

1. The Nature of Vulnerability: Two Models: Blaikie et. al have contributed significantly to the disaster research literature by this seminal work by examining the nature and progression of vulnerability through among others by “*social production*” of vulnerability’ (p. 21). The *Pressure and Release (PAR) model* despite its inherent drawbacks provides us a useful analytical framework which helps us “understanding and explaining” a disaster (p. 21). The discussion on the a wide spectrum of factors that give rise or further accelerate the growth of vulnerability from root causes leading to interaction with dynamic pressures which together with severity of hazards results in disasters which put affected population in a very complex and difficult situations is excellent. The reading go on critically examining other factors at different levels from micro level causes of vulnerability- a consequence of complex web of factors, larger social, political, ecological and economic reasons at regional and national level to analyses of global economic policy landscape and global environmental issues. Despite ‘*uncharted*’ linkages between urbanization and disaster vulnerability, the authors have done an excellent job of arguing the case.

My immediate reaction was that given the complex nature of how disaster is situated in a host of factors, any piece meal approach would be like treating the symptoms rather than making a dent on the root causes. In other words, planning processes need to address the causes that give rise to vulnerability in the first place-land poverty, reforming social and political institutions, ensuring wholesome and balanced development thereby reducing rural-urban migrations. This leads us to the notions of sustainable development. At global scale, this warrants increased cooperation between international community to help address global climate change among others.

2. Blaikie et al., Access to Resources and Coping in Adversity:

Critics of PAR model argue that the Par model does not capture the linkages of hazards and vulnerability ‘adequately’ and is ‘static’. The Access model on the other hand examines the interaction of hazards and how they shape the ‘human systems’. The social, cultural and political systems affect the way resources are distributed in the society which has profound impact on the differential allocation of production of vulnerability. People have to make difficult choices and the coping capacity is limited by their vulnerability as well as accessibility to resources.

The discussion although elaborate, lacks clear focus. The importance of social capital in reducing vulnerability as mentioned in reference to India in the reading came as no surprise. It would be interesting to see how increasing globalization (read westernization) of societies which places importance on individualism rather than on community welfare/interests would alter the vulnerability and coping mechanisms.

3. Tierney et al., Factors Influencing Disaster Preparedness and Response:

This article discusses the host of factors that shapes patterns of disaster preparedness and response- risk perceptions, perceptions of hazard adjustments, disaster experience, socioeconomic and socio-demographic factors such as race, language, ethnicity, social cohesiveness, economic levels, gender, inequality. It was interesting to see how these factors affect things like choice of insurance, types of preferred post-disaster shelter and how nature of disaster itself guides the levels of preparedness and response.