SITES: NEW SERIES · VOL 17 NO 1 · 2020

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.11157/sites-id455

– ARTICLE –

DO WE REALLY OFFER REFUGE?

USING GALTUNG'S CONCEPT OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE TO INTERROGATE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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ABSTRACT:

Decades after the first refugee convention was signed, the global community is still failing to meet its commitment to protect refugees from harm. In this article, we draw on Galtung's concept of structural violence to highlight how harm can be caused not only by physical violence but also by social structures in resettlement contexts, including economic systems, legal frameworks and government institutions. We examine how recognising the exposure of resettled refugees to structural violence in their host countries can help us interrogate the quality of the 'refuge' offered and point to significant gaps in national resettlement systems. We consider Aotearoa New Zealand as a case where there is an extensive refugee resettlement support system, but argue that it fails to adequately acknowledge and address the exposure of refugees to forms of structural violence caused by factors such as institutionalised monoculturalism and economic inequality. We conclude by calling for an expanded understanding of 'refuge' that would reorient resettlement systems towards identifying and addressing structural violence while supporting refugees to overcome the harmful impacts of both physical and structural violence in their lives.

Keywords: structural violence; refugee resettlement; forced migration; Aotearoa New Zealand; Galtung

INTRODUCTION

Refugees who are offered permanent resettlement in a stable, democratic country are generally considered to be fortunate. Countries that provide refugees access to citizenship, education, housing and healthcare are viewed as fulfilling the humanitarian obligation to protect them from harm (Healy 2014; Phillimore 2020). Resettled refugees are expected to display a sense of gratitude,

regardless of their experiences in their new home (Granados 2010; Healy 2014). However, host societies' perception of their own beneficence may overlook refugees' experiences of economic deprivation and social marginalisation, in spite of the support offered through resettlement systems (Allsopp *et al.* 2014; Carter *et al.* 2009; Liu and Ward 2012).

Refugee resettlement policies in the global north reflect liberal individualist norms, which tend to place responsibility on individual refugees to integrate into society and rapidly pursue economic self-sufficiency (Phillimore 2020). Implicitly, this position blames refugees for any experiences of poverty, and poor health and education outcomes. However, refugees demonstrate resilience throughout the resettlement process; they bring unique skills to the resettlement context, and a high level of motivation to succeed (see Anderson *et al.* this volume). A growing body of research shows that refugees often face systemic barriers to success in resettlement countries, resulting in cumulative stresses that can further erode their coping capacity (Im 2020; Phillimore 2020). Scholars have noted the impact of structural disadvantage on refugees in areas such as employment (Campion *et al.* 2018), health (DeSouza 2011) and education (O'Rourke 2011).

While researchers have examined how social structures can create barriers for refugees, the responsibility of host societies to offer 'opportunity structures' has only recently been articulated (Phillimore 2020). In this article, using Aotearoa New Zealand as a case, we draw on the concept of structural violence (Galtung 1969) to consider the extent to which resettlement systems in Aotearoa New Zealand currently offer 'refuge' to refugees, and how gaps in existing resettlement structures might be addressed.

We begin by considering how limited definitions of violence and refuge have shaped resettlement systems around the world. We then describe structural violence as a conceptual tool for evaluating the quality and nature of support provided through resettlement systems. Next we consider the nature and impacts of structural violence in Aotearoa New Zealand and consider how this might be mitigated. We conclude by calling for an expanded understanding of 'refuge' that reorients resettlement systems towards addressing structural violence, and that supports refugees to overcome the harmful impacts of both physical and structural violence in their lives.

Definitions of 'refuge' and the shaping of resettlement systems

Resettlement refers to the transfer of refugees to a third state that has offered

them permanent settlement (UNHCR 2002). The practice of refugee resettlement is founded on an international legal framework that promises protection from harm for anyone whose safety and human rights are not protected by their country of origin (Goodwin-Gill 2014). In international law, a refugee is explicitly defined as a person who requires protection from persecution, war or violence (UNHCR 2015). This definition was articulated in the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Status of Refugees as part of a series of laws ratified in the aftermath of the Second World War which set up a liberal international system guided by norms of individual human rights (Goodwin-Gill 2014).

