

BOOK REVIEWS

Berg, Berit (ed.) (2013) *Innvandring og funksjonshemming*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. 208 pp.

In this volume, Berit Berg has collected results from several research projects related to the migration and disability nexus. In particular, the presented studies are concerned with parents of children with disabilities and their encounters with support services in the Norwegian welfare system. While the majority of the empirical data are taken from a project led by Berg entitled *Ethnicity and disability*, Berg's research is supplemented with findings from other influential studies, such as Jan Tøssebro's research on raising children with disabilities in Norway (Chapter 2), and Torunn Arntsen Sajjad's research on Pakistani Norwegian families with disabled children (Chapter 3). As announced in the volume's preface, the studies conclude that the experiences of parents belonging to minority groups are comparable to the experiences of the majority population in the same situation. In particular, parents of disabled children experience lack of information, suspicion from practitioners, confusion with regard to understanding the system of institutions and their corresponding roles, bureaucratic delay and sometimes difficulty in obtaining help leading to repeated appeals against refusals of official services. The main argument throughout the book is that these experiences are intensified for minority families, due on the one hand to a lack of language skills and dependence on interpreters with limited medical knowledge, and on the other hand to a lack of familiarity with the Norwegian welfare system. Minority families are also met with an attitude of suspicion described in this volume as "culturalism", where stereotypical understandings of culture among professionals influence their interpretations of individually formulated needs and reactions.

While cross-cultural research on disability and illness has been a theme in medical anthropology since the latter part of the last century (Ingstad and Whyte 1995), research on migration and disability in Norway is not extensive. Previous to the project led by Berg, Benedicte Ingstad and Arntsen Sørheim's (now Sajjad) work has been influential. This makes the present volume a welcome and relevant publication in the same year as Norway ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Though the book does not offer new perspectives to the field, the chapters confirm in different ways previous studies related to disability research pertaining to minorities and health care. Unlike most research on disabilities performed in Norway and Scandinavia (Söder 2009), the volume does not touch upon anthropological issues such as diverse understandings and

interpretations of disabilities, gender roles and family systems. Its focus is to a large extent on mental disabilities, and the participating families' relation to and experience with the social welfare system.

The predominant focus of the volume is on "understanding the other" in relation to the principle of equal/equitable services. The families' perspectives and experiences come to the fore in many ways, for the benefit and reflection of the caregiver in particular, evidently making students and practitioners in health and social services the expected readership of the volume. The family perspectives presented, and the theoretical analysis of these, appropriately question and criticise practices and attitudes of the professional caregiver. The overarching perspective is that of the social welfare system and how the support offered can be improved through culturally sensitive communication, responsible use of interpreters, appreciation of diversity within cultural groups and avoiding "culturalisation" and stereotypical understandings.

This perspective gives the volume a perhaps unintended dual message of on the one hand the importance of learning from the experiences of minority parents of children with disabilities, while on the other pointing out the deficits or disadvantages of these parents with regard to language, knowledge and experience. Despite the repeated evidence presented, that their experiences are similar to those of the majority population in comparable situations, the particular deficits of language, education, family support and cultural barriers are made explicit throughout the book. The chapter dealing with attitudes to life, faith and coping (Chapter 7 by Anna Kittelsaa), correcting stereotypical impressions of religious and cultural understandings of disability, does describe the resourcefulness and coping strategies of the families involved. These findings, as well as findings explaining why certain families do not make use of certain assistance schemes, are, however, still presented from the perspective of 'understanding the other'. They are not employed to question the rigidity of the institutional schemes and the professional practitioners themselves.

The importance or relevance of the different perspectives raised in this collection depends on the purpose of the book. As a textbook or introduction to the theme of migration and disability, the volume points to important areas where the practitioner is reminded to be aware of her/his own cultural situatedness and limitations. This is pointed out in several ways and through several examples, for example in Kittelsaa's discussion in Chapter 5 on how encounters between families and support services may be understood, interpreted and misinterpreted differently by both parties involved. As such, I read

the book partly as an attempt to relativise majority perceptions of minority cultures, reminding the reader that context, language, education and socio-economic situation influence communication and understandings of health, disability and the role of the social welfare system. It is difficult, however, to point to one particular theme or discussion which stands out as more thorough or relevant in this regard. In the context of Norwegian policy making, I would point to the study reported on in Chapter 8 (Berg and Kittelsaa), on asylum seekers and disabilities, as particularly important. The vulnerability of people who find themselves in a limbo situation between places, having no legal status and the emotional stress of being dependent on receiving services, needs reiteration. Early intervention might be doubly important for children in this situation.

