

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

## Title IX Misperceptions: What Does it Hold for our Future

*Brenda Riemer, Eastern Michigan University*

*Erica Zonder, Eastern Michigan University*

**Professional preparation**

**Thursday, May 30, 2013**

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

**Abstract 2013-069**

**3:50 PM**

**(Room 415)**

The 40th Anniversary of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 took place in 2012. The assumption after all these years could be that girls and women are treated the same in athletic departments. However, the opposite is true. The Sharp Center's (2012) released a research report which determined that gender equity in interscholastic sport decreased; opportunities for boys increased at a greater percentage than opportunities for girls. In short, boys still have more opportunities to participate in sport.

The reality of athletic opportunity in 2012-2013 is different from what Felshin (1974) wrote two years after the law was passed. Felshin wrote that sport would "be symbolic of women's rights and gains" (p. 39). She believed that athletic department budgets would dictate teams becoming co-sexual (her term), and that in the 21st century women would have liberated sport as a male domain. The vision of those who supported Title IX and Felshin has not happened, partly, it could be argued, because sport administrators must understand the law and educate their departments about Title IX.

Sanger & Mathes (1997) were interested in the perceptions of Title IX compliance by athletic directors, faculty athletic representatives and women's basketball coaches in Division III (NCAA). The results of this study indicated that the perception of Title IX compliance by the coaches differed from that of their athletic directors and FARs. Additionally, the participant data of this study indicated that "women were highly under-represented as athletic directors and faculty representatives, and over represented as women's basketball coaches" (p. 15).

In a study about perceptions of Title IX compliance by student athletes, results indicated that female athletes report that men were treated better than women regarding access to training facilities, practice and playing fields, the pool and the track (Parente, 2008). Additionally, women believed that males were treated better in terms of facility scheduling, distribution of meal money, new equipment, and team publicity. Likewise, Jacob and Mathes (1996) determined that female athletes were not "extremely knowledgeable" (p. 38) about Title IX (63.7%). Variables that influenced knowledge included having a woman coach, and those who competed on high priority teams.

The perception of students, coaches and athletic directors about Title IX informs us about the present. All the results indicate a disconnect between what the athletic director perceives as reality and what the other individuals see as the reality about Title IX compliance. One area about Title IX which has not been studied is the knowledge of Title IX by future high school and collegiate athletic administrators. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Title IX of the future high school and collegiate athletic administrators.

Two classifications of collegiate students were participants. The first group consisted of sport management majors (undergraduate majors and graduate students). The second group of students consisted of student-athletes.

Sport management majors were given the questionnaire in one of four classes which ranged from an introductory course to a graduate course. The researcher entered the classroom and informed the participants about the study. A two part questionnaire was passed out to each student which included the consent form, a page of demographic questions (gender, age, year in school, career goals, major), and a page asking about their knowledge of Title IX (what is Title IX, positives of Title IX, negatives of Title IX, and how they knew about Title IX). Once a participant completed the questionnaire, they removed the top sheet (consent form) and placed it in a separate envelope from the questionnaire, which went into a different folder. The questionnaire took, on average, 15 minutes to complete. Twenty-one graduate students and 86 undergraduate students completed the questionnaire. Student athlete participants took the questionnaire on-line via Survey Monkey. To date, 55 student athletes have completed the questionnaire.

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

In general, results for graduate students indicated that the majority of the respondents had some idea about Title IX in terms of gender equity, but were not aware of what the law actually covers. For example, three respondents stated that you must have an equal amount of female and male sports, and four stated that the law only applied to collegiate sports. Three respondents did not know what Title IX was, including one who stated that it was for handicap accessibility in buildings. Only one respondent mentioned that sport is one aspect of Title IX. In contrast, 48% undergraduate students had no idea about what Title IX is, and only 5/86 understood the law. The presentation will include the responses to the complete questionnaire.

The data for student athletes will be available at the time of the conference, as data collection ends November 7, 2012.

In conclusion, the results suggest that sport management majors and student athletes have heard of the law, but do not know the details about the law. They know that it has something to do with sport and equity, but do not understand how it effects high school and collegiate administrative decision making. For example, for these participants it would be realistic to have them express concern about compliance issues with Title IX. They have not been taught about the law, nor have they been asked to work on case studies about the law. Forty years after the fact, we have soon to be professionals not understanding the law.

Athletic directors at all levels of sport will face new challenges in the future. It is possible that at the collegiate level, the O'Bannon court case might alter how football players and male basketball players are compensated (Solomon, 2012), plus different forms of television revenue will dictate what sports athletic directors choose to favor with increased budgets and facilities. It is our ethical duty as sport management professors to make certain that all sport managers understand the law.