10

Gender and Sport

STUDENT OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you will know the following:

- The role of gender and sex within sport
- Current challenges with gender identity and sport
- The historical roles of women in and out of sport
- How Title IX has affected sport participation
- The social issues and global status of women in sport
- The barriers for women in sport and how they may change to increase the number of women in sport

Since the ancient Olympic games, gender has played a role in whether women should be allowed to participate in a sporting event. During the ancient Olympic games, women were not allowed to participate in the Olympics or watch them, and if a woman was caught watching the Olympic event, she was then sentenced to be thrown off a cliff. While that is not the case today, gender discrimination still exists within youth, college, and professional sport organizations all around the globe. In 2020, the U.S. Soccer Federation stated that “it is undisputed that the job of [a Men’s National Team] player requires materially more strength and speed than the job of [a Women’s National Team] player.” It also added that “the job of MNT players carries more responsibility than the job of a WNT player” (Booker 2020). This statement was in response to the U.S. Women’s Soccer Team suing the federation for gender discrimination and equal pay. After this statement was made

public, U.S. Soccer Federation president Carlos Cordeiro issued an apology and then resigned as the president of the federation.

Discrimination has also taken place for women like Caster Semenya and Dutee Chand, who have had their gender questioned because of their stellar athletic performances and having higher levels of testosterone. Female athletes with significantly higher levels of testosterone are known to have hyperandrogenism. Governing bodies like the IAAF and the IOC have attempted to mandate rules in which these athletes have to actively work with a medical professional to help balance their hormone levels so that the athlete can compete in either a male or female category in sporting competitions.

When discussing transgender athletes, transgender athlete Chris Mosier was the first out transgender person to qualify for a U.S. national team. Chris faced discrimination by almost being banned from competing in the World Championship race for the duathlon but successfully challenged the IOC policy on transgender athletes in 2016 (Steele 2016).

Discrimination based on gender has been apparent throughout history. Regardless if a person self-identifies as female, intersex, or transgender, we need to figure out how to create opportunities for all genders in sport and make sport accessible, equal, and fair for all.

Sport plays an important role in giving a spotlight to how gender affects us in society. Gender equity and sport means advocating for equality in all aspects of sport and recreational activity, regardless of what gender someone may choose to identify with. The IOC views sport participation as a fundamental human right and advocates gender equality. The IOC also initiates the promotion of sport participation for humankind across the globe (IOC 2019).

While the terms *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably, they are in fact two different terms with different meanings (Page 2018).

- Sex is the biological differences between males and females when referencing genetic and genitalia makeup
- Gender is how a person self-identifies

The way a person chooses to self-identify may be influenced by their surroundings and how society terms characteristics and traits of a person who chooses to not identify as either a male or a female.

Achieving gender equity is a challenge. In North America, we tend to operate on the gender binary of the male and female sex, but there are several different ways for someone to identify their gender that may not include male or female. Gender is fluid, and a person may identify as transgender, intersex, or a combination of genders. Therefore, to be inclusive of everyone, we must operate on a nonbinary system of gender (Clayton and Tannenbaum 2016). Throughout this chapter, we will discuss the fluidity of gender and discuss the various barriers and obstacles marginalized gendered groups face and how they navigate within sport participation.

GENDER CLASSIFICATIONS

The gender binary is the classification system that only includes two genders: male and female. Most of the world, particularly in the West, is classified on the gender binary system at birth, with the doctor assigning a gender to an individual based on their genetic attributes. From a very early age, we are assigned a gender, and we are taught to adhere to those gender norms (Hyde et al. 2019). Boys are brought into this world; swaddled in blue clothes; and taught to watch sports, play with Legos, and resist the temptation of showing any form of weakness. Girls are pushed toward the color pink, and their learned behavior teaches them to play with dolls, be submissive, and not show dominant characteristics. While the Western world operates on a gender binary system, some places do not. Here are a few examples of how someone may choose to self-identify outside of the gender binary:

- Cisgender: When your gender and sex are the same

- Transgender: When your gender does not align with your sex assigned at birth
- Agender: When you identify as not having a gender

Since Western culture operates on the gender binary, it is difficult for an individual who may self-identify as a gender outside of male or female. For example, when looking at sports, usually there is a men's team and a women's team, so someone who is intersex or transgender does not fit into the Western ideology of male or female.

For example, Caitlyn Jenner (formerly Bruce Jenner) won the gold medal for the decathlon in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Winners of decathlons are considered to be the ultimate athletes, since they compete in 10 track-and-field events. When Caitlyn won, she was put on the cover of Wheaties boxes across the country, which is the cereal for the "breakfast of champions." In 2015, Caitlyn came out as a transwoman and decided to no longer self-identify as male. Caitlyn eventually went through gender reassignment surgery, so that her sex and gender could align (Travers 2018).

This begs the question, where would a transwoman compete in the Olympics? Would she compete as a male or a female? The IOC has continuously tried to figure out a fair and ethical way to include transgender people within the Olympic fabric, but there have been many snags along the way with understanding the science behind gender reassignment surgery and if it could possibly give an individual an unfair advantage in competition (Takahashi 2019). Scientists have continuously disagreed on a period of transition, levels of estrogen and testosterone to categorize a male or female, and how hormone therapy plays a role. There are over 50 different genders that one can self-identity with, but within this chapter, we will focus on transgender and intersex genders in relation to sport participation.

Transgender Athletes

Transgender is a term used for a person born with a sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male. Within sport, many

transgender athletes have competed in athletics. Keelin Godsey came out as transgender during his senior year with the Bates College women's track team and changed his self-identification from female to male. Renée Richards, who changed her self-identification from male to female and underwent gender reassignment surgery, was denied entry to the 1976 U.S. Open. She disputed this ban, and it went all the way to the Supreme Court, where there was a landmark decision on trans rights, which ruled that the USTA was discriminatory toward her and violated her rights. She was eventually allowed to compete in the U.S. Open, but lost to British player Virginia Wade in the first round of singles; however, she did reach the doubles finals.

> Renée Richards was one of the first professional athletes to successfully challenge rules that prevented her from competing in women's tournaments after gender reassignment in the 1970s.

In the case of transgender athletes, athletes transitioning from female to male versus male to female differ. Within the regulations of different governing bodies, you will see that the transition period and when an athlete can compete is different, depending on which gender they choose (Genel 2017).

Intersex Athletes

Intersex is a term used for a person born with a reproductive sexual anatomy that does not fit into the common definitions of female or male. This may involve genitalia ambiguity and a person being assigned as a male or female at birth, but may have characteristics of both sexes (Gleaves and Lehrbach 2016). Therefore, their assigned gender at birth is based on the decision of the doctor or parent(s).

Within sport, this plays a role when an intersex athlete competes within female competition since they do not fit the gender binary and therefore may have an unfair advantage when competing in a female sport. The

IAAF has established regulations and has conducted numerous amounts of research to try and figure out how to fairly distinguish if an athlete should compete as a male or a female (Wells 2019).

Sex Testing

Currently the IOC and many other sport governing bodies run on the gender binary system, and the rules and regulations may not address the ever-fluid landscape of gender and the role it plays as far as what team a person plays on. At one point, the IOC instituted sex testing into their practices, but it was focused on the discriminatory practice of testing women and not men (Genel, Simpson, and de la Chapelle 2016). Women would have to walk around in a nude parade in the 1960s to prove that their genitals were that of a female. The IOC has continued testing chromosomes and hormones, but the assigned experts still have not come to a consensus of what should constitute “normal” hormone levels for a female athlete. Problems with sex verification testing include the following:

- Invalid screening tests
- Failure to understand the problems of intersex
- Discriminatory singling out of women based on lab results
- Stigmatization
- Emotional trauma

WOMEN, GIRLS, AND SPORT

As we discussed above, we are taught to adhere to gender norms, and the forcing of certain social roles upon women throughout history has been one of the most consistent forms of discrimination. From the time of the ancient Greeks to the present day, societies have relegated females to subservient roles revolving around childrearing, family, and sex. Changes in U.S. society since the 1980s have dramatically altered the roles available to women, but the quest for equalizing women’s opportunities in society remains short of its goal.

