

**Public Opinion, Crisis, and Vulnerable Populations:
The Case of Title IX and COVID-19**

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ABSTRACT

A central function of democratic institutions is to protect vulnerable populations. The stability and success of these institutions depends, in part, on popular support. Times of crisis can introduce novel dynamics that alter popular support for protective institutions, particularly among those who do not benefit from those protections. The authors explore this possibility in the context of Title IX's gender equality requirements and infrastructure to address sexual harassment in college sports. They use a large survey of college student-athletes to study their attitudes in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and concomitant financial challenges affecting college sports. The researchers find that male student-athletes and those with sexist attitudes exhibit alarmingly low levels of support for ensuring the maintenance of equality and sexual harassment policy under Title IX. The results accentuate the vulnerability of certain populations during crises and the importance of maintaining strong institutional policy support during such times.

Authors are listed in alphabetical order and contributed equally to this paper. We thank Sangjun Lee, Jeremy Levy, Natalie Sands, and Anna Wang for research assistance.

Vulnerable groups – whether due to social, economic, or political forces – often depend on the government for protections. Without regulations and laws, these populations often face discrimination, disenfranchisement, and/or displacement. One prominent example of such a protection is Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This United States federal law protects against sex discrimination in educational settings, perhaps exerting its most notable effect by stimulating the massive increase in athletic opportunities for women, and, more recently, providing pathways to address sexual assault and harassment. In the abstract, these types of government protections often garner widespread public support and, indeed, when asked about Title IX, the general public and those in college athletics express strong policy support (Druckman, Rothschild, and Sharrow 2018; YouGov 2017).

Yet, periods of societal distress often test the bounds of these protections. This has been the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has dramatically impacted the financial well-being of college sports. For example, as of June 2020, fifty-six colleges have dropped one or more athletic teams. The decisions of athletic leadership could have devastating consequences for Title IX beneficiaries if policy protections go unenforced or unchallenged by target populations. Here, we study stakeholder opinions about Title IX during the COVID-19 pandemic. We find alarmingly low levels of support by male student-athletes – who typically do not directly benefit from Title IX but constitute the majority of student-athletes – and those with high levels of sexist attitudes. The results make clear how crises can alter the opinions of those who are not predisposed to support policy protections and accentuate the importance of strong institutional support to ensure equal opportunities during hard times.

COVID-19 and College Sports

In American college athletics, women's incorporation is ongoing and largely depends on Title IX's implementation. This has led to a dramatic expansion of women's collegiate athletic opportunities and scholarships over the past nearly five decades. That said, limited enforcement of Title IX at most institutions, where male student-athletes disproportionately benefit from the athletic opportunities and spending, means women have yet to reach full equality (e.g., Yanus and O'Connor 2016). Furthermore, there is ongoing debate about implementing sexual violence protections in college athletics, due to several high-profile sexual abuse scandals and recently revised federal policy guidelines. Overall, policy implementation provides women with rights, but women remain among the minority of college athletes, numbering 43%, and are beholden to the androcentric world of college sport (Sharro 2017).

Groups marginalized within or only tenuously incorporated into empowered structures – at work, school, or in public life – are most vulnerable to “crises” because they are susceptible to the retrenchment of rights or benefits (Strolovitch n.d.). The COVID-19 crisis is already undermining various measures of gender equality (e.g., Alon et al. 2020), echoing previous findings that women are uniquely vulnerable to the consequences of financial calamity (Blanton, Blanton, and Peksen 2018) and economic catastrophes (Strolovitch 2013).

We theorize that crises have the potential to loosen individuals' commitments to institutionalized policy protections (Marcus et al. 1995), particularly when personal interest is at stake (Huddy et al. 2002). Title IX's athletic target population (i.e., student-athletes) is well-suited to test this theory because a) they have historically exhibited high levels of support for policy (Druckman et al. 2018) so shifts in their opinion make for a difficult test of the impacts of crises on rights for marginalized groups, and b) their future fortunes depend directly on

administrative decisions made in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Athlete advocacy has long been core to policy enforcement (Belanger 2016), and thus the impact of crisis on attitudes among this target population may have long-term implications for women’s continued incorporation.

We test three pre-registered hypotheses.¹ *Hypothesis 1:* Title IX and sexual harassment policy support will be significantly higher in the abstract than support for Title IX and sexual harassment policy during the COVID-19 crisis. (We measure attitudes toward each domain separately although the policy protects against both inequitable practices and sexual harassment.) *Hypothesis 2:* Because women student-athletes are more likely to benefit from Title IX protections, male student-athletes will be less supportive of Title IX and anti-harassment policy protections during the crisis. *Hypothesis 3:* Given the androcentrism which paints sport as a “male domain” (Sharro 2017), those with higher levels of sexism will be less supportive of Title IX and anti-harassment protections during the crisis.

