

## Book Review

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*Women, Sport, and Culture*, Susan Birrell and Cheryl Cole (editors). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994, 408 pages.

This book is a compilation of 24 articles which focus on the relationship between gender and sport from political, cultural, social, and historical perspectives. An introduction sets the stage by discussing "sport" and what constitutes "sport studies." The articles following are then divided into five parts or themes. Part I • Women, Sport, and Ideology in which the five articles provide an overview and theoretical framework for gender, sport, and cultural issues. The authors suggest in different ways how attention to sport and the issues of physicality, sexuality, power, and dominance are played out through sport. Part II • Gender and the Organization of Sport, is an examination of the status of women in sport as institutions as well as organizational patterns of sport which focus on dominant practices and policies that govern sport. Part III • Women in the Male Preserve of Sport is an exploration of the power relationship of sport utilizing gender as the pivotal issue. The five articles in Section III discuss the practices which surround sport and in some sports the potential for creating a hostile environment for women. Part IV • Media, Sport, and Gender focuses on how the media view and promote women in the sporting area. The power of the media is discussed and how it impacts the way we view sport in relation to gender. In Part V, Sport and the Politics of Sexuality, the authors examine issues surrounding gender, sexuality and the body. The articles specifically address the issues of heterosexism and homophobia and their relationship to sport.

The intent of the editors was to bring together a collection of articles, from a cultural and feminist perspective, which would address both the struggles of women in sport and the ideological struggles about women in sport. Birrell and Cole have masterfully compiled some of the classic articles in feminist theory and research and organized them into meaningful themes. Each theme

or part begins with an introduction by one of the editors which lays the groundwork for the chapters.

While one of the strengths of the book are the articles which have been compiled this could also be identified as one of its weaknesses. Of the 24 articles, only 5 are original works. The other 19 articles were published elsewhere between 1982 and 1990. Several of the 19 are necessary to lay the theoretical framework; however, some of the articles were data based and no attempt was made to up-date the data or allude to any additional data that might be in progress. This does raise some concern about the relevance of the data collected seven to ten years ago.

The five articles which were original were well-written and added information and perspective which were closely integrated into the existing themes. "African-American Women and Competitive Sport 1920-1960," addressed the role of the African-American females and their difficulty working within a white female model. The original article by Cahn, "Crushes, Competition, and Closets: The Emergence of Homophobia in Women's Physical Education" provided an historical framework with excellent documentation. Future consideration would be to continue this line of inquiry post 1950. In Whitson's original work, "The Embodiment of Gender: Discipline, Domination, and Empowerment," the author examines empowerment through physical activity and how gendered identities are both social and historical constructs. Balsamo's article, "Feminist Bodybuilding," although original in nature, overlapped with Holmlund's article, "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal: The Body, Sex, Sexuality, and Race in the Pumping Iron Films." The last of the five original articles, Acosta and Carpenter, ("The Status of Women in Intercollegiate Athletics") provided an update of their longitudinal data concerning the numbers of women coaches and administrators. A by-sport-analysis of percentage of schools offering sports for female intercollegiate athletes as well as the percentage of Women's Intercollegiate Sports coached by women is also provided.

An additional chapter to the book focusing on relationships among the articles and including future directions for women in sport would have provided the needed closure. This book in its