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David L. Collinson, David Knights and Margaret Collinson.
Managing to Discriminate

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qu'un volume rigoureux et sérieux sur la sélection puisse voir le jour dans un avenir rapproché.

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Managing to Discriminate, by David L. Collinson, David Knights and Margaret Collinson, Routledge, London, 1990, 261 p., ISBN 0-415-01816-1 et ISBN 0-415-01817-X (pbk)

This book is based on a research project sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission in the mid 1980s. The project was designed to examine gender discrimination in recruitment. The authors have attempted to provide a theoretically informed examination of the empirical data using the case study evidence drawn from 45 private sector organizations in the banking, insurance, computer, mail order, food and manufacturing industries in England. The primary objective of the book is to explore the asymmetrical power relations of the labour market and recruitment process by focusing on the forms of control and resistance which characterise the gender discrimination in selection and promotion. Chapters 1 to 4 are devoted to a discussion and review of the theoretical studies on sex discrimination in the recruitment process. Chapters 1 and 2 present Marxist and feminist approaches to subordination of women in the labour market. These chapters contain an interesting and succinct summary of the theories which reveal the importance of power relations in the labour market. The third chapter reviews the literature in Industrial Sociology to analyze the channels, criteria and procedures of recruitment and the job segregation based on gender. Chapter four looks at the recruitment process from the management's point of view. Unfortunately, the discussion in chapter four is not comprehensive enough to uncover various legal, economic and other factors which influence managerial decision-making in relation to the recruitment process.

The rest of the book is devoted to the analysis of the case studies involving the forty-five organizations in various sectors of the economy in the U.K. The case studies reveal that despite the anti-discrimination legislation which has been in effect since mid 1970s, employers are still "managing to discriminate" on the grounds of gender through a variety of recruitment practices. The authors observe that the conventional divisions of labour at home and in employment are found to be both a routine condition and consequence of recruitment and a common means of legitimizing sex discrimination in the workplace. Their research confirmed the perpetuation of segregation both in blue collar and white collar jobs. This was characterised by a self-fulfilling vicious circle which incorporated the three key recruitment practices of "reproduction, rationalization and resistance". Informality in the channels, criteria and procedures of recruitment was a common practice in the organizations which facilitated the "reproduction" of job segregation. The personnel managers have often "rationalised" the job segregation by blaming the female applicants or employees who applied for promotion or by insisting that they were merely seeking to control production. Resistance by females was often found to be contradictory and self-defeating unless supported by the union.

The authors offer several prescriptions for fighting gender inequality in the recruitment process. Formalization of the recruitment process can help to make the process more structured, visible and accountable. However, formalization alone is not sufficient. A systemic effort to address the variables which contribute to the job segregation is needed. The book does not offer any new solutions in this respect except to suggest child-care arrangements.

Despite the limitations, the book provides interesting insights into the recruitment practices and perpetuation of gender discrimination in employment in England.

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