It is perhaps the format of the book as a collection of articles/chapters, which gives the impression of *Innvandring og funksjonshemming* as somewhat unfinished or fragmented. The introduction and the introductory chapter both promise discussions and perspectives, which are not followed up or dealt with in depth in the subsequent chapters. The different contributions circle around the themes of language deficits, the lack of (ability to access) information, and 'culturalisms', all giving the impression of repetition or redundancy and preventing a more significant and systematic discussion of important findings. The significance of defining disabilities in social relational terms, as emphasised in the introduction, is not evident in the subsequent chapters and discussions. On a similar note, it is unclear how the term intersectionality introduced on page 12 influences or informs the analyses of the different data presented. The questions of racism/discrimination, power of definition and of institutional authorities, and power in intersecting areas and relations are not explicitly addressed or discussed. The double (or multiple) minority situation of the families involved is pointed to, but how this bears significance in the lives of the individuals, their perception of themselves and the helper's perception is not made a theme in and of itself. As such, the book is more a collection of summaries of research reports, than a systematic theoretical and empirical contribution to the field. I would have liked to have read more about different understandings of disability, about religion, ethics, resilience and efforts to cope, and how the insights from these findings might change professional practice, in particular in order to empower families in vulnerable situations and to adapt assistance schemes to the individual needs of diverse families, both those of minority and majority populations.

All in all, the book presents important documentation of the experiences of minority parents in their interaction with social and health services in Norway. The perspectives and experiences presented are valuable to professionals and students preparing for a profession in social and health services, as well as in adjacent fields such as education and special education.

Lena Lybæk
Associate Professor, Institute of human rights, ethics and diversity, Buskerud and Vestfold University College

References

- Berg, B 2010, *Eksilets stoppesteder: Fra flukt og asyl til integrering og transnasjonale liv*, Doctoral thesis, Department of social work and health science, NTNU, Trondheim.
- Ingstad, B & Whyte, SR 1995, *Disability and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Söder, M 2009, 'Tensions, perspectives and themes in disability studies', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp 67-81, DOI: 10.1080/15017410902830496.

Blommaert Jan, Leppänen Sirpa, Pahta, Päivi & Räisänen, Tiina (eds.) (2012) *Dangerous Multilingualism. Northern Perspectives on Order, Purity and Normality*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 313 pp.

Everyone, who has worked or lived in multilingual and multicultural environments, understands what the name of the book, *Dangerous Multilingualism, Northern Perspectives on Order, Purity and Normality*, implies. Even though living in a multilingual milieu can be a richness, inspiring and fruitful, it can also consist of frustration, unpleasantness and confusion. It challenges us to move from our comfort zone to a space that we cannot control and understand. Describing in two words, multilingualism can be seen as an opportunity or as something dangerous. In the global world, multilingualism is present in the everyday lives of people and touches different layers of the society. *Dangerous Multilingualism, Northern Perspectives on Order, Purity and Normality* provides a fresh approach to multilingual reality and serves empirically and theoretically grounded accounts of the topic.

The book has been edited by Jan Blommaert, Sirpa Leppänen, Päivi Pahta and Tiina Räisänen, and the papers of the book have been written by 23 contributors. Contributions represent several fields of language studies such as English, Finnish, Finnish Sign Language and Applied Linguistic. The book consists of 13 essays in total, and they are thematically divided into three parts: (1) Order–disorder, (2) purity–impurity and (3) normality–abnormality. The book provides aspects of this issue primarily within one nation state, Finland, in which national identity has long been seen as connected to national language. Only two essays of the book discuss theme in other North European contexts. In my review, I will introduce one essay from each thematic part.

First essay, written by Jan Blommaert, Sirpa Leppänen and Massimiliano Spotti, works as an introduction and presents a historical framework of the problem of the linguistic diversity. Since the 1960s in sociolinguistics, multilingualism has been celebrated as a positive thing in societies. The authors draw attention to the fact that multilingualism is in principle a positive thing, but in practice it can also cause challenges for individuals and social groups, if it leads to inclusion and exclusion among and between people (p. 1). Globalisation and increasing migration justify the conversation of benefits and downsides of multilingualism. This is because the diversity of society brings about concrete problems, for example, in areas of language policy or systems on integration and education. Societies are ever more multilingual and multicultural and globalisation disturbs the assumption that language use and a cultural group identity are linear and connected to each other. The main concern of the book lies in this reality: ongoing and unresolved tension between the high modern assumption of a homogenous culture and post- or late modern view of linguistic diversity (p. 2).

