

TAKING GENDER INTO ACCOUNT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

*More Than Just Women's Studies**

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GENDER PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE in defining the character and circumstances of daily life. Since the 1970s feminist scholars, and those who have been influenced by feminist scholarship, have produced reports, articles, books, videos, films, and radio broadcasts which document the critical influence of gender. For those of us located within and transformed by this perspective, it is easy to forget that the significance of gender in all social analyses is far from uncontroversial. While we have been engaged in the discovery and reconsideration of women's lives, much mainline, malestream scholarship continues apparently undisturbed by the insights that a feminist analysis offers. In some ways, gender is viewed as belonging especially to women; just as in the nineteenth century women were considered "the sex." According to such a perspective, men stand as the universal norm, appearing to possess neither gender nor sex. Men's gendered role is neither examined nor questioned by authorities who see men as the effective measure of humanity, or rather *mankind*. In the 1990s and beyond, if it is to be at last comprehensive and accurate, the study of British Columbia requires simultaneously both more research on women *and* recognition of the significance of gender in shaping the experience of both sexes in the province.

Femininity, like masculinity, is socially constructed. Differences between women and men, and girls and boys, are not simply derived from innate biological processes. That women have the capacity to bear children does not presuppose that women will be responsible for all child-rearing, preparing daily meals, or cleaning the toilets. The meaning attached to sex differences varies cross-culturally, through an

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individual's life course from infant to elder, and has changed over the history of British Columbia. The existence of matrilineal clans among the First Nations suggests far more equal relations between women and men than in past or present European societies, but few, if any, communities have entirely escaped a system of social relationships that privileges men and boys in relation to women and girls. Whatever form it takes, all known societies have attached differential meanings, socialization, and roles to the two sexes, and thereby constructed the social reality of gender. In most cases, the result has done considerable injury to women.

For all the reforms won by feminists, inequality between women and men still remains in place across Canada. By virtue of their class, race,¹ ethnicity, age, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation, some women have been much more privileged than others; but by virtue of their sex all women have been situated on the periphery of power and privilege in comparison to their brothers.² Governments in Canada, far from impartial, have often used legislation and policies to reinforce gender inequities. From protective legislation that kept women out of male jobs, to laws denying women the right to vote or guardianship over their children, to those restricting access to birth control or abortion, the legal structure has often been premised on the denial of female equality and the assumption of male privilege.³

Yet, for all the evidence of the different treatment and conditions of the two sexes, scholarly debate about the nature of British Columbia

¹ It should be noted that the categories of race used in Canada, and other societies, have no basis in scientific research. Not unlike the notion of gender, which is socially defined rather than biologically given, the concept of race is socially constructed and varies historically and cross-culturally. In the nineteenth century, for example, the Irish were considered a distinct (and inferior) race from the English in Canada, as were other southern European groups in the early twentieth century, although all are popularly considered part of the "Caucasian" race today. Although race has no scientific validity as a basis for distinguishing among people, its importance is the social significance a society comes to attach to specific markers (be it skin colour, facial shape, or culture) through a process known as racialization. The study of race examines the historical and contemporary processes of racialization, and the racist ideologies and behaviour that people experience. For discussions of the social construction of race see Robert Miles, *Racism*, (London: Routledge, 1989), John Stone, *Racial Conflict in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1985), B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li, ed., *Racial Oppression in Canada*, 2nd edition (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988), and Vic Satzewich, ed., *Deconstructing A Nation: Immigration, Multiculturalism & Racism in '90s Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1992).

² For an elaboration of this argument see Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Color of Gender: Reimagining Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

³ For an early example of evidence on this see Helen Gregory MacGill, *Laws for Women and Children in British Columbia* (Vancouver 1928). See also *Women and the Law* (Vancouver: Vancouver People's Law School, 1977). For an historical treatment of this subject see Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice. Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991).

has for the most part failed to take gender into account. A dominant theme in B.C. historiography is the controversy over the relative importance of race and class, with scholars lining up either behind the historian Peter Ward's advocacy of the ideology of race and racism as the key determinant in shaping the province, or the sociologist Rennie Warburton's insistence on the greater significance of capitalist structures and class conflict.⁴ A few observers have also sought to look at the relationship between the dynamics of race and class.⁵ But the unitary construction of the concepts guiding most of this research has for the most part limited understanding of both class and race to the world of men.

In the great majority of discussions about race and/or class, women have remained absent, either as class actors or as members of ethnic or racialized communities. Evidence of what constitutes class-based or racialized practices and consciousness has focused on issues and events as seen through and defined by a minority of British Columbians — mostly white males, and occasionally men of other racialized communities. In debating whether particular events occurred due to racism or class struggle, historical subjects have been treated as if constituted separately as classes and racialized groups, rather than as both simultaneously. Not surprisingly, this kind of analytic separation, so evident in most work on the province's ethnic communities and its workforce, also remains resolutely ungendered.

Yet, for all the failure to acknowledge the presence of gendered subjects, gender has not actually been ignored in debates about the nature of B.C. society. In fact, gender has figured centrally in what scholars have selected as research questions, the choice of facts to accumulate, and the assigning of significance. This focus on the male sex has been largely unconscious and usually unstated, and thus gender has not been employed analytically. Men's contribution to British Columbian society is naturalized as the normal order of things and its gendered character thereby obscured, while women's contribution is rendered "deviant" or entirely invisible. In the process, the lives of women and men are distorted.

