

College Women Athletes' Knowledge and Perceptions of Title IX

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Despite the passage of Title IX more than twenty years ago, women's participation in intercollegiate athletics in 1991 (30.9%) has remained relatively unchanged since 1984 (30.8%) (NCAA Gender Equity Study, March 1992). Title IX, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities including interscholastic and intercollegiate athletic programs, originally was viewed by many, especially women, as a federal statutory protection for female athletes' rights (Wilde, 1993). Confusion regarding the intent, interpretation and implementation of the statute, however, delayed wide spread institutional compliance (Hogan, 1979, November/December). Additionally, the slow resolution of Title IX complaints filed by The Office of Civil Rights delayed the reduction of sex discrimination in sport.

Title IX, however, was further strengthened by the United States Supreme Court ruling in the non-sport case of *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* (1992). Here the Supreme Court concluded that compensatory damages are an available remedy for victims of deliberate Title IX discrimination (Wilde, 1993). This provided a strong financial incentive for institutions to eliminate discrimination (Wilde, 1993). Experts believe that this ruling will have the greatest impact on college sports. Adding to the momentum of Title IX was the position of Assistant Secretary of the Education for Civil Rights, who made it clear that henceforth sex discrimination complaints would receive top priority (Lederman, 1992).

In the past few years, a variety of successful lawsuits have been brought forward by student athletes to maintain and promote female athletic opportunities. The courts have been called upon not only to prevent cuts of existing women's teams, but to use Title IX to affirma-

tively seek new women's teams, (Shaw, 1995). Female athletes have successfully sued for the reinstatement of athletic teams cut by athletic departments (*Coven v. Brown University*, 1992; *Favia v. Indiana University of Pennsylvania*, 1992; *Roberts v. Colorado State University* 1993; *Howlett v. Gordon*, 1992; and for granting varsity status to a women's club sport, *Cook v. Colgate University*, 1992). During 1992, several universities (University of New Mexico, University of New Hampshire, University of Massachusetts), reacting to filed or threatened suits settled grievances related to Title IX. California State University at Fullerton (LA Times, June 7, 1992, B12) settled a lawsuit by agreeing to not only maintain the women's volleyball team but add to women's soccer team and equalize spending on women's and men's team within 10 years. In 1993, Auburn University agreed to add to women's varsity soccer team and pay \$140,000 to settle a Title IX lawsuit (Blum, 1993). The University of Texas (Blum, 1993), with 47% of the undergraduate enrollment women and only 23% of the varsity athletes female, settled a lawsuit by agreeing to double the number of women in participating sports. Ongoing disputes are still pending at Bowdoin College, University of Southern California, and Louisiana State University (Wilde, 1993). Each new complaint and successful resolution in the courts has added to the national movement towards equity in women's intercollegiate sports.

Interestingly, in the majority of cases from 1992 to the present, the plaintiffs have been women athletes who are taking universities to court (The Des Moines Register, February 2, 1994). Unlike teachers, coaches, or administrators, whose jobs and reputations might be in jeopardy for filing a suit against the institution by which they are employed, female athletes

frustrated by lack of change seem willing in the name of equity to challenge athletic departments. The ability to use Title IX as a vehicle for seeking equal opportunity, obviously rests on athletes' knowledge of Title IX. To date, no research has examined female athletes' knowledge of Title IX. The purpose of this study therefore was (1) to determine women athletes' knowledge about Title IX and (2) to assess their perceptions of their schools' athletic program's compliance with Title IX.

Method

Subjects

All women athletes (N=121) from a medium-sized Division I university with an enrollment of 20,000 were contacted and asked to participate in the study. This school had never been sued on the basis of Title IX; however, it was reviewed by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights in 1992. The results of this review were not made public until 1995 after this study was completed. Seventy-six percent (N=92) of those contacted representing nine sports (basketball, cross country, golf, gymnastics, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball) participated in the study. Since many cross country athletes compete in track, these two teams were merged for the purpose of analysis. More than 50% of the members of each of the nine teams were represented in the study.

