

# Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

Tucker Center News

Spring 1999

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Spring is here and we're ready for another exciting season of Tucker Center events!

First of all, we are extremely pleased to announce that the video documentary of the impact of Title IX and gender equity on women's sports in Minnesota has been completed. The Tucker Center, in partnership with Twin Cities television station KARE 11 (an NBC affiliate), produced the video "Throw Like a Girl: A Revolution in Women's Sports." This half-hour feature provides an historical perspective of the barriers and victories that have occurred in women's sports, and highlights the achievements of former Olympic medal winners and future Olympic hopefuls. "Throw Like a Girl" was previewed on March 4 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and received an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from attendees. Please see the "Throw Like a Girl" story inside this newsletter for a more in-depth look at the video and potential plans for its future use.



Dr. Mary Jo Kane

The second big event of the season is the Spring installment of the Borghild Strand Distinguished Lecture Series. We are pleased to announce that Michael Messner will be our 10<sup>th</sup> speaker in the series. Dr. Messner is Associate Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at the University of Southern California, where he teaches courses on sex and gender, men and masculinity, sexuality, and gender and sport. He is co-editor of *Men's Lives, Sport, Men and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, and *Through the Prism of Difference: Readings on Sex and Gender*. Professor Messner also authored *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* and co-authored *Sex, Violence, and Power in Sports: Rethinking Masculinity*.



Dr. Michael Messner

Professor Messner's talk is entitled "Confronting the Triad of Violence in Men's Sports." Recent research shows a correlation between college men's athletic participation and acts of sexual violence against women. In his talk, Professor Messner will explore the inner dynamics of boys' and men's sports in order to illuminate some of the reasons for this correlation. In particular, he will draw from his own research to outline the interrelationships among men's violence against women, against other men, and against their own bodies. Professor Messner will also raise questions about educational and therapeutic interventions with male athletic teams and programs. For more information on this upcoming event, please see the enclosed flyer or call 612-625-7327.

In addition to these two events, the Tucker Center continues to respond to local community groups, professional organizations, and foundations with their requests for speakers who advocate for increased and better quality sport opportunities for girls and women. One recent example involved Research Assistant and Ph.D. student Joah Iannotta who made a presentation on media images of female athletes at the 1999 International Women's Day Celebration held on March 6 in St. Paul, MN. On the research side of the Tucker Center, several funded projects are in various stages of initiation, implementation and completion. Please see the "Grants Update" section inside this newsletter for more detailed information on our research agenda and accomplishments. As you read through this newsletter, you will see that we continue to prosper in every aspect of our mission. Working with numerous individuals and organizations at the University and throughout the state of Minnesota, we believe we are making a difference for girls and women, their families and their communities. &

## A DEPARTING MESSAGE FROM FORMER VISITING SCHOLAR JOAN FRY

In 1998 I was fortunate to be a visiting scholar in the Tucker Center. I had learned of the Center and its work through an email list-serve mailing that announced the release of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports' report: *Physical Activity & Sport in the Lives of Girls*. Given that I'd been researching the role of physical activity in the lives of adolescent girls and how they experience physical education, the Tucker Center seemed to be an ideal place to spend my sabbatical. My expression of interest was reciprocated in the invitation extended to me by Professor Mary Jo Kane.



My aim for the six months in Minneapolis was to replicate a study I had been undertaking over the previous three years in Sydney, Australia—an investigation into the construction of self and physical activity among girls and young women in culturally diverse physical education classes. I planned to spend the six months away collecting and analysing comparative data.

From my earliest communications with Tucker Center staff, I received wonderful assistance and advice. I was guided through the critical preliminary aspects of my research—gaining ethics approvals and access to research sites and participants. I had already gained Human Subjects approval from my employing university, and then went through similar steps for the University of Minnesota and the local school boards.

Data collection began in September. I observed physical education classes in two Minneapolis public schools ( $n = 16$ ) for one instructional cycle, toward the end of which I interviewed nearly 70 young women from diverse cultural backgrounds. Roughly a third of these volunteers were Euro American, a third Asian American (specifically Hmong American) and a third either Black American or African immigrants to America. The interviews focussed on the role of physical activity in their lives and how they experienced physical education, a sample question being: "So, what's gym like for you?"

