

by the subjects of the studies as well as the authors. Women who work for pay report greater self-esteem, more marital satisfaction, and greater feelings of well-being. Their husbands also report happier marriages and fewer psychiatric problems than husbands married to housewives (p. 15.). From the employer's point of view, dual-career couples (especially the husbands) are more productive on the job and experience more job stability. But what is not adequately answered is the reason for the continued bias against this set-up.

Because the book focuses on socio-psychological aspects of the dual-career couple, it does not give adequate attention to the economic, social and political context of the issue in explaining the continued lower status of wives despite career commitment, and the negative reactions of employers to dual-career couples. Changes in organizational policy tend to cost money and cause controversy. Changes in domestic labour patterns tend to cause more work for women, and work for which they receive few social rewards. Changes in the pay structures for women employees cost money, and will be fought against by managers and owners despite the inequity of the present system. The practice of institutions hiring "two for the price of one" continues, despite a social awareness of discrimination against women. For example, in the university setting, hiring the husband means that the wife can be relied on as a form of cheap labour to teach part-time. A more complete analysis of dual-career couples would contain more research on the social, political and economic context in which these couples live and work.

In the epilogue, Pepitone-Rockwell emphasized that "fluidity of priorities ... is the cornerstone of the dual-career relationship." In this emerging family form, it is essential that priorities change at different stages of the marriage or the career. We can no longer afford to blindly give priority to family or career throughout life, without being flexible to the changing situation.

But in focusing on psychological concerns, one gets the impression that these couples are living in a social vacuum. All they need is to manage their time properly and eliminate guilt, and the problems subside. However, there are economic, political and organizational factors beyond the control of these couples which influence their success or failure.

Although the articles are uneven in style and sophistication, the book makes a valuable contribution to the field of family studies and women's studies. Despite increasing commitment to career, women's search for equality is elusive. Traditional husbands, old-fashioned employers, more difficulty finding jobs than their husbands, lower salaries and promotion than their husbands, and ambivalence about career commitment still hold women back from employment equality with men. As the dual-career couple becomes more widespread in North America, organizations as well as individuals will have to change their assumptions and priorities to accommodate this new family form. Individual men and women can change some aspects of their own relationship and job commitment, but they have little influence over laws, institutional policies, or the attitudes of the community in this new form of family.

Maureen Baker
Ottawa

Silenced. Makeda Silvera. *Toronto: Williams-Wallace Publishers Inc., 1983. Pp. 132.*

Makeda Silvera's recently published paperback about the plight of West Indian domestics working in Canada is not a pleasant story, but it is a difficult book to put down. She reports on the experiences of 10 domestic workers, largely in their own words, so simply and undramatically that one is moved by the fact poignancy of their situations. The women in her study are Black (one is from Guyana) and working class or

poor. All but one of them have children back home, and seven are sole support mothers. Despite the unsensationalistic tone of her book, the overriding message of their stories comes across loud and clear. They all sought to overcome the poverty and lack of opportunity in their homeland, and they all bought the myth of Canadian affluence.

The misconception of Canada as the land of milk and honey is reinforced by airline advertisements, domestic agencies, weekly dramas on the television set which show North America as the land of plenty, where happiness and wealth can be bought on credit and where maids like those shown on the weekly sit-coms, are treated with respect and as a special part of the family. (p. 11)

The reality of their experiences here is vastly different from their expectations,

What is never talked about, or made clear to many of these women is the widespread prejudice they will come up against in Canada and the racism embedded within a system which thrives on the labour of women of colour from third world countries...women who work...as domestic servants get as little as \$200 a month for an eighteen hour day, seven days a week job. (p. 11)

All of the women who speak to Silvera reveal their ambitions for themselves, but most of all for their children.

I tell you, when I see how my life has been wasted and I look and see the same things happen to my children and know it going to happen to their children, I just get sad. (p. 29)

When I get my landed, I want to save some money so that my grandchildren will be able to go to high school. This is my dream

to see them graduated from high school... maybe even go to university. (p. 29)

And so, in their dream to make these ambitions come true they endure long hours and back breaking work at below government regulated salaries because, as the title of the book suggests, their fear of deportation keeps them mute. Even when the inhumanity of their working conditions includes sexual harrassment, the ultimate oppression of women in the work place, the women are either afraid to speak or their complaints fall on deaf ears.