In particular, the meanings attached to being male, that is the gendered nature of masculinity itself, have seldom been subjected to

⁴ Peter Ward, "Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia," *BC Studies* 45 (Spring 1980): 17-35, and Rennie Warburton, "Race and Class in British Columbia: A Comment," *BC Studies* 49 (Spring 1981): 79-85.

⁵ See for example Robert Wynne, *Reactions to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia* (N.Y.: Arno Press, 1978), and Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" *BC Studies* 80 (Winter 1988-89): 24-49.

scrutiny.⁶ Rarely have men been studied *in relation to* the women and children with whom they live, or their behaviour considered in terms of the social construction of masculinity. The male experiences of politics, work, community, or colonial domination are mistaken for the full, or most normal, range of options. In most cases this male norm not only excludes women, it is further limited to heterosexual men of British, or at best European, origin, ignoring gay men and those from other racialized groups. How becoming and being a man may take different forms is left unexamined. As a result, despite the preoccupation with one sex, we know less than we might about what it actually means to be male in B.C.⁷

It seems necessary to emphasize that men too are gendered, and to ask what that means in our research. Like women, men live in a world in which their sense of self, the social norms they learn to accept, their sense of appropriate social roles for themselves and others, and generally the structure of possibilities and constraints throughout their lives, are all shaped by the social construction of patriarchy⁸ and masculinity and their variation by class, race, culture, sexual orientation, and historical period. But despite claims to the contrary, no one has yet, as one historian rather mischievously proclaimed, "redinked" the history of British Columbia.⁹

The tradition of Eurocentric and malestream thought in academic research¹⁰ has combined with the polarization of debate around the meaning of class and race in B.C. to make it extremely difficult either to advance the discourse itself or to propose a still different interpretation.¹¹ Feminist scholars in the province, and elsewhere, have had to struggle to enter a contest whose terms already largely excluded their

⁶ For this problem in general see Greta Nemiroff, *Women and Men: Interdisciplinary Readings on Gender* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1987), and Robert Sweeny, "Class, Gender and Modernity: Recent Debates in Canadian History/Rapports de classes, rapports de sexes et modernité: débats actuels en histoire canadienne," *ACS Newsletter/Bulletin de l'AEC* XIV, 1 (Spring/Printemps 1992): 19-22.

⁷ For some exceptions see Neil Sutherland, "We always had things to do': The Paid and Unpaid Work of Anglophone Children Between the 1920s and the 1960s," *Labour/Le Travail* (Spring 1990): 105-141, and Jean Barman, *Growing up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984).

⁸ Patriarchy refers to a system of social relationships, including both ideologies and structural differences in power, that privileges men while disadvantaging women.

⁹ Robin Fisher, *Duff Pattullo of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), xii.

¹⁰ For observations on malestream thought generally see CRIAW, *Knowledge Reconsidered: A Feminist Overview* (Ottawa: CRIAW, 1984) or Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

¹¹ On some of the results of this polarization, but not revealing its meaning for gender analysis, see Robin Fisher, "Matter for Reflection: BC Studies and British Columbia History," *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993-94): 59-77.

contribution. For two decades now, feminist scholars have demanded equal time for the discussion of gender in causation. Yet any perusal of publications on British Columbia tends to the conclusion that, for the most part, this is a dialogue of the deaf. While a growing number of publications consciously explore aspects of women's lives, the great majority remain determined to cast male experience as the social norm. The last fifteen years of the journal *BC Studies*, for example, includes only twelve articles that focus on aspects of women's lives, and an additional eleven that include some consideration of gender, out of nearly two hundred articles published.¹² Recently a special anniversary issue of *BC Studies* celebrated twenty-five years of scholarly research on B.C. with articles on anthropology, economics, history, literature, political science, and sociology. Most of these essays ignored the influence of feminist work in their respective disciplines.¹³ A welcome development is the appearance of the present special issue of *BC Studies*, with its effort to explore the meaning of gender and the experience of women in B.C. It should be noted, however, that this special issue on gender has followed those on, inter alia, Vancouver, historical geography, archaeology, cultural history, the First Nations, politics and government, and labour.

Part of the reason for the continued failure to take gender seriously is linked to the common assumption that problematizing gender equals the study of women. Since gender is assumed to be the special prerogative of women, a feminist perspective can only be applied to research where women are physically present in the context of the study. To take gender into account, in this view, is to support separate women's studies and to acknowledge the presence of women when they directly enter the scholar's field of vision. We do not want to downplay the importance of acknowledging women, especially given the previous almost total silence about women's lives, but it is, quite simply, not enough. The absence of women in some context — for example, turn-of-the-century logging camps — or the absence of men in another context — like daycare crèches during World War II — is

¹² The authors conducted an examination of *BC Studies* numbers 44 through 103 (1980-1994), identifying articles focusing on women or "women's issues" and those including some attention to gender relations. The twenty-three articles meeting these criteria account for approximately 12 per cent of those published during this period.

