

# Migration: theory, research and practice in guidance and counselling

Deirdre Hughes, Füsün Akkök, Gideon Arulmani & Helmut Zelloth

To cite this article: Deirdre Hughes, Füsün Akkök, Gideon Arulmani & Helmut Zelloth (2019) Migration: theory, research and practice in guidance and counselling, British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 47:1, 1-5, DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2018.1564898](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2018.1564898)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2018.1564898>



Published online: 01 Mar 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 850



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)



## Migration: theory, research and practice in guidance and counselling

*This Special Issue is dedicated in memory of Professor Frans Meijers who sadly passed away on 16th November 2018. Frans worked tirelessly on career development research, policies and practices. He was a prolific writer, intellect and Co-Symposium Editor of the British Journal for Guidance and Counselling. His academic work has greatly influenced many students, teachers, career advisers and counsellors, policymakers and politicians around the globe. In talking to Frans about the subject of migration he remarked, "All individuals have their own unique journey in life. The movement by people from one place to another brings about displacement from familiar surroundings and exposure to different cultures, values and norms. Guidance and counselling provides a 'safety net' that enables individuals to reflect on and give meaning to their life and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead." His final works focused on the topic of 'Happiness and Well-Being' and will be published in a Special Issue later this year.*

Migration is as old as the history of humanity. Today all over the world many people make one of the most challenging decisions in their lives: to leave their homes and townships in search of a safer or better life. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations that involve people of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches many countries and people in an era of deepening globalisation (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2017, 2018). This phenomenon is embedded in trade and cultural exchange and has offered opportunities for millions of people worldwide to forge safe and meaningful lives abroad (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Migration can result in the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology that have considerable positive impacts on productivity and economic growth (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Gelb & Krishnan, 2018; Näsholm, 2012). There are immigrants who have volitionally moved home to a new country, others who have been placed temporarily on foreign shores by their employers and live their lives as expatriates and still others who have chosen the work lifestyle of the global worker, following opportunities from one country to another (Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin, & Taniguchi, 2009). Migration may have positive or sometimes negative impact on the lives of the individuals concerned, depending on a considerable number of factors.

The terms "refugee", "asylum-seeker" and "migrant" are often used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders. The terms "migrant" and "refugee" are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish between them as there is a legal difference (Amnesty International, 2018a). There are negative perceptions of migrants in many societies. This is often framed in popular notions of "us" and "them", presenting economic challenges, or perhaps being seen as raising security concerns or creating ambivalence in cultural and political spheres, all of which have affected how migrants are perceived by host societies (McKinsey, 2016; Özer, 2014). Whilst there have been many European and international programmes and studies in response to the call for greater support mechanisms for migrants, this emergent focus is not without its issues. For example, there are several misconceptions about migrants when it comes to their contribution to society which draw on negative connotations such as cheap labour, 'stealing' jobs or being under-educated to name but a few. At the heart of the politics of migration is a notion that immigrants, especially those that are unskilled, depress wages. In Britain, Cable (2017)

has argued that while at first sight this seems plausible and undeniably there is low wage competition in some places it is a politically charged perspective, with no evidence that it is a general problem.

The growing rhetoric of building a wall, creating a new border force, establishing a camp, stopping the boats or restricting access has political, social and humanitarian consequences. Many millions of people have been forced to leave their homes. For example, the Rohingya refugee crisis has caused close to a million people to flee from their homes to save their lives (United Nations, 2017). The recent mass movement of people from Central America towards the US border involves people fleeing from poverty and violence (Amnesty International, 2018b) and highlights that some people leave home to get a job or an education. Others are forced to flee persecution or human rights violations such as torture. Millions seek to escape from armed conflicts or other crises or violence. Some no longer feel safe due to being targeted just because of who they are or what they do or believe – for example, for their ethnicity, religion, sexuality or political opinions. The latest World Migration Report (IOM, 2018) estimates that there are 244 million international migrants globally - 3.3% of the global population in 2015. In 2016 there were 40.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide and 22.5 million refugees. Further, the total number of people estimated to have been displaced globally is the highest on record (op. cit, p.2). For every migration statistic, there are individuals, children and families starting a new life in a new place. The acculturation of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees does not take place in a social vacuum.

