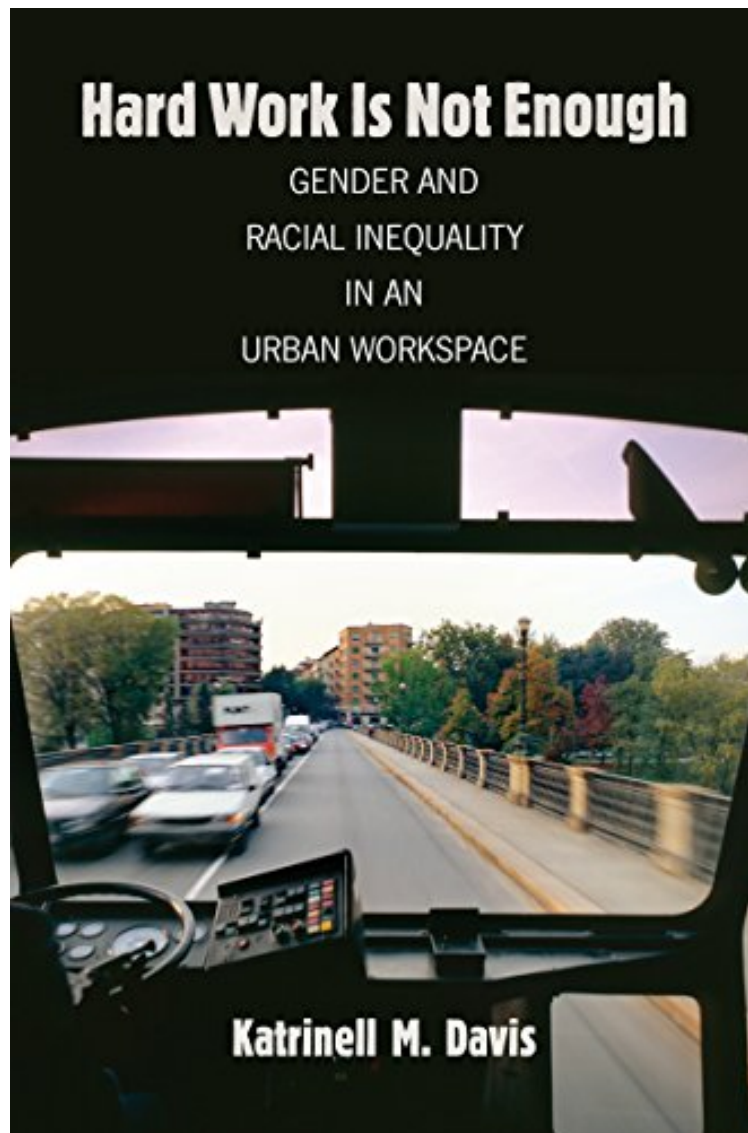


Hard Work Is Not Enough: Gender and Racial Inequality in an Urban Workspace

Katrinell M. Davis

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Katrinell M. Davis : Hard Work Is Not Enough: Gender and Racial Inequality in an Urban Workspace before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hard Work Is Not Enough: Gender and Racial Inequality in an Urban Workspace:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Racism and Sexism in San Francisco TransitBy Anna FaktorovichThis book echoes what I have been writing and thinking about lately. Gender and race bias is rampant today because the Great Recession left the most vulnerable Americans in a difficult position because they are more

disposable for the elite than the white men that continue to run Americans' businesses. American propagandists have been drumming that welfare is a crutch for the weak, and pushing the poor off it and into undesirable, dead-end jobs that do not give any hope for upward mobility. One of the central groups studied are African American transit women workers in San Francisco. They are kept down by de-unionization, and the resulting shifts in government policies that leave only a few narrow cracks for low-skilled workers to insert themselves into the capitalist system. I temporarily worked as a clerk in the Los Angeles transit system, so this is a familiar topic. This history is not only of the present day, but of the initial opportunity shifts that initially created this opening for unskilled, women and minorities when segregation and exclusion started to fade in the 1970s. From there the story moves through the decades into the present where these workers are still kept down by "persistent bias." One of the last interesting bits of the book are the digressions into discussions about these workers' mothers, children and other family members. The difficulty of maintaining a work-life balance takes center-stage. This constant stress of the role family plays in women's life, so much so that it can displace work as a serious concern, always bothers me. Just like men, some women are attached to families and take time out for them, while others are more passionate about their jobs. To stress the family as almost a superior womanly function shrinks these women into a stereotypical role instead of fully making an argument for their rights to be as workaholic or motherly as they feel like being. Another thing that's a bit odd is that two tables that show that African Americans and especially African American women made up a very small percentage of nationwide transit workers is offered in the center rather than at the start of the book. In my experience in Los Angeles, African American operators were probably a majority, but that's in 2008 and not back in 1960, when the percentage spiked up to 16% in the South, while it was only 6% in the West (48-9). If there were only a handful of women in a given line, each probably felt very isolated in this experience, so this data should be of more help at the start, so readers could visualize this gap. The picture on the cover is from inside a bus. The odd bit about it is that the road in front of the bus is completely clear as it is heading down a narrow bridge. The car heading towards it on the opposite side has crossed the white line separating the two directions of the road, and seems to be threatening to crash into the bus. This car and its neighbor seem to be stuck in a traffic jam. The operator's right hand is not visible, so that it almost seems as if the driver is not in her seat, possibly having left the bus. The only thing that cancels this theory is that the road ahead is blurred with motion, which would only happen to the rails of a bridge if the bus is moving. So, it's a mysterious image that attracts closer examination. A multi-dimension study of female African American transit workers' fight for upward mobility and success in their chosen careers. Table placement and a stress on the family is hardly cause to avoid reading a book about gender and racial equality. --Pennsylvania Literary Journal, Volume IX, Issue 1

The Great Recession punished American workers, leaving many underemployed or trapped in jobs that did not provide the income or opportunities they needed. Moreover, the gap between the wealthy and the poor had widened in past decades as mobility remained stubbornly unchanged. Against this deepening economic divide, a dominant cultural narrative took root: immobility, especially for the working class, is driven by shifts in demand for labor. In this context, and with right-to-work policies proliferating nationwide, workers are encouraged to avoid government dependency by arming themselves with education and training. Drawing on archival material and interviews with African American women transit workers in the San Francisco Bay Area, Katrinell Davis grapples with our understanding of mobility as it intersects with race and gender in the postindustrial and post-civil rights United States. Considering the consequences of declining working conditions within the public transit workplace of Alameda County, Davis illustrates how worker experience--on and off the job--has been undermined by workplace norms and administrative practices designed to address flagging worker commitment and morale. Providing a comprehensive account of how political, social, and economic factors work together to shape the culture of opportunity in a postindustrial workplace, she shows how government manpower policies, administrative policies, and drastic shifts in unionization have influenced the prospects of low-skilled workers.

Katrinell Davis provides a compelling account of the manner in which political, social, and economic factors interact to frame opportunities and inequalities in the postindustrial-era workplace. A substantial contribution that provides a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms related to downward shifts in the structure of work.--Angela James, Loyola Marymount University An illuminating case study of the experiences of African American women in an important American occupation. By studying African American women transit operators in the San Francisco Bay Area, Katrinell Davis sheds light on broader trends in work and social inequality.--Arne Kalleberg, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill About the Author Katrinell M. Davis is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Vermont.