Instrument

A review of the literature indicated that no instrument existed to measure athletes' knowledge of Title IX. Therefore, the investigator designed a 112 item questionnaire to assess athletes' demographic characteristics (N=34), knowledge of Title IX (N=48), and perceptions of their athletic programs compliance with Title IX (N=30). The knowledge of Title IX items were based upon the 1978 Office for Civil Rights' General Approach to Determining Compliance. The knowledge and perception items were drawn from four major conceptual areas (financial assistance, effective accommodation of interest and abilities, athletic benefits and opportunities, general items about the statute).

The knowledge section of the questionnaire asked athletes to determine if a statement about Title IX was true or false and then to indicate on

an 11-point scale how sure they were of their responses. An 11 point scale was selected based on the certainty method because it reflects more of the differences between individuals in relation to certain characteristics than a shorter scale. A "1" indicated that an athlete was "not very certain" of a response and an "11" indicated that an athlete was "very certain" of their answer. This section was scored by determining first if an item was answered correctly. If the item was answered correctly, the value for the response was calculated by adding 12 to the number circled on the certainty scale. For example, a correct item with a 2 circled on the certainty scale would receive a value of 14. Scores for correct items, therefore, ranged from 13 to 23. In contrast, if an incorrect response was scored, the value on the certainty scale was subtracted from 12. Incorrect scores, therefore, ranged from 1 to 11. This method of scoring avoided negative values. The means and standards deviations of items by conceptual area may be seen in Appendix A.

Validity of the items was determined by submitting them for review to a panel of ten identified Title IX experts. These experts included lawyers (N=4), athletic administrators (N=2), and sport management and law professors (N=4). Reliability was computed for all items using the Kuder Richardson (KR21) correlation coefficient. This yielded across all items of value of .94. By conceptual areas the KR21's were: financial assistance .55, accommodation of student interest .95, athletic benefits and opportunities .92, general items .95.

The perception items asked athletes to indicate to what extent they felt their athletic program was in compliance with Title IX by responding again to an 11-point scale (1="not at all in compliance", 11="totally in compliance"). The validity of these items also was based on a review by experts and computation of internal consistency measure. The KR21 across all items was .94. By conceptual area the correlation coefficients were .88 for financial aid, .96 for student interest, .94 for athletic benefits and opportunities. Rank ordered means and standard deviations by item appear in Appendix B.

Results and Discussion

The mean percent correct response of all

athletes on the knowledge items was 63.7% and the overall item mean using the certainty scale was 14.04. Analysis by conceptual area showed that athletes were most correct when responding to items regarding athletic benefits (71.2%), followed by student interest (62.4%), general items (63.8%) and financial aid (47.5%). Athletes performed better on those items that dealt with aspects of Title IX which affect them on a daily basis. They were least knowledgeable about lesser known aspects of financial aid such as work study, non-athletic loans, non-athletic grants and in-state and out-of-state scholarships (Appendix A). Table 1 shows the mean scores by conceptual area employing the certainty scale (1-23 range). These parallel the percentage correct data, but also indicate students "level of certainty" regarding their responses.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviations by Conceptual Area for Knowledge of Title IX

<u>Conceptual Area</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>s</u>
Student Interest	14.12	3.60
Athletic Benefits	14.52	3.60
General	13.81	2.75
Financial Aid	11.95	0.92

In order to determine whether athletes' knowledge of Title IX varied by academic standing, college athletic honors, team affiliation, gender of head coach, age, eligibility, state of home residency, and academic honors, a series of analyses of variance were conducted. These produced significant differences by academic standing, college athletic honors, team affiliation and gender of head coach. A review of mean scores by item showed that upper-class (juniors, seniors) athletes (M=14.4, s=1.2),

whose longer team membership may increase their experience with equity issues, were significantly more knowledgeable about Title IX than underclass athletes (M=13.7, s=1.3), $F(1,1)=5.53$, $p<.05$).

Athletes with female head coaches (M=14.3, s=1.4) also were significantly more knowledgeable about Title IX, than athletes with male head coaches (M=13.7, s=1.1)=4.49, $p<.05$). Women head coaches appear more likely than their male counterparts to discuss or relate to equity issues with athletes. Comments made by athletes to the researcher after testing such as, "We talk about this stuff", "Coach makes sure we know our rights," "Coach had someone come and talk to us about Title IX," indicate that women coaches, who have historically struggled to obtain more comparable support and resources for women's programs, tend to point out to athletes their rights to equitable treatment in athletic programs.

