

Nancy Hogshead-Makar and Andrew Zimbalist (eds.), *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change*. Temple University Press, 2007. 313 pp.

*Tamar Wilder Carroll, History Department, Cornell University, twc57@cornell.edu*

In their edited collection of primary source documents and interpretive essays, *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change*, Nancy Hogshead-Makar, an Olympic gold medalist swimmer and Professor of Law at Florida Coastal School of Law, and Andrew Zimbalist, a professor of Economics at Smith College, survey the history of Title IX and its influence on women's participation in sports. Title IX, passed by Congress in 1972, mandates that "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 educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (67). In 1971, 294,015 girls and women participated in high school sports, and 31,852 on college teams in the U.S. Today, those numbers have increased dramatically: 3.06 million girls play sports in high school, and 166,800 young women play on college teams (2). The authors credit Title IX for this "remarkable" increase in athletic participation, and set out to "demonstrate how government actions can shape and support the goal of gender equity" (2).

Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist contend that Title IX has had a "greater effect" on women's lives than any other legislation except women's suffrage, because Title IX "cracked the barriers at the foundation of women's inability to have equal opportunity to pursue economic and social advancement through education" (50). However, they mostly limit their discussion of Title IX to athletics, leaving the history of its application to other educational programs, including math and science, for another work. As the perplexed Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare during the Nixon administration, Casper Weinberger, noted in 1975 upon receiving more than 10,000 comments on HEW's proposed Title IX regulations for athletic departments, it appeared that women's participation in "intercollegiate athletics" was "the most important issue in the United States" (52). For nearly 40 years, Title IX's application to intercollegiate sports has been the most

publicized and controversial aspect of the law's implementation, and Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist have collected a variety of sources, including excerpts from government regulations and reports, court decisions, speeches by politicians and university administrators, newspaper and magazine articles, monographs, and academic studies, to explore why this has been the case.

The editors divide their collection into four chronological periods, each section prefaced by an introduction that develops their argument that governmental actions shape the much improved but still unequal playing field for girls and women's athletics. In Part I, "Women's Sports before Title IX", the editors include an excerpt from Welch Suggs' monograph, *A Place on the Team: The Triumph and Tragedy of Title IX* (Princeton University Press, 2005), which highlights the lost vision of women coaches and athletic directors who, before Title IX, created their own distinct vision of college athletics that was non-commercial and non-elitist, and who tried and failed to maintain control over girls' sports. The male-dominated National College Athletic Association (NCAA) emerges as a major villain in this study, for first leading the opposition to Title IX and for then wresting control of women's college athletics from the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIWA), with the result that many female coaches and administrators lost their jobs and young women were exposed to the same corrupting influences of commercialized sports facing young male athletes. Discouragingly, Hogshead-Makar and Zimbalist note, despite the rise in the number of female athletes, the number of women coaches and athletic directors is currently at "an all-time low" (107).

Part II, "Staking a Claim: The First Decade", provides a detailed and helpful explanation of both Congressional amendments to Title IX and HEW's multiple attempts at implementing Title IX regulations, and concludes that the 1970s saw major advances in girls and young women's participation in sports. Part III, "The Initial Backlash: The 1980s" charts the Reagan administration's efforts to block enforcement of Title IX and other civil rights acts. Part IV, "Accelerated Pace: The 1990s" credits the feminist movement and changing gender roles, as well as the Clinton administration's more active enforcement of Title IX regulations, for the "renaissance" of gender equity in athletics, although the editors acknowledge that many of the gains of the decade came from individual female athletes who brought successful lawsuits against their academic institutions (129).

The longest section, Part V, "The Second Backlash: 2001-2008", chronicles attacks on Title IX by wrestling coaches and others who

falsely claim that Title IX enforcement creates quotas that require universities and colleges to eliminate men's teams, as well as the George W. Bush administration's attempts to undermine enforcement of Title IX. The Bush administration's hostility to Title IX mobilized women sports advocates in favor of preserving its strong enforcement, and despite set backs, the editors conclude that Title IX has succeeded in advancing athletic opportunities for girls and women because its supporters "have been sufficiently cohesive and energetic to fend off its detractors" (187).

This is an information-rich collection that helps clarify the complex history of Title IX. *Equal Play* will be of interest to scholars of women's studies, U.S. history, and U.S. politics as well as advocates for women's athletics. For undergraduate course adoption, faculty may also wish to consider Susan Ware's edited collection, *Title IX: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford-St. Martin's, 2007), which is half the length and a third the price, and which includes an important discussion of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and Title IX.

---

Tamar Wilder Carroll, "Nancy Hogshead-Makar and Andrew Zimbalist (eds.), *Equal Play: Title IX and Social Change*. Temple University Press, 2007. 313 pp." *thirdspace* 9/2 (2010)