¹³ It would appear that some disciplines have been more profoundly influenced by feminist research than have others. For a discussion of the importance of gender in sociological research on B.C. see Gillian Creese, "The Sociology of British Columbia," *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993-94): 21-42. The only other article in the anniversary issue that includes any reference to gender, though it is not extensive, appears in Robin Fisher's "Matter For Reflection: *BC Studies* and British Columbia History": 59-77.

also directly linked to the social construction of gender. Feminism, as a theoretical perspective, and women's studies, as an area of specialization, have developed hand-in-glove; but feminist insights have much wider implications not confined to the area of women's studies. An appreciation of the significance of gender requires a rethinking of the entire world, not merely of female lives.

To a certain extent, early feminist scholarship on B.C., like its counterpart elsewhere, contributed to this tendency to conflate women's studies with the study of gender. Despite divisions among different theoretical schools — chiefly liberal, radical, and socialist in the early years — feminist scholars tended to bring women into a discourse from which we had been excluded by prioritizing gender as *the* central social process, and by downplaying the crucial meanings of class, racial, ethnic and other identities and power relations.¹⁴ Such was the case, for example, with many of the selections in *In Her Own Right* (1980) and *Not Just Pin Money* (1984), the first two volumes on women in British Columbia.¹⁵ While much can be said in defence of path-breaking investigations, often conducted in face of ridicule and antagonism, the narrow orientation of some studies also made it easier to ghettoize feminist scholarship. Women's studies, so it seemed, "did" gender, in the process letting everyone else off the hook, able to concentrate on the general study of life in British Columbia.

Over the last decade, however, feminist scholarship as a whole has shifted. This transformation has taken investigators from the early add-and-stir approach that placed women in existing malestream accounts, to woman-centred research that refocused questions from the vantage point of women, and finally toward non-sexist research that problematizes gender relations for women and men.¹⁶ While far from complete, and more common in some aspects of feminist scholarship than others, the latter position represents a shift to recognizing that gender is a key determinant in men's and women's lives.

The evolution of feminist scholarship, so long dominated by white, heterosexual, middle-class women, has been increasingly challenged

¹⁴ For further comments on these perspectives see "Introduction" to G. Creese and V. Strong-Boag, eds., *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1992).

¹⁵ Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess, eds., *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C.* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), and Barbara Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984).

¹⁶ Margrit Eichler "The Relationship Between Sexist, Nonsexist, Woman-Centred and Feminist Research," *Gender and Society: Creating a Canadian Women's Sociology*, ed. Arlene Tigar McLaren (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988).

by working-class activists, lesbians, and women of colour, among others, to recognize the limitations of a white, heterosexist, and middle-class perspective.¹⁷ In learning to listen to those who wish to tell their own story in their own words,¹⁸ self-conscious feminist scholarship is slowly relearning and extending old lessons about privilege and exclusiveness. As a result, feminist emphasis on prioritizing gender has increasingly shifted to the interconnections among gender, race, and class in shaping the lives of all women and men in different ways.¹⁹ The work of anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, notably her *Life Lived Like a Story*, and sociologist Alicja Muszynski, among others, reflect this shift.²⁰ In B.C., the sophisticated recognition of the historical interconnections among ethnicity, class, and gender, such as revealed in Joy Parr's *The Gender of Breadwinners*,²¹ is, however, as yet only too rare. And while the connections between gender, race, and class are receiving more attention, issues of sexuality and sexual orientation, among women or men in B.C., have yet to be subjected to serious scholarship.²²

¹⁷ For example, the events surrounding the Banff conference on violence against women in May 1991, and the more temperate but still passionate debates among participants in the "Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures" conference sponsored by Simon Fraser University's Women's Studies Programme in 1988. Also see "Unity being challenged by race, class issues," *Globe and Mail* (May 29, 1991): A1, A6, and *Kinesis* (1991): passim. See also the critical articles by Himani Bannerji, "Returning the Gaze" and Linda Carty, "Women's Studies in Canada: A Discourse and Praxis of Exclusion," *Resources for Feminist Research/Documentation sur la Recherche Feministe* 20, 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 1991): 5-11, 12-18; and *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*, edited by Himani Bannerji (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993).

¹⁸ See Lenore Keeshig Tobias and Marlene Nourbese Philip, in *Language in Her Eye: Views on Writing and Gender by Canadian Women Writing in English*, ed. L. Scheier, S. Sherad, and E. Wachtel (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1990).

¹⁹ See for example the special issue "Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers" of the *Society for Socialist Studies* Number 5, 1989. For a discussion of immigrant women see Roxanna Ng, "The Social Construction of 'Immigrant Women' in Canada," in *The Politics of Diversity*, ed. Roberta Hamilton and Michele Barrett (Montreal: Book Centre Inc., 1986).

²⁰ Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), and Muszynski, "The Organization of Women and Ethnic Minorities in a Resource Industry: A Case of the Unionization of Shore Workers in the B.C. Fishing Industry, 1937-1949," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 89-107, and "Race and Gender: Structural Determinants in the Formation of British Columbia's Salmon Cannery Labour Forces" *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 13, 1-2 (1988): 103-120.

