

## GENDER EQUITY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

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When the Olympic Games returned to their Greek birthplace in August of 2004, the lighting of the cauldron during the opening ceremony marked a convergence of the ancient and modern worlds. No better site could be found to illustrate in such profound relief the paths human beings travel over time in their quest to attain noble goals and higher ideals. In the shadow of Mount Olympus, those poised to create history came face to face with the enduring legacies of history makers.

For Americans, games heralded for their celebration of athletic excellence symbolized the long march toward fulfillment of democratic ideals for all citizens. The ancient practice of excluding women from games where men competed was relegated to the recesses of memory, replaced by the largest contingent of women ever to participate in the Olympic Games, numbering 4,305 strong and representing 40 percent of all athletes (Rogge, 2004). With 282 men and 263 women, the U.S. team presented a nearly perfect image of gender equity to the world (Shipley, 2004).

As a measure of progress, the Olympic Games offer a showcase for understanding the fluidity of gender in various historical

contexts as it is manifest in societal attitudes and expectations about females and males in sport and physical activity. With each passing generation, early 20th century prohibitions against women participating in sport have slowly faded into the background, giving way to a 21st century perspective that athleticism is not an exclusively male domain but a shared human experience. The addition of women's wrestling as an Olympic sport in 2004 vividly demonstrated this passage from ancient to modern and postmodern time (Chen, 2004; Briggs, 2004; Weiner, 2004).

Commenting on the importance of the parity within the team, U.S. Olympic Committee Executive Officer Jim Scherr stated, "Regardless of gender, socioeconomic status or race, we feel there is an opportunity for everyone to participate on our Olympic teams. We're proud of the fact that it's the ultimate meritocracy" (as quoted in Shipley, 2004, p. D01). The seamless compatibility between American values and sport values is reflected in that statement. The very foundation of our participatory democracy is built on the values of equity and fairness that serve to check discriminatory practices and beliefs so as to allow every citizen to exercise their right, and their responsibility, to contribute meaningfully to our society.

It is not surprising, given those democratic values, that Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which prohibits

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\*The boldface name is the Lead Author.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this chapter, several terms will appear as they are generally alluded to in everyday language and public policy. In a 2005 piece titled "Is it Physical Education or Physical Activity?" the National Association for Sport & Physical Education offer these definitions: "School physical education programs offer the best opportunity to provide physical activity to all children and to teach them the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle. . . . NASPE recommends that schools provide 150 minutes of instructional physical education for elementary school children, and 224 minutes for middle and high school students per week for the entire school year. Based on sequence of learning, physical education should not be compared to or confused with other physical activity experiences such as recess, intramurals, or recreational endeavors." Physical activity as defined by NASPE is "bodily movement of any type." This may include "recreational, fitness and sport activities such as jumping rope, playing soccer, lifting weights, as well as daily activities such as walking to the store, taking the stairs or raking the leaves." NASPE recommends schools-age children accumulate at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of physical activity per day while avoiding prolonged periods of inactivity. More information on this subject can be found at <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=difference.html>. In this chapter, sport primarily refers to varsity and junior varsity athletic programs offered through schools.

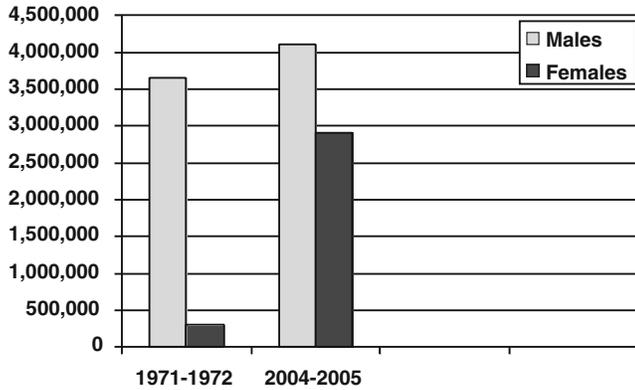


FIGURE 18.1 A comparison of female to male student participation in High School sports, 1972–2006 (Howard, 2006).

sex discrimination in all areas of education, has played a central role in shaping our national conversation about gender and sport in schools during the past 33 years.<sup>2</sup> Since its passage, the nation has witnessed profound changes for children in access and opportunity to school-based programs of sport and physical education. Nowhere are these changes seen more clearly than in the area of girls' participation in varsity sport programs.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (Howard, 2006), female participation has risen from fewer than 300,000 in 1972 to over 2.9 million in the academic year 2005–2006. This represents an 875% increase in the number of girls participating in high school sports over the span of three decades.

Whereas concerns have been expressed that male students in select sports have suffered a loss of access during the same period of time (Kocher, 2005), existing data show that opportunities for male students continue to increase in high school settings. In 2005–2006, boys registered rates of participation in high school sports that were the highest since 1977–1978 (Howard, 2006).<sup>3</sup> Although the gender composition of the student body is split almost evenly between boys and girls in high school settings, boys continue to have access to sport at a ratio of almost 2 to 1. Figure 18.1 compares female and male participation in high schools sports in 1971 and 2006. Notably, in 2005–2006, boys around the nation realized an increase of 72,066 opportunities to play high school sports compared to 43,091 for girls. When taken in their totality, these data show that male athletes have access to 1.2 million more opportunities than their female counterparts.

In a state by state analysis of the athletics gender gap, wide disparities in participation rates continue to exist (Women's

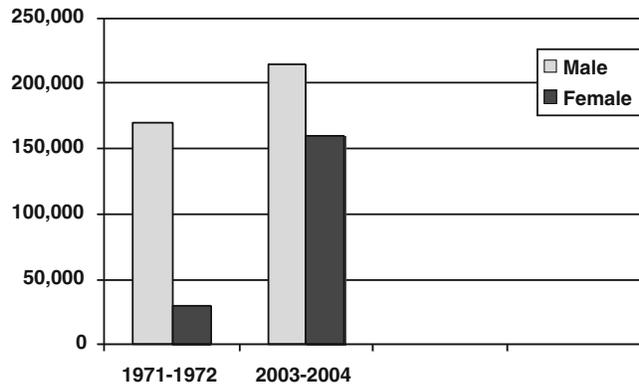


FIGURE 18.2 Intercollegiate participation rates by gender, 1971–2003 (Bray, 2004).

Sports Foundation, 2006). Vermont, where athletic opportunities for girls are nearly equal to the percent of girls in the student population (48.0% to 48.4%), leads the way in providing equitable opportunities to female athletes in high schools. In contrast, Alabama ranks 51st with an almost 18% gap between female high school enrollment compared to females represented in the athletic population.

Although there has been little research done to examine the record of college and university compliance by state, a 2006 report compiled by the Women's Law Project in Philadelphia examining data available on the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Post-Secondary Education Equity in Athletics Disclosure Website does provide a starting point by providing information about 112 colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. In summary, evidence supported a conclusion that Pennsylvania schools were "failing to provide opportunities for female athletes in proportion to women's enrollment," with a shortfall of approximately 8,000 (Cohen, 2005).

More generally at the college level, female participation in varsity sports rose from just under 30,000 to almost 151,000 between 1971–1972 and 2003–2004, representing a more than 500% increase over that 30 year span of time (Bray, 2004; see Fig. 18.2). Even with that increase, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Bray, 2004) reported that as of 2003–2004, there were still 44,000 more male athletes compared to female athletes. At an individual institutional level, that translates into roughly 42 more male athletes per college campus. Although male athletes still receive more access to sport than their female counterparts, between 1981–1982 to 2003–2004, there has been an increase of 150% in the number of female athletes participating and a decrease of 28.6 percent male athletes participating (Bray, 2004).

<sup>2</sup>Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the major federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in education. It states: 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 educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Other federal laws, like the 14th Amendment, have also been used to achieve gender equity in sport and physical education as have state equity laws. Due to the attention Title IX has received in relationship to athletics, the chapter references it exclusively here.

<sup>3</sup>In 2005–2006, 4,206,549 boys participated in high school sports compared to 2,953,355 girls (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2005).

Although the question of whether females should be permitted to participate in sport and physical activity is now settled, enduring concerns about how and in what ways females and males should participate inspire attention from educators, public policy makers, parents, and media. Addressing these concerns is no easy task. The prevailing framework for gender equity in sport and physical activity—separate but equal—is structurally anchored in a value system that not only emphasizes differences between females and males but also continues to value male experience more highly (Messner, 2002).

The now subtle, but once overt, valuing of elite male athletic experience as reflective of the societal ideal has translated into a hidden form of inequity from the standpoint that our national attention and energies have been directed toward the participation of athletes in varsity athletic programs while Title IX compliance in the area of physical education has gone comparatively unnoticed. As scholars Linda Carpenter and Vivian Acosta (2005) pointed out, “Although there are some OCR [Office of Civil Rights] complaints and law suits about Title IX violations in physical education, they are small in number compared with those that focus on athletics” (p. 46).

Prophetically, women physical educators for over half of the 20th century cautioned that the male college sport model, which emphasized sport for the few and was designed to appeal to a mass audience and generate commercial interest, would undermine the ability of educators to effectively meet the needs of citizens overall through physical education programs (Oglesby, 1990; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). With declining fitness levels, lack of daily physical education, and obesity levels higher than ever before, their concerns have been shown to be accurate (Kluger, 2005; Weir, 2004).

This preoccupation with college and university athletic programs in particular, where the allocation and protection of monies generated from football and other designated revenue-producing sports are the primary issues (Zimbalist, 2005), has left little room for a full blown consideration of Title IX enforcement and compliance over the expanse of physical education and athletic programs nationwide (Staurowsky, 2004). This was most evident in the work of the Secretary of Education’s Commission on Opportunity in Athletics, charged in 2002 to review Title IX enforcement regulations as they pertain to athletics, not physical education. “Of the 15 members on the Commission, 10 were associated with NCAA Division I-A institutions, the division with the fewest institutions and the greatest interest in obtaining exemptions for revenue-producing sports” (Staurowsky, 2003b, p. 108). Only one of the commissioners worked directly with elementary and secondary schools, which represent the most children affected by Title IX compliance and noncompliance and about whom there is the least amount of reported data.

As a consequence, our work ahead is much as it was 20 years ago, and even 100 years ago, for that matter. In the 1985 *Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity Through Education*, authors of the chapter on physical education and athletics wrote that the structural challenge to understanding gender equity in sport and physical activity was the difficulty of coming to terms “with the history of the movement toward equity in activity programs and of the ways in which fairness or lack of fairness have existed in the worlds of separateness and sameness” (Geadelmann, Bischoff, Hoferek, & McKnight, 1985, p. 319).

There are still gender stereotypes to be challenged, attitudes to be adjusted, misinformation to be countered, and visions to be forged. Although the passage of Title IX aided in creating a mass societal wave of acceptance for girls and women participating in sport that some have described as “seismic” (Lusetich, 1999), we remain largely ignorant of the full physical capability and potential of females across all age and racial groups. Furthermore, with the growth in the number of girls and women participating in “contact” or “combat” sports (wrestling, boxing, football, ice hockey) and increasing enthusiasm for girls playing team sports (Miller, 2002; Nelson, 1998; Shipley, 2004), we encounter questions about the timing and appropriateness of females and males competing with and against one another in co-ed settings. At this moment in time, when physical education programs continue to be a low priority in our public schools and a national crisis in youth fitness levels exists, seeking answers to these questions is of pressing importance (Kluger, 2005; Weir, 2004).

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section deals with overarching considerations that provide context for understanding issues of gender equity in physical activity and sport, including historical context, media influences, interpreting physiological differences, and benefits and negative health outcomes of participation. The second section examines the implementation of gender equity principles in physical education, specifically the compliance issues regarding co-education versus single-sex education. The third section provides an overview of gender equity issues in athletics, where separate but equal remains the guiding framework. The fourth section offers a consideration of sexual harassment in athletics. And finally, the fifth section offers recommendations for future action.

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## SECTION I. OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

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- A. To what extent has the historical legacy limiting the equitable participation of women and girls in physical education and sport (compared to males) continued?

In the 1938 classic text titled *Health by Stunts*, U.S. Army captains N. H. Pearl and H. E. Brown articulated the need for life-long physical education for males. Drawing upon the lessons from the “Great War,” Pearl and Brown pointed out that the lack of physical fitness in young men of draft age in 1914 could have been avoided if public schools had devised a “more intelligent system of physical education”. Notably, in a book devoted to the interests of boys, the final chapter, coincidentally numbered IX, addressed the need to adapt their plan for girls. The author, Esther Sherman, a physical educator, wrote that “all the statistical evidence gathered in the last few decades seems to bear out . . . the relative frailty of women” (p. 183). However, she continued:

That these statistics should actually be used in attempting to show that girls have not the capacity to engage in vigorous activities that boys possess, shows a deplorable lack of reasoning. These figures prove nothing at all regarding the capacity of women in physical endeavor. . . . In no way do they lead to the conclusion that girls have not the capacity for a more complete and more perfect development. (pp. 183–184)

Inasmuch as Sherman was clear in her determination that existing information about the physical capacity of girls was a reflection of the social conditions in which they were raised, by her own admission the position she took was not persuasive in the 1930s. That notwithstanding, the “physiological unfitness theory” espoused by Sherman’s colleagues to justify notions of female inferiority held little persuasiveness for her. Sherman reasoned that perspectives on female physical potential should be informed by examples of women who, under “proper environmental conditions,” proved to be the equal of men in work, hunting, and fighting (p. 185).

Support for this decidedly inclusionary perspective, which evidenced a consideration of female experience across class, racial, and ethnic lines, would certainly have been found in the public persona and presence of Babe Didrikson, who burst onto the national scene following the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics after winning two gold medals and the only gold-silver medal ever awarded an Olympian (Cahn, 1994; Cayleff, 1995). Of course, the woman who aspired to be “the greatest athlete that ever lived” became a contested figure herself, triggering in the society suspicions that women who competed like men were faulty or aberrant women.

The “Babe” and women athletes like her defied the theoretical assumptions of female weakness and the perceived biological naturalness of female inferiority. They also became the sites upon which social control mechanisms designed to keep females in their proper place were played out.