In the labor force, the education levels for women have risen. In 2018, 43 percent of working women hold a college degree, as compared with just 11 percent in 1970. Moreover, in 2017, women accounted for 52 percent of all workers employed in management, professional, and related occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018). Even so, women overall in the workforce hold more part-time jobs than men, work fewer hours, and earn only 82 percent of what males earn for comparable work and hours worked. In addition, men still dominate the higher-paying executive jobs. These shifts in the workforce mean that women now shoulder a large burden in seeking and keeping their jobs, helping ensure access to health care for their families, and still serving as the primary caregiver in most families.

When women enter the workforce, the largest household expense is that of childcare in most regions of the country. This cost is one reason that the number of stay-at-home moms rose to 28.5 percent of mothers in 2018, as compared with an all-time low of 23 percent in 1999—still well below the 49 percent of four decades ago (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018).

Along with decades of fighting for equality in employment opportunities, women have campaigned for and significantly progressed in gaining admission to institutions of higher education, rights in marriage, roles in the armed forces, and opportunities for sport participation. The sporting world changed greatly with the passage in 1972 of the federal Title IX legislation, which granted females equal opportunity for sport participation. Even so, their foray into the sporting world also meant that they faced new forms of discrimination.

WOMEN AND SPORT BEFORE TITLE IX

For centuries, sport participated in assigning a limited role to women by excluding them from participation and resisting efforts to include women in sport. Girls have been ignored, ridiculed, and even disciplined for their efforts to compete in sport (Rice, Hutchinson, and Lee 1958). It wasn’t until the mid-1800s that women even ventured into physical activity programs founded at colleges such as Mount Holyoke and Vassar. These early programs of physical education were typically led by medical doctors who were dedicated to improving the health and fitness of students.

Exercise for girls was carefully controlled and emphasized graceful, ladylike movements. Competitive sport was ruled out as simply inappropriate for women.

Even so, a few women dared to participate in individual sports, such as tennis and golf. Gradually, women were generally accepted into other sports that were considered relatively feminine because they involved grace, beauty, and coordination—for example, figure skating, gymnastics, and swimming. Power and strength sports were still deemed inappropriate for women, and even the Olympic Games banned women from most track-and-field events. To put it simply, running, jumping, and throwing heavy objects were not consistent with the prevailing social view of women. In 1920, the Olympics invited only 64 women and more than 2,500 men. At the Berlin Games in 1936, the number of female participants grew to 328, and male participation rose to nearly 4,000 (Fanbay 2005).

A few female athletes gained fame during the 1920s and 1930s. Glenna Collett-Vare was a remarkable amateur golfer who won the U.S. Women's Amateur Golf Championship six times between 1922 and 1935. Helen Wills Moody dominated women's tennis in the 1920s and 1930s by winning eight Wimbledon titles, eight U.S. national titles, and every set she played in competition between 1927 and 1932. The most famous and perhaps best athlete was Mildred "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias, whose accomplishments included two gold medals and one silver medal in track and field at the 1932 Olympics. As a golfer, Zaharias dominated both the amateur and professional fields, and she was also a tennis player who could compete with the best players in the United States.

In 1950, in view of these accomplishments, the Associated Press named Zaharias the greatest female athlete of the first half of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, the top female athlete, according to *Sports Illustrated for Women* in 2000, was track-and-field Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersee, followed closely by tennis legends Billie Jean King, Chris Evert, and Martina Navratilova. Other women also made their historical mark in professional sport. For example, the popular movie *A League of Their Own* chronicles the trials of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League during World War II. Taking a broader view, the

documentary *Dare to Compete: The Struggle of Women in Sports* traces the history of women in sport as a whole.

These outstanding female athletes blazed the trail for women to enter the sport world. But their successes would not open sport opportunities for most women until society changed its general view of a woman's role. Here are some of the reasons that people gave for excluding women from sport.

Females Aren't Interested

In hindsight, lack of interest was a particularly irrational justification for excluding girls from sport. Given that girls had little access to sport, few sport role models, and no encouragement to play sport from social institutions such as families, schools, and churches—of course they appeared uninterested! Instead, they were expected to become cheerleaders, pompon girls, and majorettes; play in the band; and fill the stands to cheer on the boys.

Physical Activity Harms the Female Body

In the last century, led by physicians and physical educators at universities across the United States, people gradually awakened to the positive benefits of physical activity for girls. Though at first limited to certain physical activities deemed "ladylike," girls were at least encouraged to become aware of their bodies for reasons of health and appearance. Eventually, research began to show that girls could train their bodies to become stronger and faster and endure longer without damaging their physique.

Still, it wasn't until the late 1970s that experts began to concertedly affirm the positive values of sport participation for females. For example, in 1978, Klafs and Lyon said, "Let it be stated here, unequivocally, that there is no reason, either psychological, physiological, or sociological, to preclude normal, healthy females from participating in strenuous physical activities, nor does such participation accentuate or develop male characteristics. Strenuous activity for the well-trained and well-conditioned female athlete results in good health and accentuates the very qualities that make her a woman" (Klafs and Lyon 1978, 10).

Although female leaders in sport forged a brave path toward physical activity for girls, they also held girls back. Up through the 1950s, leaders of women's sport limited the types of acceptable sport and encouraged girls not to become "too" competitive. The norm in the 1950s for college women in sport was the "play day" or "sport day," in which women from several colleges gathered at one campus and were assigned to teams for the day. The events were largely informal and encouraged mass participation. Several sports were typically played, and the low-key competition was usually conducted in a round-robin format. The closing event was a tea or social hour during which the "girls" could talk with each other (Spears and Swanson 1978).

When the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) threatened to take over women's sport, leading female coaches and administrators fought against it. They preferred the more ladylike approach to sport, in which female athletes were tempered by good manners, winning was deemphasized, and femininity was maintained. Remnants of this approach can be seen in some current team names, such as the Lady Lions, Lady Vols, or Lady Tigers. Imagine if men's teams were called names such as the Gentlemen Bears, Gentlemen Gators, or Gentlemen Warriors!

Early physical education classes touted the benefits of exercise for young women.

Women Cannot Compete With Men in Sport, So They Don't Deserve Equal Opportunity to Play

Once a few girls dared to compete against boys, it was perhaps inevitable that objections would arise about the relative skill and physical prowess of girls versus boys. For instance, my (Ron's) high school boys' tennis team competed against a young girl named Tory Fretz, who played first-position singles on the boys' team for Harrisburg High School and went on to a professional career. She defeated every boy in the conference, usually by a lopsided score. Her performance was an eye-opener for adolescent boys

and was experienced as humiliating for her victims, who endured teasing and taunting.

Unlike Tory Fretz, however, most girls are at a disadvantage when competing against boys once puberty sets in. Before puberty, girls can compete equally with boys in any sport. But once the relative size, strength, and body proportions change during puberty, an individual's comparative athletic ability also changes. Therefore, to achieve equal opportunity in sport, women needed a whole new structure for girls' sports, and it would have to be built starting from little history, equipment, or tradition.

TITLE IX

Social change throughout the 1950s and 1960s helped change women's sport. The women's movement of the 1960s—including organizations such as the National Organization for Women and the Women's Action Group—helped further the movement for equality of women and men. In the sport world, however, it was the passage of Title IX that ultimately helped women and girls to be on an even playing field with boys and men. (For a comprehensive work on the substance, effects, and challenges of Title IX, consult *Title IX* by Carpenter and Acosta [2005].) Passed in 1972 by the U.S. Congress, Title IX stated the following:

No person in the United States shall, based on sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

IN THE ARENA WITH …

The Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation came to life in 1974 shortly after the historic Title IX legislation was passed. Tennis legend Billie Jean King founded it and had strong support from

notable Olympians such as swimmer Donna de Varona and skier Suzy Chaffee. The organization's mission is "to advance the lives of girls and women through sports and physical activity" (Women's Sports Foundation 2014).

Since its establishment, the foundation has been nurtured by more than 225 trustees—strong advocates and role models for girls and women—to become a viable, essential, and trailblazing voice for using sport to promote healthy living for girls and women. The foundation has advocated for the rights of females in sport; addressed legal issues; supported funding equality in sport programs; and fought against discrimination due to gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

The foundation's major programs include fundraising events, athletic scholarship awards, the annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day, operating an information resource center, and compiling research relevant to females in sport and physical activity. In 2010, the foundation formed a strategic partnership with the University of Michigan School of Kinesiology to form the Sport, Health, and Activity Research Policy Center (SHARP) for women and girls. It is now a center within the Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWG) at the University of Michigan.

