



Melbourne School of Health Sciences

Department of Social Work

Trauma Recovery and Resilience Research Program Seminar

“Refugee Resettlement, Belonging and Disaster Risk Reduction: Case studies from Christchurch and Wellington”

Recognising that protracted global conflicts have now created nearly 60 million forced migrants, there is an urgent need to develop greater understandings of what informs recovery in disaster contexts with such groups. By providing a local New Zealand context in which international refugee resettlement occurs, this presentation discusses the possibilities, implications and barriers to effective disaster risk reduction with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

This paper first presents a qualitative study with refugee background participants (34 semi-structured interviews and 11 focus group discussions comprising 112 participants) from varying communities living in Christchurch about their perspectives and responses to the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010–11. Participants spoke of how a sense of belonging as individuals and as a wider community was important in the recovery effort, and highlighted the multiple ways in which they understood this concept. Their comments demonstrate how belonging can have contextual, chronological and gendered dimensions that can help inform effective and resonant disaster responses with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This analysis also illustrates how the participants’ perspectives of belonging shifted over time, and illustrates the corresponding role of supporting post-disaster recovery through the concepts of civic, ethno and ethnic-based belonging. These findings from the Canterbury context are then used as a case study to examine how well several refugee communities settled in Wellington (5 focus groups and 5 semi-structured interviews comprising 52 participants) understand the associated risks to natural hazards in the area and how they might respond. Overall, this presentation will endeavour to make stronger linkages between belonging and the social capital literature to identify relevant considerations for effective disaster risk reduction relating to communication strategies, gender, leadership, community politics and wider societal relations.



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Room 102
Level 1 Alan Gilbert Building
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Admission is free

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