

Book review of Castañeda, Heide. 2023. *Migration and health: Critical perspectives*. London & New York: Routledge. 166 pp.



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BOOK REVIEW

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Migration and Health: Critical Perspectives contributes to global perspectives on migration, addressing displacement narratives and inequality conditions by questioning issues surrounding migration. With a multidisciplinary account of the migration process, Castañeda approaches this book with a critical eye, challenging conventional views on migration and health, rethinking the field of migration, ideas about mobility and borders, as well as the effects of health, deportation, and forced displacement among migrant groups.

The book examines how migration affects health, including access to health care, communicable diseases, occupational hazards, gender and sexuality, and immigration enforcement. In addition to discussing migration, this book also considers how migration intersects with other factors such as race, class, and citizenship. Castañeda provides an overview of migration as a global issue involving the health of migrants as the main topic throughout the introduction and first chapter. In her contribution, Castañeda defines migration as a global issue, employing critical perspectives to rethink our understanding of migration by addressing discourses on the causes and complexities of mobility that identifies inequalities and opportunities to uplift the disadvantaged (p. 3). The author pays attention to the social, economic, and political activities and their distribution between migrants and host populations (p. 5), focusing on critical approaches that reject binary oppositions and institutional constraints. She also discusses intersectional standpoints and dominant ideologies that lead to inequalities. In doing so, Castañeda focuses on recognizing global patterns of inequality and how different countries have responded to the influx of migrants. For instance, the adoption and development of pro-migration policies that are often not based on cultural differences, and the lack of engagement with individual agency and national human rights discourses. Moreover, the author acknowledges migration as the result of broader globalization and colonialism processes, involving empirical challenges such as the linkage of migrants with infection or the exclusion of migrants from health care systems.

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The author's main arguments examine various moments in the migration process and the interaction of health issues and methodological challenges. These challenges could be related to Wickramage et al. (2018) global contexts of public health research across different circumstances and related factors of gender, socioeconomic, and biological predispositions that impact individuals' processes of migration. In Chapter 2, a critical perspective is adopted that understands migration as a social determinant of health, recognizing the complex, diverse, and intersectional nature of migration experiences and their impact on the health of migrants and their host communities. Migrants' lives can be affected by certain diseases, such as diabetes and tuberculosis, and the coexistence of certain conditions, such as depression or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Throughout Chapter 2, Castañeda explores a set of ideas about mobilities and borders, citizenship and sovereignty with analytical implications, and violent systems that affect migrant health. Migrants face a range of health risks, including poor nutrition and inadequate healthcare access. This could also be related to findings on food and nutrition among migrants (Khuri et al., 2022). As a result of the stress related to adapting to unfamiliar environments, they are also at risk of mental health issues.

To ensure their health and well-being, migrants need access to healthcare services and programs. The effects of conventional mobility notions on health disparities can be observed across multiple settings, as Castañeda discusses in Chapter 3. The development of several alternatives for migrants waiting indefinite periods *until new opportunities arise* (p. 37), and the conceptual characteristics of trafficking and smuggling, as a 'socially embedded phenomenon' (p. 39), accentuate the challenges for potential interventions and preventive measures. Ethnic bias, cultural oppression, and policing practices, to name a few, alter the conventional understanding of health transit, as reflected in the chapter by the author. For example, border control risks, the construction of unauthorized migrants as criminals, and the paradox of seeking work when crossing borders legally versus undocumented labor. Furthermore, Castañeda explores the transnational connections that limit further opportunities in the migration process (e.g., precarious jobs, family separation), especially for the care of children and those left behind, as well as the health implications of border control dynamics and management. A few examples include the response to COVID-19 (p. 40) and the effects of the externalization of border control, considering a more humanistic approach (p. 41).

In Chapter 4, the author focuses on the barriers and facilitators that migrants encounter when accessing health services and interacting with health professionals. Similar indicators were explored in the systematic review by Peñuela-O'Brien et al. (2023) on the experiences of health professionals and quality of care in relation to barriers accessing health services for specific migrant groups. The author also emphasizes the need to challenge existing power structures and dismantle the oppressive systems that perpetuate the exploitation of migrants. The focus is on highlighting the health of migrants and critically examining the causes of illness, considering occupational health and safety issues that affect migrants. This is something that the reader can better grasp through the critical approaches Castañeda highlights in Chapter 7 to address issues of labor and occupational health.

A critical perspective on clinical encounters is provided by the author in Chapter 5, with an emphasis on diversity, treatment patterns, and programs that fail to recognize 'biomedicine ... as a cultural system' regarding training and migration awareness, framing cultural competency, and health literacy (p. 64–65). With a critical lens around

the stigma of migrants as ‘pathogens’ threatening the health of host communities, Castañeda brings the history of the migration process to the surface with the legacies of colonialism and the collective stories about migrants ‘as vectors of disease’ (p. 71). Infectious and communicable diseases are associated with certain populations, and assumptions in fear of spreading them may be rooted in other studies or policy structures that could draw attention to basic health care services and preventive practices (Carruth et al., 2021; *The Lancet Infectious*, 2016). Nevertheless, Chapter 5 emphasizes the need for health literacy improvement, language and communication barriers among migrant groups, and health professionals’ competency and diversity.

The use of theoretical frameworks could have been discussed through aspects of cases or study findings. Fundamental aspects and controversial issues throughout the book, such as clinical encounters, infectious diseases, and human trafficking, may not sufficiently engage with other disciplines that have contributed to migration and health (such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology). Other emerging topics, such as climate change and vaccine hesitancy affecting migrants and host communities, could have also been discussed in the book. However, Castañeda leads us to reflect upon human rights violations, forced displacements due to conflict and persecution, discussing the health challenges of refugees and asylum seekers (Chapter 10). In her contribution, the author argues that migration is a multidirectional and complex process that shapes health disparities across countries, rather than simply a transnational movement of people across borders. The author also states that migration must be considered in a broader context, considering the socioeconomic and cultural factors at play, reminding us of previous literature, the migration narrative, and future considerations.

Castañeda’s book provides a critical lens for understanding and addressing health issues affecting migrants. In examining these issues in detail, the book contributes important insights into migration’s impact on health, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and equitable solutions. The book also examines how different countries and organizations around the world are responding to migrant health issues. Each chapter encourages the reader to reflect on the aspects that affect migration and health. The book concludes with recommendations to address and overcome these challenges creating a more comprehensive approach to migrant health. This book is intended for anyone who wants to better understand and address health inequalities among migrants and host populations. Students, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers interested in addressing health inequalities that affect migrants in a holistic and critical manner will benefit from the book’s insights and interventions.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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