Founder Billie Jean King is the first U.S. female to have a sport stadium bear her name—the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, which is home to the U.S. Open tennis championships in Flushing Meadows, New York. This honor resulted from King's pioneering leadership in establishing the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), which operates the women's professional tennis tour. Her vision, energy, and devotion to the cause of the Women's Sports Foundation have brought even wider recognition and honors, culminating in her being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

ACTIVITY TIME-OUT

Public Information About Equity in Athletics

Check out your university to see how it stacks up in terms of equity between male and female sport teams, participants, coaches, and budgets. Visit http://ope.ed.gov/athletics and type in the required information for your school: the undergraduate enrollment, the school name, the state in which it is located, and its NCAA division. Once you have studied your school's data, write a one-page summary of what you found. Include your own observations and conclusions and any questions you have about the data.

When Title IX was passed, there was little immediate outcry, because the United States was in the throes of ensuring equal protection for all students, regardless of race or gender, in public education. Most parents agreed that their daughters should have the same right to a fine education that their sons had. It wasn't for some time that people understood that sport was included in the decree and that big changes would have to be made.

The imbalance in sport participation between boys and girls was dramatic until the 1970s. At that time, nearly 3.7 million boys played varsity high school sport, but only 295,000 girls did so. Even more unbalanced, boys received 99 cents of every dollar spent on sport. At the college level, about 180,000 men played varsity sport, but just 32,000 women did so (Women's Sports Foundation 2009).

Once Title IX was passed, many questions were raised about what it meant and what specific changes had to be made. Did it mean that girls had to have as many teams as boys had? Did girls get half the money spent on sport, thereby reducing funding for boys unless more money was allocated to sport overall? Though many people thought girls should have an equal chance to participate in sport, few wanted to see cuts in programs for boys. What a dilemma!

After much debate and foot dragging, the Office for Civil Rights published guidelines in 1975 to clarify what it meant to comply with Title IX. To be

eligible for federal funding, schools and colleges had to meet any of three tests:

1. *Proportionality test:* If a school is 50 percent female, then no less than 45 percent of its athletes should be female. The 5 percent deviation was deemed the allowable margin.
2. *History-of-progress test:* A school demonstrates progress toward expanding women's programs, particularly over the three most recent years.
3. *Accommodation-of-interest test:* A school shows that it has fully accommodated the interests and needs of the underrepresented (generally, female) sex. Any remaining inequality exists due to lack of interest by female students or to the inability to field additional teams for athletic competition.

As these clarifications were issued, female athletes and their advocates began filing lawsuits. In one of the lawsuits, the U.S. Supreme Court surprisingly ruled that Title IX did not apply to sport since sport was not supported by federal funds. Three years later, the U.S. Congress responded to this decision by passing the Civil Rights Restoration Act, clarifying that it did indeed intend Title IX to apply to sport. President Ronald Reagan vetoed the law, but Congress overrode his veto.

Shortly after the passage of Title IX, massive changes began to be made in high school and college sport. Most schools and colleges were slow to respond, but the process had begun. Supporters of male athletics initiated numerous lawsuits to delay the inevitable, but women gradually began to assert their rights and demand sport opportunities at every level.

Title IX Challenges

The most perplexing question facing Title IX enforcement on college campuses focuses on American football and the 85 athletic scholarships awarded for football at most Division I schools. These schools must provide 85 women's scholarships just to match the football total. Once these 85 men's and 85 women's scholarships have been awarded, a

university then decides how many other scholarships it can afford for other sports.

In response, many athletic directors have completely dropped less popular, non-revenue-producing men's sports, such as wrestling, tennis, golf, gymnastics, and swimming. As a result, programs rich in tradition—some of which had earned national championships—have suddenly disappeared. Governing bodies for these sports—for example, wrestling and tennis—have mounted campaigns to reinstate them. Although they are careful not to criticize Title IX, the underlying mumbling blames women. Dropped sports are called "unintended consequences" in recognition of the fact that the authors of Title IX never intended to harm men's sport by opening women's sport (National Women's Law Center 2012).

"Where is the money going to come from?" That's the plea of every athletic director and college president faced with Title IX compliance. In essence, we've taken their athletic budget, which was largely devoted to men's sport, and asked them to split it down the middle for men and women. On top of that, they are unwilling to reduce support for football—the main revenue sport at 131 Division I institutions and a source of publicity, pride, recruiting, and alumni donations. For them, it would simply be unthinkable to reduce the number of football scholarships, though others might ask why, if it takes only 22 men to play football—11 on offense and 11 on defense—85 scholarships are needed.

The football picture at the high school level is very similar, though athletic scholarships are not a factor. Instead, the focus is on budgets for uniforms, equipment, fields, coaching salaries, and publicity. In every category, football is still a huge expense.

ACTIVITY TIME-OUT

Football and Title IX

Some people have proposed that colleges leave football out of Title IX compliance. In other words, equalize the number of

scholarships for men and women, but do not include the 85 football scholarships in the mix. Is this a fair solution to the issue of equal opportunity for females? Proponents of this view contend that football is a different animal and that there is no comparable activity for girls. Moreover, at large Division I institutions where the football team makes money, that revenue can help support other sports.

Inequities still exist in college sport as well. Unlike professional sport, which determines earnings based on what the market will bear, collegiate sports are governed by Title IX restrictions, which by law promise equality for women and girls in terms of dollars spent. However, despite significant progress made toward that goal, glaring inequities remain.

For example, at NCAA Division I FBS schools in 2016, expenses for Division I FBS men's teams were $30,187,000, as opposed to the women's teams' expenses of $12,157,000. Of course, the major difference in expenditures involves the amount spent to support football teams, which are by far the most expensive collegiate teams. More specifically, comparisons of expenditures have shown men at $2.69 million and women at $1.51 million for team travel, men at $754,000 and women at $332,000 for recruiting, and men at $978,000 and women at $394,000 for uniforms and equipment (NCAA 2018).

Comparing money spent on athletic scholarships at Division I FBS schools, the total allocated in 2016 was $5.45 million for men's sport per school and $4.15 million for women's sport. In basketball, the median head coach salary was $1.49 million for men's teams and $442,000 for women's teams (many of which are coached by men). Football coaches earned the highest median salary at $2.28 million (NCAA 2018).

Is leaving football out of Title IX an equitable solution? If not, what other ideas would you offer an athletic director who faces increasing costs without an increasing budget?

WOMEN AND SPORT AFTER TITLE IX

In the years following the passage of the Title IX legislation, the number of girls and women playing sport has changed dramatically. Here are some details:

- Participation in sport and physical activity by females of all ages has continued to increase overall, and among those exercising daily, the proportion of women improved from 15.6 percent in 2010 to 17.7 percent in 2015, whereas males posted a small decrease from 21.5 percent to 21.4 percent during the same time period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018).
- Females dominate certain activities, such as aerobic exercising (85 percent), exercise walking (55.5 percent), exercise with equipment (55.3 percent), and swimming, surfing, and water skiing (52.3 percent) (Hoffman and Knudson 2018). Women are also more likely than men to join exercise classes at gyms, a fact evidenced by their dominance in yoga (84 percent) and Pilates (84 percent) (Archer 2014).
- Women have made remarkable participation gains in high school and college sport and in the Olympic Games. For details, see tables 10.1 through 10.4.
- Olympic performances by women improved dramatically as training intensified and the pool of competing athletes enlarged. Joan Benoit Samuelson's time for the marathon in the 1984 Los Angeles Games was faster than all men's times before 1956. In Olympic swimming, the women's record in the 100-meter freestyle, set in 1992, was faster than all men's times before 1964. In cross-country skiing, the Olympic record for women in the 15-kilometer race, set in 1994, was faster than all men's records before 1992.

The following subsections examine several outcomes of the increased presence of females in sport and physical activity.

TABLE 10.1 High School Sport Participation by Gender

Year	Boys	Girls
1971-1972	3,666,917	294,015
2013-2014	4,527,994	3,267,664
2018-2019	4,534,758	3,402,733

Data from National Federation of State High School Associations (2019).

TABLE 10.2 College Sport Participation by Gender

Year	Men	Women
1981-1982	167,055	64,390
2013-2014	267,604	205,021
2018-2019	284,191	221,042

Data from NCAA (2019).

