Linda Leung, *Technologies Of Refuge And Displacement: Rethinking Digital Div*ide. Lexington Books, 2018, 154 pages. 978-1-4985-0002-9

Linda Leung, a professor and honorary associate at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, explores the challenges faced as refugees attempt to use technology to further their immigration pursuits and maintain their familial links. She relies on over 100 refugee interviews and surveys conducted from 2007 to 2011 in order to study this digital divide, examining the manner in which communication technology can be improved in order to relieve the constrained access and affordability of technology services. Regrettably, the book fails to offer any realistic solutions that may actually be used to further its stated purpose. Leung relies too heavily on the dialogue of refugee interviews in order to explain the basis of her theories, and by doing so denies the reader a coherent understanding of the book's main point. Furthermore, she fails to offer any new material on cutting edge technology or current technology existing within the immigration system. Instead, Leung relies on worn-out discussions of long-existing communication technology which fails to offer any new insight into the new technology that is currently affecting refugees.

The book is based on exploring this concept of the "digital divide" which explains the difference of accessibility to the Internet between those to which it is a privilege and to those to whom it is given. However, this distinction does not provide an adequate vehicle to explain the reasons why refugees are provided with non-functioning, outdated technology. Considering that a refugee's quality of life and socioeconomic opportunities are correlated with their successful immigration proceedings, one would anticipate that the "digital divide" would analyze the socioeconomic impact of the availability of communication technology. Instead, Leung's application of this concept is used merely to distinguish between those to whom functioning communication technology is made available, and to those to which it is not.

In the attempt to legitimize this theory of a "digital divide," Leung introduces the "Digital Dichotomies" section, which distinguishes between "netizens" and "asylum seeker". This portion of the book also introduces the concepts of "social determinism" and "technological determinism which, alas, fail to further advance the argument. Instead, this portion of the book merely identifies and distinguishes concepts that pertain to culture and accessibility without providing sufficient insight into why these concepts should be highlighted. However, it is not that these concepts lack any value; in actuality, the discussion of netizen reinforces the understanding that through the Internet, refugees are able to participate "in a wider range of voices that may otherwise not be heard in the political process." As a result, the discussion of netizens suggests that refugees who successfully exit the refugee camps may be able to meaningfully participate in the legislative process concerning immigration issues. However, none of the aforementioned concepts assist in understanding why refugees are provided a lower quality of communication technology when the need for this technology is immediately greater than that of the receiving country's population. As a result, these discussions only serve to define terminology.

Leung expends an inordinate amount of time explaining the basic themes and methodologies of the book at the expense of discussing the cutting-edge technology that is currently affecting the manner in which immigrants navigate the immigration system. For example, some of the current challenges faced by immigrants are the possibility of ICE raids, language barriers, obtaining adequate legal representation and obtaining information on their rights within the new host-country. In actuality, phone applications are some of the more prevalent means of technology that is assisting immigrants faced with these challenges. For

example, the phone applications *Arrived* and *Cell 411* were made available to the public in 2017.[7] The application *Arrived* displays the latest immigration news and educates its users on the deportation process. The application also offers English lessons, answers popular queries such as "how to write a resume" and offers a map with every non-governmental organization, law clinic and sanctuary city in the United States. Additionally, *Cell 411* also assists undocumented immigrants throughout the deportation process—the application allows users to contact close friends and family when being confronted by ICE officers, sends out users' GPS coordinates and allows the users to stream and record live videos that cannot be erased.

Unfortunately, Leung fails to acknowledge the prevalence of phone applications or other readily available technologies that are tailored to alleviate the language barriers and legal challenges faced by immigrants. Instead, she chooses to expend the first quarter of the book explaining the interaction between refugees and technology, the methodology of the study and its literary sources. The tropes presented within the first half of the book are no more than mere intuitive deductions that could be ascertained on the basis of even a rudimentary understanding of current refugee issues. None of this provides the reader with any new information on the technologies such as *Cell 411, Arrived* or *Notificá* that are currently assisting refugees and immigrants within their new host countries. I propose that a single section would have sufficed for the exposition of these themes, providing more space to explore other matters.