²¹ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

²² For one exception see M. Julia Creet, "A Test of Visibility: Lesbian Visibility in the British Columbia Federation of Women," in *Lesbians in Canada*, edited by Sharon Dale Stone (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990): 183-197. Adele Perry's article in this volume also touches on these issues. See "'Oh I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men': Gender-Imbalance, Race, Sexuality, and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia." For an introduction to lesbian history in B.C. see the National Film Board video, *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives* (Directors Aerlyn Weissman and Lynne Fernie, c. 1992). Lesbian

While feminist discourse has been slowly moving to reconsider simple dualisms, malestream scholarship has, for the most part, ignored and marginalized feminist insights into the complexity of human relationships. The continued belief that feminist theory and concern with gender relations are equivalent to women's studies, and that gender is only to be commented upon when women are directly present in the research field of vision, limits far too many studies of B.C. Stubborn assumptions that gender has no relevance to the study of general processes and social institutions continue to thrive, as if there are any institutions we have created, or social processes we have experienced, that take place fully outside of the context of gender relations.

To be sure, recent developments in the study of First Nations peoples suggest the decentring of Eurocentric thought. Where previously aboriginal life was examined through the spectacles of a small group of white males, scholars are now attempting to view events through native peoples' eyes. Recent articles by Cole Harris on the Fraser Canyon and Robert Galois on the burning of Kitsegukla, like the study of the potlatch by Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, show a new appreciation for the complexity of First Nations culture.²³ While gender remains absent as an analytic tool in these particular assessments, the sensitivity of native studies scholarship to questions of appropriation and voice promise a willingness to deconstruct male identity, to consider its multiplicity and simultaneity. Elsewhere in Canada, developments in labour studies are also making a tentative start to deconstruct male identity in the self-conscious analysis of the meaning of masculinity among white male workers.²⁴

Unfortunately, the potential, glimpsed in First Nations and labour studies, is as yet largely unrealized in most evaluations of British Columbia. The publication of three recent texts reveals the state of the field in general. Patricia Roy's *A History of British Columbia* includes

writers in B.C. have also made a marked contribution to Canadian literature. Readers who wish to explore this contribution should consult writing by Ann Cameron, Jena Hamilton, Daphne Marlatt, Shani Mootoo, Jane Rule, and Betsy Warland.

²³ See Harris, "The Fraser Canyon Encountered," *BC Studies* 94 (Summer 1992): 5-28, Galois, "The Burning of Kitsegukla, 1872," *ibid.*: 59-81, and Cole and Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990).

²⁴ See "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (Spring 1989): 159-169, and Mark Rosenfeld, "It was a Hard Life: Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950," *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1988): 237-279.

only one article in which the subjects are women.²⁵ Only two other articles show any consideration of gender relations, both, not coincidentally, on schooling in B.C.²⁶ Overall, the collection fails to acknowledge the role of gender relations in the formation of the province. Similarly, women and gender relations are absent from George Woodcock's *British Columbia: A History of the Province*.²⁷ While this volume attempts to integrate the perspectives of the First Nations, at least before Confederation, women (including First Nations women) are invisible save for the woman suffrage campaign. In welcome contrast, Jean Barman's *The West Beyond The West*²⁸ attempts to integrate women and First Nations peoples throughout the discussion of the province's economy, society, and politics. At the present time, unfortunately, Barman's work stands out as the exception rather than the rule in B.C. historiography.

As feminist scholarship moves beyond women's studies, and intersects with other interdisciplinary areas like labour and First Nations studies, it encourages us to take gender into account in all our research. This means consciously problematizing the naturalized gender constructions, social divisions, and power relations of the past and present. It means assessing how the social construction of, and relations between, masculine and feminine worlds help constitute human life in whatever sphere we are studying, as indeed they shape our very conceptualization of boundaries and linkages between social spheres. Mapping this new scholarly terrain is still uncertain, but as the following examples demonstrate, contributions to women's studies in British Columbia offer a point of departure in rethinking the entire province's history. Studies of gender relations among First Nations, in planning single-industry towns, in schooling, in the organization of domestic and wage work, and in issues of violence suggest the inseparable ties between the social construction of gender and its interconnections with race and class for understanding the general processes ongoing in society.

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²⁵ Marjorie Mitchell and Anna Franklin, "When You Don't Know the Language, Listen to the Silence: An Historical Overview of Native Indian Women in B.C.," *A History of British Columbia: Selected Readings*, ed. Patricia Roy (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989).

²⁶ Jean Barman, "A Tradition Emerges," and J. Donald Wilson, "The Visions of Ordinary Participants: Teachers' Views of Rural Schooling in British Columbia in the 1920s," *A History of British Columbia*.

²⁷ George Woodcock, *British Columbia: A History of the Province* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990).

²⁸ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

Jo-Anne Fiske's assessments of the Carrier peoples of the Nechako Plateau,²⁹ with their identification of the complicated interconnections of racial and gender identities, reappraise conventional notions about First Nations communities and their involvement with peoples of European origin. A portrait of connected spheres of female and male authority and respect emerges in which First Nations women are not marginal figures. Despite accounts of British Columbia which characterize European-First Nations relations only in terms of a racialist dynamic,³⁰ gender assumptions were embedded in the behaviour of each group. As Fiske demonstrates, the Carrier response to European fur-traders, gold-seekers, churches, settlers, and legal regimes was framed with reference to a pre-existing gendered culture which was disturbed rather than destroyed in the course of contact. In the process, female and male identities emerge not as monolithic but as contested terrain. While Europeans acknowledged only male leadership, and attempted to mould aboriginal societies in their image, the Carrier continued to accept both women and men in positions of power.

