

The Right to Participate and the Right to Compete: Stanford Women's Athletics, 1956-1995

Introduction by Professor Estelle Freedman

The Stanford University Archives provide rich primary sources for studying a range of historical topics, including gender and education. Lena Giger's Writing in the Major research paper made excellent use of university documents, personal correspondence, student reports, and oral histories within the archives to explore the changing meaning of women's participation in college sports. While she began with questions about the effects of Title IX of the landmark 1972 Education Act, the primary sources led her back to a generation of women physical educators and athletic staff. Giger developed an original analysis of the transition from an earlier emphasis on broad female participation in sports to one of more elite intercollegiate competition. Rather than tell a story of linear progress she identified ongoing tensions over these competing goals while drawing out continuing struggles for athletic equity, before and after Title IX. The essay won the Jerry Anderson Prize, The Hoefler Prize and the Francisco C. Lopes Award.

The Right to Participate and the Right to Compete: Stanford Women's Athletics, 1956-1995

Lena Giger

“Athletics was a male preserve ... the most macho part of the university,” recalled Richard Lyman, Stanford University’s seventh president.¹ He explained that most men during the mid-twentieth century dismissed women’s athletics: “[Men think] we know how to do this and we don’t want [the women] mucking around in it.” Lyman’s characterization represented the attitudes of many male administrators and coaches, both locally and nationally. He did not, however, take into account the views of women involved in athletics. During the late 1960s and 1970s, when young women demanded the right to compete in intercollegiate athletics, they faced opposition not only from men but also from female athletics administrators who questioned the role of competition among women athletes. This paper explores a generational shift in women’s attitudes towards collegiate athletics at Stanford University, both before and after Title IX mandated educational gender equality in 1972. I argue that an older generation of female educators sought equality through participation while a younger generation of female athletes successfully advocated for equality through intercollegiate competition.

Many scholars have focused on the importance of Title IX for gender equality in college athletics. After Title IX became law during the rise of Second Wave feminism, most historians have argued that it ushered in a “revolution” for women’s athletics.² This law initiated one of the first national movements to challenge the

1 Richard Lyman, interview by Jennifer Dalton, April 29, 1995, transcript, 3, Box 2, Women’s Athletics at Stanford Collection (SC0496), Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA (Hereafter WAS Collection).

2 Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 250. See also Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 226.

male-dominated world of competitive sports and resulted in a drastic increase in female participation in college athletics. Although few have disputed these claims, some historians have criticized the law for perpetuating implicit forms of gender discrimination. In her history of women's sports, Susan Cahn explains that although the implementation of Title IX meant increased funding and opportunities for women athletes, the insistence on sex-segregated sports by most universities "reinforced sexual divisions and inequalities in the athletic world."³ On the other hand, scholars such as Kelly Belanger have argued that "most women's sports advocates welcomed a sex-separate model" because it allowed women opportunities without having to compete against men.⁴ Rather than question the value of separate women's sports, this paper asks: what events preceded the passage of Title IX such that its proponents saw the need for national change? Furthermore, how and why did the views of women who actively participated in this movement for athletic equality between the 1950s and 1970s differ?

To address these questions, this case study traces a generational shift from an emphasis on participation to one on competition in women's athletics. The first section views the 1950s and 1960s through the voices of Stanford Women's Physical Education (WPE) Director Luell Guthrie and physical educator Shirley Schoof. The paper then turns to the era immediately surrounding the enactment of Title IX. I analyze the perspectives of administrators like Guthrie, Schoof, and Pamela Strathairn, who served as WPE Chair from 1968 to 1975, and the opposing views of student athletes, such as Marjorie Shuer ('75). The study concludes by exploring the attitudes surrounding women's athletics during the 1980s and 1990s through the perspectives of women's fencing coach Sherry Posthumous and women's basketball coach Tara VanDerveer. Although this study focuses on Stanford University, it suggests a broader national pattern that, despite movements for equality, women in athletics continued to face gender discrimination long after the implementation of Title IX.

The Era of Participation, 1956-1967

In the late 1950s, few universities distinguished between

3 Cahn, 213.

4 Kelly Belanger, *Invisible Seasons: Title IX and the Fight for Equity in College Sports* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016) 75.

women's athletics and women's physical education, leading to the synonymous terms "female physical educator" and "female coach." Several historians have credited these interchangeable phrases to societal gender constructs, such as the perceived anatomical fragility or the "presupposed lesser athletic ability" of women.⁵ These notions deemed the majority of women unfit for competitive physical endeavors and relegated them to participatory educational activities. Most American universities offered minimal women's physical education courses, many of which only promoted those sports considered feminine at the time, such as tennis, dance, or golf.⁶ Although some women competed in athletics during this era outside of the collegiate setting, most university physical education programs disregarded these competitive exploits and concentrated on recreational, leisurely activities for their female students.⁷

At Stanford University, the women's physical education program paralleled the national trend. During Luell Guthrie's leadership of the WPE Department from 1956 to 1967, the department sponsored courses for female students such as tap dancing, canoeing, tennis, basketball, and skiing.⁸ These classes allowed women the opportunity to participate in sports, remain physically fit, and develop into "wholesome," feminine women. As these classes did not allow for competitive events, some women participated within informal organizations outside of the classroom.⁹ During the mid-1960s, several Stanford women played in the United States Tennis Association Collegiate Tournaments, which provided one of the first opportunities for women's organized athletics. Within the school setting, Stanford female educators, however, rejected the competitive spirit of their students by enforcing equal participation among women in physical education courses, rather than allowing for competition among the female students.

