A COMPETITION SHE CANNOT WIN

A Study of Gender in Sport

MAY 2020
GWYNETH BURNS
Hampshire College
Somewhere behind the athlete you've become and the hours of practice and the coaches who have pushed you is a little girl who fell in love with the game and never looked back... play for her.
-Mia Hamm

To every girl out there, to every boy out there who watches this team, who wants to live their dream. You are not lesser just because you are a girl, you are not better just because you are a boy.
-Megan Rapinoe
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 3

Chapter 1: My Own Place on the Field ........................................................................... 4

Chapter 2- Where are the Women? ............................................................................... 14

  Pre-Title IX: .................................................................................................................. 14
  The Law of Title IX: ...................................................................................................... 24
  The Spirit of Title IX: .................................................................................................... 27
  How Title IX Impacted Female Athletes Participation: ............................................... 29
  Title IX and Leadership Positions: ................................................................................ 33

Chapter 3- She’s the Man .............................................................................................. 39

  Introduction: .................................................................................................................. 39
  Methods: ........................................................................................................................ 40
  Procedure: ...................................................................................................................... 40
  Results: .......................................................................................................................... 41
  Discussion: ..................................................................................................................... 44
  Conclusion and Limitations: ......................................................................................... 57

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 59

Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... 64

References ....................................................................................................................... 66
Abstract

This paper combines primary and secondary research to argue why Title IX is an important regulation today. By splitting the perspectives between the law and spirit of Title IX, it shows that schools can legally comply with the law, while breaking the spirit of the law. Throughout history many positives have come from this regulation; the participation rates of girls playing sports has continued to increase and there are now competitive women’s teams in colleges. Since the 1970s Title IX allowed women and girls access to sports, which often has been a male space. This thesis will first explain why this topic is important to the author through a personal essay. Next it will explain the origins of Title IX and discuss how the spirit of the law is reflected historically and which has led to an increase of participation rates and more women in leadership positions. This thesis concludes with a research study of the women’s soccer team that was recently de-funded at Hampshire College in 2019. The college’s athletic department cut the women’s team, but kept the men’s and allowed female athletes to try out for the men’s team. Interviews with female athletes who decided to try out for the team or not shape a narrative that relates back to the arguments of the spirit of the law. The conclusion discusses limitations of the thesis and avenues for future research.
Chapter 1: My Own Place on the Field

I have been playing sports since the age of five, although back then I was more likely to run off to the side with my best friend, while other five-year-old’s fought over the ball. I was happy to run off to the side as the competitive nature in me hadn’t shown its face yet. This went on for many years, until suddenly most of my friends stopped playing. I dreamed of playing soccer forever.

Someone once asked me what it means to be a female athlete. What does it mean to participate in something for so long, that it becomes a part of who you are? To finally reach the end of your high school career, your college career? What does it mean to be forced to stop playing the sports you love? Those are the questions that have recently been flowing through my brain. Although I have always been an athlete, and now I am faced with an end, not a permanent stopping point, but an end to something.

For the past three years, I have played on the soccer team at Hampshire, finding the joy of playing with a great group of teammates. They called me “Debs,” short for Debbie downer and my overly negative attitude, or “Parker” for always being nosy. I remember arriving to practice early because I was just so excited to be around people who all loved soccer like me. During my first year at Hampshire, I scored eight goals, the most I’ve ever scored in a season of all my years of playing. My team continued to dominate the league, winning many of our games and heading to playoffs.

We always had fun playing together, but as the seasons passed, seniors graduated. We said goodbye to many great players, and the soccer team slowly started to change. First, our coach received a promotion to assistant athletic director of the outdoor and recreation program (OPRA). Soon the team started to fall apart. Instead of hearing the reassuring voices of people...
communicating, you could hear the crickets on the field. The teamwork wasn’t there anymore, and instead of winning, we lost. We started measuring a good game by how much we improved rather than how much we scored. The season ended with a loss and we went from one of the best teams in the league to the worst.

A year later, in 2019, Hampshire athletics cut the women’s soccer team, citing low numbers and lack of funding. Female players would be allowed to try out for the men’s team, but everyone knew it wouldn’t be the same. When I read the email, I felt my heart instantly drop, my worse fear was imagined, my team was gone, the sport I loved taken away from me. We weren’t given the chance to fight for our team, we didn’t have a chance for our voices to be heard. I didn’t get a chance to say goodbye to a sport that has meant so much to me. Later that night, I put my computer down, and told my mom that there wasn’t going to be a team, and that I was joining cross country.

I grew up with a big back yard, and a sloping hill, with woods in the back. Some nights after dinner I would throw the baseball with my dad. When I gripped the ball, I aligned my fingers with the seams; feeling my shoulders and back tighten and then I’d throw. We would start close together, hearing the soft thump of the baseball hitting the glove. I would often think about what would happen if I threw the ball so hard that it would hit a car driving down the road, but luckily that never happened. Soon, we would spread out even farther, oftentimes I would end up in front of the sugar house waiting for the pop fly that would drop nearby. Looking up to the sky and finding the white dot against the dimming horizon, I would then chase after the ball positioning my body so it could land in my glove. I grew up learning how to throw a ball that was meant for boys, figuring out what "throw like a girl" meant to me. I discovered that I could throw with power and strength. I loved playing sports with my dad.
It was freshman year of high school when I walked into the art room to learn more about the baseball team. I was the first one in the room, and as I waited, other players started to walk through the doors. I sat there and wondered if I should stay or leave, and if I should really try out for the boy’s baseball team? At this introductory meeting, I was the only girl.

One game I was walking through the handshake line with my team, and I noticed one opposing player was shocked that there was a girl on the team. As the season went on, the shocked faces of opposing players became normal. But I didn’t want to be the center of attention, I wanted to play, to be a member of the team. I didn’t want to be treated differently because of my gender. I played because I wanted to push myself, and I didn’t want to play softball. I played because I thought being the only girl would be cool.

Turns out it was more stressful then cool.

Turns out that I always felt like the odd one out.

I still played for three years.

I didn’t like being corrected by people when I told them I played baseball, assuming that I played softball. I didn’t understand why some of the boys wouldn’t talk to me. Some people wrote it off because I was a girl, or I didn’t put myself out there to start a conversation. Being the only female baseball player, it’s hard. I played right field, I often just stood out there in hopes that a ball would be hit to me, but it almost never was. When it was my turn to bat, often times I could see the pitch, but I always mistimed it. I would often get walked or struck out depending on the pitcher. But on base, I knew what to do, I was pretty good at running.

Junior year in high school, I had to join the varsity baseball team. I was faced with many dilemmas such as walking into practice day after day and being ignored, having to stand off to the side because nobody would volunteer to throw a ball with me. I felt that I had to constantly
apologize for bad throws and mistakes, while the other male players didn’t. Either I was invisible, or no one cared. When I stood around waiting for a partner to practice with, a coach would notice and make an unwilling teammate throw the ball with me, making the situation more awkward. Nothing was different other than my gender. I showed up on time, I worked hard, but very few people told me good job, very few people would tell me that I was contributing to the team or even recognize my existence. Now I wonder why I played for so long.

One game, it was the game after prom, my dad was there watching, talking with my teammates’ mom. I was standing off to the side, within earshot. The subject of prom came up and he showed her a picture of me in my prom dress, to which she exclaimed, “Wow, I never knew Gwyn had a body like that. She looks beautiful.” At the time I laughed it off, thinking nothing of it. But today I wonder why she thought I looked beautiful when I was wearing a sparkly floor length dress, but not when I was wearing a uniform and cleats. What I look like in a dress shouldn’t matter.

Another time, I was in the on deck circle swinging the weighted bats to warm up, my boyfriend and teammate was at bat, and he hit a foul ball that happened to bounce off the end of the bat, straight to where I was standing. I jumped back and avoided it. This initiated a chorus of yelling and combined laughter of, “not at your prom date!” If I wasn’t a girl who happened to be dating the player, how would the situation have been different? I don’t understand why they had to comment on the foul ball, it could happen to anyone, why was I special? As the season continued, I became a benchwarmer and learned how to record stats. I became an expert at chasing after the foul balls that flew over the fenced dugouts into the parking lot or across the road. Through all that, I cared, I listened to the coach, I listened when everyone didn’t play well
or weren’t focused. After each loss, I felt disappointed because even if I didn’t get a minute of playing time, I still wanted to win.

I remember when I false started at the high school district meet for indoor track. The nerves were flowing through my body, hands were shaking, I couldn’t keep a straight thought in my mind. In the hallway outside of the track, people were lined up by heat. Everyone around me was tall, strong, with long hair pulled back in pony tails. I was short, with short hair, contrasting with everyone around me; I felt like I didn’t belong. It was the 50m dash, the line would increase heat by heat, race officials were everywhere, and soon it was my heat. I walked up to the blocks stood in front and stared ahead. I don’t remember what was going through my head. The race official raised her hands, I bent down at the hips, and moved my feet inch by inch until the bottom of the spikes were firmly planted onto the block. Moving my hands into the triangle starting position, I waited. “Get set!” Hips rose into the air, my body weight pressing down through my fingertips, legs feeling like springs, but I waited. Bang! The starters gun went off. Bang, Bang! Two short consecutive shots of the starters gun meant someone false started. The starter turns in my direction, and points at me. It was me, I was disqualified. I got up and walked out pushing through the crowd.

The tears were streaming down my face by the time that I got to a secluded spot. I was pacing back and forth, totally disappointed in myself. I felt like no one would understand how embarrassing it was to false start in front of the crowd and the other athletes, to be that person that other people say “oh that poor girl” about. I didn’t get to hide for long, soon my friends found me. Soon my boyfriend wrapped his arms around me, telling me that everything would be ok. But I didn’t believe him. In that moment, I thought back to all the hard work that I put into track that season, the hours of practice, learning the correct running form, learning how to run
fast, and learning that results don’t happen overnight. I wondered in that moment if all the work was worth it, just to false start in a race in front of everyone. Soon, it was time to move on, to stop crying. Wiping the tears from my eyes, I grabbed my water bottle and went to find my relay team. A track meet didn’t just stop because of a false start, and I wasn’t about to let my relay teammates down.

* 

“I’m going to quit!” I remember yelling over my shoulder during the Busa Bushwhack 5.3-mile race. It was my last race of my first and last cross-country season, senior year of college, the sport I decided to do instead of trying out for the men’s soccer team. “Why did I ever choose to participate in this sport?” I was yelling this at our coach Eric as we passed him on the trail.

He yelled in reply, “Because you love it Gwyn, because you love it!”

I kept my eye on Raini, his grey shirt and black hat sticking out from the autumn colored surroundings, keeping me going. We were running this race together. I started to feel the whispers of tiredness from my legs, my brain registering that it was either time to stop or slow down, I chose to slow down. I briefly thought of walking, and I pictured watching Raini crossing the finish line first. I reflected on the other previous practices and races that I talked about quitting, like that time trial up Mount Toby (all three miles of pain), but then I remembered that my teammates would be cheering for me at the finish line and I didn’t want to let them down. I realized that I am a fighter, I fight and fight, and I tend to not give up. I decided to fight again in this moment, I told myself I got this, and I caught up to Raini.

*
It was a difficult day when I decided to quit the baseball team. When I told my parents about my decision, it was during dinner time. I was worried about their reaction. I started to cry, I didn’t want to disappoint them. They were fully in support of my decision. When I told my boyfriend, we were standing in my barn, he was about to leave, I started to tear up because I was worried about not being able to spend time with him. But again he understood, we hugged and I went back inside. When I told my coach, I sent him an email, not wanting to deal with the in-person interaction. I typed out the email, hit send, and instantly closed my laptop and walked away. The coach replied later that day, telling me that I could never disappoint him, and that I should “Never lose that drive to improve and breakdown barriers.” Today, I think back to that moment, and try to imagine what my senior of high school would have been like if I stayed, and I can only picture myself being unhappy. I took the coach’s last words to heart, and I have never forgotten my drive to improve, and I like to think that maybe one day I will be able to breakdown barriers.

