

***Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939.* Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; 189 pages; ISBN 0-8020-7818-4; \$21.95 (paper).**

Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias set out to explore the historical roots of pay inequity in Canada and are driven by two very important questions: how did women become confined to lower paying work, and why did this happen? Their book, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939*, provides important insights into these questions and helps us understand the social, political, cultural, religious and economic factors that contributed to the development of Canada's contemporary division of labour and women's subordinate place within it.

The book covers a crucial time period, the formation of Canadian industrial capitalism, and laudably incorporates data on a broad cross-section of women's jobs in diverse categories of employment, including service, retail, factory, sex, home and white collar work, while exploring how this work was understood, experienced, shaped and regulated. As an anthropologist, I appreciate the authors' interweaving of statistical data and public policy with the voices of real workers, a conceptual format that makes the book's scope robust yet also accessible and readable. Data on women's embodied experiences of work, including the impact of socially prescribed clothing norms, and stories about real women's daily experiences of discrimination, such as the criticism from male co-workers and bosses alike that women telegraph workers sent Morse code with inefficient "womanly" musicality, highlights the depth, breath and absurdity of sexism, and humanizes the material for readers. Explorations of repression, as well as of women's strategic negotiation of the labour market and pursuit of pleasures outside of work, provide a rich picture of women's lives.

An overview of work-based resistance and trade union politics provides an important look at collective agency, but also provides an historical framing of the challenges and limitations of these efforts. Consequently, the book provides historical insights into the labour movement and gender battles therein, in addition to data on the origins of labour inequities.

The authors enlist intersectional analysis well to demonstrate how gender, class, ethnic, racial and religious politics were used to foster inter- and intra-gender discrimination and naturalize inequities. Frager and Patrias include significant consideration of women's cross-class encounters not only through workplace labour relations, but also through a discussion of social reform and the often complex and contradictory efforts of middle class social reformers which both buoyed and regulated working class women. The authors effectively

problematize "women" as a category, exploring different groups of women, internal heterogeneity, racism and classism, but also consider how women fostered collective support and struggle based primarily on gender and/or class.

Unfortunately, despite comprehensive bibliographies for each chapter, the book contains no in-text citations, footnotes or endnotes. This makes further research on a specific item of interest difficult and serves as a poor model of referencing for students. Overall, however, the book is an important resource for women's studies, labour studies and history students and an excellent introduction for newcomers to the scholarship on women's work in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada.

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