

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

her own words in only a few sections and here they never exceed one sentence and appear in question form only.

This format has both its advantages and limitations. The direct anecdotal style gives the book a sense of immediacy and a personal quality which makes it extremely readable and entertaining. However, it also conceals much of Penny's own input and therefore protects her from a thorough critical analysis. It is difficult to question the accuracy or examine the consistency of the book when each chapter deals with a unique set of events and goes no further than representing the respondents' personal feelings on these events. We know that Penny has edited these passages and directed the responses, but by presenting only the verbatim comments of her interviewees, she escapes from committing herself from any firm conclusive statements.

One may argue that the interviews speak for themselves and, to some extent, they do. But the book would be far richer if raw data were supplemented by an interpretation or at least some brief concluding remarks which would tie the interviews together. We should not be left to sort out the data ourselves. Thus I believe Penny shortchanges both herself and the reader by failing to present an analysis.

Penny's methodology is also questionable. I am aware that space limitations prohibit a complete explanation of methods, however, the reader deserves some information in this area. What kinds of questions did the author ask these women? Where did she draw her sample of interviewees? Under what conditions were the interviews conducted? In the acknowledgements, Penny notes that she had excluded thirty-five interviews. On what basis did she select sixteen out of a potential forty-one conversations? Knowledge of the criteria used in this selection is important for it bears crucially on the development of the book.

Furthermore, I doubt that this sample was randomly selected. This is not necessarily problematic. It only becomes so where representativeness is implied. Although Penny does not openly claim that this book is about all working women, she never disclaims this. An open acknowledgement that the book addresses only a small minority of working women is necessary since few women bear similarity to those portrayed in *Hard Earned Wages*. Despite wishes to the contrary, most of us do not become actively involved in fights with the government, grow from a young native woman on skid row to educator, researcher and recognized figure in the struggle for native women's rights, or assume an official position on one of Canada's leading trade unions. Indeed only a small percentage of all female workers are unionized. Most women who work (which is most employees in the ghettoized work sectors—the garment industry, domestic sphere, clerical and service work) handle work-related stress in individual and unproductive ways.

This acknowledgement, however, does not make Penny's findings any less significant. Although these women represent only a minority, they are significant in their own right. The very fact that they could have achieved so much personally and collectively gives this book an optimistic tone. This optimism is the book's greatest merit for Penny could have left the reader feeling discouraged and depressed about women's working experiences—a fault of all too many studies on women and work. While presenting the reality of the situation, and the reality is often bleak, recent studies neglect the uplifting moments in a female's working life.

Penny successfully integrates the two. She tells us about the deplorable work environment in the Lizmore Seafood plant. A plant where women stand all day on concrete floors in rubber boots, even while pregnant, inhaling the fumes of chlorine gas, and listening to the clutter of the vacuum pump and the sound of lobsters coming off the end of a metal conveyor - "chunk-chunk-

chunk into the stainless steel break-off tank” (p.45) while occasionally getting their own hands caught in wringers which have no release mechanisms. We also learn of telephone workers who must put up a flag every time they want to use the washroom, women in male-dominated fields who feel they must sacrifice their own sexuality in order to gain partial acceptance in the workplace, and how once accepted, women are verbally abused not only by management and male co-workers, but by their co-workers’ wives as well.

Respondents also describe the occasional resistance of family members, threat of job loss, the double day of work, sexual harassment, and invisibility. Furthermore, the unions themselves are not always in total support of female workers. Feeling certain issues are insignificant, some union members attempt to dissuade small locals from going to arbitration. The book also shows that before any of these problems can be tackled, the women themselves must overcome self blame and denigration and recognize that they deserve better.

Yet it also presents the pay-offs, the momentary feeling that perhaps, in the long run, the struggle is all worthwhile. A basic theme of this book is that everything will be alright, but women are going to have to fight hard to make it so. Penny shows that, apart from their divergent struggles, and varying degrees of success, all of these women grew. She operates on the premise that the struggle makes women tougher. It allows them to discover and develop new skills, find pride in themselves, and develop a sense of solidarity and cooperation. The women in this book take things in their own hands. Although they may not alter the whole labour process, they gain satisfaction by seemingly small achievements such as being recognized as a serious force by male unionists or receiving unemployment benefits from the Federal Government. *Hard Earned Wages*, however, never plays the optimism to the point of distortion.