Perhaps paradoxically, some actions of the federal and provincial governments contributed to the further empowerment of women. The federal banning in 1911 of the weir fishery weakened men's role in the domestic economy while the role of women, who were traditionally responsible for the net fishery, was simultaneously strengthened. As traditional care-givers to their extended families, Carrier women have readily taken up positions as paid administrative and support staff for the elected council and as health and welfare para-professionals. Carrier men have no comparable recourse to wages and thus to authority in a capitalist economy. When viewed through the lens of European patriarchy which expects Carrier men to take precedence in public life, the role of women in Carrier social structure appears problematic. When viewed through the lens of feminist scholarship, the relationship between colonialism and capitalism in B.C. history now appears simultaneously as a gendered process that has different outcomes for women and men.

²⁹ See Jo-Anne Fiske, "Carrier Women and the Politics of Mothering," in *British Columbia Reconsidered*; "Fishing is Women's Business": Changing Economic Role of Carrier Women and Men," in *Native People, Native Lands*, ed. Bruce Cox (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987); and "Native women in Reserve Politics: Strategies and Struggles," in *Community Organizing and the Canadian State*, ed. R. Ng, G. Walker, and J. Mueller (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1988). See also Fiske's article in this volume: "The Supreme Law and the Grand Law: Changing Significance of Customary Law for Aboriginal Women of British Columbia."

³⁰ See, for example, Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).

As many local histories with their testimony to the efforts of female as well as male pioneers illustrate, settlement occurs in the context of ongoing gender relations.³¹ Nowhere is its gendered nature more evident than in single-industry towns. Dianne Newell, Marilyn Porter, and others³² have shown that fishing communities cannot be understood without sustained investigation of the interconnected nature of female and male labour. Similarly, the instant or company town phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s in B.C., assessed by scholars like John Bradbury and Patricia Marchak,³³ shows that male job prospects and skewed sex ratios daily construct the lives of women and men in different ways, making the experience of one sex incomprehensible without reference to the other. In towns like Gold River, Kitimat, Mackenzie, and Fraser Lake, definitions of femininity and masculinity have been tightly woven into the constraints of limited employment opportunities. The high wages and shift work available to men in mills and mines affect their understanding of masculinity, and inevitably influence their contacts with colleagues and relatives. With few exceptions, women's waged work has been limited and, for most, has not offered much of a focus for identity outside of home and family.

The planning of "suburbs in the bush"³⁴ took for granted that the sexes had very different careers.³⁵ In the apportioning of land, settle-

³¹ See Linda L. Hale and Jean Barman, compilers, *British Columbia Local Histories: A Bibliography* (Victoria: B.C. Heritage Trust, 1992). See also Adele Perry's article in this volume: "Oh I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men': Gender-Imbalance, Race, Sexuality, and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia."

³² See Dianne Newell, "The Industrial Archaeology of the Organization of Work: A Half Century of Women and Racial Minorities in British Columbia's Fish Plants," *Material History Review* 33 (Spring 1991): 25-36; Marilyn Porter, "Mothers and Daughters; Linking Women's Life Histories in Grand Bank, Newfoundland, Canada," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, ed. V. Strong-Boag and A.C. Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1991); "She Was Skipper of the Shore Crew': Notes on the History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Newfoundland," *Labour/Le Travail* 15 (1986): 105-123; and Ellen Antler, "Women's Work in Newfoundland Fishery Families," *Atlantis* 2, 1(1977): 106-13. See also Jane Nadel-Klein and Dona Lee Davis, eds., *To Work and to Weep: Women in Fishing Economies*, Social and Economic Papers No. 18 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988).

³³ See, for example, John Bradbury, "Instant Towns in British Columbia, 1964 to 1972," Ph.D. thesis, Geography, Simon Fraser University, 1977; The Northern Women's Task Force, *Report on Single Industry Resource Communities* (Vancouver: Women's Research Centre, 1977); Patricia Marchak, *Green Gold: The Forest Industry in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983); and the film "No Life for a Woman" (Serendipity Films Ltd., for NFB/ONF Pacific Region, Producer Bonnie Kreps, c. 1979).

³⁴ See Margaret P. Nunn Bray, "No Life for a Woman': An Examination and Feminist Critique of the Post-World War II Instant Town with Special Reference to Manitouswage," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1989.

