

Introduction

As in the evolution of many academic domains devoted to the study of phenomena that are also significant social issues, the study of forced migration initially was powerfully influenced by representations of refugees and flight driving from that social issues discourse. Research consequently focused on particular kinds of political refugees, not environmentally forced migrants and certainly not so-called 'economic migrants'. Conceptually, 'refugee' in most academic research up to the mid-1980s was essentially what it was in folk discourse, save in legal studies. The formative days of refugee studies was also characterized by a concentration on the comparatively short period when refugees attract the public eye through flight and acute trauma, and on the comparatively few who secured resettlement in rich countries. There was little sustained interest in the chronic national, international, and environmental forces generating such movements of people, or in empirical or theoretical parallels between those deemed political refugees crossing international borders and others. Researchers often nonproblematically used highly stereotypic social issues and bureaucratically generated representations of 'the' culture, experiences, and goals of refugees that would never have been acceptable in contemporary ethnographic treatments of people in source countries.

Even fifteen years ago, gender rarely surfaced in folk representations and practice concerning forced migrants. Refugees were sometimes spoken of as women, men, or children, but typically either in passing, in relation to idealized, traditional 'family' life and roles, or in regard to programs aimed specifically at family unification, women's health, or employment. 'Generic' employment and health programs were 'for everybody' and therefore were not usually seen as gendered. The 1951 UN *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and subsequent elaborations that most governments used to determine formal refugee status then gave no support for gender as a factor in

political oppression. There was almost no social issues or research interest in how many major forces affecting the lives of those who flee—and those who do not—are gendered as well as classed.

This is now rapidly, if inconsistently, changing on both fronts, with the research side often in the vanguard. This volume reflects a time of rapid expansion and high flux in the study of forced migration that is characterized by increasingly bold attempts to go beyond extant research paradigms, while simultaneously being powerfully informed by such paradigms.

The idea for this volume arose out of a mix of my ongoing research interests and a good opportunity. The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) was being hosted by Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, in April 1996. I was asked by Khalid Koser and Richard Black to give a talk to initiate a full day of presentations on gender and forced migration—a radical increase over the number of such papers presented at the last IASFM meetings four years previously. Half of the authors represented here attended. Over the intervening months I worked extensively with these and other, invited authors to formulate and refine chapters reflecting both their interests and orientations, and a range of critical dimensions of study and practice dealing with forced migration and gender.

In retrospect, this editorial process highlighted and confirmed for me a number of important issues, tendencies, and tensions concerning gender and forced migration, some of which are now reflected in both the thematic structure of this volume and the specific content of each chapter. Perhaps the most central of these is a tension in dealing with the universal versus the specific concerning gender and forced migration through time and space. In the end, this tension may be epistemologically unresolvable without much more middle range theory. In the meantime, how it plays out and the center of gravity actually reached in discourse and practice have important consequences. How useful are the superinclusive, intransitive categories like refugee, woman, ascribed nationality, and citizenship that we have inherited from social issues discourse and forced migration practice, especially when their casual or politically strategic application so often leads to vacuously uninteresting, generic representations and to procrustean assistance programs that serve no one well? While little benefit derives from idiosyncratic, highly individualized representations of forced migrants divorced from the forces of their production, many of the authors here ably argue that the balance in research remains much too far on the macro side.

In doing so, they raise many allied questions concerning the boundedness and coherence of social systems, cultures, and lives,

and the analytical frameworks we use to make sense of them. For example, Nordstrom, Giles, Smith, Gómez and others question the notion that the cultures and social systems impacting upon and forming forced migrant women and men are, or ever actually were, bounded, organic wholes. In doing so, they and others (for instance, Cammack, Matlou, Boelaert et al., Macklin, and Crawley) illustrate ways that particular societies, cultures, classes, political forces, laws, and programs are differently organized for women and men, and for various subcategories *of* women and men. At the same time, it is of some interest to note that every author (myself included) ultimately depends at least in part on such simplifying characterizations. Perhaps this is rhetorically driven because thereafter, everything taking place within such a categorical boundary “can be treated as one single event” (Brown 1989: 176) or phenomenon. Giles, Nordstrom, Matlou, and others highlight ways that what has been classically considered abnormal such as wartime, is immanent in or deeply part of ‘normal’ processes at work in peacetime. Going further, it is my impression that there is a broad consensus across the authors represented here that every ‘noun’ (personality, citizen, family, household, culture, etc.) articulating with forced migration is so situational and far from static that it may be usefully considered as a processual ‘verb’. Many also question the utility and empirical clarity of other oppositions that have long informed refugee discourse: refugee/economic migrant, public/private, civilian/non-civilian, home/diaspora, and present/past.

