

REVIEWS

J. Freedman, *Gendering the International Asylum and Refugee Debate* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 216pp, £65.00 pbk

Reviewed by Brandy Cochrane

Carefully surveying the facets of the current political and humanitarian discussions about refugees, *Gendering the International Asylum and Refugee Debate* aims to bring a gendered analysis to discussions around illegalized mobilities. The book examines “the ensemble of actors and processes” and considers the “gendered relations of power which underlie these processes” (p. 15). Freedman, professor of political science at Université de Paris, contends that despite diversity in experience, women’s portrayals by political systems in the global north are bifurcated into either “vulnerable” or “threatening”. The duality of the construction, she suggests, serves not only to enforce the difference between men and women, but also to establish difference between female migrants from the global south and “Western” women.

The book contains eight chapters that focus on predominant areas of concern regarding refugee issues. In the first chapter, Freedman builds an argument about the lack of gendered analysis of migration, despite the feminization of migratory flows, including that contemporary migration is increasingly characterized by women travelling independently of families. She suggests that studies must move beyond the “narrowly legalistic” focus on legislation and jurisprudence (p. 15). Instead, the debate must include experiences of migrants.

Examining the “who” behind the categorization of refugee women is the work of the second chapter where Freedman surveys data about female asylum seekers within the global north. Using a base of statistics and case studies, she argues that statistics on asylum application success by female asylum seekers do not mean that the process of gaining asylum is more accessible for women. Qualitative cases, she asserts, demonstrate the gendered constructions of the asylum process which disadvantage women who fail to meet certain standards of victimhood and femininity. Furthermore, case studies challenge the “numbers debate” that dominates political rhetoric on asylum seekers and refugees. Supported by her fieldwork in France, she contends that there is an “institutional culture” around asylum that leads to cases which have “highly gendered constructions” that impact negatively and positively on men and women (p. 30).

This second chapter also focuses on spaces that asylum-seeking and refugee women inhabit: the “Western” world, refugee camps and most interestingly, as it is regularly overlooked, the experience of being internally displaced. In the section on the Western world, she explains how refugees who have gained legal status are often grouped under the category of “immigrant women” by researchers and government, which leads to specific experiences of “integration” being understudied (p. 31). Her work challenges this by identifying that women are diversely disadvantaged based on their backgrounds. She does this by highlighting the specific experiences of women in multiple realms, such as access to legal support and stable employment, child care assistance, language barriers and the community pressures placed on women to maintain unequal gender roles from their country of origin. The supposed refuge of refugee camps are also particularly fraught with flawed gendered structures that lead to both increased work for women and violence against women, such as rape and domestic violence. Last, internally displaced persons are briefly discussed as the “largest category of forced migrants” who face problems “similar or identical” to other refugees, especially around sexual and gender-based violence for women (p. 42). Freedman concludes that the agency of women in the three spaces should be noted, not just their victimization, as women’s strategies during displacement are evidenced by their resistance and survival.

Why women flee is the work of the third chapter. Here, Freedman details gender-related persecutions including female genital mutilation, forced pregnancy or abortion, and rape during wartime. Exploring the actors of violence against women, Freedman makes a concise case about persecutions being “connected by the thread of gendered relations of power” (p. 46). She systematically links the three specific persecutions to the proscribed gender roles and behaviours of certain cultures, in order to show a “continuum of violence” against women by men (p. 46).

The fourth chapter considers the place of gender with regard to the Geneva Convention. The first part guides readers through different aspects of the Convention in relation to gender by examining the definition of a refugee, public–private divisions, political actions, cultural differences, persecution, women as a social group and barriers to making asylum claims. The second half shows that international norms and law around the Convention and gender are applied unevenly throughout the world. The inclusions of multiple sites (Sweden, the UK, Canada, the US, and other European states) make the chapter interesting, but the focus on countries in the global north may lead the reader to perceive that Western states are the main recipients of asylum seekers, despite the fact that the majority are displaced within the global south.