This humanitarian legal framework defines violence as a physical act of harm, such as killing or torture (Bauböck 2018). The act of offering refuge is then understood as providing an opportunity for resettlement and protection from physical violence. However, as we elaborate in the next section, this limited definition of refuge ignores the concept of structural violence, where human beings are harmed indirectly by social systems (see Galtung 1969).

Resettled refugees are provided with legal and physical protection, and it is expected that they will be accorded political, economic and social rights similar to those enjoyed by other citizens (UNHCR 2019). The UNHCR defines effective resettlement as the provision of appropriate support that enables refugees to become full and participating members of their new communities (UNHCR 2013), and integration is widely recognised as the goal of resettlement systems across the global north (Strang and Ager 2010; Ferris 2020). Yet, as noted, resettled refugees are often among the most disadvantaged members of society (Phillimore 2020), with higher than average rates of economic precarity (Darrow 2018) and mental illness (Hynie 2018). This precarity is despite refugees' motivation to succeed, and available supports in the areas of language learning, mental health support, education, social housing and healthcare in resettlement countries, including in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ward and Liu 2012). Less than optimal resettlement outcomes raise questions about the effectiveness of current resettlement systems, and whether, in practice, resettlement systems expose refugees to preventable harms such as economic and social marginalisation.

An understanding of refuge as protection from physical violence may be a barrier to recognising harm experienced by refugees post-settlement. Although many resettlement systems state their commitment to the UNHCR goal of full social participation, in practice they are often limited by the national policy environment and levels of public support for resource allocation to newly-arrived refugees (Strang and Ager 2010; Zuckerand Zucker 1989). National resettlement systems are shaped by shifting public and political motivations

to resettle refugees (Brown and Scribner 2014; Delacrétaz *et al.* 2016). In short, they are often shaped more by the needs and preferences of the host society than those of refugees themselves (Phillmore 2020). An understanding of refuge as protection from physical harm allows host societies to see their humanitarian commitments as fulfilled through affording refugees legal residency. This definition ignores evidence of systemic barriers to social and economic participation that can threaten mental health in similar ways to physical violence pre-migration (Hynie 2018; Porter and Haslam 2005).

Host countries are generally reluctant to recognise how societal inequities may be harming former refugees (Healey 2014; Phillimore 2020). Existing citizens in resettlement countries often assume that resettled refugees are in a better situation than in their country of origin, and, therefore, that they should be grateful (Granados 2010).

It is difficult to see how refugee resettlement systems can facilitate refugees' full participation in society when unequal social structures are ignored (Dryden-Peterson and Reddick 2017; Phillimore 2020). We believe, therefore, that an expanded concept of violence is necessary to call attention to the exposure of resettled refugees to harmful social systems. This would be a step towards redefining refuge in ways that would enable resettlement systems to reach their stated goal of full participation.

Using Galtung's concept of structural violence to interogate refugee resettlement systems

Galtung (1969) defined violence as any action or non-action that causes avoidable harm to human beings. He developed the concept of structural violence to explain how social systems cause avoidable harm to human beings. For example, an earthquake is not considered structural violence because it is not avoidable, but an economic system that prevents essential provisions reaching victims of an earthquake, resulting in preventable loss of life, is an example of structural violence. Unlike in cases of physical violence, structural violence cannot be attributed to a single individual acting with deliberate intent. However, the harm caused can be just as severe; structural violence can be deadly (Galtung 1969; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016).