The first thematic part, Order–Disorder, discusses language policies in Finnish official bilingualism and school environment and also in European and Finnish policy documents. The essay, *Dealing with Increasing Linguistic Diversity in Schools – the Finnish Example*, gives an interesting view to an everyday life of multilingual school environment from teachers' perspective. Minna Suni and Sirkku Latomaa have analysed how teachers have to deal with the pressure of national language education policy on immigrant students that aims at plurilingualism, and on the other hand a classroom reality in which educational practices are largely monolingually oriented. The authors claim that even though Finland has managed multilingualism fairly well at the policy level, there is variation in the act of the policies (p. 91). For example, municipalities receive a special government

* E-mail: Lena.Lybæk@hbv.no

subsidy for all students with a language other than Finnish. On the other hand, in Finnish schools it seems to be a “rule” to avoid the use of other languages, and students have been guided to “practice their Finnish” during school time (p. 80). At the same time and in the same environment, multilingualism is both recognised and disallowed.

In the second part of the book, Purity–Impurity, each essay depicts how alleged stability and integrity on language lead to a concern with purity and to a need to protect local language from “foreign” influences. The first essay of this part, *Hard Currency or a Stigma – Russian-Finnish Bilingualism among Young Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Finland*, written by Mika Lähteenmäki and Marjatta Vanhala-Aniszewski, presents how attitudes toward various languages depend on the historical development of the sociocultural, historical and political contexts of their emergence. In Finland, this appears clearly in respect of Russian-speaking population; Russia has been represented as a potential threat to the purity of Finnish language and culture (p. 122). For that reason, some Russian-speaking people avoid using their native tongue in the public sphere, because Russian has a certain (negative) reputation in the Finnish context (p. 136). Essay focuses also on the experiences of the use of Russian and Finnish in various contexts and it suggests how linguistic resources and problems vary among individuals. Languages are seen functionally different; Russian is the language of feelings, but it is easier to talk about studies in Finnish (p. 132).

In the final part, Normality–Abnormality, each essay presents interesting views on different domains on multilingual environment. The essays discuss how multilingualism appears as a problem in a workplace, in interactive web discussion forums and among elderly and deaf people. A uniting theme between those topics is how the use of a particular language is a key for full participation rights, agency and belonging. Increasing multilingualism may lead to a social division between those who have the necessary skills for full participation and to those who are excluded because of monolingualism. This part disclosed a lot of new and surprising ways to look at the challenges of multilingualism. At the same time, it underlines how languages impact every sector of the society. In my opinion, for this reason this part gives the reader the most.

Language and its power of creating relationships but also separating people is especially visible in the essay written by Anne Pitkänen-Huhta and Marja Hujo, in which elderly people discuss how they are confronted by multilingualism and how they experience it. Essay tells a story of an elderly couple, two Finnish speaking 90-year-olds, who are living in rural south-western Finland. Authors notice that in the individual level couple are capable of working out their daily needs, but in the institutional level they are marginalised as a consequence of increasing multilingualism (p. 282). For example, there are many company names that are English even when the ownership is Finnish, and the elderly couple in the essay have problems to figure out what services a specific company provides (276–277). There is a danger that multilingualism divides people into those who have the necessary language skills and those who lack the skills, and that is why the latter become marginalised (p. 264, 282). In the Finnish context, adult immigrants can become a new underclass for the same reason, because the labour market does not recognise their language skills or these skills are seen useless.

Dangerous Multilingualism, Northern Perspectives on Order, Purity and Normality illustrates a cross-section of the multilingual reality in Finnish society. It shows clearly how multilingualism is a positive thing and richness in every society, but on the other hand increasing linguistic diversity creates operational, political and ideological problems to solve. The book brings up that the challenge

for sociolinguistics is to understand and recognise them as real forces and converse on every sides of multilingualism. However, as the subject is wide, the aspects that can be discussed in one book are limited, and thus many fruitful discussions have left out. For example, questions about multilingualism in the context of day-care centres or challenges of the future (for example, increasing rate of elderly who speak Finnish as their second language in nursing home or language policy of immigrants of second or third generation in the school context) could be interesting topics. Overall, the gain of the book is to wake up us into thinking about multilingualism as a wider phenomenon, and that is why, even though most of the essays of the book focus on multilingualism in a North European context, it will also be of value to an international audience. The book is easy to read, thoughtful and it should be essential reading for anyone interested in multilingualism or who is working in a multicultural environment.

Jonna Kulju

PhD student, Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä

Holm Pedersen, Marianne (2014) *Iraqi Women in Denmark. Ritual Performance and Belonging in Everyday Life*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press. 197 pp.

The descriptive title frames the book well. It is a description and analysis of the everyday life of some Iraqi women in Copenhagen, Denmark. The women's relation to, use and performance of rituals are utilised “as a cultural prism” (Part II) to explore and discuss the women's “notions of belonging” (Part III) in relation to Iraq, Denmark and local neighbourhoods in Copenhagen as well as in Iraqi cities. The book is divided into three parts – two is mentioned above, the first part being an introduction and contextualisation of the study – and seven chapters. Theoretically and thematically, the study is in critical dialogue with ethnography, anthropology, migration studies and anthropology of religion. The study is an updated version of Holm Pedersen's dissertation from 2009, which explains why the fieldwork was performed a decade ago.

