

**Book Reviews**

## Creating New Futures—Settling Children and Youth from Refugee Backgrounds

Mary Crook, (2015). NSW: The Federation Press.  
ISBN 978 1 86287 999 7 (pbk), pp. 313

Reviewed by Di O'Neil OAM,  
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I think I have been looking for a book like this for quite a while. I am a member of the Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children movement that is rapidly growing across Australia. I joined this group for two reasons. In the first instance, I was outraged that both major political parties were, in effect, asking me to accept that the collateral damage to innocent children and their families as a result of long-term destructive detention is necessary in order to stop other people drowning at sea. The second driver for me comes from my 45 years of experience working as a social worker with children whose development has been impacted upon by the trauma of abuse or neglect.

As an activist now, or irritant, I need to remain informed about all aspects of Australia's asylum seeker and refugee policies and practices and the impact of these, particularly on children. This book is a gold mine for me. It explains what is happening and provides evidence for better, more humane options. As a reader, I was overwhelmed by the number of acronyms, classifications, sub-classes and constantly changing legislation, none of which appear to be child focused, but all of which gave me insight into the complexity and dehumanising nature of the current refugee debate.

Mary Crook has brought together the experience and thinking of 20 people and, through them, many others who are all well positioned to talk with authority on refugee children and their futures. A short biography of all the authors is included at the front of the book.

The book has an introduction by Mary Crook followed by 14 well-linked papers covering different aspects of the arena in which refugee children are finding their feet in our communities. In her introduction, Mary discusses the recent and changing nature of refugee policy and sets the parameters for the book. She has included several informative tables. It is difficult for the average citizen to find up-to-date data in this age of secrecy; thus I found these tables very interesting.

In reviewing this book, it is difficult to do justice to each contribution and still keep the review manageable. The book is divided into three parts.

Part I includes two papers. The first is entitled *Researching the Experience of Refugee Children: Key Ethical Considerations* by Mary Ann Powell and Anne Graham. The authors caution about the considerable ethical tensions that arise and call for research processes based on reflexivity, rights and relationships. The second paper is *Finding Refuge in Australia: How Law and Policies Affect the Entitlements of Children Entering as Refugees and Humanitarian Migrants*, by Mary Crook and Hannah Martin. This paper highlights the fact that not all children from refugee backgrounds have been, or are, treated in the same way. She notes that the settlement story of refugees in Australia has almost become a tale of two countries.

Part II examines how refugee children and youth are selected for inclusion in managed programs for resettlement. It includes three papers. Chapter 3 is an essay by Margaret Piper AM titled *The Strategic Use of Resettlement*. Mary argues that '... the key to successful integration ... is the quality of assistance refugees receive after their arrival and the attitudes of the host community' (p.85). She finds that particularly vulnerable children may not always have access to resettlement.

Chapter 4, *Overview of Resettlement in the Global and Australian Context* by Mike Clayton, highlights the fact that globally the need for resettlement far outstrips available places. Chapter 5, *Using Resettlement to Protect Vulnerable Refugee Minors* by Margaret Piper AM and Graham Thorn, explores the deficiencies globally in identifying in a timely manner the most vulnerable children and adolescence for resettlement.

Part III focuses in on programs and practices that settle children and young people from refugee backgrounds. It includes nine papers all of which provide insight into the current dilemmas facing successful resettlement. The authors are not shy in placing blame where it needs to be placed and suggest ways forward by highlighting what can work. Collectively, they look at the downside of labelling, the need for ongoing, age appropriate support, the health impact psychologically and physically of trauma through

war, displacement and detention, children with disabilities, educational needs and family reunification. They argue for child centred laws and policies that enable decision makers to respond flexibly to individual circumstances.

The contributors are as follows:

Chapter 6 *Defining Refugee Youth Settlement and Why it Matters*, Sandy Gifford and Edmee Kenny

Chapter 7 *'I Might be OK but Don't Leave Me Alone': How Young People From Refugee Backgrounds View Settlement*, Margaret Piper AM, Mitra Khakbaz and Soo-Lin Quek

Chapter 8 *Settling Well? An Examination of the Settlement Experience of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors in Australia*, Carmel Guerra, Soo-Lin Quek and Mary Anne Kenny

Chapter 9 *Trauma and Recovery – The Mental Health of Young People from Refugee Backgrounds*, Louise Newman AM and Ann Locarnini

Chapter 10 *The Health Story*, Cathy Preston-Thomas

Chapter 11 *Deaf Children and Youth from Refugee Backgrounds: Pressing Issues and Possible Solutions*, Louisa Willoughby

Chapter 12 *The Education of Refugee-Background Students in Australian Schools*, Joel Windle

Chapter 13 *Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children and Family Reunion in Australia*, Mary Ann Kenny and Ali Mojtahedi

Chapter 14 *Citizens in their Own Right: Achieving Adequate Recognition of Children in Australia's Immigration and Citizenship Framework*, Kim Rubenstein and Jacqueline Field

I recommend this book to anyone with an interest in the mass movement of refugees across the world and particularly in Australia. I would love our politicians to read this book without overlaying the information with short-term political expediency. Professionals working for the betterment of children with refugee backgrounds will really appreciate the wealth of easily readable and digestible information brought together in this book. It will assist policy makers and professionals to conduct their segments of work with these children and young people within the wider complex context that has brought them to their attention.

## Improving Access to Further and Higher Education for Young People in Public Care: European Policy and Practise

Jackson, S. and Cameron, C. (2014). London: Jessica Kingsley. ISBN 978-1-84905-366-2, 288 pages.

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The authors of *Improving access to further and higher education for young people in public care: European policy and practise* report on findings from a major European research project that aimed to increase participation in post-compulsory and higher education for young people in out-of-home care (referred to as 'looked after children' in England). *Young People in Public Care: Pathways to Education in Europe (YiPPEE)* is the first ever cross-national study that focussed on the post-compulsory schooling age educational needs of young people in care. Based on the largest in-depth interview sample undertaken in Europe thus far, it traces the experiences of young people in care and their progression into further and higher education across five countries.

The first author, Sonia Jackson, is not new to leading pioneering research. Despite research indicating that the educational attainment of young people in care is considerably low in jurisdictions that assume the responsibility for children who lack parental care, their education has attracted little attention world-wide. Sonia Jackson first led research into the education of children in care, specifically their participation in higher education, more than a decade ago with a 5-year longitudinal study of university students who had

a care background in England. Owing to the findings of that study along with a tireless decade long campaign, Sonia managed to stimulate political interest in the education of children in care. Sonia has written or contributed to more than 80 publications on this topic. Her work has been heavily cited in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. The idea of the YiPPEE project has arisen from this pioneering study.

The second author, Claire Cameron, has also published widely in this area. She has led several national and cross-national studies of children and young people in care and coordinated the YiPPEE project.

Sonia and Claire's inspiration to establish the YiPPEE project was based on research findings that suggested: (a) some care leavers had possessed exceptional motivation to obtain higher education; (b) that they needed a very high degree of assistance to overcome obstacles; and (c) that their future employment, health, income and social integration have a close relationship with their educational attainment.

In addition to England, the other countries in the consortium were Denmark, Hungary, Spain and Sweden. The overall objectives of the project were to investigate