Equal participation was the policy that characterized the

5 Cahn, 213. See also Allen Guttmann, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 108.

6 Luell Guthrie, interview by Margo Davis, February 8, 1978, transcript, 26, Stanford Historical Society Oral History Project, <https://purl.stanford.edu/fr537mg9514> (Hereafter Guthrie Interview).

7 See Cahn, Chapter 5 in *Coming on Strong*.

8 Guthrie Interview, 26-28, 40.

9 Guthrie, Interview, 40.

WPE Department during the mid-twentieth century partially due to the influence of Lou Henry Hoover, the former First Lady of the United States. Throughout the early twentieth century, women of Hoover's generation successfully fought for the right to participate in physical activities. During the 1930s, as an advisor to Stanford's Department of Education, Hoover supported women's participation in physical education and argued, "there should be something for everybody and therefore varsity teams should be minimized."¹⁰ The department adapted her policies and structured its curriculum to incorporate the equal participation model that defined women's physical education in the 1950s and 1960s.

Luell Guthrie and Shirley Schoof were characteristic of the generation of female physical educators who advocated for equal participation. Guthrie joined Stanford's WPE Department staff in the fall of 1936 just as the department began to prioritize participation. Between 1956 and 1971, she served as the of Director of WPE.¹¹ Under her leadership, the department expanded vastly but also provoked controversies between male administrators and female student athletes regarding the direction and ideology of the WPE. While director, Guthrie hired Shirley Schoof in 1964 as a bowling instructor and physical educator. Schoof's workload increased as she taught full-time and coached unofficial women's tennis, swimming and field hockey teams. Although overextended, Schoof remained an instructor for nearly twenty years and concluded her career in 1993 as the Director of Club Sports and Assistant Athletic Director.¹²

While at Stanford, Guthrie and Schoof strove to include a wide range of female students in athletics with the goal of producing well-rounded women. Guthrie described the purpose of her physical education program as a way "to develop a person who is an upstanding, wholesome example." She believed a female student "may not always be the winning person," but could still set a "fine example" of what a woman should be.¹³ Guthrie even implemented co-educational courses to increase overall student enrollment and to reinforce the notion that physical activity, for both

10 Ibid, 48.

11 Ibid, 1-2.

12 Shirley Schoof, Interview by Jennifer Dalton, April 28, 1995, transcript, 1, Box 2, WAS Collection (Hereafter Schoof Interview).

13 Guthrie Interview, 61.

men and women, did not require competition. Schoof seconded the idea that winning did not take priority in women's sports when she recalled her initial years in the WPE Department: "I went in with the attitude of playing every single person on my team . . . Winning was not the whole thing."¹⁴ Guthrie and Schoof's implementation of the department's equal participation ideology perpetuated the lack of competition as well as the belief that equal involvement would lead to greater personal development.

While Guthrie and Schoof encouraged equal participation, they noted financial inequalities between the WPE department and the competition-oriented men's athletics and physical education department. In a collection of women's tennis budgets, Guthrie lamented the drastically smaller allocation of funds for women. The WPE received funding from the university's academic budget while the men's department secured additional aid from alumni donors.¹⁵ The lack of financing for the WPE Department suggests that women's activities took lower priority to the men's department. Besides team funding differences, female educators received no additional compensation for their work as coaches. Schoof discussed her long hours, which began with teaching during the workday and ended with coaching or refereeing most evenings. "The burden of all the teaching and all the coaching," she recalled, "was just extremely difficult and the worst thing was that it was not fair to the players at all."¹⁶ Between the undercompensated and overextended women educators and the lack of internal funding for teams, Schoof insinuated that female students and instructors alike faced gender inequality for their involvement in athletics. In the late-1960s, female students began questioning the educational ideologies of Stanford's WPE Department and advocating for gender equality in athletics.

The Years of Tension, 1968-1985

The push for gender equality in collegiate athletics oc-

14 Quoted in Kelli Anderson, "The Fight for Fair Play," *Stanford Magazine*, (September/October 2016), Paragraph 18, https://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=88434.

15 Luell Guthrie, Tennis Travel Budget 1965-1966, Luell W. Guthrie Papers (SC0329), Box 2, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA (Hereafter Guthrie Collection).

