

Marisa O. Ensor and Elżbieta M. Goździak (eds.), *Children and Migration: At the Crossroads of Resiliency and Vulnerability*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 287 pages, ISBN 978-0-230-27253-8

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In a globalized world, the increased intensity and speed of national and transnational migration affects equally families and individuals of all ages. Migrant children and adolescents are part of this complex phenomenon and, like their adult counterparts, they are facing the new, and often challenging, circumstances of the mobility processes. Despite of the high variety of migration contexts in which children are involved in different parts of the world, research and policy decisions on this issue are usually one-sided. Narratives of child migration are commonly focusing on minors who have been coerced into national or transnational movement to work in situations which are either abusive or exploitative in themselves, or are abusive or exploitative because of the young age of the children¹. While these humanitarian narratives are valuable as far as they are concerned with the protection of and resource provision for the child migrants, they also have their downsides. For instance, they are mainstreaming a research and policy approach, which portrays child migrants only as helpless and passive victims of adult abuse, ignoring other migratory situations. Moreover, humanitarian discourses usually assume no capabilities for children to cope with and play an active role in the migratory circumstances they are involved in.

Contrary to the approaches outlined above, there is a growing body of research which emphasizes migrant children as active agents, which express their

¹ More details on different research projects dealing with child migration can be found: on the website of the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty available at: http://www.migrationdrc.org/research/typesofmigration/child_migration.html, and also on the website of the Child Migration Research network (CMRN): <http://www.childmigration.net/>.

own voice and meaningfully participate in policy-making concerning the migratory situations in which they are involved. *Children and Migration: At the Crossroads of Resiliency and Vulnerability* edited by Marisa O. Ensor and Elżbieta M. Goździak is a plea to researchers and practitioners alike “to recognize children as active, politically and socially aware individuals, not objectified, passive victims” (p. 277). The book advocates for a significant paradigm shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches of the increasingly common phenomenon of child migration, emerging from including both in research and practice the perspective of the children themselves.

Children and Migration brings together the essays of an international group of experts - researchers, policy-makers, and advocates- in the study and practice of cultural and applied anthropology, human rights, international development, humanitarian assistance, international development, public health, social work, education, and law. Drawing on ethnographic data as well quantitative surveys, the essays included in this volume examine the experiences of children in a wide variety of migratory circumstances such as economic child migrants, transnational students, and trafficked minors, stateless, unaccompanied, and undocumented children. The book addresses theoretical, methodological, and ethical consideration of research concerning health, education, work, kinship, gender issues and the special situations presented by forced migration in which minors are involved.

The book is divided into four parts, each part dealing with a specific theme: research, policies, practices and new opportunities for migrant children. In their turn, each of the four parts of the volume includes three essays examining different aspects of the main themes mentioned above.

The first part of the book addresses the issues of research, representation and voice of migrant children. *Understanding migrant children* is an essay that opens the volume with an analysis of different conceptualizations and discourses on child migration, and childhood in general, that frame the way migrant children are viewed in research, policy and practice. The following chapter in this section examines child migration and labor in Haiti, pointing out the challenges of representing children’s perspective in research. This task is becoming increasingly difficult in the context of a growing tension between the tendency of seeing children as active agents involved in specific life situations, on the one hand, and the views of children as vulnerable and in need of assistance, on the other hand. The last essay in this part of the volume sheds light on the role of the media in

migrant children's life focusing both on the influence of the media in the establishment of local connections and also on the maintenance and development of global and transnational identities.

The second part of the volume reviews the policies and highlights the importance of taking responsibility for the rights of migrant children. More specifically, the chapters included in this section discuss how different policies and legal provisions (national and international) shape various aspects of the life of migrant children. The influence of legal frameworks on migrant children is considered from several points of view. The first chapter in this part of the book analyzes the reinforcement of border control, proliferation of detention regimes and the criminalization of unaccompanied and undocumented adolescents who arrive in France. Then, another chapter, examines the adoption and implementation of the legal provisions concerning internally displaced children concluding that, while in the case of refugee children the international community has made significant progress, less has been done in the case of internally displaced minors. The last chapter of this section investigates the problems and possible policy recommendation for upholding the right of the stateless migrant children coming from different regions of the world (Africa, Asia, the Baltics, the Caribbean, and the Middle East).

The third part of the volume examines the practices concerning child migration, advocating for the creation of new spaces for agency. The focus is on the potential tension between the diversity of migrant children's circumstances, reasons and understandings of their situation, on the one hand, and the global legal frameworks, offering standardized responses to the survivors of child trafficking, on the other hand. The authors of the essays in this section of the volume argue that certain programs aimed to socially reintegrate unaccompanied minors somehow restrict the agency of the children involved in trafficking circumstances and thus limit the understanding of their potential fate. In addition, the last case study presented in this part, demonstrates the ability of children to assess their own well-being and to understand the challenges posed by specific migration situations.

Searching for new and better opportunities as a strategy driving child migrations is the theme of the last section of the book. The first chapter in this section counters the mainstream view that child labor is necessarily exploitative. Using ethnographic data from Bangladesh the author of this chapter points out a

long established tradition (in the cultural and economic context of this study) according to which children play an active and dynamic role in the collective agency of households. The second essay in this section points out the variations in the perspectives regarding school in the case of young people which have transnational student experience. The section concludes with an essay on the enduring philosophy of equality and the space occupied by children in France's social fabric, particularly in educational opportunity.

Children and Migration contributes to the ongoing academic and policy debates on migration offering a comprehensive study of child migration which incorporates in the analysis the perspective of children themselves. The editors of the book acknowledge that migrant children do not speak with a single voice, since they are involved in a high variety of migration situations each of which posing special problems and implying different coping strategies. Moreover, the volume enhances our understanding of the multifaceted character of child migration phenomenon, by challenging some of the most commonly held assumptions in this field. In this way, *Children and Migration* provides a useful and inspiring collection of essays, which will interest child migration experts, researchers, decision-makers and practitioners alike.