

**Educating Adolescent Girls Around the Globe: Challenges and Opportunities** by Sandra L. Stacki & Supriya Baily (Eds). Routledge Research in International and Comparative Education, London: Routledge, 2015, 284 pp., US\$145.00 (Hardback) ISBN 9781138781108.

In 2012 Malala Yousafzai was on a bus in Pakistan on her way from school when members of the Taliban hijacked the vehicle, shot her and two school friends. The horrible attack elicited widespread condemnation by governments and individuals. As is well known, Malala recovered from her injuries, returned to her studies at a school in the UK, became a high profile advocate for girls' education around the world, and the youngest ever recipient of the Nobel peace prize. As the editors note in their introduction, this assault was, tragically, one among many at a similar time made on young girls going to school. Not all have led to such international profile for the victims. What does Malala symbolise and what do we need her to signal? How and why has the education of adolescent girls become such a potent issue, with geopolitical as well as educational dimensions? And how do the frames of international and comparative education help us understand this complex mix of image, identity, process, politics and power? The chapters in this book put down some of the groundwork to answer these questions, but they also indicate how much more is needed analytically and empirically.

The organising shape for the book takes the notion of comparing domains. These are termed by the editors the structural domain, the institutional domain, the psychological and social domain, and the communal and cultural domain. However in delimiting the domains (Stacki and Baily, 2015, 3) there is no very detailed conceptual work. The domains are loose schematisations, so that the structural domain, for example, encompasses

global trends and discourses in education and development, including the impact of globalization, migration and urbanization on young adolescent girls' learning and the presence of community and family in the structures of power that exist at local level (Stacki and Baily, 2015, 3)

It is not clear what is particularly structural here, and why the grouping of chapters placed in the communal and cultural domain, which deal with 'the struggles for young women to participate in education, such as ethnic, religious and poverty constraints or sexual harassment and health concerns' (ibid) are not seen as structural. These overlaps and rough groupings highlight how the strength of the book is in the detail, and how much work remains to be done in this field to provide sharper analytic and historical location to the areas of education it identifies.

What emerges from the chapters is a multiplicity of experience, policy formulation, state and non-state actors, and an expanding agenda of conceptualisations. It is clear that the transitions of adolescence associated for girls with puberty, marriage, and appropriate dress are key areas of policy discussion, academic dispute, community contestation, and young

voices trying to articulate pathways to adulthood. Education is both a site for and an obstacle to these processes. Chapters by Nancy Kendall on Malawi, Shenila Khoja-Mooli on the discourse of child marriage, and Waafa Hozein on wearing the hijab in the USA all lead us through some of the many layers of issues these themes raise. Adolescent girls talk back to theory, as they are neither children nor adults, and not simply placed in conventional comparative education spaces of the state (as they are generally not yet voters, although they may well be workers) or the school (as they may be entering or exiting from the education system). The editors register the potential of ideas around intersectionality and marginalisation to understand some of these processes, and Vilma Seeberg draws on the capability approach to understand empowerment and adolescent girls' education in West China. Indeed empowerment is a theme invoked in a number of studies, but not theorised in any depth. Much more detailed theoretical work with any or all of these concepts remains to be done so that we see more clearly what the liminalities of educating adolescent girls can tell us.

This collection breathes air into the sometimes mechanical repetitions of policy formulations and the fixity of symbols. It gives glimpses of real struggles, the difficulties of practising leadership or care, and the potential of theory. It builds the groundwork for future analytical depth drawing on the insights of comparative and international education. Many follow up volumes are needed that will help us with a range of conceptual and empirical issues. Malala's personal journey has already been a long one, but the field of inquiry that is linked to her courage and the questions she signals has a much longer road to go.

Elaine Unterhalter  
University College London, Institute of Education  
[Elaine.Unterhalter@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:Elaine.Unterhalter@ioe.ac.uk)