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## Title IX Turns 30

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE  
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This month marks the thirtieth anniversary of the passage of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 whose section, Title IX, transformed sport in America. After thirty years the achievements of Title IX are impressive, while the controversy over it has been growing steadily especially over the last few years.

Conservatives are honing in on Title IX for criticism of Big Government, as a way to attack feminism, and as another front on the "culture wars" that has marked the political right in American politics since the advent of Newt Gingrich.

In 1972 athletic programs for women in American colleges and high schools were rare. Team sports were nearly non-existent. Less than 30,000 women participated in intercollegiate athletic programs, as compared to some 170,000 men.

By 1976 under the influence of Title IX those numbers had changed to approximately 63,000 women and 168,000 men, and by 1990 the numbers were nearly 93,000 women and 184,000 men. A year ago there were about 151,000 women and 209,000 men playing varsity sports.

The numbers of course tell only a miniscule part of the story. What has changed more than the numbers are the attitudes in America about women's sports and women who play sports. Young women in America today grow up in a world in which they see women participating in athletics from an early age. No one looks askance at a woman who participates in athletics. Few regard sport for women as an unladylike activity. The old mythologies about women's participation in sport and the impact on the ability of women to bear children have long since been demolished.

High school and college girls in the twenty-first century look upon athletic participation as a natural part of their existence. There would be an uprising of considerable severity if anyone told them they could not participate. Students take this for granted and the star athletes are as likely to be dating or socializing with other star athletes rather than cheerleaders. The older stereotypes are crumbling.

Ask any man if his daughter should have the opportunity to play sports and the vast majority will tell you that indeed she has a right to participate in sports in the schools of America.

The increase in intercollegiate sports for women has also meant a growth in the number of coaching positions available to women. Initially this was substantial, although in recent years as the women's positions have become more attractive in prestige and salary, the growth has been seen more in the number of men moving into the women's programs as coaches.

At one level then the story of Title IX has been a success. At the same time there is considerable discontent from male athletes and from conservative politicians and anti-feminists. In their view Title IX is a horrible example of legislation whose unintended consequences have been unfair to men and have led to the use of quotas to achieve the goals of social policy.

One of the chief complaints is that women's sports have grown at the expense of men sports. The sharp increase in the number of men's intercollegiate sports that have been dropped over the past thirty years is cited to prove the case. Wrestling, tennis, swimming and track and field have been eliminated on a number of campuses. However the number of Division I football teams has increased in the last decade from 193 to 232, the total number of men competing in intercollegiate athletics continues to climb, and the number of men's soccer teams has skyrocketed by over 140 in the past decade.

During the same time frame there has been phenomenal growth in the expenditures for intercollegiate athletics. During just the past five years men's budgets have increased by nearly a billion dollars, while women's budgets have increased by about half a million dollars. Expenditures on women's athletics last year reached nearly \$940 million dollars while men's expenditures were \$1.8 billion dollars. When you consider that there are three women participating for every four men the budget ratio of two to one is quite striking.

These numbers reflect the continuing growth of football rosters and budgets. Those who oppose Title IX argue that

the elimination of men's minor sports is a result of Title IX. Those who support Title IX argue that men's sports have been sacrificed to the bloated football budgets.

Donna Lopiano, president of the Women's Sports Federation, says that what we have seen in athletic departments is a decision that those men occupying the 70<sup>th</sup> to 100<sup>th</sup> position on the football roster are more important than the male wrestlers, runners, and swimmers whose teams have been cut. She may be right in this, but others will argue that football programs are the cash cow that supports the remainder of the athletic budgets. This is true only in a minority of institutions where football makes big money. Where football loses money, the minor sports have suffered severely.

It is difficult to imagine that the controversy will end soon, and it is equally difficult to imagine that there will be a reversal in the growth of women's sports. The real question to be answered as Welch Suggs of The Chronicle of Higher Education says is not about Title IX, but about the nature of intercollegiate athletics. The fact that nearly 3 billion dollars is spent on 360,000 student/athletes each year should raise a few eyebrows.

Are intercollegiate athletics a part of the educational function of the university, or are they a business and entertainment operation? Advocates and opponents of Title IX differ on their answers to that question too.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

(Most of the figures used in this commentary come from the June 21 edition of The Chronicle of Higher Education which has provided an excellent piece of reporting on the issues).

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