16 Schoof Interview, 3.

curred against the backdrop of the Civil Rights, anti-war, and Second Wave feminist movements. Nationally, black student activism escalated through campus strikes and militant rallies to protest racism.¹⁷ In 1968, following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the Stanford Black Student Union demanded that the university increase enrollment of black students, develop programs to support African-American studies, and create outreach programs for people of color.¹⁸ As anti-war sentiments grew across the country, Stanford students and faculty members protested American involvement in the Vietnam War through protests and violent riots across campus.¹⁹ Concurrently, women who challenged their “traditional” domestic roles fought for greater social and economic freedom and denounced the male-dominated political system.²⁰ In the mid-1960s, the Stanford Sexual Rights Forum initiated a petition that demanded that all students, regardless of gender, have access to sexual contraceptive methods.²¹ In 1967, Stanford female students successfully argued for the right to live off-campus like their male counterparts.²² Social and political unrest characterized much of the late 1960s and early 1970s on Stanford’s campus.

The rise in resistance to social injustices created an environment on campus conducive to challenging gender norms in athletics, even before the passage of Title IX. Within this political climate, tensions between athletic and physical education faculty escalated. In 1968, men’s physical activities consisted of two separately funded departments: athletics and physical education. In contrast, a single academic Department for Women’s Physical Education housed women’s athletics, intramural sports, and physical education. During the following year, the Committee on Athletics and Physical Education (CAPE) conducted an equality study

17 Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 13.

18 “1960s,” Stanford Stories from the Archives, accessed December 2, 2017, <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/stanford-stories/feature/1960s>. See also Karen Bartholomew, *A Chronology of Stanford University and Its Founders: 1824-2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Historical Society, 2001), 95.

19 Bartholomew, *A Chronology of Stanford*, 93.

20 Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking Press, 2000), 63.

21 “1960s,” Stanford University.

22 Meredith Wheeler, “Moral Citizens: Coeducational Transformation at Stanford, 1965-1969,” *Sandstone & Tile* 38, no. 3 (2014), 11.

on the physical education and athletic departments. Following the study, CAPE issued a proposal that suggested unifying the men's and women's physical education departments and maintaining a separate department for men's athletics.²³ Although this motion for a co-educational system intended to foster gender equality, it quickly garnered backlash from women physical educators and administrators.

In 1970, Guthrie, one of the most outspoken administrators to oppose departmental unification, detailed her complaints about the proposal in a four-page letter to the chairman of CAPE. She listed concerns about efficiency and flexibility, but she also acknowledged that the combination of the two physical education departments would compromise educational quality. "Women's Physical Education has seemed to be a superior program because it is staffed by highly qualified and prepared specialists," Guthrie wrote. "Teaching is an art, a proficiency, a competency, and a concentration. If the concentration is divided the teaching is less efficient."²⁴ Guthrie's blatant criticisms regarding the inadequate education quality taught by the male physical educators, who doubled as men's athletic coaches, implied that she considered teaching and education more important than coaching and competition instructed by the men's department. She also expressed her concerns that unifying the departments would alter women's physical education to cater to a more competitive focus. For the women's curriculum, she noted, "No level is more important than another: elementary, intermediate, advanced and tournament or performance." In the men's program, however, priorities consisted of "varsity always first, intramurals, then clubs, then instruction."²⁵ Guthrie's disapproval of a combined department reverberated with contemporary cultural feminist models of the time that supported women's pursuit of equality through all-women spaces and female autonomy.²⁶ A unified department, Guthrie believed, would hinder women's fight for equality and result in male control.

Reflecting the views of her generation, Guthrie expressed

23 Pamela L. Strathairn, John E. Nixon and Wesley K. Ruff to Robert Compton, April 7, 1970, Box 2, WAS Collection.

24 Luell Guthrie to Robert Compton, April 22, 1970, Box 2, Guthrie Collection.

25 Ibid.

26 Freedman, 87.

concerns about masculine and feminine imagery of female athletes, invoking her own term, “Image Factor” – the notion that women should remain feminine while participating in athletics. Guthrie feared that with the unification of the departments, male educators would disregard the importance of image, which she stressed “must not be sacrificed in a combined situation.”²⁷ By maintaining separate physical education departments, female educators could preserve the femininity of women athletes. Her descriptions of a “beautiful dancer” and “feminine golfer” exemplified her ideals and the efforts of these physical education administrators to promote them.

Guthrie’s critiques of a unified physical education department did not contradict the goal of gender equality; rather, her letter asserted that a separate, autonomous women’s department better served the female students and educators. In a series of letters written in 1970, Guthrie inquired whether women would receive equal travel funds and use of athletic facilities under a unified department.²⁸ She feared that in a unified department, ambitious male administrators would detract from the fundamentals of women’s physical education and lead to underfunded and poorly executed classes for women. In another letter, Guthrie asked a member of CAPE whether female staff members would receive the same “fringe benefits” as male educators, such as free tickets and priority seating at games.²⁹ Her question reveals the existing differences between male and female administrators, as well as her doubts that a departmental merger would result in equality for women. Relentless criticisms from Guthrie and others throughout the early 1970s succeeded in postponing the unification of the two departments.

