

# Epilogue: Reflections on women and leadership through the prism of citizenship

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Looking at questions about women and leadership also provides an excellent frame through which to reflect upon the way women leaders have expressed their citizenship. The word ‘citizenship’ is an important term to think about from the experience of women, and I begin these concluding comments by explaining what I mean when using the term. I am also interested to conclude this collection by asking: what does this tell us about women leaders as citizens?

The term citizenship is used in a range of interdisciplinary contexts. Different discussions occur when thinking of citizenship as a legal formal notion, compared with citizenship as a normative concept. The legal formal notion is primarily concerned with the legal status of individuals within a nation-state. So, for instance in Australia, citizens are contrasted with permanent residents, temporary residents and unlawful non-citizens. Legal issues associated with the formal status include the acquisition and loss of citizenship, the criteria for citizenship by application, dual or multiple citizenship and discrimination based upon citizenship status. All of these legal issues have had an impact, historically, and to a certain extent currently, in various countries around the world, in discriminatory ways upon women. For instance, there was a period in Australia’s citizenship law history when a woman’s formal legal status was entirely dependent upon her husband’s.<sup>2</sup>

The normative notion of citizenship, in contrast, is not solely concerned with these legal questions, but rather it sees membership as something more comprehensive and less formally constrained. For instance, citizenship is discussed in the non-legal, normative frameworks in a variety of ways—primarily in terms that look to the material circumstances of life within the polity, notably to questions of social membership and substantive equality.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The Australian National University.

2 Kim Rubenstein, *Australian Citizenship Law in Context* (Sydney: Lawbook Company, 2000). See also Helen Irving, *When Women Were Aliens: The Neglected History of Derivative Marital Citizenship*, Research Paper No. 12/47, 2012, Sydney Law School, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2110546>.

3 Kim Rubenstein and Daniel Adler, ‘International Citizenship: The Future of Nationality in a Globalised World’, *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 7(2) (2000): 519.

Indeed, Linda Bosniak has identified three other ways that the scholarship conceives of citizenship beyond legal status: citizenship as rights, citizenship as political activity and citizenship as identity.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of citizenship as identity relates more to how an individual thinks of herself as part of a community. To some extent one's formal legal status can reflect one's own sense of identity, but there were many women historically who were deprived of their formal citizenship status, but that had no real impact on their own identification with their home. And as this collection highlights, many women's identity was affirmed through a transnational, international environment, taking their self-identity well beyond the domestic concerns of a single nation-state.

In thinking about citizenship as rights and political activity and identity, we can see the normative notion is often much broader than the legal notion in that it looks to membership in ways that are not necessarily dependent upon legal status. In fact, there is often a disjuncture between the legal notion—which is an exclusive one—and the normative notion that in certain contexts seeks to be inclusive and universal.

But what is common to them all is the sense that citizenship represents a form of membership—and it is women's membership in society broadly and in the public and private spheres that feminist work on citizenship has been directed to for some time and that this volume adds rich material to by considering women's leadership.

What does this tell us about women leaders as citizens?

This volume informs our understanding about women's participation in society through the leadership experiences of women and it also illustrates how women have expressed their citizenship. It helps us conceive of women's citizenship in terms of their own life experiences—in both legal and normative terms. Indeed, the six-part structure has captured the complexity and nuance of women's expressions of citizenship in a mix of historical and contemporary contexts.

Amanda Sinclair's chapter and the first part on feminist approaches to leadership remind us why women have a strong interest in the broader phenomena of leadership. She affirms the value of this collection in its contribution to making us think about how women have influenced and changed the public agenda and improved the life experiences of the people around and following after them. In the same way that Bosniak discusses how citizenship is a powerful discourse, Sinclair argues that precisely because leadership has become such a powerful

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4 Linda Bosniak, 'Citizenship Denationalised', *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* (2000): 447.

discourse, with people at all levels of society being urged to do more leadership, it is vital to deconstruct, interrogate and reapproach leadership from a feminist point of view.<sup>5</sup>

This feminist approach also reminds us that feminists have long challenged the universal nature of citizenship often promoted. Margaret Thornton has illustrated that feminists must also think of citizenship beyond the formal legal context because:

