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Professor Hays

Rhet 102

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Empowering Women in Sports

America is known as the country of freedom, opportunity, and equality for all. It is a place where people are capable of doing what they want and being what they want. The Education Amendments Act of 1972 was created to give all individuals the equal rights in schools including the school's extracurricular activities. Furthermore Title IX was a huge accomplishment for females to have the same opportunities as male students in sports, because it gave females equal opportunities disregarding their gender roles.

What is the definition of Title IX? According to the article Women Win Big with Title IX "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Barra). From this, one can see that Title IX makes it a requirement to make everyone feel included; Although Title IX does not specifically target sports, it sure has opened the doors for women who do partake in athletic games. For example, the article articulates that participation from women in sports has increased to 3.2 million since just 2011, compared to 300,000 or less back in 1971. This has impacted women across the nation because the bars continue to be set higher and higher. Since universities have to follow Title IX, they have since made great competing athletes -who are the reason why we see victories in the World Cup and Olympic soccer titles (Barra, 20). As mentioned, participation only kept taking

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off, which has not been a problem that has been brought to attention. On the other hand, Title IX is the equal funding once team sports have been established. This of course was a concern to The NCAA because it was thought that there wouldn't be as much success in income that college basketball and football bring in (Barra, 21). This article explains how the equal funding has not only applied to women sport programs but to a lot of school's athletic department, where many universities have had to cut many of their programs who have been around for many years. This is happening because "instead of allocating resources among a variety of sports, many college administrators are choosing to take part in the basketball and football 'arms race' at the expense of other athletic programs," but this is seen as something positive because this attention to those two sports in return provide funding for those programs that bring in no money (Barra, 21). This article also ushers the importance that Title IX is not only about sports but the success that derives from it. The importance of Title IX for woman includes given them equality in sports and fairness between men and women.

Once more, as mentioned Title IX has made it possible for women to partake in sports. Due to this push and excellence, women have gone from participating in college teams to performing for the U.S national teams. But before we move forward, it is important to understand how female athletes impact others. Since the requirement that implements schools to provide equal opportunities to male and female athletes because of Title IX, "the number of American high school girls who play sports jumped from one in twenty-seven, to one in three," (Conniff, 26). The article *The Joy of Women's sports* by Ruth Conniff gives an insight of how female athletes are able to grow and discover who they are and what they want because of their sport. This is the result of beginning a sport at a young age. The author of this article, Ruth Conniff, is attending the NCAA track championships with her former student athlete, Kamila

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Hoyer-Weaver, who she formerly coached in high school (26). Conniff makes an observation of how Kamila was capable of taking on the world by leaving behind her former “shy back-of-the-packer in cross country and track” (26), to currently representing a Division I athletic program because of the “long line of female champions” (27). The legacy that other female athletes have left, has helped the development of young women by facing their fears and discovering what they can really do with their bodies. They are given an insight of what others have achieved and know that they can do the same. The article I feel is a great encouragement for women to athletically prove men aren’t the only talented athletes. Furthermore, although many female athletes have achieved greatness they have had to fight more than male athletes would. One instance was when a high school in Florida had a stadium for the boy’s baseball team, while the girls’ softball team had a field with no upkeep; two girls from the softball team sued the school for discrimination (Conniff, 27-28). But with issues like so, one can see more student athletes working together -both male and female- and motivating one another. But it is important to know that there will always be resistance with Title IX.

Today woman have more opportunities. As stated before, the legacy of past women in sports has inspired and created much stronger competing women today. In the article *University Looks Back at Women in Sports* by Ian Gold, the University of Illinois commemorates female athletes who graduated before 1974. Bring into mind that before Title IX came into effect, there were women athletic events but they “were stagnant and nonprogressive” compared to the men’s programs. Those being honored who attended the university prior to graduating, had “women’s sports budget of a few hundred dollars” and by 1974 they had “a budget of \$83,500”. Now there are more teams and clubs with a budget worth millions. Some of the former athletes whose daughters attended the school as athletes, are getting more support and they are glad Title IX has

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paved the way for them (B-1). It is rewarding of the university to have a ceremony to recognize the athletes that have progressed in their career before Title IX was fully implemented. But to think that there was a time where the social norm was for men to be the main ones to play sports, be engineers, and be granted sports scholarships is insane. However, because of Title IX that is not the norm anymore and everyone has an equal chance to become something. Nowadays women are getting more involved in STEM programs. There is more coverage in female sports when it comes to the Olympics; Women like Serena Williams, Simone Biles, and Malala Yousafzai are inspirations to many out there because they've gone through hardships to get to where they are today. Women are being taken more seriously and it does not have to do with having the same physical or mental ability as a man.

