

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*The Economics of Affirmative Action*, edited by Harry J. HOLZER and David NEUMARK, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2004, 688 pp., ISBN 1-84376-117-3.

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La citoyenneté au travail ? Réflexions sur le milieu de travail de l'avenir

Citizenship at Work? Thinking the Workplace of the Future

¿La ciudadanía laboral? reflexiones sobre el medio laboral del futuro

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quasi muet sur les pistes de solution aux problèmes soulevés. Publié dans une collection « Recherches » qui voudrait voir s'élaborer « des paradigmes novateurs » et s'établir des « liens inédits » entre disciplines, ce livre aurait de plus bénéficié d'une conclusion – inexistante –, qui aille au-delà de résultats de recherches, pour prolonger la réflexion au niveau des paradigmes les plus porteurs pour la poursuite des

recherches dans le domaine. Il reste qu'il s'agit d'un ouvrage de base, reposant sur des textes bien documentés et des études originales de la question, qui sera utile aux spécialistes dans le domaine de l'emploi et du travail et qui servira sans aucun doute de référence dans les années à venir.

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*The Economics of Affirmative Action,*

edited by Harry J. HOLZER and David NEUMARK, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2004, 688 pp., ISBN 1-84376-117-3.

The book is an anthology of 29 papers published between 1976 and 2000 that focuses on affirmative action (AA) in the United States. The importance of these papers lies in the fact that they are based on evidence supported by data and analysis. As the editors note, AA concerns proactive action on the part of employers with a view to eliminating discrimination against minorities and women. In contrast, other anti-discrimination policies (such as human rights legislations across Canada) prohibit employers from discriminating against minorities and women on listed grounds such as race, sex, etc. In Canada and the United States, these measures are complaint based and not proactive, as is the case for AA which requires employers to undertake measures to increase the numbers of these groups in proportion to their external labour force representation.

AA in the United States, as the editors note, began with President Johnson's Executive Order 11246 covering federal contractors with 50 employees or contracts worth \$50,000 or more to supply goods and services to US government departments and agencies. Such contractors are required to file reports on any job in which minorities and women are underrepresented. Contractors are then obliged to make

corrective efforts to address the underrepresentation or underutilization by making corrective efforts including written "goals and timetables." Contractors may be sued and debarred from future contracts if they are judged to be not pursuing AA.

The Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) to administer and enforce the Act. In the case that an employer is found to have discriminated against women or minorities, the Act allows the courts to order AA measures, including hiring or reinstatement of employees. EEOC guidelines for defining adverse, disparate (or disproportionate impact on minorities and women) essentially establish a system of numerical yardsticks.

According to the editors, AA in the labour market is not limited solely to the effects associated with contractor status "but ought to be viewed more generally as policies or actions that induce greater hiring (or promotion) of women and minorities." The editors go on to suggest that in addition to the federal level, states and others levels of government have also awarded the numerical share of contracts to minority-owned businesses; this practice does not exist in Canada.

The book is divided into three parts: Part I has five articles on theoretical evaluations of affirmative action by such well known economists as Welch, Lundberg, Coate and Loury, Athey et al., and Schotter and Weigelt. These papers make a significant contribution to analyzing AA. The papers study important theoretical issues underlying AA. This analysis is "likely to stand the test of time."

Part II has nine articles on the redistributive effects of AA on employment, education and contracting by Heckman and Wolpin; three by Leonard, Smith and Welch, and Rodgers and Spriggs; three on education and contracts by Conrad and Sharpe, Attiyeh and Attiyeh, and Cancian. The papers discuss whether AA policy has the intended effects of redistributing employment, educational and contracting opportunities to women and minorities. According to the editors, in education, redistributive effects are reflected in growth in minority (black) employment over time (1960 to 1995) and in even sharper changes in representation in professional schools such as law schools and medical schools. In one study, there is modest preferential treatment of women in three of the five disciplines (Economics, Biochemistry, English, Mathematics and Mechanical Engineering) and substantial preferential treatment of minorities relative to other US citizens in all five disciplines.

Part III evaluates efficiency/performance effects in the labour market, education and contracting. It contains ten articles on the labour market by Leonard, Griffin, two articles by Holzer and Neumark, Steel and Lovrich, Lott, Kolpin and Singell, Canor et al., Neumark and Gardecki, Canes and Rosen. It presents four papers on the Efficiency/performance effect in Education by Keith et al., Loury and Garman, Kane, and Dickens and Kane.

Finally, the book ends with a single article on Efficiency/contracting from Bates and Williams. The authors of some of these papers on performance effects in the labour market examine the productivity, profitability, and unit labour costs to test various hypotheses regarding the efficiency effects of AA. However, the perspective represented in these papers is limited to an economics perspective rather than one of fairness or justice. In both education and contracting, there is no overall test for the efficiency effects of AA.

I would recommend the book to serious scholars and to graduate students interested in studying affirmative action or employment equity in Canada.

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*L'aveuglement organisationnel ou comment lutter contre les malentendus*, par Valérie BOUSSARD, Delphine MERCIER et Pierre TRIPIER, Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2004, 183 p., ISBN 2-271-06279-9.

Ce livre est le produit d'un groupe de travail qui, à l'origine, faisait de la recherche sur les outils et les dispositifs de gestion. Leurs travaux, qui se sont échelonnés sur une décennie, comptent une quinzaine de recherches sur le terrain dont quatre en particulier qui servent de référence et d'objet à l'analyse présentée. Ces travaux de recherche ont

été marqués par trois moments cruciaux. Au départ, il s'est agi d'une recherche sur les dérapages déontologiques au service des postes (département des colis postaux) qui fait principalement l'objet de la première partie de l'ouvrage. Cette étape fut suivie du développement et de la mise en œuvre d'un outil de diagnostic organisationnel. Enfin, les