Thus, when biological determinism failed to adequately explain why females should be excluded or limited in their sport activities, monitoring female athletes to ensure against “mannish” behavior and “sexploitation” took over. The Gibson Girl of the 1900s was, on one hand, attractive, self-assured, and independent, and on the other, she risked acquiring a “bicycle face” (a strained, intense, unladylike appearance) if she expressed too much enthusiasm (Cahn, 1994). The liberating effects of the safety bicycle offered cheap transportation to women across social classes and considerable opportunity for adventure across town. The “bathing beauties” of the flapper era who appeared as “nymphs” on the covers of *Physical Culture* magazine, fueled societal fantasies about desirable women but toyed with prohibitions regarding female modesty and propriety, evoking the ever-present specter of “public” women being “loose women” (Cahn, 1994).

The uncertain intersections between conceptions of athleticism, female beauty, sex appeal, and commercial interests have often sparked attention and controversy during the past century. It was Annette Kellerman in the 1920s who “popularized swimming with her speed and her sleek, streamlined bathing suits—sleeveless, skirtless, form-fitting suits that replaced the bulky, full length, bloomed costumes” (Cahn, 1994, p. 46) setting the stage for the *Sports Illustrated* swim suit editions in the years ahead (Nelson, 1998) and ultimately the appearance of 2004 Olympians Amy Acuff and Haley Cope Clark in *Playboy* (Morago, 2004; Topkins, 2004).

In the 1940s, strength and femininity merged in the image of “Rosie the Riveter,” prompted by economic demands posed by World War II. Activities once deemed to be appropriate for men only, such as munitions factory work, were reclassified as acceptable and necessary for women due to “manpower” shortages with the mandatory draft in effect and men called to service in the European, African, and Pacific theaters. The national necessity for the game of baseball to continue in time of war led to the creation of the short-lived All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL), a league whose guiding principle was to find female ball players who conformed to a predetermined “femininity principle” devised in accordance with the country’s, and baseball’s, worldview (Cahn, 1994; Macy, 1993). Thus, just as the “American game” had an unstated color barrier that prohibited Black players from playing in the major leagues, so too did the AAGPBL ban women of color as well.

By the 1950s, middle and upper class women would be encouraged in school to relinquish the workplace to men returning from the war for a “resurgent domesticity” that called for women to be compliant helpmates and companions. The new consumerism of the 1950s made home a place where some women could enjoy a measure of freedom as advertised in “time saving” appliances that made housework “fun” and “enjoyable” while others would balk at being tethered to the domestic sphere (Friedan, 1963; Kerber & DeHart, 1995). For poor women, especially women of color, their educational and work lives continued to reflect little privilege or entitlement.

In sport, women physical educators continued to advocate a position of what they called “moderation,” a philosophy articulated in the 1920s and fostered through the 1960s, which was a negotiated compromise to allow girls and women to play sports while delicately avoiding a violation of gender role norms and expectations. The sport system women physical educators sought to achieve reflected a studied disapproval for the excesses of male sports (competition, corruption, commercialism, emphasis on winning and spectators) and a concern for female health and well-being. Thus, alternative forms of competition such as play days (where high school girls from various schools would be mixed together on teams and play games on a given day) and sports days (where high school girls would represent their own schools in day long tournaments against other schools) were organized within a model emphasizing fitness, participation, and inclusion, as articulated in the Division for Girls and Women in Sport’s motto, “a sport for every girl, and a girl in every sport”<sup>4</sup> (Carpenter, 2001; Nelson, 1998; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998).

By the 1960s, with the emergence of the Modern Women’s Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, assumptions about natural female inferiority would be challenged in significant ways (Carpenter, 2001; Durrant, 1992; Galles, 2004). The groundwork for women’s championships and a greater emphasis on competition and pursuit of athletic excellence as a national agenda began to take shape upon the founding of the Commis-

<sup>4</sup>The expression “a sport for every girl, and every girl in a sport” emerged out of the 1920s as a reflection of an advocacy movement including physical educators, physicians, and sports enthusiasts. Appointed vice-president of the Women’s Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF), Lou Henry Hoover, the wife of President Herbert Hoover, organized a conference in 1923 to discuss philosophical differences over competition versus participation, issues of facilities and space for women, and a lack of qualified women’s coaches (Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, n.d.). This expression was in circulation at that time and would be maintained well into the 1950s.

sion on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1966 (the precursor to what would become the female counterpart to the NCAA, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women). As was the case in previous generations, the dawning of a new age for women's sport was part and parcel of an upsurge in advocacy for women's rights in general.

Emblematic of the times, two prominent women athletes, Althea Gibson and Billie Jean King, emerged as symbols of those movements. As the nation confronted the challenges of racial discrimination in schools in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, Althea Gibson was challenging the exclusionary practices in the all-White sports of tennis and golf. During that critical time period, Gibson became the first African American to win 11 Grand Slam titles in women's tennis, among them Wimbledon and the U.S. national tournament (what would become the U.S. Open). She went on to integrate women's golf, playing in 177 tournaments between 1963 and 1977 ("Althea's way," 2003).

Billie Jean King, a dominant women's tennis player in the 1970s, would take center stage in the gender wars in her 1973 match with Bobby Riggs. Marketed as a prime time television event pitting the "libber" versus the "lobber," the event was viewed as a "necessary spectacle" in confronting sexism not only on the tennis court but also more broadly in the society overall (Roberts, 2005). No one understood the implications of the match more than Billie Jean King herself. About the Battle of the Sexes, King said, "it wasn't about tennis. It was about social change" (HBO, 2000). King's victory in the match validated the passage of Title IX, which had happened the previous year, and offered an outright assault on prevailing notions of female frailty. Using the platform she helped create, King worked to form the first women's professional tennis tour and union, established an advocacy forum in the creation of the Women's Sports Foundation, envisioned a model for equitable and inclusionary sport in the concept of World Team Tennis, and became an outspoken advocate on behalf of women in the United States (Fleming, 1998).

The remaining four decades, from 1970 to present day, witnessed ever-expanding opportunities for girls and women in sport and physical activity, due in large measure to the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the increasing support for gender equity in athletics. Title IX's prohibitions against sex discrimination in the schools receiving federal financial assistance served as a catalyst for ongoing debates about equity in sport and physical activity (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). The end result has been a rethinking of once seemingly intractable suppositions about the capabilities of female athletes and increasing acceptance for the nondiscrimination mandate of Title IX. The late 1990s phenomena of "girl power" and "girls rule" were inspired in significant part by the triumphs of the U.S. women's soccer team, which defeated China to win the Women's World Cup in a match played before a crowd of over 90,000 (Elliott, 2000; Miller, 2002). Entities that once vehemently opposed the application of Title IX to athletic departments, such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association, have become staunch supporters for women's sports and advocates for Title IX (Brand, 2003)

At the same time, resistance to the enforcement of Title IX has slowed progress. Unsubstantiated concerns that Title IX was being used to hurt male athletes served as the impetus for the appointment of the Secretary of Education's Commission on Opportunity in Athletics during the 30th anniversary year of the passage of Title IX in 2002 under direction of the Bush Administration (Hogshead-Makar, 2003; Staurowsky, 2005). The clear political agenda of the Commission was seen in its focus on the very narrow interests of big-time college sport programs and men's minor sport programs, specifically wrestling, to the near exclusion of the interests of children at the elementary and secondary levels. It is notable that at the time the Commission's agenda was set, the number of complaints involving sex discrimination in high school and middle school athletes exceeded those involving college athletes by five to one (Pennington, 2004).

The historical legacy of a gendered world view that conceptualizes athleticism as a male birth right and a female anomaly remains in circulation today. Steven Rhoads (2004), a professor of politics at the University of Virginia, has argued that exposure to testosterone in utero accounts for what he believes to be a "greater love of sports by males" (p. 47B).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the centerpiece of assertions that Title IX has wrongly been used to cut men's sports is the argument that "women are inherently less interested in sports than men" (Samuels & Galles, 2003; Schlafly, 2004).

Just as Esther Sherman cautioned against the use of statistical data on sex differences to show that girls did not have the capacity to engage in vigorous activities in 1938, so too did the court in *Coben v. Brown* (1996) reject the reasoning of Brown University that surveys could accurately reflect the interest of women in sport. The court wrote:

Statistical evidence purporting to reflect women's interest instead provides only a measure of the very discrimination that is and has been the basis for women's lack of opportunity to participate in sports. To allow a numbers-based lack of interest defense to become the instrument of further discrimination against the underrepresented gender would pervert the remedial purpose of Title IX.

The notion that boys and men are more naturally interested in sport persists today—after three decades of girls and women participating in sport opportunities when those opportunities have been provided—and demonstrates the degree to which present day approaches to gender equity continue to be advised by the past.

B. To what extent do mass media and conceptions of gender difference affect participation in sport and physical activity?

No one would challenge the notion that mass media play a powerful role in shaping and maintaining our most deeply held values and beliefs. As Douglas Kellner (1995) has argued, mainstream media actually create a common culture, one that, unfor-

<sup>5</sup>To refute Dr. Rhoads comment, see chapter 2 in this volume by Drs. Hyde and Lindberg addressing the facts and assumptions about the nature of gender differences and the implications for gender equity.

tunately, is far too often based on power and control. Kellner further states that one significant component of this “media culture” is the creation of spectacles on a vast public scale. Watching these spectacles we learn who has power and who does not. Sport scholars are keenly aware that in U.S. culture, sports are “media spectacles” writ large. As a result, media coverage of sport offers fertile ground for any of us who wish to understand the images, symbols, and myths that shape how we think about females and males and their participation in sport and physical activity. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to provide an overview of the research that has examined the various ways in which athletic females have been portrayed throughout mainstream media, to explore how these representations undermine and trivialize the post–Title IX sportswoman in her quest for equity, and to call on the media to reflect the reality versus the caricature of women’s involvement in one of this society’s most important and revered institutions—sport.

### *Sport Media Scholarship: An Overview*

Title IX marked an unprecedented moment in the history of women’s sports. Michael Messner (1988) was one of the first sport scholars to point out that this landmark federal legislation not only created a legal basis from which females (and their advocates) could pursue equity in sport, but it also reflected a cultural shift that went far beyond any legal proceedings. In short, Messner argued that the post–Title IX era could represent an unprecedented opportunity for sportswomen to challenge in a significant way the traditional ideologies and practices that assume male athletes are, by definition, the “real” athletes. But Messner also realized that such a challenge would be fiercely resisted given how much was at stake in preserving the gender-as-power dynamics that have been well established in sport. One of the most significant and all-pervasive mechanisms for resisting any and all challenges from female athletes (and their allies) is mainstream sport media. As a number of scholars have amply demonstrated, the media go well beyond the simple transmission of dominant beliefs and ideologies (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Kane, 1998; Sabo & Jansen, 1998; Wenner, 1998). They consistently provide “frameworks of meaning” that shape, and even create, attitudes, values, and expectations about women’s sports participation. Because media stories inform and legitimize unequal power relations between females and males, it is critically important that we examine the various frameworks of meaning used by the media to portray sportswomen in the post–Title IX era (Kane & Buysse, 2005).

Over the past three decades, sport media scholars have done precisely that. Through their empirical and theoretical investigations they have demonstrated how female athletes—and their bodies—are systematically portrayed in ways that undermine their accomplishments as highly skilled competitors. For example, one significant finding of sport media scholarship is that mainstream media underreport and denigrate women’s athletic achievements. As a result, their ability to redefine themselves in ways that fundamentally challenge men’s ideological and institutional control of sport remains an ongoing struggle (Iannotta & Kane, 2002).

Sport media scholars have made such claims in large part because of two remarkably consistent findings that make it undeniably clear that females and males are treated in remarkably different ways throughout mainstream media. First, even though young girls and women continue to increase their participation at an impressive rate 30 years and counting after Title IX, they continue to be underrepresented in terms of overall sport media coverage (Bernstein, 2002; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Kane & Buysse, 2005; Wann, Schrader, Allison & McGeorge, 1998).

A second pattern discovered in the research involves the type of coverage sportswomen receive. Numerous empirical investigations have shown that male athletes are presented in an endless array of visual, written, and oral texts that emphasize their physical strength, mental toughness, and athletic ability, whereas female athletes are portrayed in narratives that highlight their femininity, sexual appeal, and heterosexuality (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Iannotta & Kane, 2002; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Schultz, 2004; Vincent, 2004). In short, females are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to be portrayed off the court, out of uniform, and in passive, sexualized poses.

**Amount of coverage.** One persistent myth perpetuated by mainstream media is that the sports landscape is predominantly occupied by men (Kane, 1996). This leaves the false impression that females represent only a small percentage of the overall athletic population. In fact, on a nationwide basis, females account for approximately 40% of all those participating in sport and physical activity (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). Needless to say, these inaccurate assumptions perpetuate the widely held belief that males are much more interested in participating in sports and thus deserve to be considered (and treated) as the “real,” or certainly the most important, athletes.

A media study by Fink and Kensicki (2002) underscores this point. The authors wanted to replicate earlier media research studies to see whether there had been significant changes in the amount of coverage devoted to women’s sports. Applying content analysis to *Sports Illustrated* (SI), Fink and Kensicki examined articles and photographs from 1997–1999. Their results indicated that SI fiercely maintained its traditional emphasis on men’s sports even in the post–Title IX era. To wit: Female athletes continued to be significantly underrepresented, frequently depicted in nonsport related settings, and more often than not engaged in traditionally “feminine,” individual sports. For example, only 10% of the photographs in the sample featured women’s sports. How ironic that sportswomen were still being ignored by the most prestigious forum in print broadcast journalism—*Sports Illustrated*—during the same time period when U.S. sportswomen compiled an unprecedented number of athletic achievements, such as capturing gold medals in basketball, soccer, and gymnastics during the 1996 summer Olympic Games.

A recently completed study by Duncan and Messner (2005) not only highlights the lack of interest in women’s sports by major media outlets but also indicates that things are actually getting worse. The authors have compiled 15 years of longitudinal data related to TV sports coverage on three local network affiliates in the Los Angeles area (NBC, CBS, and ABC). In their most recent study, they also included ESPN’s “SportsCenter” and Fox’s

“Southern California Sports Report.” Comparing their current results with those uncovered in their earlier research, Duncan and Messner found that, quite amazingly, television coverage of women’s sports has actually declined over the last five years: Female athletes received just 6.3% of total sports coverage in 2004 compared to 8.7% of total coverage in 1999. An equally alarming finding was that the percentage of coverage devoted to women’s sports currently is as low as it was 15 years ago.

