
A Research on the Changes Brought by Title IX on Sports and Society

A Nation Changer: How Title IX has changed sports and society

Oftentimes when people think of what has changed this nation's foundations, they think of the Civil Rights Movement and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Not many people think about a piece of legislation passed in 1972 that prohibits participation, denied benefits, and discrimination based on sex in any education program receiving federal financial aid. This keystone piece in our history is called Title IX and has been under the microscope of scrutiny for nearly four decades, and to be honest, it should not be such the controversial subject it is. [NT1] When people think of Title IX, they often associate it with collegiate athletics. People think that way because they are not aware that it includes academics, support services, clubs, and so on. As a society we have unfortunately become glued to ESPN that we forget there is more to life than who beat the New York Yankees or what NFL superstar got arrested.

The Women's Sports Foundation revealed in a question-answer article that despite the ongoing claims and litigation brought to court by individuals and parents, more people are becoming more accepting of this law, signifying a major shift in society's views of women in sports ("Title IX"). We as a society should not need this law, although important, to ensure gender equity. Instead, we should view men and women as equals. Title IX has expanded beyond the athletic fields and courts, beyond what society thinks it only deals with, and is now a major issue in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Since its enactment, women have become empowered and passionate about changing the society's view of their sex across the board. Take one look at the last presidential election. The United States of America almost had for the first time in history, a female vice president in Sarah Palin. Even more so, look at who is running the State of North Carolina: Beverly Perdue.

I found out from the Women's Sports Foundation website that in order to be compliant with Title IX, a school must pass two parts of a three-part analysis. The first part is to provide athletic participation slots significantly proportionate to total student enrollment. The second part is that federally-funded institutions must show ongoing commitment to athletic opportunity expansion of the underrepresented sex, and lastly, the third part of the compliance analysis is accommodating the underrepresented sex's interests and abilities ("Title IX"). I myself have been involved in athletics as a student-equipment manager for about a decade now. I am also majoring in Sport Management with a concentration in Athletic Administration at Western Carolina University. I am familiar with how Title IX works in an athletic department as a result of

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my curricula. To put the analysis in laymen's terms, I will use Western Carolina University as an example. There are a total of 287 athletes, 111 being female and 176 being male. That equates to 39 percent and 61 percent respectively. The student body enrollment is 9,429; 56 percent being female and 44 percent being male. Western would not comply with this prong (proportionality test) because the percentages are outside the three percent "give or take" range. The expansion of athletic opportunities for the underrepresented sex prong is commonly referred to as a temporary compliance fix because a school can only use it for so long before they must switch to another prong. Western uses this prong as well as the third prong, the third by including athletic surveys in their admission application. When a student applies for admission, they must list sports they would be interested in playing. This satisfies the third prong of the compliancy test.

For the longest time Title IX was only enforced in educational programs and those related. When lawmakers realized that athletic departments are also a part of the educational institution that is when the water really began to boil. One of the most significant examples in history of protesting athletic changes in favor of Title IX is the story of Chris Ernst and the Yale University's women's rowing team.[NT2] A member of the 1982 Olympic rowing team, Mary Mazzio produced in 1999, "A Hero for Daisy". Figure 1 is a vivid shot of what the young girls did in the Yale AD's office.

According to Mazzio's film and Ernst's narrative, it was 1976 when the actual events took place, but the legend lives on: nineteen young women rowers wrote "Title IX" on their chests and backs and walked into the Yale athletic director's office and stripped to their waists, revealing the phrase while Ernst read a statement. Before this protest, the women would have to come in after a grueling, sometimes cold, wet practice, and take cold showers. After the protest, the AD put showers in the women's locker room and the entire story was all over the news...all across the country ("Hero"). [NT3] The main theme behind this film is the girls wanted to stop being treated as inferior to the men and have appropriate shower and locker room facilities. I saw scenes of the women having to get on the bus back to campus with frozen hair the showers were so inadequate. Several of the team members also became ill as a result of not being able to take care of themselves properly. [NT4] Quite simply, the women were fed up with being treated as underdogs to the men and decided to stand up for what they believed was right. In my opinion, these women changed sports and without a doubt, society as well.

The result of Chris Ernst's actions undoubtedly made national news. Of all national broadcasting agencies to put this film on the airwaves was ESPN. The media is the largest form of intelligence transportation known to mankind. Both at Penn State University, Marie Hardin, an associate professor in the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism, and Erin Whiteside, a student pursuing a doctoral degree in the College of Communications, wrote an article in Newspaper Research Journal titled "Sports Reporters Divided Over Concerns about Title IX."

