

Women's Rights Newscast

Introduction:

From the beginning of the republic, American society was divided into two spheres: the domestic sphere and the public sphere. Religious beliefs held that women should excel in the domestic sphere—caring for children, keeping house, and providing support for a husband—and stay out of the public sphere of professions and politics. During the 1800s, women were prohibited by law from testifying in court, owning property, and establishing businesses. Women were also not permitted to vote, giving them the status of second-class citizens in the new democracy. However, many women refused to accept such secondary status. In 1848 a group of feminists, or activists seeking equal rights for women, met in Seneca Falls, New York, to discuss the position of women in American society. They issued the Declaration of Sentiments, which declared that "all men and women are created equal." Feminist efforts to draw attention to women's second-class status encouraged more women—and some men—to join the fight for women's right to vote. Women finally won the vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

A few years later, Quaker feminist Alice Paul proposed another amendment to the Constitution, this one ensuring women's legal rights. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), as it was called, stated: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged [reduced] by the United States or by any state on account of sex." Congress refused to consider the proposed amendment, but women's groups continued to lobby for it during the 1930s and 1940s. The first and second world wars created new opportunities for women to work beyond the domestic sphere and help support the war effort in jobs as welders, factory workers, pilots, and professional baseball players. However, by the 1950s, as male veterans claimed the jobs they had held before the war, women were again encouraged to return to homemaking.

*The women's movement grew dramatic support and momentum in the 1960s, inspired by the African-American civil rights movement and a groundbreaking book by Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan argued that American society should be changed to allow women to reach their full potential inside and outside the home. In addition, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy authorized a commission to write a report on the status of women. By 1964, over 64,000 Americans had bought the report, which documented the ways in which women were discriminated against and recommended 24 ways to improve women's status.*

When the women's movement revived the ERA, thousands of women and men lent their support. In 1972, the amendment was approved by Congress and submitted to the states for ratification. However, some groups in society began to advocate more strongly against the women's movement. As a result, the ERA was not ratified by the 1982 deadline; only 35 of the 38 states needed for ratification approved the amendment.

Despite the failure of the ERA, women made numerous gains in equal rights in many areas of American society. Feminists advocated for reproductive rights, improved childcare facilities, and opportunities for women in numerous professions, in sports, and in the media—in short, in every facet of American life. Declaring that the "personal is political," reformers sought to break down the barriers between the domestic and public spheres so women could move more freely between them. Their efforts were largely successful, radically altering the lives of every American, both male and female.

Class Procedure: The class will be graded together (5pts) on the flow of the newscast and the organization between groups. The class should choose an anchor and a co-anchor who will set the order of the presentation and handle the lead ins to the subtopics, writes and reads off the lead story.

Group Procedure: Learns about the topic by reading the information provided by the teacher, chooses an "on-scene reporter," writes a story and dialogue for the newscast and acts out the event. Rehearse your story (2-4 minutes) and get appropriate props and attire for your presentation.

Everybody: Takes notes on other sections while the newscast is progressing and participates in the discussion with the teacher after by being prepared for the following questions.

- What were the most prominent concerns of the women's movement?
- What were the most prominent successes of the women's movement?
- What were the chief frustrations of the women's movement? What obstacles and failures did feminists experience?
- In what significant ways did the women's movement change American society?
- Did the women's movement achieve full equity for American women? Explain.
- In what tangible ways have your daily lives and future aspiration been changed by the women's movement?

Press Release on Sports

Key Concerns of the Women’s Movement A key goal of the women’s movement was to gain entry to a cherished male preserve: the world of athletics. To do so, feminists and athletes pushed for equal opportunity for women in sports, and the expansion and protection of women’s rights in the world of athletics.

