

## One

# Introduction

### “THE SEARCH FOR MR. RIGHT”

AT 4 A.M. ON THURSDAY, September 24, 1993, millions of television viewers in Australia were watching tens of thousands of people who had gathered around a giant electronic screen adjacent to Sydney’s world-famous Opera House. Most of these people were hoping that the impending telecast from Monaco would reveal that Sydney had obtained one of sport’s most glittering prizes—the right to host the Olympic Games in 2000. The crowd fell silent when Juan Antonio Samaranch, a former minister of sport in Francisco Franco’s fascist regime in Spain and president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), one of the most androcentric organizations in the world, appeared on screen to divulge the winner. The atmosphere was tense while Samaranch opened the envelope and waited for what seemed to the observers like an eternity before declaring the winner. When he announced that Sydney had triumphed, Australians began patriotic celebrations that had not been seen since almost 10 years to the day, when in another historic sporting event, Australia became the first challenger to defeat the United States in the America’s Cup. In a portentously gendered statement, the then prime minister, Paul Keating, proclaimed that the outcome had put Australia “in the swim with the big boys.”

There was immediate speculation about who the predominantly male members of the state government, the Australian Olympic Council, and the city council would select as the CEO and members of the organizing committee for the

Games. In her "Corporate Woman" column for *The Australian Financial Review* (Australia's equivalent of *The Wall Street Journal*), Sheryle Bagwell provided a short list of eminently qualified women whom she thought should be considered for CEO. Citing the contributions that women had made to the success of the tender, Bagwell (1993, p.17) opined that:

. . . I thought the Olympic movement was about fairness and equity. After all, what better place than the sporting field to underline the truism that the winner is always the person on the day, whatever the gender? I admit that there is not much of a tradition of women running Olympic Games around the world. But wouldn't it be a great symbol for the Olympics that will herald in a change of millennium to have a women at the helm?

However, she was pessimistic that a woman actually would be chosen. As she noted, a Sydney newspaper had already set the gender agenda for the headhunters by dubbing the quest "The Search for Mr Right." But Bagwell was optimistic that the selectors would at least include some women members on the organizing committee. Her idealism was dashed when the composition of the committee was announced a few weeks later. Just one of the fourteen members was a woman, who was only added at the last minute after the embarrassed selectors realized that they initially had chosen only men. This belated decision to include a token woman evoked a barrage of criticism: a headline in *The Australian* proclaimed, "Women Cheated by Games Team Choice"; a letter to the editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* was captioned, "Insult To All Women"; the head of the Women's Electoral Lobby said that the board was "a boring collection of Anglo-Saxon males."<sup>1</sup>

Putting thirteen men and one woman on the organizing committee for the 2000 Olympics is a graphic example of what Schein (1994) terms the "think male, think manager" mentality that pervades most organizations. But as I will attempt to

demonstrate in this book, it is just one of myriad ways in which managerial practices are undergirded by male-centered assumptions. In order to study this androcentric culture of management, I maintain that it is necessary to use the perspectives of profeminism and social constructionism.

### PROFEMINIST RESEARCH

Heterosexual men have responded to critiques of their relatively privileged position in society by women and gay men in several ways. Some have formed militant men's rights movements in order to counter perceived threats to their privileges. Others have blamed women for producing "soft" men and turned to mythopoetic activities like warrior weekends as a way of restoring "deep masculinity." A much smaller group has responded by taking on board some of the criticisms and embracing a profeminist, gay-affirmative and male-positive stance. Groups such as Men Against Sexual Assault, the National Organization of Men Against Sexism, and the White Ribbon campaign, which attempt to mobilize men to oppose other men's homophobic, misogynist, and violent behavior, are grass roots examples of this response. At the academic level, some men who are sympathetic to gay and feminist critiques have responded by basing their research on profeminist, gay-positive and male-positive principles (Brittan 1989; Brod and Kimmel 1994; Connell 1995; Kimmel and Messner 1995). From the perspective of profeminism, masculinity per se is not the problem, but rather the fact that a very restrictive way of being a man is idealized as *the* way that *all* men should act. For instance, Connell (1983, 22) correctly argues that masculinity is not, as some critics would have it, an impoverished phenomenon but a "plenitude." However, he goes on to state that "the specific richness of hegemonic masculinity is oppressive, being founded on, and enforcing, the subordination of women" (Connell 1983, 22). We can add the oppression of gay men to this observation.