Iraqi Women in Denmark is cleverly construed. The three chapters of Part II describing, contextualising and discussing rituals are at the heart of the study. As readers, we get to acquaint ourselves with three celebratory rituals during which the women gather and break the day-to-day routines. Each ritual serves an analytical function. When *id al-fitr*, the celebration after the end of the Ramadan fasting is discussed, Holm Pedersen uses the opportunity to discuss “notions of relatedness among extended families”. Theoretically, this chapter draws on ritual and migration studies. Holm Pedersen carefully heeds her own material and ably avoids to reproduce earlier research results or taken for granted descriptions. All through, the Iraqi women are actors, not reduced to being “religious” or “women” following given routes, but individuals forming their lives in contexts they do not fully (or sometimes not even partly) control. Rituals and traditions are not simply reproduced or refuted; rather they are formed, sometimes deliberately to, for example, please children, sometimes as an effect of changed living conditions.

In the next chapter on the commemoration rituals of *Muharram*, remembering the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn, Holm Pedersen discusses notions of community and belonging, and how these are negotiated. She carefully moves from a general description of what the *Muharram* celebration commemorates to emphasise social relations, hierarchies and expectations the celebrations bring to the fore. The *Muharram* rituals trigger memories of left relatives and places, prior years' celebrations,

* E-mail: jonna.kulju@gmail.com

and nostalgia; but the rituals are also reconstituted among friends, family and consociates. Women who perform rituals together but who do not normally socialise outside of the ritual sphere are called consociates in the study to mark the different quality of the relation. The reconstitution of the ritual events localises the experiences and creates new bonds – to persons as well as to places. The latter is crucial to Holm Pedersen's overall message in the book. The Iraqi women might seldom be included in the dominant Danish nationalist narrative of "Danishness" and belonging, but they do consider themselves grounded locally in Copenhagen through personal networks, everyday life, work, friends, and rituals. Copenhagen is where they have made their home, for good or bad.

The third and final empirical chapter introduces the reader to the *taklif* ritual; the celebration of a girl's coming of age religiously. In this chapter, Holm Pedersen addresses issues of generation, parenthood and understanding of place and belonging. In the prior chapters, focus has been on the experiences of women who were adults when they left Iraq. By bringing in the younger generation as a contrast, Holm Pedersen manages to further clarify the life worlds of her main interlocutors. Their children grow up in another social position, with a different relation to place, language and religion. Holm Pedersen uses this difference to criticise the lack of in-depth studies of grown up religious migrant women. A fair point, far too little attention has been paid to the reflections of adult immigrants with a Muslim family background on, for example, upbringing, their children's futures or on the strategies they develop to guide their youth.

Iraqi Women in Denmark does not avoid the, at times, troublesome views on Danish society and the complex relations they have to it. Holm Pedersen not only notes the discrimination the women are subjected to, but also records some women's defensive strategies. Some, like Umm Zainap (see Chapter 2), in her effort to present herself as a good person (the ultimate goal of all interviewees), come across as religiously conservative and judgemental about Danish culture (like its drinking culture and relation to nudity). When stressing individual agency, it becomes pertinent to ask what choices are made, in the context one is in, pertaining, for example, education, work, child bearing and rearing, social networking, language learning and religious observance. Some information is given and a few ideas are developed on bridging capital and weak ties, and on respectability (borrowing from Beverley Skeggs' (1997) work on working class women), but generally, Holm Pedersen seems more interested in discussing majority society discrimination and stereotypes than pursuing a theoretical discussion on individual agency and social inclusion.

The finest contribution of *Iraqi Women in Denmark* is the treatment of the topic of rituals and localisation. With her rich empirical material, Holm Pedersen continues the line of thought laid down by, for example, Pnina Werbner in her numerous texts on the ritual life of British Pakistanis (1996, 2002, 2003). The focus on everyday life and rituals forces other aspects of ritual performance into the limelight than a discussion on the symbolic elements of the rituals would have. The rituals get interwoven with the narratives of belonging and localisation, giving the author the possibility to stress the social aspects of the rituals. Coming from the field of religious studies, I would not have minded more details about the rituals – I particularly enjoyed the description of the *latam* (a gentle, ritual striking to express grief) and how this is practiced, taught and perceived – but Holm Pedersen has chosen another route, and I have no objections to that.

To sum up, the study is thorough, well structured, in dialogue with earlier scholarship and, most importantly, a respectful and honest

portrait of a number of Iraqi women residing in Copenhagen, their everyday life and ritual performance. By honest, I mean that also bothersome views and not very productive strategies are also dealt with. Not least because of that choice, Holm Pedersen's study comes across as true to the study's ideal of looking at individual agency in everyday life situations.

