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Introduction: Expanding the gerontological imagination through the study of older migrants

Sandra Torres^{a,*}, Allen Glicksman^b^a Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, Sweden^b Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, USA

Social scientists have long drawn attention to the fact that both population aging, and the globalization of international migration, are amongst the greatest societal challenges that societies around the world are facing. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that social gerontologists have discussed the impact that population aging is bound to have on the gerontological imagination. The impact that the globalization of international migration will have on the gerontological imagination has received some attention as well but less so. This is the case even though interest in international migration was formally consolidated through, for example, the Gerontological Society of America's interest group on international aging and migration for well over twenty years.

Migration scholars have also drawn attention to the fact that as migrants grow older, new areas of investigation open up (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaher, & Torres, 2004; Warnes & Williams, 2006; White, 2006). For example, the former European Science Foundation funded two research networks to bring attention to older migrants back in the early 2000's and Europe's largest network of scholars on migration and integration, IMISCOE, has hosted a Standing Committee on Aging Migrants since 2010. This **Special Section** of the *Journal of Aging Studies* stems from a panel hosted by the Interest Group on International Aging and Migration that we co-convened at an annual GSA conference which brought together researchers in social gerontology who have been working on older migrants for over two decades now, with researchers in migration who discovered old age and aging as a theoretically profuse source of information about migration a decade or so ago.

In this Special Issue, we bring attention to the diversity of older migrants (Torres, 2012), and argue that the migratory life course has the potential to challenge the imagination of our scholarship (Torres, 2006, 2008). By bringing attention to the fact that migration history must be taken into account when long-term services are being planned in the United States (as Glicksman and Ring's contribution argues); by arguing that the concept of super diversity used in migration scholarship can help us understand how practitioners make sense of service provision (as Ciobanu argues while using an example from

Switzerland); by showing us what attachment to, and identification with different places, has implications for how older migrants experience aging (as Palladino shows us), and by proposing an agenda for research on older migrants' civic participation (which is what Torres and Serrat propose on the basis of a scoping review that exposed the lacuna of research there is in this area), this Special Section argues that there are an array of research questions begging our attention.

The articles in this Special Section address the societal trends in question while pointing out – through empirical examples drawn from different countries – the opportunities that they generate as far as how conceptualizations about aging, old age and elderly care are shaped. The intersection of population aging and international migration has the potential to expand the gerontological imagination but seizing these opportunities requires that we re-think the ways in which we have approached them so far. The interesting thing is not namely that new groups demand our attention, but rather that new questions are generated and that these unleash our imagination about what it means to grow old in these highly globalized times.

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sandra.torres@soc.uu.se (S. Torres), Allen.Glicksman@pcaCares.org (A. Glicksman).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2019.100791>

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