TABLE 10.3 Women in the Summer Olympic Games

Year	Female participants (% of total)

Year	Female participants (% of total)
1900	1.6
1960	11.5
1984	23
1996	34
2000	38
2004	41
2008	42
2012	44
2016	45

Data from International Olympic Committee (2016).

Women as Sport Fans

As women’s participation in sport exploded, females also became avid sport fans. Moreover, many females began watching sport to track the

performances of their favorite athletes and appreciate the competition—not just as spectators but now as fellow participants.

- 62 percent of women say they watch sport on television either regularly or occasionally. In comparison, only 42 percent watch soap operas regularly or occasionally (Gumpel 2009).
- Female viewers outnumber male viewers for three major sporting events: the Kentucky Derby, the Winter Olympics, and the Summer Olympics. Coverage of the Olympic Games has traditionally catered to a female audience, and much of the airtime is devoted to women's gymnastics, figure skating, and beach volleyball (Owens 2010).
- Games played in the National Football League (NFL) are by far the most popular sport on U.S. television, drawing 64 percent of all Americans (73 percent of men and 55 percent of women). The Super Bowl now draws an audience that is 46 percent female, and women pay better attention than men to the game, actual plays, advertisements, and the halftime show (Salkowitz 2018).
- Women make up close to half of all NFL fans and have started to hold front office and coaching positions within the NFL (Hampton 2017).
- After NFL football, NASCAR is the second most-watched sport on television, and 37 percent of its viewers are female (Thompson 2014).
- Women make up 32 percent of Major League Soccer (MLS) fans, 30 percent of Major League Baseball (MLB) fans, 32 percent of National Hockey League (NHL) fans, and 30 percent of National Basketball Association (NBA) fans (Thompson 2014).

TABLE 10.4 American Women in the Olympic Games

Olympic year	Total number of U.S. athletes	Number of U.S. female athletes	Female percentage of U.S. athletes
1972	428	90	21

Olympic year	Total number of U.S. athletes	Number of U.S. female athletes	Female percentage of U.S. athletes
1992	619	203	33
2008	596	286	48
2012	530	269	51
2016	554	292	53

Data from Smith and Wynn (2013); Team USA (2020); United States Olympic Committee (2016).

Popularity of Women’s Sport

Women’s sport at every level of competition has begun to attract large numbers of spectators. Here are some landmark attendance figures:

- In 1973, at the height of the women’s movement, Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs to win the “Battle of the Sexes” in front of 30,472 fans—then a record for the largest crowd to attend any tennis match and one that stood until 2010 (Women’s Sports Foundation 2009). The match that broke the record was an exhibition between Serena Williams and Kim Clijsters in the tiny country of Belgium. That match, staged in Brussels, set the new attendance record for of 35,681, largest for a women’s match.
- In 2019, a women’s basketball game between Baylor University and the University of Notre Dame drew a record crowd of 20,127. That is the highest attendance at a women’s college basketball game not

involving one or both of the sport's two historical powers: the University of Connecticut and the University of Tennessee (NCAA 2020).

- During the 2018 to 2019 season, nine women's basketball teams—Notre Dame, South Carolina, Mississippi State, Iowa State, Oregon, Baylor, Oregon State, Stanford, and Gonzaga—had higher attendance rates than their male counterparts (NCAA 2020).
- At the 2018 U.S. Open, the women's final between Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams attracted 3,101,000 viewers, while the men's final between Novak Djokovic and Juan Martin del Potro drew in 2,065,000 viewers (Tandon 2018).
- The University of Utah women's gymnastics team set an attendance record in a 2011 dual meet with the University of Florida by drawing 15,558 fans. In 2014, average attendance for home meets was 14,376—the highest in the nation for the 30th time (University of Utah Gymnastics 2020).

POP CULTURE

Serena Williams: Iconic Superstar

From her childhood as an African American female living in a rough neighborhood of Compton, California, tennis player Serena Williams has blazed a trail of athletic excellence that has resulted in career earnings of more than $92 million in prize money—the most in history for any female athlete. Playing a sport traditionally unwelcoming to African Americans has posed a career challenge for Serena, who burst on the scene alongside her older sister Venus by exhibiting a brand of tennis that featured power and athleticism rarely seen from women on the court.

Serena Williams was ranked number one in the world for the first time in July 2002 and has continued her excellence on the court ever since. To date, she has won 73 singles titles, 23 doubles titles, 39 Grand Slams, 14 doubles titles, and four

Olympic gold medals. As of 2019, Serena Williams was named the greatest female athlete of the decade.

Serena Williams' influence has reached far beyond the tennis court. Her matches have drawn record-setting television audiences, and her image has graced the cover of the "Body Issue" of ESPN The Magazine, New York Times Magazine, Essence magazine, and Fitness magazine. As an athlete, she has had to overcome racialized and gendered discourse in which the media and her opponents criticize her physique and apparel choices. Most notably, her controversial outfit of choice, the catsuit, made its debut in 2002 and again in 2018, drawing racist comments in which the media depicted her as masculine and animalistic (Laskas 2018). She has since played through these insensitive and racist media critiques and has paved the way for a new wave of young Black tennis players like Naomi Osaka and Coco Gauff, who have followed the blueprint of Serena's success.

The Battle for Equity Continues

Despite the remarkable progress made by girls and women in sport, equity remains a pressing challenge. Athletic opportunities for girls and women remain clearly unequal, and the urge to congratulate ourselves for the progress made since the 1980s should not cause us to slack off now.

Girls, particularly those of color, have far fewer opportunities than boys to participate in sport; moreover, when they do play, they typically must tolerate inferior facilities, equipment, coaching, and publicity. Although high school sport for girls has experienced many consecutive years of increased participation, girls still trail boys in high school sport by 1.2 million participants. In addition, fewer than two-thirds of African American and Hispanic girls participate in sport, whereas more than three-fourths of White girls do (National Women's Law Center 2012).

At the college level, females receive 62,236 fewer sport participation opportunities than males (216,378 for females versus 278,614 for males).

Female college athletes receive only 45 percent of all scholarships. Significant inequities also exist across the board in terms of overall budgets, recruiting budgets, transportation, facilities, and uniforms (Lapchick 2018).

Male athletes have consistently had more endorsement deals, media coverage, and a higher salary than that of their female counterparts. In some sports like tennis, men and women make about the same salary. However, in sports like basketball and soccer, women do not make nearly that of what the men make. However, the tide started to shift and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) started to make progress toward equal pay for their athletic endeavors.

Women's National Basketball Association

The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) came into existence in 1996, after the success of the Women's National Basketball Team in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to the development of the WNBA, women were playing professional basketball overseas because there were no opportunities for women to play basketball professionally in the United States. The WNBA has never been known for their high salaries, and the star female athletes have often gone overseas for professional basketball opportunities so that they can make a living from playing basketball as career. In fact, the WNBA season and the seasons of teams in Europe work together so that the women can play in the WNBA in the summer months and then go overseas starting in the fall months (Butler 2018). This type of schedule means that many of the WNBA's top athletes are playing professional basketball year-round, meaning they cannot rest their bodies or start a family if they wish to do so.

In 2020, the WNBA and the WNBAPA (player's association) reached a tentative labor relations agreement in which maternity leave, childcare benefits, travel standards, and an equal revenue sharing plan were negotiated. The new deal is supposed to run through 2027, and WNBA players now have the potential to earn 53 percent more in total cash compensation (Wallace 2020). This means that salaries and bonuses will be

higher in addition to players reaping the benefits of earned revenue from league and team marketing deals.

U.S. Women's National Team

The United States Women's National Team (USWNT) won the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019 by defeating the Netherlands. After this historic win, they became the first team in Women's World Cup history to have four total wins. This win came after the failed attempt of the U.S. Men's National Team (USMNT) to even qualify for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. Approximately 14.3 million U.S. viewers watched the Women's World Cup final in 2019, which was 22 percent more than those tuning in to watch the Men's World Cup Final in 2018 (Hess 2019). U.S. women's soccer games generated more revenue during 2016 to 2019 than did men's soccer games. However, the women's team is not paid as much as the men's team, despite having a higher success rate on the pitch and with viewership.