How refugees are supported, or rather fail to be supported, by various groups such as the UN and NGOs is at the centre of the fifth chapter. The discussion of

assistance and violence from UN actors is especially interesting as it shows how closely tied help and harm can be in the context of women's lives. In addition, she describes how much of the offered support is based on Western normative frameworks of women as vulnerable victims who need care. Freedman argues the framework limits refugees' participation in assistance. Instead, she contends, organizations should assist in empowering refugees, especially women, to be more involved with political actions and self-run organizations to increase agency and decrease stereotypes of victimhood.

In the sixth chapter, Freedman explores the governmental regimes and controls around asylum seekers and refugees in the US, the EU, and Australia. The external controls (such as securitization of borders and relocation to other states) along with the internal controls (such as detention and welfare benefits) are based on the concept of the threatening migrant that has specific gendered effects. Drawing on examples in the UK, she succinctly argues that "there is no evidence that these restrictions . . . actually discourage asylum claims, but there is very compelling evidence that have a highly negative effect" especially for women (p. 171). Freedman's depth of work is especially evident in this chapter, as it is well researched and very wide in breadth.

Centring the voices of asylum-seeking women, and those who work with them, is the crux of the seventh chapter. Freedman begins by discussing the situation of female asylum seekers within France and their experiences of isolation, rejection, poverty, housing issues, and changing family relations. This chapter builds on her initial argument that although women are painted as victims or threats within the global north, she found the women she encountered were neither. She states that none were "passive subjects . . . but all had shown a huge willingness to fight to establish rights" for themselves and their children (p 196). From here, she focuses on the "particularly weak" French NGO sector and those who make determinations on asylum cases within France (p. 189). One of the strengths of Freedman's book, her fieldwork in France, is also one of its greatest structural weaknesses. By containing women's narratives, governmental voices and NGO experience to one chapter instead of integrating the themes throughout the book means the qualitative cases Freedman suggests are necessary to examine gendered constructions are isolated from discussions of policy and law.

Chapter 8 briefly describes recent refugee crises including those in the Congo, Syria, and people affected by climate change. Though informative and interesting, the cases could have been used earlier to set the scene of conditions in refugee home countries or perhaps given more detail. In the short conclusion, Freedman returns back to her original argument that asylum-seeking women are seen as either vulnerable or threatening, stating that we must move past stereotypes and listen to the voices of the women themselves.

The thread of women's agency is woven throughout the book and is its strongest component. However, the book, at times, seems to lose its theme of gender in favour of detailed accounts of policy and the law. In the introduction, Freedman writes about how much of the discussion around refugees is legally based and how academia must move away from the frame of law. Despite the critique, many of the chapters focus on the particulars of the law without the benefit of the voices and experiences of women, NGOs, or government officials involved with the asylum process.

Notwithstanding this critique, the book's strengths far outweigh its few weaknesses. The breadth of Freedman's research for *Gendering the International Asylum and Refugee Debate* is self-evident. The attention to detail she maintains while surveying the expansive topic of refugee and asylum seekers makes this book an excellent choice for academics new to the field who are searching for a contemporary overview. In addition, the clear and concise writing makes it a good choice to assign for classroom reading within a myriad of disciplines. For critical criminologists, in particular, the book is beneficial in supporting arguments about the gendered harms of internal and external border tactics engaged by states in the name of sovereignty and security. Overall, Freedman's contribution to the refugee literature is far-reaching and meaningful, especially for scholars interested in how gender complicates questions and assumptions which arise in the debate of asylum.

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D. Scott, *Emancipatory Politics and Praxis: An Anthology of Essays Written for the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control, 2013-2016* (London: EG Press, 2016), 253pp, £10.00 pbk

Reviewed by Elizabeth Stanley

The European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control ("the EG") has long been a hub for critical criminologists and activists. From the Group's first conference in 1973, the EG has met every year, rotating across European cities, towns and islands. Beyond this meeting, the EG produces a regular newsletter, posted to over a thousand subscribers, and members have built social media sites, a publishing house (EG Press) and a new journal (*Justice, Power and Resistance*). The EG operates as a vital oppositional space of solidarity for those wishing to challenge rising inequalities, austerity measures, the state cossetting of predatory financial and corporate institutions, mainstream advances of far-right racist politics, refugee crises, institutionalized sexism, endemic violence against