Discrimination Against Women in Sports The women’s movement brought attention to the number of barriers to women’s involvement in sports. Despite the accomplishments of women athletes before the 1970s, most women were discouraged from participating in sports, which were considered “unwomanly” and “too strenuous.” Instead, they were relegated to the sidelines, as observers or cheerleaders. Women who did pursue professional athletics were paid significantly less than their male counterparts, and at both the amateur and professional levels they were barred from competing in certain sports. For example, officials at the Boston Marathon didn’t allow women to enter the race until 1972. Many had run the race unofficially before, including Katherine Switzer, who entered the 1967 marathon under her brother’s name and ran with a cap covering her hair until she was discovered. Officials tried to chase Switzer off the course, but she outran them all and finished the race.



- **What concerns did the women’s movement have about women and sports?**
- **Give an example of women being discriminated against in sports.**

Title IX Bars Discrimination The women’s movement met with success when feminist efforts led to Congress passing Title IX, a key piece of education legislation. Part of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Title IX outlawed sex discrimination in educational programs that received federal money. Under Title IX, if a school was caught discriminating on the basis of sex, the government would cut off its funding. The law included sports programs at federally funded schools, mandating that they give female sports programs and teams the same funding as male sports programs, and access to equivalent (equal) facilities. This meant that if a school’s enrollment was half male and half female, then the same amount of its money would be available to men’s and women’s athletic teams for scholarships, equipment, coaching, travel, and so forth.

Resistance to Title IX Initially, high schools and colleges throughout the United States resisted Title IX. Some resisted because they didn’t believe that women should be as heavily involved in sports as men. For example, one Wisconsin high school coach complained in 1973, “I think girls have a right to participate but to a lesser degree than boys. If they go too far with the competitive stuff, they lose their femininity.” Some athletic administrators resented allocating equal funds to women’s sports because it reduced the amount of money spent on men’s sports. Others were reluctant to invest in women’s sports because they believed that they were not as important—or as lucrative—as men’s sports. Even though violations of Title IX were rampant, the U.S. Health, Education, and Welfare Department (HEW) was lax in enforcing the law. As a result, by the mid 1970s a number of women’s

organizations focused on education—such as the Project on Equal Education Rights (PEER)—began to monitor enforcement. Despite successes in getting schools to comply with Title IX, many schools continued to resist through the end of the twentieth century.



- What is Title IX?
- What must schools do, in the realm of athletics, to comply with the law?
- What are two reasons schools resisted enforcing Title IX?

Changes in Funding for Women’s Sports Title IX’s greatest impact was on high school and college sports programs for girls and women, which were expanded through increasing funding. The funding for collegiate women’s sports grew from approximately 1 percent in 1972 to over 16 percent by 1984. By 1990, the schools with big athletic programs, dominated by football, spent 82 percent of their budgets on men’s programs and 18 percent on women’s. In smaller schools without football teams, though, the gap in spending was smaller, with an average of 54 percent of funds spent on men’s athletics and 46 percent spent on women’s. In response to the disparity in funding, numerous women athletes have sued their schools for an equal share of the athletic budget. *Women’s Sports and Fitness* magazine reported that in the fall of 1995, women had won 31 Title IX discrimination cases, and had lost none. In one case, Brown University was required to reinstate women’s gymnastics and volleyball teams to their varsity status to offer more equal athletic opportunities for female students, who make up 51 percent of student body.

Changes in Women’s Participation in Sports The expansion of sports programs and facilities generated a dramatic increase in girls’ and women’s participation in high school and college sports. Before 1972, only 16,000 college women participated in women’s sports each year. By 1984, the number had risen to over 150,000. Title IX’s positive impact was confirmed at the 1984 Olympic Games, where three quarters of the American women who competed said they would not have been at the games without Title IX. By the mid 1990s, over 2 million girls played on high school sports teams, more than six times the number involved in athletics in 1971. Susan Baumbach Vass comments on changes brought about by Title IX in the book *In the Company of Women*:

When I was growing up—and this was before Title IX—I was an excellent athlete.... I was a really good basketball player.... After Title IX, the first girls’ basketball tournament that I ever watched was on television. I sat in my apartment, I watched the girls play...and I wept and I wept and I wept. It’s a small thing, hardly earth-shattering compared to grinding kinds of oppression. But on a personal level, that hurt so much. I cried with happiness for the girls now, but also with this great sense of loss that I never had a chance to compete.



