

Do We All Arrive in the Same State of Mind?: Understanding Migration to the U.S. from a Psychological Perspective

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Abstract:

Psychosocial Experiences and Adjustment of Migrants provides an accessible overview of the different types of migration in relation to mental health and adjustment. Using a psychological approach to shed new light on recent migration dynamics, the volume serves as a valuable resource for professionals working in migration-related fields. Consisting of case studies, geographic analysis, and personal narratives, it is a multifaceted work with applicability to various professional fields.

Do we all arrive in the same state of mind?: Migration in die USA aus Psychologischer Sicht verstehen

German Abstract:

Psychosocial Experiences and Adjustment of Migrants bietet einen leicht zugänglichen Überblick über die verschiedenen Arten der Migration im Zusammenhang mit psychischer Gesundheit und Anpassung. Der Band nutzt einen psychologischen Ansatz, um ein neues Licht auf die jüngsten Migrationsdynamiken zu werfen, und dient als wertvolle Ressource für Fachleute, die in migrationsbezogenen Bereichen arbeiten. Es besteht aus Fallstudien, geografischen Analysen und persönlichen Erzählungen und ist ein vielseitiges Werk, das sich auf verschiedene Berufsfelder anwenden lässt.

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Do We All Arrive in the Same State of Mind?: Understanding Migration to the U.S. from a Psychological Perspective

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Rich, Grant J., Judy Kuriansky, Uwe P. Gielen and Daniel Kaplin: *Psychosocial Experiences and Adjustment of Migrants. Coming to the USA*. San Diego: Academic Press 2023. 498 pages, 132,17 EUR. ISBN: 978-0-12-823794-6.

Edited by experienced psychologist Dr. Grant J. Rich, clinical psychologist Dr. Judy Kuriansky, Chairman of the Department of Psychology at St. Francis College, Uwe P. Gielen, and Assistant Professor at St. Francis College Daniel Kaplin, the edited volume *Psychosocial Experiences and Adjustment of Migrants: Coming to the USA* combines various characteristics and factors related to migration including gender, place of origin, reasons for migration (e.g., forced migration), and consequences for the mental health of migrants, giving it a holistic approach. Divided into three parts and 31 chapters, the book highlights the mental health and psychosocial experiences of different migrants, provides an in-depth look at migration patterns, and explores adjustments to sociocultural changes. By examining and profiling the individual experiences of migrants by region of origin, it is a valuable resource for a variety of stakeholders, including governmental agencies, psychology students, and various agencies that work with migrants, to gain profound psychological insight.

The cover of the book features a waving American flag and silhouettes of different people on the move. We can see men and women of various ages, but also children, all packed with suitcases, trolleys, and various pieces of luggage, moving from the left to the right. This powerful illustration already clearly indicates the thematic focus of the book – it deals with various people(s) on the move in the U.S. American context.

Part one provides a more general introduction to the various factors that influence and contribute to migration patterns in the U.S., including a thorough overview of the legal and historical context of migration to the United States, a general overview of psychological issues related to migration, as well as an examination of the support system implemented for children

and youth, refugees and immigrants. Emphasis is also placed on the different stages of migration, namely premigration, migration and postmigration, identifying factors such as impetus for migration, challenges encountered during navigation and adjustment, and stressors such as language barriers. The inclusion of personal narratives adds a dimension of relatability to the discourse. This personal dimension is present throughout the book, not only in the personal stories of migrants but also in the professional yet personal reflections on the topic, as chapter 10 titled “Is Immigration Good or Bad for the United States? A Professional’s Personal Reflection on the Concepts of Coloniality and Mutual Benefit in Migration” illustrates.

In addition, for example, there is a chapter (7) on gender studies. This chapter focuses on the specific struggles of women and LGBTQ+ members as more vulnerable migrants, whose gender identity is often directly or indirectly related to the reasons for migration. Women are often found to be more vulnerable within detention centers and there is a notable gender disparity in the granting of residency, with more men obtaining residency through work, highlighting the relatively greater dependence of women on family ties for access to permanent residency through chain migration (cf. p. 99). However, the author of this chapter primarily presents statistical data and factual information without discussing in detail the underlying reasons for these trends.