³⁵ On urban suburbs see V. Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXII, 4 (Winter 1991): 471-504.

ments have been sharply divided into industrial and public space, effectively labelled male, and domestic and private space, assigned preeminently to women. In Kitimat, the gender hierarchy implicit in this allocation was confirmed by Alcan's failure to implement many original town planning proposals designed to make Kitimat a good place for wives and mothers.³⁶ Initial proposals from planners that fathers of young children not be required to work night shifts so they could share fully in family life were, for example, ignored.³⁷ Kitimat's ability to make profits for Alcan for much of the period since its founding have given it a reputation as a success, but what is the meaning of its accomplishment for women? In 1977 the Northern Women's Task Force concluded that:

women of Kitimat are most often wives who are kept indoors (with their children, if preschool age) due to the inclement weather, and the lack of support services for a major portion of the year; and it is known that there is a high incidence of mental illness for unemployed wives. Yet employment opportunities are scarce and even when a job is found it rarely offers enough money to live on. The lack of usable daycare again handicaps women in their efforts to become employed. When family breakups occur, women are more often than men the heads of single-parent families; and more women end up on welfare than men.³⁸

No wonder single-industry towns have been regularly dismissed as "no life for women." Taking gender into account in the analysis of life in single-industry towns paints a very different portrait than analyses that construct the general processes of economic development as an ungendered (but male-centred) experience.

Much as settlement is organized with regard to gender, so too is schooling and the transition to work. A recent volume by Jane Gaskell, *Gender Matters From School to Work*,³⁹ sets out the consequences of commercial classes and secondary schooling for working-class girls

³⁶ These included the creation of a community centre, a day care centre, and extensive, covered play areas for children. The impetus behind these suggestions was indicated in the comments of one planner, Lois Barclay Murphy, "Efficient workers must also be happy workers; and they cannot be happy without happy wives and children. . . . Frustrated, cross children drive their mothers crazy; cross wives frustrate their husbands. Good health adjustment requires planning for all ages.", *Kitimat Townsite Report*, 1951-2: 43.

³⁷ See the failure to take up the recommendations either in the *Kitimat Townsite Reports* (1951-2 and 1953-8) or in the Northern Women's Task Force, *Report* (1977).

³⁸ Northern Women's Task Force, *Report* (1977): 36.

³⁹ Jane Gaskell, *Gender Matters From School to Work* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992).

and boys. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, vocational education was commonly introduced to provide practical training for the majority of students who would not advance beyond high school or aspire to professional or managerial jobs. Today, overwhelmingly working-class students enrol in secretarial, business, industrial, and commercial classes as time-worn routes to immediate employment on leaving school. Just as they did earlier in the twentieth century, girls and boys assume that certain classes are most appropriate to each gender, with girls gravitating toward commercial classes while boys enrol in technical and industrial subjects. In co-educational institutions children are matter-of-factly channelled, not only by their own inclinations and talents but by a series of social expectations framed in terms of gender, class, and race. In contrasting Gaskell's working-class youngsters with Jean Barman's boys in the Vernon Preparatory School or Elizabeth Bell-Irving's account of girls at Crofton House School,⁴⁰ differences of class and gender clearly interact to foster wide variation in the sense of entitlement. Other studies of industrial schools for children designated as deviant or criminal⁴¹ and of residential schools for First Nations youngsters⁴² confirm how so-called equal educational opportunities have shaped and furthered long-standing inequities in the province. To some degree girls shared the experience of their brothers, but female students, like those at the Lejac Residential School, always encountered a system which presumed a certain model femininity. Boys similarly encountered assumptions about what behaviour and careers were appropriate for adult males.

In whatever programme they have found themselves, children develop very specific ideas about the appropriate relationship between work and home. Pragmatic observers of the world about them, girls regularly expect to assume the primary responsibility for domestic labour, and their choices of waged labour are made accordingly. Boys, in contrast, regularly anticipate continuing their fathers' advantages in fewer domestic responsibilities and envision a more sustained and

⁴⁰ Jean Barman, *Growing Up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), and Elizabeth Bell-Irving, *Crofton House School: The First Ninety Years 1898-1988* (Vancouver: Crofton House School, 1988).

⁴¹ See Indiana Matters, "Sinners or Sinned Against?: Historical Aspects of Female Juvenile Delinquency in British Columbia," in *Not Just Pin Money*, ed. Barbara Latham and Roberta Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984); and D.L. [Indiana] Matters, "The Boys' Industrial School: Education for Juvenile Offenders," in *Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia*, ed. J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1980).

⁴² See Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Canadian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum, 1988).

better-paid commitment to the labour market. As a result of their observations and of adult and peer pressures, children of similar intellectual gifts make very different academic choices. Parents, teachers, and students contribute to the creation of distinct agendas played out in the classroom and the schoolyard, where gendered, class, and racial identities are simultaneously negotiated. Once adults, most women and men experience considerable difficulty in veering too far from the gendered courses set in their childhood.

While studies in education are confirming how childhood schooling and adult career choices have been profoundly influenced by gender, most research on work in British Columbia is limited to paid labour in the formal economy. Unpaid work, in the home, on the farm, or in the family business, is usually invisible and unvalued; it is also mostly performed by women.⁴³ Only slowly are the tools, skills, and politics of these workplaces being explored. In the meantime old assumptions die hard. Concepts like “working mothers,” coined to refer to mothers in the paid labour force — as if full-time mothers do not work — still crop up in discourses of every kind. All mothers work, but some also work for pay and perform a double day of labour. Martin Meissner’s research on domestic labour in B.C. shows that when we add paid and unpaid work together, women work considerably longer hours than men.⁴⁴ Yet ironically the academic and public image of the quintessential worker is still male. Indeed, it seems that wages themselves confer a degree of masculinity, the absence of which can be problematic for men.

