

Title IX: The Cooption of Females into the Male Collegiate Athletic Model

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Since 1982, female college athletes have competed under the aegis of the NCAA, having lost both their original genteel, play model and the student-athlete AIAW model. With this loss of autonomy went loss of jobs in coaching and administration.

The most recent study of college athletics, done for the Presidents Commission of the NCAA and devoted to the NCAA's Division I, draws no distinction between male and female athletes in its first report, but promises further reports on both female and black athletes. This lumping together of sexism and racism is, however, conceptually mistaken because few alumnae are willing or able to help female athletes circumvent NCAA recruitment and financial rules, or provide post-college jobs, while even the best female players have few professional career opportunities. All male college athletes, in whatever NCAA Division, fulfill a societally acceptable role, while the nature of participation in sport for females is still debatable.

Controversies in feminist thought affect the present female collegiate athletic model. Title IX represents the views of feminists who believe reform can be attained within the existing structure of American society; feminists of a more radical persuasion assert that to accept the male sport model is to be coopted into a system that values hierarchy, elitism, and a dangerous physical and psychological competitiveness. Such feminists hope to create an oppositional female sport model, stressing process rather than result, supportiveness, and an ethic of care.

This proposed model, however, is not a female but an amateur sport model. Its characteristics are those of the sport played by girls and women in British schools and colleges for at least eighty years, a model derived from the *male* British public (private) schools, reflecting a conscious dichotomy in *male* sport between amateurism and commercialism.

Title IX has coopted female collegiate athletes into not a specifically male but specifically commercial sport model, one that has few rewards for females. This raises questions concerning how and why U.S. colleges ever managed to sell the model of the student-athlete, much less sustain it; when and why student-athletes began to perceive themselves as "meat on the hoof"; what part U.S. colleges have played in producing professional athletes in sports other than baseball, basketball, and football; and what constitute male, female, or androgynous models of sport.