

**Myths and Realities: Understanding Students' Perceptions of Title IX**

*Amy Cole, Washington State University*

*Tammy Crawford, Washington State University*

*Yong Chae Rhee, Washington State University*

**Socio-cultural**

**Thursday, May 30, 2013**

**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)  
(Room 404)**

**Abstract 2013-043**

**1:45 PM**

The recent fortieth anniversary of Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments inspired much critical scholarly reflection regarding the impact and progress made by the legislation. Such work includes special issues of journals such as the *Marquette Law Review* and covers a broad scope, including media portrayals of female athletes; the legislation's impact on the 2012 Olympics; and its role in transgendered participation (Daniels & Wartena, 2011; Pauline, 2012; Sinisi, 2012). Intended to promote gender equity in educational programs and activities that receive federal funding, Title IX has received much attention for its impact on interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics. Recent research depicts clearly the positive impact of Title IX on women's athletic participation, not only as athletes, but as coaches and administrators (for a detailed review, see Acosta and Carpenter, 2012).

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of the progress made by Title IX, research indicates that there is still significant room for continued progress toward gender equity. The participation gap between male and female athletes still exists. Many believe that male participation opportunities are decreasing as a result of Title IX compliance; however, since Title IX was passed male opportunities have increased (Women's Sports Foundation, 2012). The belief that Title IX has "done its job" is one of many common myths regarding Title IX addressed by prominent organizations such as the Women's Sports Foundation. It is this framework of misconceptions and myths from which we approach our study. We chose to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students to evaluate their understanding of the legislation and its impacts. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which undergraduates believe the predominant myths regarding Title IX. By investigating what students actually know and what they believe they know, in conjunction with their beliefs in the legislation's progress and their own experiences, we intend to paint a picture of the pervasiveness of the myths surrounding Title IX. The following seven hypotheses were tested:

H1: Students' actual knowledge will be different from their perceived knowledge.

H2: Student athletes' actual knowledge will be higher than non-athletes' actual knowledge.

H3: Students who have had a class that covers Title IX will have higher actual knowledge than those who have not had Title IX covered in class.

H4: Female students will have higher actual knowledge than male students.

H5: Compared to male students, female students will have higher correlations with the dependent variables (see below).

H6: Compared to male student athletes, female student athletes will have higher correlations with the dependent variables (see below).

H7: Females with high actual knowledge will score lower on the dependent variable scales than women with low actual knowledge.

A questionnaire was distributed to undergraduates (N=1137) at two large NCAA Division I universities in the Pacific Northwest; 725 completed questionnaires were considered usable for the analysis. Ninety-seven percent of respondents received secondary education in the U.S. Respondents self-reported their academic majors as follows: 46% are studying education, health science, sport management, or athletic training; 24% are liberal arts or social science majors, and 22% reported their major as natural sciences. Fifty-eight percent (414) were male (64 were athletes) and 42% (309) were female (74 were athletes). Thirty-one percent of total respondents reported having Title IX discussed in some form of curriculum. The questionnaire consisted of twelve scaled-items (three per variable) measuring the dependent variables of perceived knowledge (what students believe they know about Title IX), success (their belief that the legislation reached its goals), satisfaction (with their own sport participation experience) and education (if they believe more education about Title IX is needed). The response format for all of the items was a 6-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. To avoid response bias from order effect, the items were randomly placed in the questionnaire. Construct validity was established through

## 2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

expert review and, following the administration of the instrument, Confirmatory Factor Analysis to assess the psychometric properties of the scales. As indicated by  $X^2/df = 304.20/196 = 1.55$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .05, the measurement model achieved good fit for the data. All factor loadings ranging from .71 to .94. AVE values ranged from .778 to .938. Actual knowledge was measured with fourteen true/false items compiled through a literature review of the prominent myths about Title IX. In order to assess the measurement properties of the scale a face validity test was performed through a Title IX expert group. Sport participation at various levels was assessed with three items. Finally, items measuring demographic characteristics of participants were also included in the questionnaire.

To test the hypotheses, simultaneous equations modeling was performed. The initial model showed good fit to the data ( $X^2/df = 304.20/196 = 1.55$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .05). We found support for hypotheses one, four, five, and six, while hypotheses two, three, and seven were disproved. In order to see the moderation effect of gender, participation in NCAA sports, and Title IX curriculum, we performed a series of multi-group analyses. Fit indices for the gender ( $X^2/df = 497.76/102 = 4.8$ , RMSEA = .07, CFI = .93, TLI = .91, SRMR = .16), participation ( $X^2/df = 515.35/54 = 5.05$ , RMSEA = .07, CFI = .93, TLI = .91, SRMR = .18), and Title IX curriculum ( $X^2/df = 492.32/54 = 4.82$ , RMSEA = .07, CFI = .93, TLI = .91, SRMR = .18) showed moderate fit to the data. A negative correlation was found between perceived and actual knowledge of all students. Student athletes were found to have lower actual knowledge than non-athletes, while female students had higher knowledge than male students. No difference exists between students who have had curriculum on Title IX and those who have not. When compared with male students, female students scored higher on all of the dependent variable scales (all statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ), meaning female students were more satisfied with their participation experience and were more likely to believe Title IX has been successfully implemented. Similar relationships were found when comparing male student-athletes to female student-athletes. Finally, it was found that women with high actual knowledge scored higher on all dependent variable scales than women with low actual knowledge.

Our findings indicate that perceived knowledge does not match actual knowledge, indicating the need for ongoing education to promote understanding that gender equity has not been achieved, despite tremendous progress. Education is needed to help both men and women understand that males have not been victimized as a result of Title IX legislation. Too often Title IX, or women themselves, are blamed for the results of administrative decisions made in an effort to promote opportunity for female athletes and administrators. Our research suggests that current efforts at education are insufficient and that the delivery of this education must be considered.