Continuing on, as mentioned on the participation of women in sports has not been a problem. It is remarkable to see the effect of Title IX. The graph (Figure 1) from the textbook *Title IX at 40: Working to Ensure Gender Equity in Education* in the section *Title IX and Athletics: Proven benefits, unfounded objections* where one can see before Title IX act was passed there were fewer than 300,000 thousand girls participating in high school sports. But even less women participating in college sports with only 29,977 female athletes. However, we can see that since 1972 the participation of female athletes increased dramatically (Figure 1). Looking at the data for 2010-2011, the participation for female high school reached over three million (Figure 1). Comparing the participation for high school male athletes, it is great to see how the female participation ratio is very close. But although the female involvement in sports has increased over the years there still more improvement in allowing women to be represented beyond their stereotypic gender role.

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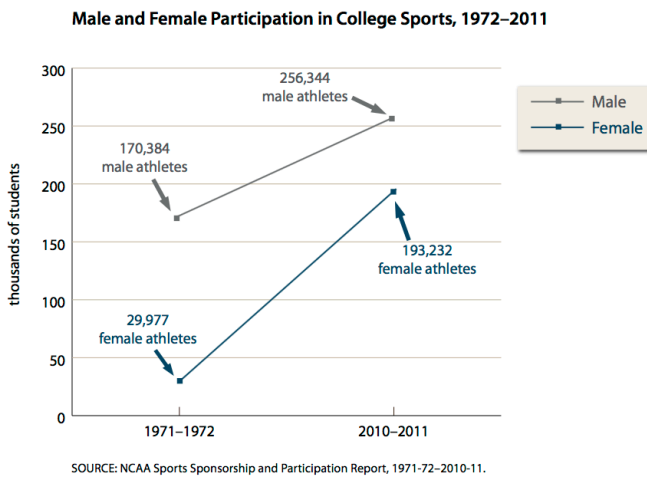
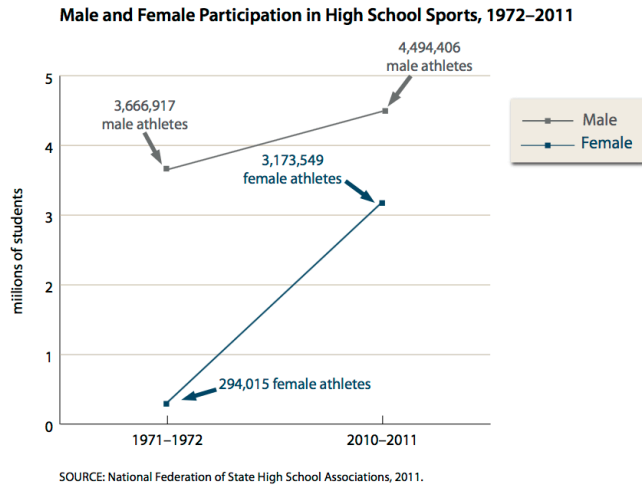


Figure 1: The number of male and female athletes have increased in both the high school and college level. Dusenbery, Maya, and Jaeah Lee. "Charts: The State of Women's Athletics, 40 Years After Title IX." Mother Jones. Mother Jones, 22 June 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/06/charts-womens-athletics-title-nine-ncaa>>.

Gold, Ian. "University Looks Back at Women in Sports." Daily Illini [Champaign] 23 Nov. 2003, sec. B: n. pag. Print.