Galtung (1969, 168) argued that 'an extended concept of violence is indispensable' to expanding our understanding of what constitutes a peaceful society. We suggest that an expanded concept of violence can also deepen our understanding of what it means to offer refuge to people seeking protection. In

light of evidence that unequal social structures often impede the integration of resettled refugees, causing harm to their wellbeing (for example, Campion *et al.* 2018; Phillimore 2020; Im 2020), the concept of structural violence allows us to interrogate the effectiveness of resettlement systems. Societal structures are particularly impactful for resettled refugees; due to forced migration, many do not have the financial resources and social connections that might protect them from structural harm (Im 2020; Asam and Vyas 2019). Instead, they are disproportionately reliant on government welfare systems, more likely to be in precarious and underpaid employment, and vulnerable to systemic racism and/or xenophobia due to ethnic minority status (Darrow 2018; Ward and Liu 2012).

The need to address how structures of inequality create barriers to refugees achieving full social and economic participation in host societies is only beginning to be recognised (see Dryden-Petersen and Riddick 2017; Phillimore 2020). Expanding our concept of refuge to include protection from structural violence offers an opportunity to rebalance our vision of the resettled refugee as someone who is protected from physical violence, to a vision of the resettled refugee as someone who is served by social structures that facilitate their wellbeing and full economic and social participation.

Case study: refugee resettlement and structural violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is a country with low levels of physical violence but substantial levels of structural violence such as poverty, health inequalities and systemic racism (Hodgetts *et al.* 2014; Came 2014). It is also a country that offers substantial support to resettled refugees, but where refugees are arguably the most marginalised group in society despite this assistance (Mahoney *et al.* 2017; Ward and Liu 2012). These conditions create a fruitful context for demonstrating the insights afforded by a consideration of structural violence concerning the effectiveness of refugee resettlement systems. In this section, we show how structural violence in Aotearoa New Zealand impacts on resettlement outcomes for former refugees, and how attention to structural violence might inform more effective resettlement systems.

Our case study is based on secondary data, including academic research, newspaper reports, government statistics and government documents. Reviewing refugee resettlement literature, as well as broader research into societal inequalities, we noted that refugees resettled in Aotearoa New Zealand are particularly exposed to two forms of structural violence: institutionalised monoculturalism; and inequalities resulting from decades of neoliberal economic policies.

In this section, we discuss how these two forms of structural violence impact on resettled refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand, while recognising that other forms of structural violence may also shape refugees' resettlement experiences and outcomes.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

As a percentage of the existing population, Aotearoa New Zealand accepts a relatively small number of refugees annually (Stephens 2014). Since 1987, this has included an annual quota of 750 refugees, which recently increased to 1,000, and in 2020 to 1,500 (New Zealand Immigration n.d.). Refugees accepted through this pathway are termed 'quota refugees'. Aotearoa New Zealand's annual refugee quota prioritises refugees with complex medical needs and disabilities, women at risk and emergency cases (Beaglehole 2013; Mahony *et al.* 2017). As a result, many refugees brought to Aotearoa New Zealand have high health needs, and a consequent reduced ability to find paid employment. Refugees are also typically from ethnic backgrounds that are a minority in the wider population, meaning that they lack access to the extended social support network which has been shown to facilitate successful integration in other contexts (see Healey 2014; Strang and Ager 2010).

Aotearoa New Zealand is generally recognised as following the good practice principles set out by UNHCR, at least for quota refugees, although with some regional variation in the availability of support services (Mahoney *et al.* 2017; Marlowe *et al.* 2014). The 2013 refugee resettlement strategy for quota refugees has improved and formalised the resettlement support provided by the government and has been praised for the involvement of former refugees in its development (Marlowe *et al.* 2014). The strategy created a whole of government approach to supporting quota refugees (Immigration New Zealand 2012). Its overall goal is that (p.3):

> Refugees are participating fully and integrated socially and economically as soon as possible so that they are living independently, undertaking the same responsibilities and exercising the same rights as other New Zealanders and have a strong sense of belonging to their own community and to New Zealand.

The goal articulates specific targets relating to employment, housing, education, health and social integration.