Jonas Otterbeck

Professor, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University

References

- Skeggs, B 1997, *Formation of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*, Sage, London.
- Werbner, P 1996, 'Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralising of Space among British Muslims', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 309-338.
- Werbner, P 2002, *Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims*, James Currey & School of American Research, Santa Fe.
- Werbner, P 2003, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*, Hurst Publishers, London.

Lehtonen, Mikko (2013) (ed.) *Liikkuva maailma. Liike, raja, tieto*, Tampere: Vastapaino, Tampereen yliopisto. 312 pp.

Movement of goods, people and information challenges the way we understand the world. For researchers, this means that the concepts of nation/al/ity, belonging, borders, community and identity, among others, should be reconsidered as continuous and dynamic processes instead of fixed and stable "states of things". This openness is difficult for researchers who tend to set boundaries, categorise, measure and linearise their objects of study. How to tame the unpredictable, coincidental and 'liquid' world?

Liikkuva maailma ("fluid world") is a collection of articles edited by Mikko Lehtonen, the Professor of Media Culture at University of Tampere. It is a result of the work of a research development programme by the same name at University of Tampere (2011–2013), where new conceptualisations were created about the current world characterised by movement. The "fluidities" studied were concrete – moving people, messages and objects – and symbolic – entanglements of politics, economics and culture, as well as movements of ideologies and thoughts. As Lehtonen points out in his introduction; the researchers urgently need a new kind of imagination and empathy to understand the world, where things can appear to be present even when they physically are not (p. 22).

The book consists of 13 articles from sociologists, social anthropologists, media, literature, translation, gender and cultural studies researchers, a geographer and a social psychologist. This kind of a multidisciplinary approach is needed now more than ever to make sense of the world with constantly shifting borders. The book covers a wide range of topics from nationalisation of global political trends to the work of translators, conceptual deliberations alternating with empirical studies. The writing is insightful, illustrative and in many cases, delightfully concrete.

However, it would have seemed valuable to draw the distinct cases together, to articulate the *transdisciplinary* aspect of the research, and end the collection with conclusions and recommendations for further research. Although several useful concepts for transnational studies are discussed in-depth in the articles, the final results of the research development program are not articulated explicitly. Which new conceptualisations were put forth and what kind of new understandings could they offer to human sciences?

* E-mail: Jonas.Otterbeck@teol.lu.se

The central theme of the book is to find means to resist what Mikko Lehtonen calls "methodological nationalism": thinking grounded in national borders, old geopolitical imagination and identities based on differences and connected to one place only. We have witnessed in the past 20 years or so the exponential increase in research applying transnational approaches and it has become a slightly slippery device for researchers. In this collection of articles, the notion of transnational is understood as connections, intensities, cooperation, influence (approaching here the concept of soft power), circulation, movement of ideas, information, objects or people, or as a way of thinking, imagining and knowing that crosses national borders.

Indeed, there are very few phenomena in this world, which could not be considered transnational in one way or another. Nevertheless, the national still seems to remain as the point of reference in transnational studies. It appears almost impossible to get rid of as 'national' is always included in the very word "transnational". This dynamics is present in many of the articles. The national and transnational forces cannot be separated from each other and therefore, possibly, should not be studied separately either.

A thought-provoking chapter with transnational approach worth highlighting is Hanna Kuusela's article on books crossing borders. Kuusela introduces material culture studies as an example of a method capable to describe and give significations to the ubiquitous movement and change in the fluid world. Following Arjun Appadurai's (1986: 5) advice, Kuusela follows the itineraries of books and tracks the human interactions and appreciations that give meanings to them on the way. In our world, books, the practices and ideas related to them can move more freely than people can. Kuusela gives an illuminating example of the Afghan man Shah Muhammad Rais, who applied for a visa to Norway in 2005 with his family and was declined. In contrast, his story had served as an inspiration for the Norwegian writer-journalist Åsne Seierstad's book *The Bookseller of Kabul*, published in 2002. The book became an international success, was translated to several languages and sold over 2 billion copies. The man himself was not able to move anywhere, but the book travelled around the world. Claiming he had been ill-depicted in the book, Rais filed a lawsuit against Seierstad stating that the book had made his and his family's life unsafe in Afghanistan.¹ According to Kuusela, Rais' case exemplifies that objects like books, their production, forms, utilisation and circulation are transporters of meaning and interpretations, and that books can serve as agents – or even surrogates for people or ideas – in the global arena of cultural and political negotiations. (p. 117 and 129).