Within the second portion of the book Leung misses the opportunity to establish the immediacy of her research by ignoring the emerging resources that can alleviate the challenges faced within immigrant detention centers. By doing so, Leung hinders the reader's ability to empathize with the challenges of immigrants and dulls the elation that arises when an immigrant is finally able to reconnect with a loved one via technology. For example, within Chapter 2 Leung establishes that in 2009 she conducted a workshop with NGOS in Africa to identify the ways in which they can; (1) help refugees communicate during war, (2) help recently arrived refugees in Australia use new communication and (3) help refugees in Australia communicate with family overseas. However, Chapter 2 only poses the aforementioned questions and quickly moves on. Essentially, Leung misses the opportunity to introduce the ways in which the challenges within immigration detention centers are currently being combated and the pros and cons of either method. Instead, the second portion of the book focuses on exploring the importance of technology-mediated communication within the restrictive environment of immigration detention centers while also expanding upon the methods of analysis that will serve as the basis of the book. However, dedicating an entire Chapter to explaining the basic means through which the information was gathered appears to have been an inadequate usage of space because Leung's study fails to include a discussion of the long-existing social-media websites that have undoubtedly been utilized within the immigrant social sphere.

For example, in 2014 usage of Facebook allowed Antonio Vargas, an undocumented immigrant residing in Mountain View California, to reconnect with his mother after decades.[14] Vargas was sent from the Philippines to Mountain View California to live with his grand parents in order to escape the socio-economic challenges of his home country. However, since his mother, who still resides in the Philippines, cannot obtain a tourist Visa, and the fact that Vargas is undocumented, the two have not seen each other in a number of years. Considering that

---

[7] *See* Minyoung Park, 5 must-have applications for undocumented immigrants, https://money.cnn.com/2017/03/30/technology/immigrant-apps/index.html (Mar 30. 2017).
[14] *See* Ariel, Schwartz, How Technology Has Changed the Lives of Undocumented Immigrants, https://www.fastcompany.com/3025745/how-technology-has-changed-the-lives-of-undocumented-immigrants (Feb. 28, 2014).

Garrick Josephs, book review, Linda Leung, *Technologies of Refuge and Displacement, AmeriQuests* 14.2 (2018)

Leung conducted the workshop with the NGOs in 2009, and the fact that Facebook was launched in 2006, one would anticipate that this readily available website would be discussed or at least something in a similar vein would stand to be mentioned in this portion of the book. Unfortunately, Leung dulls the impact of the book by failing to establish the the modernity of her work.

The third portion of the book exemplifies the book's lack of innovation. Chapter 3, "Alternative Models," offers alternative ways of understanding that the refugees' relationship to technology is not a simplistic dichotomy, but rather a more complex relationship that is flexible and dependent on the level of resources that the refugees are provided. However, this portion of the book fails to provide an alternative perspective on the interaction between technology and immigration procedure that could inform its readers of the issues that need to be corrected. For example, within Chapters 6 and 7, Leung employees Mark Granovetter's theory of "weak ties" and "strong ties" in order to explain the means by which refugees maintain their familial links and further their asylum procedure. However, the aforementioned theories only offer a very shallow insight into the manner in which these ties are maintained. Instead, I propose that Leung should have explored the shifting dynamic within the immigration sphere to where the youth have now taken a larger role in alleviating the difficulty of the immigration process. For instance, in 2018 *United We Dream*, the largest national immigrant youth-led organization officially launched Notificá, a smartphone application that allows undocumented immigrants to activate a plan if they come in contact with immigration law enforcement authorities or find themselves at risk of being detained.[17] The application allows its users to prepare a set of automatic messages to alert their family members and lawyers if they or someone they care about have encountered immigration enforcement authorities. The application was developed last year and distributed on a small scale, and is now available for the public on Google and at Apple app stores.[18] Rather than focus on over-explored tropes, Leung could have significantly improved the depth of the humanistic aspect of her study by exploring the manner in which immigrants and immigrant-led organizations are advancing to combat their circumstances and the ways in which they are employing new technology to do so. Even more helpful would have been some sort of consideration of the manner in which the youth have taken up the metaphorical torch to improve their circumstances and that of their family members. Sadly, the third portion of the books fails to exude any manner of innovation because it ignores an in-depth exploration of one of the most important aspects of the narrative—the humanistic progression in relation to technology.