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A key feature of profeminist research is a commitment to “studying up” the gender order (Connell 1990c, 1992; Messner 1996). Consider the following statistics: in the United States a woman is raped every six minutes, and as many as one in four women may be raped during their lives; 1400 women are murdered by men every year; and a man beats a woman about every 15 seconds. A 1995 United Nations Development Program report on the global status of women revealed that:

- women constituted 70 percent of the 1.3 billion people living below the poverty line
- 75 percent of women workers were employed in low-paying and insecure jobs
- women made up 14 percent of administrators and managers and held just 10 percent of seats and 6 percent of ministerial positions in parliaments
- women earned 30 percent to 40 percent less than men
- between 15 percent and 20 percent of women in industrial countries reported that they had experienced frequent and serious sexual harassment, compelling 6 percent to 8 percent of them to quit their jobs
- 300 million women did not have the means to plan their pregnancies
- 500,000 and 100,000 died each year from childbirth problems and illegal abortions, respectively
- and two million were sexually mutilated annually.

The document recommended that in order to improve the status of women, governments should take affirmative action in legal, work, health, and educational spheres and strive to have 50 percent of the seats on public sector boards held by women by the year 2000. The report estimated that it would take an extra \$20 billion a year to achieve this goal (*The Australian* 1995). Two recent studies by the International Labour Organization estimated that based on current trends, it will take women about 500 years to gain the same access as men to

management positions and around 1,000 years for them to get equal representation in the upper echelons of political and economic power (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 1993; *The Weekend Australian* 1995).

In light of these facts, I believe that men should use their relatively privileged positions to study and promote gender justice. As I will demonstrate in chapter 7, this position is fraught with tensions. For instance, terms such as “profeminist men” or “male feminism” would appear to be an oxymoron (Heath 1986; Messner 1990a). As Connell (1987, 286) states, “In a gender order where men are advantaged and women are disadvantaged, major structural reform is, on the face of it, against men’s interests.” It is not surprising then, that profeminist men usually encounter hostility from antifeminist men and women and suspicion from some feminists (Duelli Klein 1983; Richardson and Robinson 1994). For some feminists, “men in feminism” evokes the question of “Now what are they up to?” (Bradshaw 1982) or charges of “cloak-and-dagger chauvinism” (Hester 1984). As Wise and Stanley (1984, 2) put it: “Men have been the subject of nearly all research to date, which has constituted ‘men’s studies,’ so why should feminists add to this?” Bristow (1988, 121) also has noted the difficulty of men studying men by using feminist-inspired principles:

In feminist theory . . . definitions of masculinity have made a point of noting that the one thing men are not equipped well to do is understanding just what they *are* as men, especially when what they *are* as men is damaging to women . . . Masculinity, as its critics observe, has a conspicuous limit: it cannot see beyond itself.

These difficulties notwithstanding, there are examples of relatively privileged groups who have used their positions to work with oppressed people for social justice. Consider, for instance, the white men and women who have formed anti-slavery organizations, worked for liberation movements like

the African National Congress, supported the American civil rights movement, and taught counterracist curricula in their classrooms (Douglas 1994). And as Kimmel (1992) has documented, there are some men who individually and collectively have swam “against the tide” by supporting women’s push for full citizenship.

As I will argue in chapter 2, neither men nor women are monolithic categories; they are divided by social class, age, sexual and ethnic/racial backgrounds. Since profeminism involves a male-positive position, it is important not to posit an “us versus them” research agenda in which “Men are reduced to a gender with no redeeming qualities and women [are] regarded as blameless in the maintenance of gender-stratified societies” (Davis 1994, 236). Thus it is vital to emphasize that a given man may not be a rapist. Nevertheless, all men live in a *rape culture* that is constituted by a constellation of signs, ideologies, and images that legitimize men’s violence against women. By analogy, although individual white men and women in Australia and the United States may not be racists, they live in a racist culture. And just as white people have a fundamental role to play in eliminating racism, men have the capacity to eradicate sexism. This is why it is imperative to counter the conventional wisdom of the men’s rights and mythopoetic movements that men are “oppressed” by women. It is undeniable that some men do experience confusion, unease, anger, threat, betrayal, and pain. But this angst-ridden situation has been caused not by women, but by an ensemble of competitive and hierarchical practices that enable relatively privileged men to oppress both women and subordinated and marginalized men. To equate men’s emotional confusion with the everyday harassment, assault, and violence against women is a profound misuse of the term “oppression” (Clatterbaugh 1992). Radford Ruether (1993, 16) has felicitously pointed out the irony of this reactionary discourse of some sections of the men’s movement by comparing it with race relations in the United States:

