

you were devising a first-year experience program you will find examples, but little evidence, to convince your colleagues.

**2.2** The survey of colleges and universities used to develop a profile of what practices are in place, clearly shows that institutions have begun shifting away from blaming the students for failure (unpreparedness) to taking responsibility for enhancing the learning environment. The idea of colleges and universities as learning communities is central. The idea of sharing extant practices is helpful and the book provides useful description in this regard.

**2.3** Evaluating initiatives designed to ease transitions is an important process, but in this book it has a very “more research required” echo. Careful evaluation is rarely an afterthought anymore — most people think of it, but like many good intentions most people do not do it.

**Readers will draw differing conclusions.**

**3.1 Goals.** Some will lament an attempt to broaden the focus of the postsecondary mission. Here the cry will be that these best practices expand a social welfare function that is robbing colleges and universities of their role in invigorating the mind and honing talent. The diffusion of, or misdirection of, focus will be a strong lament.

**3.2 Responsibility:** Others will applaud an attempt at shifting scarce institutional resources toward helping students succeed. By highlighting learning communities an emphasis on integration shifts the onus from students as solely responsible for their own success or failure to institutions who share collectively in the responsibility for success and failure. This centering of the student learner will be strongly applauded.



Jacqueline Stalker & Susan Prentice (Eds). (1998). *The illusion of inclusion: Women in postsecondary education*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.  
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This book is a must-read for anyone working, teaching and learning in postsecondary education in Canada. It is about the illusion of equity for women, as students and faculty, in postsecondary education.

This collection of essays demonstrates that exclusionary practices [toward women] are still flourishing, despite formal

claims to the contrary, (p. 12). [T]he authors also analyze the chasm between the *appearance of inclusion* and the *reality of exclusion* (p. 13) (my emphasis).

Many barriers are documented which prevent women from full participation in higher education, barriers which are systemic and enduring. Many of these recommendations acknowledge that those marginalized participants, despite trying to change the system themselves, need support — collegial and hierarchical, institutional and societal.

The book, in structure and content, purports to a holistic, systematic and systemic approach to change. It has been carefully constructed in five parts; each part addresses a different component illustrating the contradictions of the appearance and the reality of women's participation in postsecondary education. The introduction, written by the editors, Stalker and Prentice, provides an excellent overview of the breadth and depth of the inequities that exist, while not in intent but certainly in impact. Quantitative data reveal that women are enrolling in university in greater numbers; yet qualitative data describe both the underrepresentation of women in traditionally powerful positions in the university and overrepresentation of women in many areas of support within the university: committee work, counselling and advising, program supervisors, part-time instructors, and as untenured faculty.

The first section of the book provides an historical overview for women in postsecondary education (Guillet) and specifically for native people (Collier). Guillet reminds women to be courageous, outspoken and especially vigilant to ensure that change is progressive and not regressive. Collier documents the plethora of ways that school systems exclude native people; educators simply do not understand or seem to want to learn about the Indian culture and philosophy. Indian women, as students in higher education, are in double jeopardy.

The second part of the book is written by and for women students, now the majority of "clients" in our universities, portraying the vast array of inequities they perceive within the classroom and university as a whole (Blackwell & Vezina). Sparks is especially humorous yet biting as she writes about the "one size fits all" nature of the university, a philosophy which is shown to extend to more than just furniture. These students are not just young, svelte, single and middle class; they may also be older, have different physiques, be married or divorced, be dual or single-parenting and may be working class. These women students are

led to believe that they are powerless: they are without resources (time, money, support) to be able to criticize the system publicly. However, they are successful; they creatively develop support systems to sustain themselves and their dependents and display an incredible tenacity to complete their programs, overcoming many challenges. De Chateauvert describes the privileged opportunity that she was given, as an aboriginal woman, to attain a profession but expressed concern that more cannot take advantage of that avenue due to funding constraints.

The third part of the book is written by women faculty, part-time and full-time faculty, reflecting about getting in and remaining/not remaining in *academe*. This section crystallizes the dilemmas continuously confronting women faculty and portrays the persuasiveness of systemic discrimination. Sheinin insists that, "in the academy, knowledge can be and is being endowed with gender," (p. 94) referring to it as "en-gender-ed by women and feminists who serve as academic administrators." More engendering must go on presumably by women and more women university administrators. Innis Dagg asks just how fair are hiring practices within higher education. She attests that ". . . [W]omen professors are needed to give women students role models and mentors, to elicit discussion among women in the classroom, to counteract male bias in the curriculum and in research, and to show women as authority figures," (p. 111). This article leads into the Tancred and Hook Czarnocki article asking how women can maintain excellence as teachers and researchers, wives *and* mothers? And why should women professors remain in universities where discrimination and harassment prevail and where the established patriarchy dominates?