Resettled refugees, usually termed 'former refugees' in Aotearoa New Zea-

land, are offered a year of intensive support to settle in the local community and find employment that is administered through government community partners, usually New Zealand Red Cross (Mahony *et al.* 2017; Changemakers 2016). They are also provided with social housing, welfare benefits, access to the school system and the health care system, and free English language lessons (Mahony *et al.* 2017).

However, despite this support, former refugees remain some of the most disadvantaged members of New Zealand society, with below-average outcomes in areas such as education and employment (Rafferty 2020; New Zealand Immigration 2017). The potential exposure of former refugees to structural violence in Aotearoa New Zealand is not recognised within the refugee resettlement strategy. On reviewing the key documents outlining the resettlement programme, we found no acknowledgement of systemic inequities in Aotearoa New Zealand and their potential impact on former refugees (see Immigration New Zealand 2012). Instead, the strategy emphasises the importance of individuals achieving self-sufficiency through adaptation to New Zealand's institutions and social norms (see also Mahony *et al.* 2017). Recently, scholars have critiqued as paternalistic the current approach to refugee resettlement in Aotearoa New Zealand, noting a failure to adequately centre refugees' voices in discussions around the effectiveness of support (McIntosh and Cockburn-Wootten 2020).

The Exposure of Refugees to Structural Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

Two social structures in Aotearoa New Zealand society illustrate how structural violence may impact on resettled refugees. The first is a colonial legacy of monoculturalism leading to state service provision (for example, in health and education) that is insufficiently responsive to the diverse needs and cultural practices of minorities (Liu 2007; Fernando 2018). The second is a neoliberal mode of governance that has led to high levels of child poverty, limited healthy and affordable housing, and the proliferation of insecure working conditions (Hackell, 2013; Keddell 2018; Rashbrooke 2013). These social structures intersect in particular ways in Aotearoa New Zealand; the application of neoliberalism to social policy has led to reduced government welfare support, while colonial legacies of exclusion ensure ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poverty and rely on government assistance, delivered in ways that do not take account of people's diverse needs (McMillan 2020). Former refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand are particularly exposed to these social inequalities since they are typically members of ethnic minority groups, supported through government healthcare, social housing, education and welfare provision.

Unequal Impacts of Monocultural Institutions

Refugees arriving into Aotearoa New Zealand encounter a 'society in which inequalities, across a range of social, political and economic indicators, have identifiably ethnic characteristics' (McMillan 2020, 90). These inequalities have historical roots in the British colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand and its ongoing negative repercussions for the country's Indigenous people, and 'visible' immigrants (Ward and Liu 2012; Beaglehole 2013; Rashbrooke 2013). Historically, alongside multiple acts of direct violence against the Indigenous population, a more covert process embedded advantages for white settlers into national laws and institutions (McMillan 2020). More recent policy has also proven disproportionately detrimental to ethnic minority groups (Human Rights Commission, 2012; Ward and Liu 2012).

Aotearoa New Zealand has been described as 'demographically multicultural, formally bicultural, and with a few exceptions, institutionally monocultural' (Liu 2007, 24). The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2012) released a report on institutional discrimination where it highlighted numerous examples of discrimination embedded in public health, education, criminal justice and welfare services. The report found that in Aotearoa New Zealand state systems consistently favour the Pākehā (white) majority. Minority groups' engagement with state institutions is often conditional on the subjugation of their values and practices to those of 'the system of the power culture' (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori perspective 1988, 19).

Historically, migration policy in Aotearoa New Zealand has favoured people from European backgrounds, particularly those of British and Irish descent (Beaglehole 2007). It is only in the past three decades that immigration policy has allowed easier access for migrants from non-traditional countries of origin (Ward and Liu 2012). Indications are that immigrants perceived as most culturally and racially distinct from the white majority struggle to find acceptance in Aotearoa New Zealand society (Butcher *et al.* 2006). Recent statistics show New Zealanders view refugees as the least desirable immigrants. In contrast, English-speaking immigrants from majority-white countries are seen as the most desirable (Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment 2016). Refugees who are African and/or Muslim have particularly struggled to access employment and integrate socially in New Zealand (Butcher *et al.* 2006; Ward and Liu 2012).