The case also demonstrates the knowledge politics that Mikko Lehtonen sees closely connected to the transnational circulations. Who is heard, and who is left silent in the current categorisations? (p. 21) A perceptive account on negotiating the symbolic borders is presented by Olli Löytty, who analyses the ways in which the so-called "immigrant literature" has been defined in Finland. As he points out, the line between immigrant and Finnish literature is impossible to draw, but still in most cases, this line remains as the unquestioned starting point for understanding the literary life in Finland. The hybrid and multilingual forms of Finnish literature have consequently been cast aside as they have been seen as a threat to the national imagination. Modern European nationalism and literature studies have formed a pact, which has seemed difficult to break until now (p. 262). In Finland, an important turning point was the amendment of rules of Finlandia Literature Prize to allow a foreigner, the Slovak writer Alexandra Salmela living in Finland, to participate in the competition in 2010 (p. 261).

Löytty recommends the concept "ylirajainen" (see Martikainen 2006) – "border-crossing" – over transnationalism, transculturalism or trans-social, as it does not assume or define in advance what kind of borders are significant in a certain situation. This choice also contests the identity politics related to the definitions mentioned above; as, for example, "minority literature" is necessarily contrasted with the assumed "majority culture" or "national literature" (p. 263).

Apart from some minor deficiencies in finalising of the book – e.g. missing titles in the list of references, few incomplete sentences – there are no genuine causes for critique. This is a highly recommendable collection abounding insights on critical methods for studying the situations of crossing borders.

Niina Oisalo

Doctoral Candidate, Media Studies, University of Turku, Finland

References

- Appadurai A (ed.) 1986, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Martikainen, T (ed.) 2006, *Ylirajainen kulttuuri. Etnisyys Suomessa 2000-luvulla*, Tietolipas 212, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Helsinki.
- Rais, S M 2007 *Once upon a time there was a bookseller in Kabul*, SHAH M BOOK CO.
- Seierstad, Å 2002, *The Bookseller of Kabul*, Virago, London.

Masten, Ann S., Liebkind, Karmela and Hernandez, Donald J. (eds.) (2012) *Realizing the potential of immigrant youth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 445 pp.

In political language, immigrants are often portrayed as the reserve labour force performing tasks that are not attractive to non-immigrant populations and less as a group of people enriching the society and being of value as such. In this respect, *Realizing the potential of immigrant youth* is a promising book focusing on positive effects of immigrants. The editors of the book are Professors in different disciplines. Karmela Liebkind holds a professorship in social psychology at the University of Helsinki, Ann S. Masten in child psychology at the University of Minnesota and Donald J. Hernandez in sociology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Altogether, they have an impressive amount of experience in studying migrants, children, ethnicity, child development, resilience and child well-being.

The book consists of three parts: the first focuses on who migrates and how they fare, the second part is dedicated to studies that explain who the successful immigrants are and why. The third part addresses the ways of promoting the potential of immigrant youth. Each part consists of four to seven articles and altogether there are 17 articles in addition to the introduction. The authors are academics ranging from doctoral students to professors (45 altogether) from universities in five continents, many from the fields of psychology and social psychology. In the majority of articles the authors, when talking about immigrant youth and children mean first- and second-generation youth and children, i.e. those born outside the country or native-born but with at least one immigrant parent. Most studies focus on youth under the age of 18, only few articles address the issues related to young children.

The main message of the book is that migration, at any age, is always a turning point or a rupture in life. It demands adjusting and learning new skills; if not the language then the cultural and practical ways of acting, codes and norms in the receiving country.

* E-mail: niina.oisalo@utu.fi

Furthermore, migration poses specific challenges and opportunities for children. Children, migrants and non-migrants are supposed to gain competence in age-salient developmental tasks that are to some extent culture-bound. Therefore, immigrant children have to learn the language, values, beliefs, behaviours and typical customs of both the society they reside in and the society where their parents or grandparents (and possibly themselves) arrived from. Additionally, they have to learn to bridge these different worlds and develop positive ethnic and national identities. It is essential to ensure that children with immigrant background are assisted in bridging the gaps they may have in cultural, human, social and socioeconomic resources compared with native peers. Children who migrate before starting primary school seem to fare better than those who migrate later, especially in adolescence.

The book consists mostly of studies from North America that indeed has a long migration tradition. A European reader would have appreciated a few more connections to European studies. At times, it was stated that this has mainly been studied in North America, but it could have been rather a question of access (language) to European studies. However, there is a lot to learn from North American studies on migrants. Therefore, *Realizing the potential of immigrant youth* is a good reader on different aspects of immigrant youth's well-being. Since the tradition of child or youth-centred research is rather new, some articles tend to slip out of it. If I was to point out key texts in this rather substantial book, I would recommend the following four articles, in addition to the introduction and the last integrating article.

Frosso Motti-Stefanidi and colleagues propose in their article "Positive immigrant youth adaptation in context: developmental, acculturation and social-psychological perspectives" an integrative framework including developmental, acculturation and social-psychological approaches for studying individual differences in the adaptation of immigrant youth. The framework has three levels: the individual, the interactional and societal. All these levels play a central role in adaptive process that may lead to success. What is, however, missing in this framework is the transnational level, which is known to be part of the everyday life of many migrants, consisting of relations across the borders of nation-states (see, for example, Kraller et al. 2011).