Unfortunately scholars and educators have done almost no research on how often women of color are represented in mainstream sport media. But what little has been done indicates that, not surprisingly, underreporting the achievements of athletic females is not confined to White women (Davis & Harris, 1998). In one of the few studies that specifically focused on sports-women of color, Lumpkin and Williams (1991) found that between the years 1954 and 1987, African American women received the least amount of coverage in *Sports Illustrated*: Out of the approximately 3,800 feature articles appearing during that time, only 16 were devoted to African American women. In a related study, Lumpkin and Williams examined the covers of *Sports Illustrated* from 1954 to 1989. In a pattern that was quite similar to their other investigation, the authors discovered that regardless of one’s racial makeup, athletic females accounted for only 6% of all the covers they sampled (114 out of 1,835), and that African American females appeared on only 5 of the 114 covers that featured sportswomen.

**Type of coverage.** Another myth perpetuated by mainstream sport media involves the type of coverage given to female athletes. Numerous authors have documented how sportswomen are routinely depicted off the court in “heterosex” poses rather than in on-the-court portrayals that emphasize their athletic capabilities (Burroughs, Ashburn, & Seeböhm, 1995; Daddario, 1997; Kane & Buysse, 2005). The findings from these investigations indicate that there are two interrelated (and highly persistent) media patterns—trivialization and sexualization—that deny women the respect and the status they so richly deserve (Kane, 1996). Sportswomen are trivialized, for example, when they are portrayed in visual, written, and oral texts that do not treat them, or their athletic achievements, in a serious manner. One insidious (and dangerous) way this occurs is when the media emphasize women’s off-the-court physical characteristics such as their femininity and sex appeal. Sport media also routinely emphasize an athlete’s personal life such as her role as wife, mother, or girlfriend. This type of coverage, by definition, removes from the radar screen any sense of female athletes as hard working, disciplined, and dedicated athletes (Kane, 1998). The second pattern of representation related to type of coverage involves sexualizing female athletes either overtly, by portraying them as sexual objects that bear alarming parallels to soft pornography, or more covertly, by overemphasizing their physical attractiveness. In both instances, their athleticism is ignored and devalued (Kane & Buysse, 2005).

An early and influential study by Margaret Carlisle Duncan (1990) revealed how these patterns of representation appear throughout mainstream media. Duncan analyzed cover and feature photographs from *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Maclean’s* that focused on the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games. Her findings revealed that notions of sexual difference,

not to mention sexual stereotypes, dominated much of the coverage. For example, there was an overemphasis on sportswomen’s physical appearance, one that highlighted their seeming heterosexuality. In addition, female athletes were frequently framed in poses that resembled soft pornography, and in body positions that emphasized their sexual submissiveness. Duncan noted that a highly accomplished and well-known American female athlete during this time period—Florence Griffith Joyner (Flo-Jo)—was a popular subject for sport photographers precisely because she fit these traditional standards of femininity: “It is no coincidence that Joyner’s rapier-like, intricately painted fingernails are often visibly present in photographs. . . . Griffith Joyner’s nails are an external adornment that shouts femininity” (p. 28). Duncan’s findings have been replicated in numerous research studies over the past 15 years and were manifest in 2004 media coverage of Olympic athletes. For example, FHM’s online magazine in its “Covergirls” section featured the “U.S. Olympic Girls,” five female Olympians wearing bikinis and posing suggestively with a lead-in touting their “killer smiles, model looks and amazing bodies” (FHMUS.com, 2004).

Based on these and numerous other findings, scholars have begun to make the case that underlying much of the coverage which trivializes and sexualizes female athletes is the “image problem” that pervades women’s sports. As Pat Griffin (1998) noted, media representations that frame sportswomen as pretty and heterosex are, in reality, designed to reassure fans, coaches, corporate sponsors, parents, teammates, and even themselves that they are, or appear to be, heterosexual. And because of the long-standing and deep-seated beliefs that women’s sports is a haven for lesbians, or that sports participation will turn heterosexual females gay, sportswomen have gone to great lengths to counteract these very fears (Iannotta & Kane, 2002; Kane & Buysse, 2005; Krane, 1997). A most effective way to accomplish this task is to encourage, and in many cases require, sportswomen to “engage in the protective camouflage of feminine drag” (Griffin, 1992, p. 254). There is no more effective means by which such “protective camouflage” is ensured than through the media images that dominate coverage of women’s sports.

The vast sports media landscape is filled with manifestations of homophobic coverage (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). One explicit—and powerful—manifestation of homophobic coverage is when a well-known female athlete is explicitly linked to a heterosexual role, typically as a wife or a mother. For example, Chris Evert and Nancy Lopez received a great deal more coverage than did many of their contemporaries. It is not a stretch to suggest that this was, in large measure, precisely because they occupied both roles. In fact, much of the coverage surrounding their careers emphasized these very facts. Consider the case of Evert’s decision to retire from professional tennis in the late 1980s. Her retirement was deemed significant enough that *Sports Illustrated*, no friend of women’s sports, decided to put Evert on its cover. But rather than emphasize her two-decade long career or her victories in Grand Slam tournaments, the caption that accompanied her posed, nonathletic photograph was: “Now I’m Going To Be a Full-Time Wife.”

**Some recent (and hopeful) research regarding media coverage.** Learning about the results cited above may lead readers to believe that little or no progress has occurred with

respect to media coverage given to women's sports. However, a just-completed investigation by Kane and Buysse (2005) indicates that in some quarters sportswomen are finally being given their due as highly skilled competitors. Kane and Buysse examined the world of intercollegiate athletics because of the enormous explosion in this particular area of women's sports since the passage of Title IX. They wanted to determine how sportswomen and sportsmen were portrayed on media guide covers in the most prestigious athletic conferences across the U.S.—the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Pacific Athletic Conference (Pac-10), the Big 10, the Big 12, the Big East, and the Southeastern Conference (SEC). Media guide covers were chosen as the unit of analysis because they are consciously constructed products by which institutions of higher education present their sports programs to members of the local and national media; corporate sponsors; and alumni, donors, and other campus and community stakeholders (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004). Kane and Buysse measured how often females and males were presented on the court, in uniform, and engaged in active, athletic images. More specifically, they framed their analysis by asking two central questions: a) if images of female and male athletes were examined for the same sports (e.g., basketball, tennis and gymnastics), in the same year, at the same institution, using the same medium, would there be significant gender differences?; and b) would there be significant shifts in these images over the course of three time periods representing the 1989–1990, 1996–1997 and 2003–2004 athletic seasons? Their findings revealed two important trends. First, in the coverage of the most prestigious and influential intercollegiate athletic conferences, females were portrayed as serious, competent athletes: 97% of the sportswomen who appeared on the covers were portrayed in uniform versus out of uniform; 80% were portrayed on versus off the court; and 72% were presented in active versus passive images. Second, when making change-over-time comparisons, the authors discovered there were profound and unexpected shifts in the representations of female athletes from the early 1990s to 2004. For example, in the first media guide study (1989–1990), only 51% of sportswomen were portrayed on the court, but in the 2003–2004 season that percentage reached 80%. Obviously, these kinds of patterns are in stark contrast to much of what appears throughout print and broadcast journalism. Kane and Buysse suggest that such a dramatic departure has to do with the role of sport scholars and educators as agents of social change. These individuals not only produce and disseminate the results of their work to mainstream audiences, but they do so in a way that critiques the one-sided and unfair coverage given to female athletes. Hope, at least on college campuses, does spring eternal.

**Consequences of media coverage.** For the last several years, sport scholars have discussed the harmful consequences of media coverage that trivializes and denigrates female athletes (Duncan & Messner, 2005; Kane & Buysse, 2005; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). As part of this discussion, these same scholars make two essential points. At the very least, media representations that primarily focus on a female athlete's physical attractiveness and heterosexuality undermine her athletic commitment, capabilities, and achievements. As a result, the media play no small role in ensuring that sportswomen continue to be seen

(and treated) like second class citizens, a counterfeit version of the real—that is, male—athlete. At the very most, media representations, particularly those that hyper-heterosexualize female athletes, become a powerful counterforce to any gains sportswomen may accrue in the post-Title IX era. By routinely sexualizing them, the media tell us all that in the final analysis, female athletes are not (and never can or should be) comparable to male athletes.

We should not underestimate the importance of sportswomen's virtual exclusion and/or denigration in one of this society's most powerful and influential institutions. No one who advocates for better coverage is calling on the media to further a particular social or political agenda. Nor are we asking the media to exaggerate women's athletic accomplishments. We are simply asking them to turn on the camera and show us the best—and the worst—of what happens when women engage in competitive, organized activity. In short, we are calling on the media to show us the reality of women's ever-expanding involvement in sport. And when they do, we will have a more accurate and equitable sports world than the one we have today. One that is, for now, a made-up media caricature 30 years and counting after Title IX.

### C. How do interpretations of the meaning of gender differences limit gender equity in physical activity and athletics?

The history of women's sport in the United States has been one of testing and overcoming perspectives that a girl's or woman's fate is determined by her biology, a biology often viewed as secondary to that of her male counterpart. Like most research, research into gender differences in athletic and sport performance is assumed to be objective particularly when it follows a rigorous scientific method.

However, in keeping with Hyde and Lindberg's discussion in chapter 2 regarding the gender-loaded assumptions that can potentially affect reporting and interpretation of data on gender differences, the literature on gender differences in athletic performance often confuses *findings of difference* with *findings of significance* and then wrongly draws *causal inferences* from *correlational data*. Vast differences occur within sex categories just as they do between sex categories. Furthermore, in sport there is a great emphasis on top achievers, both female and male. As a case in point, for the past 20 years the question of whether females will ever outpace men in running events has been a subject of great interest to sport scientists and social commentators alike.

#### A Case Example: Gender Differences in Running Performance

Three key moments define this ongoing discussion. In 1992 Whipp and Ward published a letter in *Nature* raising the then-provocative possibility of women outperforming men in certain running events. Examining men's and women's times in five Olympic running events, from the 200-yard dash to the marathon, from the 1920s through 1990, they found that the gender gap in performance was becoming narrower. Extrapolation

lating from the pattern of performance they found, Whipp and Ward projected that women could be running the marathon as fast as men by 1998.

In turn, Seiler and Sailer challenged the assertion that the gender gap in physical performance was “rapidly” disappearing in articles published in the *National Review* and *SportScience News* in 1997. According to their analyses, “the absolute magnitude of the gender difference ranges from 9 to 13% across events and increases with distance” (this statistic did not include performances in the marathon) (Seiler & Sailer, 1997). In a 2004 update in *Science*, Seiler reported the gender gap was actually increasing in seven events, with the exception of the marathon, where the gap narrowed from 11.9% to 8.4% (Holden, 2004).

Notably, Seiler and Sailer (1997) concluded that elite women athletes would continue to improve their performance over time; however, the rate of improvement would be slowed due to better drug testing programs at the Olympic level. Believing they had found a connection between elite female performance and illicit performance enhancing drug use (in the 1970s and 1980s women from East Germany, the Soviet Union, and the Former Communist Bloc dominated women’s running), they concluded, “The impact of masculinizing hormones on performance appears to have been far greater for women than men. The male performance data we have analyzed provides no evidence that improved drug testing since 1989 has even marginally impacted performance trends among the world’s best male runners.”

The discussion takes yet another turn in 2004 with the publication of Tatem, Guerra, Atkinson, and Hay’s piece entitled “Athletics: Momentous Sprint at the 2156 Olympics?” in which they plotted the winning times of the men’s and women’s Olympic finals in the 100-meter sprint. (See Table 18.1) Contrary to Seiler and Sailer (1997) and Holden (2004), “the remarkably strong linear trends that were first highlighted over ten years ago persist for the Olympic 100-metre sprints. There is no indication that a plateau has been reached by either male or female athletes in the Olympic 100-metre sprint record” (Tatem et al., 2004).<sup>6</sup>

Based on these data, what are we to conclude? Is it the case, as *Science* headline writers query, that the gender gap is “everlasting” or does the possibility exist that women will one day surpass the achievements of men? Of course, this polarization of the possibilities ignores the idea of men and women running as equals; there does not seem to be a conception anywhere in these scenarios that men and women would run together, or even that men and women are running together in races now and that women are performing extremely well in those circumstances. Yes, the “momentous” moment when a woman wins one of these races has not yet arrived, but women do place well in these events. And yet there is little attention directed toward research agendas that address how women have fared within the gender-integrated pack, so to speak. As Gorman (2005) writes, ultramarathoner Ann Trason runs a 6:47-per-mile pace and she “routinely outpaces some of the best male ultrarunners in the world.” What might we learn about what is really happening in

TABLE 18.1 Winning Times of the Men’s and Women’s Olympic 100-Metre Sprints from 1900

Olympic Year	Men’s Winning Time(s)	Women’s Winning Time(s)
1900	11.00	
1904	11.00	
1908	10.80	
1912	10.80	
1916		
1920	10.80	
1924	10.60	
1928	10.80	12.20
1932	10.30	11.90
1936	10.30	11.50
1940		
1944		
1948	10.30	11.90
1952	10.40	11.50
1956	10.50	11.50
1960	10.20	11.00
1964	10.00	11.40
1968	9.95	11.08
1972	10.14	11.07
1976	10.06	11.08
1980	10.25	11.06
1984	9.99	10.97
1988	9.92	10.54
1992	9.96	10.82
1996	9.84	10.94
2000	9.87	10.75
2004	9.85	10.93

Source: Rendell, M. (ed.) (2003). *The Olympics: Athens to Athens 1896–2004* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. pp. 338–340.

the realm of athletic performance if we knew more about this phenomenon?

Given the fact that elite competition in the vast array of sports is set up as a gender binary (a rigid male–female system), one would have to concede that there is an inevitable circularity to the findings as they exist. We have a gender binary system of sport established on the basis of our understandings or assumptions about gender binaries in general (men and women must be separated when it comes to athletic competition because of their biology) and our research reflects those gender binaries. The seemingly objective question of whether females will surpass men in sport performance becomes a loaded answer in confirming once again that females are inferior to men.

The long history of women’s sports has demonstrated that the existing gender binary has been encoded with messages about innate male physical superiority and female physical inferiority resulting in what effectively has been the “mismeasure” of the woman athlete. For example, it is not until the Tatem et al. (2004) article that we find female athletic performance put into perspective when they note “those who maintain that there could be a continuing decrease in [the] gender gap point out

<sup>6</sup>A figure illustrating the winning Olympic 100-metre sprint times for men (blue points) and women (red points), with superimposed best-fit linear regression lines (solid black lines) and coefficients of determination can be found at [http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v431/n7008/fig\\_tab/431525a\\_F1.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v431/n7008/fig_tab/431525a_F1.html)

that only a minority of the world's female population has been given the opportunity to compete" (n.p.).