Indoor track led to outdoor track, which led to shin splints, ice and bio freeze. Running track also led to the want to get better, to become faster. I started running the mile, where every racer was faster than me. The next meet, I got put into the 800m; a half mile race, two laps around the track. During my first ever 800 race, I paced off of the other runners, I was in the middle of the pack. I would look up and see people’s elbows and legs kicking out behind them. I looked ahead in front of me to see my friend and training partner. I remember hearing the bell ring, marking the second lap, and I knew this was my time to go. After the first curve, I passed a girl and I was in second. My arms continued to pump, my feet continued to dig down into the surface of the track. Finally, we hit the second curve, the 200m mark, and I heard my dad yell, “You gotta go now!” from across the track. I dug in deep and went. When I finished, I learned
many things: one that maybe I was better at running then I thought, two that I was close to beating the league champion, and three that my coach would make me run the 800m for the rest of the season.

The Busa Bushwhack race meant more to me than just not quitting. It was the start and end of a new chapter of my athletic experience. It marked the last day competing with the Hampshire College cross country team. That morning there were no “pain is just a social construct” cheer like usual, instead everyone high fived each other, wishing good luck.

I ran with Raini, we kept each other going the whole way. With under a mile left to go, we were pushing the pace, side by side. I focused on my breathing, on my stride, on my arms. I tried not to focus on the idea of this being my last race. The last race of being a cross country runner, the last race to a season that began with the question of whether or not I would be good enough. Looking back, I have been surrounded with great teammates, with people who have laughed with me, that have congratulated my PRs, and who have listened to what I have to say.

Raini and I rounded the corner, leading into the final part, uphill we went. At the top, I spot Amy, Sam, Al, and James all huddled underneath an umbrella. I pick up the pace, fixing my arms to become more sprint like, hands to hips then back up to chin, back and forth they went. I grimaced, full of determination and persistence, reaching to the point where I had to work hard to use every ounce of energy left in my body. Raini was right beside me, maybe he was going through the same thing I was. We passed the small group of spectators; Amy, our coach, came in for a high five, but we passed that up, we were in full competition mode. “What no high five!?!?” we heard her call from the background, she was incredulous that we left her hanging. The finish line was in sight, the timing equipment ready for us to cross the line. We were both
simultaneously pushing ourselves, helping each other become better runners, better teammates, and better people. We crossed the line together.

Our time was 45:30.

Ten minutes faster than our projected time. We didn’t win anything. But I won because I found a team that has made me smile through the times of pain. I found a team that helped me lose most of my anxiety, a team that helped me realize that I can do anything I believe in. I won, because I was able to cross the finish line with my friend, my teammate, and my training partner; and for that I couldn’t be more proud.

Today the question of what it means to be a female athlete still swirls around in my brain. When I entered Hampshire, I still believed that sports were a happy place, a place that would accept everyone. It wasn’t until my second year when I started to pay attention. I started to pay attention to how outside of the World Cup or the Olympics, the media ignores female athletes and their sports. I started to see that in college sports, more attention is brought to the men’s football and basketball teams instead of the women’s soccer or cross-country. During this time, I took a class, called “Sport for Social Change,” that didn’t so much teach how sports can be used to create social change, but rather how sports have been used to hinder change. Sport as an institution has always forgotten about teams that aren’t deemed to matter, and oftentimes this means the female athletes. Men’s and Women’s sports wouldn’t tie in a race for viewership, instead the men’s teams are ahead by miles.

One time two track seasons ago, the Hampshire track team traveled to Boston to compete at an indoor meet at Harvard. Towards the end of the meet, my coach decided to create a co-ed distance medley relay (DMR), I ran the 800m leg. I was nervous, I hadn’t run a good 800m since high school. Warming up, I could feel the soreness in my legs. The tiredness slowly moving
through my legs made me wonder if this race would go over well, if I would be able to keep up, and if I would be able to make it through four laps. I was the third leg of the relay team, the 1200m, and the 400m legs before me. I waited in anticipation, jumping up and down, pacing back and forth, trying not to notice the height difference between the men and me.

Soon it was time for my leg, as I grabbed the stick from my teammates hand, I took off. Rounding the first curve, I knew then that this race was going to be different, my legs already felt tired, and I knew that it was only going to get worse. I was the last runner to receive a handoff, already starting off at a disadvantage. I was already getting passed by the taller, stronger, and faster male athletes. As the race continued, I became more and more disheartened, I looked up into the stands, nobody was cheering, I couldn’t find the eyes of my coach. I continued to run, I continued to get passed, my legs continued to become more and more painful. Soon it was time to hand off the baton to the last leg, the 1600m. As soon as the baton was passed, I sat down on the side of the track, grabbed my legs with my arms, and hung my head. I was disappointed with how the leg went, I was embarrassed for getting passed so much, I couldn’t breathe, soon a male competitor helped me up. Later, I told my coach that I was never going to do that again.

The feeling of being lapped, of losing, but still working your hardest; that is how I would describe what it means to be a female athlete. Working your butt off, fighting for every success, for every win, but still getting lapped. Advocates for female athletes are always running, always working hard, always putting their heart into everything, but they never cross the finish line first.
Chapter 2- Where are the Women?  
The Past and Present of Title IX and Women’s Athletics

Pre-Title IX:

Nineteenth century books, magazines, journals, and scientists portrayed women as the weaker sex, and segregated them to household duties deemed appropriate for them (Wushanley, 2004). This viewpoint was suggested by men, and through “a male-created image of women [that] justified men’s resistance to women’s rights to higher education as well as to other opportunities traditionally dominated by men, often in the name of protecting the “weaker” sex” (Wushanley, 2004). Opportunities such as physical activity were seen as too intense for women to participate in, and contradictory to their role of a mother, caregiver, or housekeeper.

When physical education first became part of the education program for female college students, the only activities allowed were ones deemed “appropriate” or taught “acceptable values”. These activities were not competitive; the belief was that competition would bring out negative values in women. The 1890s brought new ways of thinking, as colleges started to offer sport programs geared towards women, including archery, bowling, track and field, horseback riding, and basketball, which was credited as the start of intercollegiate sports for women. This chapter will talk about female involvement in sports pre-Title IX, the law of Title IX and how it differs from the spirit of the legislation, until finally concluding with the increase of female participation in sports and leadership positions. This section will provide visual aids such as graphs and figures, as well as interview- based content.

As the start of intercollegiate sports for women today, basketball warrants special attention. Sendra Berenson founded women’s basketball in 1892 when she “accidentally transformed the world of women’s sports” (Wushanley, 2004). She modified the rules of men’s basketball to be more appropriate for women’s by eliminating ball snatching, limiting dribbling,
and dividing the court into three sections. Sendra Berenson held onto the notion that, “rough and vicious play seems worse in women than in men,’… ‘[Although] a certain amount of roughness is deemed necessary to bring out manliness in our young men, [it] can have no possible excuse in our young women” (Wushanley, 2004). Throughout the 1890s her beliefs were still structured around the idea that women were weaker than men, by holding onto the belief that sports held different meanings depending on the athlete’s gender. For men sports were used to bring out manliness, while for women it was important that they hold onto their femininity.

After Sendra Berenson created women’s basketball, intramural sports or “play days” were created all through college campuses nationwide during the time of the 1920-30s. In 1922 an attempt to create the “Women’s Olympic Games” ultimately failed when the male-dominated Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) took over. In April 1923, disheartened by how men controlled sports, Lou Henry Hoover founded the Women’s Division of National Amateur Athletic Federation. This group further produced “the anti-varsity, anti-Olympics philosophy known as the ‘Platform.’ It condemned the participation of American Women in international contests, emphasized participation over competition, and stressed control of women’s sports by women” (Wushanley, 2004). These ideals were seen in the “Play Days” around college campuses, taking on the message of “sports for all,” which was employed as a synonym for anti-varsity and anti-competition.

Beginning in the 1930s, a lack of competitive sports for women drew pushback. One dissenter Ina E. Gittings stated, “[Play Days] are extremely weak and offer little or none of the joy and values of real games played skillfully, willingly, intellectually, and eagerly well-matched teams” (Wushanley, 2004). She suggested that play days don’t offer the same experiences of joy that players feel after competing with a team of other equally matched players. She continued to
say, “I picture the girls in a Play Day as sheep, huddled and bleating in their little Play meadow, whereas they should be young mustangs exultantly racing together across vast prairies” (Wushanley, 2004), suggesting that instead of empowering female college students to become athletes, the Play Day organizers were disempowering them. These contrasting beliefs continued to push back against one another, until the 1950s when the idea of being anti-varsity and anti-competition was pushed aside. If it wasn’t for the change in social and political views about women roles, it wouldn’t have happened. Finally, in 1966 physical education leaders responded to such feedback and introduced competitive sport for women: a new group called the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW). This group first introduced competitive sports for female college athletes for five years, until in 1971 when the CIAW was renamed the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW).

Founded in 1971, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), had a mission to “foster broad programs consistent with educational aims and objective[s]; assist in extension and enrichment of programs; stimulate quality of leadership and encourage excellence in performance” (Mattheessen, 2016), suggesting that sports for women were meant to have an educational component to them, rather than a competitive energy. When the AIAW began, its membership was 278 institutions and by 1981, the membership exceeded 800 schools (Bell, 2008). The AIAW was the athletic department that was led by women for women. One supporter stated that she, “had never been in the company of so many strong women. It was an empowering sensation” (Hult, 1999). The AIAW believed in the separation between male and female sports, wanting women’s athletics to support educational values rather than the competitive values of men’s athletics. The leaders of the AIAW wanted to avoid the “win or die attitude of the NCAA” (Bell, 2008), perpetuating the belief that female athletes couldn’t handle
the pressure of competition. While female sports didn’t become organized until the 1970s, men’s sports had been a part of society long before then.

In order to gain a full understanding of the differences of men’s and women’s sports, we must step back in time to learn about how male sports began. In 1810, Harvard and Yale decided to compete in a rowing regatta against each other; the event was run by students. Even in the beginning of college sports, there were questions raised in terms of institutional control, rules, and regulations. Smith, 2000, provides an example where Harvard, in order to win, brought in a coxswain who wasn’t a student. This brought on “The problem of cheating, which was no doubt compounded by the increasing commercialization of sport” (Smith, 2000). The increase of worry around cheating was why sports moved from being student run to being led by a faculty advisor. By 1906, college sports programs joined together and formed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

It didn’t take long for there to be questions about college sports and the possible commercialization of the student-athletes involved to start circulating. The President of MIT stated, “[I]f the movement shall continue at the same rate, it will soon be fairly a question whether the letters B.A. stand more for Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Athletics” (Smith, 2000). This quote has predicted the future of college sports. It is important to understand that the NCAA served predominantly men from 1906 until 1982 was predominantly men. One source stating that, “When the Constitution [of the NCAA] was written” … “although you did not write it in, you obviously did plan only to regulate for men” (Wu, 1999). Suggesting that the male-only rule was inherently meant that the NCAA was only to be used to regulate men’s sports. The idea of being male-only suggested that, “women’s intercollegiate competitions were rare and almost unknown to the public” (Wu, 1999). The NCAA has been a part of the men’s sporting culture for
many years, 114 to be exact, and only 38 of those years have included women’s intercollegiate competition.

