

*Frontiers of Gender Equality; Transnational Legal Perspectives*

edited by Rebecca J. COOK

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Any new book on gender equality will face the challenge of demonstrating its contribution to an already very large body of literature. Yet, as Rebecca Cook decries in the opening pages, the gap between the principle of gender equality and its realisation is widening. In that context, this is a timely collection that offers readers a sense of how much more work is needed to reach the unrealised goal of gender equality. Responding to this predicament, Cook sets out three main goals: to enlighten thinking beyond formalistic approaches to discrimination; to provide a retrospective assessment of why some struggles for gender equality and particular methods have been more successful than others; and to reconstruct gender equality and offer readers future areas for research.

The chapters that tackle the multiple and intersecting axes of gender discrimination do best at advancing critical thinking. In Chapter 3, Shreya Atrey provides an excellent account of hierarchies of inequality, revisiting Kimberlé Crenshaw's now renowned 'basement metaphor' to interrogate how recent jurisprudence by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) makes clear the obligation on States Parties to attend to compounded discrimination and avoid segregating discrimination. Atrey takes on the generally intersectionality-blind International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in Chapter 7. In Chapter 4, Daniel Del Gobbo's analysis of the at-times minoritizing and at others, universalising language of the Yogyakarta Principles, cautions us not to see intersectionality as a laundry list of bases upon which discrimination may occur but rather 'a heuristic for understanding the complex operation of power along gender, sexuality and other lines' (p. 84). The goal of reconstructing gender equality is met by offering new directions. Meghan Campbell, for instance, in Chapter 8, sets out ways for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to focus on the overlooked and marginalised aspects of women's rights to avoid duplicating the work of the CEDAW Committee.

The absence of Asia from chapters 10 to 14 – which are focused on regional treaties in Europe, the Americas, Africa and the League of Arab States – is a reminder of how far the region is out of step with global trends. Yet countries from the region find their way into the collection. Reservations to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by India and Singapore, and their withdrawal to some extent in Bangladesh, are discussed in Siobhán Mullally's persuasive chapter on the limitations that reservations pose to the transformative potential of human rights. Asia's women migrant workers are an undercurrent in Susana Fredman's study of adult care work in the UK. Naina Kapur offers an eloquent and stand-out reminder of the individuals who sit behind public interest litigation – in this case, BD, a forty year old Indian woman who is a village-level activist and victim of a gang rape – and make great sacrifices in pursuit of justice in ways that may be a gateway to expanding women's rights.

Overall, the book is a solid account and does well to touch upon developments in recent years. Authors illustrate their theories on inequality and discrimination with the experiences of, for example, transgender women athletes, indigenous women and water access, the under-representation of women in clinical research and the spike in domestic violence during COVID-19 lockdown. The book therefore offers newcomers a foundational text while for others, it is a thought-provoking addition to the scholarship, with reconfigured theories for how to strengthen the institutional structures, both internationally and domestically, that have been designed to protect rights and particularly those of the individuals currently left behind.

**Competing interests: the author declares none.**