

Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

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<http://www.coled.umn.edu/KLS/crgws.html>

C R G W S Center News C R G W S

Spring, 1996

Recent Research

Lisa Disch, a professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Minnesota, and Mary Jo Kane, CRGWS Director, published an article in the Winter, 1996, edition of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*.

The article, "When a Looker Is Really a Bitch: Lisa Olson, Sport, and the Heterosexual Matrix," examines the September, 1990, incident in which Lisa Olson, a sports reporter for the *Boston Herald*, was sexually harrassed by several members of the New England Patriots football team. Olson was attempting to conduct interviews in the team's locker room when several naked players confronted and taunted her.

Despite the fact that a 1978 Federal Court ruling makes it legal for both male and female reporters to have access to players in locker rooms, Olson was vilified by the players as a "looker," someone whom the players claim enters the locker room to admire or gaze at the male bodies rather than to conduct interviews. She was also castigated by the media and general public for her insistence on appropriate punishment of the players as well as the management that supported and even encouraged their behavior.

According to Disch and Kane, Olson's entry into the locker room discomfited the players because "hers was an intrusion not just into the locker room but into certainties about gender relations and sex differences that sport serves to guarantee." Olson's status as a supposed looker gave her the power of approval or disapproval of male athletes, unusual for any woman in the privileged world of men's professional athletics. Disch and Kane argue that the sexual harrassment by the players was their not-so-subtle attempt at subverting Olson's power by reducing her to a sexual object.

Signs is a prestigious, scholarly feminist journal. The Disch and Kane article is the first one solely focused on the issue of sports and gender ever to appear in the journal.

For further information concerning this or related publications, contact the Center.

Mariah Burton Nelson Lecture

I came to live out loud.

— Emile Zola

Mariah Burton Nelson, nationally-recognized author and athlete, delivered the Center's fourth Distinguished Lecture on March 6.

More than 270 people viewed Nelson's presentation on "The Courage to Compete: Women's Ways of Winning in Sports and Life." Nelson wove stories of her own swimming competitions with her mother, which began when the younger Nelson was just five years old and continue 35 years later, into her discussion of how all girls and women can and should learn to be "outstanding" in their own way.



Nelson acknowledged that many young women are taught to hide their talents and gifts, to stand not quite so tall as they might or to state their opinions softly or not at all. The resulting constriction, Nelson said, is the figurative equivalent of the girdle worn by women in the early part of this century.


Because of the controversy surrounding her 1994 book, "The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football," Nelson has repeatedly had to show her courage to an often-skeptical and sometimes-hostile national audience. At this gathering, however, Nelson's honesty and outspokenness was welcomed by a diverse and highly supportive audience that included grade school boys and girls, high school and college athletes, as well as many parents and community members.

The Center's lecture series brings nationally-recognized researchers to the University of Minnesota campus to speak about various issues related to the participation of girls and women in sport. Previous speakers and their topics include Maureen Weiss (sport benefits for young people), Barbara Drinkwater (women's health issues), and Karla Henderson (women and the outdoors).

(continued)

Lecture (cont.)

According to Center Director Mary Jo Kane, the series exemplifies the Center's commitment to community outreach and education. "The lecture series allows us to make important links to the larger community and to build partnerships with educators, parents, policy-makers and the sports participants themselves," said Kane.

The lecture was videotaped and copies are available in the Center for \$25. For information about renting this or other Distinguished Lecture Series videotapes, call the Center. 

Internships, Grants & Scholarships

The *National Association of Women Legal Defense and Education Fund* has one graduate student internship available for the summer of 1996. This position is for a student who is studying for an advanced degree in the social sciences or public policy and has a demonstrated interest in women's issues. The project areas involve social welfare policy, education and/or economics. A stipend of \$350 per week is offered for a full-time schedule. Applications for unpaid volunteer positions are also welcome. Mail a cover letter, resume and writing sample to Martha F. Davis, Senior Staff Attorney at NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund, 99 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013-2871 (212) 925-6635 by April 15.

Odds & Ends

► The 100th Boston Marathon will be run April 15, 1996. For women a different milestone will be marked, as this will be the 30th anniversary of Roberta "Bobbi" Gibb's historic first run.

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► The Internet provides access to information on a number of women's sports and famous female athletes. One such resource is the WWW Women's Sports Page, which can be reached at the following web address: <http://fiat.gslis.utexas.edu/~lewisa/womsprt.html>

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► One more reason to play, from the Women's Sports Foundation and the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*: Women who exercise one to three hours each week from their teens to the age of 40 lower their risk of breast cancer by 20 to 30 percent. Those who exercise four or more hours a week, as in an organized sport or exercise program, can reduce their risk of breast cancer by nearly 60 percent.

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► A subscription to *New Moon: The Magazine for Girls and Their Dreams*, which won the Alternative Press Award from the *Utne Reader* in 1994, makes a terrific gift for young girls. For subscription information, call (218) 728-5507.

Calendar of Events

Now through April 5 UNICEF is sponsoring a free exhibit, "Girls and Girlhood: A Perilous Path," in the University Room of Oyate Hall in the U of M Student Center. The exhibit is a startling overview of the world-wide treatment of girls and what is being done about it. The exhibit is on display weekdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Melpomene Institute of St. Paul is sponsoring a series of "Bodywise" lectures on Nutrition and the Active Woman.

April 2 "Dieting, Body Image and Self-Esteem"

April 9 "Current Research on Body Weight and Health"

April 16 "Eating Disorders: What's to Blame and How Can We Help?"

April 23 "Pros, Cons and Guidelines for a Vegetarian Diet"

For more information about these or other Melpomene events, call 612-642-1951.

April 25 is *National Take Our Daughters To Work Day*.

April 26-27 University of Minnesota students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to attend the *Spring Leadership Retreat*, co-sponsored by the Women's Center and Student Activities at the U of M. Call (612) 625-9837 for more information.

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The *Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport* is dedicated to exploring how sport, recreation, and physical activity affect the lives of girls and women. The first of its kind in the world, it is an interdisciplinary center leading a pioneering effort on significant social and educational issues. The Center is equally committed to teaching and mentoring students and to community outreach and service. The Center has three interrelated goals: research, education, and outreach. The Center is presently working on a variety of projects including a comprehensive report on young girls and women for the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport, a proposal to study gender differences in paratrooper injury, and a research initiative with the City of Minneapolis on Young Women At Risk.

Questions or comments about this newsletter? Call LeeAnn at (612) 625-7327.