

Book / video reviews

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Powerful Subjects: Are Women Really Taking Over the University? Jocey Quinn. Stoke on Trent, UK and Sterling, USA: Trentham Books, 2003; x + 168 pages; ISBN 1 85856 279 1; \$29.95US (paper).

In *Powerful Subjects*, Jocey Quinn discusses a research project in which she examined claims that feminism and the expanded female presence in universities and colleges has resulted in female domination of formerly masculine space. Her project was in response to widespread claims that education has become feminized. Quinn found that far from being feminized spaces, the institutions she studied were uncomfortable for many female students; that being a majority within a student body does not necessarily make female students "powerful subjects."

Quinn's research was done in Britain, where post-secondary institutions are different enough from those of Canada that her research results cannot be directly superimposed. But it is not difficult for the Canadian reader to imagine ways in which Quinn's results might apply to Canadian institutions, and her solid literature review and bibliography will be useful to people interested in this topic.

Quinn examined the experiences of twenty-one female students in two British post-secondary institutions: one a college and one a relatively new university. She studied students in two different subject areas, neither of them male dominated. While she tried to get a cross section of ages and conditions of life, her study subjects were less racially and ethnically diverse than one might expect to find in similar institutions in urban Canada.

Quinn's study results place into question the presumption that feminism and the presence of women in post-secondary education have affected course content and modes of teaching. Explicitly feminist discourse was largely absent in these institutions, even in a class dealing with

feminist issues. Feminist pedagogy was a non-issue, male students still tended to dominate classrooms, female students still felt uncertain of their place. Quinn found that while her subjects were thoughtful, they were not powerful, neither in their self-perceptions nor in the objective circumstance of their classroom and other institutional experiences.

This work has some real limitations. Not all readers will agree with Quinn's theoretical and ideological assumptions about what "feminist" and "feminist pedagogy" mean. The small sample size and restricted locales limit the general applicability of her research results. Yet despite these limitations, readers who are concerned about the place of women in institutions of higher education will find this work useful. Quinn demonstrates some of the ways and some of the reasons why, for all the changes that have taken place in post-secondary education, and despite a vast increase in the presence of women as university students and faculty, women are still far from being powerful subjects within these institutions.

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The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives. Susan Bracken, Jeanie Allen, and Diane Dean, eds. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2006; illustrations; xiv+177pp; ISBN 1-57922-149-1; \$24.95US (paper).

The Balancing Act is essential reading for anyone concerned with the uneven impact of institutional policies and unofficial expectations on the lives of academic women and underrepresented minorities, male and female. It provides a body of quantitative and qualitative scholarship substantiating what many of us may already believe, but that can often be conveniently dismissed by university