Athletes who earned college sport honors (All-American, All-Conference) also were significantly more knowledgeable (M=14.5, s=1.2) about Title IX than athletes who had not received such honors (M=13.9, s=1.3, $F(1,1)=4.86$, $p<.05$). Highly-skilled athletes, who often are recruited by various schools, may be more knowledgeable about Title IX because they have compared programs in terms of equity issues. They also may be more sensitive to whether their talent receives the same rewards as their male counterparts.

Team affiliation also was a significant factor $F(7,7)=4.11$, $p<.05$, impacting on athletes' knowledge of Title IX. The Scheffe follow-up test showed that volleyball players were significantly more knowledgeable (M=15.9, s=.50) about Title IX than basketball players (M=12.9, s=.80), swimmers (M=13.6, s=1.1) and track/cross country athletes (M=13.8, s=1.05). There were no significant differences between the other teams. The greater knowledge of volleyball players seems to parallel the increased benefits and emphasis given this team by the athletic department within the past few years. Women's volleyball also has no parallel men's sport and competes for practice facilities and times with men's and women's basketball. volleyball players, therefore, may be more aware of differential treatment of teams.

Knowledge of Title IX By Conceptual Area

Having examined athletes' responses across all items, subsequent analyses compared responses by the four conceptual areas from which the Title IX items were originally drawn. Significant differences were found only in the conceptual area of "financial aid." Here athletes differed significantly by academic classification and team affiliation. As found previously, upper-class (junior, senior) athletes ($M=12.4$, $s=2.91$) were significantly more $F(1,1)=5.53$, $p<.05$ knowledgeable about Title IX regulations governing financial aid than under-class (freshman, sophomore) athletes ($M=11.5$, $s=2.8$). Upper-class athletes' longer history of receiving financial aid appears to increase their understanding of these regulations.

Volleyball ($M=13.4$, $s=2.0$) players scored significantly higher ($F(7,7)=2.01$, $p<.05$) than basketball players ($M=10.4$, $s=2.9$) and swimmers ($M=10.5$, $s=3.5$) on financial aid items. Gymnasts ($M=12.2$, $s=2.1$), tennis players ($M=12.1$, $s=1.9$), golfers ($M=12.2$, $s=2.7$) and track/cross country athletes ($M=12$, $s=2.7$) also similarly scored significantly higher than basketball players. Historically, basketball players receive the maximum allowable benefits and so financial aid may not be an issue for these athletes.

Athletes' Perceptions of Institutional Compliance with Title IX

The second portion of the study focused on athletes' perceptions of the extent to which they believed that their athletic department provided comparable opportunity for female and male athletes (Appendix B). Recalling that an 11-point scale (1=Not At All In Compliance, 11=Totally In Compliance) was employed, across all items the mean score was $M=8.4$, $s=2.2$ with individual item scores ranging from $M=9.57$, $s=1.8$ (weight facilities) to $M=5.51$, $s=3.1$ (publicity). The overall mean of 8.4 suggests that while athletes did not view their program as "totally" in compliance, they did not see it as drastically non-compliant. Of the 29 items, only two received mean scores lower than seven. The lowest mean score, associated with publicity, suggested that women athletes felt that their team posters and media guides were not of com-

parable quality to men's. They also viewed training table arrangements ($M=6.7$, $s=3.4$) provided as inequitable. At the time of the study, although two women's teams (basketball, volleyball) and two men's teams (football, basketball) were on training table, eating the same food at the same facility, female athletes who enjoy such benefits. The number of male basketball and football players greatly exceeds the representation of women athletes. The item that asked for an overall evaluation of their programs' compliance received a mean score of 8.2, $s=1.2$ suggesting that athletes viewed their program as more in compliance than to compliant at all.

