

Foul play in corporate games

Portia Priegert

Despite the promising allure of *Games Your Mother Never Taught You*, Betty Lehan Harragan's book is, quite frankly, a disappointment. Heralded as the corporate membership guide for women, the book is filled with unadorned tomfoolery. Take for example, her section on locker room language: "80% Sex, 20% Excreta." Under her alphabetical list of vulgarities she includes "Pee. Refers to urination, specifically through the penis. To pee is go to the urinal. Presumes a direct stream." Really, I don't know where Harragan thinks we've been living all these years. She'll have

to do much better than explain the meaning of ass, bitch, crap, fuck, girl, screw, and shit to impress me.

The same goes for her sections on sports vernacular and military metaphors. How many women really don't know what allies or ball park figures refer to?

In *Games Mother Never Taught You* Harragan tries to present a way for women to get ahead in the business world. Her thesis is that women have not undergone the same socialization or experienced the same emphasis on teamwork and leadership as men. Consequently, successful ascent in the corporate world is difficult for any 'normal' woman.

Her book, she believes, is

the solution to this unfortunate problem. "You're in the army now" she urges, "Fight team, fight." The goal? The top of the pyramid. So plan your offense, cover your weaknesses and play "symbols, signals, style and sex" better than a man.

But "a pyramid is a phallic symbol," she cautions, "so beware of getting laid." Sleeping with the boss is no way to move up because talking about it is part of the game.

But not you. On no, nary a word should pass your perfectly moral lips. Keep your love life circumspect, she says, (at least within the company).

And what if they call you a "castrating bitch?" Ignore it or laugh kind-heartedly at their

little jokes. After all, they'll laugh out of the other side of their mouths when you're on top.

I guess what really bothers me about this book is that for all Harragan's show of support for the feminist movement, *Games Your Mother Never Taught You* comes off sounding a lot like *Miss Smith's Guide for Adolescent Girls*.

Although there is some merit in accepting an unsatisfactory situation and trying to work

within that framework, Harragan's approach leaves much to be desired. *Boys will be boys* seems to be her underlying message *but girls must be girls*. And I can't help feeling that if you play the double standard game and win the way Harragan describes, you really haven't won at all.

After all, do we want to win in a man's game, or do we want to create a human game in which we can all be winners?

Body Politics says it with vibes

Keith Wiley

"Vibrations," body language, non-verbal communications by whatever name is a subject popularized in several recent books. Nancy Henley's *Body Politics* is an analysis with a difference, though. Not only is this book a careful scientific examination of what goes on in the subtle silent languages but it is a forthrightly feminist analysis.

Henley hypothesizes non-verbal communication is a power structure, on a "micropolitical" level, in our society. It's a power structure which resembles the dominance-submission gestures of social animals. This power structure is basic to the human pecking order, among all people, of course, but it especially keeps women in their place in that order. Henley suggests that accepted behaviour patterns for women are the passive and submissive ones.

There are many examples in *Body Politics* as Henley carefully examines dominant and submissive signals in the areas of eye, space, touch, eyes, facial expression and gestures. Then she looks at the signals most often used by women. Henley's ideas about the power relationships in non-verbal communication are borne out by the empirical evidence; the accepted behaviour patterns for women are the submissive ones. A textbook, *Body Politics* is for the most part dry and academic. Henley did her masters thesis on the politics of touch. However, the book does present exciting and disturbing ideas. Following her observations is a tight analysis; women are NOT 'naturally' submissive in their relations.

Henley says the subtle domination of women by body language is a part of the cultural oppression of women. Like the economic oppression in housework and poorly-paid jobs, it is something women have passively accepted but have had imposed upon them. Women who break the submissive patterns are criticised for being unfeminine, mean or even frigid. Although they may take up these behaviour patterns through socialization, as women they are punished for trying to get out of them.

Finally, in the conclusion, Henley talks about breaking the oppression and improving the situation. And the way to do it, she says, is by each of us examining and changing our own behaviour. She recommends men restrain their

dominance behaviours. Ultimately, however, it is up to women to break the pattern. "Women can stop: smiling unless they are happy; lowering or averting their eyes when stared at; getting out of men's way in public; allowing interruptions; restraining their body postures;

accepting unwanted touch."

Although it focuses on the situation of women *Body Politics* is an important contribution to our understanding of human interaction generally. If you want to find out what we mean when we're not talking, read it.

Starting sixth year

Branching Out survives

by Margaret Donovan

"Survival" is one of the most impressive achievements of *Branching Out*, an Edmonton-based feminist magazine, says editor Sharon Batt.

Despite chronic financial problems, *Branching Out* celebrated its fifth anniversary last month.

Readership is presently estimated at 4,000 but an increase to 10,000 would make the magazine more viable financially, for advertising revenue could be increased.

The magazine now receives funds from various federal and provincial bodies, such as Alberta Culture and The Secretary of State. Most of the money is spent on printing and distribution. Writers get a small honorarium and the staff are volunteers.

Batt says getting magazine writing of a sufficiently high quality is difficult. *Branching Out* solicits almost all of its non-fiction, though it gets more than enough good fiction and poetry.

Batt says that contributors to the magazine must have something to say that other women want to hear. She adds

that there is no conscious effort to model *Branching Out* on *Ms.* or any other feminist magazine.

Past issues have covered much of what is seen as standard feminist fare. This includes rape, abortion, day-care, women and the law, native women, and women in the work place. More unusual topics such as women and sport, feminist philately and an article on the art of Codpieces have been featured.