The second recommendation is an article by Andrew J. Fuligni and Eva H. Telzer on contributions of youth to immigrant families. They powerfully show how children in immigrant families are contributing to the well-being of the entire family and that the youth gain competences while at the same time facing the risk of being burdened by family obligations. The tasks that many immigrant youth performs include translations, searching for information and services (health care, housing, etc.), assisting in family business, cultural brokering and striving at school for the good of the family. An important observation is that when immigrant youth help their families, they are doing a favour to the entire society by enhancing the parents' process of integration.

The third essential article is written by Maykel Verkuyten who discusses the different ways that ethnic identity is studied in psychological research. His starting point is ethnic identity as socially negotiated and providing a horizon for self-understanding with positive and negative self-feelings. Various international studies show that ethnic identity of ethnic minority youth is often more positive than the one of national comparison group. However, ethnic identity does not necessarily have to be central aspect of how one sees oneself. When it comes to migrant members of youth, they may have the possibility to shift between different ethnic identities, to reject and to accept them in different situations.

The fourth recommendation is the article written by Cigdem Kağıtçıbaşı in which acculturation is looked not only from the

immigrant youth perspective, but set against the dominant culture and lifestyle in the host society. Special emphasis is put on individualistic and collectivistic cultures and possible clashes between the parental values and the ones of the host society. There is a small risk of essentialising immigrant communities coming only from collectivist cultures; however, mostly there is some kind of cultural difference between sending and receiving countries. Kağıtçıbaşı stresses the need to promote both cognitive competence and autonomy of immigrant youth to capitalise their potential.

In the last article of the book, Brian Nolan notes that institutional settings and policies, which vary greatly across countries, are essential when studying migrants and their well-being. He also brings up the notion of well-being and the possible dimensions of it while other studies rely on a more individual-oriented understanding of success or positive youth development. One of them being the five Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring, which reflect the self-worth, positive understanding of oneself, positive relations and other individual qualities (Lerner et al. 2005). Nolan furthermore attempts to put the individual studies presented in the book into a framework with the six core dimensions for the well-being of children and youth: material deprivation, health and safety, education, family and peer relationships, behaviour/lifestyles and risks and subjective well-being. In a short article, it is impossible to get very far with this task. It would have been useful to have this general framework at the beginning of the book to help place the individual articles into the bigger picture.

The North American emphasis did create a certain deficit in the book. The structures of welfare states, such as family, integration and labour market policies, gained rather little attention in the book. As a result, the book obviously cannot make many concrete policy recommendations that was the expectation from the last part of the book titled "What works to promote the potential of immigrant youth?" One exception is Eugene E. García's article on Latino education in the United States that offered clear policy recommendations (good quality early education). Even if some of the articles have rather complicated research settings and data descriptions, the book is recommended reading for researchers interested in the potential of youth, immigrant and non-immigrant.

At the end, Karmela Liebkind et al. point out the most important: "On a societal level, immigrant policies still revolve primarily around demands that are made of immigrants and how they should adapt, ignoring the fact that successful integration of minority groups also requires the majority group to provide opportunities and remove obstacles" (p. 220). We all must change.

Minna Zechner
PhD, Principal Lecturer, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Care and Social Work

References

- Kraller, A, Kofman, E, Kohli, M, & Schmoll, C (eds.) 2011 'Gender, Generations, and the Family in International Migration', Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.
- Lerner, RM, Lerner JV, Almerigi, JB, Theokas, C, Phelps, E, Gestsdottir, S, Naudeau, S, Jelicic, H, Alberts, A, Ma, L, Smith, L, Bobek, D, Richman-Raphael, D, Simpson, I, DiDenti Christiansen, E, & von Eye, A 2005, 'Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development', *Journal of Early Adolescence* vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 17–71, DOI: 10.1177/0272431604272461.

* E-mail: minna.zechner@seamk.fi

Sirriyeh, Ala (2013) *Inhabiting Borders, Routes Home. Youth, Gender, Asylum*, Surrey: Ashgate. 202 pp.

This study by Ala Sirriyeh focuses on the relationship between international (forced) refugee migration and transition to adulthood from the perspective of young refugee and asylum seeking women in the United Kingdom. Sirriyeh argues that there are parallels and interrelationships between these two journeys as they both involve encounters with borders, require positioning in society and are interwoven with politics and emotions. The author further argues that the concept of home comprises different aspects of both transition to adulthood and migration. One of the main themes in the book is thus the conceptualisation, understanding and negotiation of home with special attention paid to the elements of safety related to it. The aspects of friendship, family, networks, religion, accommodation, position in society, education as well as (im)mobility and hostility are taken into account in the analysis. In the field of research on youth and migration, Sirriyeh's focus on women is important as it allows to understand gendered differences within the transnational context. The multiplicity of connotations regarding home are well highlighted, which supports the author's contention of the concept being complex, individual and multidimensional.