The wage gap had been evident before the 2019 World Cup win. In fact, in 2016, Carli Lloyd, Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn, and Hope Solo filed a wage discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation. By 2017, a new collective bargaining agreement had been made that would increase the salary of the players yet still not guarantee that the pay would be equal to that of the men (Dwyer 2017). In March 2019, on the heels of the World Cup in France, all 28 members of the U.S. Women's National Team filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation for institutional gender discrimination (Hays 2019). While the women still are not equal to the men in pay, they are slowly making progress toward the fight to close the gender wage gap.

SOCIAL ISSUES IN WOMEN'S SPORT

As sport opportunities and fitness activities for women have increased, new social issues have arisen. For example, before women's participation in sport and physical activity, little or no attention was paid to issues such as the impact of women's fitness on health and the design of exercise clothing

specifically for a woman's body. This section explores several social issues that have emerged as women have entered the playing field.

Women's Health

In 1994, Donna Lopiano of the Women's Sports Foundation summarized the benefits of women's participation in sport and physical activity. Specifically, benefits have been identified and substantiated in the psychosocial, physical, behavioral, and emotional realms. In addition, research has shown that introducing girls to sport and physical activity at an early age is essential in helping them make exercise a lifelong habit. In fact, Linda Bunker (1988) of the University of Virginia has concluded that if a girl does not participate in sport by the time she is 10, there is only a 10 percent chance that she will participate when she is an adult (Women's Sports Foundation 2009).

The amount of physical activity that a young girl gets relates to multiple factors, including her race, class, and culture and the influence of people around her. White girls (56 percent) are more likely to participate in sport than are Black girls (47 percent) or Hispanic girls (36 percent) (Iber et al. 2011). Girls from middle- and upper-middle-class homes are more likely than girls from less affluent homes to participate in vigorous physical activity.

In addition, girls growing up in a culture that ascribes relatively narrow female roles oriented toward childbearing and families value the sport experience differently than girls growing up with access to a wider range of possible roles. Moreover, families struggling economically are more likely to encourage girls to spend time helping in the home and caring for younger siblings. Indeed, girls who grow up in poor urban settings may face daunting barriers to sport participation (see chapter 11 for more about these challenges).

The health benefits of exercise extend beyond fitness. Research has shown that teenage female athletes are less likely than nonathletes to use illicit drugs (marijuana, cocaine, and others), to be suicidal, or to smoke. They are also more likely than nonathletes to have a positive body image

(Women's Sports Foundation 2009). These benefits mirror those found for male athletes and speak to the value of encouraging young people of both sexes to take better care of their bodies and develop a strong self-concept that helps them resist peer pressure.

Teenage female athletes are also less likely than nonathletes to get pregnant, more likely to abstain from sexual intercourse, and more likely to experience sexual intercourse at a later age (Women's Sports Foundation 2015). In this light, one might wonder if the relative lack of sport participation among economically disadvantaged girls correlates with their significantly higher rate of teenage pregnancy.

Ample evidence shows that moderate and consistent levels of sport and other physical activity are essential to overall good health and well-being for both girls and women. For example, physical activity helps prevent obesity, heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's disease and related forms of dementia. Females who are physically active also achieve higher academic performance and attend college at a higher rate than peers who are inactive. In addition, female sport participants typically develop a healthier body image and overall self-image, as well as feelings of self-confidence. For more detailed information, consult *Her Life Depends on It* (Women's Sports Foundation 2015).

> The risk for many health issues—such as osteoporosis, breast cancer, and heart disease—can be lowered by engaging in physical activity. What must society do to encourage young women to become and stay physically active?

As our culture continues to encourage women to join the workforce and contend for leadership roles, the lessons of the playing field appear to be just as helpful to females as they are to males. Various sport experiences help women develop critical skills needed for building a successful career—for example, leading, handling pressure, taking pride in accomplishment, and working as part of a team.

In a 2014 study conducted by espnW and the Ernst and Young Women Athletes Business Network, three of four female executives say that a candidate's background in sport influences their hiring decisions. The survey respondents were high-ranking executives, and 52 percent of them had participated in sport at the university level, whereas that figure was just 39 percent for women at lower levels of management. Only 3 percent of women in executive roles said that they had never played a sport. One conclusion drawn from the study is that elite female athletes may be "an untapped leadership pipeline for business" (Otani 2014).

Broadly speaking, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that exercise and sport participation are good for women and girls. You wonder why it took so long for society to realize this fact and encourage healthy activity among the female half of the population. To learn more and get the latest data about women in sport, visit the website of the Women's Sports Foundation.

Athletes and Sexuality

Since women and girls started participating in sports, strong, confident female athletes have always had their sexuality questioned. Some famous female athletes, such as tennis players Billie Jean King and (later) Amelie Mauresmo, have been frank with the media about their sexual orientation. King, who identifies as bisexual, is an icon for women's liberation and a role model for many people; at the same time, she is popular among women, but her fan base among men is much smaller. Some fans were stunned when Sheryl Swoopes, three-time WNBA Most Valuable Player, revealed that she was a lesbian. Although she was previously married and has a son, Swoopes told the world that she currently has a female life partner.

The pace of self-identification and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons in U.S. society has accelerated rapidly in recent years. Many student-athletes who identify as LGBTQ+ are now starting to be open about their sexuality. At colleges around the country and in athletic departments, there is clearly a generation gap with respect to sexual orientation. In addition, as has been well documented, some coaches and players fear having their teams or schools labeled as a

haven for LGBTQ+ athletes. This fear, of course, creates an intimidating environment for athletes who would like to be more open and honest.

One example involves the falling-out between Baylor women's basketball coach Kim Mulkey and her star player, Brittney Griner. When Griner came out publicly as a being a homosexual athlete during her last year in college, Mulkey feared that Griner's openness would affect the Baylor program's recruiting. In addition, Griner's statement conflicted with the university's policy, which did *not* include sexual preference in its nondiscrimination statement. However, since Griner had brought fame and plenty of revenue to the women's basketball program—twice being selected as national player of the year—campus leaders were forced to take a more tolerant view regarding sexual preference.

As society has changed, it has become clear that educational institutions have a responsibility to ensure that homophobia is eliminated from their campus, both overall and in their athletic programs. Indeed, ignorance, fear, and bigotry are the very antithesis of the values that an educational institution should stand for and promulgate. Perhaps we have begun to realize what we have done, not only to LGBTQ athletes but also to those who have not learned to accept them. Unless the needed changes are made, sport for girls and women will continue to struggle for wide acceptance and equal opportunities for generations to come.

Sportswear

As girls and women have moved into sport, they have sparked changes in sport clothing by demanding attire that fits their unique needs. In response, apparel companies have raced to design sport clothing for women and implemented marketing campaigns to attract buyers of athletic gear designed specifically for women. These developments have affected both the economy of sport business and cultural attitudes about females in sport.

Sports Bra

The sports bra was invented in 1977 to give women participating in sport the same kind of physical support that men had enjoyed for years. Hinda

Miller and Lisa Lindahl created a prototype for the sports bra by imitating the male athletic supporter that “pulled the body parts closer to the body” (Sharp 1994). Eventually, their creation was called the Jogbra, and females quickly adopted it for comfort and safety and to limit embarrassment and perform uninhibitedly during vigorous activity.

It wasn’t long before clothing companies began marketing versions of the sports bra that not only facilitated physical activity but also looked attractive. Women began wearing sports bras under their jerseys, but soon they shed their jerseys in gyms, on courts, and on fields. Female athletes found the comfort and freedom exhilarating.

When Brandi Chastain ripped off her jersey to celebrate the 1999 U.S. women’s victory in the World Cup soccer championship, it was a landmark moment in sport. Her action was captured on film, and her image was viewed round the world. Chastain’s sports bra somehow symbolized to different people all that was either right or wrong with women in sport.

Many accepted it as an expression of pure joy at victory. After all, male soccer players and tennis players had removed their shirts before—notably Andre Agassi and Andy Roddick of the United States. Others saw it as a celebration of a strong, muscular woman who was proud of her body.

Yet Chastain’s action also ignited a storm of criticism. Some saw it as a striptease, as if she were offering her body to male viewers. Others thought it was calculated to draw attention. Whatever one’s opinion, her act stimulated debate and exposed the conflict in both male and female opinions about women’s bodies and their acceptability in public view.