The social marginalisation of particular groups of refugees has been amplified by government policy. From 2009–2019, law changes meant that, unless prospective refugees from the Middle East and Africa had family in Aotearoa

New Zealand, they could not be accepted for the annual quota intake. National and international criticism of this exclusion as racist, and harmful to citizens fleeing many of the world's fiercest conflicts (see Stephens 2014; Bonnett 2019), led to a 2019 policy change (Lees-Galloway 2019). However, that such policy existed for ten years without significant public outcry suggests a willingness at both governmental and societal level to favour immigrants perceived to be more culturally similar to the majority, and/or disregard of the discriminatory impacts of negative stereotypes.

Neoliberalism and the Creation of a Precarious Society

Aotearoa New Zealand is a prominent example of neoliberal governance (Rashbrooke, 2013). Neoliberalism as an ideology valorises individual freedom and responsibility, and the introduction of market mechanisms 'into every sphere of human interaction' (Grady and Harvie 2011, 174). However, neoliberalism has been criticised for deflecting attention away from the structural roots of social problems and blaming disadvantaged members of society for their disadvantage (see Dej 2016; Schram 2019). The application of neoliberal ideology to social policy is associated with widening economic inequality and worsening health and education outcomes among the most disadvantaged members of society (Beer *et al.* 2016; Jacobs and Myers 2014). In particular, neoliberal economic policies are associated with an increase in the working poor – people whose full-time employment does not guarantee economic security (Beer *et al.* 2016; Cochrane *et al.* 2017).

Widespread neoliberal reforms to social policy in Aotearoa New Zealand in the mid-1980s plunged many New Zealanders into financial precarity, widening the gap between low- and high-income individuals (Rashbrooke 2013). Further reforms in the 1990s cut government welfare payments to levels that barely satisfied basic needs (Dean 2015). At the same time, government rhetoric blamed poverty on individual failure rather than socio-economic structures (St John and Wynd 2006). Those unable to work were increasingly devalued and vilified, creating social antagonism toward 'a subordinate set of minorities – a non-taxpaying anti-community of welfare beneficiaries' (Hackell 2013, 131).

The current welfare system has been critiqued for its complexity and failure to provide adequate levels of financial support, resulting in disenfranchisement and toxic stress among beneficiaries (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019). Inadequate welfare disproportionately impacts children living in poverty, those with disabilities, Indigenous and Pasifika peoples, those with health conditions, and young people (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019). Rather than leading

to self-reliance, neoliberal welfare reforms 'compound[ed] social harm and disconnectedness' (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019, 7).

Concurrently, opportunities to gain secure employment and stay out of poverty were reduced by neoliberal reforms that prioritised the interests of employers over employees (Rashbrooke 2013). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, one in six New Zealanders were in insecure employment, leading to unstable living conditions due to erratic levels of family income (Cochrane *et al.* 2017). Reduced state income support alongside a proliferation of low-paid and insecure jobs resulted in people experiencing income inequality and child poverty at levels higher than the OECD average (Marriot and Sim 2014; OECD 2019).

Simultaneously, government under-investment in social housing eroded the quality and quantity of social housing stock, which is deficient in comparison with many high-income countries (Crothers *et al.* 2018; Howden-Chapman *et al.* 2012; Fuller 2018). Lack of social housing contributes to financial strain for families, as private sector rents increase while wages and welfare payments stagnate (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019). Low-quality housing stock also negatively impacts on health (Mahoney *et al.* 2017). The cold and damp conditions in many family homes in Aotearoa New Zealand increase the risk for respiratory diseases, particularly among children and the elderly (Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019, 40; Ainge Roy 2016).

