

February 2021

Book title: Handbook on Gender and Health. Author(s): Jasmine Gideon (Ed.). Publication year: 2016. Publisher: Edward Elgar, City: London, UK. Total number of pages: 640. Illustrations: Yes. Photographs: No. Appendix, or index are included: Yes. Price for hardcover and/or paperback copy: US\$265.50/E-book: US\$65.00

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Recommended Citation

de Faria, Mateus A. (2021). Book title: Handbook on Gender and Health. Author(s): Jasmine Gideon (Ed.). Publication year: 2016. Publisher: Edward Elgar, City: London, UK. Total number of pages: 640. Illustrations: Yes. Photographs: No. Appendix, or index are included: Yes. Price for hardcover and/or paperback copy: US\$265.50/E-book: US\$65.00. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(1), 541-543. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss1/34>

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Reviewed by Mateus Aparecido de Faria¹

What is a handbook for? According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, a handbook is a "book that contains instructions or advice about how to do something or the most important and useful information about a subject". Thus, the challenge of handbook is to be complete and to have (apparently) everything one can imagine about something, so that it allows its readers to feel informed about the topic discussed. Such a task seems to be more feasible when we think of a handbook about 20th century electrical machines or infectious-parasitic diseases, since they are knowledge systematized with some regularity over the years. However, elaborating on handbook on health and gender seems to be incomprehensible and, at the threshold of imagination, something already doomed to incompleteness.

It was by accepting this challenge that Jasmine Gideons gathered fifty-six researchers from various countries to build a handbook that would reach aspects of human life in which gender was problematic for the field of health and named it the *Handbook on Gender and Health*. The audacity of these people involved in its development may be characterized as broad as the scope of the publication.

Handbook on Gender and Health is divided into eight parts, totaling 32 chapters. Its first part begins by rescuing the recent past of research with and about women and their health. From this historical-conceptual panorama, its second part addresses a hot topic, the analyses of social determinants in health, which positions women as agents in the global environmental context with respect to climate change, indigenous cultures and neoliberalism. Integrated in this section is one of the main conceptual contributions of the book, the perspective of masculinities in the field of health as it relates to gender studies.

Part three of the *Handbook* is dedicated to studies on gender, work and health. It addresses the role of gender-based risks at work. Of significance is the analysis of a need for an intersectional perspective to better understand aspects related to mental health and psychological risks resulting from the work environment. The fourth part of *Handbook* focuses on migration and its implications and/or health and gender consequences. This social determinant of health is central to the new political configurations of nation states and the increasing violence directed at people considered foreign and dangerous to the native. Here again there is an effort to analyze intersectionality, in which unregulated work, such as sex work, impacts the living conditions and health of migrants. In part five, Gideon includes papers on gender and health systems. The premise of this section is that health systems are not inherently relational and, therefore, their greatest challenges are also problems that arise in relation to each other. Thus, this part addresses the way societies produce norms and policies that guarantee rights that respect specificities such as gender, ethnicity and income. The discussion highlights conceptual approaches such as interculturalism and critical and

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post-critical conceptions about human life, which are especially useful for dealing with the complexity of social systems, such as health or education systems. The sixth section of the *Handbook* is devoted to the dynamics within homes and the relationship with health care. The analyses include, for example, violence against children and the decision-making in the context of the home.

Gender studies, social activism and health, are the topic of part seven; arguably, an essential theme for thinking and acting with a view to social transformation. It is important to note that one of the objectives of gender studies is to destabilize and deconstruct anachronistic social structures of economy, health, work and other areas of social life. In concluding the *Handbook*, the eighth section of the *Handbook* presents chapters on debates related to gender, health, sexuality and rights. The use of contraceptives, the influence of the Catholic Church on body affairs, abortion, HIV and sex education are topics that emerge from the global perspective provided.

Returning to the expected objective of a handbook, the myriad of gender-based and situated themes presented by Jasmine Gideon and her collaborators advances beyond mainstream gender discussions, reaching the capillarity of everyday bodies designated as women and men. In providing this discourse, the *Handbook* addresses gender issues in ways that transcend stereotypes and classical approaches; this is a distinction of the book.

The methodological approach of the works that make up the book includes qualitative research, such as case studies, reflective articles, essays, theoretical studies, among other formats that allow greater thematic deepening. Some authors use a counter-hegemonic perspective, in which consolidated concepts are deconstructed using African, Asian and Latin American epistemologies. This makes the approach of certain topics more consistent with the context in which they occur. However, the authors acknowledge the challenge of producing and legitimizing knowledge produced by previously marginalized peoples; this is discussed and also addressed. Further, as noted in the gender literature, space to discuss gender norms is necessary to move beyond binary gender roles. The *Handbook* provides a rationale for why more fluid categories are needed and includes different perspectives, reaching a wide geographical, historical and epistemological scope. Additionally, the discussions provide situational context for the relevance of the discourse.

In spite of the thoroughness of the discussion of gender, there are some challenges that remain:

- The need to understand non-hegemonic approaches to gender, such as South African and Asian epistemologies, is an imperative of our time.
- The decentralization of knowledge production and the ways in which science is constituted and circulates among nations.
- The unequal attention given to gender categories

Finally, several chapters are devoted to Gender, Health, Sexuality and Rights, but only two chapters deal with Gender, Work and Health.

Still, the *Handbook* can be characterized as an essential work for scholars, researchers and other people interested in gender studies. Given its breadth, it is not advisable to read it in full at once - it instead is a resource to be consulted and reflected upon related to specific topics. Moreover, because it is a relatively extensive book, reading needs to be accompanied with critique.

For the reading of the *Handbook*, it is advisable, but not necessary, that the reader has some prior knowledge about gender studies or about the health and its social determinants. The way in which the book is structured, it provides an accessible foundation to the overall topic and adds

complexity through its successive chapters. The book would be of value to researchers and students interested in developing a foundation in the relationship of gender and health.