

Network News

An Uneven Playing Field for Female Sports Fans

A glance at an issue of *Sociology* through the “Daily Report” in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 August 2004—Female sports fans are often marginalized as “inauthentic” supporters of their teams, even when they are not outnumbered by male fans, say Garry Crawford, a senior lecturer in social and cultural studies at Sheffield Hallam University, and Victoria K. Gosling, a research student in the department of sociological studies at the University of Sheffield, both in England.

Roughly half of the spectators at professional ice hockey games in Britain are women, and the sport, which had a resurgence of popularity in the 1990s, is seen as more welcoming to women and families than some of the more traditionally male-dominated sports, the authors say.

“It would appear that ‘new’ and ‘imported’ sports such as ice hockey in the U.K. and soccer in the U.S.A., which lack the masculine tradition of many more-established sports, offer women more opportunity to attend as supporters,” write Mr. Crawford and Ms. Gosling.

However, many men label female ice hockey fans as “puck bunnies” whose only motive for attending games is to ogle the male players, the authors say.

Mr. Crawford and Ms. Gosling interviewed fans of one ice hockey team, the Manchester Storm, and found that many male respondents tended to regard younger female fans as not “real” supporters of the sport, and as “largely ‘silly young girls’ who show little knowledge or commitment to their team.”

However, the authors say, their research showed that the women were just as knowl-

edgeable and committed to the team as the men, and “none of the interviewees discussed or mentioned any reference to the physical or sexual attractiveness of any of the players.”

Denial of Birth Control = Rx for Disaster

From the Women’s Issues Committee of the United Council at the University of Wisconsin at Madison— On Thursday, Sept 23rd women in Wisconsin, USA, rallied in Madison to protest the actions of pharmacist Neil T. Noesen who refused to fill a physician-prescribed prescription for oral contraceptives in Menominee, Wis. He then refused to transfer that prescription to another pharmacy. Organizers of the rally assert, “It is unacceptable for any pharmacist to refuse to fill a patient’s prescription for oral contraceptives because he or she personally opposes birth control. Now more than ever we need to make sure we vote for candidates that support access to birth control, and protect patient rights.”

Designing Women Focus on Video Games

An excerpt from the Women’s eNews Web site—A small band of female video-game designers and savants banded together last week [9–10 September 2004] to tempt and help more women into the industry. More female designers, they reason, will leaven the powerful medium’s sex-toy portrayal of women. . . .

“For the longest time games were exclusively a fantasy space for men,” said Mia Consalvo, assistant professor of telecommunications at Ohio University in Athens, who is a member of the steering committee. “And the people play-

ing games were playing with what they wanted in a fantasy character: an orc, an elf, or a scantily clad woman. We are trying to get the industry to break out of that mold and for that we need to bring in new people, especially women.”

In addition to creating networking and mentoring opportunities for young women, the group is designing a scholarship program. Next fall it plans to send one aspiring female designer to the Guildhall digital education program at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The scholarship . . . will cover the school’s \$37,000 tuition for the 18-month-long program.

The object is not to induce more girls to sit around fixedly staring at video monitors or computer screens. . . . Even though far fewer girls than boys are playing electronic games, millions of girls are playing. Given that, the goal of these software executives and educators is to encourage better recreational content for girls.

Women on Waves Ship Blocked by Navy from Portugal Harbor

From the Web site Feminist Majority Foundation, 30 August 2004—The Women on Waves ship, traveling to Portugal to bring attention to the nation’s restrictive abortion policies, has been blocked from entering Portuguese waters. . . . Portugal’s Defense Ministry has announced that it will use force if the small ship attempts to enter the harbor. Two ships from Portugal’s Navy are circling the Women on Waves vessel. According to Women on Waves . . . , this reaction is well outside the bounds of international law and violates standard procedures within the European Union.

Women on Waves, based in the Netherlands, is led by Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, the crusading Dutch doctor who is determined to make visible the suffering of women caused by outlawing abortion. . . . Women on Waves traveled to Portugal to . . . provide medical abortions using

mifepristone for Portuguese women in international waters. . . .

Women on Waves last traveled to Poland, where it was able to successfully administer the first medical abortion in international waters. In both Poland and Ireland, the ship sparked a major public discussion on the abortion issue and resulted in significant increases in public support for legalizing abortion. The standoff between the small Women on Waves ship and the Portuguese Navy has already garnered significant press coverage in Portugal and in the European Union.

World’s First Women’s Mosque Set to Open in India

From the Feminist Daily News Wire, 14 September 2004—The first women-only mosque is being planned by a group of Muslim women in Tamil Nadu, India. According to *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*, the first women’s *jamaat* (citizen’s council) in the world, the Tamil Nadu Muslim Women’s Jamaat Committee (MWJC) has made the decision to build their own mosque because they have been refused representation in their community.

According to the *Muslim Public Affairs Committee*, male-controlled *jamaats* are stating that “women should have the right to offer prayers in mosques. In at least 5 percent of Tamil Nadu’s mosques there are separate enclosures for women. But a women’s mosque is unacceptable.”

Always affiliated with the local mosque, *jamaats* make judgments on the domestic affairs of the community, including domestic violence. Currently, with the exception of the women’s *jamaat*, *jamaats* in Tamil Nadu do not allow women to be members, nor do they allow women to represent their own cases, reports *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*.