Analyses of the compliance items by the conceptual areas showed that athletes were most satisfied with equivalence of benefits in terms of effective accommodation of student interest ($M=8.39$, $s=2.33$) and least with financial assistance ($M=7.4$, $s=2.4$). Other athletic benefits and opportunities scores ($M=8.31$, $s=1.43$) fell slightly below student interests and abilities. The OCR report on this institution made public in February of 1995, a year after this study, found disparities between women and men's teams in spending on food allowances, travel accommodations, locker room facilities, recruiting, and athletic scholarships (Witosky, 1995).

Few significant differences were found by various sub-groups. Athletes in their second year of eligibility ($M=8.5$, $s=1.3$) rated their program's compliance with Title IX financial aid regulations significantly ($F(3,3)=3.25$, $p<.05$) higher than those in their first year ($M=7.1$, $s=1.5$) and third year ($M=6.8$, $s=1.7$).

Athletes with female head coaches scored the accommodation of student interest times ($M=8.8$, $s=1.8$) significantly higher ($F(1,1)=5.99$, $p<.05$) than athletes coached by men ($M=7.7$, $s=2.6$). Recalling that athletes coached by women were more knowledgeable of Title IX, it might have been expected they would have been more sensitized to inequity and perhaps more critical. The athletes' perceptions may reflect that this institution fields more women's teams than any in three conference. Athletes may also have noted directly in local and state media, coaches comments about the positive influence high level competition has had a n improving team performance.

Finally, to determine whether a relationship

existed between knowledge of Title IX and athletes' perceptions of institutional compliance, an analysis of variance was computed on the overall ranked knowledge items scores and compliance items scores. This yielded a significant difference ($F(91,91)=2.10, p<.05$) indicating that the more knowledgeable the athlete, the more critical they tended to be of their athletic program's compliance with Title IX. It appears that the increased number of law suits, media attention, and public debate associated with Title IX may not only add to athletes' knowledge, but may increase their awareness of inequities in their program. This in turn may serve to fuel the use of the courts by athletes to reduce discrimination in intercollegiate athletics.

Summary and Conclusions

The result of this study of female college athletes at a single midwestern university showed that they are not extremely knowledgeable (mean correct response rate 63.7%) about various facets of Title IX, although this varies by the type of information, gender of head coach, college sport honors and team affiliation. Athletes are most knowledgeable about equitable treatment of women athletes in terms of facts most directly associated with their personal involvement (athletic benefits, student interest) and least about general and financial aid concerns. Women coached by women coaches, who also earned college sport honors and participated on certain athletic department high priority sport teams, were more knowledgeable than other athletes about Title IX. Similarly, athletes' perceptions of their own program's compliance showed reasonable satisfaction, with most satisfaction on items related to student interest and least on those associated with financial aid. Athletes on teams coached by women were significantly more satisfied with institutional compliance in the student interest area (competitive opportunities, quality and type of competition) than women on teams coached by men. This was attributed to the fact that this institution offers nine women sports and has in the past three years increased the level of competition in order to enhance team performance. It appears that gender of the head coach impacts on female athletes' knowledge and perceptions of

equity. The finding that the more knowledgeable an athlete was of Title IX, the more critical they were of program compliance was not a surprising finding. The recent lawsuits brought by women athletes indicates that once athletes are armed with knowledge of Title IX, they are not only sensitive to non-compliance, but may use the courts to seek greater equity for women in sport. On the other hand, lack of knowledge of Title IX may explain, in part, why more universities have not yet been sued.

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B. Cases

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- Favia v. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 812 F. Supp. 578 (W.D. Pa), aff'd 7 F. 3d. 332 (3d cir. 1993) (W.D.Pa., November 2, 1992).
- Franklin V. Gwinnett County Public Schools, 112 S. Ct. 1028, 1038 (1992).
- *Cook v. Colgate University, Docker No. 90-DV-411 N.D.N.Y., Sept. 28, 1992).
- *Howlett v. Gordon, Civil Action Case No. 680299 (Cal. Super. Ct., Orange County, May 22, 1992). (Entry of consent order).
- *Roberts v. Colorado State University, 814 F. Supp. 1507, 1512 (D. Colo., 1993), aff'd 998 F. 2d 824 (10 Cir. 1993), Cert denied, 114 S. Ct. 580 (1993).

