Building Temporary Migrant and Settlement System Resilience in a Second Tier City

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Building Migrant Resilience in Cities Immigration et résilience en milieu urbain

What is the BMRC Project?

- Established in 2016, Building Migrant Resilience in Cities (BMRC) is a research partnership and multisector collaboration.
- Draws on 20+ years of bringing together key actors working on immigration and settlement through CERIS, an Ontario network of migration & settlement researchers, practitioners & policymakers.
- Explores the concept of social resilience to examine how institutions can facilitate migrant settlement in urban areas across Quebec (Montreal, Sherbrooke) and Ontario (Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor, Ottawa).

The Kitchener-Waterloo Network

International Migration Research Centre (WLU) & Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership

Principle Investigator: Dr Jenna Hennebry
Network Co-Chair: Tara Bedard (IP Executive Director)
Co-Investigator: Dr Margaret Walton-Roberts
Plus:

- Grad students (4), recent PhD grad (1), recent MA grad (1), undergrad student (1)
- Community organizations serving temporary migrants (4)

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Research Focus: Precarious migrants (temporary migrants, international students, caregivers and refugee claimants), gender and resilience.

Goal: To understand how to engender resilient pathways and communities for newcomers from a gender perspective and advocate for policy changes that support migrant resilience.

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Assumptions

Resilience emerges at the intersection of individuals and institutions

- *Individual/family resilience* in responding to the challenges of migration
- *Institutional/community resilience* to provide supports that foster newcomer resilience and respond to change

Gender is a set of socially constructed ideas and expectations regarding roles in society, which lead men, women & non-binary individuals to have different needs and experiences in their families, society and in migration.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Network

So far:

- Detailed literature review
- Extensive consultation and interviews with community representatives and partners
- Secured research ethics approval from WLU
- Focus groups (int'l students, high skilled temp foreign workers) and key informant interviews with over 50 participants

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Building Resilience into the K-W Settlement System

Our Premise

Organizational resilience requires a focus on both the system and individual organizations, where a resilient system has organizational diversity and organizational resilience is related to position, role and support in the wider ecosystem

Building Resilience into the K-W Settlement System

Our Challenges

- The notion of "settlement" itself
- Fragmentation of immigration system versus common understanding of immigrants and refugees.
- Resulting impact on eligibility and fragmentation of settlement and other community services
- Time, trust and relationships

Building Resilience into the Settlement System

What We're Doing

- Intentionally wide scope of work – we support & integrate all immigrants and refugees
- Building a settlement ecosystem – not just settlement in the IRCC sense
- Expand understanding of "settlement" & roles
- Evaluating change & resilience in our ecosystem
- Spending time to develop strong trust & relationships
- Starting to address niche groups/challenges

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Building Resilience into the Settlement System

What We're Hearing

"The LIP is what is working. We used to be part of the Belong Pillar, where we were creating awareness about immigration and thinking about what kind of a community we want to be. Now we are part of the Settlement Steering Group, where we are sharing resources, identifying needs. It is like a kitchen. Everyone works together."

– Family Outreach Worker, House of Friendship

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