Athletic Shoes

As girls and women flocked to sport participation, improper athletic footwear posed a recurrent issue. Forced to wear sneakers designed for male feet, female athletes suffered in silence. In particular, female basketball players, who are typically well above average in size, were forced to wear men’s basketball sneakers, and they complained about the bulk, weight, and width of the male shoes.

On average, a female foot is narrower and thinner than a male foot. In addition, although foot shape varies from one female to another, a woman's foot generally has a wider forefoot and a narrower heel than a male's foot. It is no surprise, then, that orthopedists named poorly fitting shoes as a major cause of the high incidence of sport injuries in women and girls, particularly in the knee, ankle, and lower leg (Sports Doctor 2000).

Things changed in the 1990s, when athletic shoe companies began designing and marketing shoes specifically for female feet (Brown 2001). In 1996, at the Atlanta Olympics, basketball player Sheryl Swoopes became the first woman to endorse a shoe—the "Air Swoopes." In 2001, the inaugural WNBA All-Star Game became a celebration of how far women in sport had come: Five of the All-Stars wore basketball shoes designed specifically for them.

Modern athletic shoe development—led by Nike, Reebok, and Adidas—has introduced the public to terms such as *pronation*, *stability*, and *motion control*. New concepts in design have helped absorb shock, stabilize the foot, and reduce injuries among both high-performance athletes and casual recreational athletes (Pribut and Richie 2002). In addition, shoes are now made to accommodate the typical differences between male feet and female feet.

The athletic shoe industry has benefited considerably from the increase in female participation in fitness and sport activities. Indeed, women now spend 80 percent of all sport apparel dollars and control 60 percent of all money spent on men's athletic clothing (Holland 2014). Kevin Plank, CEO of Under Armour, expects that his sales of women's sport gear will come to equal or surpass his sales for men's gear. His company currently earns about one-third of its revenue from women's sportswear, and both his company and market leader Nike reported a 25 percent to 30 percent growth on the women's side in 2013. Nike declared 2019 the year of the woman and has increased their female-centered products, including a sports hijab for women.

Sports Hijabs

The hijab has existed since the Qur'an and refers to a partition in the literal or metaphysical sense that separated Muhammad's house from his wives' dwellings. Some Muslim women wear a hijab, which is a head covering. Historically, women have worn a hijab when they leave their homes and are around males who are not a part of their immediate family. The hijab is worn for modesty and is meant to give women a certain amount of privacy and not attract attention to their physical appearance (Khan 2017). The hijab always covers a woman's hair and sometimes (depending on region, religion, or family) her face.

In sport, the type of apparel that one wears when participating is usually appropriate for the activity or sporting event. Swimmers wear swimsuits so that there is no drag when they swim, leotards are worn in gymnastics so that gymnasts do not snag their clothing when performing flips, and skiers wear ski suits to protect them from the cold weather.

> The sports hijab created opportunities for many Muslim women to participate in sport and physical activity.

For some Muslim women, the hijab is a very important practice in their everyday lives, and they are unable to take it off. Many sports do not have apparel where one's head is covered, and in the past, athletes were prohibited from wearing any type of headpiece due to safety regulations. Many Muslim women couldn't play sports until the invention of the sports hijab.

The sports hijab enables Muslim women to maintain modesty, even when playing a sport (Moore 2018). The sports hijab design consists of an aerodynamic breathable fabric and does not pose a safety concern for women who wear it. Currently, soccer players, track-and-field runners, and weightlifters wear the sports hijab in their respective sport. U.S. fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad wore a sports hijab during the 2016 Rio Olympic games during her fencing competition (Cohen 2016). She ended up winning a bronze medal in the competition and is the first female Muslim American athlete who has worn a sports hijab to earn a medal at the Olympics.

Objectification of Female Athletes

As strong, independent women move into the sport world, they attract multiple types of attention. A female athlete's strong and agile body, with its defined musculature, can be a magnet for millions of viewers. In addition, as clothing trends have changed, women have shifted from dowdy dresses and kilted skirts to form-fitting swimsuits, gymnastics leotards, and skimpy outfits on the tennis court. Moreover, though the sports bra was a technical improvement for women and serves a utilitarian purpose—allowing women to move freely—it also symbolizes the duplicity in society's view of women both as strong athletes and as sex objects (Schultz 2004).

Female athletes may be looked at as sex objects regardless of whether they want to be seen that way. In fact, successful female athletes are often judged more by their appearance than by their athletic success. For example, Jan Stephenson was more famous for her physical attractiveness than for her golf game, even though she was an excellent golfer. Similarly, Anna Kournikova long held the title of sexiest female tennis player but was roundly criticized for her popularity because she never won a singles tournament. She was in fact ranked among the top 10 players, but that did not mollify critics who believed that she capitalized on her looks rather than her talent.

At the same time, are female athletes sometimes partly responsible for this objectification? At every Olympic Games, there is a rush to promote the Games in part by focusing on attractive female athletes. While the men get most of their attention for their athletic success and their odds of winning a medal, a whole different culture is built around women who are both athletically gifted and sexy. In fact, *Playboy* magazine's "Women of the Olympics" issue rivals the annual *Sports Illustrated* "Swimsuit Edition" as eye candy aimed primarily at male readers.

This attention makes it possible for female athletes—for example, Serena Williams (tennis), Naomi Osaka (tennis), Angelique Kerber (tennis), Chloe Kim (snowboarding), Sloane Stephens (tennis), and Alex Morgan (soccer)—to have almost a second career highlighting their physical attractiveness.

No doubt these and other women know that publicity shots and features can only help their careers and indirectly promote their sports. And who is to say what is appropriate for an attractive athlete who is blessed with natural beauty that she chooses to enhance through physical training?

Many female athletes are conflicted about posing to show off their bodies. Some favor it, either because it helps promote their sports or because they think it dispels the notion that you can't be sexy if you're an athlete (Topkin 2004). When female athletes do intentionally display their bodies, some people may question whether such images are appropriate for public viewing, especially by younger children. Suggestive images of both male and female athletes can be controlled, and standards of decorum can be established—but only if the market demands it—and a cutting-edge advertising agency will do whatever attracts attention and gains publicity, as it was hired to do.

Consider this advice from the Women's Sports Foundation in its publication titled "Media—Images and Words in Women's Sports: The Foundation Position" (1995). More than 50 of the nation's most highly visible champion female athletes reviewed this document.

> Women are no different from men athletes in the skill, dedication, and courage they bring to their sports. Sports commentary and reporting, like the use of the English language in general, should reflect the fundamental equality of women and men, both on and off the field. There is nothing wrong with women wanting to look feminine/attractive from a traditional perspective. However, female athletes deserve the same respect for their athletic abilities given to male athletes. When a female athlete appears in a sport publication or advertisement to promote her sport or fitness product, she should be portrayed respectfully as is her male counterpart … as a skilled athlete.

Here are some suggested guidelines for media images of female athletes (Women's Sports Foundation 1995):

- Female athletes should look like athletes; they should be shown executing a skill they do well.
- A female athlete's clothing should be authentic for her sport.
- A female athlete should have all her appropriate clothes on and should not be in the process of dressing or undressing.
- Certain body parts (breasts or buttocks) should not be the focus, nor should the image be a sexual one.
- The athlete's pose or movements should be authentic and not appear dainty, shy, or seductive. Nor should she be gazing adoringly at men in the photo or at consumers viewing the ad.
- Photos and captions should go together; the caption should not undermine the image.
- Young female athletes should not be portrayed as being older than they are.
- The final image should be something that any woman could feel proud of as a current or future athlete.
- What if the woman or girl in the photo was your daughter, your mom, or a female friend?

GLOBAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN SPORT

While the numbers of women in sport continue to rise in the United States, that trend is not typical around the world. The social system in many nations, particularly Middle Eastern ones, discourages women and girls from sport participation. Many countries in the Middle East adhere to a traditional view of women and girls as subservient to men, and some households prevent women and girls from taking part in any type of physical activity due to cultural or religious beliefs.

As shown in table 10.3, the percentage of women participating in the Summer Olympics has increased steadily—for example, from 34 percent in 1996 to 45 percent in 2016. Similarly, at the 2000 Olympic Games, 36 countries—almost 30 percent of the 123 participating nations—sent no female athletes, but that also has changed. As of 2012, every country that competed in the Olympics had sent women to the Olympic Games, which was a first since the revival of the modern Olympics in 1896 in which women were not allowed to compete.