C. Legislation and Regulations

- Title IX Education Amendments of 1972, Publ. L. No. 92-318, §§901-09, 86 Stat. 235, codified at 20 U.S.C.

Appendix A

Title IX Questionnaire Means and Standard Deviations by Item and Conceptual Area

	<u>M</u>	<u>S</u>
<u>Financial Assistance</u>		
• The total number of athletic scholarships given to female athletes must equal the total number of scholarships given to male athletes. (F)	12.38	7.67
• The number of out-of-state scholarships given to male and female student athletes need not be considered when calculating the proportion of aid given to each gender. (F)	11.41	6.03
• When calculating the proportion of aid given to male and female student athletes, non-athletic "financial aid grants" must be considered. (T)	11.45	6.03
• When calculating the proportion of aid given to male and female student athletes, non-athletic "financial aid loans" are not a consideration. (F)	10.57	5.75
• Work study opportunities received by student athletes must be considered when calculating the proportion of financial assistance which female and male athletes receive. (T)	12.47	5.77
• Scholarships for revenue producing sports (i.e., football and men's basketball), need not be considered when determining the equity of financial assistance provided for male and female student athletes. (F)	13.43	6.47
<u>Effective Accommodation of Interest and Abilities</u>		
• The same number of sports must be offered for women and men. (F)	9.85	8.12
• Both female and male athletes must have a challenging competition schedule, based on their abilities. (T)	10.76	7.02
• If an institution offers baseball for men, it must offer softball for women. (F)	13.25	7.37
• Men's and women's teams must compete against the same schools. (F)	18.39	5.96
• If a significant number of women are interested in a sport, a school must ensure that every effort is made to afford these women an opportunity to participate in that sport. (T)	13.42	6.27
• When there is a need to reduce the number of teams at an institution, an athletic department must consider the historical inequities for women before eliminating any women's or		

men's programs. (T)	12.66	6.05
• If there is a men's varsity baseball team at a school, but no women's softball team, a woman who is talented enough to play shortstop must be allowed an opportunity to try out for the men's baseball team. (T)	17.45	4.99
• One of the tests to ensure that both genders have equal opportunities in intercollegiate athletics is to compare the proportion of each gender in the undergraduate enrollment to the proportion of females and male student athletes. (T)	15.38	5.69
• Since basketball is labeled a "contact sport", a school is not required to allow a woman to go out for the men's team, even if there is no women's team. (T)	10.35	5.19
• The overall guiding principle of the statute is to ensure that female and male student athletes have comparable opportunities. (T)	19.46	4.44

Athletic Benefits and Opportunities

• Men's and women's head coaches must have relatively equal numbers of years of coaching experience, (e.g., if the men's golf coach has 10 years of experience at the Division level, the women's golf coach must have around 10 years of experience at the same level. (F)	16.98	5.74
• Availability of academic tutoring must be comparable for female and male student athletes. (T)	19.79	3.75
• If men and women in the same sport compete in the same facility, they must be given a similar number of practice for that facility. (T)	19.03	4.43
• If men's basketball team receives new uniforms in 1992, then the women's basketball team must receive new uniforms in 1992. (F)	16.79	4.78
• An athletic program must send the same amount of money on travel for women's and men's athletic teams. (F)	14.15	7.13
• When assigning coaching responsibilities, athletic programs must ensure, overall, that coaches of women's teams have a similar percentage of their time allocated for coaching as coaches of men's teams. (T)	16.01	5.29
• Coaches of the women's and men's golf teams must receive equal pay. (F)	16.96	5.37
• During an official recruiting visitation, prospective female and male student athletes must receive comparable benefits, (e.g., type of travel to and from the school, room and board accommodations while at the school, etc.). (T)	17.85	5.58
• Female and male basketball players must have locker rooms of similar quality, (e.g., comparable lockers, shower facilities, sound systems, etc.). (T)	15.12	6.78
• The amount of practice time allowed for women's and men's teams in the same sport that share a facility must be substantially equal. (T)	18.99	4.09
• When teams are traveling, athletic departments must spend the same amount of money for men's and women's hotel accommodations. (T)	11.91	7.08
• Prime practice times for a shared facility must be available to women's and men's teams in comparable sports on an equal basis. (T)	17.40	5.26