Female administrators and coaches supported feminine, recreational activities yet, many female students, such as Marjorie L. Shuer, rejected their aversion to women’s competition. During her undergraduate years between 1971 and 1975, Shuer swam, but

27 Guthrie to Compton, April 1970.

28 Luell Guthrie to Robert Compton, June 10, 1970, Box 2, Guthrie Collection.

29 Luell Guthrie to Robert Compton, May 27, 1970, Box 2, Guthrie Collection.

could only train during three weekly 50-minute sessions.³⁰ While women faced these strict limitations, their male counterparts did not experience such constraints. Shuer blamed this difference on female physical educators. “The root of this problem exists in the set up and personnel in the physical education dept. for women, here and across the nation,” she wrote in 1971. “Most women in Physical Education think of themselves as physical educators and not intramural directors or athletic coaches.”³¹ Her statement demonstrates a fundamental difference between what the female administrators and many female students considered the role of women’s physical activities. Many female students, such as Shuer, wanted an environment in which they could train competitively, rather than for leisure. This competitive sentiment conflicted with the primary goal of the WPE Department, demonstrating a shift in ideology.

Shuer both acknowledged and disputed the contentions surrounding the “Image Factor” in women’s sports. “Too much of the Women’s Athletic program on the college level is wrapped up in the ‘be like a lady image,’” she wrote, “which means that one must go to competition fully outfitted with hair and makeup in place.” She further criticized coaches for trying to “keep the masculinity out of [women’s] sport[s] as much as possible.”³² Historian Jaime Schultz helps contextualize this characterization of the coaches. Schultz has argued that because women’s success in a male-dominated field like athletics could upset the binary gender status quo, many women of Guthrie’s generation accepted their social expectation of femininity to avoid societal disruption.³³ Shuer, however, represented the beginning of a shift in women’s thinking. Her generation wanted to enter the world of competitive athletics, which also meant challenging the male-dominated social structure.

In 1971, Shuer conducted a survey among female student

30 Marjorie L. Shuer, “The Women Athlete in Society and Discrimination on the College Level” (paper, Stanford University, May 18, 1971), 2, Marjorie L. Shuer Papers (SC0733), Box 1, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA (Hereafter Shuer Collection).

31 Ibid, 7.

32 Ibid, 11.

33 Jaime Schultz, *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in the U.S. Women’s Sport* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 108.

athletes that further illustrated the shift in student opinion. When asked if female students thought their athletic programs sufficed, the majority answered affirmatively. However, when asked more pointed questions about coaching and facilities, many voiced discontent. “The basketball coach has no experience in basketball – simply does not know the game,” one female basketball player complained. Another player thought that the “use of practice time is inefficient” and “actual coaching is nonexistent.”³⁴ One field hockey player described the program as “disorganized” and remarked, “My coach did not know how to coach.”³⁵ The disparity between feeling content and noting the lack of quality instruction reveals that the younger generation of women appreciated their increased opportunities in physical activities but still desired higher quality and greater competition. These surveys, like Shuer’s arguments, testify to a growing ideological divide between the older and younger generations at Stanford.

As discontent grew among female student athletes, student-run organizations responded publically. The Stanford Daily published multiple articles by female student athletes who addressed concerns about their physical education. “The Women’s Physical Education (WPE) department has deliberately directed its efforts toward serving the broad spectrum of Stanford women,” wrote one columnist in early 1972. “The further development and encouragement of highly skilled girls evidently comes at the expense of the non-competitive classes.”³⁶ This writer used the press to introduce the growing dissatisfaction to the larger undergraduate population. Other students organized new groups such as the Stanford Women’s Recreation Association.³⁷ Members hoped to create an environment for women to participate in physical activities outside the strict constraints and limited instruction of the physical education department.

Female students’ opposition during the early 1970s marked the beginning of an era when collegiate women demanded the right to compete athletically. As the number of female participants in intercollegiate athletics doubled nationally between 1966 and

34 Marjorie L. Shuer, “Spring Quarter of 1971 Questionnaire,” May 1971, 1, Box 1, Shuer Collection.

35 Ibid., 2.

36 “Women’s Athletics Challenged,” Stanford Daily, February 15, 1972.

37 Dalton, 4.

1971, many women voiced the need for official national leagues.³⁸ The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), founded in 1971, attempted to answer the call. The AIAW, however, “shared a commitment to a more participation-oriented, less elitist approach to sports,” historian Susan Ware has argued. This approach “differed fundamentally from the reigning male model of sports which intertwined competition, winning, and commercialization.”³⁹ Although this organization failed to match the ideologies of the men’s National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the formation of the AIAW marked one of the first collective efforts to unite women’s intercollegiate sports. It also brought nationwide attention to the inequalities that characterized women’s athletics.

While Stanford students asserted the need for greater equality locally and national organizations escalated this demand, President Nixon signed into law the Education Amendments Act of 1972. One amendment, Title IX, stated, “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 funding assistance.”⁴⁰ Although the law does not mention athletics, historians have noted that the statute “radically transformed” the world of women’s sports.⁴¹ Despite initial resistance from male-dominated organizations, such as the NCAA, enforcement of the Title IX regulations began in 1975. Within five years of the mandate, women’s involvement in collegiate athletics doubled to nearly 65,000 participants.⁴² The creation of new women’s teams resulted in a large influx of female athletes, which generated new conference leagues and championship series.