Liberal legalism is strewn with universalised concepts that deny the particularity of difference. Citizenship is a paradigmatic example of such a universal, for it requires the citizen to erase all facets of his or her identity. Within legal discourse, 'the citizen' is not only an individual who is de-sexed, de-raced and de-classed, but he or she is also dehistoricised. The one characteristic of identity that the juridical concept of citizenship purports not to suppress is that of nationality. Citizenship is therefore grounded in a very distinctive way. It signals homogeneity and a sense of belonging, but the community to which the citizen belongs is exclusively determined in relation to the nation state. The familiar communities of everyday life, such as those congregated around the workplace, club, school and suburb, are invisible to the juridical gaze. Indeed, this gaze is pathologically incapable of seeing multiplicitous and heterogeneous interests at all.<sup>6</sup>

This collection forces us to think of women's leadership—women's expressions of their citizenship—in these multiple and broader ways. In the second part, the focus on Indigenous women's leadership also resonates with a citizenship story. Not only does it inform us of the important leadership contributions and active citizenship and participation of the Indigenous women whose lives we read about, citizenship as rights and political participation, but it also intersects with the citizenship struggles in Australia that Indigenous women and men have been engaged with. In Australia, Indigenous Australians have formally been full legal members of the community—first as British subjects and then, when the *Australian Citizenship Act* (1948) came into force, as Australian citizens.<sup>7</sup> But their life experiences have highlighted the disjuncture between citizenship as a formal status and citizenship as rights, participation and identity.<sup>8</sup>

In the third part, on local and global politics, we are reminded of how citizenship has always, in practice, been discussed and engaged with as both a national

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5 Ibid.

6 Margaret Thornton, 'Historicising Citizenship: Remembering Broken Promises', *Melbourne University Law Review* 20 (1996): 1072.

7 Rubenstein, *Australian Citizenship Law in Context*.

8 John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

and a transnational activity. While the formal concept is linked to the singular nation-state (although people can hold more than one formal citizenship), the normative concept has discussed rights, participation and identity as something more open and fluid. Citizenship issues arise throughout this part through women's activism on legislative reform issues and rights struggles, and in the language of political participation as in those lives we read about of women with disability. And the gaze also heads beyond the national borders as we hear more about those women who have participated in the international sphere through their leadership on both the national and the international stages.

We are reminded with the final three parts of the collection of how important it is to look at leadership beyond the formal political governance structures and sites of civic citizenship, to the other sites of influence and power in society to highlight participation in its myriad ways. The fourth section on leadership and the professions enlarges our thinking beyond women's experiences in the professional public world to activity and leadership in the factory houses, in the philanthropic and social worlds and in academia. Once again, we see the multiple ways in which citizenship as membership through different associations and professional communities plays out through the experiences of those women. When we move in the fifth part to leadership and women and culture, we are encouraged to think about women's voices and influence in those other powerful aspects of society—through representations of leadership for those women who did hold formal leadership roles to those women who have led the way in fighting about entertainment policy and issues, and also into the literary world, which is often a world that represents our lives back to ourselves. These all play into citizenship as identity—for our identities as women are informed both by the issues covered in this section and by the way in which women have engaged with them. And finally, when reading about movements for social change, we are reminded of the different styles and ways in which participation and leadership can be expressed. The women's movement, the environment movement and the consumer movement are all illustrative of how different associations have seen different women's citizenship experiences play out. They resonate with the view that citizenship activity occurs as much in civil society and in broader social issues and is not reliant on the formal expressions of citizenship through voting and political office.

In conclusion, I am reminded that the purpose of the book included identifying outstanding women leaders to demonstrate their significance in inspiring the actions of others within a range of activities, and also to consider the fragility of women's capacity to take up leadership roles after they gained formal expressions of citizenship. By doing so, this book has contributed to understanding a different kind of leadership culture, challenging the masculine model on which leadership is conventionally based. In this epilogue, I have

argued that we have also seen that in fulfilling their purpose those women's voices and experiences have expanded and added to both formal and normative understandings of citizenship. This can be seen by the stories showing how women's participation and influence have often directly influenced the formal national governance sphere in ways that have broadened who is included in its citizenry, but also in our thinking about leadership as political activity. It has also shown us that citizenship as rights activity and rights protection has been subject to significant women's influence. Finally, all of this material enlarges our collective national and international identity and understanding as human beings, as fellow citizens of the world, connected to one another.

## References

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