• The same number of certified athletic trainers do not need to be assigned to the women's and men's swimming teams, rather the training support should be based on each team's needs. (T)	13.20	6.78
• The men's and women's cross country teams should be scheduled for approximately the same number of competition dates. (T)	16.16	5.14
• The same number of academic tutors must be available to both female and male student athletes. (F)	4.71	4.51
• The number of assistant coaches available to coach women athletes must be equal to the number of assistant coaches available to coach men. (F)	11.43	6.18
• The amount of secretarial and clerical assistance provided to men's and women's sports programs should be proportional to the size of each program. (T)	15.30	5.26
• The same number of bats, balls, and gloves must be purchased for the softball and baseball teams. (F)	14.11	5.70
• The recruiting budget for women's sports program must be equal to the men's sports programs. (F)	10.95	6.82
• Weight training facilities for women athletes must contain the same type of equipment as that for men. (F)	6.65	5.39
• An athletic program must purchase the same brand name equipment for both genders (e.g., Wilson, Champion, etc.). (F)	14.98	6.18
• A sports information office must spend a comparable amount of money for women's and men's media guides. (T)	15.16	6.46
• The length of stay at hotels/motels before and after competitive events away from school should be the same for women's and men's teams in comparable sports. (T)	15.87	5.30
• There must be a head men's athletic trainer and head women's athletic trainer. (F)	9.01	6.36
• Women and men in the same sport are not required to compete in comparable facilities, (e.g., seating capacity), if the spectator interest in each team is different. (T)	12.01	6.12
• Team posters for the women's and men's gymnastics teams should be of similar quality, (e.g., size, bond of paper, color). (T)	13.84	6.35
• The amount of release time to recruit allowed for coaches of women's and men's teams must be similar. (T)	17.79	4.15

General Items

• The federal agency responsible for enforcing Title IX is the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education. (T)	13.38	3.87
• Booster clubs may support a team of just one gender. (T)	10.59	7.00
• If an athletic program does not receive funding directly from the federal government, it is not required to follow the rules of Title IX. (F)	12.26	6.09
• Student athletes, who believe they are victims of sex discrimination, may bring a lawsuit against the university. (T)	18.80	3.90
• A student athlete who files a lawsuit based on Title IX can be personally awarded monetary damages. (T)	14.00	5.53

Appendix B

Rank Ordered Means and Standard Deviations of Athletes' Perceptions of Institutional Compliance with Title IX

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>S</u>
Weight training facilities	9.57	1.8
Time of day practices are scheduled	9.35	1.7
Number/length of practices scheduled	9.25	1.7
Availability of tutoring	9.25	2.5
Procedures for obtaining tutoring	9.21	2.3
Number of competitive events scheduled per sport	9.14	1.7
Time of day competitive events scheduled	8.91	2.0
Suitability of equipment (i.e., regulation NCAA sanctioned)	8.90	2.0
Number of athletic trainers assigned sports	8.83	2.4
Practice facilities	8.76	2.4
Housing furnished during travel	8.57	2.4
Length of stay before and after competitive events	8.57	2.3
Competitive opportunities (number of sports)	8.52	2.2
Modes of transportation (plane, bus, etc.)	8.52	2.4
Game facilities	8.48	2.4
Availability of coaching (number of full-time, part-time coaches)	8.38	2.8
Quality and type of competition (level of competition)	8.30	2.5
Amount of time coaches have to coach and recruit	8.24	2.4
Quality of equipment (condition, durability, overall quality)	8.20	2.5
Hiring experienced coaches	8.22	2.6
Amount of equipment	8.17	2.4
Maintenance and replacement of equipment	8.15	2.6
Benefits provided recruits (mode of transportation, meals, housing, etc.)	8.09	2.4
Meal allowances	7.82	2.8
Proportion of non-athletic financial aid (e.g. loans, grants, etc.)	7.41	2.5
Secretarial and clerical support	7.39	2.6
Proportion of athletic grants and waivers for women and man	7.37	2.4
Training table	6.68	3.4
Publicity provided	5.51	3.1