THE LANGUAGE OF SUPPORT: THE CASE OF THE CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

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TIMELINE

Earthquake
12:51 pm on Tue, 22 Feb 2011

First message posted
11:54 pm on Tue 22 Feb 2011 (from US)

1,543 messages posted

Last message
01:14 pm on Tue 1 Mar 2011 (from Norway)

More messages posted

Most recent message posted
10:07 am on Tue 25 Oct 2011 (from England)
“Send your messages of support to the Canterbury earthquake victims”
Nature of the Messages

- Ranged in length and style; mainly English; some in Spanish, French & Afrikaans
- Mostly in the form of a simple message to an “imagined” community; some in the form of a prayer; others in the form of a poem
- Expressions of anger were generally absent; if present, anger was expressed at 3\textsuperscript{rd} parties (looters, own governments)
Cloud tag

2011 23 24 25 26 27 affected am all christchurch city country
earthquake england everyone family feel friday friends from get go
god goes had has have heart hearts help here hope i just kia kiwi kiwis know
like lost love loved many may my new news now nz one ones other our
out people prayers sad safe saturday see so states stay strength strong
sunday thinking those thoughts through thursday time tragedy uk united up
us very we wednesday were what who wish world you
your zealand
### Words with more than 1% coverage

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<th>Count</th>
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Nodes Clustered by Word similarity

- courage
  - Shock
    - Feeling
    - Tragedy and tragic
  - I and me
  - We and our
  - You and your

- kia kaha
  - bless and blessing
  - god

- strength and strong
  - Thinking and thoughts
  - pray and prayer
  - hope and hoping
  - Know

- Those and they
  - Loss
  - Heart
  - Love

- family and whanau
  - friend and friends

- everyone
- Sad and saddened
SOME OBSERVATIONS

- Discourse changed alongside news reporting (emotional images etc.)
  
  *I cried when I saw the pics on the website.*
  
  [RED (China) | 04:18PM Thursday, 24 Feb 2011]

  *Even seeing the All Blacks Player shovelling wheelbarrow loads from peoples gardens was so true of this kiwi spirit.*
  
  [The Cookies (England) | 01:04PM Monday, 28 Feb 2011]

- Majority of messages were religious in nature, future-oriented and positive. (Does media influence religious discourse?)
  
  *And I am sure that God will save our lovely Christchurch and the kiwi people will rebuilt it.*
  
  [Amedeo (Romania) | 10:32AM Monday, 28 Feb 2011]
IN CONCLUSION

- Messages of support are affective and symbolic in nature & have become ritualistic (like the process of sending support messages).

- The prevalence of “I”, “you”, “we” and “our” establishes a personal relationship and creates an “imagined” community that is not be bound to geographical boundaries.

- Discourse suggests that this community provides strength and communality, reminiscent of a collectivist approach.

- Suggest that those affected are encountering hardship & must remain strong (underlying religious discourse of testing faith?)


