community Readiness Model (CRM) to identify the strength of social network across system and the use of readiness to address problem at the community level on developing and building plans to mitigate the effect of a disaster. The CRM has nine stages of which the six being applicable to preparing a disaster plan and the last two applies to continuing after the disaster. Once a stage is identified a strategy appropriate to that level is selected which is easily adapted to the unique cultures and makeup of the community. Communities with a strong social network are able to improve the quality of life of its residents better than

communities that do not have a strong social network. The CRM is used in disaster affected communities to assess the level of involvement of social network and build and sustain effective social networks.

Chapter 4 concentrates on applying the Community Readiness Model (CRM) to real life scenarios as the tornado in Wright, Wyoming. It gives description of the events that occurred, an overview of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and a federal funded Crisis Counseling and Training Assistance Program (CCP). The mission of the CCP is to provide community based outreach and psycho-educational services to assist people and communities in recovering from disasters. The CRM was used to assess the community along its nine stages, resulting that most citizens were at the first level of “no awareness” as they were not aware of the CCP as a resource to the community. The model however was seen to be effective in providing a customize CCP to the community and the CRM is used to achieve the goals of the CCP. Using the guidance of the CRM and the social contribution of the CCP the communities moved quickly through the stages of readiness. The affected communities in Wyoming was given cultural competency training and on phases of disaster recovery and were able to use social network to connect and provide outreach services to vulnerable populations in the community of different background such as Spanish-speaking individuals, elderly, disabled among others.

Chapter 5 also presents a real life scenario - on hurricane evacuation among mobile home residents in Florida. This chapter focuses on the complex roles of social networks, such as families, neighbors and institutional social relationship, and how these complexities affect the preparedness and evacuation of the residents living in Florida. A study was done on the mobile home residents to evaluate the evacuation stance taken by families such as decisions made by families to stay together or separate. The research shows that behaviors in the relationship of families can negatively affect preparedness, such as the stockpiling of foods

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