# Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

YVONNE JEWKES (Ed.) *Dot.cons: Crime, Deviance and Identity on the Internet*. Portland, OR: Willan Publishing, 2003. viii + 200 p. Index..

This work assembles an eclectic range of essays in which authors analyse and express their concerns about the sociality and criminal potentiality of cyberspace, focusing specifically on the internet. They particularly concentrate on the transformative aspects of cyberspace identity and the ways it can be altered via constant changes to self-invention and self-presentation, while examining and problematising how cyberspace reflects and magnifies existing social inequalities of race, gender and socio-economic status. The edited collection, therefore, fits into the recent debate about the liberating and constraining elements of new information and communication technologies. This debate encompasses reflections on the potential for experimentation with gendered identity in which cyberspace may be understood as transformative spatiality; theories about the ways that traditional and innovative media have reconfigured possibilities for bodies, technologies, and gender; and critiques of technologically neutral or determinist positions that do not analyse differences within and between genders and the particular sociocultural histories of gendered practice.

Themed by Castells' assertion that people are becoming defined by what they are, rather than what they do or consume, and the impact this has for constructions of identity, the essays trace the difficulties of censoring social practices on the internet, engage with the debates about what actions may constitute a 'crime' when practiced in the privacy of one's home (indeed, a number of the chapters use Goffman's theories of public and hidden behaviours as frameworks for their analyses), explore how socially acceptable behaviour in one culture may be perceived as criminal in another, and examine the difficulties of industry self-regulation when the industry produces and operates in an amorphous knowledge-dimension.

Suggesting that the challenge for governments is to find a balance between free speech and protecting society, the essays examine in detail the social impacts of the masking of gendered identity, cyberstalking, identity theft, hacking, the purchase of women and children via a range of sites that present people as the ultimate commodity, and the ironic rise of counter-cultures via the internet as a technological arena that was first designed as part of a United States defence strategy. All authors critically examine the dominant utopian view of cyberspace as an enhanced and superior reality. Yet, while many authors focus on the specific social problems generated by the expansion of the internet, all do not argue for responses that are cyber-

specific. For example, an alternative suggestion to the debate about regulation of information available via the internet is to consider the appropriateness of broader limitations on personal information about individuals, regardless of its source. Nor does the collection focus only on the potential for social damage by produced by 'netizens'. An important essay also considers the ethical issues of conducting, and offers practical advice about how to conduct, online research into computer-mediated communication as a noteworthy move away from conventional social research approaches and field methods.

Many of the essays will inevitably be useful tools in the study of information and technologies policy at universities, as the collection speaks to students and researchers who are familiar with the internet, in particular, as well as broader aspects of cyberculture. The index is particularly useful in encapsulating many of the recent publications about cyberspace. While focusing on issues of 'crime', the collection does not take a legislative nor technologically-driven approach but focuses on people and emerging patterns of human behaviour and association. The challenge will be to impel many of the authors' astute analyses and observations into arenas where government policy is made and into those classrooms where information technology is taught as a socially-neutral discipline.

Helen Johnson *University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*