The integration of migrants can be a difficult process for all involved. It requires migrants to

yield to the reality of their new lives and to agree to taking those lives forward in ways that may not have been their choice. It requires receiving communities and governments to accept new arrivals, to accommodate their presence with material and spiritual generosity and to be open to the possibility of enrichment. (Gallagher, 2018, p. 2)

Finding suitable housing, education, training and/or work is critical to successful integration. Local support mechanisms for individuals and families to adjust and make successful transitions into new communities are essential. Guidance and counselling can support individual paths to self-sufficiency, better well-being and provide stability by addressing trauma, displacement, mental health, transitional readjustment, or simply opening up access to opportunities, and creating new ones. These services each provide a place and space for individuals and/or groups to find their own identity and to gain a sense of hope and optimism for a better future. Academic interest in identity transformation (Vassilieva, 2016) and professional identity transformation (Brown & Bimrose, 2018) is increasing; yet, there is insufficient empirical research on migrants' identity transformation and their lived experiences in new community settings. We need to better understand what works, how and in what circumstances. Fundamentally, wrong assumptions, inequalities and bias have to be challenged by guidance and counselling professionals, underpinned by a strong evidence-base. This can then have a positive effect in influencing the public perception of migrants and the policymakers' stance.

Migration research is informed by different strands of theory building and is often anchored in epistemological, ontological and methodological frameworks. Research interest in this global phenomenon has amplified in recent years. This is evidenced in the multiplicity of journal articles and books published, as well as the various actors engaged, including academia, think tanks and intergovernmental organisations. But within guidance and counselling this topic is largely under-researched (Newman, Bimrose, Nielsen, & Zacher, 2018). There is a growing need for analytical tools and approaches that allow us to deal with the complex, contradictory, and contested nature of migration. This is a political, cultural and social phenomenon that requires greater understanding of contemporary dynamics and their manifold implications. Those working in these professional fields need to be inspired by good and interesting theories, methods and innovative practice from around the world and develop knowledge, skills and competences for multicultural guidance and counselling.

This Special Issue begins with Yoon, Bailey, Admundson and Niles presenting a hope-action theory applied in the context of working with Syrian refugees in British Columbia. They assess the proximal

and distal outcomes of a career development training programme for refugees using a two-way mixed effects analysis of covariance and a serial mediation analysis. The authors discuss the need to create the conditions and chances for refugee newcomers to tell their unique stories during training.

Arulmani draws upon his travelogue of 17 years capturing interviews with immigrants and refugees in different parts of the world. He describes two studies to understand the disturbance of cultural equilibrium as individuals try to find their way in a host country. Drawing upon his research, he presents the cultural preparation status model of aspiration and engagement as a framework that guidance and counselling workers might use to help immigrants optimise their engagement with the systems of the host country.

Kim and Agee consider identity as a major theme. This qualitative study of the experiences of 1.5 generation Korean New Zealanders as parents considers their identity-related experiences as migrants. The term 1.5 generation refers to people who immigrated as children, old enough to remember the native country and retain its culture, yet young enough to adapt naturally to the new country and its culture. Reflecting on the challenges of their migration and identity journeys enabled them to recognise their vulnerabilities and their advantages, and the multiple ways in which identity-related cultural conflicts and confusion influenced their parenting of their children. The implications for further research and for counselling practice are identified.

Cowles and Griggs put the spotlight on the challenges and dilemmas practitioners face in trauma-focused work. They focus on people who are seeking asylum who often have lived experience of their personal boundaries and human rights being violated. They provide a case study of work with a woman with a severe trauma history who was seeking asylum in England. Some perceived boundary crossings in the therapeutic relationship are examined, alongside considerations for other clinicians working with asylum seekers.