Transcription was my most time consuming task and given that I had taken several hours of interviews with Australian girls with me, I spent a considerable amount of my time in Minneapolis wearing a set of headphones attached to a transcription machine. This work left little time for anything other than preliminary data analysis. In terms of the nature of the girls' activity, a number of issues are immersing as important. These include: emphasis on running in gym, perceived choice in gym, teacher encouragement, peer support, responsibilities, cultural practices, and climate.

I'd like to thank Professor Kane for the invitation to work at the Tucker Center and the Tucker Center staff for their advice, support and friendship over the semester.

*Dr. Joan Marian Fry*  
Senior Lecturer, Human Movement Studies Unit  
Charles Sturt University, Australia

## GRANTS UPDATE

**Past**

The Tucker Center recently completed a research project funded by the Center for Transportation Studies that investigated whether gender and participation in athletics are related to differences in driver accident involvement. The preliminary results of the study do not support the stereotype that males and females differ with respect to driving and braking performance. Results indicated that the higher performance of female athletes compared to non-athletes was wider than that for male athletes and non-athletes. A final report will be published shortly by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Anyone interested in this study can contact the Tucker Center for more information.

**Present**

The Tucker Center is currently working on a collaborative research project to analyze how persons with physical disabilities are portrayed by the media in terms of sports and recreation participation. Specifically, we are gathering baseline data to determine whether the patterns of gender and racial

bias perpetuated by mainstream sports media are reproduced in media targeted to persons with disabilities. Conducting the baseline analysis is Dr. Sarah Hall, Assistant Professor, California State University at Northridge's Department of Special Education, a newly affiliated scholar with the Tucker Center. Also collaborating on the project are Drs. Stuart Schleien and Leandra Bedini from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism. The results of the baseline study will be used to develop further research and programmatic efforts.

**Future**

The Tucker Center is pleased to announce that the Minnesota Women's Foundation, Nike Corporation and the St. Paul branch of the American Association of University Women have pledged their support to continue our successful program for high school girls that we piloted last year. The program—"Image Is Everything: Equitable Treatment for Females"—uses the media's discriminatory

practices toward female athletes as compelling examples to teach girls how to recognize and counteract the cultural messages that can harm them. We plan to deliver the “Image Is Everything” program to 12 additional high schools throughout Minnesota during the next two school years. Ultimately, we hope to make the program available nationwide by developing a video and curriculum package.

In addition, the Tucker Center recently submitted a proposal to the National Athletic Trainers’ Association to fund a two-year study examining the effects of stress, mood state and coping on the occurrence, onset frequency and severity of injury and illness in male versus female intercollegiate athletes. Study participants will include approximately 325 University of Minnesota athletes from fourteen teams. The purpose of the study is to develop an “at-risk” profile of identifying characteristics to help athletic trainers and coaches predict those student-athletes most at risk for incurring injuries and illnesses. Directing the study are affiliated scholars Dr. Diane Wiese-Bjornstal (professor of sport psychology), Dr. Elizabeth Arendt (orthopedic surgeon) and Patricia Lacy, A.T.C./R. (assistant athletic trainer for women’s intercollegiate athletics). The proposed study expands upon a pilot study conducted by Drs. Wiese-Bjornstal and Arendt in 1997. &

#### ***COLLABORATIVE VIDEO AIRED ON KARE 11:***

##### ***“Throw Like a Girl: A Revolution in Women’s Sports”***

A screening and reception for “Throw Like a Girl: A Revolution in Women’s Sports” was held on March 4, 1999 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. More than 60 people attended the invitation-only event including some of the video’s participants, KARE 11 executives and producers, University of Minnesota dignitaries, and the three key players who transformed the video from a dream into a reality: Mary Jo Kane, Eleanor Savage, a local artist and film maker, and Jane Helmke, a managing editor at KARE 11.

The Tucker Center has a three-fold mission: 1) to conduct interdisciplinary research; 2) to provide quality education for students; and 3) to engage in community outreach and public service. It was in the spirit of the third part of our mission that “Throw Like a Girl” was conceived. About two years ago Mary Jo Kane attended a film series and saw a movie that was produced and directed by Eleanor Savage. Mary Jo was moved not only by the content, but by the vision it invoked. Eleanor’s piece, “Voicing the Legacy”, was a documentary on the lives of lesbians in their 50s, 60s and 70s and what it felt like for them to grow up in an era of repression and stigmatization. The topic was handled with such dignity, grace and compassion that it made Mary Jo think about the work that is so close to her heart: Women athletes, a group who, until very recently, also operated on the margins of society, and were often stigmatized and ostracized simply for who they were.