A belief about the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was that they became an “economic cartel.’ No longer was the NCAA focused on the athlete; they were focused on the money that came with the athlete” (Mattheessen, 2016). The importance of generating revenue was in direct contrast to what the leaders of the AIAW believed about athletics for women. Where the leaders of the AIAW stated that they “are against the evils that are often associated with athletics, principally the exploitation of talent for notoriety” (Wushanley, 2004). Unlike the NCAA, the leaders of the AIAW didn’t want to exploit the talent of the female athletes, fueling the argument to keep the two departments separate. Both sides agreed on this perspective, stating that, “men are uniquely different from women, therefore, their answers to problems fundamental to sports programs will not always be satisfactory ready-made solutions which can be superimposed upon the women’s program” (Wushanley, 2004). The idea was that the “commercial model” of male athletics could not work for the “educational model” of female athletes. Soon, the two departments would have to figure out a solution to the upcoming legislation of Title IX.

The first year where the NCAA was interested in providing competitive sports for women was 1968, but the leaders of the AIAW were not accepting of this idea. One reason was “that women leaders did not want institutions and their athletic departments, run by men, to have financial control and thus power over women’s intercollegiate athletics” (Wushanley, 2004). The leaders of the AIAW didn’t want men in charge of the sports for women, thinking that they would become overly competitive like men’s sports. Walter Byers who was appointed as the Executive Director of the NCAA during this time, reassured women’s sports leaders that the
NCAA just wanted to help the women start their own national association. This assumption lasted until 1970, when Walter Byers stated,

[Our] legal counsel… is in the process of formulating [a] legal opinion as to the NCAA’s current position of not permitting female student-athletes to compete in NCAA meets and tournaments… [I]t appears that the NCAA is in a difficult legal position on the basis of its present posture and I suspect that it is quite likely that we will proceed to remove such barriers and, in fact, provide competitive opportunities for women as well as men (Wu, 1999).

Byers could have changed his opinion for many reasons. One reason could be that 1970 was on the cusp of Title IX, which would allow women to have similar opportunities as men. In order to fully become compliant with Title IX, the NCAA would have to make some changes.

By February 1971, the NCAA grappled with the addition of women’s intercollegiate competition because, “women cannot in general compete equally with men. Thus, the only way for the NCAA to remove itself from a charge of discrimination would be to create the opportunities for competition “by women among women themselves” (Wu, 1999). Since men and women were seen as being on different playing fields, both genders wouldn’t be able to compete on the same together. This left the NCAA in June 1971 to ask the AIAW to dissociate with the DGWS, and align themselves with the NCAA. Meaning that the NCAA would, “take full advantage of the great amount of work done hencefore in the field of women’s sport, to avoid resentment and hostility from the leading women athletic administrators, and as the best means of locating the necessary additional female administrators” (Wushanley, 2004). The NCAA wanted to merge with the AIAW after the women leaders created it from the beginning. The response of the AIAW was that the NCAA “[was] looking for an ‘out’” … “They were seeking some sort of affiliation with the AIAW so that they could say, ‘This [AIAW] is the group officially recognized by the NCAA to conduct intercollegiate athletics for women’”
(Wushanley, 2004). The NCAA was looking for the easiest option to fulfil the new Title IX regulations, and to make sure that they would avoid a discrimination lawsuit.

In October of 1972, the NCAA voted to allow women into the NCAA championships. The vote instigated the removal of the word ‘male’ in the various policy and rule books in 1973. This step allowed for the NCAA to start to control women’s sports, with the view point being that “women’s athletics should be subject to institutional control, similar to intercollegiate athletics for men, rather than being controlled by professional organizations composed of individuals” (Wushanley, 2004). This quote suggests that the NCAA would be better suited to be in charge of women’s intercollegiate athletics because they were seen as more professional.

There were many theories and opinions circulating the sports world during this time. One idea was that the NCAA was only interested in gaining control of women’s sports because by not offering competitions for women, the NCAA was disadvantaged compared to the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). “The male-only status of the organization did not help the NCAA in its quest to gain more power over amateur athletics in its battle with the AAU [Amateur Athletic Union]. An obvious solution was to revoke the males-only provision, allowing the NCAA to exert control over all collegiate athletics” (Wu, 1999). This suggested that the NCAA was able to finally gain control of amateur sports over competing organizations once they added women’s athletics to their offerings.

Not everything during this time was positive, there still was push back from others when Title IX became a law. The complaints often came from the people who were concerned that Title IX would negatively affect men’s athletics, notably college presidents who feared that “the proposed Title IX guidelines would mean the end of all intercollegiate athletic programs when men were forced to share “their” money with women” (Wushanley, 2004); suggesting that male
athletes, coaches, and college presidents would start to see their resources dwindle with the introduction of female athletics. This also comments on the fact that sports were seen as a man’s field rather than a woman’s, which would suggest that the men weren’t ready to share their resources with women as outsiders. Other complaints moved away from the idea of having to share “their” resources, but pointed more towards the idea of Title IX. For example, in 1974, the president of Rockford College, John Howard stated,

> Equal opportunity is a commendable and necessary objective in this country but, like anything else, if carried to excess it can distort and poison. There is no way that government can make oranges and apples equal. Nor can the government make men and women equal… The proposed extension of the Affirmative Action program to athletics is, I believe, a misguided effort to gain some political advantage at the expense of the character of a very basic function of higher education” (Wushanley, 2004).

Commenting that the equal opportunity could poison the sporting institution suggests that before women were allowed to compete, everything was seen as normal. By introducing women and the concept of equal opportunity, the government could be pushing to ruin something by trying to make it more inclusive. This quote also hints that in Howard’s mind, women and men will never be fully equal, that men will always be ahead and women are always going to be behind. What Howard is missing by viewing affirmative action as a negative consequence to society, is that in some cases such a policy is needed to provide underrepresented groups with the same opportunities as the majority group. While males still hold the majority, females are the underrepresented sex in sports.

Title IX not only provided greater access to competitive sports for women, but it also meant that the AIAW would have to reevaluate their stance on policy in order to be compliant. For that reason, some critics of the AIAW suggested that, “It was unfortunate for the AIAW that at the very beginning of its existence, when the leaders of women’s athletics solidified
themselves by establishing what they believed a set of noble standards for female student-athletes, they also sowed the seed of legal complaints against themselves in the future” (Wu, 1999). During the inception of Title IX, the AIAW began to have problems with the idea that male and female athletes should be combined. Title IX becoming a law was the beginning of the decline for the AIAW: the NCAA began to offer women’s sports, and buy the rights to televise the competitions. Slowly the AIAW lost power and the ability to have in sole control athletics for women. In the beginning, the opinion of the AIAW was that women, “were demanding the right for their own autonomy,’… ‘we would welcome any help we could get, but we did not want it to be a takeover’” (Wushanley, 2004). As the months passed, the doom of the AIAW was starting to become more imminent. People started to oppose the leadership of the AIAW, calling their beliefs discriminatory against women.

“I believe that the initials of DGWS [Division of Girls and Women’s Sports] stand for ‘Don’t Give Women’s Sports’ and the AIAW means Association for Interfering with Athletics for Women” (Wushanley, 2004). Linda Estes was the director of women’s athletics at the University of New Mexico, but in the history of the AIAW she was also the most vocal critic of the organization. She believed that the “women were also discriminated against by their own women sports leaders” (Wushanley, 2004), suggesting that, while the leaders of the AIAW voiced their support for Title IX, they didn’t necessarily believe that female athletes should be offered the same scholarships, competition, and recognition as the male athletes. The leader of the AIAW, Leotus Morrison in 1973 stated that “I see these times as a period in which we can create programs designed for women.’ … ‘Legality is a certainly a factor but to opt for ‘something’ just because a man has it negates my value as a self-determining [sic] female” (Wushanley, 2004), suggesting that male access to athletic scholarships doesn’t mean that
female athletes need to have them as well. Other policies that the AIAW included such as the chaperone policy in the 1972-73 handbook stated that,

No participant shall be permitted to attend and AIAW national intercollegiate championship unsupervised. The hostess institution shall require that the name of the woman chaperone be designated in writing by the chairman of the physical education department. A woman coach or chaperone from another college who agrees to accept the responsibility will meet this requirement (Adams & Soladay, 1972).

Not only would the female athletes have to be supervised, but only woman would be allowed to chaperone. In the eyes of Estes, the policy discriminated against men, because it was, “stupid” and “archaic”.

When talking about scholarships for women partaking in college sports, the AIAW was firmly against the idea. The official policy of the AIAW states, “An institution is not eligible for membership in AIAW if it gives an athletic scholarship to women [sic] in any sports area” (Wu, 1999). The reasoning that follows highlights the assumption that female athletes have to be protected against the commercialization of competitive college sports,

It is not to diminish but to protect the continued development of athletics for women, …that the Division of Girls and Women’s Sports does not approve the awarding of scholarships, financial awards or financial assistance designated for women participants in intercollegiate sports competition (Wu, 1999).

By disallowing athletic scholarships to female athletes, the AIAW was justifying the education model of sports and moves away from the commercialized setting of male sports. The AIAW believed that the education model was the only athletic model for female athletes. In the minds of the AIAW by not offering athletic scholarships they were protecting the female athletes from being commercialized. But in actuality the AIAW supported the idea that female athletes were always going to be different when compared to male athletes. While through the lens of Title IX, this practice wouldn’t be fair, if the male athletes receive athletic scholarships, then female
athlete should as well. Before Title IX the AIAW could have gotten away with this justification, but post-Title IX, this regulation wouldn’t have stood. The debate about awarding scholarships is just further proof that the AIAW was promoting discrimination against their female athletes by not providing the same opportunities as the male athletes.

The opposition to the AIAW soon allowed the NCAA to gain more control of women’s athletics and offer more intercollegiate competitions for women. While throughout this time, the AIAW still fought against the NCAA through various lawsuits, but it still led the AIAW to cease operations on June 30, 1982 (Bell, 2008). When the AIAW was near to the end it “Was handicapped administratively and economically by its lack of an identifiable membership to provide a direct communication channel to individual institutions and source of dues to finance operations” (Wu, 1999). This highlights that towards the end the AIAW could not compete financially or economically with the NCAA. What hindered them was their belief that the educational model was the only way to run women’s sports, which ultimately didn’t stand up to the test of time. The past of female athletes has many ups and downs from the belief that sports for women shouldn’t be competitive to the AIAW disbanding. In the coming section, the law of Title IX will be explained in relation to college sports as well as the pushback that it faced.

The Law of Title IX:

Imagine being told as a young girl that sports were not for you. Having to watch your brothers play sports, score goals, or making tackles on the field, and wanting to be like them; but everyone just shook their heads at you. Imagine not having the opportunities that girls and women have today. Unlike boys, girls had to wait for permission to be treated the same.

The female athletes of today have Title IX advocates to thank for their ability to participate in school-organized sports today. Title IX was adopted in 1972, and stated that, “no
person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (George, 1993). This means that male and female sports should be treated equally, provided with the same opportunities, resources, playing conditions, and access to the same levels of coaching.

In theory Title IX should have been enforced in all public schools starting in 1972. The application of Title IX to athletic programs wouldn’t be secured until fifteen years later largely due to the phrase, “any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (George, 1993), showcasing the fact that athletic departments do not receive federal aid directly. This justification supported the argument that athletics should be exempt from the application of Title IX, an argument made in Grove v. Bell (1984), suggesting that only education programs had to be compliant under the law.