Several also question whether and where it is appropriate to apply what are in the main Western-derived academic, bureaucratic, and media representations to gender and forced migration cross-culturally, noting the mixed consequences this has had in the past. Western social issue and social problem-generated images of refugees as powerless victims of forces beyond their control are well-entrenched. One of the pitfalls facing those now highlighting gender is the risk of quick foreclosure: that gender will be simplistically read as ‘women’ rather than as relations of power, privilege, and prestige informed by situated notions of maleness and femaleness; and that ‘women refugees’ will then be comfortably categorized as a comparatively invariant kind of ‘multiple minority’, victimized as ‘women’ in their source and host cultures and as ‘refugees’. Systematic neglect of the class, subcultural, and situational variability among women would be an almost automatic consequence. Only gendered violence of particular sorts long associated with women’s violation and men’s honor, such as rape, would be considered, and only when immediately connected to ‘war’.

Over the last twenty years, a great tension has developed in feminist studies concerning how to weigh the sometimes directly contradictory values of cultural relativism and universalized notions of individual human rights. This tension is now reflected in the study of gender and forced migration, and a spectrum of positions is reflected in this volume; Matsuoka and Sorenson, and McSpadden, for example, argue for a more compassionate and flexible institutional recognition of Eritrean and Ethiopian conceptions of masculinity even if these do not fit Western feminist ideals, while Cammack's treatment of crumbling aid agency resolve in the face of Taleban assertions about the place of Afghan women takes a very different line. Even so, the balance here is definitely on the side of the priority of individual human rights when rights and cultural expectations are in opposition.

The organization of the volume reflects these objectives and concerns. The first two chapters by Indra and Colson and my interview with Barbara Harrell-Bond deal in differing ways with the history of forced migration research, historical constraints, and future possibilities. In "Not a 'Room of One's Own'" I outline a number of historical parallels between successive feminist approaches to gender in development and forced migration research and talk some years later. Drawing illustrations from the evolution of gendered household entitlement theory in development studies, I also suggest that we might use the history of gender in development to avoid a number of unnecessary conceptual limitations and dead ends. Elizabeth Colson's "Gendering Those Uprooted by 'Development'" draws on her extraordinary, forty year longitudinal study of the Gwembe Tonga, who were resettled in 1958 after the building of Kariba Hydroelectric Dam on the Zambezi River. Colson pushes the bounds of research convention in several ways to construct representations of Gwembe Tonga women and men as complex actors in history, multiply constrained by gender, age, locality, and national policy. Colson also clearly demonstrates how the key relational dimensions of gender for these developmentally forced migrants vary significantly from place to place and over time. Barbara Harrell-Bond is the founder of one of the first centers for forced migration research, the Refugee Studies Programme (RSP) at the University of Oxford. In her interview she presents insights drawn from her ongoing experience with, and active role in the rise of refugee studies and gender studies within it. In outlining her own strongly held position about the need for a deep synthesis of research and practice, she well illustrates the complex and changing ways in which talk and action in forced migration discourse have historically reflected highly global Northern ways of seeing and responding.

Each of the next seven papers challenges and politicizes extant conceptual or practical boundaries. Carolyn Nordstrom's "Girls and War Zones" decries the invisibility of girl children in bureaucratic, media, and academic discourses of refugee-generating situations of acute, violent conflict. She shows how highly naturalized, doxic distinctions between peace and war zones mask underlying forces that mute, abuse, oppress, and destroy girls in both these nominally different domains. Wenona Giles's "Gendered Violence in War" considers how images of home ideologized by nationalists frame women as "mothers, wives, partners, workers, warriors, enemies, victims, or heroines, located in highly political and public spaces"—ideologies which differentially expose women in source countries, in flight, and in camps to certain forms of oppression. Diana Cammack sharply criticizes "Gender Relief and Politics During the Afghan War," showing how national and international media, Islamic organizations, academics, aid organizations, funders, and governments generated competing constructions of Afghan aid, war, gender, and nation. She also narrates how macropolitical considerations led a number of aid organizations to compromise their human rights charters and limit their aid programs aimed at women and girl refugees. Peter Marsden then draws on his long experience with the practical delivery of Afghan aid to respond to Cammack's chapter.