Mary Jo had long wanted to tell the story about how

women’s sports had existed for generations, and how it had evolved out of the shadows, and into a place not only of acceptance, but admiration and respect. This story was particularly relevant for Minnesota, a place that has long been known for its leaders, its pioneers—women and men who have championed a female’s right to fully participate in all aspects of sport and physical activity.

Mary Jo approached Eleanor and said that she wanted to make a movie about women’s sports with the same integrity, vision and passion that she witnessed in “Voicing the Legacy.” Eleanor was interested and eager, but she wanted to know how to move from the realm of ideas to the practicalities of reality, meaning she needed funding and air-time.

Jane Helmke, a managing editor at KARE 11, had already produced an award winning documentary about women as sport heroes for Melpomene Institute in St. Paul. After meeting with Mary Jo and Eleanor to discuss the possibilities of a collaborative project, Jane liked the idea so much she requested a proposal to take to the management at KARE 11. Two years, umpteen meetings, scripts, and interviews later, the video was completed.

“Throw Like a Girl: A Revolution in Women’s Sports” is a story about what it has been like for girls and women to play sports as told through the eyes of different generations of Minnesota families. It is a story about the barriers that needed to be overcome in order to reach a landmark moment in women’s sports—the passage of Title IX in 1972—and all of the victories that have occurred in its wake. It is a story about females participating at all levels of sport—from the playgrounds to the Olympics. It is a story about the impact of sport, not just on the young women themselves, but on their families, their communities and even their country. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is a story about triumph and what it means to finally live during an era when “throwing like a girl” is seen not as a criticism, but as a compliment.

After the video was previewed, those in attendance had a lively discussion and idea session. Topics ranged from inspiring personal testimony of the benefits of women’s and girls’ sport participation, to the need to create more sport opportunities for females. Discussion ultimately centered on the various ways in which “Throw Like a Girl” can be used for educational purposes. Viewers unanimously agreed that the video and an accompanying curriculum should be distributed to schools and youth organizations across the state. This “package” could be used in physical education, history, and social studies classes, as well as in sport programs to tell the history and forecast the future of women’s and girl’s sport in the state of Minnesota. The Tucker Center hopes to distribute the video/curriculum package at an all-day invitational event for high school female athletes this fall at the University of Minnesota.

The documentary originally aired on KARE 11 on March 7, 1999. A second broadcast is planned and the Tucker Center will announce the date as soon as its confirmed.

Stay tuned! &

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- On March 8, 1999 in honor of Women's History Month, HBO aired a documentary on the journey of the female athlete entitled "Dare to Compete: The Struggle of Women in Sports." The Women's Sports Foundation, in cooperation with Lifetime Learning Systems and HBO, offers an educational study guide for "Dare to Compete." Contact the Women's Sports Foundation at 800-227-3988 to learn more about the study guide and documentary.
- *Sports Illustrated for Women*, a new magazine from the makers of *Sports Illustrated*, recently released its Spring 1999 issue. According to Sandy Bailey, Editor-in-Chief, this magazine is an improved version of *Women/Sport* that was published twice in 1997. The customer service number is 800-950-5150 or visit <http://www.siforwomen.com>.
- Amy Love's *real SPORTS* just published its second issue after receiving incredibly positive feedback regarding the inaugural issue. As a result of the overwhelming reader response and advertiser support, the publication cycle was accelerated from June to March. The next issue will be June/July and then *real SPORTS* will be published every other month. Call 800-650-0122 or visit <http://www.real-sports.com> for subscription information.

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## DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT OR SUGGESTION FOR US?

The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport is always looking for suggestions from you for future Distinguished Lecture Series scholars or announcements you'd like to see in our newsletter. We appreciate your feedback. Please call or email your suggestions for future Distinguished Lecture Series scholars, announcements, or other comments or suggestions to us at 612-625-7327 • [crgws@tc.umn.edu](mailto:crgws@tc.umn.edu). Thanks!

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