During a television interview, the president of Grove City College, Dr. Charles McKenzie was asked his justification for his refusal to comply with Title IX, he stated that,

Actually we are not opposed to Title IX, Judy. In principle, we are actually very supportive of the intention of Title IX. But we are very much opposed to signing a compliance form, which in essence would give the federal government jurisdiction over a private college, that accepts not one penny of direct federal funding (Grove City College v. Bell – A Retrospective, 2015). While the school itself may have not accepted federal funds, the students relied on federal loans in order to pay for tuition. The school ended up taking the federal government to court, which through numerous appeals, made it to the U.S. Supreme Court. In response, the court stated that, “A 6-3 majority of the court held that when students receive federally funded grants, Title IX requirements can only apply to the specific program or activity that was benefitted by the grants. In such instances, Title IX requirements do not apply across the entire institution” (Grove City
College v. Bell—Facts and Case Summary | United States Courts, 2019). The ruling of Grove City v. Bell stood for three years, until 1987 when it was reversed.

Congress reversed the Supreme Court’s decision with the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 which stated, “the term ‘program or activity’ and ‘program’ mean all of the operations of… a college, university, or other postsecondary institution, or a public system of higher education…any part of which is extended Federal financial assistance” (Pattison, 1994). Title IX and the Civil Rights Restoration Act made sure that colleges provided equal opportunities to female athletes, but the governing bodies still needed to come up with a way to enforce the new rules. This prompted the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to draft a three-pronged test that would enforce Title IX.

This three-pronged test ensured that colleges create and offer fair opportunities for female athletes. Part one the test looked at “whether intercollegiate level participation opportunities for male and female students are provided in numbers substantially proportionate to their respective enrollments” (Shook, 1996). For example, if the student body was 40% women, then 40% of sports teams had to be for women. The second prong covered program expansion, meaning that schools in regard to the underrepresented sex have to “show a history and continuing practice of program expansion which demonstrably responsive to the developing interest and abilities of the members of that sex” (Shook, 1996). In order to be Title IX compliant, schools needed to show that they were adding sports teams for female athletes. This would mean matching or exceeding the number of programs for male athletes. The final prong supports the idea of fully accommodating the underrepresented sex, “by offering every team for which there is sufficient interest and ability for a viable team, and sufficient completion in the geographic area where the institutions normally competes” (Title IX Athletics: A Chronology, 2017). Under this prong
schools should offer similar sports for women that they do for men. With the three-pronged test, the avenue is there for high schools and colleges to test their compliancy. Even with the three-pronged test, there is still a grey area where legally an institution is compliant with the law on paper, but the outcome goes against the spirit of female athletes being able attain the same resources and coverage.

**The Sprit of Title IX:**

Title IX is often understood as a law that requires institutions to be equitable towards female athletes- a law that makes sure that athletic departments are creating similar opportunities for everyone. The three-pronged test is supposed to make college athletic departments see why female sports matter, however, often what is forgotten is that the letter of the law is different than the spirit of the law. Schools can be Title IX compliant by the letter of the law, and still break the spirit of the law. The letter of the law overlooks the years of fighting, while the spirit captures why the fight is important. In the coming chapter, we will discuss what happened at the University of North Dakota and about a college athletic director who values women’s sports.

The spirit of the law tells a story of the effort involved for female sports to be where they are today. The spirit captures the countrywide fight that women had to go through to advocate for themselves and why female sports should exist. It tells female athletes that they matter, and deserve the same resources and recognition as male sports. Institutions today need to start investing more into their female athletic sports, investing is the only way to improve a program.

The spirit of Title IX advocates that whether winning or losing, no women’s team should be cut from the program. But it happened, and it’s still happening. On March 30, 2017, the University of North Dakota (UND) cut the women’s ice hockey team, despite being known to graduate the most Olympians. Lauren Hennessey recently committed to the school and was on a
campus tour when she learned the news. She described herself being “shocked” and that the situation was “surreal.” No athlete expects for their team to be cut. In an article for “Sports Illustrated” she states, “Honestly, it is really heartbreaking to be so excited to finally have accomplished one of the biggest dreams I have ever set for myself by playing Division I hockey and within a second, having it be taken away” (Cimini, 2017). By cutting the team, the school administration told their athletes that their sport didn’t matter.

The decision to cut the UND program came 24-hours after the US Women’s Ice Hockey team secured a new contract with USA Hockey, which would provide a promising future for female ice hockey players. The UNDs women’s head coach met with the university’s president Mark Kennedy, to see if anything could be done to save it, Kennedy’s response was, “it’s definitely over’… ‘Women’s hockey is a boutique sport and never should have been at UND’” (Gibbs, 2017). In response, Monique and Jocelyne Lamoureux, professional ice hockey players for the US wrote a Facebook post that stated…

Really sad to have heard Mark Kennedy calling women’s hockey a “Boutique Sport.” It’s unfortunate in a situation like this that we have to deal with sexist remarks from the president of the university. It’s yet another example of the lack of respect, leadership, and character from the top at UND (Monique and Jocelyne Lamoureux—Posts, 2017).

When a school’s president cuts a women’s team, it suggests that the president cares more about “revenue generating” sports, than a women’s ice hockey team. Oftentimes revenue generating sports equates to male sport teams. This goes against the spirit of Title IX because it’s treating a women’s sport less than a men’s sport. While it did not explicitly say that UND valued men’s sports over women’s, the implication was that they were.

Chris Gobrecht from the University of Washington shares a different perspective from her time as the women’s basketball coach. As a coach she was never scared to speak her mind, and because of that she felt that Washington always listened. She believes that “it’s not a purely
financial thing,’ … ‘there’s lots of things that I didn’t recognize at the time but I look back on now there were statements being made that ‘we support women’s athletics’” (Condetta, 2012). Her comments suggest that sports in general shouldn’t be purely about the amount of money that they bring in. That the spirit of sports and Title IX should be about people caring because they love the sport.

Gobrecht could tell that the school cared about her and the team because she had a corner office, and the marching band played at both men’s and women’s basketball games. This gesture may seem small, but for Chris it showed that the college cared (Condetta, 2012). She recalls that the UW athletic director believed that his “life has been greatly enriched by sports,’… ‘this is putting something back. If I experienced all those things, why shouldn’t women have the same opportunities?’” (Condetta, 2012). Sports have enriched the lives of many female athletes, same as they’ve done for men. What shouldn’t be forgotten though, is the fight that it took for female athletes to have the same opportunity as male athletes. The spirit of Title IX should share the story of the law being adopted, but it should also capture where improvements still need to be made for women’s sports to be valued the same as men’s.

How Title IX Impacted Female Athletes Participation:

Recall that historically, the first three quarters of the 20th century the standard impression of ‘female athletics’ was an education approach rather than a competitive one, stemming from the belief that women would lose their femininity if they were to partake in competitive sports. To fully appreciate the current trends, one must go back to the beginning when Title IX was first passed in 1972, when the improvements were rapid. It is hard to imagine today, but back in 1972 fewer than 32,000 women were participating in college athletics (Wilson, 2017). Today the number of female athletes participating in college athletics is, 221,042 (Irick, 2019). This is an
improvement in participation rates, the following graph depicts the percentages of male and female athletes participating in NCAA sports from 1982-2016.

![Graph showing participation rates of male and female athletes in NCAA sports from 1982 to 2016.](Wilson, 2017.)

In this graph, the blue line depicts female athletes, while the orange line shows the male athletes. As seen by the graph, the blue line starts low until increasing in 2002, where the percentage begins to plateau. In 1982 the percentage of female athletes playing in college was 30.5% which rose to 42.3% in 2002. After 2012, the line starts to plateau, not increasing or decreasing. Relating back to the history of female sports, one reason for the 30.5% participation in 1982 could be that athletic departments weren’t advertising women’s programs at the same rate as the men’s programs. But looking at the orange line, which shows the percentage of male athletes, in 1982, the percentage was 69.5%, which over time has decreased to 56.5%. This could mean that over the years, college athletics for men have become more competitive. Much like the blue line, the orange line has also plateaued, creating the picture that in the future the rate of participation in college sports for both women and men will not be drastically changing.
Currently, a graph that was published by the NCAA shows the increasing participation for both male and female athletes:

In this graph, the brown line represents male student-athletes, while the female student-athletes are represented by the grey line. In 1982, the total number of male athletes participating in sport was 169,800, while female athletes were at 74,239 (Meyers, 2019). This could be explained because Title IX was a relatively new piece of legislation, which could affect the number of female athletes. As seen by the graph, the grey line has trended upwards consistently. While, the brown line has also continued to increase, but it has had more bumps along the way.
The graph below shows how female athletes participation rates differ between high school and the NCAA.

**NCAA and High School Female Participation Levels**

![Graph showing female participation levels from 1982 to 2016](image)

*Figure 2 (Wilson, 2017)*

The total number of girls participating in high school sports is 3,324,326 in 2016, but only 211,886 or 6.4% of those athletes participate in college sports (Wilson, 2017). The significant drop-in female athletes playing in college could be because of the limited number of programs for female athletes to continue their sport.

While Title IX has clearly increased participation of female athletes from 1979 to the present, there are still many areas that need increased representation for women, such as
coaching, leadership positions, and athletic department’s administration. Which relates back to the UND example, the decision to cut the women’s hockey team was made by an athletic administration that was led by a man. When comparing past too present, the change that occurred has been huge, but progress still needs to be made in terms of who is put in charge of leadership positions.

**Title IX and Leadership Positions:**

Title IX was intended to help women participate in sports at a similar level as men but can also benefit women in coaching positions. Title IX extends to many other aspects of the world of sports such as, funding, scholarships, and equal access to resources. With the adoption of Title IX, girls could dream of playing sports in high school and in college; they could dream about what it means to be a female athlete. While Title IX has helped increase girl’s participation in sports, it hasn’t done much to help with women entering the field of coaching or athletic administration. The 2018 Racial and Gender Report Card noted that, “the percentage of female athletics directors in Division I, decreased from 11.2 percent to 10.5 percent while increasing in Divisions II and III from 16.0 percent to 18.3 percent, and from 30.9 percent to 31.1 percent, respectively, in 2017-2018” (Lapchick, 2019). Just the fact that the percentage of women in athletic departments decreased in Division I schools, suggests that many women aren’t given the chance to work in or be in charge of an athletic department. While in the lower divisions, the quote suggests that there has been an increase in women athletic directors. While there has been an increase, there is still room for progress.

College athletic departments like many parts of today’s society are patriarchal. There are many reasons why this continues, but one could be that there is a section congruent with Title IX
that is often not assumed to affect the representation of women in leadership positions. Title 34, section 106.51 of the non-discrimination policy for education states that,

No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in employment, or recruitment, consideration, or selection therefor, whether full-time or part-time, under any education program or activity operated by a recipient which receives Federal financial assistance. *(34 CFR § 106.5—Employment., n.d.)*

This section explains that since athletic departments receive federal aid, athletic directors must offer the job to female applicants as well, to comply with the law. This might make athletic directors interview a female candidate in order to be compliant without considering her for the job. This argument is similar to a rule in professional football, named the Rooney Rule. This rule, “mandating that every NFL team interview at least one minority candidate upon the vacancy of a head coaching position” (Collins, 2007). Meaning that when looking for a head coach for a team, a minority candidate must be interviewed. In the eyes of the NFL, this is assumed to be a racial minority. In the case of athletic departments, should there be a policy similar to the “Rooney Rule”, it would also be in terms of gender. While throughout the years there has been speculation if by making interviewing a minority candidate will change the hiring practices of NFL owners; this requirement has the potential to change the make-up of a coaching staff. If there was a similar requirement initiated into the athletic departments, the athletic directors will start to see that there are qualified female coaches and administrators; which in turn will increase the percentage of women in college athletic departments.

