

American Journal of Sociology

TechnoFeminism. By Judy Wajcman. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. Pp. viii+148.

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Judy Wajcman combines feminist concerns with the field of science and technology studies (STS) to discuss the feminist politics of technology. When Wajcman refers to technofeminism—as in “from the perspective of technofeminism”—she does not mean that technofeminism is a theory or political stance. Rather, technofeminism is an approach to understanding gender and technology, referring to the idea of the mutual shaping of gender and technology, “in which technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations” (p. 7). This approach neither dismisses technology as oppressive to women nor heralds technology as automatically liberatory.

I disagree with Wajcman’s insistence, which serves as a foundational framework for her book, that feminism has been “plagued” by understanding new technologies in such determinist ways, however. For the very feminist scholars she cites throughout the book—Cowan, Cockburn, Clarke, Haraway, and others—have for years offered far more sophisticated analyses that exemplify Wajcman’s “technofeminist” approach. Indeed, such feminist scholars have been leaders (and standard reading) in the field of social studies of science and technology, a field that, Wajcman acknowledges, rejects such technological determinism.

TechnoFeminism does not present original research by Wajcman but instead offers a summary of the work of other feminist STS scholars. While the book provides a helpful outline of some feminist studies of specific technologies, it will not satisfy those teaching courses on gender and technology who long for a textbook giving a comprehensive overview of the topic. Wajcman does not aim to provide that sort of textbook coverage but instead highlights communication and information technologies and touches on biomedical technologies.

For example, in the chapter “Virtual Gender,” Wajcman reviews some male scholars’ perspectives on community in cyberspace, then reviews some feminist perspectives on community in cyberspace, then reviews some feminist perspectives on community, sex, and gender in cyberspace, including Sadie Plant’s hopeful feminist uses of the Internet, Sherry Turkle’s analysis of communication and life “on the screen,” and Allucquère Rosanne Stone’s account of Lewin, the male psychiatrist who posed as a woman therapist to countless women whose trust was shattered when they discovered that Lewin was, in real life, a man. Wajcman concludes that all these scholars have overemphasized the freedom and choice of virtual communities and underemphasized women’s ongoing care for physically proximate communities. I do not share her reading of those feminist scholars as being utopian in their interpretations of cyberculture;

for example, Stone's portrayal of Lewin does not insist that the subject and the body are now, in cyberspace, separable, but instead presents a more nuanced picture of the possibilities and constraints of gendered identity and self-presentation online. Further, these studies were published between seven and ten years ago, and thus conducted when the Internet really was a different kind of space, before corporate media conglomerates took over the Web. More recent feminist scholarship on cyberculture, which Wajcman leaves out of this book, does reflect on these developments in cyberculture.

The following chapter, "The Cyborg Solution," summarizes the work of Donna Haraway, carefully distinguishing Haraway's sophisticated understanding of the cyborg as an ambiguous, ironic feminist political myth from a crude popularized account of the cyborg that implies we can transcend complex material differences. In the end, Wajcman concludes that "Haraway is much stronger at providing evocative figurations of a new feminist subjectivity than she is at providing guidelines for a practical emancipatory politics" (p. 101).

The final chapter, "Metaphor and Materiality," insists that feminist scholarship on technology does what Haraway does not: becomes more firmly rooted in a material analysis of women's lives. As an example Wajcman offers mobile phones, which might feel liberating in the hands of Western female users but quite different in the hands of the women mass producing them in factories or those in Central Africa mining under oppressive conditions for coltan, the mineral necessary for such electronic devices. Ultimately, this chapter speaks as much to nonfeminist STS scholars as it does to feminist scholars.

Because it mainly reviews material and perspectives rather than presents new research or analyses, *TechnoFeminism* does not offer very much to those feminist STS scholars who have already been reading this scholarship as it has come out. But it does offer a helpful introduction to those just beginning to realize the significance of the dramatic, interrelated social changes in both women's lives and technology. Further, by showing how previous analyses of technology and society are incomplete precisely because they ignored the gendered use of a particular technology, Wajcman argues convincingly that analyses of everything from transit systems to pap smears must include a technofeminist awareness of men's and women's often different positions as designers, manufacturing operatives, salespersons, purchasers, profiteers, and embodied users of such technologies. *TechnoFeminism* thus also offers an important corrective to anyone pursuing research on technology and society who might have had the impudent boldness to ignore gender issues.