El Khoury investigates the impact of age, gender, language and acculturation choice on the socio-cultural adjustment and well-being of Syrian refugees in Stuttgart, Germany. Correlation analyses and t-tests were used to examine the relationships between different variables drawn from a demographics questionnaire, the Acculturation Attitudes Scale (AAS-16), the Revised Sociocultural Adjustment Scale (R-SCAS), and the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-18). The results indicate a wide range of factors at work affecting refugees' well-being. A case is made for coaching designed for refugees in socio-cultural adjustment and cross-cultural stressors.

Yoon, Ahn and Kang reflect on a job-seeking competency model for North Korean defectors who are college students in South Korea. They adopt the Delphi method with a panel of 17 experts and, through three Delphi rounds, 18 job-seeking competencies were identified. In addition, the preliminary utility of the competency model is examined. Implications of the study results and future directions for enhancing the validity and utility of the competency model are discussed.

Kumar offers a fresh perspective on occupational identity, describing left-behind families of pine resin tappers in India. A review of the literature reveals that there is more focus on international migration compared to internal migration. Further, there is more emphasis on issues related to the migration destination rather than those at the source of migration. The left-behind families of pine resin tappers in the Changar region of the Indian Himalayas are presented as a case study to draw the attention of career guidance and counselling professionals to this unattended population.

Molin-Karakoc and Ikola consider findings from a qualitative study of first generation migrant adolescents in Finnish secondary schools. They shed light on the multi-faceted construct of school engagement among migrant students. They highlight the implications of students' lived experiences for their integration, socialisation, development and well-being. Participant interviews and observations were conducted. The results indicate a need for reshaping support services to consider the cultural capital, multi-lingual literacies and the quality of existing social, in and out-of-school relationships of students in order to offer effective teaching, guidance and mentoring services.

Clough, Nazareth, Day and Casey underscore the relative neglect in examining distress or help-seeking knowledge and attitudes among international students in the literature. Their aim was to

examine psychological distress, mental health literacy (MHL), and help-seeking attitudes and intentions among a sample of domestic and international tertiary students. International student status was predictive of lower scores for MHL, help-seeking attitudes and help-seeking intentions for suicidal ideation. Student group was not predictive of help-seeking intentions for emotional problems or psychological distress, but international students had lower help-seeking intentions for suicidal ideation.

This Special Issue strengthens the evidence-base to inform and support guidance and counselling policies, research and practice. It also includes a review undertaken by Reid (2018) who critiques 'Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis': Journeys over land and sea' (Crowley, Duvell, Jones, McMahon, & Sigona, 2017). She signposts the reader to the power of human narratives used to explicate the complexities that underpin the causes of migration. As is clear in the narratives, the original intention of many was to move to and stay in nearby countries, not Europe. Key issues such as the role of smugglers, the lack of security and protection offered to refugees and migrants, and the role that local organisations and volunteers play in offering support are considered.

Finally, we conclude by outlining a number of implications for future research on this topic. For example:

- There have been few substantive studies that have included cost-benefit analysis or use of big data sets to improve policymakers' understanding of the economic benefits in investing in programmes targeted at migrants, asylum seekers and/or refugees;
- There is insufficient empirical research on migrants' identity transformation and their lived experiences in new community settings;
- There is a requirement for deeper understanding of migrants' own use of, and preferences for, different types of media. This is particularly important for understanding how and to what extent online information, advice and guidance or counselling sources can shape and influence perceptions;
- There are gaps in the literature on migrants' children and their career-related learning from an early age;
- There is scope to use the notion of migrants' identity and transitions as a focal point for both Western and Eastern scholarly debates that move beyond established academic boundaries with more methodological approaches and meta-analyses drawn from research and practice; and
- Longitudinal studies are helpful to understand the life patterns of migrants and how they grow and develop throughout the life-course.