An informed discussion about gender equity in physical activity and sport must consider the degree to which this gender binary, which has shaped our understandings about physiological differences between females and males, has been used to obscure the important similarities that exist between female and male athletes. Further, an informed discussion should also include a consideration of how a focus on gender differences to the exclusion of shared characteristics across athletes may even devalue the strength and accomplishments of female athletes. The similarities between males and females may provide the most powerful arguments for why physical education and sport, when organized and run in equitable and accessible ways, is equally important in the development of boys and girls, men and women.

The remainder of this section will avoid replicating old patterns of difference as found in the scholarship on gender differences in athletics and sport and will offer instead an exploration of the problems associated with studying physical differences between males and females. Until now research has delivered to us a generalized and rather obvious understanding that males on average are larger in size, have greater upper body strength and have greater muscle density than women (Wilmore & Costill, 2004). These differences become most pronounced after puberty when boys begin to develop their secondary sex characteristics, thus impacting strength and body weight development. However, the more illusory questions of when and if these differences matter in the pursuit of athletic health and well-being for females and under what circumstances these differences are used to limit the fulfillment of female athletic potential remain largely unanswered. To that end, two main points are considered below: how research on physical effects between males and females still affects power differences in society and why categorizing human participants by gender is problematic and may become increasingly more complicated.

### *Revisiting Difference As Androcentric Bias*

An example can be drawn from the historical record of women's physical activity to support the notion that social order affects biology. Women's sport and physical education historians have long discussed women's physicality at the turn of the 20th century. Social mores seriously affected women's health as the advice of medical practitioners was to limit physical activity. Additionally, extreme environmental constraints such as tight corsets, heavy and imposing costumes, and poor shoe design created serious health and social consequences for women. Women lacked strength, endurance, and power for sports and recreational play because social constraints disallowed physical activity particularly for upper class White women. The physical education movement that began in the United States in colleges and universities at the turn of the 20th century was essentially developed to address some of these problems (Wughalter, 2000).

In contemporary times, the literature is not devoid of biological explanations. For example, Kimura in the *Scientific American* (2002) strongly supported a biological explanation

for physical and cognitive effects when assessed by gender. She accounted for the chromosomal differences based early in development and hormonal differences as the mechanisms responsible for differences between males and females. Kimura recognized the small impact of social and environmental effects, but she attributed the major differences to biology. Although there are those who advocate primarily for biological explanations, others make clear that it is very difficult to deny the impact of social factors.

A multitude of physical differences can be examined between males and females through research in the anatomical, physiological, mechanical, and behavioral sciences. In this research males and females are studied through careful scientific measure, observation, or self-report questionnaire or survey on which they are often queried about their biological sex. In many of these measures it is difficult to remove the impact of phenomenological, historical, social, legal, and psychological effects. Toward the end of the 20th century, the Title IX era (post-1972) had a significant impact on the physical performance achievements and expectations for females, and young girls and women have turned in unparalleled physical performances. As Sparling, O'Donnell, and Snow (1998) point out, recent advances in female athlete performance are related to improved quality of training methods resulting from scholarship in the exercise sciences; equipment and uniform enhancements; advantages occurring due to new and innovative biomechanical knowledge; and the application of advanced scientific knowledge in many areas such as sport psychology and motor learning.

In their review of physical differences between males and females, Ransdell and Wells (1999) compared a variety of world class track and field, swimming, and power lifting event scores. They viewed each activity by its energy requirements. Their findings are explained in terms anatomical, physical, morphological, and cultural differences between males and females, and their data indicated the performance gap between males and females has become increasingly smaller over a 60 to 70 year period. Sparling and colleagues (1998) revealed similar percentage differences in world record running performances between males and females; however, they found the data plateaus and suggested the 11% difference is biologically determined.

In the end, the question lingers. To what extent are females still socialized to limit their physical activity and participation in sport? From a physiological and anatomical perspective the difference in running may be explained by the percentage of total body weight accounted for by body fat in women that has to be carried by the performer in a weight bearing activity such as running. On the other hand, Ransdell and Wells (1999) suggested this additional body fat might facilitate female performance in long duration swimming events to aid the body in cold water environments and the extra body fat might add to female buoyancy.

Treating sex as a dichotomous independent variable when conducting research on physical measures assumes these categories are mutually exclusive. This overly simplified approach assumes that biological differences are the same for all participants in the same category, and ignores other plausible explanations for differences (Severin & Wyer, 2000). For example, individuals' social identity, physical self-concept, or movement confidence may account for some of the measured performance differences.

Furthermore when relative measures or adjusted measures of physical characteristics are studied often the differences between the sexes are diminished and the research fails to reveal significant effects. Sparling (1979) pointed out in his meta-analysis study of maximum oxygen consumption that when expressed in absolute terms, differences were found between males and females; however, the differences were minimized when the value was expressed relative to lean body mass. Sparling argued that as females became more physically active and increased their lean body mass, their maximum oxygen consumption would improve. Thompson, Baxter-Jones, Mirwald, and Bailey (2003) found that measures of physical activity between girls and boys were not significant when measuring age at peak velocity. However, differences were found when using chronological age. These data can easily be misinterpreted to show that older females are not interested in physical activity and thus their programs do not need support or resources.

### *Masking the Complexity of Difference*

Dynamic processes shape genetic and environmental make up and their long-term responses to movement and physical activity. By grouping individuals by sex or gender researchers collapse across the complex differences that occur within a single sex and fail to uncover similarities in the responses of males and females and the variations that occur and are important within one sex. Focusing on the mean differences between males and females provides only a superficial analysis and does not account well for this variation within a category. Also problematic are research models that include assignment of transgendered individuals to the binary categories of male and female (Severin & Wyrer, 2000) and participation rates for females and males without consideration across categories of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

To conclude, research designed to study differences in athletic performance is often socially constructed to marginalize the characteristics and performances of the subordinate group; therefore, information related to sex and gender differences should be carefully reviewed (Severin & Wyrer, 2000). The historical record indicates that the study of performance characteristics has relied on research frameworks that valued male physical characteristics while female physical characteristics were devalued, as exemplified in the use of such value-laden terms as brute strength (male coded) versus athletic grace (female coded). Research assumptions are often guided by these values. If we are to achieve a fuller understanding of the potential of female and male athletes, we must first become more cognizant of the way in which gendered assumptions have affected our current beliefs about female and male athletic potential, moving beyond the overly simplified categories that characterize much of the work done in this area. We must also struggle to better comprehend the relative contributions of both nature and nurture as they come together in shaping male and female athletes. In the end, a reexamination of our approach to research on gender differences in sport should prompt a reevaluation of the questions we consider important and what social agenda is served by the findings. Why are some scholars so in-

terested in whether women will ever beat men in a running race and not as interested in the question of how to foster a more accepting environment for females in sport? Why is it so off-putting for some to think that women could compete on a level playing field with men not just intellectually but physically?

### D. What is the need for gender equitable participation in physical education and sport?

Since the passage of Title IX and discussion about gender equity in physical education classrooms states have been dropping quality physical education programs. As of 2005, only the state of Illinois had a requirement for daily physical education for students in kindergarten through the 12th grade, and Alabama and Washington require physical education for elementary students through the 8th grade (Weir, 2004). This illustrates the complications of determining the degree to which girls and an increasing number of boys have access to the educational opportunities and experiences they need to be healthy in later life.

### *The Decline of Daily Physical Education and the Rise in Childhood Obesity*

The paradox of Title IX is the emphasis that has been placed on supporting programs that lead to the development of an athletic elite and cater to the needs of athletic achievers (Lerner, 2000). Whereas more boys than girls report being vigorously active (72.3% to 53.5% respectively; Kann, 1997), access to daily physical education in general has progressively declined. In 1991, 42% of students in grades 9 through 12 were enrolled in daily physical education. By 1995, that enrollment figure had dropped to 25 percent. To compound this problem, there is evidence to show that the amount of time students spend being active in physical education classes has also declined. According to the Centers for Disease Control (1997), the percent of students who were active for at least 20 minutes during an average physical education class dropped from 81 percent in 1991 to 70 percent in 1995. Across all grade levels, girls get significantly less activity than boys, yet 75% of them believe they get enough exercise (Centers for Disease Control, 1997).

In a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Lowery, Brener, Lee, & Epping, 2004), "only 55.7% of high school students were enrolled in a PE class, only 28.4% were attending PE class daily, and only 39.2% were physically active during PE." Notably, the age of the student and grade level also has a significant impact on the gender gap in activity. With a decline in girls' participation beginning in 9th grade, the average gender differences between females and males in absolute terms in vigorous physical activity is 21.7% (Ransdell, 2005).

Furthermore, female students and students in higher grades were found to be consistently more at risk for not achieving national health objectives. Although not to the degree experienced by females, male physical activity participation also decreases with increasing age during adolescence (Allison, Dwyer, & Makin, 1999; Tappe, Duda, & Ehrnwald, 1989; Tergerson & King, 2002).

Despite these trends, little sustained attention is given to the state of physical education in this country. Few schools are responding to the recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and other health organizations calling for daily physical education. According to the Institute of Medicine in a report entitled "Preventing Childhood Obesity," only 8% of elementary schools, 6.4% of middle schools, and 5.8% of high schools nationwide offer daily physical education (Koplan, Liverman, & Kraak, 2004). Even in the state of Illinois where there is a daily physical education requirement, 25% of school districts provide a waiver that allows students alternatives to actually meeting the requirement. According to many physical educators, part of the problem stems from the fact that there is no recognition within the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for physical education (Weir, 2004).

### *The Gender Gap in Physical Activity Among Racial Minorities & Disabled Children*

Recent research on physical activity patterns across racial and ethnic groups reveals that members of racial minorities (both female and male) typically are less active than their non-Hispanic White counterparts and are at potentially greater risk for long term associated health problems (Dowda, Pate, Felton, & Saunders, 2004; Kruger, Ham, Kohl, & Sapkota, 2004; Morantz & Torrey, 2004; Unger, Reynolds, Shakib, & Spruijt-Metz, 2004).

According to Ransdell (2005), the gender difference in physical activity is more pronounced among minority students than among White students. Since 1993, the gender difference in physical activity participation has been greatest in African American and Hispanic students, with the gender differences among African American students consistently exceeding 20% (Ransdell, p. 7).

In a 2003 report done for The After School Project, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, research by Robert Halpern focused on "what some are calling an epidemic of inactivity among low-and moderate-income children and youth" (p. 2). Elaborating further on a problem that has "multiple, intertwined roots," which include unfriendly and unhealthy physical environments, economic pressures on low-income families, damaging messages from popular culture, rampant consumerism, and an unhealthy approach to youth sport in American society, he argued for a comprehensive plan to address the needs of children.

With regard to students with disabilities, there is a dearth of information about their participation patterns. As Welch (1996) pointed out, teachers in mainstream settings have historically been exempt from teaching students with disabilities and are woefully underprepared to deal with integrating these students into physical education classes. Whereas advancements have been made in special education practice, teacher education programs have lagged behind in addressing the needs of disabled students, thus perpetuating separate systems of education for both disabled and able-bodied students. In recent works attempting to gauge physical education teachers' perspectives on creating inclusive environments, researchers have found that teacher competence and confidence is affected by exposure to teaching students with disabilities and instruction regarding

their needs (Welch, 1996; Hardin, 2005). In point of fact, Ronspies and Messerole (2005) have developed a program called PE Central Challenges that offers suggestions for how to accommodate the various skill levels and abilities of students within a class while creating challenges for all students.

Cairney, Hay, Faught, Mandigo, and Flouris (2005) reported that children with developmental coordination disorder (DCD), which results in poor motor proficiency impairing both social and academic functioning, exhibited lower self-efficacy toward physical activity and participated in fewer organized and recreational play activities than did children without the disorder. Out of all children in the study, girls with DCD (developmental coordinator disorder) generally had the lowest mean scores.

### *The Benefits of Physical Activity For Children*

According to a report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in March of 2005, benefits to be derived from encouraging young people to be more physically active can decrease the risk of long-term physical and psychological issues. Because the number of overweight among children ages 6 to 11 has more than doubled during the past 20 years, a greater emphasis on getting children moving and making a commitment to healthier lifestyles early on may reduce the occurrence of weight-related illnesses, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, some types of cancer, and gallbladder disease. Additionally, the identified long-term consequences of physical inactivity combined with overweight and obesity include an increased risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis, and poor health status (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March, 2005).

In a study examining the health risk behaviors of athletes and non-athletes, 16,076 high school students in grades 9 through 12 were surveyed using the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Miller, Sabo, Melnick, Farrell, & Barnes, 2000). This study indicates:

- Both female and male athletes are less likely to use illicit drugs than nonathletes.
- Male athletes were no more likely to use steroids than male nonathletes.
- Female athletes overall and highly involved male athletes were nearly one and a half times more likely to use steroids than nonathletes. Highly involved female athletes were twice as likely to use steroids.
- As a general trend, athletes (female or male) were not significantly more likely to drink alcohol or to drink to excess when compared to their nonathletic peers. However, highly involved male and female athletes were more likely to binge drink.
- In the area of tobacco use, athletes were less likely to smoke but more likely to use chewing and dipping tobacco. Highly involved female athletes were three times more likely than their female counterparts to engage in this.
- From a mental health perspective, female and male athletes were less likely to contemplate suicide or to develop a plan

to commit suicide. Male athletes were less likely than male nonathletes to attempt suicide. Highly involved athletes (both male and female) who attempt suicide, however, were nearly twice as likely to require medical treatment once they did so.

- Athletes in general were less likely to describe themselves as overweight. Female athletes, however, were more inclined to attempt to lose weight. Highly involved female athletes were more likely compared to their female counterparts to purge by vomiting or using laxatives.
- Female athletes were more likely to use seat belts. Female athletes and highly involved male athletes were also more likely to drink and drive (Miller et al., 2000, p. 4.)