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The article shows in a series of charts that although most sports journalists are acquainted with Title IX, their beliefs towards the law and homosexual athletes varies according to their own gender and amount of circulation (Hardin 1). Figure 2 gives clear gender-specific views of Title IX and sports:

As you can tell from this chart, there is a higher percentage of men that think Title IX has hurt men's sports than not. Women have a converse view, reporting that they think Title IX has not hurt men's sports. Again with the second question, more men think that Title IX is just fine the way it is, and a large majority of the women interviewed still think it should be amended. It is a classic example of gender bias; People in this field tend to vote for their own gender no matter what is ethically right in the eyes of society.

The media is just as bad, if not the worst, at being fair when it comes to publishing stories on women's athletics. Hardin and Whiteside's article states, "Studies have consistently found that women are positioned as less interesting and capable through both the quantity and quality of coverage. Furthermore, the lack of newspaper coverage devoted to girls' and women's sports does not reflect their participation rates, and editors have cited 'lack of interest' to justify these decisions" (Hardin 2). Unfortunately, people read more stories about the achievements of male athletes than female. Here's a classic example: look at how many articles have been written about Shaun White, a professional snowboarder who has only recently made headlines with a spectacular performance at the Winter X Games, and Jamie Anderson, the female equivalent – with not quite the spectacular performance. I said Jamie Anderson and people probably had no idea who I was referring to because they did not see her name in quite as many articles explaining how great of a snowboarder she is. I would not say that it is an overall lack of interest in sports amongst females; I think one could unfortunately fault sports journalism for being bias. This biasness among sports journalism is an institutional norm; "Individuals who choose to resist those institutional norms by supporting women's sports, for instance, can be ostracized" (Hardin 4). So if I choose to be a sports journalist and chose to go against the common grain of coverage and write about people like Jamie Anderson, I would be considered an outcast. An outcast for doing what I believe is the right thing to do, promoting the achievements of women in athletics. At least that is the mindset of sports journalism more often than not. Title IX is a law seeking to turn the tables of that popular notion. I know that one female in particular used Title IX in her favor and changed the way sports journalism views women. It was Chris Ernst, and when her complaint made the headlines, you can bet it impacted society.

The general public might think, "Title IX sure does seem bias towards women." They would be right; Title IX is directed more toward providing athletic opportunities for women. Steven Rhoads brings up in his article "Sports, sex, and Title IX" that this law is supposedly anti-discriminatory, when in fact it is just the opposite. Title IX fails to mention is that in order for institutions to be compliant with the law, some programs dedicated to male involvement must be cut, namely non-

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revenue earning sports. Take for example wrestling. Each of the three weight classes has a certain number of participants in them; call it twenty for easy math. That brings the grand total to sixty wrestlers. Since wrestling in most schools is not considered a huge ticket sell, it is often dropped due to Title IX requirements. That means sixty young men cannot go after a passion because of a law that tries to get more females active in sports. Rhoads also points out that based on the interest prong of the compliancy analysis, it is hard to determine what females are interested in. Moreover, he explains that the psychology behind females in sports is much different than males in sports. Males have natural tendency to expend their testosterone-born aggression and competitiveness through sport. Males also make more friendships through involvement in sports. Even a benchwarmer on a football team feels he is a part of the team merely by cheering and being there for his team. Females on the other hand, when they feel they will be cut or see potential for arguments, they quit the team (Rhoads). So going back to the interest prong, could one argue that we are wasting time trying to figure out athletic opportunities for women by doing surveys when they may quit a team at first sign of struggle?

Have you ever wondered how the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) schools fare in regard to Title IX? These are schools where the outcomes of football and men's basketball games make headlines more often than academic research. According to "Part", "Charles Kennedy is a senior instructor of political science at Penn State – York. He is a former Peace Corps volunteer, director of Pennsylvania's Governor's Action Center, and assistant to West Virginia's Secretary of State" ("Part"). Kennedy came up with a playoff system explained in his article "Part" to determine compliancy using other factors other than the commonly-used three prong test. His variables come from a 2004 Chronicle of Higher Education gender equity study: participation, scholarships, coaching salaries, and operating expenses. The participation test is quite simple; the number of female student-athletes should be proportionate to the percentage of women in the student body. The scholarship variable is governed by the Office of Civil Rights and mandates that "colleges must award the same proportions of aid to female athletes as there are women participating in varsity sports. The proportion is to be within one percentage point" ("Part" 52). Two variables not included in Title IX are coaching salaries and operating expenses. I do believe that coaching salaries should be proportionate and fair because it makes the women coaches just as equal as the men coaches. Although operating expenses are not covered under Title IX, they are of concern with the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act in that the EADA does mandate how much of an athletic budget must be reserved for women's teams ("BCS" 53). In Kennedy's analysis, the BCS Champion of Title IX was Ohio University, outlasting Stanford University 3-1 with individual statistics* of participation (-10.7: 0.0), scholarship (2.55:1.96), coaching salaries (40.9:38.0) and lastly operating expenses (41.7:39.2).