Let us imagine a parallel “white people’s movement” arising that would claim to solve racism by seeing it as a problem of the wounded white psyche. We are told that white people are deeply wounded by the lack of positive white role models, exacerbated by the vicious criticism of white people that took place during in the civil rights and the apartheid movements. It is acknowledged that white people have sometimes been immature in and have used their power aggressively, but this is only because they were insecure in their whiteness. What is needed is to restore white people’s confidence in whiteness as a manifestation of strong and positive psychic traits.

#### PROFEMINIST RESEARCH AND SPORT

Gender inequalities are systematic at all levels of sport. At the elite level men compete in nearly double the number of events as women at the summer Olympics; about 25 percent of countries competing at the summer Olympics, mainly Muslim ones, send no women representatives; only seven of the 94 members of the IOC are women and only six of the 174 national Olympic associations in the world have women presidents (Hall 1995). At the grass roots level virtually every study of sport in liberal-democratic states has found that vast gender imbalances exist. The following Australian findings are typical of most advanced industrial nations:

- girls have lower levels of fitness than boys
- girls drop out of sport and physical activity at an earlier age than boys
- more girls than boys have negative attitudes towards sport and physical activity
- more girls than boys have low self-concepts about their bodily abilities
- women are more unlikely than men to return to sport later in life



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- women are immensely underrepresented in coaching and administrative positions
- there are only a handful of women sports journalists
- less than 2 percent of media coverage is given to women's sport (ASC 1992).

Despite being lauded as a vital constructor of moral integrity and discipline, sport can engender blind obedience to figures of authority, override personal autonomy, and lead to “overconformity” to group norms both on and off the field (Curry 1991; Hughes and Coakley 1991; Williams and Taylor 1994). Like other tightly-knit competitive male groups (e.g., military units, gangs, college fraternities), sport often produces “groupthink”—a mind-set that makes men incapable of believing that there is anything wrong with their harassing, abusive, and violent behavior toward women. Examples of “groupthink” in sport are evident in the burgeoning incidents of sexual harassment and violence involving male coaches and athletes (Crossett et al. 1995; Curry 1991; Fritner and Rubinson 1993; Kane and Disch 1993; Katz 1995; Koss and Gaines 1993; Lenskyj 1992a; Melnick 1992; Messner and Sabo 1994; White et al. 1992; William and Taylor 1994). Recent studies of U.S. college campuses have shown that:

- one third of sexual assaults on women involve athletes
- athletes are the second largest group after fraternity members to commit gang rapes
- women are particularly reluctant to press charges against male athletes because of the hallowed status they have in society.

In 1993, three white, middle class high school football players in Newark, New Jersey, were convicted of first-degree sexual assault on a slightly retarded 17-year-old woman, and another, on whom the woman performed fellatio, was found guilty of fourth-degree sexual assault. While nine other boys cheered, the athletes, two of whom were team co-captains,



assaulted the woman with a miniature baseball bat and broomstick. In another case, rape charges were laid against fifteen white, middle class high school athletes from Lakewood, California, who called themselves the "Spur Posse," after their favorite professional basketball team, the San Antonio Spurs. When the boys were released from jail they received a hero's welcome. On national television programs, some of the boys bragged about how gang members earned "spurs," or "points," for raping girls as young as ten. One boasted that about a third of his 67 victims had been virgins, and crowed, "When ya got it, ya got it." A school physical education teacher claimed the incident had been "blown out of proportion"; the athletes were described as "red-blooded boys who will be boys" and the girls were called "sluts"; a father of one of the accused maintained that the "Spur Posse" was "no different from the band, the choir or the PTA." All but one of the 15 boys were subsequently acquitted (Wenzel 1993, 3). In 1995, a former British Olympic swimming coach was sentenced to seventeen years in prison for two rapes and eleven indecent assaults on young female swimmers over a 15-year period. Lenskyj (1993) has documented a case in which a Canadian coach who raped a paraplegic athlete ten years ago is still coaching young women. The revelations of chronic wife abuse by former American football heroes Vance Johnson, Warren Moon, and O.J. Simpson ought to shatter any illusions there still might be about the character-building virtues of sport.

