

## BOOK REVIEW

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By Joanna Hadjicostandi

Katie Willis and Brenda Yeoh (eds), 2000, *Gender and Migration*, Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc., xxii and 560 pp., maps, diagrams, notes and index.

Gender and migration research presents tremendous challenges, as is well documented and analyzed within the pages of this collection of twenty-one superb articles written on the subject. All the articles of this collection are reprints, dating from 1990 to 1998. Although gender and migration research took off during the 1980s with a number of influential studies, it was nonetheless initially concerned with how to «add» women to the migration field or already existing research, where their presence was either peripheral or simply invisible. The studies in this volume not only «add», but fully include women, and even place them in the center of their analyses of the migratory process. The editors of this volume are to be praised for their insight and vision to bring together this collection of multidisciplinary essays by recognizing the invaluable dimension these scholars have added to the field of gender and migration. The collection demonstrates the maturity of the field as well as points to new directions for research.

The issues addressed in this collection vary from general gender migration theory, international labour migration, transnationalism, construction of national identity, participation in immigrant politics, citizenship, refugees, gendered work, to emigration and household reproduction. The analytical framework of the articles in this volume, though unique to each author, is firmly grounded in feminist theoretical analysis. By taking gender seriously the authors recast the conceptual tools central to conventional models of migration, such as regulating the patterns of skill transfer, household decision-making, labor markets segmentation dynamics, networking and residential location choice. The variety of topics in this set of articles demonstrates how the growing focus on gender has led to new arenas of concern within migration studies. The collection further demonstrates the need for the use of different methodological approaches, for example qualitative research, oral histories, participant observation and archival material in the study of gender-

red power relations, rather than the traditionally used quantitative approaches of migration studies.

More specifically, Thang-Dam Truong's article provides an analytical framework for the understanding of female migrants as reproductive workers in a cross-national transfer of labor. The author further discusses the implications on policy-making and networking at the international and national level, taking into account the specific ideological, political and socio-economic constraints. The importance of women in the center of economic production as well as social reproduction has been ignored not only in research but also realistically in policy-making and inclusion in post-colonial societies. C. Wright further enriches international migration theories with a structuration model, aiming at reconciling structure and agency within the field of gender and migration. Using Giddens' structuration model, not as a «grand theory» but as part of a country's socio-political reality, she argues that this model leaves analytical space for the role Africans have played in constituting the migrant labor system, while it recognizes that asymmetrical distributions of resources and relations of power, along gender, class, and age lines enables some Africans to have more influence in promoting sectional interests.

From within family studies, the volume includes exemplary scholarship by H. Zlotnic, S. Chant, N. Kibria, Richa Nagar, P. Hondagneu-Sotelo and E. Avila, A. Chattopandhyay. Families

are important actors in the migration process, especially in the analysis of female migration whether this involves migration of the whole family, reunification, improvement of the family economic status, or reliance on the family for support. Even when women migrate independently, they are still immediately connected to families. The special condition and problems of «transnational motherhood» are well analyzed in the case of Latin American migrant mothers, interrogating thus the class, race and cultural assumptions underlying «motherhood.»

Furthermore, the issue of household reproduction is seen as an immediate link to women's participation in the labor market nationally and internationally and is well analysed by several authors in this volume. Thanh-Dam Truong, J. Salaff, P. Pessar, B. Yeoh and S. Huang, B. Yeoh and Louisa-May Khoo and Eve Hall (also see Lazaridis, 2000) make outstanding contributions to the theories of work, exploitation, networking, cross-national transfer of labor and gendered participation in labor markets. Chant outlines how rural-urban migration in Costa Rica can be explained with reference to the greater access to kinship support, shelter, and different services in urban rather than rural areas, which frees adults to seek seasonal employment elsewhere. By highlighting the role of kinship support, Chant draws attention to the role of gendered aspects of household survival in shaping migration. Salaff further supports this argument by her findings that «migration work» varies by class

and gender. For example, since the working class families depend on kin to get resources to emigrate, their work involves maintaining these kin ties, while lower middle class view kin as an information source.

One of the strengths of this excellent collection of essays is that it debunks some of the myths on migration in general, by addressing issues pertinent to female migration, kinship relations and the interconnections among gender, class and race. Overall, the collection not only offers an invaluable contribution to

the field of migration studies, but opens the avenue for further exploration of gender in migration studies and research.

Key words: migration, gender, migration and work.

#### **References**

- Lazaridis G., 2000, «Filipino and Albanian Women Migrant Workers in Greece: Multiple Layers of Oppression», pp. 49-79, in F. Anthias and G. Lazaridis (eds), *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe*, Oxford, Berg.

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