A chemist at the Naval Research Laboratory, Debra Rolison, has done Title IX protesting in the form of holding discussions nationwide in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – STEM – disciplines. [NT5] In an interview report by Toni Feder[NT6] , Rolison feels that these

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departments should have to maintain a balance of male and female doctorate positions. According to a report given by the Congressional Subcommittee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, if we want to have better educated graduating classes coming out of our universities and colleges, we need to open the door of recruiting and accepting women in the educational workplace more (Feder). [NT7]

Julie Walters is an assistant professor of political science at Oakland University and Connie L. McNeely is a faculty member of the School of Public Policy at George Mason University. Together they wrote an article addressing gender equity in the STEM fields as well. They shed light on how little Title IX has been discussed in the realm of academics, when in fact academics is probably the more important subject to be discussed than athletics. Women are less inclined to go into STEM fields because “while both males and females are equally committed to academic careers, women’s higher turnover has been highly correlated with dissatisfaction and lower levels of research support, fewer advancement opportunities, intellectual constraints, and heavier teaching and service workloads” (Walters 1). If that is not sexual discrimination in the workplace, please tell me what is. It is completely unfair to shove more work onto women as retribution for trying to advance in their career. Universities exalt the male by allowing them easier course loads and giving them advancement opportunities quicker than females. I am not a feminist by any means, but I do know where to draw an ethical line, and what some universities do is plainly unethical and purely discriminatory. The worst part of it is that “an institution may attempt to defend itself by claiming, for example, that all such work is “voluntary,” but a question arises in the definition of “voluntary” in practice and application” (Walters 9). Just when people think the institution is the terrible person, take a look at the federal government; “In 1996, Congress cut or eliminated funding for state Title IX coordinators, and in 2003, cut funding for the Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1965, which provided grants in aid in promoting gender equity in educational environments” (Walters 9). What that last quote is saying is Congress basically said that funding Title IX is no longer important. Schools nationwide need those coordinators to make sure the school is in compliance, and all of a sudden Congress says, “Gender equity is no longer a big deal to us.” You can bet that Congressional ruling impacted society and quite a few athletic departments.

In a report by the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, statistics are showing that females are making significant strides in the academic field. According to the report, “In the last 10 years, the number of girls taking the AP Calculus AB exam has increased nearly 60% and the number of girls taking the AP Physics B exam more than doubled during the same period... And, in 2007, half of the 40 finalists in the Intel Science Talent Search were girls” (“Science”). Even with a major law in place, women still see the cold shoulder; “unsupportive classroom environments, a limited peer group and outdated pedagogy; and women scientists and engineers earn less and advance slower than men in both academia and the private sector” (“Science”). In my opinion, we should accept women and girls not for just beauty, but

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for the amount of intelligence and other talent they have. In our dismal economy, we cannot afford to be discriminatory against women, or toward any sexual orientation for that matter. We need the most qualified individuals in the positions, and if the most qualified are women, so be it.

Continuing on with the STEM fields, the United States National Aeronautic and Space Administration – NASA – has their own policies on Title IX. NASA grants federal money to universities and other educational institutions for research and development. Since this aid is federal, it makes the entire organization subject to compliance checks. The “prong” analysis I mentioned earlier does not apply here as much as it does in athletics, but one could argue that the money should be allocated evenly amongst the affected programs. I found out that NASA does conduct random but forewarned interviews and tests among schools that received grants. In comparison to the NCAA punishment policies, NASA is fairly lenient, only bringing down hefty sanctions when the school fails to voluntarily comply[NT8] (NASA).[NT9]

In conclusion, I hope that this explanation has left you, the reader, with a better understanding of how Title IX has impacted sports and society. I can only imagine what society was like before Title IX, and I am thankful that we have it today and for the future. Many generations to come will benefit not just in athletics, but in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Without a doubt, the people with passion for reforming society, namely Chris Ernst and people like Debra Rolison, are making the world a more balanced society.

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