At Stanford, however, Title IX did not initiate change

38 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *More Hurdles to Clear* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights,

39 Susan Ware, *Title IX: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2007), 11.

40 United States, Congress, Office of the Assistant Secretary from Administration and Management. “Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972.” *Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972*. <https://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>

41 Guttmann, 209.

42 U.S. Commission, *More Hurdles to Clear*, 22.

among female educators and students, who had already debated the issue. Rather, the law clarified for male administrators the need for gender equality in athletics. Following the enactment of Title IX, universities had a three-year grace period to assess inequalities and reach compliance. Joseph Ruetz, the Men's Athletic Director from 1972 to 1975, initiated Stanford's investigation into athletic inequalities through a financial review of the men's and women's departments. In a February 1973 report, Ruetz noted that the women's department had functioned on a budget of \$187,094 in the previous school year, while the men's department had operated on \$2.96 million.⁴³ He clarified that men's spectator sports like football and basketball generated this drastic budgetary difference but nonetheless noted the disparity. Ruetz also warned that Title IX would have "potentially disastrous effects that would dismantle men's intercollegiate athletics" if Congress implemented the law immediately. His statement demonstrated the hesitancy of some male attitudes towards Title IX at Stanford and further revealed the need for administrative policy change.

While administrators assessed initial compliance solutions, the ideological divide between female educators and female students widened. In classes like gymnastics, tennis, and field hockey, female participation expanded drastically, sometimes nearly tripling the previous year's enrollment.⁴⁴ Many older-generation female instructors perceived this development as the best response to Title IX. WPE Chair Pamela Strathairn instructed her fellow women educators to teach additional classes and coach the new, prospering intramural teams. Schoof recalled Strathairn's insistence that Schoof add basketball to her coaching repertoire in the fall of 1972 in order to promote the expansion of women's sports. Despite her lack of qualifications, Schoof explained, Strathairn "believed that women were physical educators and as physical educators they could coach. If you were a good teacher, you could learn and then be a good coach."⁴⁵ Although Strathairn indicated a nominal distinction between teaching and coaching, she disregarded the students' demands for higher quality coaches and insisted that physical educators would suffice.

43 Joseph H. Ruetz, "Reflections on the Men's Department of Physical Education and Athletics at Stanford," February 1973, 3, Box 1, WAS Collection.

44 "Special Show by the Ladies," *Stanford Daily*, May 22, 1970.

45 Schoof Interview, 4.

Discontent continued to grow among female student athletes as the administration enforced a system they believed addressed the need for gender equality. By 1973, many female students enjoyed access to better facilities and a wider variety of sports, but still sought better quality coaching and competition. *The Stanford Daily* captured this transition in the title of a 1974 article: "Women's Athletics Improved, But Still Not Equal."⁴⁶ Female student athletes felt they lacked the necessary instruction and support that their male counterparts received from experienced, well-trained coaches. Shuer addressed these inequalities passionately in a 1974 article about her experiences on the women's swim team. She noted that due to the policies of the WPE Department, "teams are 'taught' by physical educators and not 'coached' by athletic coaches."⁴⁷ Although the Stanford team qualified for nationals, the swim coach did not send the two best swimmers because "they [felt] that it would be a 'good educational experience'" for other swimmers to gain practice at nationals. Shuer expressed her outrage at these coaching decisions and insisted that the department needed athletic coaches for women sports that concentrated on competitive performance, not solely educators who instructed fair and equal participation.

As the 1975 implementation date neared, male and female administrators presented a compromise: a combined men's and women's physical education and athletics department. Strathairn and Ruetz presented this unification as the most efficient and effective method of reaching Title IX's compliance requirements. Although Ruetz presumed many schools would avoid compliance, he asserted that "We are not going to do that. In fact, our goal is to have the best women's athletic program in the country."⁴⁸ In summer 1975, Stanford became one of the first universities to merge men's and women's athletics and physical education departments. Ruetz became the first Stanford Athletic Director of a combined-gender department and Strathairn assumed the positions of Associate Athletic Director and Chairwoman of Physical Education. This administrative structure allowed men to maintain control of competitive varsity athletics while women remained responsible

46 Glenn Kramon, "Women's Athletics Improved, But Still Not Equal," *Stanford Daily*, October 30, 1974.

47 Margie Shuer, "Swim Team Blues," *Stanford Daily*, February 26, 1974.

48 Quoted in Anderson, "The Fight," Paragraph 27.

for participation-oriented academic courses and intramural sports.

The fall of 1975 marked the convergence of earlier female efforts for equality and Title IX implementation. In that school year, Stanford awarded nine women the first female athletic scholarships in swimming, basketball, and tennis.⁴⁹ Multiple *Stanford Daily* articles discussed women's "greater access to practice facilities" and the "expansion in travel budgets for women athletics."⁵⁰ These financial improvements moved women's athletics from the academic setting of the smaller Roble Gymnasium to large, competitive arenas like Maples Pavilion, where men's teams played. "All of a sudden, it was the big time," described former student and newly hired tennis coach Anne Connelly Gould. "We were practicing at stadium courts, we had uniforms, we had balls, we had scholarships."⁵¹ These advancements in women's athletics promoted a competitive environment and satisfied many of the students' demands for gender equality in sports.