The study is based on fieldwork including narrative interviews with 23 young women who originated from different countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Prior to the interviews, the research participants were asked to take photos with a disposable camera of what "home" meant to them in order to build the basis for the interviews. Sirriyeh follows a narrative approach throughout her study. The author has a constructivist understanding of concepts such as home, age and identity and thus does not equalise the forced migration experiences but rather highlights the differences and similarities between the research partners in their individual contexts.

Sirriyeh debates in her study that both the transition to adulthood and the defining of home do not follow a linear process. Even though a number of young women fled from conflicts and danger in their countries of origin in search of safety, migration also led to further safety risks, sometimes explored for the first time in the UK. For some young women, safety reasons were similar with reasons to leave their countries of origin: involvement in political actions, domestic abuse and religious persecution, to name a few. The combination of living alone, running one's own household and the poor living conditions led to a feeling of insecurity just like gender-related experiences such as sexual abuse or rape. Thus, safety and insecurity are taken into consideration by the author in both the women's countries of origin as well as in the UK and are discussed in the interviews. This approach allows to challenge the dichotomies between "there" and "here", "before" and "after", "safe" and "unsafe". Sirriyeh highlights the interwovenness of age and gender with regard to safety and thus shows dimensions of intersectionality and multiple discrimination.

Another challenge for the young women identified in this study was to achieve all the key elements of home that each had determined, and the feeling of "being home" or "having a home" was often influenced by their socio-economic context. By connecting the individual feeling of having failed or succeeded with the broader governmental and social framework, Sirriyeh also introduces a cross-sectoral perspective, which makes the book a complex read. The young women are, despite the sometimes hostile society, not presented as powerless but rather challenge these circumstances through their agency and interactions.

Another main topic raised in the book is the transition from childhood into adulthood. Age is not understood as a stable part

of identity in this study, instead Sirriyeh highlights that the young women's environments, social interactions, their position in society and legal discourses influence their age-related positioning. The book shows that different factors have an impact on the age identities of the young women, for example at the border, when people are marked as "child" or "adult" and might be misrecognised. By highlighting this, the author also challenges the age assessment procedures put into effect in the UK. Furthermore, markers of childhood and adulthood differed between the UK and their countries of origin. This idea is supported with the example of turning 18: Whereas this date marks adulthood in the English culture and justifies the wish of living independently, in Eritrea, for example, living alone at that age is considered a shame.

Following the women's narratives and trajectories beyond the age of 18 differentiates Sirriyeh's study from those which take only young refugees under 18 into consideration. The study allows us to understand the challenges of being differently positioned along the child-adult-scheme in varying situations. The context of migration, which demands among others visits to the authorities, required adult behaviour from the young women, whereas they shared typical teenage experiences at school or during their extracurricular activities. The back-and-forth movement along the child-adult-spectrum led to permanent identity negotiations.

Not having the same economical or educational resources as some of their UK born friends also led young women sometimes to the feelings of not being "normal". Sirriyeh's focus on everyday lives localises the young women's experiences and clarifies mechanisms of either racial, economical or gender-related exclusion that takes place in habitual encounters. The unstable positioning by themselves but also by others, for example, parents, teachers or social workers, placed considerable stress on their lives. Having the feeling to be pushed into adult roles, for example, in the context of family was perceived as an excessive demand. Nevertheless, they lived a teenage social life with their friends, which led to a feeling of safety and normality. Sirriyeh states that the necessity of performing different roles in distinct social environments was apparent.

The author gives many examples in her book and quotes from her interviews, which makes the book a vivid and diversified read. However, as the book is relatively short, the stories do not go into detail and remain somewhat superficial. The author introduces her methods of fieldwork, photo elicitation and narrative interviews very well. Sirriyeh decided to follow a reflexive approach for her analysis but the part on evaluation and interpretation remains short. The author contextualises her study within the gender discourse and also reflects the interviews against the background of the British asylum system. Thus, Sirriyeh relates her results with discourses on belonging, "refugeeness", home and identity but due to the shortness of the book the theoretical framework remains brief.

The book is well structured and thus a very good read for students and scholars who are interested in gender, youth studies and forced-migration studies. The variety of methods presented in this book, especially the photo elicitation, can be inspiring for those who are planning to conduct their own field studies.

Laura Otto
Master of Arts in Transcultural Studies
University of Bremen

Notes

1 Rais later published his own version of the story (2007).

* E-mail: laurakristina.otto@gmail.com