As we have seen, the participation for female athletes has increased significantly after the act of Title IX was passed minimizing the normal gender role of a women. In the article *Panelists voice the benefits of Title IX*, by Tina Shah, mentions how NCAA senior vice-president for the Championships and Education Services and senior woman administrator, Judith Sweet, was not able to play on an intercollegiate team while she was enrolled in college. Because that Judith Sweet had not been part of a team during that time, she did not anticipate to get to where she is now. The University of Illinois hosted the Title IX and Women's Athletics Conference where Judith Sweet was a speaker and athletic trainers and head coaches of women's sports attended (A-3). The purpose of the conference was to focus on the ones who are still not able to play! There are still great improvements to be done now. The battle of equality is no longer between genders, but has extended towards minorities.

It is great knowing that for the most part Title IX has made a difference, but even though this act has been passed for nearly forty-five years, there still are inequality issues that go unnoticed. According to the National Women's Law Center analysis of 2011-12 Department of Education data, there are large gender inequality in public high school sports across the United States. The states that have the most severe inequality are the southern states. Ali Wong explains, that a gap is considered large when it is twelve; so for example, even if there is a 78 percent of girl's population in the school but only 66 percent of them get sports on the team. This is one of the main reasons why girls are still not getting equal opportunities for girls because they do not get facilities like they should, and it is not because the schools have neglected girls to be in sports team or due to girls not being interested but rather because "schools with high

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concentrations of minority and low-income students not only tend to have fewer resources for extracurricular activities, they also tend to have much larger gender disparities in sports participation than do schools serving majority-white populations,” (Wong). But it also make sense because the thirteen southern states are also the ones that face segregation. In *Charts: The State of Women's Athletics, 40 Years After Title IX* by Maya Dusenbery and Jaeah Lee, it includes a response from Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, an Olympic gold medalist in track and field, recently explained to the *New York Times*, “In the grand scheme of things, Caucasian girls have benefited disproportionately well, especially suburban girls and wealthy Caucasian girls.” There is not much representation from African-American, Hispanic, and Asian girls. Lastly, by having high school girls participate in sports team one is able to see excellence when it comes academics and careers (Dusenbery). This statement included women sports beyond gender and including minorities being treated unequal in sports similar to men and women.

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In the 2012 Olympic Games there was great coverage of accomplished athletic women in their prime competing level. This was the event were women from all around the world were recognized with having more winning medals than men. In fact, Saudi Arabia allowed for the first time women to compete (Pauline, 4). A more interesting note is that, “if the U.S women were their own nation they would have finished ahead of every other country’s total gold medal count,” (Pauline, 4) which is impressive that women have come a long way because of the achieved Title IX. But as mentioned before, there is still more time for improvement. One major improvement that has taken effect is media attention, because of this; other generations will be in route to becoming Olympians. But a future possibility of Title IX is to improve opportunities for women who are not only athletes but for those who want to hold employment in the sports industry. In the article, *Celebrating 40 Years of Title IX: How Far Have We Really Come?* By

Gina Pauline, mentions how more organizations are taking consideration of the situation by initiating programs, policies, and opportunities to further the advancement in women in the industry. In the near future, one can hope that women will have greater or equal pay in professions such as marketing, event management, communications, sales and more as men currently do!

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To think that in 1972, 90 percent of women were coaching team sports and now the number has gone drastically to about 40 percent. In the article *Number of Women Coaching in College Has Plummeted in Title IX Era* by Jeré Longman, it is mentioned how as more money and higher salaries came into college sports men became increasingly interested women’s teams but it did not work the other way around. In fact, Nicole M. LaVoi, the co-director of the Tucker Center adds, “My biggest concern is that young women are not often getting the opportunity to have a female coaching role model, that’s detrimental to development.” but when there is an opportunity to do so the ratio is 7:3, (Longman, (*Number of Women Coaching in College Has Plummeted in Title IX Era*”). I believe women who are the coaches as well as the players should have equal opportunities as the men have in the sport industry because it minimize the stereotypical gender roles in today’s society.

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All in all, as a result of Title IX, women have benefited from involvement in sports and, the sports industry is more entertaining with their participation. Today, women continue to excel in every field of athletics and education as a result of Title IX. We know gender equality in education and athletics hasn’t been fully met but with the help of expressing Title IX gender roles will eventually end.

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<<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/06/girls-high-school-sports-inequality/396782/>>.

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