The concept of homogenous reproduction is described as, “those who run [things] often rely on outward manifestations to determine who is the ‘right sort of person.’ Managers tend to carefully guard power and privilege for those who fit in, for those they see as ‘their kind’” (Stangl & Kane, 1991). Often times, the term “right person” could be comparable with a man, often
A common theme in the overarching society today is that the people in power want to stay in power, but when it is time to move on, they hire people that look like them, talk like them, and have the same viewpoints as them. It can be argued that they are not considering female applicants or are ignoring their applications, and that this loophole in the process does not complying with the law.

In 1972, 90% of all coaching positions for female sports were held by women (LaFountaine & Kamphoff, 2016). Maybe the numbers reflected the idea that the men didn’t believe that women should be participating in sports, or maybe they didn’t think that coaching women’s teams was worth it. After the passage of Title IX, and the introduction to official women’s sports teams in college, it “transformed them from passion project for the most dedicated women’s sports advocates to serious career paths” (Greenwall, 2012). The male coaches started to see the promise in women’s sports, and the impact that they could on coaching women’s teams. When Title IX became a law, it made the athletic departments merge, allowing for the men to essentially keep their jobs, while pushing the head athletic director for women to a smaller role, or no role at all (Wushanley, 2004).

While the overall representation of women within college sport in all three Divisions continued to improve, it was negatively balanced by the fact that in the 47th year after the passage of Title IX, nearly 60 percent of all women’s teams are still coached by men and 51 percent of all the assistant coaches on women’s teams are men” (Lapchick, 2019).

These numbers suggest that only 40% of all college women’s teams are coached by women, and only 49% of teams have female assistant coaches. With men in charge of the athletic department, the women have to work twice as hard to get their foot in the door. When looking at women coaching male sports, the numbers are even lower. Lapchick stating that the,
Percentage of women head coaches for men’s teams reached an all-time high in Division III institutions in 2017-2018 at 12.2 percent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points from last year. Women held 8.6 percent, and 10.6 percent of head coaching positions of men’s teams in Divisions I and II, respectively (Lapchick, 2019).

This could be that historically men’s sports were seen to be at a different level compared to female sports. With the belief that “(men) are confident that women can’t supervise football, or handle a football coach, or a high profile men’s basketball coach” (Hancock & Hums, 2016). Suggesting that there is a belief that male athletic directors perceive women to be less capable of leading a men’s sports team or being in charge of an athletic department. This thought continues to suggest that if a women is applying for a job within an athletic department they will have to work twice as hard to come in prepared and advocate for themselves. The consequences are that, ‘“if a (woman) go in there an you’re not prepared to hit out of the park on all fronts, personal and professional, then you don’t want to handicap women who come after you.’… ‘if a women is not sucessful as an Athletic Director, the majority of women in this study perceived that people making future hires in an athletic director would be less likely to consider another female for the position’” (Hancock & Hums, 2016).

This suggests that if a woman is in a position of power, such as being in charge of an athletic department, the possibility of future women being hired for the same job will be contingent on the performance of previous women in the office. If female candidates are not on the top of their game, then they are often overlooked in the hiring process. In the beginning, it was hard to get a foot in the door, athletic departments were controlled by men, being a woman already made you different. Judy Dixon worked in the Yale athletic department from 1974-1977, she experienced it first-hand of what it was like, and now it is time to tell her story.

Judy Dixon was a professional tennis player, today she is a tennis coach. She was the women’s tennis coach at Yale from 1974 to 1977, then moved on to other jobs until coaching tennis at UMass Amherst in 2002. She has witnessed and experienced the injustices around
female sports back in the early days of Title IX. Judy Dixon tells the story about what it was like to work in an athletic department two years after Title IX was first adopted into law. Before that she was a professional tennis player, which is where she first felt the difference between what it meant to be a female athlete when sports were considered a “male field.” She tells the story of a day when she was practicing on the courts of the Los Angeles Tennis Club, and she was made to leave. It might seem silly to a reader, but this tennis club had twenty-four open courts and she was still asked to leave. She described it as, “I was playing tennis on one court, and the older men came out and said they wanted that court” (J. Dixon, personal communication, November 1, 2019). There were twenty-four other courts available. She was just a college student, but she packed up her stuff and walked away. The woman she was practicing with was a Wimbledon champion. She describes it as appalling and embarrassing that a Wimbledon champion was asked to leave just because they weren’t men.

She reports that when she was the coach for the Yale women’s tennis team and the coordinator for women’s athletics, her salary was $24,000. The men’s tennis coach’s salary was $45,000. She tells the story of a time when a male administrator came in from the showers, and asked to use her phone, sitting down in her chair with only a towel around his waist. When she cringed, he replied along the lines of, “if you don’t like it you can leave because this is a male gymnasium” (J. Dixon, personal communication, November 1, 2019). Everything was framed as men being the default for who was allowed, and the women had to ask for permission.

Back in 2012, Jody Runge, the head women’s basketball coach at the University of Oregon, decided to speak out. She was the coach that led the Oregon Ducks to NCAA championships, two Pac-10 titles, and a winning percentage of 70%, of all during her eight years of coaching (Fagan & Cyphers, 2012). As a coach she decided to advocate for her players,
advocating for better practice times, and for equal pay like her peers. She often voiced her opinions, “refusing to look the other way when the marketing department plastered Mac Court with life-size photos of players from the men’s team but none from her squad” (Fagan & Cyphers, 2012). Her questioning of the athletic department and advocating for her athletes led her to be fired. Jody now runs a bed and breakfast in Portland Oregon, her guests don’t recognize her, and she doesn’t talk about her eight years of coaching. After she was fired by the University of Oregon, she sent her resume to over twenty schools, only hearing back from one. The story of women in athletic departments is complex, there are female athletic directors, administrators, and coaches; but when looking at colleges as whole, women are still a minority.

Title IX as a law to this day is important for the existence of female sports for female athletes in college. Through the introduction of Title IX, participation numbers have risen for female athletes, and the number of sports that are offered have increased. The female athletes weren’t awarded this access without fighting, without the help of federal legislation, without the advocacy of female sports advocates, and without the belief that sports are meant for everyone. Throughout the year’s organizational groups were opposed to Title IX as a law, fought it in court and lost. Until today where college athletic departments offer sports, offer scholarships, playing facilities, and locker rooms for female athletes. The next challenge is increasing the number of women in leadership positions such as coaching, and in athletic administration.
Chapter 3- She’s the Man
A Real World Outcome when Women Compete with Men

Introduction:

In the Spring 2019 semester at Hampshire College, the college president announced that there would be many changes. Students staged a protest, sitting in various offices and buildings around campus. The president of the college then resigned and the college was in financial turmoil. This caused a landslide of events that would affect the school and the student body. Some professors and staff were let go or put on reduced time, and other budget cuts were implemented across campus. This chapter addresses the impact that these cuts had on the Hampshire College Outdoor, Programs, Recreation, and Athletics (OPRA), which resulted in the decision to cut the women’s soccer team.

An email sent out by an athletic administrator to returning female soccer players at the end of July cited that, “It’s difficult to even have a conversation about deciding to not run a program, especially one that has been consistently successful during my 15 years at Hampshire. Last fall, our numbers fell, and we were forced to forfeit a game due to low numbers, our first time ever to do so”. To many students, the news came as quite a shock: it isn’t everyday a college has to cut a program, let alone a women’s team. The concession for cutting the women’s team was that female soccer players would be allowed to try out for the men’s team. The team wouldn’t be a co-ed team; rather it would be a men’s team with female players on it. As a Division III student who has played on the Hampshire soccer team for the past three years, I was shocked to read the news.

This research investigates the reasons behind the decision, to gain insight from the athletic department at Hampshire, as well as from the current and recent female athletes who
played soccer on the team. This study includes interviews with staff in the athletic department, including the soccer coach, to understand how the decision was made.

Methods:

The participants of this study are current and past female Hampshire soccer players. The participants are split into three different groups: female players who made the men’s team, players who tried out but didn’t make the team, and former players who decided not to try out. Another part of this project are the interviews of the athletic staff, who are categorized as the fourth group. Recruitment is done through a post to the Hampshire College Daily Digest email notifications to the college, as well as posters around campus. The coach of the team also contacted female players on the team to notify them about this study. All the participants are over the age of 18. All methods are approved by the Hampshire College Institutional Review Board (IRB) before soliciting for study participants.

Procedure:

The investigation takes the form of individual interviews. I contacted the athletes and staff via email and then interviewed them in person. Interviewees were identified by group and informed that their name would not be used in my analysis. They provided informed consent before I proceeded with the interview. Each set of questions are listed below:

**Group #1: Female athletes who tried out and made the team:**
1. Did you play soccer on the Hampshire team in the past?
2. What factors did you consider when deciding to try out for the men’s team?
3. Have you had any previous experience playing on a men’s team?
4. What was it like trying out for the co-ed team? How would you change the experience if you could?
5. How is the dynamic of the Hampshire College soccer team now that you’re playing on the men’s team?
6. Have you enjoyed the new setting?
7. Do you have any feelings regarding the reasons/act of consolidation?

**Group #2: Female athletes who tried out but didn’t make the team:**
1. Did you play soccer on the Hampshire team in the past?
2. What factors did you consider when deciding to try out for the men’s team?
3. Have you had any previous experience playing on a men’s team?
4. What was it like trying out?
5. How would you change the experience if you could?
6. Are you doing another sport or activity instead of soccer?
7. Do you have any feelings regarding the reasons/act of consolidation?

**Group #3: Female athletes who chose not to try out:**
1. Did you play soccer on the Hampshire team in the past?
2. What factors did you consider when deciding not to try out for the men’s team?
3. Have you had any previous experience playing on a men’s team?
4. If there was a women’s team, would you play?
   a. Why/why not?
5. Are you doing another sport or activity instead of soccer?
6. Do you have any feelings regarding the reasons/act of consolidation?

**Group #4: Athletic Administration:**
1. How was the decision to form a men’s soccer team with female players made?
2. How does this consolidation support Title IX policy?
3. What is it like coaching a men’s team with male and female players versus a single-sex team?
4. How did you choose the players?
5. Do you have any feelings regarding the consolidation of soccer teams?

Each interview was recorded on a recording device, and then transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Each interview lasted from 15 minutes to 30 minutes. The interviews were classified by numbers instead of by the players’ names, in order to keep subject identities anonymous.

**Results:**

Data is classified by whether or not the athletes and athletic department staff felt positive, negative, or neutral about the change. The total number of participants is thirteen and included all the groups. Thirty-eight percent of the participants felt positive about the team change, thirty percent responded that it was a negative change, and twenty-three percent responded with mixed feelings. Forty percent of athletes stated that they played a different sport, rather than join the men’s soccer team, while, sixty percent clarified that they decided not to play a fall sport.

Finally, fifty-seven percent of athletes felt dissuaded from trying out for the men’s soccer team, while forty-three responded did not.
Group #1: Female athletes who made the team:

In this section, two athletes out of the possible four responded to my flyer. When prompted with the question, “Did you play soccer on the Hampshire team in the past?,” athlete 2, 11, and 12 answered yes, while athlete 6 answered no. For the second question, “What factors did you consider when deciding to try out for the men’s team?”, both athlete 2, 6, and 12 stated they wanted to still play soccer, and that they wanted to try it out. For the third question, “Have you had any previous experience playing on a men’s team?” all athletes replied yes. The next question focused on what the athletes thought about trying out. Athlete 2 thought that it was “suspenseful, and different”. Athlete 11 thought that it was negative, and athlete 12 stated that it was intimidating. While athlete 6 stated that it was “different, but also like normal try outs”.

