Title IX And The Female Athlete Essay, Research Paper

TITLE IX AND THE FEMALE ATHLETE

Since the beginning of humankind, women have been viewed as the weaker sex and in turn have been discriminated against in all aspects of society. Females have not received the respect and opportunities that they deserve and have not been given the opportunities that males have to succeed. Women finally began to have their voices heard after the post World War II movement into the labor force in the late 1950?s and 1960?s. Along with this movement came demands for equity, a fact that soon resulted in the passage of the Title IX legislation in 1972. Title IX is a law that ?prohibits discrimination against girls and women in federally funded education, including athletic programs? (Empowering Women in Sports 1). This law was the first time female access in sports received proper attention. Though this law was passed almost thirty years ago, there are some public education facilities that have yet to comply with the boundaries set forth by Title IX.

One of the reasons many schools fail to comply with Title IX, is because the law has not been strongly enforced by the Federal Government. Although Title IX was adopted in 1972, it was not until 1974 that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare released its proposed regulations for a school to comply with Title IX. Still, colleges were allowed a three-year grace period before these provisions had to be met (Women, Sport, and Culture 101). Women have been forced to file many lawsuits against their high schools and colleges in order for the institution to force gender equity. ?Hundreds of lawsuits and Civil Rights complaints have been filed under Title IX and state Equal Rights Amendments charging gender discrimination in sports in high school and colleges (Empowering Women In Sports 2).? Fortunately, most of these cases have been in favor of women. A case where a lawsuit was filed, was the case at Brown University. Here, a decision was made by the athletic department to cut two men?s sports and two women?s sports from being varsity sports. One of the sports happened to be gymnastics, which brings in more participation and money for women. $62,000 was the combined cut from the women?s sports budget, while the cut in the two men?s sports only amounted to a $16,000 deduction from the men?s budget. The Brown case has gone further than any other Title IX case since the university was already in violation of Title IX (Empowering Women In Sports2). It was not until recently that the Civil Rights Office actually started to crack down on violators.

Despite the fact that Title IX increases benefits for women in sports, some argue that men are being punished. Many people believe, especially coaches of wrestling, golf, and gymnastics teams, that as more women become involved in sports, there will be less opportunity for men to play. This belief is a myth because there was not equal opportunity to begin with, for men had all the opportunities to play, while women had very few. Today, women and the Civil Rights are only trying to make the opportunity the same for women as for men. Although women participation is increasing at a faster rate then men?s, they have yet to catch up with the men?s participation. Men still receive 70% of scholarship money, 77% of the operating budget, and 83% of the recruiting money in most schools (Empowering Women In Sports 1). Society obviously has a long way to go before it reaches equality.

Although some, mostly men and coaches, oppose gender equity, Title IX has helped the female athlete, both mentally and physically. In the past, studies have shown that females are susceptible to being unfit, dropping out of physical education and sport; developing eating disorders, smoking by the age of 15, and being overweight (Gender Equity Through Physical Education and Sport 5). Athleticism has its short-term as well as long-term benefits. For example, playing organized sports will help enhance the educational experience by providing opportunities for leadership, teamwork, and competition. These characteristics can help women be more successful entering their careers. Organized sports can also provide adult role models to children and teenagers, a fact that is essential in the development of young adults. Before Title IX only males were receiving this benefits, however, now females are being given a chance. Other benefits of organized sports and physical activity are the following: it enhances cognitive ability, contributes a positive body image and self-esteem, and it allows females to have more confidence and a feeling of achievement (Gender Equity Through Physical Education and Sport 5).

Although there are many benefits for women to participate in sports, many females are discourages from pursuing their sport because of society rendering athleticism as a male domain. Many athletes say that being on a sports team has often led others to assume that they are lesbians. As former basketball star Mariah Burton Nelson put in her book Are We Winning Yet?, ?Female athletes in traditionally masculine sports challenge the social dictates about proper behavior for females; therefore, the reasoning goes, there must be something wrong with them? (102). Girls are afraid to join sports that are considered masculine in fear that society?s homophobia will label them as a lesbian. If they do decide to join the sport, they are forced to deal with the ridicule throughout their careers, which leads females to limit their own opportunities for involvement. Perhaps one day, society will be able to realize that it is not that female athletes are masculine, but that they truly possess athletic ability but have not been able to show it until now.

Clearly, Title IX has created advances toward equality in education and sports. But society is nowhere near where it should be. Women are still only about one-third of interscholastic and intercollegiate athletes, and they receive a great deal less money than do men. As we enter the third millennium, it is our duty to develop physical education and sports programs that do make judgments based on sex, age, ability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, but rather ability and performance. Then we will be able to provide equal opportunities for males and females, blacks and whites, gay or straights. Society must realize that just because athleticism has been male dominated for so long, does not mean that women should be denied the opportunities that men receive. Perhaps all schools will someday follow Title IX so that we can have full equality.WORKS CITED

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