Failure to recognize the gendered construction of labour also affects most studies of paid work. A central feature of the formal economy is systematic gender segregation of the labour market. Women constitute nearly half the labour force today but work in a limited number of occupations, mostly clerical and service, with few possibilities for promotion and much lower wages than men, a pattern that has changed little over the last century.⁴⁵ Most occupations are gendered, considered especially appropriate for one sex, and women’s work is

⁴³ For example see Barbara Powell, “The Diaries of the Crease Family Women” in this volume.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Martin Meissner, E. Humphreys, S. Meiss, and W. Scheu, “No Exit for Housewives: Sexual Division of Labour and the Accumulation of Household Demands,” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 12, 4:1 (1975): 424-439; and Meissner, “The Domestic Economy — Half of Canada’s Work: Now You See It Now You Don’t,” in *Women’s Worlds: From the New Scholarship*, ed. M. Safir et al. (New York: Praeger, 1985).

⁴⁵ For current trends see Labour Canada, *Women in the Labour Force 1990-1 Edition* (Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1990). For historical trends in B.C., see Creese, “The Politics of Dependence: Women, Work and Unemployment in Vancouver Before World War II,” in *British Columbia Reconsidered*.

systematically devalued through the historical construction of gender-biased definitions of skill.⁴⁶ Feminist scholars have begun to research many aspects of women's paid labour, from experiences in female-dominated occupations to women's influence in trade unions.⁴⁷ Women's presence in the provincial labour force is now routinely included in mainstream research. In some respects, feminist research has had its greatest impact, outside of women's studies, in the study of paid work; yet most research fails to include gender as anything more than another descriptive variable. In fact, gender relations structure the labour force, and men's and women's participation in it, in much more profound ways than are currently acknowledged in most studies.

As Melody Hessing's research on clerical workers in B.C. has shown, the gendered worlds of paid and unpaid work are intimately connected, with heavy domestic responsibilities structuring women's labour force participation and rationalizing their subordinate position in the workplace.⁴⁸ It should be equally clear that domestic arrangements determine men's labour force participation too, and the assumption that men are normal workers affects the way paid work is organized. Male career and mobility patterns, involving a primary commitment to the workplace, are conceptualized as the norm, but typically rely on women doing the marketing, cooking, cleaning, laundering, and child-rearing. If we take gender relations into account, we realize that without women's unpaid labour men's labour force participation would be different and more restricted. The existing corporate culture would be more difficult to maintain, with more pressure to restructure the workplace and accommodate flex time, shorter hours, on-site daycare, and other family-friendly initiatives

⁴⁶ See Cynthia Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How* (London: Pluto Press, 1985). Also Jane Gaskell, "The Social Construction of Skill Through Schooling: Implications for Women," *Atlantis* 8, 2 (Spring 1983): 11-25; and "What Counts as Skill? Reflections on Pay Equity," in *Just Wages A Feminist Assessment of Pay Equity*, ed. Judy Fudge and Patricia McDermott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ For example see Marjorie Lang and Linda Hale, "Women of the World and Other Dailies: The Lives and Times of Vancouver Newspaperwomen in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century," *BC Studies* 85 (Spring 1990): 3-23; William Carroll and Rennie Warburton, "Feminism, Class Consciousness and Household-Work Linkages Among Registered Nurses in Victoria," *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Fall 1989): 131-145; Alicja Muszynski, "Race and Gender: Structural Determinants in the Formation of British Columbia's Salmon Cannery Labour Forces," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 13, 1-2 (1988): 103-120; Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915," *BC Studies* 41 (Spring 1979): 36-55; Donald Wilson, "Lottie Bowron and Rural Women Teachers in British Columbia, 1928-1934," in *British Columbia Reconsidered*; Melody Hessing, "Talking on the Job: Office Conversations and Women's Dual Labour," *ibid.*; and Gillian Creese, "The Politics of Dependence," *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Melody Hessing, "Talking on the Job: Office Conversations and Women's Dual Labour," in *British Columbia Reconsidered*.

that currently affect women much more than men. Gender relations provide an essential analytic tool for understanding the structure of the paid workplace, forcing us to consider its masculine and patriarchal organization and its meaning for both sexes, instead of trying to fit women awkwardly into existing male-centred accounts of economic life.

Our understanding of conflict and violence is also transformed when re-examined through a feminist lens. Traditional accounts of conflict in B.C. concentrate on political and industrial action and interracial clashes for their awareness of the meaning, outcome, and remedy for conflict. Males are overwhelmingly portrayed as the instigators, perpetrators, and victims of these struggles, but how their notions of masculinity contribute to the particulars and dynamics of their experience have gone unexamined. This omission occurs despite the fact that many participants have a strong sense of masculinity being on the line, picket or otherwise, which has no doubt added to the fierceness and complexity of many confrontations.⁴⁹ While public battles of every kind have monopolized texts by Martin Robin and others,⁵⁰ it is also clear, even from partial reporting, that relationships of trust provide the context for most injury, physical and otherwise.

