

# Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

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# Center News

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Summer, 1996

## CRGWS Develops Affiliated Scholar Network

According to Center Director Mary Jo Kane, the complex issues confronting girls and women in sport may best be understood through interdisciplinary research. For that reason, the Center has established a network of affiliated scholars who lend their time and expertise to studying issues in sport.

The affiliated scholars specialize in a wide variety of fields at the University of Minnesota. Among the researchers' departments are Human Ecology, Education and Human Development, Food Science and Nutrition, the College of Liberal Arts and the Medical School.

The result of such collaboration is a network of scholars working together on a variety of multidisciplinary research projects ranging from addiction to exercise to fostering leadership development in young girls at risk in urban settings.

### Profile: Diane Wiese-Bjornstal

One of the Center's affiliated scholars is Professor Diane Wiese-Bjornstal, a researcher and instructor in the Division of Kinesiology. Professor Wiese-Bjornstal specializes in the field of sports psychology, and in particular the psychology of sport injury.

A native of River Falls, Wisconsin, Wiese-Bjornstal was a softball and volleyball coach in the midwest before earning her doctoral degree at the University of Oregon in 1989. For eight years she has worked at the University of Minnesota, where she is currently an Associate Professor.

Most recently, Wiese-Bjornstal completed a research paper concerning the psychological dimensions of physical activity participation for female children and youth. The paper is part of a larger report being developed under the leadership of the Center, as well as The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport.

Professor Wiese-Bjornstal is also co-editing a book entitled *Psychosocial Interaction in Sports Medicine: A Counseling Approach*. The book will provide basic information to sports medicine practitioners regarding the psychosocial dimensions of working with injured athletes.

According to Professor Wiese-Bjornstal, gender research in sport psychology (and psychology in general) is limited both in scope and depth. In the past 10 years, however, sports psychologists have found a number of gender differences among athletes. For example, when females feel they are in a masculine-oriented activity such as football, they tend to exhibit less confidence in their physical abilities. Females also tend to place greater emphasis on achieving personal goals in sport, while males generally emphasize competitiveness and winning.

There are also many similarities between the athletic experiences of males and females. For instance, both young boys and girls tend to play sports for fun, skill improvement and fitness. Professor Wiese-Bjornstal notes that there also appear to be few differences in the ways male and female athletes psychologically respond to injury, although research findings in this area are currently limited.

The literature shows that "participation in physical activity has enormous *potential* for enhancing the motivation, confidence and self-esteem of females," according to Wiese-Bjornstal. However, she cautions that such benefits will accrue only if sports programs "are designed with the specific needs and interests of females in mind."

Simply adding females to current physical activity programs originally designed for males may not be enough, she warns, adding that "we should start from scratch in many cases and design some physical activity programs specifically for females, emphasizing their unique psychological concerns."

In the future, Professor Wiese-Bjornstal believes sport psychology must encompass gender as an explanatory variable in order to better understand females' physical activity involvement.

"We must," she says, "consider gender influences across a wider range of sport and exercise activities, across more racially and ethnically diverse samples, and across disciplines including social, biological and psychological considerations." □

## Grants and Scholarships

The **Women's Sports Foundation** (WSF) sponsors a number of grants and scholarships for professionals, student-athletes and community members. The following are two examples:

**Ocean Spray Travel & Training Fund:** Funds are available to aspiring female athletes with successful sports careers and the potential to achieve greater success in their sports. Awards will pay for coaching, specialized training, equipment, and/or travel. The deadline is July 15, 1996.

**The Budget Rent-a-Car Leadership Development Grant:** Aid is available to assist in the training of women as sports leaders, coaches, officials and administrators. Any sport governing body, school, sport club or other organization offering sport opportunities to girls and women is eligible to receive assistance. Individuals may also apply. The deadline for application is October 15, 1996.

For further information about these and many other grant and scholarship opportunities, contact the WSF.

## Center Update

**President's Council Report:** The Center is jointly sponsoring a groundbreaking report on the fitness and athletic activity of girls 18 and under with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport. The report was compiled by sports sociologists, psychologists and exercise scientists and will be released in Washington, D.C. later this summer. The CRGWS fall newsletter will provide an in-depth overview and analysis of the report.

**Mentorship Project:** The Center is in the early stages of establishing a partnership with the city of Minneapolis that would involve analyzing the impact of sports mentors on at-risk urban girls.

## Odds & Ends

➡ The Minnesota Women's Fund (MWF) published a monograph entitled *Social Systems, Girls, and Self Esteem* in the fall of 1995. Included is research on the reasons for girls' decreasing self-esteem in the teen years as well as strategies for combating the problem. The monograph may be obtained at no charge by calling the MWF at 1-800-328-4827, ext. 1429.

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➡ According to statistics compiled by the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), women's soccer has grown from being offered at 2.8% of NCAA colleges in 1978 to 55.5% of colleges in 1994. Soccer is now the fifth most popular sport in terms of participation rates for high school females. To order a copy of the Participation Statistics Packet listing this and other facts about girls' and women's participation in sports, call the WSF at 1-800-227-3988.

## Recent Publications

**Womansport: The Women's Sports Bible:** Published by Athletic Achievements, this book includes a directory of over 1600 of sport's most influential females.

**The Womansport Directory:** Also from Athletic Achievements, this reference guide lists women's special interest groups, major corporations, and high profile spokespersons in the sports marketplace.

**Feminism and Sporting Bodies: Essays on Theory and Practice:** Prominent sport sociologist M. Ann Hall describes her own intellectual odyssey through various feminist approaches to women's participation in sport, as well as offering suggestions as to what can be done about the gap between feminist theory and practice in women's sport.

**Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives:** Though published in 1994, this text, edited by D. Margaret Costa and Sharon R. Guthrie, remains the most comprehensive study on the past, present and future of women in sport.

**Women, Sport, and Culture:** Also published in 1994, this text comprehensively examines feminist and critical perspectives on gender and sport. Two prominent sport sociologists, Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole, edit the volume.

These and related books can be ordered by calling Human Kinetics Publishers at 1-800-747-4457.

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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 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.