

2020

## *Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster*, by Julie L. Drolet

Lucas Prieto  
*Michigan State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

### Recommended Citation

Prieto, Lucas (2020) "*Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster*, by Julie L. Drolet," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 47: Iss. 1, Article 14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.4385>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol47/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



Julie L. Drolet, *Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster*. Oxford University Press (2019). 258 pages, \$39.95 (Paperback).

Disasters are inevitable to occur around the world and the responses to these disasters are critical for the long-term recovery of communities. Julie Drolet's book discusses *the Rebuilding Lives Post Disaster Project* (RLPDP), an international project composed of academics and practitioners who work in international community disaster recovery. The RLPDP compiled field research from six disaster-stricken countries and explores how communities were impacted and responded to the disasters. The RLPDP included viewpoints from a wide variety of key actors that are involved with disaster relief (i.e. stakeholders, emergency managers, social workers).

The first section of Drolet's book begins with thorough detail of concepts, theoretical frameworks, and background literature about community disaster recovery. The second section includes international disaster case examples that range from immediate wildfires to a slow onset drought, giving a diverse spectrum of disaster response information. And finally, the third section discusses lessons learned from the different disasters and implications for social workers' consideration. Many times survivors of disasters are lumped into one group; however, it is evident from Drolet's work that marginalized groups suffer the most both before and after disaster. This work adds to the current literature on the long-term community-based disaster recovery by including the discussion of gender inequity. A strength of this book is in highlights gender inequalities that women face globally in community disaster recovery. Women play a significant role in communities prior to and after disasters, but are overshadowed by male dominated systems that downplay the utilization of their strengths and resilience. Furthermore, Drolet explains how social vulnerabilities and socially constructed ideas like masculinity are instrumental in communities' mental health and decision making in disaster recovery, especially for women. These concepts are being left out of the community disaster recovery conversation and result in costly suffering for women.

Drolet provides a wide range of disaster examples and the impact of the disaster from different areas of the world. Each chapter has a takeaway lesson that is beneficial for future

inclusive strategies of disaster recovery plans. One specifically valuable chapter explores the 'double jeopardy' rural migrant women face due to working in a male driven field of agriculture and having limited English proficiency (LEP). Drolet outlines the barriers, resiliency, and the utility LEP women migrant workers have on disaster reduction. This chapter also discusses the perspective of emergency leaders and stakeholders with the rural migrant community. Each chapter of the book provides rich quotes from the focus group interviews that helps the reader understand the struggle and challenges people, especially women, face pre- and post-disaster.

A criticism of the book is that the information presented is at times overwhelming. Readers may find the dense descriptions and extensive historical context a bit repetitive. But the fundamental essence of the book examining the case studies is done beautifully. Although Drolet mentions briefly other vulnerable populations at an increased risk during disasters, I would have liked to see a case example on how disasters and disaster recovery impacted members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community. My area of research interest is in LGBT health and Drolet's book sparked ideas on how different disasters and resilience strategies impact the lives of the LGBT community. My hypothesis is that disaster recovery would look vastly different from other marginalized groups; even within the umbrella term of LGBT community, the response may look completely different. Examination of sexual orientation and disaster recovery may be beneficial to explore further in the future.

Overall, *Rebuilding Lives Post-Disaster* provides a great "how-to" guide to engaging with various communities and disaster recovery. The RLPDP offers invaluable suggestions on how communities, stakeholders, responders, bureaucratic systems, and social workers should approach community disaster recovery from a new perspective. This book helps readers reframe how disaster impacts different populations beyond typical dimensions of monetary damages, physical damage, and incorporates the impact of social aspects.

Lucas Prieto  
Michigan State University