



Anthropology & Aging

Journal of the Association for Anthropology & Gerontology

Book Review

Review of Ageing in the Contexts of Migration. Ute Karl and Sandra Torres (editors). Routledge. ISBN 9780415738064, 204 pp. Price \$116.00 (Hardback).

Matthew Dalstrom
Saint Anthony College of Nursing

Anthropology & Aging, Vol 38, No 2 (2017), pp. 44-45

ISSN 2374-2267 (online) DOI 10.5195/aa.2017.182



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.

This journal is published by the [University Library System](#) of the [University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#), and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#).

Book Review

Review of Ageing in the Contexts of Migration. Ute Karl and Sandra Torres (editors). Routledge. ISBN 9780415738064, 204 pp. Price \$116.00 (Hardback).

Matthew Dalstrom
Saint Anthony College of Nursing

Ageing in the Contexts of Migration, edited by Ute Karl and Sandra Torres is a collection of short essays that explore the ways that migration and gerontology research intersect and inform each other. As globalization and government policies allow and enable more people to migrate and as those migrant communities age, the editors argue that it is increasingly important to think about how aging influences migration and vice versa. At first glance, neither one of those topics appear to appear to be novel, but the editors point out in the introduction that research on “older migrants has been relegated to the periphery of both, migration scholarship and gerontology” (1). Thus, this edited collection represents an attempt to shed some light on the how migration shapes ageing as a process, ageing as a stage in the life course, and how migration impacts elder care. To that end, the book is divided into three sections, “Elderly Care Regimes and Migration Regimes,” “Aging in the Context of Migration,” and “Elderly Care in the Context of Migration.” Primarily the book focuses on migration and aging in Europe with just one chapter addressing issues in the US. The majority of chapters, focus on a single country and provide national demographic data to highlight the number of migrants (both elderly and/or engaged in elder care) and the state policies and/or cultural beliefs that shape their experience.

The first collection of essays explores how national policies, population dynamics, and cultural beliefs interact with and influence migration practices and the aging process. For instance, in chapter two, Perek-Biatas and Slany discuss how higher wages and the limited amount of elder care staff in Germany, has resulted in an influx of Polish elder care workers. The irony though, is that the loss of those workers has put a tremendous strain on the Polish elder care system which relies heavily on children to take care of their parents. Therefore, children find themselves taking care of the elderly in Germany and sending money back to Poland to have others take care of their parents. Through highlighting this dynamic, the authors illustrate that studies of migration and aging should not be geographically bound, but be understood within the context of globalization. While interesting, the argument that context (in terms of the individual and society) along with culture have to be understood and taken into account to understand the aging experience and to improve it, should not be new to anthropologists. The field of anthropology has long argued that a holistic and ethnographically rich approach enables a much more nuanced understanding and it is refreshing to read a collection of essays that emphasize that point.

Section two illustrates the different questions and contributions that studying migration and aging can illuminate. The chapters deal with a wide array of topics from intergenerational migrant relationships, return migration, labor relationships after retirement, and how stereotypes faced in a host country can strength ties to the origin community. The final section centers on the elder care system and the issues that arise when people migrate to work in that sector. The last section fits together better than the previous two because it is thematically organized around a more defined topic and the sequencing of chapters flow better. For example, chapter 11 begins with a literature review of migrant care worker policies, jobs, and working conditions. The subsequent chapters then go onto discuss the implications of regulation (or lack thereof) on the practice, how stereotypes of the “Other” inform policy and care decisions, and the vulnerability of migrants engaged in the practice.

Within the current context of increasing immigration and refugee resettlement in Europe, this book is a timely reminder that migrants age and their experiences of aging are different than the rest of the population. Moreover, it pushes the reader to think about how context shapes the migrant experience and how policy needs to be address those differences within the community. It is important to note, however that the book is an overview and does not go into very much depth about any one particular issue. Nevertheless, it would be useful for those interested in the perspective that gerontology and migration studies have on the intersection of aging and migration.