When asked about how they would change the experience, athletes 2, 11, and 12 responded that she would change it. When asked about how the dynamic has changed, athletes 2, and 11 believed that its different, and that the communication has changed. While athlete 6, couldn’t compare it to the previous team. When prompted about if they liked the new setting, athletes 6, and 12 replied yes, and athletes 2, and 11 said yes/no. Finally, when asked about how they felt about the reasons for the consolidation, all athletes replied yes that they had thoughts about why this happened, athlete 6 believed that it was because Hampshire tries to be open to anything.

While athlete 2, and 11 stated that she didn’t understand why the women’s team was cut, about how there wasn’t a chance to try to pull together a team, and why there wasn’t more communication between the athletic department and the female players.

Group #2: Female athletes who tried out, but didn’t make the team:

In this section only one athlete responded to the flyer out of the possible two, who had played soccer for Hampshire previously. When asked about the factors that she considered when trying out for the men’s team, she stated that she still wanted to play. She replied no to having
previous experience playing soccer on a men’s team, and she stated that it was intense, different, but also similar during the try-out. Athlete 3 said that she would change it if she could. She is playing another sport instead of soccer, cross country and basketball. When asked about how she felt about the consolidation, she stated that yes, she has feelings about it, especially when thinking about why the women’s team was cut.

**Group #3: Female athletes who chose not to try out:**

In this section, four out of five total athletes responded to my flyers. All the athletes responded that they have played soccer for Hampshire in the past. When asked about why they decided not to try out for the men’s team, there were many different answers. Athletes 4, 8, and 10 chose not to try out because it would be a men’s team, athletes 4, 5, and 10 stated that the competition would be men. Athlete 10 stated that she wouldn’t be playing with her team, and athlete 5 stated that her prior experience on a men’s team dissuaded her. When asked about prior experience playing with men, only interview 4 and 5 said yes, and interview 8, and 10 said only during indoor soccer at Hampshire. When asked if they would play soccer this year if there was a women’s team, all athletes said yes, athletes 4, and 5 stated that it’s because they love the team. Next, they were prompted with a question about playing a different sport, athlete 4 and 5 said yes, while athlete 8 and 10 said no. Finally, when asked about their thoughts/feelings about the consolidation, all athletes stated that yes, they had thoughts about why. Athlete 5 and 10 stated that they were thinking about the reasons why the women’s team was cut. Interview 5 also shared a thought about why the male returning players got to come to campus early for pre-season soccer practices, while the female returning players didn’t get to have the same opportunity.
Group #4: Athletic department (AD, Assistant AD, and Coach):

In this section, all the prospective participants responded to my email regarding this project. The decision was made, interview 1 said through meetings and student feedback, interview 7 said through talking with outside resources, and interview 7 and 9 both said looking at the budgets. When asked about how it supports Title IX policy, interview 1, 7, and 9 said that it does because it allows female players to try out for the men’s team. Interview 9 also talked about how it offers the same opportunity to female athletes as it does for male athletes. When asked about how the coaching differs, interview 9 stated that it was different, has different communication methods, and must have clear expectations and norms. When asked about how the players were chosen, interview 9 said speed and technique. Finally, when asked about whether they had feelings about the consolidation interview 1, 7, and 9 all said yes. Interview 7 specified that it was sad to see a program go, but that there was no other choice. Interview 9 thought that it was for the best. In the following section, the narratives of the female athletes, and the athletic department will be interconnected with research around the concepts of imposters syndrome, sexual and gender harassment.

Discussion:

Title IX as a federal law is used to protect people from harassment based on gender, gender discrimination, and to offer women the same opportunities as men. When Hampshire cut the women’s soccer team, they normalized that a school can cut a women’s team because lack of funding and lack of interest; meanwhile keep the men’s team. When Title IX was first implemented, it was used to create a space for female athletes to partake in athletics. Which today, Title IX continues to protect their right and ability to access sport teams.

The Hampshire athletic department rationalizes the decision to cut the women’s soccer team by stating, “That our goal is to put forth good effort to field and provide equal support to all
teams, which I think that our track record shows that we have done a good job of” (Interview #1). By putting in the effort to email a survey to returning athletes over the Spring 2019 semester, and then making the decision for the athletes rather than include them in the process; in their eyes this counts as “good effort”. One athlete commenting on this fact by saying, “And it was like you have to give us a chance, and they did the same thing that President Mim did, and it was just like no communication, didn’t talk with us, and it just also makes me feel like they valued the men’s team more than the women’s team” (Interview #11). Highlighting the belief that the administration made the decision without first consulting the female soccer players for their input. Looking back into the interviews with female athletes on and off the soccer team, shows that not everything was perfect. The female athletes who tried out described instances of feeling intimidated, describing instances of gender and sexual harassment. The athletic administration, on the other hand, believes that nothing went wrong.

“I think that it was absolute bullshit” (Interview #2), is how one athlete responded to the decision of the women’s soccer team being cut due to budgetary concerns and lack of returning players. A theme throughout the interviews was the disdain that many players felt about the situation. These athletes were notified of the news via email, and told that they could join a women’s indoor soccer league. Shortly after, the athletic department received an email asking, “Hey, can this be opened up to females as well for the men’s team” (Interview #7). Prompting the athletic department to reach out to outside community members for help; the athletic department staff talked with an athletic administrator at Smith College asking if she has ever had any experience with this question. They contacted the Title IX coordinators at Hampshire, to determine the legality of allowing women on the men’s soccer team and contacted the president of the YSCC (Yankee Small College Conference), to gain clarification if the Hampshire men’s
team would still be allowed to play within the league guidelines with women on the team.

Through their research, they were able to determine that female athletes would be allowed to try out for the men’s team.

Title IX was created to make sure that female athletes receive the equitable treatment in athletic programs. These regulations have been in place since 1972, one athlete referenced this law by stating, “Literally Title IX says like if you don’t provide a women’s team, they have to give you a try out” (Interview #11). While this is in simplified terms, the sentiment is true, female athletes should be allowed to try out for the men’s team if there isn’t a women’s team offered. In the eyes of female athletes interviewed, there was never a question surrounding whether or not female athletes would be able to try out for the men’s team. But from one testimony, “The first thing [OPRA] tried to tell us was that they didn’t know if they could let [female athletes] play” (Interview #11). Suggesting that the athletic departments first instinct was to not support the option for trying out for the men’s team.

When asked about why they didn’t try out, one player responded, “I appreciate, for the other players who did go and try out that they were included, but also they do know it was at the last minute decision to even add women to that team” (Interview #4). This suggests that if the option for female players to try out for the men’s team wasn’t suggested by a player, the athletic department wouldn’t have considered it. Without a female athlete fighting for their right to play a sport no matter if it’s a men’s team, is often the story historically and presently is told. If the female athletes didn’t fight for their ability to try out for the men’s soccer team, then nothing would have happened.

Walking onto a male dominated team can be scary. Many people would be unsure of what is expected of them, or what their chances were of successfully gaining a spot. Instead of
believing that they are good players, they can believe that they are just being added to the team to fill a quota or to comply with Title IX. These feelings could be described by the imposter syndrome defined as, “A phenomenon characterized by an inability to internalize academic success” (Watson, 2010). This is often seen in academic settings, where women or other minority groups believe that they were able to rise to their certain job by luck or pity, instead of believing in their own accomplishments. This phenomenon can also be seen in athletic spaces where athletes believe that they are undeserving of their accomplishment. Instead this syndrome should be argued, not as an internal issue for just one person, but as a systematic issue for many. Argued here, “Imposter syndrome might be viewed as a personal challenge affecting a few than a systemic problem of considerable scale with real, detrimental consequences to those affected” (Mullangi, 2019). While a single person can be affected by the imposter syndrome, it can also affect a group of people. By looking at the imposters syndrome through the lens of female athletes participating on a men’s soccer team, the first barrier to their participation is that the team is named a men’s team; suggesting that women aren’t welcome. When people are seen as minorities, simple aspects such as name of the team could turn them away, and push athletes from trying out.

When asked about how this team was formed, one administrator replied that, “It won’t be a co-ed team because we are still playing within the league, so we were still able to keep the men’s soccer team title with having it be mixed gender, we were able to compete within the league guideline and regulations” (Interview #7). Calling it a men’s team instead of a mixed gender team or a co-ed team, inadvertently pushes female athletes away from trying out, already believing that they’re not welcome without even stepping out onto the field. One athlete stated, “Just the idea of playing with guys wasn’t really appealing” (Interview #4). This suggests that by
calling it a men’s team, where many players were male, that being a female player was already considered an “other” and that they weren’t welcome. The larger systemic problem that was faced by the female athletes was the assumption that there would be separate spheres for male and female athletes. During tryouts an athlete stated,

“Usually there were a lot of complaints that were aired publicly that were not directed to the girls in conversation but were about the girls’… ‘like why is it that the boys can be kicked off the team, we all came to tryouts’ … ‘like if you guys don’t work hard then you’re not going to make it. The boys were all upset about that, they did not like the idea of a girl coming in and taking their spot, not everyone, but generally that was the vibe” (Interview #2).

This shows that the systemic issue being faced was that, in previous years, the male soccer players were ‘guaranteed’ a spot on the team, but now their spot was assumed to be at risk because of the female players.

When thinking about being a minority in a group, people will always feel different, be held to different standards, and will have to work harder to be respected by the majority group. Watson, 2010 suggests that, “Our feelings of being an imposter are created within the regulatory framework of masculinity. The language of the academy, its policies, rules, regulations, and requirements originate in a male standpoint” (Watson, 2010). Working in an occupation that is predominantly male dominated may have different stakes then walking onto a men’s sports team, but results can be the same. The policies determined by the dominant group will not only continue, and will affect the members of the minority group. Suggesting that the minority group will be held to the same standards and will lead them to have to work extra hard to be appreciated. This can be applied to a soccer team, by suggesting that the culture of the team has historically been centered around the concept of masculinity. Where through the belief that the culture of a men’s soccer team is different than the culture of a women’s soccer team whether it is through communication, game strategy, or how the game is coached. The female athletes at
Hampshire were asked to try out again even though they already made the women’s team, they had to prove themselves to the male players, and they had to advocate for themselves consistently.

“It gives everyone equal and fair play” (Interview #9). In theory the fact that these female athletes had to try out wasn’t fair or equal. While the female athletes were asked to try out again, the male athletes didn’t, because they were returning players. The female athletes were asked to try out again, to advocate for themselves, to be heard with their concerns about being treated the same. One player decided that she didn’t want to play on the men’s team because, “I didn’t want to deal with having to try out for a team that I have already made in my first year. I didn’t like the idea of having to try out for a spot that I have shown that I deserved to have because of previous years” (Interview #5). Suggesting that it didn’t matter whether the female athletes made the women’s team, they still had to try out again. While, another athlete commented on her understanding that neither gender was being invited back, “Like coming back and not being invited back for preseason, but they weren’t inviting anyone back. When that was not true and they were inviting the men’s team back” (Interview #11). Furthering the understanding that she was lead to believe that no gender was being invited to preseason, and it wasn’t until later that she learned that it was untrue.

While, for the male players, the longstanding belief was that once you make the team, you are on the team. One athlete commenting that when she tried out for the women’s team, “In past years at Hampshire that wasn’t a fear, except for my first year, and it was a college team, and I don’t want to be cut. And I was surprised to find out that no people were, or if any were cut” (Interview #12). Highlighting the longstanding belief that except for first year athletes wanting to try out, there was no fear of returning players being let go. And in previous years, the
team allowed many first year students to join the team. Going along with this thought, another player spoke out about not receiving a preseason expressing the opinion, “I think it would have been worthwhile for both teams to come for preseason and get the opportunity for the girls’ team to try to pull a team together” (Interview #2). Not only would this be a chance for the women’s team to attempt to come up with ways to recruit new players, it would also allow for any women who wanted to try out for the men’s team to bond with the male players before the try out.