Women from across Canada such as Pauline Jewett, Rosemary Brown and Mavis Gallant have been featured. Closer to home, a story on Professor Jean Lauber of the Department of Zoology has been done.

There is also a regular law column and a book review section. Photography, drawings and paintings by women artists are included as well.

Branching Out appeals to a limited number of women and will probably never have the support and appeal of *Ms.* Nonetheless, it serves a useful local function and deserves to survive.

Recommended reading

by Ruth Groberman

Sometimes women aren't aware of all the current literature or aren't willing to take the time to separate the good from the very bad.

If anyone is interested in reading about the role of women, I urge them to come into the office of Student Affairs (in Athabasca Hall). Here we have several pertinent books available to read. Such as these listed below:

Shack, Sybil, *Saturday's Stepchild: Canadian Women in Business.*

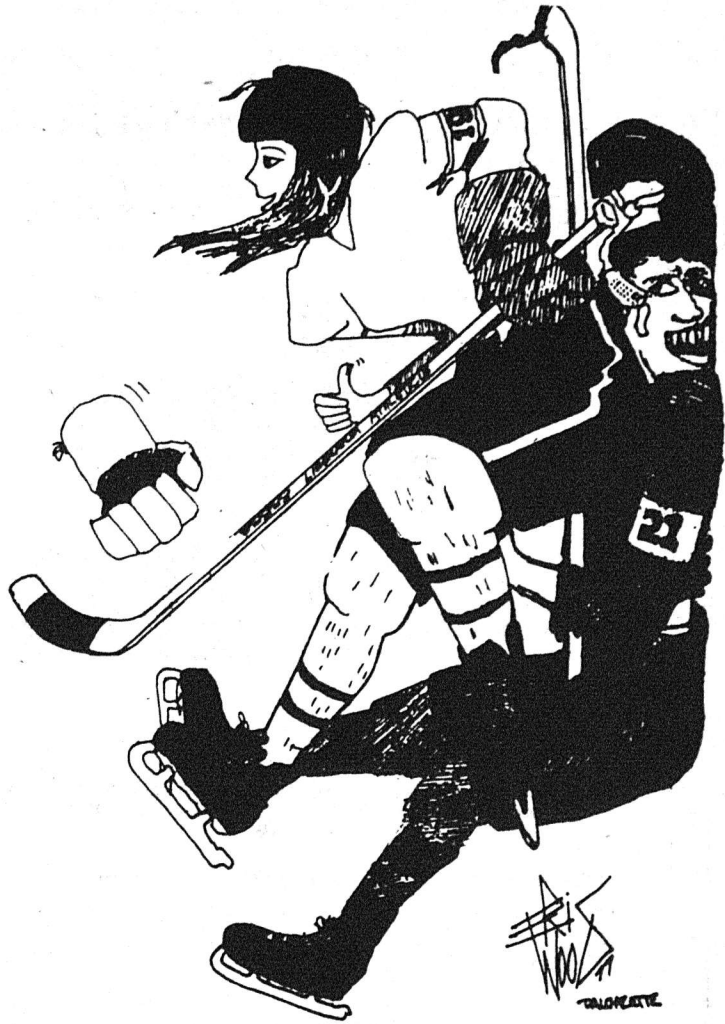
Armstrong, Pat and Hugh, *The Double Ghetto.*

Henning Margaret and Jardin, Anne, *The Managerial Woman.* The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Our Selves.*

McCalla Vickers, J. and Adam, June, *But Can You Type?* Shack, Sybil, *Women in Canadian Education.*

Garfield Barbach, L., *For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality.*

Tumlin, Nellie, *How to Decide: A Workbook for Women.*



Women in sports

Increasing numbers of girls and women are participating in sports and fitness programs and forming athletic organizations.

But for many, it's an uphill battle against bureaucracy, and the intangible social bias against the athletic female.

As more children are raised by liberated parents, an increasing number of girls will enter sports without fear of reprisals. But, at present, there are many discouragements.

For example, it is widely assumed that women cannot perform as well as men in sports and therefore should not bother to perform at all. If they do, their efforts are often not taken seriously.

This assumption is based on the competitive concept created by the media exposure of professional sports which places such an emphasis on winning, that there seems to be no value in just participating. But in many competitive sports, such as running and jumping, women are narrowing the achievement gap.

A second misconception which discourages girls and women from competing in sports is that athletic females are considered unattractive. The myth of the muscle-bound woman has not yet been killed, and our society still tends to equal beauty with physical weakness and ineptitude in women. Abby Hoffman, in the

December issue of *Status of Women News* points out how these two factors combine to frustrate progress in female athletics. Because physical development is viewed as unattractive by many women, they do not reach their physical potential, and hence strengthen the argument that women are physically inferior to men.

"It's a vicious circle: females participate less, therefore they don't reach their optimum physical potential. They are therefore assumed (by themselves and by males) to lack significant physical capacity, and this observation then justifies the lesser availability of resources and opportunities to participate in sport."

The problem is complex. It goes far beyond a teen-aged girl worrying about whether she'll be popular if she joins the volleyball team.

Attitudes become institutionalized by a dearth of athletic facilities for females and by decisions of administrative bodies to prevent equal opportunity in publically-funded sports organizations.

Gradual change is the only answer. Just as the situation for the female athlete is better now than it was 20 years ago, so will it be even better in 20 more years. The key is equal opportunity and freedom of choice, principles which society in general, upholds.