

Migration, Incorporation and Change in an Interconnected World

- Nazli Kibria
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Migration, Incorporation and Change in an Interconnected World. Syed Ali and Douglas Hartmann. New York: Routledge, 2015

Written expressly for students, *Migration, Incorporation and Change in an Interconnected World* offers a tour of the field of migration studies in accessible, lively, and succinct terms. Indeed, in reading the book I was often reminded of sitting through an engaging university lecture. The professor at the lectern is someone who is able to draw you in with her wit, constantly impressing you with her wealth of knowledge about the topic. Along with a self-consciously opinionated view on the issues at hand, the eminent academic peppers the lecture with witty remarks and anecdotes, at times drawing on her own life experiences. Students leave the lecture with a sense of satisfaction, feeling that they have learned something of value.

Much like an engaging academic lecture, *Migration, Incorporation and Change in an Interconnected World* is successful, I believe, in its primary goal of offering an introduction to migration issues that is reader-friendly and can be usefully assigned as a text in undergraduate courses. But the authors also have another goal—to challenge, if not reframe, the sociology of migration as a field of study. In the book's preface, the authors refer to themselves as outsiders who “don't have the personal network connections to the ‘big players’” (xi) in the migration field. This outsider status, they

say, gives them a certain advantage in evaluating the field, allowing them to “see the forest for the trees” and to thus focus on what is interesting and important. Fair enough, although I do wonder about what exactly constitutes the “migration field” and whether the authors are assigning a greater unity and clarity of hierarchy to it than is actually the case.

The book's six chapters deal with a range of topics, from theories of migration to the impacts of migration on receiving societies. Chapter two, somewhat provocatively titled, “Cheap Meat for the Global Market,” offers an account of labor migration that is refreshing in its attention to not just the United States and Western Europe but also to a wide range of global flows, including those from Asia to the Middle East. There is also a discussion of women migrants, marriage migrants, and sexual labor, including trafficking. Chapter three on “Globally Mobile Professionals” discusses movements of skilled professionals around the world. Once again, Ali and Hartmann spotlight flows that have remained largely invisible in the literature. There is an intriguing account of Western professionals working and living as expatriates in Dubai and Shanghai. They also offer a section on “Cosmopolitan Expatriates,” or skilled workers who migrate between multiple countries. Chapter four examines the assimilation of second-generation immigrants, and chapter five, the situation of Muslims in the United States and Western Europe. In both of these chapters, the authors draw heavily on the well-worn tracks of assimilation theories, especially segmented assimilation. For the most part, the focus is on dimensions of inclusion rather than exclusion. Markedly absent are perspectives from critical race theory that are increasingly prominent in the migration literature, especially on studies of Muslims.

At a few points in the book, the authors make statements that are likely to raise some eyebrows among scholars in the migration field, which is certainly not necessarily a bad thing. For example, in the section on theories of migration, they assert that migration

theorists do not place enough emphasis on the role of the state in shaping migration flows: “the state seems to be for many writers the context in which migration happens, rather than a cause of migration” (36). And in the chapter on assimilation, they make a case for the importance of peers, arguing that many studies neglect the role of peers in shaping variations in cultural and economic assimilation that are often apparent not only across but also within communities or families. Few will argue with the idea that peers are indeed important contexts and that the study of peer groups offers a useful lens on the dynamics of integration. But sociologists in particular are likely to be wary of the authors’ emphasis on *peer choice* as a determinant of assimilation given the potential that exists in this conceptualization for focusing on individual matters and decisions without attention to broader social contexts.

Quibbles aside, *Migration, Incorporation and Change in an Interconnected World* is an intelligent, reader-friendly review of the sociology of migration that will be useful to those who teach on these issues.