Although the first year of Title IX implementation propelled many of these changes for female student athletes, the generational divide persisted. The ideology of women's coaches did not shift until nearly a decade after Title IX. Many female coaches still doubled as physical educators or graduate students. Schoof recalled, "As the need for coaches also came up for the women, [physical educators] became coaches." However, many of these coaches remained unqualified because the athletic department didn't start training female coaches until the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁵² Although many female physical educators transitioned to coaching, their limited experience in competitive athletics proved insufficient in producing successful women's teams. By the mid-1980s, a change in coaching ideology represented the beginning of an era concentrated on competitive women's athletics and established a new market for high quality, professional coaches for women's teams.

The Era of Competition, 1986-1995

49 Bartholomew, 112.

50 Terri Borchers, Sonia Jarvis, Kathy Levinson, "Women Race for Equality," *Stanford Daily*, September 1, 1975. See also Jeff Parietti, "Major Changes in Store for Women's Sports," May 30, 1975 and Ellen Sofio, "Harshbarger Propels Women Swimmers," October 24, 1975.

51 Quoted in Anderson, "The Fight," Paragraph 29.

52 Schoof Interview, 4.

In the mid-1980s, universities realized the larger economic ramifications of Title IX. Many schools filed lawsuits that claimed that revenue sports, such as football, should remain exempt from Title IX's financial stipulations.⁵³ Despite initial inconsistencies among U.S. courts, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 established that any educational institution that received federal funding must comply in totality with civil rights law, not just specific programs. This interpretation forced universities to reevaluate their funding and inadvertently altered the priorities of women's teams. Many programs shifted their focus to competition, and specifically victory, in order to justify the economic investment in women's athletics.⁵⁴ This focus on winning prompted a need for qualified, professional women's coaches.

Two Stanford women's coaches, Sherry Posthumous and Tara VanDerveer, characterized the transition to competition-focused programs. Posthumous joined the staff in the early 1980s as a physical educator while also training professionally as a fencer.⁵⁵ In 1987, upon the separation of the men's and women's fencing teams, Posthumous became head coach of the women's team. Following nearly a decade of team successes, the department promoted her to Assistant Athletic Director, a role she filled until her retirement in 2005.⁵⁶ VanDerveer became the head coach of women's basketball in the fall of 1986 following five successful years of coaching at Ohio State University.⁵⁷ Excluding a yearlong leave from Stanford in 1996 to coach the U.S. Women's Olympic basketball team, VanDerveer has coached at Stanford for thirty seasons and continues to be the director of women's basketball.

From the beginning of their coaching careers, both wom-

53 Ware, 75. See also, *Cannon v. University of Chicago*, 441 U.S. 677 (1979) and *Grove City College v. Bell*, 465 U.S. 555.

54 John R. Thelin, "Good Sports," *Journal of Higher Education* 71, no. 4 (2000): 398.

55 Sherry Posthumous, Interview by Jennifer Dalton, April 22, 1995, transcript, 1, Box 1, WAS Collection (Hereafter Posthumous Interview).

56 "Longtime Coach, Leader in the World of Fencing Dead at 62," *Stanford Report*, January 9, 2008.

57 Tara Vanderveer and Joan Ryan, *Shooting from the Outside: How a Coach and Her Olympic Team Transformed Women's Basketball* (New York: Avon Books, 1997)12. See also "Tara VanDerveer," Department of Athletics, Stanford University, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://www.gostanford.com/coaches.aspx?rc=958>.

en prioritized competition. As one of the first female fencing head coaches in the country, Posthumous relied on her competitive knowledge as a former fencer to coach young, eager female athletes. Although she recalled that “coaching was reserved for the men” during much of the 1980s, the women’s fencing team achieved national success under Posthumous’ leadership.⁵⁸ She recommended that in order to gain competitive experience her team should compete against the best fencers in the country, regardless of the outcome. VanDerveer implemented a similar competition-driven coaching ideology. During her first few seasons as the head coach of Stanford women’s basketball, VanDerveer instructed her athletes to focus on ambitious, national-level accomplishments. Despite playing more competitive teams, Stanford women went from a losing record of 9-19 to a winning record of 27-5 in three years.⁵⁹ While elevating Stanford’s women’s basketball to a national caliber program, VanDerveer conveyed the importance of competition in women’s athletics to male administrators. “[VanDerveer] really challenged me as a director to raise my sights,” recalled Andy Geiger, Stanford’s Athletic Director from 1979 to 1990. “She has an insatiable desire to get better.”⁶⁰ Posthumous and VanDerveer’s advocacy of continual improvement fostered a competitive environment for young female athletes.