In a report entitled “Her Life Depends On It” released in 2004, researchers conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature on the relationship between physical activity and girls’ health (Sabo, Miller, Melnick, & Heywood, 2004). They concluded that “the current state of knowledge on the relationship of physical activity to the health and social needs of American girls warrants the serious attention of public health officials, educators and sport leaders” (p. 2) A compilation of research findings indicate that girls face what the authors describe as a “daunting array” of health risks in their youth and later life that can be reduced through physical activity and sport participation. Specifically:

- *Breast cancer risk:* One to three hours of exercise a week over a woman’s reproductive lifetime (from the teens to about age 40) may bring a 20–30% reduction in the risk of breast cancer, and four or more hours of exercise a week can reduce the risk almost 60% (Bernstein et al., 1994).
- *Smoking:* Female athletes on one or two school or community sports teams were significantly less likely to smoke regularly than female nonathletes. Girls on three or more teams were even less likely to smoke regularly (Melnick et al., 2001).
- *Illicit drug use:* Two nationwide studies found that female school or community athletes were significantly less likely to use marijuana, cocaine, or most other illicit drugs, although they were no less likely to use crack or inhalants. This protective effect of sports was especially true for White girls (Miller et al., 2000; Pate et al., 2000).
- *Sexual risk:* Female athletes are less likely to be sexually active, in part because they tend to be more concerned about getting pregnant than female nonathletes (Dodge & Jaccard, 2002).
- *Depression:* Women and girls who participate in regular exercise suffer lower rates of depression (Nicoloff & Schwenk, 1995; Page & Tucker, 1994).
- *Suicide:* Female high school athletes, especially those participating on three or more teams, have lower odds of considering or planning a suicide attempt (Sabo et al., 2004).
- *Educational gains:* The positive educational impacts of school sports were just as strong for girls as for boys including self-concept, educational aspirations in the senior year, school attendance, math and science enrollment, time spent on homework, and taking honors courses (Marsh, 1993, p. 4, as reported in Sabo et al., 2004).

### *The Possible Health Risks Associated For Youth Sport Athletes*

For all of the benefits to be realized from participation in physical activity and sport, there is another side of the coin, however. Where children have access to athletic programs and opportunities, negative health outcomes have been realized as well. According to Ewing and Seefeldt (1995), 55% of the 10–17 year olds participated in nonschool sport activity. Although the numbers of children participating in organized sport has steadily increased during the last half-century, the rate of drop out or withdraw from sport has been increasing as well. According to Petlichkoff (1996) over 65% of participants between the ages of 7 and 18 years withdraw from playing sport. Some researchers report that youth sport athletes who drop out do so mostly as a result of negative experiences whereas others report that competing interests is the primary reason (Gould, 1987; Petlichkoff, 1996). Frequently cited factors associated with youth sport athlete burn out include high training volume and time requirements, demanding performance expectations (either self- or other-imposed), continuous intense competition, excessive parental involvement, abusive coaches, lack of funding, and lack of opportunities for normal social development (Brady, 2004).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 7 million sports-related injuries occur in the United States annually with 4.3 million requiring emergency medical attention. “Boys 10 to 14 make up the largest single segment of that injury population, followed closely by boys 15 to 19; men 25 to 44 follow this group. Girls aged 10 to 14 comprise the largest single category of females, followed by women 25 to 44” (Worrell, 2004, p. 1). Because training has become more sport-specific and occurs almost all year round even at the youth level, overuse injuries are now common among athletes aged 5 to 17 (DiFiori, 1999).

With ever increasing numbers of girls and women participating in physical activity and sport, reports of injuries among women have also increased (Ransdell, 2005). However, increased participation alone has not fully explained why women experience more knee injuries than men. In fact, in comparable sports, females have greater number of injuries to the knee compared to their male counterparts. Specifically, women incur nearly 10,000 anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries in collegiate sports and 25,000 ACL injuries in high school sports (Ransdell, 2005).

In 2005, surgeons reported a five- to sixfold increase during the previous decade (1993–2003) in youth pitchers seeking surgery for elbow problems. Dr. James Andrews, an orthopedic surgeon with the American Sports Medicine Institute, notes that in addition to youth pitchers throwing year-round, risk of injury has increased because of athletes competing on more than one team (subverting playing limits imposed to reduce injuries), the effect of radar guns on pressure to perform, the existence of showcase tryouts, and poor pitching mechanics. Across sports, from gymnastics to swimming to soccer, similar factors are contributing to greater risk among youth sport participants (Pennington, 2005).

In the aftermath of U.S. House Committee on Government Reform hearings on steroid use in the spring of 2005 (Political Transcript Wire, June 15, 2005), awareness regarding the health risks associated with steroid use among youth sport athletes has

grown. Data from a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control released in 2004 revealed that 6.8% of boys and 5.3% of girls had used steroids without a doctor's prescription (Guregian, 2005).

In light of existing research, the challenges researchers, public policy makers, health practitioners, physical educators, and parents face moving into the 21st Century are twofold. First, school systems must be more responsiveness to the need for curricular frameworks that encourage lifelong participation in sport and physical activity because of the long term positive benefits to be realized. At the same time, there is a real need for greater steps to be taken in protecting children from the excessive physical and mental demands placed on them in youth sport settings that threaten their health and well-being.

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## SECTION II. EQUITY IN GENDER-INTEGRATED PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

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### Gender-Integrated Physical Education Under Title IX

Federal regulations offering guidance to educators regarding Title IX as it applies to any class work or curriculum, including physical education, prohibit the routine separation of boys and girls in physical education classes or using the sex of a child to require or refuse participation in certain activities. Exceptions to this prohibition in physical education include sports or activities that involve bodily contact. Even here, however, students are expected to learn about these sports in integrated settings, being separated only for class competition (Title IX Federal Regulations, Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 34 CFR Sec. 106.34) (also see Lirgg, 1993).

Following the passage of Title IX and the 1975 implementing regulations, physical educators and school administrators at the elementary and secondary level had to contemplate what "non-discrimination on the basis of sex" in physical education and athletics meant. The previous routine assignment of females and males into separate physical education classes that offered different activities (boys physical education curricula was typically more narrowly focused on team sports; girls curricula tended to be broader, less focused on team sports, and did not include contact sports) was no longer permissible. According to Geadelmann (1979) the necessity to comply with Title IX guidelines led to a de-emphasis on team sports, the inclusion of new activities more amenable to coeducational settings such as rappelling and orienteering, and the adoption of rules that modified team sports.

### Achieving Gender-Integrated Physical Education Classes

Over time, physical educators faced the challenge of conceiving new curricular models within a discipline where activities have historically been sex stereotyped. However, the residue of thinking about specific sports as appropriate to males (contact sports, competitive team sports) or females (activities that em-

phasize flexibility and grace, individual sports) continues today, among physical educators themselves and their students (Kulinna, Martin, Lai, Kliber, & Reed, 2003). Two major approaches to the shaping of physical education in light of the need to consider the equitable treatment of female and male students have emerged. Early on, attempts to integrate physical education curriculum included recommendations that heavily sex-stereotyped team sport activities, like basketball, baseball, and football, be replaced with activities organized around less competitive and more incremental skill development (Lirgg & Feltz, 1989; Steward & Corbin, 1989; Williamson, 1993). Others argued that a consideration of sex equity in physical education called for a new approach where the team sports that had been heavily associated with boys, and which inherently favored boys in areas of confidence levels and preference by virtue of exposure over time, be replaced with activities developed within an equity model, such as ropes courses, outdoor adventure activities, and long-term leisure sports (Hutchinson, 1995; Williamson, 1993).

Another common response rarely appeared in compliance reviews but was consistently evident on the floor of the gym. Departments denied the law and continued gender segregated programs, under the guise of choice, offering students options (aerobic dance or basketball) that resulted in gender segregation. The end result was often complete gender segregation. Some faculty organized programs in ways that effectively undermined the law by taking roll en masse and then allowing students to split for the rest of the instructional time without any genuine attempt to integrate their physical education classrooms. Other frequently occurring scenarios that violated the coeducation requirements of Title IX included scheduling classes such as football directly opposite aerobic dance with the intent of producing sex-segregated classes; requiring girls to pass a skill test to enroll in an advanced class or a typically males-only class such as football when boys do not have to pass such a test, and labeling classes specifically for "girls" and "boys" (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005, p. 41).

This stance on the part of physical educators to persist in gender-segregated classes in defiance of the law is not unexpected when considered in light of research conducted over the past 30 years that shows a consistent pattern of gender-bias among physical educators. In their classic work examining the gender behaviors of teachers in elementary and secondary schools, David and Myra Sadker (1994) concluded that second to vocational education, physical education was the most gender-biased subject to be found in schools. Davis (2003), in an extensive review of existing research, found that physical education teachers across all grade levels interacted both verbally and nonverbally more often with male students when compared with female students:

- asked more questions of male students,
- praised male students for good performance and female students for their effort,
- gave more corrective feedback to male students than female students,
- used gender-biased language when they interacted with students,

- expressed an expectation that male students would exhibit different behavior from female students and that male students would have better physical ability,
- selected male students to demonstrate skills more frequently than female students,
- chose not to intervene when students exhibited negative gender stereotyping toward one another,
- maintained gender-biased perceptions and explanations for student behavior,
- used teaching strategies and styles that perpetuated gender bias, and
- constructed curriculums that ignore the needs and interests of female students.

In contrast, there were only four studies Davis located that reported more gender-equitable attitudes on the part of physical educators compared to other teachers.

Whereas Geadelmann (1981) reported that effective gender integrated physical activity programs were appearing more frequently throughout elementary and secondary levels, contemporary discussions regarding physical education methodology and curriculum shows that the curriculum and approach to education has not changed as dramatically as some might have predicted. Singleton (2003), for example, wrote “Regardless of recent curriculum revisions, physical educators, faced with reduced time and/or inadequate equipment and facilities, continue to offer competitive team activities for a high percentage of their program time.” In turn, Langford and Carter (2003, p. 194) pointed out that not only is physical education instruction usually limited across the life of a school child, offering essentially the same set of skill instruction from middle school through high school, but it also “invokes spectator sports or group activities” to the neglect of activities to be pursued into adulthood. When considered in light of the range of responses to Title IX, which include defiance, backsliding, “paper” compliance, “laissez-faire” co-ed classes, and enthusiastic endorsement of gender equity (Griffin, 1989, p. 30), it is clear that there is much work still to be done in conceptualizing a physical education environment that is equally beneficial to all children.

Many physical educators, like much of the rest of society, remain locked in ideological debates about the value of single-sex versus co-educational classes (Soderlund, 2005). When considering performance outcomes on skills tests, early research supported conclusions that there was little or no difference in performances when students in co-education classes were compared to students in same-sex classes (Tallman, 1970).

Notably, those who actively seek to find ways of achieving gender equity in physical education tend to be college and university professors whereas some arguing for same-sex physical education models are practitioners (Osbourne, Bauer, & Sutliff, 2002). Those who wish for a return to a pre-Title IX era when classes were separate argue that girls would experience more success in all-girl settings freed from the pressures boys place on girls in co-ed settings (Derry, 2002; Derry & Phillips, 2004) and the differences to be found in attitudes (girls are nicer, boys more aggressive) (Keinman, 1999). In turn, some physical educators have viewed the integration of physical education as the

catalyst to water down the curriculum in a way that does not challenge boys (Griffin, 1984).

The assumptions about immutable differences that serve as the departure point for arguments in support of single-sex physical education need to be refuted (see chapter 2, “Facts and Assumptions about the Nature of Gender Differences and the Implications for Gender Equity” in this volume). Research shows that although consistent patterns of gender differentiated behaviors exist, they are tied to socialization more than innate gender differences. For example, from a child development perspective, tensions between boys and girls arise and are manifest in gendered ways. Thorne’s (1993) extensive work on children’s interactions on the playground documented the gendered behavior of boys and girls, from taunting to invading each others’ space to play. Griffin (1984) found similar evidence of those dynamics happening in co-ed physical education classes.

As Messner (2000, 2002) explains, these behaviors are not isolated but occur within a much larger system of gender performance. In his observational study of a girls and boys soccer team (ages 4 to 5 years old), he notes that it was not the numerous similarities that existed across these children as they set out on their first day of their youth soccer season but their differences that parents focused and commented upon.

Whereas the stakes are the same for all children, the access children have to physical activity, the encouragement they receive from significant adults in their lives, and the messages they receive about the value of their own physical abilities are determined in part by gender, race, and social class biases. Historically, children’s involvement in physical activity has been discussed within the context of differences, reflecting the attention that difference has received in research reports. Why the dominant narrative about the sexes is one of difference is an important question to consider.

As research is conducted on the effectiveness of co-education versus single sex models of physical education, the issue of what researchers focus on—similarities or differences—becomes important to the overall understanding of what is happening in the classroom. For example, findings from one study of selected student and teacher variables for female students and female physical educators supported a conclusion that because female teachers spent less time in classroom management in single-sex classrooms, allowing for female students to be more engaged in activity, single-sex physical education is a more effective learning environment (Derry & Phillips, 2004). Apart from the fact that the findings from this study can potentially be overgeneralized given the sample (18 teachers were compared), the question of why differences or similarities may be found is as significant as the finding itself. Ryan, Fleming, and Maina (2003) found few if any significant differences in student likes and dislikes about physical education teachers across gender and racial groups, a finding that differed with other studies. Offering a rationale for why their findings differed with those of other researchers, Ryan and colleagues pointed out that the physical education teachers they studied may have played a significant role in developing the favorable attitudes students had about their experiences in class, something that transcended gender and race.

Furthermore, a compounding issue that has to be addressed in all of these studies featuring single-sex comparison groups is

the fact that the samples themselves may reflect the lack of a good faith effort on the part of physical educators to sex-integrate their classrooms. As a result, the methodology behind these studies and subsequent interpretation of the findings are problematic. Are these studies measuring the effectiveness of single-sex classes in the creation of an educational climate conducive to good education, or are they measuring resistance to societal change and the required reorganization, reassessment, and reconsideration of gender-belief structures that would have to take place in order for gender-integration in physical education to occur? For example, Derry and Philipps (2004) reported that the classes they observed included traditional team sport units, including volleyball, basketball, soccer, softball, flag football, and lacrosse along with tennis. Notably, only two of those activities (basketball and lacrosse) would qualify as exempted contact sports that could be taught in single-sex rather than co-ed settings. And why would there be a necessity for tennis to be taught in a single-sex environment when the history of the sport itself has long provided for mixed doubles? If physical educators have not even been able to provide the leadership necessary to integrate their classes enough to accommodate mixed doubles, what does that say about the mindset of some physical educators in general?