Even so, female participation rates have not grown in all countries, especially those where women's overall rights lag those of men. Moreover, in countries dominated by poverty, famine, political instability, and strict religious views, females are virtually excluded from sport participation.

Some female followers of Islam are unable to participate in sport competition because of a decree that women should be covered in public. This makes it difficult if not impossible to participate in sports because of sport attire and that they would be competing in front of a crowd with both male and female spectators. Moreover, in such cultures, women seeking to participate in sport are seen as threats to the social, moral, and religious codes of their societies and even as repudiating their culture in favor of Western influence.

In the 2000 Sydney Olympics, more than 110,000 people saw Nouria Mérah-Benida win the 1,500-meter run, thus following up on the 1992 Olympic championship performance of her Algerian countrywoman Hassiba Boulmerka. These two runners have sparked debate about whether women might break out of the mold of Middle Eastern tradition and enjoy athletic success. Indeed, at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 60 of the 958 medals awarded went to citizens of Muslim-majority countries—44 to men, 15 to women, and 1 to a woman in an open or mixed competition (Amr 2008).

In the 2012 London Olympics, Sarah Attar (representing Saudi Arabia) ran a heat in the 800 meters qualifying race. She finished dead last but earned a standing ovation from the audience, who appreciated her groundbreaking entry as she competed fully clothed—covered from head to toe.

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN SPORT

Learning about the gains women made in sport during the last few decades may lead you to think that there is not much more for women to accomplish. But a closer look reveals that additional changes are necessary to create full equality of opportunity in sport for females. Perhaps progress will be initiated outside of the sport world as women continue to gain power and influence in business and affect more of what is portrayed in the

media. As society changes, so does women's sport. Yet sport can also serve as a catalyst for change led by confident, determined females with a public stage on which to share their beliefs and dreams.

Physical Activity Participation and Dropouts

If we compare statistics for physical activity among women with those for men, we find some striking differences. Specifically, inactivity is higher among women (31 percent) than among men (28.6 percent), and it increases with age, standing at 24.5 percent for ages 18 to 44, 31.8 percent for ages 45 to 64, 35.7 percent for ages 65 to 74, and 51.4 percent for age 75 and above. Women are also more likely than men to fail to meet national guidelines for both aerobic exercise and muscle strengthening activity (American Heart Association 2013).

Females over age seven reported their favorite physical activities as aerobics (85 percent), yoga (84 percent), dancing (61 percent), exercise walking (56 percent), and exercising with equipment (55 percent). According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association's 2007 Annual Fitness Survey, females account for at least 50 percent of total participants in 15 of the leading fitness activities (Women's Sports Foundation 2009). These activities include walking for fitness, aerobics, running, treadmill running, Pilates, yoga, tai chi, stair climbing, and elliptical-machine training.

The Women's Sports Foundation has found that interest in sport is similar among younger boys and girls but that some key differences do exist. Girls tend to start sport participation a year or two later than boys do, which often means that they have less experience, skill, and practice than boys of the same age. By age 14, girls drop out of sport at a rate six times higher than that of boys. In short, girls tend to start participating in sport later and drop out of it sooner than boys (U.S. Anti-Doping Agency 2012).

Differences also appear with the overall category of females. For instance, girls of color and those from low-income families typically end their participation in organized sport sooner than peers who are White or from middle- or higher-income families. In addition, girls living in urban and

rural areas enter sport later and drop out earlier than those living in suburban communities. Reasons for these differences include household chore responsibilities, the need to care for younger siblings, lack of funds, transportation issues, and unsafe neighborhoods.

To address the question of why girls drop out of sport, one study (Boxill, Glanville, and Murray 2011) collected data from teachers and from girls aged 14 to 17. The results are shown in figure 10.1. The major factors identified by girls who represented national sport governing bodies included wanting more free time and having friends who dropped out. Adults cited girls becoming shy about their bodies, though girls that age did not agree with this assessment. Both adults and girls felt that girls often found something else they liked to do better, and in fact girls do seem to be attracted to a wider range of social activities than boys are.

FIGURE 10.1 Top reasons that girls become less active in sport.

Reprinted by permission from J. Boxill, D. Glanville, and T. Murray, "What Sport Means in America; A Study of Sport's Role in Society," International Sport Coaching Journal 4 (2011): 2-45.

Women as Leaders in Sport

Women still occupy a small percentage of leadership roles as compared with their proportion of either the sport population or the at-large population. Perhaps the most disappointing percentage is for female coaches in collegiate women's sport. The 2014 percentage of 43 percent is nearly the lowest percentage in history; indeed, in 1972, when Title IX was enacted, the percentage was 90 percent. Here are some other percentages for women in significant leadership roles in high school, college, and Olympic sport (Acosta and Carpenter 2014; Team USA 2020):

Collegiate head coaches FBS program	**14.5**
Collegiate athletic directors at FBS institutions	9.2
Collegiate athletic directors in Division I	10.5
Collegiate sport information directors in Division I	12.8
Collegiate head athletic trainers	32
Heads of state high school athletic associations	6
International Olympic Committee members	42.7
United States Olympic Committee Board of Directors	50

APPLYING SOCIAL THEORY

Feminist Theorists and Increasing the Number of Female Coaches

Take the perspective of a feminist theorist to suggest strategies for increasing the number of female coaches at every level of play. As background, recall that in women's college sport before the existence of Title IX, 95 percent of women's teams were coached by females. Today, in contrast, just 43 percent of women's teams have a female head coach (and only 2

percent of men’s teams). The statistics are similar in youth sport and high school sport.

Begin your consideration by examining the value to girls and women of having female coaches as role models, mentors, and confidants. You might also consider what values women bring to the coaching role as compared with men. Next, propose several practical strategies for adjusting the proportions of male and female coaches to create greater equality of opportunity.

Additional information, including percentages for professional sport, can be viewed in the Racial and Gender Report Card updated annually by Richard Lapchick at the University of Central Florida.

Equal Pay for Equal Play

Opportunities for women in professional sport have expanded significantly in tennis, golf, basketball, and soccer; in fact, in these sports, building a professional career is a realistic goal for an athlete who is good enough. Some other sports—including gymnastics, track and field, figure skating, and swimming—offer prize money and endorsement possibilities now that the Olympics allow professional athletes. Overall, however, as compared with men, women still struggle to make a career in professional sport, and in many cases the financial compensation barely covers their expenses.

In tennis, for example, the prize money for men at the four Grand Slam events (Wimbledon and the Australian, French, and U.S. Opens) traditionally exceeded the prize money for women. Though all four Grand Slam events now offer equal prize money for men and women, some have pressured them to reverse that decision. In addition, at other tennis events, men and women still receive significantly different levels of compensation. The argument against paying women the same amount as men usually goes something like this:

- Women don’t play the same level of tennis that men play. In a head-to-head match, a good collegiate men’s player would defeat most women on the professional tour. (This is probably true.)

- Women are not as strong, don't hit the ball as hard, and play mostly a baseline game featuring rallies rather than an exciting power game. (It is true that women play more of a baseline game, but the men's short points dominated by powerful serves can be boring to watch. Many fans like the rallies in women's tennis.)
- Women play a best-of-three format in championship matches, whereas men play best-of-five and therefore work harder. (Men do play five sets, but who wants to watch a match that takes five hours between exhausted competitors? Two out of three creates more excitement because every point has more effect on the match's outcome.)
- Fans come to see the men, and ticket revenue should be the basis of the prize money. (The men argued this point for years—until the women's game and superstar personalities started to grab the headlines. Suddenly, the men backed off this stance.)