As the ideologies of women’s coaches aligned with the competition mindset of female student athletes, Stanford women’s athletics flourished in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The women’s fencing team competed at the NCAA Championship every year between 1990 and 1995, where they placed in the top ten twice.⁶¹ Under VanDerveer’s leadership, the women’s basketball team appeared at the NCAA Tournament for eight consecutive

58 Posthumous Interview, 1. See also Joe Bialowitz, “Fencers Hope to Avoid Sliming Banana Slugs of UC-Santa Cruz a Difficult Foe for Cardinal,” *Stanford Daily*, December 3, 1993.

59 “Year-By-Year Results (1981-90),” Stanford Athletics, Stanford University, updated June 1, 2016, <http://www.gostanford.com/news/2016/7/6/womens-basketball-year-by-year-results-1981-90.aspx>.

60 Quoted in Ron Kroichick, “Tara VanDerveer’s Climb to 1,000 Wins: An Oral History,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 1, 2017.

61 “Stanford Fencing History,” Stanford Athletics, Stanford University, accessed November 12, 2017, <http://www.gostanford.com/sports/2014/11/30/209859594.aspx>.

years (1988-1995), competed in the NCAA Tournament Final Four for four of those eight appearances, and won the NCAA Championships in 1990 and 1992.⁶² In total, Stanford won fifteen NCAA Championships and twenty-seven PAC-10 Conference Championships between 1986 and 1995 in basketball, swimming, tennis and volleyball.⁶³ Other women's sports like field hockey, golf, and soccer made numerous NCAA Tournament appearances, and many teams finished in the top ten.

Stanford women's athletic success lay in the combination of early demands for gender equality, receptive athletic administrators, and the hiring of new, professional coaches. As early as the mid-1960s, Stanford women advocated for gender equality in sports, which forced administrators to acknowledge the issue years before Title IX. While other universities fought Title IX in court or simply refused to comply, Athletic Director Andy Geiger, enforced equality measurements bolstered the women's program. Geiger believed that regardless of the gender of the players, "If it had a cardinal and white uniform, it ought to be good."⁶⁴ He hired "dynamic coaches" who used their prior competitive experiences as athletes to train young women to "national prominence."⁶⁵ These factors undergirded the success of Stanford women's athletics and allowed them to prevail as a dominant force for much of the 1990s.

The hiring of professional coaches, however, had the paradoxical effect of marginalizing female coaches both nationally and at Stanford. Despite Title IX's efforts to promote professional female coaches, many of the newly created competitive coaching positions went to men. In 1972, women coached over ninety percent of women's athletics nationally. By 1995, that number had

62 "Women's Basketball History," Stanford Athletics, Stanford University, updated May 1, 2017, <http://www.gostanford.com/news/2016/6/29/womens-basketball-history.aspx>.

63 "Women's Sport History," Stanford Athletics, Stanford University, accessed November 12, 2017, <http://www.gostanford.com/index.aspx>.

64 Quoted in Anderson, "The Fight," Paragraph 32.

65 Chris Crader, "Card Can Win Across the Board," *Stanford Daily*, June 5, 1990. See also, Evan Tuchinsky, "Tara's Theme: Recruit," *Stanford Daily*, January 12, 1988, and David Hirling, "Stop the Shutout," *Stanford Daily*, May 9, 1991, and T. C. Hall, "Gym Champions Deserve More Recognition," *Stanford Daily*, April 28, 1992.

nearly halved to roughly forty-eight percent.⁶⁶ As the gender gap in collegiate coaching drastically escalated, so did the wage gap. In 1996, the median male head basketball coach earned an additional \$191,600 over the average female head basketball coach.⁶⁷ At Stanford, men dominated the coaching staff. Although Posthumous and VanDerveer represented successful female coaches, men coached seven out of the eleven women's teams throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁸ Despite their qualifications, female coaches remained overlooked and undercompensated, which perpetuated gender discrimination within athletic hiring procedures.

Female athletes also continued to experience gender discrimination, specifically in regards to their sexuality. Historian Susan Cahn has argued that since the early twentieth century, “women athletes – noted for their masculine bodies, interests, and attributes – were visible representatives of the gender inversion often associated with homosexuality.”⁶⁹ This societal framing of female athletes as “sexually aberrant” built on the fears of sexual deviation. In a conference sponsored by the Stanford Women's Center in 1986, sociologist Gail Whitaker explained that society used multiple attitudes, including homophobia, to keep women from participating in sports. She observed, “If you are a female athlete, then you are (assumed to be) a lesbian.”⁷⁰ Not only did this gendered stereotype prevent women from pursuing their athletic interests, but it also hindered female athletes from openly em-

66 R. Vivian Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter, “Women in Intercollegiate Sport: A Longitudinal, National Study

Thirty-Seven Year Update – 1977-2014,” Unpublished Manuscript, accessed November 17, 2017, www.acostacarpenter.org/2014%20Status%20of%20Women%20in%20Intercollegiate%20Sport%20-37%20Year%20Update%20-%201977-2014%20.pdf. See also Rachel Stark, “Where Are the Women?” *Champion Magazine*, Winter 2017, <http://www.ncaa.org/static/champion/where-are-the-women/>.

67 “Gender Equality in Sports,” Title IX Resources, University of Iowa, updated October 16, 2000, <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/ge/old/index.html#200>.

