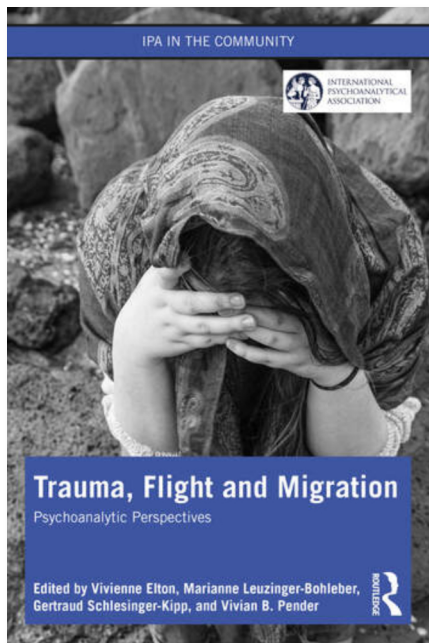


REVIEW: Trauma, Flight, and Migration: Psychoanalytic Perspectives by Vivienne Elton, Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber, Gertraud Schlesinger-Kipp, and Vivian B. Pender, eds.

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When welcoming immigrants and resettling refugees, host country volunteers often focus on meeting physical needs. While this is indeed necessary, could it be that addressing the mental and emotional needs of these displaced image-bearers is just as—or even more—crucial as a factor in their long-term adjustment?

In the *IPA in the Community Book Series*, the International Psychoanalytic Association brings together expert psychoanalysts to give their perspectives on various kinds of community outreach, and in *Trauma, Flight, and Migration: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, those with vast and diverse experience working with migrants and refugees share their insights urgently in light of the

“unprecedented number” (p. 1) of people who have been forced to migrate in recent years.

Migration itself is a kind of crisis, regardless of the circumstances surrounding it, but in addition to this, there are often many additional traumatic events—including violence, trafficking, and being sent to detention centers, among other things—which migrants may encounter en route from their motherland to their new home. If not acknowledged and dealt with, these traumas have the potential to prevent those who have experienced them from ever healing and thriving in their new surroundings.

Part A of this edited volume forms the majority of the book and is made up of reports on specific projects based in particular locations. Chapter one discusses working with refugees in Hesse, Germany, which seeks to provide early care for recently arrived

immigrants dealing with trauma. The psychoanalysts working with these refugees were also aware that traumatized migrants often have a latency period where they seem to be in a good mental state as they accomplish all the tasks of resettling in a new country (finding a job, getting paperwork in order, etc.) but then they often enter another period of psychological difficulty which is an opportunity to go back and address unresolved trauma and process it at a deeper level. Guidelines for helping include building trust, listening compassionately to a person's individual story, taking care to address feelings of guilt or shame, and suggesting resources for practical coping.

Chapter two discusses the efforts of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute to assist refugees, paying particular attention to the challenges of including a translator in sessions where there is a language barrier. Chapter three discusses the complexities of the internal migration of Peruvian women, particularly focusing on shifting family dynamics, while chapter four zeroes in on “perinatal migration” (p. 70), exploring the reality that pregnant women and the babies they carry are among some of the most vulnerable migrants both physically and psychologically. Chapter five describes the collaborative effort of mental health professionals in Peru to “assist the population in the reconstruction of their internal world” (p. 90) in the aftermath of a natural disaster, while chapter six is autobiographical in nature, describing how the author has used his training to become deeply “involved in community activities”—including activism on behalf of asylum seekers as a “psychoanalytically informed expert witness” (p. 93).

Chapter seven explores the intergenerational aspect of trauma, since “next generation survivors are left to psychically metabolise inherited trauma” (p. 101), and chapter eight identifies the potential of the psychoanalytical method to provide the stability of a “psychic locus” (p. 115) where meaning can be made of the migration experience. Chapter nine zeros in on understanding mourning as distinct from other mental disorders when encountering migrants who are mentally distressed, and chapter ten narrates the experiences and insights gained by a psychoanalyst interacting with carers and refugees in Lesbos, Greece. Chapter eleven investigates schizoid splitting as a response to trauma and its restrictive and impoverishing effects, as well as the possibility of reintegration.

Chapter twelve explores the ways in which trauma can be articulated and processed in collaboration with a psychoanalytic therapist, and chapter thirteen provides insights into engaging cross-culturally in trauma-focused psychotherapy with East Africans,

particularly those from a Muslim background, with chapter fourteen further elaborating the complexities of psychoanalysis when the analyst and the patient come from different cultural backgrounds.

Part B provides a theoretical framework for how psychoanalytic thinking can be helpful in addressing the trauma incurred by those who have migrated, seeking to provide stability and interpersonal interactions, as well as seeking to “[return] the refugees from an experience of passivity to active action” (p. 31), with focus on UN meetings, human rights, and “the right to stay in place” (p. 218).

Strengths of this book include a richness of multiple authors speaking with a deep richness of experience in their psychoanalytic field and the prevalence of insightful case studies illustrating the concepts presented through the presenting issues, backstories, and therapeutic processes of refugees and asylum seekers with whom the authors interacted. Readers who do not have previous training in mental health may find the book somewhat technical, and psychoanalysis itself as a method of therapy may give Christian readers pause, but I would recommend this book for those who want to be part of addressing not just the physical but also the emotional needs of refugees and asylum seekers, to gain exposure to the types of issues that are common for people with traumatic migration stories, and to bring home the stark reality that more research and resources for understanding and processing migration-related trauma are needed which are less specialized and perhaps more accessible both for refugees and asylum seekers themselves and for those who care about them.

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