To reiterate the general point made above, I believe that given these facts, profeminist men should use their relatively privileged position to study men's power and privileges in sporting contexts.

#### SUMMARY

I have argued that profeminist men can assume a stance analogous to members of relatively privileged ethnic and racial groups who use their powerful positions to research ethnic

and racial prejudice and discrimination. So, just as relatively privileged white feminists can combat racism among women (Ang 1995), relatively privileged men can oppose sexism among men (hooks 1984). This line of investigation has not usually been on the agenda of most academic men, as they are unlikely to see that there is anything problematic about their power and privileges. In an article entitled “Invisible Masculinity” (1993), Kimmel contends that American men—or more accurately, white, middle class heterosexual men—have no history. He argues that although men have been conspicuous as athletes, politicians, scientists, and soldiers, they generally have been indiscernible *as men*. As Kimmel (1993, 30) notes, this veiled status of men is one of the principal vectors of power and privilege in society:

The very processes that confer privilege to one group and not to another are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred . . . men have come to think of themselves as genderless, in part because they can afford the luxury of ignoring the centrality of gender . . . Invisibility reproduces inequality. And the invisibility of gender to those privileged by it reproduces the inequalities that are circumscribed by gender.

A major aim of this book is to use empirical research to make hegemonic masculinity “visible”—to articulate men’s identities and power *as men* in organizations that they generally assume are genderless. This seems like a self-evident goal until it is recognized just how little attention scholars have paid to it in their empirical research. Although men are usually mentioned as being theoretically important by scholars working in the “women and management” research tradition, they seldom have been included at the empirical level. Research from the more recent “men and management” perspective has been primarily theoretical, and few of the meagre empirical studies have included women. Although feminist scholars have examined gender inequalities in management in

sporting organizations, most research has consisted of survey research. There have been virtually no comparisons of the everyday practices that men *and* women use to “manage” gender and no studies that have used profeminist and social constructionist perspectives. Thus, a major strength of this book is that it compares the managerial experiences of both men and women in a particularly androcentric organizational culture.

It is hoped that this effort will help other men to acknowledge the structural privileges and power we hold in organizational life and how we might use our collective resources to “engender” justice. This is not a case of taking the high moral ground, but as Starhawk (1993, 29) argues, of encouraging men to confront their complicity in sustaining relations of inequality between men and women, and to take personal and collective responsibility for liberating themselves rather than blaming women for their problems:

A men’s movement I could trust would be clear about the difference between spiritual malaise and oppression. Oppression is what slaves suffer; malaise is what happens to the slave owners whose personalities are warped and whose essential humanity is necessarily undermined by their position. Malaise and oppression are both painful, but they are not comparable. And the necessary first step in the cure for what ails the slave owner is to free the slave. If men want to be liberated, they must first be willing to let go of the institutionalized advantage they have in every arena of society.

#### NOTE

1. Corporate director Gary Pemberton was eventually selected as “Mr. Right.” Pemberton resigned in 1996 and since then three other men have occupied the chief executive position on the Sydney Organizing Committee for the 2000 Olympics (SOCOG). Sallyanne Atkinson, the woman who was belatedly appointed to the organizing

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committee, resigned in 1994. Former union leader, Anna Booth, who was appointed in 1995, is the only woman on the SOCOG board. In February 1997, SOCOG appointed corporate consultant Glen-Marie Frost as head of its community and corporate relations division. Frost's appointment was greeted in mainly condescending ways by print journalists. *The Sydney Morning Herald* covered her appointment with the headline "City Socialite to be the New Face of SOCOG." Although mentioning Frost's business experience, reporter Matthew Moore also described her appointment as a "surprise," and noted that she was "a former beauty queen and model" who was "well-known on the luncheon circuit" (Moore 1997:6). Similarly, *The Australian* proclaimed: "Socialite Wins Olympic PR Job," and reporter John Ellicot described Frost as "a Sydney socialite best known to the public as the face of the Bankcard marketing campaign in the 1970s" (Ellicot 1997:3).