- What are two examples or statistics that show how funding for women’s sports increased?
- In what ways has Title IX had a positive effect on girls and women in sports?

Women and Sports

Women athletes are also given short shrift in the media. Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Michael Messner studied sports coverage on three network affiliates in Los Angeles. They report that only nine per cent of airtime was devoted to women's sports, in contrast to the 88 per cent devoted to male athletes. Female athletes fared even worse on ESPN's national sports show *Sports Center*, where they occupied just over two per cent of airtime.

Margaret Carlisle Duncan notes that commentators (97 per cent of whom are men) use different language when they talk about female athletes. Where men are described as "big," "strong," "brilliant," "gutsy" and "aggressive," women are more often referred to as "weary," "fatigued," "frustrated," "panicked," "vulnerable" and "choking." Commentators are also twice as likely to call men by their last names only, and three times as likely to call women by their first names only. Duncan argues that this "reduces female athletes to the role of children, while giving adult status to white male athletes."

During the last 2 decades, numerous empirical studies investigating the interaction of gender, sport, and the media have consistently found that media coverage of female athletes have failed to mirror their athletic achievements. Studies of media coverage of female athletes show that they are generally under-represented compared to their male counterparts (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Pederson, 2002). Despite the exponential growth in women's sport in the last three decades, elite female athletes typically receive only about 10 percent of print media coverage (Bernstein, 2002).

When female athletes receive coverage it is frequently imbued with socially constructed sex role stereotypes and replete with references to their heterosexual familial roles as wives, mothers, girlfriends, and daughters (Christopherson, Janning & McConnell, 2002). The mediated discourse of the heterosexual familial roles of female athletes serves to reproduce the pattern of male dominance in heterosexual relationships (Hargreaves, 1986). The male dominated sport media subordinate female athletic events as the "other" event through a myriad of journalistic and production techniques. Reports of female athletic prowess and achievement are combined with trivialization and are frequently framed with culturally stereotyped commentary about their physical appearance and feminine heterosexual attractiveness rather than their athletic prowess and skill (Bernstein, 2002; Christopherson et al., 2002; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Kane & Lenskyi, 1998; Kinkema & Harris, 1998; Messner, 2002).

Research has indicated that female athletes competing in the traditionally "gender-appropriate" individual sports such as swimming, diving, gymnastics, and tennis, which represent a narrow, culturally stereotyped view of female athleticism, receive more electronic and print media coverage than female athletes competing in the traditionally "gender-inappropriate" team sports such as field hockey, softball, rugby, and bodybuilding .

One such woman wrote:

I had two workouts today. The first I did at the gym, where I sweated, strained, pushed and coaxed myself to push more. There I visualized strong sexy curves and rippling muscle. Counting off reps, I imagined the vision I want to see when I look in the mirror. Resting between sets my mind reeled backwards, recalling the training tips from Lenda Murray, Sharon Bruneau, Kim Chizevsky: focus, concentrate, breathe, flex it, stretch it, hold it! Through the burn and the pain my mind recaptured visions of these powerfully beautiful women's bodies. Inspired but tired, when I finished my workout I congratulated myself on my dedication and my self-investment as I left the gym. This first workout has lasting effects and it is transformative: I hold my head higher, feel more confident, carry groceries easier, feel more sexual, breathe deeper, and I walk taller on the street because I feel safer there. My second workout was perhaps more demanding. This one I completed at home, alone with my stack of magazines on

bodybuilding. Not physical but mental, for this workout I needed to prepare myself for a different kind of pain. This is another, difficult kind of test of my stamina for bodybuilding. Facing magazines like *„Muscle & Fitness“*, *„Flex“*, and *„Muscular Development“*, the only mass culture representations of women's bodybuilding (widely) available to me, I had to strain against the weight of psychological alienation, and push past the forces of sexism and misogyny which are part of the foundation of these publications. This workout is also transformative and has lasting effects, though they do not contribute to a positive self- portrait.