Furthermore, the theories within the third portion of the book ignore the initial social challenges, such as language and cultural barriers, that refugees would probably have to overcome in order to obtain a stranger's trust prior to (for exam[le) obtaining the use of that stranger's cellphone. Instead, Leung only offers the financial hardship and emotional tolls that the absence of technology would bring upon the refugee—tropes that have been exhaustively explored within a large number of refugee focused works. Again, Leung ignores the importance of exploring the difficulty within the initial human interactions within the immigration sphere or at the most, is only providing a shallow consideration of the internal struggle to obtain and use

---

[17] *See* Olivia P. Tallet, Undocumented Immigrants turn to technology to avoid arrests, https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/article/New-mobile-app-helps-immigrants-at-risk-12833276.php#photo-15391210 (April 16, 2018).

[18] *Id. (*explaining that Notifica includes information and guidance about the rights of immigrants and tips on what to do in different scenarios. It is an initiative of the UWD's National Defense Network Program. Currently the application is provided in both English and Spanish.)

technology. Essentially, Leung fails to adequately explore the psychosocial attributes of human interaction and the compounded difficulty that accompanies the language barrier. I propose that the absence of human exploration within the book is due to Leung failing to understand the extent to which human life and online identities are conjoined in modern society. For instance, the concept of "digital identity" within the immigration sphere explains that an individual's online identity is not only a person's identity but also encompasses the services one is eligible for, the education they are certified for etc.[19] Considering that this online identity will dictate, to some degree, the quality of health services that a refugee will receive, it is undoubted that the topic of technology and refugees should provide an adequate discussion of the initial linguistic and cultural barriers that will be faced to even obtain usage of the technology. For example, in Chapter 8 Leung explains that "In the Australian context, it was clear that participants struggled to understand their phone bills" (79)., Leung also explains that once refugees leave their countries of origin, telecommunications literacy acquisition during displacement becomes significantly impacted by both the intermediate countries where they were located and by the circumstances of that displacement. However, neither of the sections provide an adequate exploration of the initial internal reactions of a refugee who is within an immigration detention center and is trying to overcome a language barrier in order to improve their chances of successfully immigrating. Instead, the third portion of the book titled "Alternative Models" only offers a shallow perspective on the alternative theories of viewing the relationships amongst refugees and between refugees and the immigration infrastructure.

Although the book is called *Technologies of Refuge And Displacement*, the discussion of technology is limited to standard means of communication that have existed for decades, including fax machines, cell phones, print media and radio technologies. Considering that the book was published in 2018, it is reasonable to assume that the book would discuss more innovative technologies, software or applications, and the reasons why such technology is not provided within the immigration sphere. For example, in 2017 over 600 accommodation providers registered to host refugees through the AirBnB phone application.[22] In addition to connecting homeowners to those seeking temporary lodging, AirBnB aims to register an additional 100,000 participants to provide refugees with temporary homes to stay.

Rather than exploring newer technology and their real-world application, Leung opted to rely on long-existing communication tools such as print media and radio broadcast media in order to analyze the current challenges faced within immigration detention centers and throughout the immigration process. However, these forms of communication have been exhaustively identified and analyzed within the immigration scheme. Considering that technology such as phone applications tend to be readily available, this lack of discussion of innovative technology within *Technologies of Refuge And Displacement* fails to provide the in-depth analysis of current technologies that the very title of the book invoked.

Garrick D. Josephs, Vanderbilt Law School

---

[19] *See* How can Technology transform the refugee crisis? https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/syria/how-can-technology-transform-refugee-crisis (Mar. 13, 2018) (explaining that one great example we've seen is with Medical Teams International in Uganda. They use a data intake system in their health centers in refugee camps that provide real-time data that can alert providers on potential outbreaks of disease.)

[22] *See* Zosia Wasik, *Migrant crisis triggers wave of tech innovation* (Oct. 25, 2018, 2:00 PM),https://www.ft.com/content/e53197ee-8904-11e7-afd2-74b8ecd34d3b.