

MCKAY, JIM. *Managing Gender: Affirmative Action and Organizational Power in Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand Sport*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. xxi + 217. Appendices, bibliographic references, index. \$18.95 pb.

Intense debate and litigation surround affirmative action policies. U.S. President Lyndon Johnson once provided a clear defense of this concept, also known as positive discrimination: "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair." Johnson's defense is highly pertinent when considering the hurdles faced by female sports administrators. In *Managing Gender*, Jim McKay illustrates the obstacles women face in gaining access to male-dominated sporting organizations and the unique struggles they encounter once they are in such positions. For example, many women interviewed by McKay expressed frustration at their lack of access to men's social networks which invariably involve sport and/or drinking. Women feel that men deliberately exclude them, while men attribute the absence of women to different cultural and social norms. But as one male interviewee admitted, "Women aren't invited . . . into all-male, boys' own circles."

Based on a study of Australian managers of state and federal government sporting organizations, *Managing Gender* analyzes the implementation of affirmative action programs for women. McKay's conclusions will trouble sportspeople. He shows that "current affirmative initiatives based on the premise of 'getting more women into sport' have either been marginalized, trivialized, or incorporated into the androcentric cultures that pervade sporting organizations, the media and the state" (p. xiv). This is a valuable addition to the literature in the area of gender and sport because it uncovers men and women's perceptions of affirmative action, identifies the barriers that prevent effective policies, and suggests ways that affirmative action *can* perform.

Students interested in the struggles around affirmative action programs and in the unique battles faced by women with families *and* careers will find the book especially useful. Women managers speak of the constant struggle of attending to their families and work and report that often their careers suffer as a result. *Managing Gender* also offers useful guidelines for sports organizations wishing to implement affirmative action programs or that want to make existing policies more gender-friendly. McKay makes constructive suggestions in terms of changing organizational cultures and male attitudes and transforming sport. In order to persuade men to support affirmative action policies, he suggests including "issues of men, masculinity, sexuality, sexual harassment and leadership" (p. 148).

McKay uses a social constructionist framework to explore the institutionalized and gendered dynamics of organizational life and places his theory within Australian, Canadian and New Zealand contexts. These contexts give the book life and make the issues less abstract. Interesting statistics emerge, such as the fact that "under 3 percent of New Zealand women who work full-time are in administrative or managerial positions and most of

these are Anglos" (p. 16). In exploring male and female managers' perceptions of their organizational cultures, McKay found that some men welcomed women. Nonetheless, considerable antagonism toward affirmative action remained because men believe that it is tantamount to reverse discrimination or that their organization already operates on the basis of equal opportunity. The spurious nature of these viewpoints is highlighted, however, by the fact that even if organizations do supposedly advocate equal opportunity, women do not get a chance to advertise themselves in the same ways as men. As one female interviewee put it, "You might have talents, but the men don't know it because you don't get invited to drink with them or play sport with them and, of course, you don't get to use the urinal next to them" (p. 66).

The methodology is straightforward and effective. McKay interviewed nearly 100 managers from a variety of sporting organizations across Australia to see how they implemented affirmative action programs for women and to gauge their opinions of their organization and affirmative action initiatives. In analyzing the interviews McKay presents a wide range of viewpoints and largely leaves readers to draw their own conclusions. He also includes excerpts from the popular press. These illustrate how the media socially constructs gender, and how affirmative action is represented in Australian sport. For example, one journalist "attacked the 'rampant feminism' of the federal minister for sport for wasting taxpayers' money on studying self-esteem in sport" (p. 124). McKay makes good use of tables to illustrate and expand upon his points. He adds nice personal touches to the book by discussing reactions to some earlier studies. At one point, McKay describes his submission to the Australian Sports Commission of a report on the Commission's treatment and inclusion of women, which they contracted. The Commission subsequently slammed the report for ignoring the views of men, its use of selective quotations and offensive illustrations, and the promotion of impractical and outdated recommendations.

Finally, the 24-page bibliography, divided into sections dealing with academic material, government and related documents, and newspaper, magazine and miscellaneous articles is a helpful resource.

McKay acknowledges that his interviewees were mainly heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied Anglos. Such self-flagellation does not carry much weight; those holding managerial positions invariably come from such backgrounds. Of course, this is precisely why we need affirmative action policies. As has been emphasized above, the assumption that sport and sporting organizations operate on the basis of equal opportunity is naïve. Women, ethnic minorities, and other non-hegemonic groups continue to find it exceedingly difficult to penetrate the powerful old boy networks that pervade sport.

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