In developing this work, we need greater attention to be given to actions for impact that put individuals and families at the heart of the process. Doing good work can be difficult at times. Community attachment, dedication and a sense of belonging should be there as an opportunity for all.

## References

- Amnesty International. (2018a). Definitions: What exactly is a refugee, an asylum-seeker and a migrant? Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
- Amnesty International. (2018b). Key facts about the migrant and refugee caravans making their way to the USA. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/key-facts-about-the-migrant-and-refugee-caravans-making-their-way-to-the-usa/>
- Bimrose, J., & McNair, S. (2011). Career support for migrants: Transformation or Adaptation? *Journal Of Vocational Behavior*, 78(3), 321–392.
- Brown, A., & Bimrose, J. (2018). Learning and identity development at work. In M. Milana, S. Webb, J. Holford, R. Waller, & P. Jarvis (Eds.), *The Palgrave International Handbook on Adult and Lifelong Education and Learning* (pp. 245–265). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cable, V. (2017). *The Tory fallacy: that migrants are taking British jobs and driving down wages*. London: The Guardian Newspaper. September 8, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/08/tory-fallacy-migrants-british-jobs-wages-brexite>

- Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 945–963.
- Crawley, H., Duvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S., & Sigona, N. (2017). *Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis'. Journeys over land and sea*. Bristol: University of Bristol, Policy Press.
- Gallagher, A. (2018). *We need to talk about integration after migration*. Davos: World Economic Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/10/we-need-to-talk-about-integration-after-migration>
- Gelb, S., & Krishnan, A. (2018). *Technology, migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. Briefing note*. Switzerland: Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, SDC. Retrieved from <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12395.pdf>
- International Organisation of Migration. (2017). *Executive summary on migrant vulnerabilities and integration needs in Central Asia 2017: Assessing migrants' and community needs and managing risks*. Geneva, Switzerland: IOM, The UN Migration Agency. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.kz/images/books/2017-DAR-executive-summary-eng.pdf>
- International Organisation of Migration. (2018). *World migration report 2018*. Geneva, Switzerland: IOM, The UN Migration Agency. Retrieved from <http://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018>
- McKinsey. (2016). *People on the move: global migration's impact and opportunity*. McKinsey Global Institute Migration Policy Institute Europe. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/MPIEurope\_UNHCR-Resettlement-FINAL%20(1).pdf
- Näsholm, M. H. (2012). Global careerists' identity construction. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 5(4), 804–812.
- Newman, A., Bimrose, J., Nielsen, I., & Zacher, H. (2018). Vocational Behavior of Refugees: How do Refugees Seek Employment, Overcome Work-related Challenges, and Navigate Their Careers?. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 105, 1–5. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2018.01.007
- OECD. (2018). *International migration outlook* (42nd ed.). Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Publishing.
- Özer, Y. Y. (2014). *Migration, asylum and refugees in Turkey: Studies in control of population at the Southeastern borders of The European Union*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Reid, H. (2018). Book Review - 'Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis'. Journeys over land and sea', Crawley, H., Duvell, F., Jones, K., McMahon, S., & Sigona, N. (2017). Bristol: University of Bristol, Policy Press, 2017.
- Stahl, G. K., Chua, C. H., Caligiuri, P., Cerdin, J. L., & Taniguchi, M. (2009). Predictors of turnover intentions in learning-driven and demand-driven international assignments: The role of repatriation concerns, satisfaction with company support, and perceived career advancement opportunities. *Human Resource Management*, 48(1), 89–109.
- United Nations. (2017). *The Rohingya refugee crisis*. Geneva: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
- Vassilieva, J. (2016). *Narrative psychology: Identity, transformation and ethics*. Palgrave: Macmillan. doi:10.1057/978-1-137-49195-4

Deirdre Hughes  
 Institute for Employment Research (IER), University of Warwick, Coventry, UK  
 deirdre.hughes3@btinternet.com

Fusun Akkök  
 Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

Gideon Arulmani  
 The Promise Foundation, India

Helmut Zelloth  
 European Training Foundation (ETF), Turin, Italy