Additionally, in a comparison of student activity levels in co-ed and single-sex classes, girls were found to engage in less moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) in classes than were the boys (McKenzie, Prochaska, Sallis, & LaMaster, 2004). The authors of the study, however, point out that “some of the differences in physical activity for boys and girls in co-educational and single-gender classes were mediated by the amount of time allotted to different lesson contexts” (p. 448). In effect, girls-only classes emphasized more skill drills and less game play. Thus, the structure of the experience, rather than the gender of the participant, may help explain why girls are essentially less actively engaged in physical education classes.

This recognition for the power teachers have in creating gender equitable classroom cultures and environments needs to be explored more by physical educators. Williamson (1993) has argued that teachers who believe in gender stereotypes that assume girls and boys have different capabilities create self-fulfilling prophecies. Furthermore, merely placing girls and boys in close proximity to one another in physical education does not by itself result in gender equity. As Nilges (1998) concludes “equal access to a common curriculum may not fully eliminate gender discrimination in physical education” (p. 172). Where “we–they” dichotomies (Nilges, 1998) that pit boys against girls or situate boys and girls along the fault line of difference persist, stereotypes that undermine girls confidence in their own abilities and boys appreciation for the capabilities of girls flourish. Furthermore, there is little to challenge the persistent notion that the equity to be found in co-educational classes benefits only girls. For example, Lirgg (1993) found that “males in co-educational classes were more confident of their capability to learn basketball than males in same sex classes” (p. 324).

Although refuted earlier in this chapter, the justification of immutable differences that sustains sex discrimination in physical education and athletic settings has not disappeared from the dialogue surrounding gender and sport. For example, Rhoads (2004) wrote, “Only when we begin to take sex differences seriously enough to see that men are intrinsically more at-

tracted to sports—and need sports competition more than women do—will we be able to design public policies that are just, functional, and sensible” (p. B4). The advocacy for this position not only ignores the flawed science of biological determinism that undergirds such beliefs, but it also ignores the most basic ethical responsibility associated with teaching in a democracy. Educators are honor and duty bound to uphold a standard of excellence for students that encourages them to strive to fulfill their promise and potential as human beings and citizens. Exploring Rhoads’s assertion further, what are the implications of this line of reasoning in other areas of the curriculum? Should boys, because of a stereotypical perception that they are less verbal, be evaluated using modified standards in English classes or perhaps exempted entirely? In turn, should physical educators just accept that girls will be destined for mediocrity when they enter their classrooms? It is this very logic, the logic of discrimination, that Title IX was designed to address.

There is evidence that some physical educators in secondary schools who are supposed to comply with Title IX continue to resist offering co-educational classes (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005; McKenzie et al., 2004). More importantly, explanations for why single-sex classes would better meet the needs of students in physical education include removing girls from environments where boys are threatening, aggressive, and superior (Derry, 2002; Derry & Phillips, 2004) reveal that sex discrimination is still going on in physical education classes. Derry (2002) reported that “female teachers described their less-skilled female students as being intimidated by the more athletic boys and were often the brunt of critical comments and rude remarks” (p. 24). Rather than a rationale for single-sex physical education for girls, that finding indicates that in this study, teachers were aware that girls in their mixed class settings were subjected to sexual harassment. If this is the case, removing them merely covers over the harassment and does not engage boys in meaningful ways about how they are to treat girls and women. In effect, sex segregation becomes a tool in allowing sex discrimination to continue and the patterns underlying it to go unchallenged.

It is clear from the literature that for physical educators who have the will to create more equitable classrooms and learning environments, equity can be achieved. There is evidence to show that something as simple as physical education teachers avoiding references to innate racial and gender superiority/inferiority and encouraging students to consider that performance is incremental and dependent on work and effort has an effect on how students view possibilities for themselves and for each other (Cheypator-Thomson, You, & Hardin, 2000; Li, Harrison, & Solomon, 2004). Additional steps physical educators can take include changing the culture of the classroom through their use of language and terminology, reconsidering ways in which they differentially treat students on the basis of gender, adopting different methods of class management, and altering teaching style (See Table 18.2 for more details).

The discussion about gender-integrated versus single-sex class experiences in physical education has received renewed interest in light of the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights March 2004 proposed changes to Title IX regulations that would make it easier for schools to offer single-sex classes. Although the current Title IX regulations allow single-sex classes for affirmative or remedial purposes to decrease sex discrimination, it is not clear how this provision can be justified in phys-

TABLE 18.2 Research-Based Strategies to Achieve Gender Equity in Physical Education Classes

Steps to Achieving Gender Equity in Physical Education Classes	Physical Educators Should Consider
Changing the Culture of the Classroom (Brown et al., 1996; Napper-Owen, 1994; Parks & Robertson, 1999; Satina, 1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate gender biased language and terminology (avoiding use of generic terms like "you guys")</li> <li>• Using parallel terms when referring to mixed groups (boys and girls, men and women)</li> <li>• Do not reference groups with language (girls and boys; boys and girls)</li> <li>• Alter activity terms (player-to-player defense instead of man-to-man)</li> </ul>
Reconsidering Differential Treatment Based on Gender (Sprague & Engstrom, 2000; Trainor et al., 1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid lower expectations of girls on the basis of assumed inferiority</li> <li>• Consider appropriate development and learning progressions to foster mastery in all students</li> </ul>
Class Management (Brown et al., 1996; Davis, 1999, 2001, 2003; Mitchell et al., 1995; Napper-Owen, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give careful consideration to arranging students in mixed-groups</li> <li>• Place students in groups based on ability and not gender</li> <li>• Avoid pitting females against males in "we-they" scenarios</li> <li>• Assign leadership responsibilities to males &amp; females (squad leaders, team captains)</li> <li>• Use references to high profile female as well as male sports figures when instructing</li> <li>• Give consideration to representation of female figures on bulletin boards and in class readings</li> <li>• Avoid stereotyping of less proficient male students</li> <li>• Make class rules to avoid interruptions</li> <li>• Call on girls by first name</li> </ul>
Teaching Style (Hutchinson, 1995; Lock et al., 1999; Napper-Owen, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce emphasis on winning and competition</li> <li>• Engage students in more critical thinking, answer open ended questions, encourage them to create their own games</li> <li>• Incorporate more cooperative games into the curriculum</li> <li>• Implement skill building approaches</li> </ul>

ical education where the regulations prohibit sex segregation. (See also chapter 9, "Gender Equity in Coeducation and Single Sex Educational Environments," this volume.)

In a country with an education policy titled No Child Left Behind, the need to create gender equitable co-educational physical education that focuses on developing the skills and commitment for a lifetime of physical activity is critically important to our nation's health and the overall well-being of individual children.

### SECTION III. GENDER EQUITY ISSUES IN SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

#### Introduction

Over the last three decades, gender equity in college athletics and secondary school athletics has been influenced significantly by government action, collegiate and scholastic leadership, and advocacy groups. Although significant progress has been made in terms of increased sport participation opportunities and increased resources for girls and women, there are still significant inequities in both participation and resources. Common inequities include inferior treatment received by many female sport participants, the low number of women as athletics directors and coaches, as well as the continued attacks against Title IX's athletics regulations.

In order to address the topic of gender equity issues in school athletic programs, we will begin by providing an overview of current statistics on girls and women in sport. Secondly, an overview of Title IX's regulations as they apply to athletics programs will be provided, including common issues about Title IX. Third, we will provide an overview of congressional and court action, educational leadership initiatives, and advocacy group action.

#### The Impact of Title IX on Athletics Programs

Title IX has produced a revolution in sports participation for women. It has altered the face of women's sports as well as our society's interest in and attitude toward women athletes and women's sports. It has provided the legal impetus for millions of girls and women to obtain the benefits of participating in competitive athletics. Because of the law, girls and young women are able to take advantage of superior coaching, facilities, equipment, medical treatment, travel, and publicity (for specific details regarding participation rates, see the introduction to this chapter).

Although the implementation of Title IX has led to impressive gains for women's athletics, the playing field is still far from level. Women's athletic programs continue to lag behind men's programs by almost every measurable criterion, including participation opportunities, athletic scholarships,

operating budgets and recruiting expenditures. For example, in high school, 49.1% of all students are female, yet females comprise only 41% of all high school athletes and receive a total of 1.2 million fewer opportunities to play sports (NFSHA, 2005). Although women in NCAA Division I member institutions represent 54.5% of the student body, they represent less than 44% of athletes and receive only 34% of athletic department operating budgets, 33% of the recruiting budgets, and just 44% of the athletic scholarships (NCAA Gender Equity Report, 2002–2003).

Unfortunately in the athletics director's office of NCAA institutions, there has been "a loss in the presence of a female voice" (Acosta & Carpenter, 2004), particularly at the highest levels. "When Title IX was enacted in 1972, more than 90% of women's programs were directed by a female administrator" (Acosta & Carpenter, 2004, p. 4). By 2006, only 18.6% of NCAA Divisions I, II, and III institutions were headed by women whereas 14.5% of schools lacked a female administrator entirely (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006).<sup>7</sup> This change occurred because many separate men's and women's athletics departments merged within a few years of Title IX's enactment (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992). This leadership change and the "old boys club" valued the male applicant's experience over the female applicant's experience (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992, Hasbrook, 1988). Today, at the Division I level women have the lowest representation, with 9.3% female athletics directors and 90.7% male athletics directors. In Division II, 17.8% of the athletics directors are women, and in Division III, 26.6% of the athletics directors are women. (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006).

The percentage of women in the coaching ranks has seen a steady decline as well. Just as 90% of the administrators of women's programs were women prior to 1972, so too were 90% of the coaches of women's teams. Today, only 42.4% of women's teams are coached by females, which is the lowest representation of women coaches in history (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). "Even though over half of women's teams are coached by males, very few females serve as head coaches of men's teams" and the percentage of females coaching men's teams "remains under 2% as it has been for the last three decades" (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006).

## Title IX as Applied to Athletics

### *Title IX—The Legal Standard*

The prohibition against sex discrimination as articulated in Title IX is very broad. It not only applies to every aspect of a federally funded education program or activity and extends to elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities, but it also applies to their athletics programs as well.

In 1975, the agency responsible for enforcing Title IX promulgated regulations interpreting the law as it related to athlet-

ics. These regulations require schools to provide male and female students with the following:

1. Equal opportunities to participate in sports
2. An equitable allocation of scholarships monies
3. Equitable treatment in all aspects of athletics, including coaching, facilities, equipment, medical treatment, travel, and support, among other things

The regulations required compliance in elementary schools by 1976 and in high schools and colleges by 1978.

By 1978, it became clear that schools needed further guidance on how to comply with the first requirement, equal opportunities to participate in athletics, after the agency received more than 100 complaints alleging discrimination in athletics. The central question was, How many athletic opportunities were schools required to provide? The math and reading programs could simply adopt gender-neutral admissions standards. But what did "equal opportunity" mean in the sex-segregated world of athletics? In response, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) issued a policy interpretation in 1979. In addition to setting forth clarification on scholarship and treatment requirements, it sets forth three wholly independent ways for schools to demonstrate that students of both genders have equal opportunities to participate in sports. Institutions could comply with the participation requirements of the provision by showing either that:

1. The percentage of male and female athletes is substantially proportionate to the percentage of male and female students enrolled in the school (the so-called proportionality test; Prong 1); or
2. The school has a history and a continuing practice of expanding opportunities for female students (Prong 2); or
3. The school is fully and effectively meeting its female students' interests and abilities to participate in sports, and competition exists within the school's competitive region (Prong 3).

If a school meets any one of these tests, it is in compliance with Title IX's participation requirements. This three-part test has been in effect for almost three decades and has been upheld by every one of the eight federal appeals courts that has considered its legality.

The first prong is fairly simple—it asks whether the female rates of participation and enrollment are "substantially proportionate." For example, if the student body is 50% female and 50% male, the gender break down among the school's athlete population should be about the same.

The second prong allows a school to defend itself by arguing that it has not achieved proportionality yet, but that it can demonstrate "a history and continued practice of program expansion which is demonstrably responsive to the developing interest and abilities of the members of [the underrepresented]

<sup>7</sup>The terms Division I, II, and III refer to NCAA designations for schools that are distinguished by the manner in which their athletic departments run. At the Division I and II levels, athletes may receive scholarships and there is considerable attention paid to "revenue-producing" sports. According to the NCAA, Division III athletic departments place "special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators". For more discussion of this, see [http://www.ncaa.org/about/div\\_criteria.html](http://www.ncaa.org/about/div_criteria.html)

sex.” Courts have rejected arguments from schools that teams created over ten years previously, promises to expand women’s programs at some unspecified future date, smaller cuts for women than men, or improving the quality of existing programs, constitute “program expansion” within the meaning of the statute.

The third prong allows a school to defend itself by arguing that it has not achieved proportionality yet, but it can demonstrate “that the interests and abilities of the members of [the underrepresented] sex have been fully and effectively accommodated by the present [athletic] program.” In essence, this prong asks whether there are girls or women who have the interest and ability to compete, but are not given the opportunity. Relative interests between men and women are not weighed. In 1996, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued its Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Guidance: The Three-Part Test.<sup>8</sup> It states that women athletes advocating for additional sports teams must be able to demonstrate that there is sufficient unmet interest to support an intercollegiate team, that there is sufficient ability to sustain an intercollegiate team, and that there is a reasonable expectation of competition for the team.

#### *Enforcement of Title IX’s Athletics Regulations*

An aggrieved athlete or school employee may wish to resolve the inequities informally by contacting the school’s Title IX coordinator, the athletic director, school board members, the school principal, or president. If an informal resolution proves to be unsatisfactory, the athlete has two other options to resolve the dispute. First, she or he can file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education. The OCR is akin to the police; they are the governmental agency with the responsibility of enforcing Title IX in schools. The complaint can be made online<sup>9</sup> and does not require a lawyer. However, there are serious limitations to this process. First, inadequate resources leave the OCR unable to address all Title IX violations. For example, in 2001 the OCR initiated just two Title IX athletics reviews of schools. Additionally, athletes who file complaints with the OCR have neither the right to participate in the investigation and enforcement of their complaints nor the right to make sure their evidence or witnesses are heard. The agency is not required to help the complaining athletes. For example, the OCR may obtain a compliance agreement from the school that provides for a new soccer team, but the complaining athletes were softball players. Finally, court cases have declared schools in violation of Title IX after the OCR made a determination that it was in compliance with the law.

As a second alternative, the athlete may sue the school directly in federal court to enforce Title IX. The athlete does not need to exhaust administrative remedies prior to filing a suit. Title IX suits are generally filed as class actions to ensure that the court will not drop the case after the athlete graduates from the school.