Similarly, people on low incomes struggle to access sufficient health services in Aotearoa New Zealand (Potter *et al.* 2017). In practice, Aotearoa New Zealand operates a two-tiered health system, where wealthier individuals can purchase private insurance and gain faster access to health care, while those on low incomes must rely on a public system focused on acute care rather than prevention (Chin *et al.* 2018). Long waiting times in the public system mean that crucial diagnostic tests are often delayed, resulting in a situation where people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are over-represented among emergency presentations and preventable deaths (Chin *et al.* 2018). For migrants, including resettled refugees, this situation can be further exacerbated where interpreting services are not available despite government commitments (Mahony *et al.* 2017; Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2019).

Education has also been impacted by the application of neoliberal ideology to school management (Ballard 2004). Since the 1980s, schools in Aotearoa New Zealand have been 'self-managing' institutions that must compete for students to remain viable (Roberts 1998). This has led to schools publicising exam results to bolster the school 'brand', creating an incentive to avoid accepting students

with complex educational needs and/or life circumstances that present a barrier to educational achievement. While strategies have been developed to provide additional support for students who identify as Māori or Pasifika, these and other ethnic minority students continue to be disadvantaged by a system that is designed to benefit the most privileged students (Bishop *et al.* 2009). At the same time, reduction in state support for tertiary educational institutions has placed a greater financial burden on students, disproportionately affecting those whose families lack the financial resources to cover fees increases (O'Rourke 2011).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, neoliberal reforms have reduced the levels of support offered by the State in areas including health, education, housing, and social welfare, and driven a concurrent rise in inequality across many domains (Rashbrooke 2013). The general increase in inequality has been especially damaging for Indigenous and minority groups (Marriott and Sim 2014), including former refugees.

How Structural Violence Harms Resettled Refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand

Refugees come to Aotearoa New Zealand to escape physical harm. Those who have been victims of physical violence can have impaired health and/or significant disabilities (Mahony *et al.* 2017). Refugees may also suffer ongoing trauma, although their mental health can recover well if stressors reduce post-migration (Beiser 2009; Hynie 2018). At the same time, young former refugees may have disrupted educational pathways, leaving them with critical gaps in their knowledge (Sampson *et al.* 2016).

Refugees resettled in New Zealand may face challenges associated with migration in general, caused by lack of familiarity with the English language, challenges adapting to unfamiliar social systems and cultural norms, lack of social connection, and local employers' failure to recognise existing qualifications and prior work experience (Rafferty 2019; McIntosh and Cockburn-Wootten 2019). Compared with many long-term migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand, former refugees are usually dependent on state welfare payments as their primary source of income, particularly in the initial post-settlement years (Simon-Kumar 2020).

These factors intersect and place former refugees in a uniquely disadvantaged position in Aotearoa New Zealand. Physical and mental health challenges associated with forced migration may cross with problems related to living on a low income in a neoliberal economy. As members of ethnic minority groups,

former refugees must navigate monocultural institutions grounded in a history of colonisation. The effects of structural violence for former refugees may be further compounded where they have limited English language proficiency, are unfamiliar with local social systems, and have limited social connections (see Im 2020).

The impacts of structural violence are evident in the disproportionately poor outcomes experienced by refugees resettled in Aotearoa New Zealand, despite a resettlement system that is considered to follow good practices. Despite the promises of the resettlement strategy, more than half of former refugees still depend on welfare payments for their income after five years (New Zealand Immigration 2017). Young people from refugee backgrounds are less likely to access higher education than the general population (Ministry of Education, personal communication, 23 November 2018; O'Rourke 2011). Refugees also face barriers to accessing appropriate healthcare and housing (Mahony *et al.* 2017; Shrestha-Ranjit *et al.* 2017).