While Silvera's description of domestic labour life is clearly an extreme one, although I hear more and more stories every day from my own nanny/housekeeper which make me wonder about how atypical they really are - it really doesn't matter. The crux of the issue is that the government and to a large extent the Canadian public doesn't care about exploitation of domestic labourers, especially when the labour pool is from the Third World. On the other hand, one of the major problems with Silvera's book is her unending insistence at least by implication, that indeed the domestic labour problem is a racial one. In fact, the problem is far more pervasive. The problem is housework.

In the last chapter of her book Silvera does make some reference to housework issues *per se* which she claims and rightly so -

...the mainstream women's movement has failed to take up, largely because of its white middle class bias. (p. 122) The lived relations between the woman-as-mistress and the woman-as-servant are complex and rarely mentioned even in contemporary writings on women and work. (p. 123)

This latter quote is especially intriguing. The notion of opening up a dialogue between employers and employees vis-a-vis the domestic labour issue is truly radical. But perhaps it will

be a little close to home for some of us. For example, it may be argued that one way in which professional middle class women are able to circumlocute this issue is by orienting themselves to Day Care rather than confronting the dilemmas of the domestic labour dyad. But since Day Care workers are only slightly better paid, the general issue of the devaluation of women's work is not fundamentally altered. Or even more importantly, do I avoid hiring a Black domestic over a White one because of the socio-political implications of seeing myself in such a stereotyped dyad? There is clearly a rich area of field research here.

While the book does not profess to be an analytical or theoretical treatise on the issue (the study is 127 pages and most of this is devoted to the 10 case studies) a framework is nevertheless pervasive. And that framework is clearly racism. Silvera is quite literal when she says her study is about *Black* working-class women. But the truth of the matter is that the domestic labour problem is first and foremost a feminist issue, i.e. it is about sexism. Without becoming overly committed to a chicken/egg argument suffice it to say that when the two areas sexism and racism mesh historically, as we have here, it provides a political hotbed.

Silvera also indicates that nothing short of a socialist government will fundamentally alter the problem. Quoting Charlotte Perkins Gilman who noted at the turn of the century the necessity for "teams of trained and well-paid workers, moving from dwelling to dwelling" she appears to be supportive of contemporary Molly Maid services, but Silvera would add the necessity of a social welfare state which makes such services and childrearing areas available to everyone (p. 124). Yet, I cannot help but find this a romantic notion and one which leaves us in a status quo situation. As Silvera herself suggests, the history of domestic labour has shown that progressively

each group has fled domestic labour when possible, regardless of pay and working conditions, thus demonstrating the depth of the devaluation of women's work. And as has become clear, until recently as the feminist movement has done little to reorient our biases, but rather has contributed at times to the notion that housework is shit-work. Neither the proper regulation nor enforcement of domestic labour laws can eradicate the deep underlying stigma associated with the problem - namely that women's work is insignificant. In short, the problem is very deep - perhaps far deeper than capitalism. The notion of devaluation of women's work goes back at least as far as primitive hunting and gathering societies in which women may have been more central to subsistence yet symbolically were usually not acknowledged as such.

Makeda Silvera is a gifted "listener" and writer who seems to sneak in her sociology almost effortlessly. Although I may not agree totally with her perspective, it is an important one which raises a variety of controversial feminist issues surrounding the domestic labour controversy. Reminiscent of Matthew's *Voices From the Shadows*, another recently published Canadian paperback, which relates the personal experiences of disabled women, *Silenced* contributes to an understanding of women who have minority status within their own gender milieu. *Silenced* should become a standard women's studies text in Canadian courses coast to coast.

Judith Posner
York University

Slaves of Slaves. The Challenge of Latin American Women. Latin American and Caribbean Women's Collective. Translated by Michael Pallis. London, England: Zed Press, 1980. Pp. 186;