A lawsuit will ensure that the specific remedy sought by the aggrieved athlete will be considered. While punitive damages are not available in Title IX suits, athletes may obtain injunctive relief, requiring the school to add teams or provide more resources for existing teams. They may also obtain monetary damages for losses sustained as a result of the school’s discriminatory practices. Attorney’s fees are also recoverable separately under the statute.

#### Common Issues in Title IX Disputes

##### *Equal Numbers of Teams*

Title IX’s participation mandate is measured by the *overall* number of athletic opportunities offered, not by the number of teams offered. Some teams may have over 100 athletes, whereas other teams may have as few as 5. Therefore, the number of teams offered to men and women is irrelevant in analyzing whether there is discrimination in the opportunity to play sports.

##### *Club Teams*

In evaluating the number of competitive opportunities, club teams are not considered to be intercollegiate teams except in those instances where they regularly participate in varsity competition.

##### *Exception for Football or Other “Revenue-Producing” Sport*

There is no exemption for revenue-producing sports, either in calculating whether the school is providing equal opportunities or in providing equal treatment.

##### *Per Capita Expenditures May Not Be Equivalent*

Congress has recognized that some sports are inherently more expensive than others. As long as the school is providing the male and female athletes with equivalent educational programs, the school is not in violation. However, the fact finder “may consider the failure to provide necessary funds for teams for one sex in assessing equality of opportunity for members of each sex (Athletics, 106.41).” Different expenditures in required equipment may be justified—it may cost more to equip a football player than a swimmer, but different expenditures in travel, for example, may not.

##### *Booster Clubs*

A school cannot hide behind booster club contributions to men’s sports as a defense explaining why its female athletes are

<sup>8</sup>Available at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/docs/clarific.html>

<sup>9</sup>Complaints may be filed at [www.ocr.gov](http://www.ocr.gov)

not treated equitably. The OCR's Title IX Investigator's Manual (Bonnette & Daniel, 1990) provides:

Where booster clubs provide benefits or services that assist only teams of one sex, the institution shall ensure that teams of the other sex receive equivalent benefits and services. If booster clubs provide benefits and services to athletes of the other sex, then the institution shall take action to ensure that benefits and services are equivalent for both sexes. (p. 5)

### *Lack of Funds*

A school cannot proffer the defense that it lacks the funds necessary to end the complained of discrimination.

### *Quotas*

Attempts to argue that Title IX is a quota have consistently failed. This is true for a number of reasons. First, comparing the percentage of athletes with the percentage of the student body is only a starting point for Title IX analysis. As demonstrated by the material above, schools can still demonstrate that they have a continuing history of program expansion or that they are meeting the interests and abilities of the student athletes. Second, in the sex-segregated athletic department, it is appropriate to measure whether resources are being unfairly distributed by looking at resources provided to the other sex.

### The "Athletics Arms Race" and Title IX

Title IX is often blamed when there are cuts in funding for men's athletic teams because the assumption is that the funding is going to create equity for the "less important" women's teams. However, this blame is often baseless as the bulk of the funds instead go to supporting the high-visibility men's sports that often lose more money than they gain in revenue. For example:

Iowa State, coming off perhaps the most successful sports year in its history, cut these two programs (baseball and men's swimming) last month because its athletic department faced a \$1.4 million deficit. Blame came quickly, much of it directed at the recently negotiated contracts for the school's football and basketball coaches. Football Coach Dan McCarney's compensation was doubled to \$600,000 while Larry Eustachy's annual package rose to \$1.1 million (from approximately \$500,000), even though the basketball coach had nine years left on a 10-year deal. (NCWGE, 2002, p. 17)

The Marquette Wrestling Club was one of the plaintiffs that filed the lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education alleging that Title IX causes discrimination against male athletes. Marquette's athletics director publicly blamed Title IX as the rationale for dropping the sport of wrestling, a sport that was reportedly funded at only \$50,000. Institutional priorities rather than finances appear to be a motivating factor because

Marquette embarked on a venture to find new moneys to support and promote the sport of basketball:

Marquette University, an institution that does not sponsor a football program, dropped its wrestling program following the 2000-01 season. Marquette . . . has since announced a \$31 million capital campaign to build a basketball arena, in an effort to return its basketball program to national prominence. (NCWGE, 2002, p. 20)

As highlighted in the 2002 NCWGE report titled "Title IX Athletics Policies: Issues and Data for Education Decision Makers":

A "pull-back" on the nation's commitment to civil rights cannot be precipitated by institutional decisions to emphasize one sport program, reduce the size of men's sports programs or in other ways determine the appropriate size and expense of athletics programs. Higher education should not expect the federal government to weaken its commitment to gender equity, an important civil rights law, in response to higher education's inability to control expenditures. Higher education must address budgetary issues and excess in intercollegiate athletics. (p. 14).

The 2002 NCWGE report included a number of options for exploration such as contract limitations, curtailing excessive and unnecessary expenditures in football and basketball, staff limitations, and scholarship reassessment.

### Athletics Leadership and Governance

#### *Congress*

Congress has played a critical leadership role in efforts to achieve gender equity in athletics by adopting federal legislation (Title IX), restoring the application of the law when it was watered down by the courts, and instituting a monitoring mechanism to track progress.

There have been attempts over the years by members of Congress and some U. S. Department of Education political appointees to weaken Title IX as well as to support existing standards. The Tower Amendment, which attempted to exempt revenue-producing sports (e.g., football) from Title IX in 1974, was denied (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005; Hogshead-Makar, 2003; Staurowsky, 2003). Instead, the Javitz Amendment, which allows some flexibility due to the nature of certain sports without watering down the intent of the law, was adopted by Congress. And in response to *Grove City College v. Bell* in 1984, which temporarily suspended Title IX's application to athletics, Congress adopted the 1987 Civil Rights Restoration Act overturning the *Grove City College* Supreme Court decision which had placed limitations on the coverage of Title IX in all programs and activities of the institution receiving federal financial assistance (Carpenter, & Acosta, 2005; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Suggs, 2005a).

In an attempt to nudge schools toward equity, Congress passed the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) in 1994 and amended it in 1998 (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005, Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Suggs, 2005a). The legislation requires all two- and four-year collegiate institutions to disclose participation rates and program support expenditures for male and female

athletic programs.<sup>10</sup> Data from the survey instruments have been used by advocacy organizations to call attention to potential Title IX compliance problems. At the high school level, however, this standard information collection is not yet required by law and therefore goes largely unchecked. Proposed legislation would require high schools to engage in similar reporting practices as the EADA requires of all collegiate institutions.

#### U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

The ED Office for Civil Rights is the key federal regulatory agency responsible for administering and enforcing Title IX in educational institutions (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). Its work is heavily influenced by the political party in power—particularly to the degree to which the regulations are enforced. In 1979, OCR produced a publication, *Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Interpretation*, that explained how Title IX applies to intercollegiate athletics and what component areas must be reviewed for compliance. In 1996, in response to some specific questions about how to determine whether men and women have equitable opportunities to play sports, the OCR provided additional compliance examples in their *Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy Guidance: The Three Part Test*.

In 2002, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, under the direction of the George W. Bush Administration, established a Secretary of Education's Commission on Opportunity in Athletics to explore whether Title IX was working as intended within athletics (see introduction, this chapter, for more details).

Due to grassroots responses of pro-Title IX advocates and the strength of the existing regulations that had been upheld in numerous court cases, the 2002–03 efforts to weaken Title IX were thwarted. In 2003, as a follow-up to the commission deliberations, the OCR sent out a *Further Clarification Letter* under Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Gerald Reynolds's signature. In this letter the OCR stated that Title IX's athletics regulations provide sufficient flexibility, that Title IX's athletics regulations would be kept intact, and that greater education and enforcement of the law and its regulations are needed. Among the enforcement policies affirmed at that time was “the three part test.”

The struggle was enjoined again in 2005 when the Department of Education issued a letter titled *Additional Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics Policy: Three-Part Test—Part Three*. Circulated without notice or public input, this clarification alters previous approaches to enforcement of part three of the test that deals with accommodating interests and abilities (Manning, 2005). As a means of measuring female interest in sport, the OCR has stated that the administration of a web-based prototype survey, which they call a “Model Survey,” would generate sufficient information to determine if schools were meeting the needs of female students in the area of athletics. Schools failing to provide proportional opportunities to female athletes or at least demonstrate a history of expanding programs could still meet the standards for compliance under this new clarification if they send out the Model Survey to fe-

male students. A provision in the methodology allows for surveys to be sent out via email. Further, the nonresponse of students to the survey would be presumed to reflect a lack of interest on the part of females.

Scholars point out that the methodology and design of the survey is flawed at a number of levels, including problems associated with potentially low response rates, the error of presuming that nonresponse is indicative of lack of interest, lack of provision for sampling errors, and the predictable misinterpretation of the purpose of the survey by students (Sabo & Grant, 2005). Those familiar with the policy also point out that the elevation of survey results as a sole indicator of interest is a major departure from previous understandings regarding the consideration of multiple factors in determining interest (National Women's Law Center, 2005b). Among those calling for the new guideline to be rescinded were a group of over 140 Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives who sent a letter to President Bush (Suggs, 2005b), the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee (Suggs, 2005b), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2005). Karr and Sanil (2005).

#### Action in the Courts

- *Grove City College v. Bell* (1984): The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that if a sub-unit of an educational institution did not receive federal funds, that particular sub-unit did not need to comply with Title IX. Therefore, Title IX did not apply to college athletics during the time period between 1984 and 1988. (In 1988, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 was adopted which restored the application of Title IX to athletics.)
- *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* (1992): The Court found that monetary damages to private individuals may be awarded in Title IX cases where intentional Title IX violations occurred.
- *Cohen v. Brown* (1996): Brown University dropped two viable and existing varsity sport teams for women at a time when Brown did not meet any of the prongs for equitable participation under the Three-Part Test. The argument that women aren't as interested in sports as rationale for throwing out the Three-Part Test failed.
- Circuit Court Decisions: Eight Circuit courts have ruled in favor of the validity of the three-part test for participation opportunities.
- *National Wrestling Coaches Association et al. v. U.S. Department of Education* (2003): The NWCA challenged the legality of OCR's Three-Part Test for assessing athletics participation compliance under Title IX. In 2003, the case was dismissed because the NWCA did not have legal standing. In short, the courts said that colleges have the right to choose which sports they want to offer and the argument put forth by the wrestlers would not force colleges to add the sport of wrestling. In 2005, the District of Columbia Circuit court affirmed the ruling of the district court. The case was again dismissed.

<sup>10</sup>Participation and expenditure reports on any two- or four-year institution in the United States are available online at <http://ope.ed.gov/athletics>

- *Roderick Jackson v. Birmingham School District* (2005): This case involved a male high school basketball coach who alleged he had been fired as a result of pointing out the need to eliminate discrimination against his female athletes. In March of 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that individuals who are subject to retaliation as a result of their efforts to protest sex discrimination are protected under Title IX. The ruling establishes that retaliatory action directed at someone seeking to remedy sex discrimination is discrimination on the basis of sex. It further clarifies that protection against retaliation is critical to the enforcement of Title IX and that witnesses of discrimination, even when not victims themselves, have standing to challenge discrimination on behalf of others.

### Collegiate and Scholastic Leadership

Despite the impressive rate of growth in female sport participation, a persistent decline in the percent of women coaches and athletic administrators has occurred since the passage of Title IX in 1972. Compared to the early 1970s, when roughly 90% of the coaches and administrators of female teams were women, in 2004 women at the college level occupied

- less than 45% of the head coaching positions for women's teams;
- less than 20% of the head coaching positions at the college level overall;
- less than 2% of the head coaches of men's teams; and
- less than 19% of athletic director positions. (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005; Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio, & Stauffer, 2005).

From a historical perspective, the disappearance of women leaders in athletics can be traced back, in part, to the changes that happened over time in governance and administrative structures. In 1971, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) became "a model and a new voice in the structure of collegiate sports for women" (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). The existence of the AIAW reflected the overall structure of college sport at that time, when women's and men's athletic programs were separate, controlled, and operated by women and men, respectively (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Suggs, 2005a). When the AIAW was taken over by the NCAA in 1981, which prompted the mergers and what some women of that era called "submergers" of separate athletic departments, there was a subsequent decline of women in both coaching and administration.

Research studies on the lack of women in coaching and administration focus on organizational climate and culture issues, institutional barriers, agency barriers, and strategies for inclusion/exclusion (Drago, et al., 2005; Fuchs, 2003; Galst, 2003; Martin, Kelley, & Dias, 1999; Robinson, Tedrick, & Carpenter, 2001; Sagas, Paetzold, & Ashley, 2005; Stahura & Greenwood, 2002; Stahura, Greenwood, & Dobbs, 2003; Sturm, 2003; Werthner, 2005). Studies on institutional barriers focus on access discrimination and treatment discrimination (e.g., recruitment and hiring process,

"ol' boy's network," tangible/intangible rewards). Studies on agency barriers examine the issue from an individual perspective and assess how time constraints, family obligations, support, burnout, and other personal factors may impact the number of women in coaching. Studies on agency barriers are sometimes approached from a gender difference approach, comparing male preference to female preference, which is problematic in that such studies may ignore the institutional and societal influences that may serve to impede women's "interest" levels. Clearly, more research is needed in this area and strategies for alleviating barriers and implementing inclusionary strategies to push open the door for women as coaches of men's and women's sports teams, as well as administrators, is needed.

### NCAA National Leadership

The NCAA was originally viewed unfavorably by women's sports advocates as a bully during its earlier takeover of the AIAW and by its efforts to undermine Title IX (Sack & Staurowsky, 1998). But the NCAA leadership's stance on women in sport has changed over time (Brand, 2003).

Over the last several years, the NCAA leadership has demonstrated support for existing Title IX athletics regulations and support for achieving gender equity. In 1991, the NCAA undertook its first gender equity study, identified emerging sports for women in order to increase the number of female participation opportunities, adopted legislation to require NCAA institutions to undergo athletics certification, and required Division I colleges to have a gender equity plan. Furthermore, NCAA President Myles Brand spoke in support of existing Title IX athletics regulations at the Commission hearings. Most recently, the NCAA has made a commitment to pay more attention to the appointment of qualified Title IX coordinators in their institutional reviews and self-assessment guidance (Rosie Stallman, Director of Educational Outreach, NCAA, email communication, December 12, 2005).