Thus, the fourth part of the book describes policies and practices which continue to disregard, ignore, suppress and even disparage women in the university. Students should not be silent or silenced in the class by the professor or classmates. Hughes sums up the situation very well, "We must balance our obligation to encourage our students to think and to question with our obligation to enhance an appropriate learning environment; that environment must include *respect for all* [people — professor and] students in the room," p. 144 (my changes and emphasis). Hughes admits, though, that ensuring women's 'vocal presence' in the classroom is a complex task. The Tripp-Knowles article offers ways of transforming the curriculum, through both process and content, to accomplish balancing gender in science. The strategies, I allege, are

much more far-reaching than just the discipline of science and higher education; all educators would do well to follow her advice. Rubin and Cooper follow-up with short and long-term suggestions for overcoming gender inequity in the classroom.

In the short term . . . to publicly and financially support gender sensitivity in the teaching pedagogy. . . Over the long run . . . to include sensitivity to gender differences as an explicit criterion for selecting personnel for administrative, regular faculty, staff, visiting faculty and guest speakers. (pp. 162–163).

The final article here by Johnston on personal safety underscores the need for gender sensitivity awareness. Three points require further policy clarification. One, whose criteria of “safe” are being used? Different acceptable levels of safety exist between those empowered and unempowered within the university system. Two, why undertake further safety audits if the recommendations therein have yet to be implemented? And three, why are university administrators seemingly working in isolation? Minimal coordination appears to exist between the grounds and security staff.

The final part of the book illustrates aspects of the university climate which require alteration to make it “women-friendly.” Hornosty writes about the need for flexible and affordable child care. Hers is a student’s perspective but her comments are applicable to all primary care-givers in the university. Fisher Lavell’s account of being a student who is a working-class mother highlights three points. First, the road to graduation for some is much more arduous and longer than for others. Second, those who are resource-less act more resource-ful. Third, she revealed the uncaring nature of our society/university administration with her comment, “And when a student is spending more time meeting the requirements of her funding agency than she is doing course work, she is, in my opinion, not being aided,” (Fisher Lavell, p. 200). Stalker challenges the reader to start the revolution, putting an end to the illusion of inclusion in *academe*. Fittingly, the book ends with fifty-three recommendations from the Canadian Federation of University Women’s 1992 report by its original authors (Saunders, Therrien & Williams). The systemic and systematic changes needed were documented thoroughly and explicitly in 1992; in 1998, they remain, in the main, unheeded. I ask who will effect those changes? Will a critical mass exist so that the revolutionaries feel confident and secure enough to shake up

and redesign the system? Or in the process of “getting there” (tenured, full professor and in senior administration), will women’s courageous and outspoken nature be extinguished?

I thoroughly enjoyed the book. The book is not only *about* inclusion; the book *is* inclusive in terms of content, contributors, and approaches put forward toward making the university a truly gender-equitable institution. The articles are very well written and complement each other. Yet while the book refers to issues of women students who are older, of aboriginal origin and are of different social class, it does not address issues of the academy specific to women of colour, women who are differently abled and women who have a different sexual orientation. Moreover, it addresses women students and faculty, leaving out the perspective of the non-academic staff.

Hughes refers to the need for respect for others in the university. I believe that respect is the key to beginning the transformation process toward inclusion; moreover, its absence fosters a climate of exclusion. Disrespect runs rampant throughout the university: by professors to students and, in particular, to women students, to colleagues, and in particular women colleagues; by students to the non-academic staff (who are in the majority women), to women faculty, to each other and in particular women students; by university administrators to student groups and of student and faculty needs, to faculty groups and to certain departments within the university. I contend that until we members of the academy, women and men, admit to and grapple with disrespect in universities, many of these excellent recommendations when finally implemented will be ineffective. What is not desirable is for the *next* generation of women students and scholars to say, “The more things change, the more things stay the same,” as was said in *The Illusion of Inclusion*.