Evidence suggests that exposure to structural violence is impeding some former refugees' ability to integrate and achieve self-sufficiency in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, resettled refugees are disadvantaged by local employers' preference for local work experience, and by government policies that do not recognise existing qualifications (Rafferty 2019; Ward and Liu 2012). English language proficiency and adaptation to local work culture is often required if people are to gain employment. Still, these skills are not usually taught in tandem, and some former refugees drop out of English classes feeling that they are not relevant to gaining employment (Rafferty 2019). Where former refugees are successful in finding employment, this is often low-skilled and low-paid work, regardless of their occupational history (Mahony *et al.* 2017; Ward and Liu 2012). Barriers to secure and well-paid employment increase the probability that refugees will experience mental and physical health challenges associated with poverty and economic insecurity.

Access to the education system would seem to offer a pathway out of this situation, at least for the next generation in former refugee families. Yet refugee-background students are not recognised as 'priority learners' at any level of education, which would qualify them for additional support in the Aotearoa New Zealand education system (Rafferty 2020). Schools are provided with only minimal funding for English language assistance, or to address the issue of lost years of schooling (Rafferty 2020; Mahony *et al.* 2017). Young people who arrive in New Zealand less than five years before sitting the school leaving qualification (NCEA Level Two) are less likely than the national average to pass,

which poses barriers to employment and further education (Rafferty, 2020). They are also much less likely than average to achieve sufficient grades to gain a place at university, meaning they miss out on the average graduate lifetime earnings premium of NZ $1.38 million (Rafferty 2020). Even when students do achieve the necessary exams, higher education fees may deter them from pursuing this opportunity (O'Rourke, 2011).

The tendency of former refugees to fall disproportionately into the lowest band of socio-economic status in Aotearoa New Zealand has further implications for their ability to find adequate housing which, as noted, can lead to health problems (Mahony *et al.* 2017). In their first years in Aotearoa New Zealand, quota refugees are offered places in social housing as part of the resettlement programme. A recent case was reported in the city of Dunedin, where former refugee families were living in cold and damp private accommodation that they believed was harming their children's health. Brunton quotes a representative of the local former refugee community describing families as feeling like 'they're still in war' due to the struggle to meet basic needs (Brunton 2019).

Refugees resettled in New Zealand must also confront a health system that has been cut back and partially privatised by decades of neoliberal governance (Potter *et al.* 2017). Being disproportionately likely to have low incomes means that former refugees are unlikely to have access to private health insurance, leaving them facing long waiting times for non-emergency care, even if they have complex health needs (Chin *et al.* 2018). Like other New Zealanders on low incomes, they may also be deterred from seeking primary health care due to cost, since it is only partially subsidised. Former refugees may encounter monoculturalism in individualised approaches to mental health provision that disconnects clients from extended family members or support provided through religious practices (Hassan *et al.* 2015; Shrestha-Ranjit *et al.* 2017). They may also encounter the patchy use of interpreting services which may make it difficult to be understood or to self-advocate (Gray 2019).

Neoliberal cuts to state support services may also contribute directly to social marginalisation for former refugees by creating an atmosphere of competition for scarce resources among disadvantaged groups (McIntosh and Cockburn-Wootten 2020). While Aotearoa New Zealand is relatively tolerant of immigration, racism and xenophobia remain significant, particularly where migrants are perceived to bring little immediate economic value (Lee and Cain 2019; Walters 2018).

The structural violence embedded in Aotearoa New Zealand's welfare, health, education and housing systems means that resettled refugees are exposed, potentially daily, to situations that can harm their physical and mental health. Social policy shaped by neoliberal ideology, and institutional monoculturalism grounded in New Zealand's colonial history, can create barriers to the social participation and self-sufficiency that the resettlement strategy defines as its markers of success. Attention to the impacts of structural violence on refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand might allow us to consider more fully how the resettlement system could avoid such harm, and thus better support refugees to achieve their full potential.

