

Conference Review

Women's Institute on Sport and Education Foundation

Transcending Boundaries...The New Agenda in Sport
September 28-30, 1995
Baltimore, MD

A total of 31 research focused presentations were given on topics relative to issues of media, multi-culture, health, stereotypes, gender equity, academic stress, inter-collegiate athletics, marketing sports, eating disorders and history.

In addition, a workshop on sexual harassment was presented. The keynote address, *Transcending Boundaries*, was given by Eleanor Smeal.

Three of the presentations are reviewed here.

Teamwork and Competition Among Women's Sports Advocates

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Mariah Burton Nelson, author of several books on women and sport, gave a sneak preview of her next book, *The Courage to Compete*, which concerns how women compete, avoid competing, and could compete. Mariah grew up in a family where everything, including throwing paper into the trash can, was seen as competition, but where the idea of winning and losing was not seen as negative. She related some of her own competitive experiences such as a swim race against her mother at the age of five (which was won gleefully by her mother), struggles with injury, and coping with feelings of envy.

The focus of Mariah's presentation was to explore one aspect of her works in progress: competition off the playing field. Women's sports advocates were asked if they considered themselves competitive and winners; and in which other aspects of their lives they were competitive. Respondents identified the workplace, with colleagues, and at conferences as competitive arenas. Another question posed was whether there are differences between the traditional model of competition which emphasizes winners and losers, and women's ways of competing. Can competitive situations be seen as opportunities to develop partnerships, bonds and intimacy? Can competition be viewed as a decision-making process of when and with whom to compete?

Mariah shared anonymously some answers to questions on competition asked of women associated with sports. The win/loss aspect of competition was generally depicted as negative and associated with the traditional male model. The competitive environment of academia was seen as grueling and adversarial, even among women.

Mariah concluded with guidelines for healthy and productive competition: Use competition for self fulfillment rather than the defeat of another; acknowledge competitiveness; view competition as including the right to compete, to cheer and support, and to quit; appreciate the compliment that others consider you a worthy competitor; and use competition to move towards positive behaviors of intimacies, inspirations and insights.

Ending Sexual Harassment In Sport:

A Commitment Whose Time Has Come

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During the last few decades, social scientists and human services professionals uncovered an array of social problems that lay