

# Book Reviews

**A World of Difference: Gender Roles in Perspective.** Esther R. Greenglass. Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1982. Pp. 356.

**Exploring Gender Relations: A Canadian Perspective.** Marlene Mackie. Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1983. Pp. 358.

It is difficult to review two books with very similar thematic content, socio-psychological aspects of gender, without comparing them. But there is a way in which a comparison of *A World of Difference: Gender Roles in Perspectives* by Esther R. Greenglass and Marlene Mackie's *Exploring Gender Relations: A Canadian Perspective* must reflect the bias of the reviewer. The first book is primarily an examination of the psychological research on males and females and their similarities and differences which has proliferated in the past decade. The second, a review of sociological and psychological literature does more than review empirical studies. Thus, we benefit little from Greenglass's own viewpoint or her critical analysis of the theoretical assumptions and methodological techniques of the reviewed literature, whereas the real strength of Mackie's work is that it is grounded in a reflexive, critical examination of sociological discourse. Incorporated into it are continual attempts to extrapolate beyond the bare findings of research studies to alternate theoretical explanations of the contemporary situation.

The table of contents of Greenglass's work appears relatively inclusive. It considers gender-role differences, stereotypes, behaviour and biology, socialization of boys and girls, how gender roles are acquired, other agents of gender-role socialization, gender-role differences in cognitive ability and achievement, human sexuality, implications of gender-role differences, family and

employment, gender roles and psychopathology. Within each of these chapters, the author reports, rather tersely, on the available recent research literature in each of the areas. As I see it, there are two serious drawbacks to this work. The first is that it lacks an overall organizing theoretical framework, or consistent point of view within which research findings can be evaluated and critiqued. One sees little of the author's critical scholarly viewpoint or of her personal experience in the work because it tends to be read most appropriately as a report on the research literature. My second problem with the work, follows from the first. It is that it is without an adequate comment on the methodology of methodology or the theory of methodology used in the myriad of cited studies. A chapter, for instance, on the nature of psychological research, its value base, or its practical implications could have provided a foundation for a more thorough critique of the discipline, and the current findings. Some speculation on the reasons that males and females have been found to differ in some and be similar in other significant ways would have enhanced the value of the text.

Finally, one of the most promising new directions in psychological research, the study of androgyny is given very little consideration. Androgyny is generally taken to refer to the combined presence of 'masculine' and 'feminine' personality characteristics in one individual. The presence or absence of androgynous characteristics has been found to affect males and females differently. But there is some evidence that androgynous characteristics are of some advantage, especially for females because they enhance flexible responsiveness and emotional adjustment. A fuller examination of this literature could have been valuable.

Mackie writes with a discursive and often witty writing style, so that the book is entertaining as well as informative. In her first chapter Mackie approaches the questions of the value bases of the sociology and psychology of gender.

To an extent, she locates the knowledge in the social context of the construction of the knowledge in her discussion of the female sociologist's complaint regarding (i) topics of study, (ii) theory, (iii) methodology, and (iv) teaching. The first chapter paves the way for the data presented in the subsequent chapters. The book moves into female/male similarities and differences, biological explanations of sex differences, gender socialization, the social-psychological perspective on sex differences, family and peer group: primary sources of gender socialization, secondary and symbolic agents of gender socialization, social-structural explanations of gender, and prospects of the future. The chapter on the social-structural explanations is a valuable addition because in it she uses a macro level of analysis to address the various theoretical explanations of the state of gender relations.

Both books would be improved by careful attention to such important complicating variables as class, sex preference, race and ethnicity. In a complex society, such as Canada, there are times when any one of these variables may be more powerful determinants of behaviour than gender differences. There are times, too, when the subjective ties between people of the same class, race, ethnic background or sex preference compete with ties based on gender. The objective and subjective consequences of these possibly significant variables need to be addressed.

Each of these books falls within the dominant paradigm of the respective disciplines—the positivist paradigm. Certain limitations are inherent in this perspective. Millman and Kanter in *In Another Voice* mentioned some; the emphasis on the formal and public at the expense of the informal, and private; the lack of recognition of the distinct social world and languages of men and women and their consequent incommensurability; and the potentiality of radical transformation and change rather than the maintenance of the present social order. Inclusion of other paradigms such as the definitionist and the

activist would begin to address this paradigmatic myopia by (1) acknowledging the importance of meaning of the experience of being male and being female; and (2) by questioning the existing structures which perpetuate sexism.

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**Hard Earned Wages: Women Fighting for Better Work.** Jennifer Penney. *Toronto: The Women's Press, 1983. Pp. 241*

*Hard Earned Wages: Women Fighting for Better Work* is a collection of oral accounts about contemporary women's experiences in the Canadian labour force. The book's central concern is to inform us of working class women who differ in background, personality and goals, yet who are drawn either by pure desperation, accident, or a conscious determination to actively fight for the improvement of their work situations. Its author, Jennifer Penny, offers portraits of sixteen women in both traditional and non-traditional fields - a worker in a cross-cultural centre, workers in a seafood plant, a mailsorter, daycare, telephone, library, and steel workers, a heavy duty mechanic, and squidjiggers. Although each woman offers an individual and unique portrait of herself and her working life, all tend to focus on four general areas. These include a description of work experiences (the content of their work and its social organization), the process of becoming involved in a struggle, the nature, development, and obstacles to the struggle, and the outcome of the fight as measured by the attainment of both psychological and tangible rewards.

Each of these accounts takes the form of a monologue or a conversation in the case where several women were interviewed together. Although Penny offers a brief introductory chapter, the women speak for themselves throughout the remainder of the book. The author inserts