DISCUSSION

Despite being offered permanent resettlement in a society with low levels of physical violence, former refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand face a complex and unique set of challenges. Some are the result of social systems that are beyond their immediate control. Due to their reliance on state support in the immediate years post-settlement, former refugees are particularly exposed to the structural violence associated with neoliberal policy-making and institutional monoculturalism. Failure to acknowledge and address the everyday impacts of this violence risks inflicting a sense of disenfranchisement and alienation on former refugees and feeding societal discourses that blame individuals for their own disadvantage.

Conversely, greater recognition of the impacts of structural violence on resettled refugees highlights the responsibility of host societies to accommodate refugees at a structural level (see Phillimore 2020). In this article, we have highlighted three key areas where intervention is necessary for Aotearoa New Zealand: education, healthcare and housing.

A more comprehensive commitment to refugee resettlement in Aotearoa New Zealand would involve addressing disadvantage across government portfolios. For example, government departments with responsibility for health, education and housing could be required to demonstrate how they are proactively addressing the needs of former refugees and eliminating disadvantage at both a systemic and community level. This could include tracking and publishing full data on outcomes across areas such as education and health. Other important components of a reconfigured approach to resettlement would be supporting former refugees to collectively organise and advocate for their rights and ensuring that government agencies engage in processes of becoming directly accountable to them.

However, ultimately, an effective approach to refugee resettlement requires the creation of a fairer and more inclusive society. More culturally inclusive institutions and better funding of government support services across Aotearoa New Zealand would benefit both former refugees and other marginalised groups. Indeed, measures to reduce structural violence can be seen as both an economic and social investment. If it were easier for people to escape poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand, this would also be easier for former refugees, reducing the need for long-term resettlement support. At the same time, a more culturally inclusive society and better-funded government services would lead to improved outcomes in health and education and facilitate integration – disrupting the tendency to blame marginalised groups for their marginalisation, and any sense of competition for scarce resources among minority groups.

Further research is needed that examines the impacts of structural violence on former refugees' ability to integrate and achieve wellbeing in resettlement contexts. This article offers a starting point by arguing for attention to structural violence in order to conceptualise what refuge means in practice. Further work is needed that theorises how multiple forms of violence intersect in the lives of forced migrants and how these can be adequately addressed in resettlement support programmes. Future research could explore how multiple forms of disadvantage may shape former refugees' resettlement outcomes. Strengths-based research could also help to identify ways in which former refugees succeed in navigating and overcoming structural challenges, and aspects of resettlement support programmes that are effective in this regard. Standardised reporting is needed on resettled refugees' outcomes across a range of measures such as health, educational achievement and employment status, both within and between resettlement countries. Identifying resettlement countries where former refugees have better outcomes could point to factors that influence their wellbeing at the macro-level; this may include reduced structural violence in the society as a whole, or programmes that mitigate existing structural violence.

In this article, we have argued that Aotearoa New Zealand does not currently offer resettled refugees genuine refuge from harm. Instead, while offering some protection from harm caused through direct violence, the resettlement system exposes them to structural violence, which is another form of harm. We suggest that structural violence must be addressed through the resettlement system in Aotearoa New Zealand, and in other contexts, if they are to facilitate former refugees' self-sufficiency and full social and economic participation in the resettlement context.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have considered whether refugee resettlement systems in the global north genuinely offer refuge from harm, using Aotearoa New Zealand as a case. We have called attention to the value of an expanded definition of violence for our conceptualisation of refuge. We have argued that recognising the harms caused by structural violence, as well as those caused by physical violence, reorientates our understanding of refuge. This leads to more understanding of why resettled refugees may remain socially and economically marginalised long after their arrival, and shifts towards an emphasis on how host society systems present barriers to integration.

Although systemic change is difficult to achieve, resettlement programmes must be grounded in an acknowledgement of structural violence, and in an understanding that this violence will impact former refugees in particular ways. This, in turn, can provide the impetus to develop forms of resettlement support that empower former refugees to navigate challenges more effectively at an individual level, and to relationships of solidarity and advocacy on a collective level that challenge inequitable social structures. Truly offering refuge to former refugees has the potential to lead to a better society for all.

NOTES

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