68 “Women's Sports History,” Stanford Athletics, <http://www.gostanford.com/index.aspx>.

69 Cahn, 178. See also Jean O'Reilly and Susan Cahn, *Women and Sports in the United States: A Documentary Reader* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007), 68.

70 Quoted in Yvonne Lee, “Sociologist: Tactics Prevent Women from Playing Sports,” *Stanford Daily*, October 24, 1986.

bracing their sexuality. In 1993, a Stanford female varsity athlete recalled overt, homophobic comments that perpetuated the stereotype of female athletes on campus. "Not only was I a woman but I wasn't straight," she wrote. "There was no way I would have come out to anyone."⁷¹ As women gained the right to compete athletically, they faced new forms of discrimination that attacked their identities.

Beyond sexual discrimination, female athletes faced a new dilemma: verbal and physical abuse by male coaches. Many scholars have deemed abuse one of the "unintended consequences" of Title IX, and historian Susan Ware has argued that the "abuse [is] rooted in the power imbalance between omniscient and powerful coaches" and young, "subservient" female athletes.⁷² At Stanford, two male coaches resigned in the early 1990s following accusations of abuse against their female student athletes. In December 1992, former Stanford athlete Tish Williams exposed the abuse of Brooks Johnson, the women's track and field head coach from 1979 to 1992. Williams recalled that Johnson "thumped" her on the head, called her "shithead," "conniving bitch," and "bourgeoisie brat" in front of competitors and teammates, and reduced most of the female athletes to tears.⁷³ Roughly six months later, women's soccer coach Berhane Anderberhan resigned after players also accused him of verbal abuse. They stated that Anderberhan "engaged in psychological tug-of-war" and constantly criticized their body weight, triggering eating disorders for some athletes.⁷⁴ Following these two instances of misconduct, Stanford Athletic Director Ted Leland released a statement condemning the coaches. Although Stanford and many other universities tried to combat the discrimination against female athletes, these issues persisted well into the twenty-first century.

71 Gretchen Atwood, "Coming Out During Freshman Year: Gays Recount Experiences," *Stanford Daily*, September 23, 1993.

72 Ware, 24.

73 Tish Williams, "Baring Brooks Johnson's Bitter Legacy," *Stanford Daily*, December 3, 1992. See also, "Former Track Member Berates Brooks Johnson," *Stanford Daily*, January 6, 1993 and "Brooks Johnson's Abuse Hurt Stanford as well as Team," *Stanford Daily*, February 9, 1993.

74 Gretchen Atwood, "Women's Soccer Coach Resigns Under Pressure," *Stanford Daily*, June 24, 1993. See also Gretchen Atwood, "Athletic Dept. Continues Search for New Soccer, Softball Coaches," *Stanford Daily*, July 15, 1993.

Conclusion

In May 1995, Stanford University retroactively awarded 2,200 former Stanford women athletes with a “Block S” varsity letter.⁷⁵ As the first American university to do so, Stanford acknowledged all the women who participated in athletics before the implementation of Title IX. The idea for this landmark event came from Marjorie Shuer, who competed as a student athlete during the mandate’s transition years in the early 1970s and returned to Stanford as a faculty member in the 1990s. Although no ceremony could atone these women for the gender discrimination these women faced in their athletic pursuits, the event represented the university’s movement towards athletic gender equality. Some women who attended the ceremony credited this shift to Title IX. Ginny Fiske Marshall, a student athlete who graduated in 1972, wrote, “Title IX was the best thing that happened to Women’s Sports – sorry I missed it!”⁷⁶ Despite former student athletes’ praise for Title IX at the award ceremony, the federal law represented only the formalization of the broader efforts for gender equality.

The hard-fought battle for equality in Stanford women’s athletics began far earlier than the implementation of Title IX. The goals of equality, however, shifted between 1956 and 1995. The older generation of physical educators emphasized the right to participate, while the younger generation of student athletes demanded the right to compete. Although both generations advocated female empowerment, they challenged each other’s ideologies. Invigorated by Second Wave feminism, the new generation blamed the older generation for the lack of competitiveness and the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes. In the excitement over the national triumph of Title IX, narratives about Stanford women’s athletics have neglected the voices of women who fought for equality at the local level years before the law’s implementation. By recovering these voices, we not only supplement our knowledge of Stanford’s institutional history but also support the ongoing historiographical imperative to restore agency to marginalized historical actors.

The fight for equality did not end in 1995. Rather, female athletes and coaches both nationally and at Stanford contin-

75 Allison Otto, “Block S Athletes at Last,” 125 Stanford Stories, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://125.stanford.edu/block-s-athletes-last/>.

76 Ginny Fiske Marshall to Jon Denney, February 1995. WAS Collection, Box 1.

ue to face gender discrimination. In the last two decades, advocates of equality have confronted a new set of issues, including unequal compensation for coaches, homophobia, physical and verbal abuse, and sexual harassment. The lessons of the past demonstrate that addressing these issues requires the combination of local student activism, receptive administrators, and a national political climate willing to implement legal and institutional change.