The NCAA has also earmarked new dollars for athletics leadership and coaching education programs (e.g., NACWAA HERS Institute, the Coaching Academy, Executive Institute for Athletics Administrators, etc.), which are designed to increase the number women in athletics administration and coaching.

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## SECTION IV. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS SETTINGS

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In the mid-1990s, Sabo and Oglesby argued persuasively that sexual harassment in sport and in the broader society was "no longer shrouded by secrecy" but "remained clouded by controversy and confusion" (Ruder, 1995, p. 83). Their important work in this area encouraged the development of links between research and policy development (Oglesby & Sabo, 1996).

Whereas the definition and principles describing sexual harassment are found in Title VII, they apply under Title IX because of the express prohibition against discrimination based on sex (Hogshead-Makar & Steinbach, 2003; Mendelson, 2003;

Osborne & Duffy, 2005; Pinarski, 2000).<sup>11</sup> In 2001 the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the United States Department of Education issued guidance regarding sexual harassment in schools. Under their guidelines, sexual harassment is defined as “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature . . . in each case, the issue is whether the harassment rises to a level that it denies or limits a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the school’s programs based on sex” (OCR, 2001, n.p.).

As Hogshead-Makar and Steinbach (2003) pointed out, “athletics breeds special opportunities for sexual harassment” (p. 176). The situations out of which sexual harassment may emerge in athletic settings include relationships between coaches and athletes (same gender and cross gender) as well as peer-to-peer harassment. Similar situations may occur in physical education settings as well.

Carpenter and Acosta (2005) explain that courts typically categorize sexual harassment as either *quid pro quo* or a hostile environment. Within the context of a coach–athlete relationship, an athlete may encounter a *quid pro quo* scenario when his or her coach decides team- or player-related issues based on that athlete’s acquiescence or refusal of sexual demands or overtures. Given the fact that coaches determine who plays on their teams, how much playing time athletes get, whether athletes will receive and retain scholarships, and what kind of opportunities athletes may have for advancement within their sport, the potential for a coercive, abusive relationship where sexual harassment can occur is clearly present.

Conversely, a hostile environment is much more general. Arising in an athletic setting, a hostile environment can be found when a coach’s conduct limits or denies an athlete his or her ability to perform (Mendelson, 2003) and may also occur student-to-student (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). Having said that, “not every crude, inappropriate, or rude remark with a sexual connotation that makes someone uncomfortable constitutes sexual harassment. Only those remarks and behaviors that are sufficiently pervasive and rise to an unreasonable level are actionable as sexual harassment. The threshold is high. Determining what meets the threshold in a specific instance is up to the court” (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005, p. 149).

The magnitude of the problem of sexual harassment in athletic and physical education settings is difficult to calculate. As is the case with all forms of interpersonal aggression and violence, the human calculus is affected by the forces that discourage or mask the occurrence. Some students or athletes who may have been sexually harassed by a coach, teacher, or student may have simply dropped out without ever reporting what had happened to them. Others may find the subject so painful or intimidating that they will not disclose information even when asked. Still, some studies suggest that female athletes who are subjected to sexual harassment do not recognize it as such (Osborne & Duffy, 2005; Toftegaard, 2001).

Since 1996, a slowly growing body of research studies, court cases, and policy statements have helped to define and recognize the magnitude of the problem in athletics and physical education in the United States and internationally, although there

is still much that remains unexamined on this topic. For example, the few studies that have been done in the United States have focused on college age athletes (Volkwein, Schnell, Sherwood, & Livezey, 1997; Volkwein-Caplan, Schnell, Devlin, Mitchell, & Sutera, 2002). Even less attention has been given to high school athletes (Hayden, 2003). Additionally, there is little information available about the degree to which male athletes are subjected to sexual harassment in athletic and physical education settings. Based on the male response to a British Broadcasting Company program titled “Secrets of the Coach” that dealt with the silence surrounding sexual abuse and coaching, where a disproportionately high number of anonymous males called in to discuss experiences they had had as athletes and had never talked about, this area warrants much more investigation as well (Brackenridge, 2001).

According to Volkwein-Caplan and colleagues (2002), who compared the experiences of college female athletes with those of female college students relative to sexual harassment from coaches and professors, female athletes were subjected to more forms of what the authors refer to as “mild sexual harassment,” such as touching, questioning by coaches about personal affairs, invitations to lunch or dinner, or being called pet names, than their female student counterparts.

Anecdotal evidence over the years has offered powerful testimony to the existence of the problem, however, and to the profound affect that sexual harassment has on athletes and students in physical education settings. As a case in point, revelations that the recruitment process for top football players at the University of Colorado featured promises of sex, alcohol, and drugs in 2004 eventually prompted as many as 10 female students, one of whom was Katie Hnida, a place kicker on the football team, to publicly allege they had been sexually harassed and raped by football players (Hnida, 2006).

Two of these women, Lisa Simpson and Anne Gilmore, filed suit against the University of Colorado in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado (Civil Case No. 02-RB-2390). Although Robert E. Blackburn, the judge in this case found that the two women had suffered severe and objectively offensive sexual harassment, he dismissed the case on the grounds the plaintiffs had failed to prove that the university knew or was deliberately indifferent to the possibility that players and recruits would harass female students despite a history of the university being served notice of sexual violence perpetrated by players and coaches against their wives, employees at the institution, and even high school students (*Simpson & Gilmore v. University of Colorado*, 2005). In August of 2005, the plaintiffs filed an appeal based on newly released information from the University of Colorado Office of Sexual Harassment (Hartman & Vaughan, 2005).

In another high profile case, two former players at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill alleged that their coach had made inappropriate comments, pried into their private lives, and created a hostile environment that made them uncomfortable (*Jennings & Keller v. Dorrance*, 2002). After six years, the university settled in March of 2004 with one of the plaintiffs for \$70,000. The case involving the other plaintiff was

<sup>11</sup>This section deals specifically with sexual harassment in school physical education and athletics settings. For a broader discussion of sexual harassment and bullying see chapter 11 in this volume.

subsequently dismissed. Apart from the public scrutiny directed at the coach, he was also required as part of the settlement to attend sensitivity training (Associated Press, March 25, 2004).

Whereas the most visible cases of sexual harassment appear to be those that take place between coaches and athletes, peer-to-peer harassment among athletes and students in physical education classes has also gone on. In *Snow v. Seamons* (2000), a football player was allegedly hazed and sexually harassed by his teammates with the knowledge of his coach, who rationalized the abuse by saying “boys will be boys”. Similarly, in *Snelling v. Fall Mountain Regional School District* (2001), a case involving two brothers who played high school basketball, the court determined that the name-calling, taunting, and unnecessary rough treatment to which they had been subjected by teammates and their coach could constitute sexual harassment and presented issues triable under Title IX.

There have been cases, such as *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* (1999), illustrating the vulnerabilities children experience at the elementary school level as well. On a repeated basis, Lashonda Davis suffered the vulgar remarks and escalating inappropriate attentions of a classmate in physical education classes and at other times during the school day. Despite actions taken by both Lashonda and her mother to notify school authorities, her tormenter persisted, exacting a toll that eventually made the prospect of suicide seem a viable option to get out of the circumstances she was in. The significance of this case rests in the court’s determination that in order for institutions to be held liable, notice of the sexual harassment must be given to school officials and officials must be shown to exhibit “deliberate indifference (p. 1)” after notice has been served.

Awareness in the coaching community about coaches who had been quietly dismissed from one job who would move on to sexually harass athletes on other teams came to light in a story aired on ESPN in 1993. The story focused on then coach of the University of Florida’s swim program, Mitch Ivey, who had routinely pursued sexual liaisons with female athletes on his teams, some of whom were under the legal age for consent (Fish, 1998). Statements regarding sexual harassment started to appear in codes of ethics for coaches in the mid-1990s and now many organizations ranging from swim to volleyball coaches associations have ethics codes with statements regarding sexual harassment and coach conduct. As of today, there has not been a universal adoption of sexual harassment statements in coaching codes of ethics nationwide.

Addressing the issue of sexual harassment in coaching codes of ethics represent only one proactive step that should be taken to ensure that the rights of students and athletes are protected. The OCR Sexual Harassment Guidance explains the liability of educational institutions under Title IX (Osborne & Duffy, 2005). In accordance with that guidance, schools can be held liable when coaches, acting as agents on behalf of those schools, engage in sexual harassment. Thus, in circumstances where school administrators fail to act when they learn that employees are sexually harassing students or they allow behavior that continues to perpetuate a hostile environment for students, they have effectively limited student access to an education free from discrimination. Institutions are also held responsible if they knew

or reasonably should have known about peer or third-party sexual harassment and did not take prompt and effective action.

Based on this, it would behoove athletic departments to have established policies in place regarding sexual harassment. However, in a recent study done by Osborne and Duffy (2005) where they surveyed 117 athletic departments of NCAA Division IA member institutions, only 77% had a written sexual harassment policy with 44% reporting the existence of a sexual harassment complaint procedure specific to athletes. Whereas it is possible that the athletic departments without express sexual harassment policies or grievance procedures may have been covered under blanket university policies, Osborne and Duffy suggest “if the department has not adopted a written policy that it advertises to its employees and student-athletes, it indicates an indifference to the issue” (p. 76).

The necessity for athletes to understand the options available to them when they have a grievance is demonstrated in the case of Jennifer Harris, a female basketball player on scholarship at Penn State University who believes she was targeted by her coach, Rene Portland, because of a Portland’s perception that Harris was a lesbian. When asked why Harris did not file a complaint with officials at Penn State when she was asked not to return to the basketball program the next year, precipitating her leaving the university, she explained that she feared retaliation while the events were occurring and didn’t feel safe reporting the alleged treatment to which she had been subjected (Epstein, 2005).

While there has been an awakening of sorts in the United States regarding the potential for sexual harassment in school athletic and physical education settings, there is much more work that needs to be done to ensure that children and young adults are allowed to pursue education free from this kind of abuse. To that end, there needs to be far more research and documentation regarding the problem itself and its occurrence. Furthermore, continuing efforts need to be made to encourage national sport organizations, like the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Mendelson, 2003), to provide leadership on these important issues.

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## SECTION V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

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To move forward toward the goal of achieving gender equity in physical education and athletics, the following actions are recommended:

1. *Increase Title IX Educational and Accountability Efforts.* Greater education of school administrators is needed regarding their obligations under Title IX as it relates to athletics and physical education. As an accountability mechanism, easily accessible web based information on Title IX coordinators, policies and gender and race disaggregated statistics should be developed and maintained at all levels of education and students and staff should also be informed of their rights as well as patterns of inequities.
2. *Increase Title IX Enforcement Efforts.* There is ample evidence to show that sex discrimination continues to exist in

- athletic and physical education programs around the country. In its long history of application to physical education and athletics, government efforts to enforce Title IX have been inconsistent. Instead of changing existing regulations, interpretations, and policies that have been promulgated in the public domain and clarified in the courts, Title IX should be uniformly enforced (see 3c below).
3. *Keep Title IX's Regulations Strong.* When attempts are made to weaken Title IX, effort must be taken to keep Title IX's regulations intact and strong.
    - a. *Rescind the OCR 2005 Additional Clarification of Intercollegiate Athletics: Three-Part Test—Part Three* on the grounds that it is based on flawed scientific methodology, irrevocably alters previous OCR policies that provided for multiple factors to be used in evaluating female student interest in sport, and that it holds the potential to reverse gains that have made for girls and women in sport.
    - b. *Continue to Fight Efforts to Challenge Title IX's Single-Sex Regulations.* Proposed amendments governing single-sex classes under Title IX as outlined in 69 Fed. Reg. 11276 should be aggressively challenged on the grounds that the assumption that sex discrimination no longer goes in school settings is wrong. There is ample evidence to show that sex discrimination continues to exist in athletic and physical education programs around the country.
    - c. *Advocate for the Expansion of the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act at the High School Level.* The Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act, which requires that colleges and universities provide information regarding participation opportunities and budget allocations in athletics, has created an accountability mechanism to monitor progress at that level. A similar disclosure mechanism should be created for athletic programs for the secondary level.
    - d. *Focus On Making Gender Integrated Non-Sexist Physical Education Classes A Reality.* Greater work needs to be done to create physical education environments where students can maximize their individual skills and abilities while making a positive commitment to healthy lifelong physical activity. This can be achieved through the continuing development and identification of effective teaching strategies and replicable student curriculum.
  4. *Encourage Greater Focus In Sport Science Research On Gender Equity Questions.* Unlike any other area of the school curriculum, the complications of well-established sex stereotypes and traditions of sex segregated classes and athletic activities define the structure and circumstances in which children are educated in physical education and athletics within the nation's schools. Thus gender equity requires even greater scrutiny and accountability on the part of policy makers, researchers, and practitioners to regularly examine their own gendered assumptions in light of solid research in the physical activity areas as well as other aspects of the curriculum. More grant funding should be directed toward research and development designed to achieve gender equitable physical education classrooms and to understand similarities across age groups in physical performance and how to accomplish a positive commitment to lifelong physical activity to improve the health of males and females.
  5. *Increase Physical Education in our Schools.* All efforts should be made to incorporate daily physical education into our nation's schools. Consideration should be given to the Model Physical Activity and Physical Education Act proposed by the Women's Sports Foundation (2006), which provides a template for implementing daily physical education or its equivalent in grades K–12.
  6. *Greater Emphasis in Physical Education Teacher Education Programs On Gender Equity.* Provide greater emphasis on gender equity in physical education teacher education programs. Especially in the elementary school level, where girls are slightly ahead of boys in physical development, those efforts should be done in tandem with renewed commitment to ensuring that there is an equal playing field.
  7. *More Funding Should Be Made Available For Achieving Gender Equity in Physical Education and Athletic Programs Around the Nation.* Physical educators and coaches need more training in understanding their obligations under the law. Additional federal funding should be directed through the Department of Education to create these programs.
  8. *Conduct Further Research on Issues Impacting Girls and Women in Sport.* The identification of issues impacting girls and women in sport and the development of strategies to alleviate barriers and to encourage more women in coaching and athletic administration positions needs further exploration and attention.
  9. *Encourage Coaches Associations, Sport Governing Bodies, and Athletic Departments to Adopt Sexual Harassment Policies and Grievance Procedures.*
  10. *Create and Implement Media Awareness Initiatives.*
    - a. Federal funding should be made available through the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services for media awareness training for teachers and sport educators.
    - b. Contact local and national print and broadcast journalism organizations to insist that media representations associated with sportswomen reflect an accurate portrayal of their involvement.

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