Patrick Matlou's "Upsetting the Cart" develops the thesis that while African "refugees are caused chiefly by political events, the international refugee regime, oddly enough, conceptualizes and treats them primarily as a humanitarian issue." Moreover, Matlou chronicles how gender-oriented violence is increasingly one of the main weapons of war in Africa and, hence, a major source of forced migrants. Charles David Smith's "Women Migrants of Kagera Region, Tanzania" challenges the long-established bureaucratic distinction between 'economic migrants' and political refugees. He shows how women, who most governments and aid organizations would class as 'economic migrants', face highly gendered "factors forcing them out [that] are political: their educational disadvantage, their inability to inherit land under customary law, and their exclusion from serious involvement in coffee production." "The Relevance of Gendered Approaches to Refugee Health" is a case study of health care provision in Hagadera, Kenya. In it, Marleen Boelaert and her medically trained co-authors investigate what many others merely assume: that a gendered approach is in fact relevant to emergency health programs. They concur, but also question whether the most effective route might then be "a matter of better, rather than more care"—care that does not simply address

refugee women “from a biological perspective only,” and that acknowledges “the fact that gender cannot be reduced to sex.”

In “Post-Soviet Russian Migration from the New Independent States,” Natalya Kosmarskaya considers the gendered implications of Russian speakers returning ‘home’ to Russia from the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. In doing so, Kosmarskaya shows that Western-informed models of refugee migration and settlement based on European evidence do not particularly fit well in this context, in which once comparatively privileged women and men are forced to move to the rural hinterland of Russia as the result of the collapse of empire and the loss of their associated privileges. Inés Gómez then considers ways in which Chilean women in the California diaspora use home-pedagogy to construct “A Space for Remembering” ‘home’, and for effectively conveying associated images and symbols to their children.

Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson’s “Eritrean Canadian Refugee Households As Sites of Gender Renegotiation” shows how strongly gendered Eritrean personal roles and expectations are often directly confronted by the changed economic, social, and political circumstances of Canadian exile, and why these changed circumstances undermine some men’s self-identities and not others. Matsuoka and Sorenson also describe how a distinctive feminism has arisen among Eritreans during their long years of political and military struggle, and why some Eritrean women exiles claim that they “don’t necessarily want to be like the feminists in the West.” Lucia Ann McSpadden’s “Negotiating Masculinity in the Reconstruction of Social Place” extends this inquiry to Eritrean and Ethiopian men in the US and Sweden. She shows how class-based, source country gender ideals powerfully drive diasporic men to succeed (as judged by freestanding, idealized source country standards), and how such attempts are sometimes frustrated by government programs that gauge refugee success in very different terms.

The balance of the volume is primarily concerned with the interplay of gender with issues of human rights, protection, and refugee determination in law and practice. In “The Human Rights of Refugees with Special Reference to Muslim Refugee Women,” Khadija Elmadmad explores ways in which Islamic states might be able to complement secular, ‘modern’ international legal instruments relating to refugees with notions of asylum and protection derived from Islam. Audrey Macklin then presents “A Comparative Analysis of the Canadian, US, and Australian Directives on Gender Persecution and Refugee Status.” Her thorough analysis explains how agents of these three governments have developed linked, yet differing, legal

bases for partially incorporating gender as a criterion for refugee status. In “Women and Refugee Status,” Heaven Crawley describes how UK asylum policy has moved in the opposite direction to a hard stance, rejecting any notion that modest suggestions made by the UNHCR on how gender might be incorporated into such criteria are binding on States Party.

Lisa Gilad’s “The Problem of Gender-Related Persecution” and Sidney Waldron’s response, “Anthropologists As ‘Expert Witnesses,’” complete the volume. Lisa Gilad’s chapter is included posthumously. I contacted Lisa Gilad early in the course of soliciting authors, and in the subsequent to-and-fro that inevitably follows, she sent me a draft paper on the use of anthropological input in establishing gender dimensions of refugee determination, along with a query on whether it could be a basis for a more developed treatment. Lisa’s partner Robert Paine quickly replied to my affirmative response that she had tragically died in an automobile accident just a few days earlier. I have included her draft paper, which, because of the circumstances has only been lightly edited. Sidney Waldron, whose work Lisa uses as an extended example, has kindly provided a response.