Because of the very subject it addresses, this book runs the risk of over-romanticization and banality. Penny also manages to avoid this possibility. She does so by presenting the women with levity. The women in her book are not heroes or “superwomen.” They have limitations, idiosyncracies, and reservations about their roles as activists. For example, Jamie Kass, a day care worker describes how her hands, then legs, started to shake and her whole body went into convulsions when she was forced to speak in front of 3,000 people at the 1980 CLC convention. And Loretta and Betty Burt who, in my view, offer the most enjoyable passages, never take themselves or their struggles seriously. They manage to convey, with much humor and a total lack of pretention, the blunders of Revenue Canada and the insensitivity of members of Parliament. Penny believes that work is an integral part of our lives. Unfortunately, however, because of a lack of autonomy and control, most individuals perceive work in a negative way. Thus she concludes that if we can gain some control, our work experiences will be more enjoyable, our personal lives will be richer, and we will generally feel better about ourselves. This book achieves a nice interplay between the labour force experience, the individual personality, and family life. Penny successfully illustrates how our work force experiences very much affect our personal development and how, in turn, our personal development and private lives shape our placement and experience in the labour force.

Although *Hard Earned Wages* does not offer particularly novel findings or theoretical insights, it does contribute to the literature in that it accomplishes all of this with a human touch. The book’s value lies in its ability to present the anecdotal, the personal side of real and current issues of which we are given concrete detail. It offers an insider’s glimpse at the ongoing fight between rank and file union heads, labour and management, citizens and Government. In short, it portrays women’s involvement in the current

events of Canadian society. Its presentation of women as powerful forces in the decision-making process, rather than the powerless victims of distant socio-political forces makes this book, in spite of its flaws, well worth reading.

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Women and Work: Inequality in the Labour Market. Paul Phillips and Erin Phillips. *Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1983. Pp. 205.*

Has the economic position of women improved since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women filed its report in 1971? According to Paul and Erin Phillips disparities remain between men and women and the social attitudes and institutions on which these inequalities are based also remain in place. Historical and contemporary data on income levels and occupational profiles are presented to prove this point.

The scope of the book, then, is narrowly focused on women doing paid work and does not deal with women's work in the home. The authors, however, begin with the assumption that the characteristics of women's labour market participation is "directly related to their primary responsibility for work in the home." The issue of the effect of this double ghetto on women in the labour market is addressed by synthesizing the evidence available in books, articles and government sources. As well as documenting the unequal position of women, the authors systematically evaluate alternative explanations. These include overt male discrimination, failure of women to acquire skills, biological differences as well as the social attitudes and institutions that wittingly or unwittingly discriminate.

Instead of relying solely on either orthodox economics, feminist or radical frameworks they draw on these alternative approaches to develop

their own analysis. In practice, this means that for each question, the authors assess whether the explanation offered by alternative frameworks corresponds to reality. They, then, answer the question by incorporating the most useful explanations with their own insights. What is missing is a concluding examination of the fit between each of the theoretical approaches and the issue raised on women in the Canadian labour market.

The authors group the issues into five sections. They begin with a rich chronology of the indispensable participation of women in the fur trade to the computer age. The questions raised in this section are crucial to understanding the position of women in the labour force. Have social and economic changes increased job and income opportunities for women? The number of jobs has increased but the differentiation in type of jobs and income levels remain. Why has the percent of married women in the labour force increased? Married women work to maintain real family income, to gain independence and because of the dissolution of marriages.

Why does wage and job discrimination exist? It is due to inhumanity of unregulated markets, imperatives of industrial capitalism, social institutions and attitudes of patriarchal society, the assignment of women to do unpaid domestic work and their role in reproduction. These factors are distilled into a systemic explanation. Women take low wage, transitory jobs offered by the marginal sectors of the economy because they have little formal training and child rearing responsibilities require integrated intervals at home. These jobs keep women dependant on a male wage earner and, thus, they have few choices but to continue fulfilling the role of reproduction of the family. This, in turn, reduces the cost of the male worker for the employers. In short, the current position of women in the labour force still exists because it is profitable.

This conclusion leads the authors to examine the origins and functions of inequality in the