Historically, only returning players could come to preseason, since their team was still a team. The female athletes who were going to try out were considered to not be on the team and were not allowed to be at preseason. This choice should have had an exception: by not allowing the female players to arrive early for preseason, there will be a lack of togetherness as a team. There were different barriers that the female athletes had to go through in order to be allowed to try out for the men’s team. Therefore, the athletes would have to advocate for themselves for their complaints to be validated by the people in charge. One player stated that, “Every time that something happened, another player and I had to address it again, again, and again until we were heard, so I think at some point people started to hear us and listened at least a little bit and we were figuring it out who to talk to, to make things better” (Interview #2). The responsibility to advocate for themselves, often fell on the shoulders of the female athletes. There should have been someone to step in and put a stop to everything that was being said or done to them. It is important for the athletes to advocate for themselves, but they shouldn’t have to continuously repeat the same issues over again, when they didn’t do anything wrong.

Female student athletes stated that the environment was intensified, that it was unwelcoming to the female athletes, and the act of cutting the women’s team excluded female athletes from playing their sport. The athletic administration told a different narrative. From their
perspective, “The male team members were very receptive and wanting to be very sure that they understood what was being done wrong, if anything, and what can they do to make it a more comfortable situation” (Interview #9). This suggests that under the watchful eye of an administrator, the male players were treating everyone fairly, that they were welcoming of the female athletes. Another administrator suggested, “At first it was hard, we had some bumps in the road at the beginning, we all got together and did a norms session, community norms within the team because it was new for everyone, coaches, us, players especially” (Interview #7). This suggests that this administrator recognized that the transition in the beginning was difficult, but it also suggests that they felt that the norms meeting solved the issues. In the eyes of the athletic department, everything was fine, was hard in the beginning, then as the season went on, it “Ended on a high note” (Interview #7). With respect to how the opposing teams were treating the team, an administrator stated, “Each coach responded to me, saying that they were supportive, saying that it’s pretty rad basically, good for you guys, so they were very supportive and to my knowledge we didn’t have any comments, any negativity from the crowd or from the players from the schools” (Interview #7). The administration suggested that everything was fine, but when female athletes filed a complaint they didn’t expect to be believed.

Sexual harassment is defined as “Any form of sexual behavior or suggestion, in verbal, non-verbal or physical form, whether intentional or not, which is regarded as a person experiencing it as undesired or forced” (Fasting, 2005). Harassment can be seen in the workplace, in educational spaces such as schools, and it can also be seen in sports. Fasting, 2005 points out that, “Sports organizations… may represent cultures in which sexual harassment can easily occur, because gender ratios, sexualized atmospheres and organizational power have been found to influence both the incidence and maintenance of sexual harassment” (Fasting, 2005).
Fasting, 2005 asked 21,108 Australian athletes if they had experienced sexual harassment. Forty-one percent of female athletes reported that they experienced sexual abuse in a sports organization. Since sports have historically been predominantly male environment, it would suggest that, “‘Men’s beliefs and expectations about masculinity are powerful and consistent predictors of sexual violence supporting beliefs and behaviors.’… ‘Including power over women, dominance, disdain for homosexuals, and sexual conquests, may drive SH [Sexual Harassment]’” (Burn, 2019). When sports are dominated by men, it supports a mindset where they believe that they can get away with anything, including harassment. This often leads to women getting harassed by male athletes, male coaches, or the male players on their own soccer team. Sports shouldn’t be a place where female athletes and non-athletes should feel like there is a chance for harassment to occur.

Walking onto the soccer field for try-outs, the female athletes who tried out for the men’s soccer team were not prepared for what lay ahead. There was no way of knowing that this would become a space for the male players to harass the female athletes, because they were women. One player remarked that, “The boys said some really sexist comments during the summer like how girls could never play with them… via text message” (Interview #2). This happened during the summer, before anyone was even on campus yet, before anyone tried out. Circulating the belief that the female players wouldn’t be able to keep up. One athlete stating, “But a few of them were making really sexual comments, just really demeaning things, and saying why would [an administrator] take a woman if she could fill the spot with a man” (Interview #11). This comment inherently suggests that by taking a female athlete, the team will be weaker, and wouldn’t be able to win games. These thoughts and assumptions by the male players throughout the season, created a hostile environment, which can “exist when a person’s conduct is pervasive
or severe enough to disturb an athlete and interfere with his or her ability to perform” (Fasting, 2005). One athlete who made the team, commented, “I had like a weird interaction with one of the boys the day I tried out, I think he was trying to intimidate me and be teasing in a friendly manner and it just came off really weird” (Interview #6). While this doesn’t outright suggest harassment, a male player intimidating a female player, by making flirty comments it would create a hostile environment for the female athlete to compete under. Another player commented, “I definitely heard issues of mistreatment, and just the fact that they cut the team it was itself already a mistreatment already to the [female] soccer players. And I have also heard of comments being made by players and by [an administrator] too” (Interview #12). While this player doesn’t directly comment on whether or not she received any comments, it suggests that she was privy to what was being said to the other female athletes.

Other players didn’t want to try out for the team because, “It was intimidating in ways to try out” (Interview #8), or “I wouldn’t want to play in an environment where it seemed like we weren’t welcome” (Interview #4). The word intimidating can correspond with the word hostile, and the sentiment is often the same. These examples suggest that even when looking from afar, the general feeling of the team dynamic was negative and hostile, rather than positive and welcoming. One player didn’t know if she was going to try out or not stating, “I actually wasn’t sure if I was going to play and then the whole Title IX issue made me feel like I had to try out just to make a stand” (Interview #11). Meaning that the pressure to act, to use her right to try out for the men’s team, pushed this athlete to try out, when originally she didn’t want to.

Not only was harassment seen on the team, but also through games played with other men’s soccer teams. For example, one player said, “There are so many other things, guys were catcalling me during games, one guy in the last game kept touching me, trying to grab my ass,
like ‘hey pretty lady, blah blah blah, I want to get in bed with you’” (Interview #2). When a male player comments that he wants to sleep with the female player, that is crossing a line, and is sexual harassment. Two female athletes mentioned an instance where an opposing male player groped one of the female athletes while on the field. When they brought this to two administrators, they didn’t believe her. They asked her if she was sure that it was an intentional groping or if the male player was just playing good defense.

While the female athletes were allowed to try out for the men’s soccer team, that was only one solution was offered. In the beginning there was also talk about enrolling the female athletes into an indoor soccer league, which ultimately didn’t happen. The female athletes were asked how they would change the situation if they could, one interviewee stated, “I feel like I would have made it a more equal opportunity for the women’s team. Like if there were going to give the 14 returning spots for the male players, then they should have probably given the other six to retuning female players” (Interview #3). This solution suggests that spots should have been allotted for the returning female athletes. While the majority of the players would still be male, this approach would provide more of the spots for the female athletes who were perhaps too intimidated to try out. Another player had the suggestion, “Let’s make a co-ed team, and take it out from the women, men completely, take that out and make it one team, and let’s call it, like an intermural something for us to just take a year off to save the money” (Interview #10). While this solution would mean not registering with the league, and the team would no longer be a varsity team, by making it a co-ed and club team, it would allow for both male and female soccer players to play the game they love. This solution would also help the athletics department save money.
For others the solution was more simple, “I would fire the coach. Get a new coach. I would have a new Title IX director” (Interview #11). In the eyes of this athlete, the coach was the main cause of the inherent sexism throughout this team. She states that,

It’s so interesting, I don’t know if this matters but we are playing indoor [soccer] right now, and [the administration] is not a part of indoor and I love it now. Like I love my team, and I love playing with the guys. It’s like, their so inclusive, their so much more aware now, and I think when we see each other as equal players we don’t hold ourselves back (Interview #11).

Suggesting that in season, the unhealthy treatment and divide of men vs. women was created by the coach, while in indoor where the coach isn’t a part of the team, the environment has changed. Another athlete supports this idea as well stating, “That when an administrator started to make remarks to me personally about stuff, [the administrator] reported herself but then [a Title IX administrator] didn’t take it seriously because they were very close and asked me to just let it go’ (Interview #2). The administration wasn’t taking the situation seriously, siding with the other administrator involved, and not listening to the athlete. Along the way there were many missteps, many things that happened that should never have happened here or at any school. For one athlete, in her eyes “The biggest frustration was with [the coach] as a whole, as a female athlete I looked up to her and I thought she out of everyone would understand and she was the most sexist one out of all of them” (Interview #11). Leadership starts at the top, only to be modeled through the team, if the person in charge models sexist behavior, there is no reason why the team wouldn’t follow suit.

An athlete called for societal change in terms of Title IX compliancy. “The other thing is that schools need to have really clear Title IX policies, like this could happen so people know that it’s not like a disputable thing and it’s not because we are Hampshire and we are more liberal college [that] we are allowing girls to try out” (Interview #2). If this was ever to happen again this player is suggesting that there needs to be the Title IX policy, and how it relates to
athletics clearly stated and understood by the athletic department at colleges. One athlete posed the solution of looking into other teams for inspiration about mixed gendered playing, stating, “I think Frisbee has been a great example of how to conduct meetings and build a community around just wanting to respect one another even aside from gender. To respect one another means to have conversations around mixed gendered playing” (Interview #11). By modeling how Frisbee operates as mixed gender team, this would provide a more comprehensive understanding of what should have been changed throughout this consolidation of teams.

In the eyes of one athlete there were signs that the women’s soccer team in the past received less attention compared to the men’s team. One athlete posing her opinion as,

Which I felt that last year too, just in terms of we were sharing space, and it felt like Meg, was more into the boys, and coaching the boys than she was into our team. It felt like, coach Dave would be trying to explain a drill to us, and he would be more interested in watching the men’s drills then us (Interview #11). Suggesting that while there was still a gender-separated team, the coaches would still be more interested in the men’s team compared to the women’s team. This continues the thought that male athletes are seen as more important compared to female athletes. Another athlete mentioning that, “I think there’s an image that men’s bodies can do more than women’s. And lots of times that can be true’… ‘it doesn’t mean that they [male athletes] should be given more opportunities to develop that physicality and if anything, it would be counterintuitive” (Interview #12). This thought continues the idea that being an athlete is divided by gender lines, suggesting that sports correlates to masculine, instead of feminine. Which connects back to the situation at hand, when push comes to shove, what team was cut, the women’s team but not the men’s. The administration believes that the decision was made because the men could field a team, while the women couldn’t. If we look into society this prioritization, “Just happens all the time in sports, men’s sports have always been prioritized over women’s” (Interview #12). Supporting the
common belief that male athletes are more interesting to watch when compared to female athletes, which often leads to the lack of investment into female sports whether it be in college or in professional leagues. While Hampshire is a more liberal minded school, there was no reason that this should have happened, or that the solution was to make the female athletes try out for the men’s team. The athletic department should have communicated more with the students; they should have given females a chance to pull a team together.

Conclusion and Limitations:

This study investigated how female athletes from the Hampshire College soccer team felt about their team being cut, as well as what it was like to try out for the men’s team. There were many opinions shared in the interviews. The athletic department was positive about the change, the female athletes who made the team had various opinions and feelings about the change, and the athletes who didn’t try out for the team were pushed away from their sport. While many things went to plan in terms of this study, there are some things that I wish I could have changed.