A study of criminal offences in turn-of-the-century B.C. illustrates the province's long history of sexual assault and the victimization of women and children.⁵¹ Women's organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union⁵² and Women Against Violence Against Women have pointed to the pervasiveness and influence of male violence against women and children. Right up to the present, B.C. shares with the rest of Canada a bleak history of an outrageous betrayal of trust by males in their roles as fathers, husbands, priests, teachers, and doctors.⁵³ Recently, the report of the B.C. Task Force on

⁴⁹ See Jeremy Mouat, "The Politics of Coal: A Study of the Wellington Miners' Strike of 1890-91," *BC Studies* 77 (Spring 1988): 3-29; Hugh Johnston, "The Surveillance of Indian Nationalists in North America, 1908-1918," *ibid.* 78 (Summer 1988): 3-27; Gordon Hak, "Line Up or Roll Up: The Lumber Workers Industrial Union in the Prince George District," *ibid.* 86 (Summer 1990): 57-74; and James Conley, "Open Shop Means Closed to Union Men: Carpenters and the 1911 Vancouver Building Trades General Strike," *ibid.* 91-92 (Autumn/Winter 1991-92): 127-151.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Martin Robin, *The Company Province* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972-3): 2 v.

⁵¹ Terry L. Chapman, "Sexual Deviation in British Columbia: A Study of Offenses Against Morality and Chastity, 1890-1920," unpublished manuscript.

⁵² See Lynn Gough, *As Wise as Serpents: Five Women & An Organization That Changed British Columbia 1883-1939* (Victoria: Swan Lake Publishing, 1988).

⁵³ Among the most notorious of recent cases are those of the psychiatrist James Tyhurst in B.C. and the Christian Brothers at the Mt. Cashel Orphanage in St. John's, Newfoundland: See

Family Violence, *Is Anyone LISTENING?*, confirms how gender and age help construct the proclivity to be victimized on the one hand and to become an aggressor on the other.⁵⁴ The accompanying *Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities: A First Nations Report*, by Sharlene Frank, confirms that race is also important in increasing the likelihood that women and children will become targets.⁵⁵ As a result, by the end of the 1980s some 50,000 to 70,000 B.C. school children are estimated to have witnessed violence against their mothers. At least another 171,000 female adults in the province have been, or will be, sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. Women are also very much more likely to be either injured or killed by their male partners than by strangers. In face of such evidence the persistent preoccupation in academic literature with the much more episodic events of class-based and interracial conflict needs, at the very least, re-examination. Racial conflict such as the 1907 anti-Japanese riots in Vancouver,⁵⁶ or industrial conflict such as the pitched battles between strikers and police in the early history of unionization in B.C.,⁵⁷ need to be placed in the context of a society which experiences widespread violent behaviour at the most intimate level. Many men have acted in the public world in ways they often knew well from their private relationships with women and children, leading us to recast conflict based on class or racial divisions from an aberration to behaviour in keeping with particular constructions of masculinity. The limited literature on women in situations of potential racial or class conflict also suggests that gender socialization is influential in shaping strategies different from those of men similarly located.⁵⁸

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Christopher Hyde, *Abuse of Trust* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991); Michael Harris, *Unholy Orders* (Markham, Ontario: Viking, 1990); and Dereck O'Brien, *Suffer Little Children* (St. John's, Newfoundland: Breakwater, 1991).

⁵⁴ B.C. Task Force on Family Violence, *Is Anyone LISTENING?* (Victoria: Ministry of Women's Equality, February 1992).

⁵⁵ Sharlene Frank, *Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities. A First Nations Report* (Victoria: Ministry of Women's Equality, March 1992).

⁵⁶ See Ken Adachi *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

⁵⁷ See Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver: B.C. Federation of Labour and Boag Foundation, 1967), and Patricia Wejr and Howie Smith, *Fighting for Labour. Four Decades of Work in British Columbia 1910-1950* (Victoria: Provincial Archives, Sound Heritage Volume III, No.4, 1978).

⁵⁸ See William K. Carroll and Rennie Warburton, "Feminism, Class Consciousness and Household-Work Linkages Among Registered Nurses in Victoria," *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Fall 1989): 131-145; and Karen van Dieren, "The Response of the WMS to the Immigration of Asian Women," in *Not Just Pin Money*, ed. Barbara Latham and Roberta Pazdro (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984).

This brief foray into contemporary feminist research illustrates how gender affects all spheres of social life and, once considered, forces us to reinterpret traditional explanations and approaches. Women and men are not isolated individuals, as classical liberalism would have us believe, but beings constructed on a daily basis as females and males within a complexity of gender, class, racial, and other social hierarchies. Gendered identities and power relations shape all aspects of social life, often in complex and contradictory ways, and never in isolation from other relations of power and privilege. Yet the common assumption that gender equals women, so its consideration can be confined to women's studies, continues to produce research that resonates with uncritical masculinist thinking that is bound to result in partial understandings and flawed generalizations. The ghettoization of feminist approaches serves to reproduce the privileged position of men and malestream thought, while at the same time undermining the quest for more accurate research. At the very least, it is incumbent upon all serious scholars of British Columbia to listen to feminist scholars and to begin to ask how gender might affect the social processes, structures, and individual experiences that constitute their fields of expertise.