

lack of power are regulated and maintained by the state, market and informal social institutions. Such forces of social exclusion are powerful protectors of privilege" (142). While others have made similar claims, what is distinctive about this book is that the authors move beyond abstract theorizing to reveal how specific policy changes foster these processes at the ground level. In doing so, Neysmith et al. bring in the voices and viewpoints of people frequently excluded from policy debates, specifically the poor and economically marginalized. Thus, they offer an important counterweight to policy research that recreates the vocabularies and ideas of those with privilege and power.

This book is a refreshing contribution to the study of social politics and administration that would fit well on course outlines in many fields, including social work, sociology, political science, and gender studies.

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Doing IT: Women Working in Information Technology.
Krista Scott-Dixon. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2004; 246 pages; ISBN 1-894549-37-6; \$26.95 (paper).

Doing IT: Women Working in Information Technology provides a window into how women are doing in the new occupational niches created by information technologies. Throughout this five-chapter book, Scott-Dixon juxtaposes the heady claims which heralded the arrival of IT in the latter part of the twentieth century with how the work-life and careers of women in this sector have been unfolding in the "real" world. Her intellectual focus is on whether and how information technologies have disrupted vs. reconstructed vs. reinforced existing worker inequalities based on class, race and gender. She is also concerned about what the answer to this "whether and how" question should mean not only to academic debates about IT work but also to the attitudes and political perspectives of women who have taken up IT work, sometimes achieving a high degree of material and professional success without reflecting on their and other IT workers' experiences and situations.

Scott-Dixon skillfully works back and forth between examinations of the "structural" features of high-tech work and the rich narratives of women who

work in the IT field. Rather than painting a picture which either celebrates or condemns the high-tech revolution, her portrait is multi-coloured and multi-textured, as she reveals an unfolding process in which opportunities for both material and non-material advancement open and close, simultaneously or consecutively. Along with them, the hopes and dreams of IT workers rise, then fall and often rise again. She reveals an immense variety in the situations and experiences of these workers, not only because of the systemic influences of their gender, race and class location but also because of things such as geographical location, time of entry into the IT field, and the nature of their skills and how they acquired them.

Scott-Dixon thus undermines the simplistic predictions and ideological blind spots of human capital theory which, in spite of its intellectual failings, continues to strongly influence policy-making. She also challenges the views of scholars and activists whose political commitments to worker equality are closer to her own. In their also simplistic, often dystopic predictions, these critics of IT fail to take into account the enormous resourcefulness and political potential of people who are pulled into the gravity field of technological change. Workers who find themselves on high-tech's roller coaster ride make and execute plans according to the opportunities as well as obstacles they confront: they do not react in any simple way to the technological imperative.

One weakness of the book is that Scott-Dixon frequently accounts for certain conditions of, and approaches to, IT work in terms of women's distinctive situation and perspective. For example, she argues that women in IT (in contrast to men) don't like to think in a linear way and tend instead to favour non-linearity, interconnectedness and pragmatism (97-102). Yet she uses interviews with only women to support her case. Interviews with men working at comparable levels would have provided better ground for making this argument. Hopefully, Scott-Dixon will adopt a gender-comparative method in future research since it will help to clarify whether IT workers' situations and experiences are shaped more by existing gendered differences, as she tends to claim, than by distinctive features of this technology which, as is claimed by some other researchers and commentators, challenge gender patterns and open up possibilities for gender-bending.

Doing IT is a valuable resource for challenging the technologically-determinist worldviews which are often uncritically presented in technical, policy-oriented and marketing discourses. To her credit, Scott-Dixon does not provide us with categorical answers to questions such as: Is work in the IT field a major advance to achieving equality in the work-place or does it continue or even worsen existing inequalities? Instead, she makes the case convincingly for seeing IT work as more fluid - a process unfolding and contingent - thus leaving open the possibility for political intervention by those who would use the opportunity to create a better future.

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Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents, and Possibilities. Braithwaite, Ann, Susan Heald, Susanne Luhmann & Sharon Rosenberg. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2004; Acks; i + 258 pages; ISBN 1-894549-36-8; \$28.95 (paper).

This volume is an insightful collection of stories about stories: more specifically, the stories that academics tell about the field of Women's Studies. The text contains four separate narratives that seek to illuminate the process by which Women's Studies has sought/seeks to define itself and its relationship to the women's movement(s) and feminism more generally. The trouble with Women's Studies, it posits, centres around feelings of ambivalence, separation and alienation: a recurring theme of "Paradise Lost" that is embodied within the internal debate around the discipline's own genesis, ascension, and perceived "fall from grace." The authors trace the attempt of the founding mothers to construct a "master narrative" of Women's Studies, and demonstrate how this process has excluded a polyphony of voices, erasing the disparate experiences of class, culture, ethnicity, and gender. If the "prime directive" of Women's Studies is both self-reflexivity and accountability, then Women's Studies epistemology contains a serious flaw, since it spends little time "exploring the difference that difference makes" (132).

While the motifs of alienation and loss lend the text an internal thematic cogency, they also give the work an overall flavour of Judeo-Christian-liberal ideology that is overwhelming at times, undermining

the authors' appeals to inclusivity and polyphony. The implied assumption throughout is the notion that the "new" and "innovative" are always "progressive," and that continuity retards evolution. As a professor of First Nations Studies who has taught courses in Women's Studies, I found myself questioning the "naturalness" of this attitude. First Nations cultures tend to stress continuity over radical change, recognizing a cyclical cosmology where nothing is ever really new, but is derivative of what came before it. In this worldview, continuity does not preclude change, innovation, or diversity: rather, continuity provides the social stability necessary for those elements to evolve.

Nevertheless, I found the text valuable for reflecting upon the state of my own discipline, noticing many parallels between the debates and dilemmas of Women's Studies, and those that occur in First Nations Studies. Particularly interesting was Susan Heald's examination of the Tayloristic aspirations of the modern academy, in which a university degree has been reduced to a commodity for which students are the intended consumers. In this model, curricula in disciplines such as Women's Studies (or First Nations Studies) that are rooted in experiential and emancipatory ethics don't pass the "cost-benefit" analysis of university administrators, students, or prospective employers: the benefit of receiving the education is not perceived to outweigh, or even match, the cost of its production (in terms of dedicated funding) or consumption (in terms of securing employment, or its potential use to employers). Overall, the text left me wondering if the modern academy has any room left for pedagogies that require a meaningful form of self-reflexivity and accountability, and if marginalized disciplines like Women's Studies sometimes choose co-optation as a form of survival. Ultimately, in contemplating our own disciplinary origins and identities, we must realize that we can't go "back to the garden" because it didn't exist in the first place.

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