This study is unique in the fact that there are almost no studies that investigate female athletes who play on a men’s sports team. This created some challenges, such as not being able to find previous literature to back up the findings. One change would be to interview the male athletes on the team, and not just the women. This would allow to hear both sides of the stories, whether they matched up among the gender lines. I decided not to include the male athletes because I thought that it would have made the study have too many moving parts and having to track down athletes would have been an even larger challenge. Another thing that I would change about this study would be to change the questions that I asked the athletes. The questions that were submitted approved by the Institutional Review Board were questions that at the time were valid, but after interviewing a couple of participants, I would have changed some questions
in regard to how they were phrased, or added some questions about what they liked about playing soccer at Hampshire. In terms of questioning, I think it would have been important for me to ask to follow up questions.

This study was a pilot study, a small-scale research study in which a researcher can test out their experimental design for the future. Which if I was to continue this research in the future, the scale would be a lot larger. For one, there would be the inclusion of other mixed gender sports teams such as Ultimate Frisbee. This would greatly increase the sample size and allow for results in context of a team that is historically co-ed. When thinking about how this study could impact the world of sports, there are many responses. One response could be that there needs to be more opportunities for mixed gender teams to exist, which would start to decrease the importance of the gender binary in sports. Future research would greatly affect the world of sports around the dynamics of a mixed gender team because right now there isn’t a lot out there. At Hampshire College, and the disbanding of the female soccer team could have been handled differently. The male soccer team should have been more welcoming to the female athletes, which must change if in the future this happens again.
Conclusion

All year, the question of what it means to be a female athlete swirled around my brain. Constantly I’ve wondered if the meaning changed from the past to today, does it change with time or does it change based on the person? Who are the athletes that people see in the media, who counts as a female athlete, who is in charge? I have come to the conclusion that this question can only be answered individually depending on the athlete that you speak to, everyone has their own experience. What it means for me to be a female athlete, is looking back and remembering the memories. The memories of playing soccer on Saturday mornings with my friends or playing catch baseball with my dad in the back yard. I remember the good moments of when I crossed home plate in a high school baseball game, when I scored a goal after a hard fought game of missed chances. I remember the bad memories of my high school soccer coach or the time I false started in a race, or when I ignored the pain in my shins to continue to compete. The greatest honor that I held as a female athlete is that for the past seventeen years I have been surrounded by other strong, badass female athletes and teammates. I have found teammates that made the running workouts a little less painful, the idea of racing less stressful, and teammates that were always there to offer words of support. For the past seventeen years of my life I have been a part of a team, but next year will be my first year without being on a team. This thought scares me, it brings tears to my eyes to have to walk away from the spaces that I know. The greatest thing that I have learned from this year by researching and writing my thesis is that a female athlete must always believe in themselves, especially when others may not.

All year, I have been worried about this project and whether it was a worthwhile avenue to pursue. I was worried that people would read my personal story and judge me, or read my research and say that the history doesn’t matter. I was worried that my belief that there are
inequalities still in college athletic departments would be hidden behind the voices of people who may oppose this thought. I’ve struggled with the thoughts of whether this project achieves what I wanted it to achieve or whether I should have made it into a more creative format. I’ve thought about what it would be like to create a podcast, I’ve thought about what it would be like to not create a research study about my soccer team that was cut. After interviewing Judy Dixon, we were standing in the doorway of the Hampshire College Multisport Center about to part ways, and I thanked her for allowing me to interview her. I told her that I was worried that people wouldn’t find my topic or project interesting or important, that people would be bored. She stood there and thought, and replied that my project is important, that the fight for Title IX compliance is still going on today, and that I shouldn’t give up. Those words have stayed with me since that day, and have pushed me to continue to write and research Title IX and female athletes.

Throughout this year, I have learned that what I have created and what I have learned is amazing, and that I should be proud. And I am proud. I look back and see the effort that it took, to research Title IX, to write a personal essay on my sporting experience. I look back and see the emotional toll, the stress dreams, and sleepless nights that were caused by conducting and writing an original research study about the women’s soccer team that was cut. Looking back, I am proud of what I have achieved, and looking forward I believe that this is only the beginning. This thesis could be the beginning of increased research on mixed gendered sports teams to see if they could be a sustainable future.

This topic has created avenues for future research to take off, like looking into how hiring practices are affected by race, or there is limited space for intersex and transgender athletes to participate in sports. One topic would be race and how the hiring practices of athletic departments are affected by the race of the interviewee. How often is it that women of color get
hired to be the athletic director, the head coach, and the assistant coach? This is an important topic for the future, it deserves a thesis that will be able to commit time to research and study gender and race theory as they intersect with sport culture in America. Race implicitly affects hiring practices not only in sports, but also in the larger society. Another topic is the inclusion of intersex and transgender athletes into high school, college, and professional sports. This topic could be its own thesis as well: sports as a space needs to become more inclusive towards athletes who don’t “fit” within the gender binary. Questions to be answered, include: who capitalizes on the gender binary? Is Title IX still working? What happens if there wasn’t a binary, how would athletes be categorized? Sports institutions need to become more inclusive as a whole, to disprove the belief that trans athletes are “cheating” or that they have an inherent advantage over female athletes. These beliefs often stem from television shows that depict trans athletes in a satirical way. These misconceptions continue the belief that trans athletes have an advantage because they take hormones, or that intersex athletes are also assumed to disadvantage female athletes, because some have higher testosterone levels. These assumptions are from the belief that men are always stronger than women, and that female athletes need to be protected from an unequal playing field. But, one group cannot be protected by putting down another. These topics are just as important to sports as is the cheating scandals in college sports like the UNC scandal that lasted from 1993-2011, and there is a need for advocacy for female athletics not only in college but also in professional realms such as the US women’s national soccer team fighting for equal pay, or the debate that surrounds Caster Semenya.

Future research should examine the idea of having mixed gendered teams, and whether or not having all genders play together decreases the inherent sexism in sports. There needs to be more research on the idea that men’s athletics are funding women’s sports teams. That women
“stole” money that could be used for men’s sports teams in college. Also, that female athletes are undeserving of investment because of the perceived lack of spectatorship. This idea could be compared to the welfare debate in the U.S., some people believe that welfare “steals” money from hardworking citizens and gives it too undeserving “lazy” citizens. More sophisticated research shows that this comparison is untrue- female athlete work hard but they just don’t receive the same investment as men’s sports.

More researchers and people should be questioning the institution of college football: are they really generating money? Are colleges with a football team Title IX compliant? College football may bankrupt college athletic departments rather than funding them. Future research needs to find out if that assumption is true, or if college football makes money. Finally, the future work could look at how the construct of gender is reinforced through the everyday performance of female athletes; which can be seen through stereotypes and the belief that female athletes must fulfill the normative behavior of women. Female athletes aren’t allowed to celebrate too much, and they are seen as being too dominant when beating a team 13-0. Male athletes are allowed to celebrate, they are allowed to dominate a team, and not be declared unsportsmanlike; they receive millions of dollars as a salary, even when they don’t bring home gold medals or world cups.

The topic of what it means to be a female athlete still remains to be answered. Does it mean being on the national soccer team, and still having to sue for equal pay? Does it mean historically having to fight to be allowed to play sports in high school, college, and professionally? Or does it mean that every person should have the same opportunity to participate in the same activities. Women’s athletics in the future is only going to increase. One day the spectatorship will increase, there will be more female college and professional coaches.
Female athletes will stop hearing their governing bodies say that they value the men’s team more than the women’s such as this comment made by U.S. Soccer, “the job of MNT [Men’s National Team] player carries more responsibility within U.S. Soccer than the job of WNT [Women’s National Team] player” (U.S. Soccer). Soon, female athletes will finally achieve equal pay and every girl won’t be afraid of playing a sport that isn’t meant for women. In the news today, there are professional baseball teams adding female strength and conditioning coaches and batting coaches. In the 2020 Super Bowl, the 49s hired Katie Sowers as their offensive line assistant coordinator. In the NBA the San Antonio Spurs hired Becky Hammon as an assistant coach. In major league baseball, Alyssa Nakken was recently hired as the assistant coach for the San Francisco Giants. One day there will be women in head coaching positions of men’s and women’s sports. The future of women’s athletics is bright, but people and society need to start believing in the importance of women’s sports.
Acknowledgements

Ever since I was a little girl, I have looked up to the women’s national soccer team. I wanted to be like them, I wanted to meet them, and I loved watching them play throughout my childhood. As the female athletes of today fight for equal pay and equal representation; we must remember the fight that the advocates for women’s sports were committed too. We must remember the people of the AIAW that believed that women deserved a place on the playing field. As a female athlete today, I have to thank the women who in the past advocated for my ability to play the sports I love today.

- Thank you to my study participants, without your contributions my thesis wouldn’t be what it is today. I will always appreciate the time that you took out of your day to let me interview you.

- Thank you to Andrew, Lily, and Walker in the writing center for being my second home for the past four years. I will miss the weekly meetings; the importance of the writing center will never be lost on me.

- Thank you to Cynthia Gill and Elizabeth Conlisk for being on my committee for this past year, for pushing me to create something amazing. I wouldn’t have conducted original research if it wasn’t for the push to do so.

- Thank you to Lily Friedrich, who completes the other half of Gwily. From late night taco bell runs, to coffee runs, to soccer games and track meets. I will always believe that you will do great things, and I am excited to see what happens. Thank you for being my friend and teammate for the past four years.

- Thank you to Julia Krzywy for all the hours we watched Sex in the City and Criminal Minds, or for all the times we have gotten lost on the dark quiet streets of Northampton. The night of discovering the Northampton Christmas lights will always be in my memory.

- Thank you to Tess, for being my friend since first grade. Thank you for the laughter, the random adventures, for watching the World Cup with me, and thank you for being someone who I have come to rely on.

- Thank you to Danielle for doing work in the library with me over winter break, for being someone who I know will always have a kind word to say. I can’t wait to see what the future holds for both of us.

- Thank you to my teammates past and present. Thank you the cross country team for welcoming me onto the team. Thanks for all the hard workouts, the runs on Earls, and the weird music on the way to meets. My last year wouldn’t have been the same without you all.
• Thank you to Ais who has inspired me since the first day of cross country practice. Thank you for believing in my running, but also in this div. Thanks for running on Earls with me, I will miss the quiet moments of just us on the trail.

• Thank you to the coaches at Hampshire, to Eric and Amy for taking a soccer player and welcoming her onto the cross country team, and for helping me believe that I could contribute to the team. Thank you for volunteering to make my dream of a track team come alive.

• Thank you to Connor, someone who for the past six years I have relied on for support. Thank you for listening to my rants, my frustrations. Thank you for supporting me through the hard parts, I love you.

• Thank you to my brother Harry, it has been my pleasure to watch you grow up into the person who you are today. It always amazed me how you can be so talented at art, at piano, at mountain biking. Keep working hard, one day you will create amazing things.

• A huge thank you to my parents. I would like to thank my mom for always being there to talk on the phone, to bounce ideas off of. Thank you to my dad for always coming to my sports games whether it was soccer, baseball, cross country, or track, having you in the stands has always meant a lot. But most of all, thank you for modeling all throughout my life what hard work means and what it means doing things that you are passionate about. You guys are always going to be my heroes.
References


Dixon, J. (2019, November 1). *Title IX and her Experience* [Audio].


great-for-female-athletes-and-terrible-for-female-coaches/2012/07/26/gJQAAFK1BX_story.html

Griffin, P. (2019, November 5). Title IX and her Experience [Audio].


https://www.eiu.edu/historia/Clara%20Mattheessen%20historia%202016.pdf


http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-sports-sponsorship-and-participation-rates-database


Murray, B. (2006). How to Evaluate the Implementation of Title IX at Colleges and Universities


