
BRACKENRIDGE, CELIA H. *Spoilsports: Understanding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Sport*. Ethics and Sport Series. New York: Routledge, 2001. Pp xvi+284. List of figures, tables, acronyms, appendices, bibliography, index. \$32.95 pb.

Sexual harassment and abuse has been a recognized problem in the workplace for more than three decades. As a result, many professions enforce policies to prevent the abuse of trust including intimate relationships between, for example, doctors and patients, and psychologists and clients. Despite several cases of sexual exploitation in coach-athlete relationships within the past two decades, sport authorities and researchers have been slow to respond. Since the mid 1980s Celia Brackenridge has been at the forefront of advocacy research, working to expose the sexual exploitation of female athletes and to develop effective prevention policies. *Spoilsports* is the most comprehensive treatment of sexual exploitation in sport and offers the first systematic analysis of exploitation as well as practical guidelines for prevention.

Brackenridge first traces the ways in which high profile sex "scandals" historically generate a moral panic within sporting communities. She argues that the resulting moral panic focuses on individual perpetrators who have intruded into sport from the *outside*. Drawing on extensive data from athlete survivors, she shows how this misplaced panic focuses on individual abusive practices and overlooks glaring underlying problems that enable exploitative behavior in the first place. As the subtitle suggests, sport professionals still need to understand the complex problem of sexual exploitation before beginning to implement policy interventions that are realistic and effective. Thus the book covers a wide range of disciplines, fields of study, and clinical practices to summarize this work for professionals in sport.

Brackenridge aims for her book to reach a varied audience including athletes, coaches, administrators, policy makers and academics. That's a wide net to cast. While she has something to say to each audience, her book is better suited to academics than practitioners, although it contains many checklists, guidelines and action plans for sport-policy makers working with all levels of sport and recreation. Athletes, coaches and laypersons working in sport might find her extensive review of academic research and theoretical perspectives arguably less than appealing, and they may be inclined only to dip into selected chapters with themes and issues of particular interest.

Spoilsports contains case-study material from Canadian, U.S., Australian and most often British contexts divided into four sections. Parts one (Context and Scope) and two

(Theory and Understanding) introduce the reader to a wide range of existing research, examining the broader social, historical and political contexts within which sport is embedded while outlining the struggles involved in bringing the issue of sexual abuse to the wider public. Parts three (Policy and Prevention) and four (Conclusions and Challenges) are intended for those with a day-to-day involvement and interest in the ethical practice of sport. Overall, the most compelling aspect of the book is the extensive use of interview excerpts from survivors of sexual exploitation. These narratives provide compelling examples of the practices of sport that place young athletes—particularly girls—at risk of abuse.

Brackenridge contends that her book has "an unashamedly political agenda, which is to bring about change in the way sport is structured and managed" (p. 5). She argues that "by changing the power relations between athletes and authority figures, and between men, women and children in sport, we can prevent sexual exploitation" (p. 231). Brackenridge acknowledges that there is still much empirical research needed, including an analysis of the ways in which gender, social class, sexuality, disability, race and ethnicity make an impact upon people's experiences of exploitation. Unfortunately, interspersed throughout the book is an ill-informed critique of postmodern research approaches, which Brackenridge sees as being of limited use for advocacy research. Her assumptions regarding postmodern research approaches limit an understanding of the ways in which feminist action research, such as the work by Patti Lather, has moved beyond monolithic models to engage with material, political practices. Rather than advocate theoretical coherence to tackle sexual exploitation in sport, perhaps a postmodern turn would help to address the gaps that remain in research priorities that ignore power relations of race, class, sexuality and gender. Although not technically a book about sport history, *Spoilsports* is a critical introduction to sexual exploitation in sport that has much to offer sport historians.

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