The second part of the book examines various historical and contemporary aspects of the migration process, from physical journeys, legal statuses, challenges such as illegal immigration, push-pull factors, and forced displacement. Chapters are organized by geographic regions, providing diverse insights, particularly considering regions with high migration rates to the U.S. The geographic focus clearly favors Central and South American, and Asian migration over African and European migration. Given the recent upsurge in mass migration, especially from countries south of the United States, this choice seems natural. Chapter 19 “Forced Displacement from the Northern Triangle Region: Implications for Clinical Intervention and Training” by Caroline S. Clauss-Ehlers presents a case study of Josefina, an 18-year-old girl from Honduras, to illustrate the challenges of forced displacement caused by extreme poverty, natural disasters, and gang violence. The author thus offers insights into the causes and consequences of forced displacement within the Northern Triangle region, which includes Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, while also placing these issues within the broader context of global forced displacement, as evidenced by references to statistics such as the

UNHCR report. Clauss-Ehlers also adds the Trilateral Trauma Migration Model, which presents three aspects of migration (departure, migration and relocation) and applies them to the case to remind the reader that all of these aspects need to be considered, not just one (cf. p. 264–265): “Through this lens of the various components of forced displacement, clinicians and trainees are encouraged to consider the complexity of PTSD, such as how multiple traumas, rather than one traumatic event, can lead to complex PTSD” (p. 274). Overall, the second part of the book includes not only geographical, but also conditional differentiation, dealing not only with forced displacement but also with asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants with different reasons for migrating, as well as shedding light on long-neglected struggles such as PTSD and transgenerational adjustment issues.

Part three focuses on the role of stakeholders, advocacy, and international agreements, rounding out this already well-balanced book. Reflecting on the current state of international cooperation and law, this part delves into a more theoretical and all-encompassing aspect of migration. Chapter 25, “Diplomatic Psychology at the United Nations: The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration,” for example, is about how the UN deals with migration in relation to Goal 10.7, which entails a call on countries to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of well-managed migration policies” of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (p. 339). Fernando de la Mora Salcedo acknowledges the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) and explores the role of psychology and mental health in shaping the GCM (cf. p. 339–341). In de la Mora Salcedo’s assessment, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) has been largely shaped by past, ineffective migration policies that, for example, ignored public assumptions (e.g., that migrants drain social welfare systems) rather than addressing them. Now, a shift has occurred that has reshaped the way public concerns are addressed, moving toward recognition and engagement. The author commends the use of psychological tools, exemplified by the promotion of collaborative dialogue among government agencies, civil society representatives, and stakeholders, intending to create a comprehensive framework conducive to the promotion of “safe, orderly, and regular” migration (p. 354).

Other chapters focus on NGOs or the UN agenda on migration, as well as concrete changes such as the establishment of mental health facilities. In chapter 28, “Psychosocial Support for Migrants and Refugees: Similarities and Differences in Historic International Compacts,” Judy

Kuriansky not only sheds light on existing and emerging programs but also provides a straightforward list of recommendations for assisting migrants in need of mental health support, even going so far as to recognize the unique struggles faced by men, an aspect that is often overlooked (cf. p. 398).

In terms of the layout and structure of the chapters, the editors have taken care to include a comprehensive abstract as well as a wealth of definitions and explanations at the beginning of each section. Each chapter takes a multifaceted approach, considering all kinds of different backgrounds, additional information, and cross-references to more extensive work on different aspects (e.g., acculturation), providing easy access to more information. For example, in chapter 3, “Psychological Issues Associated with Migration,” Irene Lopéz, discusses various forms of psychological stress, such as severe mental illness or the effects of parental separation, that go far beyond the migration process itself. Lopéz also makes clear that while there is a political distinction between migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, psychologically these distinctions do not matter. What matters, however, is the question of perceived forcedness (cf. p. 42). These clear distinctions and the structure give the book a well-rounded complexion, making it easy to understand even for non-psychology scholars. In this way, the volume lives up to the goal the editors set in the introduction of providing a resource that is accessible to anyone working with migrants, including counselors and clinical professionals, as well as advocates working with refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers (cf. p xxxii).

In conclusion, this comprehensive and accessible work can be considered a framework for both professional counselors and other professionals working in the areas of migration. This volume is a significant contribution that greatly reflects the current phenomenon of migration and its psychological implications in the United States. The inclusion of not only psychological research but also personal stories, case studies, and an interrelated approach that also considers historical, political, and global aspects, gives the volume a holistic edge. Rich et al. have produced a significant work that has the potential to contribute greatly to the psychological well-being and understanding of all types of people from diverse immigrant backgrounds.