Here are some other notable facts about pay for female athletes versus pay for male athletes (all amounts are in U.S. dollars):

- In basketball, the average salary for WNBA players for 2018 was $71,635, whereas the NBA average was $6.2 million. The team salary cap for 2019 was $976,300 in the WNBA and $109 million in the NBA. The highest salary that was paid to a WNBA player in 2018 was $113,500, whereas the NBA's highest salary was $40.23 million (for Steph Curry). Top WNBA players have found that the only way to make more money is to spend the WNBA's off-season playing in Israel, Turkey, or Russia, where they can earn an additional $750,000 playing for seven months. Of course, that means playing year-round, which takes its toll on one's body (Wallace 2020).
- In soccer, players earned $16,538 to $46,200 per year in 2019 in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), which was launched in 2013 after two earlier women's pro leagues folded. Player salaries may be supplemented by their national federations of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In contrast, male players in Major League Soccer (MLS) have a minimum yearly salary of $70,250, with wide variation depending on the player (Siregar 2019).
- After struggling for a couple of years, women's golf has seen increasing sponsorship and prize money starting in 2013. In 2019, the

total prize money was $70.55 million (Cunningham 2018). The top female earners in 2019 were Jin Young Ko at $2.77 million and Sei Young Kim at $2.75 million (LPGA 2020). At the same time, the top male earners in 2019 were Brooks Koepka at $9.68 million and Rory McEllroy at $7.78 million (ESPN 2019). Please note that men and women are paid equally for wins but differ with endorsement deals.

- Although huge endorsement deals are scarce for women, tennis star Venus Williams signed a five-year, $40 million deal with Reebok in 2002. A year later, her sister Serena topped her with a Nike contract that, if she earned the performance-related bonuses, could make her the richest woman in sport, with a possible net income of $55 million to $60 million. Of course, this income didn't even include her prize money for playing tennis (Chief Marketer 2003).
- In 2019, the top 100 highest-paid athletes were all male with the lone exception of Serena Williams, who ranked 63rd (Badenhausen 2019).
- Although the endorsement deals available to some top female athletes may stun the average fan, the amounts commanded by women and men still differ considerably. Based on endorsements only—that is, without counting prize money—the top women earners in 2019 were Serena Williams ($25 million), Naomi Osaka ($16.5 million), and Angelique Kerber ($6.5 million). Among male athletes, the top three were Roger Federer ($86 million), Tiger Woods ($54 million), and LeBron James ($53 million) (Badenhausen 2019; Garrand 2020).

EXPERT'S VIEW

Media Coverage and Female Athletes

Media Coverage & Female Athletes is a groundbreaking 56-minute video presentation featuring scholars, award-winning coaches, and athletes who discuss and share their perspectives on the status of women's sport in the media. They confront myths about past media coverage—such as the notion that "sex sells" women's sport and the belief that no one cares about girls participating in sport. The video was produced and made available, free, by the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and

Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota in partnership with Twin Cities Public Television. It has received an Upper Midwest Emmy Award in the sport documentary category for confronting the hard fact that although more than 40 percent of all sport participants are female, women's sport gets only 4 percent of media sport coverage. You can check out the video at https://video.tpt.org/video/tpt-co-productions-media-coverage-female-athletes.

GOLDEN AGE OF SPORT REBORN

Perhaps we'll recreate the excitement of another "golden age of sport"—and this time around, it will include women and girls. To reach that goal, significant changes are still needed in the world of sport. However, they will never fully occur without concomitant changes in society. The following discussion addresses some changes that will promote equality.

The percentage of women in the workplace is nearing that of men, but salaries for females still lag those of their male counterparts for doing the same work. The proverbial glass ceiling also still prevents many women from reaching upper management. Indeed, workplaces, government agencies, and the courts are all still dominated by men, yet they can also be used to help eliminate discriminatory practices. The effort requires us to challenge the rigid sex roles that have historically guided society, expand our definitions of sexuality, and accept those who are LGBTQ+. Doing so will help us all find equal places in society.

We also need to collect data to show inequities in all forms, particularly in women's sport activities, to show us where we still need to work to reach equality. This effort has been undertaken by people like Billie Jean King, founder of the Women's Sports Foundation and the professional women's tennis tour; Dr. Richard Lapchick, author of the Racial and Gender Report Card; and Donna Lopiano, former executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation. These people and others have taken it upon themselves to inform the public of salient issues and statistics about racism, sexism, and other related topics. A growing cadre of female sport leaders has supported them, determined to enhance the legacy of opportunities for

physical activity and competitive sport for future generations of girls and women.

In addition, women's sport leaders and sympathetic corporate sponsors need to challenge each other to press ahead. Advocates for women's sport must aggressively recruit, train, and mentor young girls and women into key positions of influence in coaching, officiating, administration, athletic training, marketing, and the media. By taking their place in these positions, women can become a more powerful influence in the sport world.

Indeed, women must aggressively pursue leadership positions in sport organizations at every level. In 1994, Kathy Woods became the first female president of the United States Professional Tennis Association, a trade group with a membership of more than 13,000 tennis teaching professionals. A few years later, Judy Levering ascended to the presidency of the United States Tennis Association (USTA)—again, the first woman to do so. Within a few more years, two other women—Jane Brown and Lucy Garvin—followed their lead to the top job at USTA. In 2015, former professional player Katrina Adams, who is African American, became the first Black USTA president, breaking yet another barrier. In addition, Anita DeFrantz of the United States became the first female elected to the International Olympic Committee. These trailblazers deserve appreciation —and a new succession of women to follow their lead.

Leaders in women's sport must take the initiative to look for ways to make their sports produce revenue so that men become their allies rather than remaining their competitors. A few colleges have figured out how to earn money from women's basketball and gymnastics, but other sports and schools lag. Leaders of specific professional women's sports need to build on the attractiveness of their athletes who are strong, independent women.

Parents of girls must also help by encouraging them to take the first step into exercise and sport at a young age. Even more critically, parents must support girls through their early teen years, when they are most likely to drop out of sport. Fathers need to become advocates, role models, and mentors for their daughters, just as they are for their sons.

In addition, recreational community-sponsored sport teams, high school teams, and collegiate teams must help lead the way to ensure equal access and encouragement for girls and women in sport. College sport needs to get over its preoccupation with football and men's basketball if it is to truly serve its university mission rather than focusing merely on revenue production, opulent athletic arenas, and mining alumni for donations earmarked for athletics rather than the overall institutional mission.

Finally, we must continue to educate people about the value of sport for women. Never underestimate the power of the mind in convincing people of the need to combat sexism in sport. In the early 1980s, as a college professor at a midsize state university, I (Ron) was invited to join a semester course called How to Combat Sexism in the Classroom. The class was taught on Saturdays by five women who could argue their case. Although few men attended, all of us—women and men—learned strategies to combat sexism, applied them in our own classes, and received feedback from students and colleagues. Our lives have never been the same. Many of the lessons I learned all those years ago are still a vital part of my thinking and working character.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examines gender in sport, beginning with knowledge on the difference between sex and gender in relation to sport. Throughout the chapter we touched on gender, noting intersex and transgender athletes and stigmas and difficulties that this population faces with sport participation. We also discussed sexuality in relation to stereotypes about female athletes. Lastly, the focus of the chapter was understanding the various challenges that women and girls face compared to their male counterparts.

During the first half of the 20th century, physical educators encouraged women's sport and physical activity in colleges as a route to good health. However, athletics were deemed too violent, competitive, and aggressive for young women. It wasn't until the late 1960s, when the women's movement took hold, that women realized that competitive athletics were another restriction for them to conquer.

In 1972, the U.S. Congress passed Title IX, which states that no person can be excluded from participation in sport based on sex in any educational program receiving federal assistance. Title IX set the stage for years of lobbying by those in control of men's programs who did not want to give up any of their funding or perks to women. Numerous lawsuits were filed, and the law was challenged, but in the end it was reaffirmed.

The time since the 1980s has been exciting for girls and women, as opportunities have opened in the world of sport. The proportion of female athletes has risen rapidly, proving that girls want to participate in sport, though some men had suggested otherwise. Women and girls have become consumers of sport, buying sport equipment and clothing, watching sport on television, signing up for youth sport programs, and making their presence felt in high school and collegiate sport. Research has overwhelmingly attested to the benefits of physical activity for girls and women. Numerous studies have shown improved academic performance, self-image, confidence, and physical health—all benefits like those enjoyed by boys for years.

Despite all the positive changes for women in sport in the second half of the 20th century, women are still underrepresented in sport leadership, sport business, and the sport media. Continued progress cannot be made without persistent effort and determination on the part of women and the men that they can recruit to assist them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Research and discuss the various barriers and obstacles that Muslim women face if they want to participate in sport. How does it differ from country to country?
2. If Caitlin Jenner were to compete in the decathlon today, would she compete in the men's competition or the women's? Research and discuss ways the IOC and other sport governing bodies can be inclusive of transgender athletes.

Go to HKPropel to complete the activities and case studies for this chapter.