For this second workout today, I had special (and invisible) gear to don: protection in the form of blinders to block out the negative stereotypes, the blatant sexual objectifications and the trivialization of women that I try to ignore in letters to the editor, articles and opinion-editorials, in interviews and advertisements and in photography spreads from cover to cover, from publication to publication, month to month. Even with this "gear" my psychological training is never thorough enough. To read about the great women in this sport, I have to pay a high price: my magazine subscription cheque buys me not only an education about training and a images of built women, but also the opportunity to be severely compromised, offended, shocked and saddened as I leaf through the glossy pages each month. As a female reader of dominant perspectives and representations in the masculinist culture of bodybuilding, I must overtrain myself to withstand the treatment of women I find there. Unlike my gym sessions, which leave me sore but satisfied, tired but triumphant and with a sense of accomplishment, as I finish this mental workout I feel subtly weakened. The desire that motivates my efforts to construct and sculpt my body is often temporarily sapped after reading.

Like thousands of other women I'm sure, I ritualistically search for representations of my heroines in muscle magazines. I celebrate their triumphs and mourn their setbacks, both personal and professional. I follow their careers as an admirer, a dedicated fan. These women of steel become my new ideals, replacing the images of anorexic looking women who decorate the pages of the women's fashion magazines I grew up reading. Not so long ago I was one of the thousands of subscribers who look to *„Mademoiselle“* and *„Elle“* to communicate an ideal of feminine beauty. Then I idolized and modelled myself after skeletal female physiques which seemed to require my adoption of an eating disorder. In a never-ending circulation of representations of frail and childlike supermodels, publications of the fashion- beauty industry taught me that to succeed in the game of heterosexualized femininity my body must appear small, weak and submissive. I learned that the risk of gaining muscle mass was the loss of my feminine identity. If my hip bones and clavicle did not protrude, or if my thighs were much larger than my calves, I knew that I should be considering cosmetic remedies such as liposuction. Covering those bones with muscular curves was not presented as a viable option.

Normal fashion journals portray women athletes in issue after issue shows women in training articles wearing, not proper workout gear but lingerie and stiletto heels. Routinely these professional female athletes are wearing nothing at all, appearing nude and sprawling on the floor, or draped over a chair. Have you ever noticed how often these women's legs are spread, or how many shots there are of them crawling on the floor or on the beach? Why are women on their knees, with their rear- ends in the air? As a reader, there is no doubt in my mind that the publishers present these women's bodies for male consumption, and that my gaze is necessarily outside the expected group of spectators. Editorial decisions for representing these women in increasingly pornographic positions make it clear that these are men's magazines, not so far removed from *„Playboy“* and *„Hustler“*.

In the future I hope that women will continue to gain power and influence in the fitness and muscle industry, and then the major magazines will be not be able to get away with their outdated and inequitable attitudes. Beauty ideals for women are changing, and the demand for positive images of women with muscle mass is growing. But until there exists more woman-positive and accessible bodybuilding publications I'll have no choice but to pursue my double workout strategy, and build a stamina to face the stress and pain that accompany reading muscle monthlies, while preserving enough energy to face the difficult but rewarding work I do in the gym.

To the journalists who covered the 2000 International Women's Tennis Cup. The *Gazette* noted in particular the journalists' keen interest in any of the athletes' poses that could be seen as suggestive, as well as the excessive attention accorded Anna Kournikova—for her beauty rather than her game.

Media images of women in sports are also very different from the familiar pictures of male athletes in action. Female athletes are increasingly photographed in what Professor Pat Griffin calls "hypersexualized poses." Griffin notes, "When it was once enough to feminize women athletes, now it is necessary to sexualize them for men. Instead of hearing, 'I am woman, hear me roar,' we are hearing 'I am hetero-sexy, watch me strip.'"