Data

To assess our hypotheses, we conducted a survey with a representative sample 1,925 student-athletes in May-June 2020 (see online appendices 1-3 for details). We initially asked respondents the extent to which they disagree or agree with the requirements of Title IX and whether less or more should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws. These items, measured on 7-point scales with higher scores indicating greater support, capture abstract attitudes. To measure opinion in light of the COVID-19 crisis, we included seven items that asked whether Title IX’s equality of athletic opportunity provision should be relaxed (due to financial strains), whether respondents worry about it being relaxed during the pandemic, whether relaxing

¹ We pre-registered at: <https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=n3rk2k>. (We also pre-registered an experimental aspect of the study which is outside our purview here.)

compliance requirements would undermine law and equality, and about the relative importance of Title IX vis-a-vis other athletic prerogatives ($\alpha = .86$). We assess opinion toward the protection of infrastructure for addressing sexual harassment during the pandemic using a similar set of seven items ($\alpha = .84$). Both COVID-19-specific scales range from 1 to 5 with higher scores indicating more support for protecting equality and anti-harassment infrastructure. The midpoint (3) indicates a neutral opinion. Finally, we asked respondents to rate the importance of protecting a host of items, aside from Title IX and anti-harassment infrastructure, in response to COVID-19 cuts during the recovery (e.g., maintaining current scholarships, coaches, travel resources) on 5-point scales.

We measured the gender of the respondent and sexist attitudes, using the hostile sexism scale (Glick and Fiske 1996) ($\alpha = .87$).² The survey included a host of other variables such as sport, year in school, income, etc. that we use in the analyses (see online appendix 4 for question wording).

Results

We find middling levels of support for protecting equality and sexual harassment provisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, with respective mean scores on the 5-point scales of 2.98 (std. dev.: .90), and 3.02 (.84).³ As predicted by hypothesis 1, these scores are *notably lower* than general support which has respective means well above the midpoints on the 7-point scales – respectively, 5.36 (1.73) and 5.52 (1.28). The abstracted measures are statistically significantly higher than the during-crisis measures (respectively, $z = 9.89$; $p < .01$; $z = 10.98$; $p < .01$).

² The correlation between male and sexism is .30 (i.e., sexist attitudes are not only present among males).

³ Not surprisingly, the measures are highly correlated at .72.

We test our other two hypotheses by regressing the during-COVID-19 equality and harassment variables on gender and sexist attitudes, along with a large host of controls (see online appendix 5 for discussion). The regressions appear in online appendix 5; we plot the predicted values (with 95% confidence intervals) to test our hypotheses in Figures 1 and 2 (using truncated scales).⁴ For the sake of presentation, we present predicted values for sexist attitudes at both the minimum score (1) and the midpoint (4) of the 7-point scale, but the results are similar and significant using other exemplars.⁵

The results offer strong support for hypotheses 1 and 2. There are notable differences by gender – specifically a .83 or 20.75% decrease in support when it comes to protecting equality during COVID-19, and a .39 or a 9.75% decrease in support for safeguarding anti-harassment protections. We see slightly smaller but similar trends among those with sexist attitudes. Moreover, men and those with high levels of sexism fall below the midpoints on both scales, on average. This exposes that support for these protections is weakened among large sub-groups of college athletes during this crisis period.

[Insert Figures 1 and 2 About Here]

In Figure 3, we plot responses about the relative importance of a host of different financial and policy priorities for athletic departments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, across most items, men and women respond similarly (with the exception of attitudes toward cutting women’s teams). Second, though, we see substantial differences in protecting Title IX compliance and maintaining the infrastructure for sexual harassment, both between women and men and compared to other priorities. Here, similar to the above results, we see

⁴ We do so using *Clarify*.

⁵ Nineteen percent of our sample is at the minimum sexism score while the midpoint score is roughly the 3rd quartile. In other words, more than 25% is above it and hence a meaningful number.

notable gender disparities that are statistically significant ($p < .01$). For women, these two items are the *highest* scores along with maintaining women teams, while for men they are the two *lowest* scores. Among men, protecting Title IX and the infrastructure to prevent sexual harassment rate no differently than maintaining travel resources ($p > .29$ for men for both travel vs. harassment and Title IX, but $p < .01$ for women).

[Insert Figure 3 About Here]

Conclusion

These results underscore how crises – and specifically the COVID-19 pandemic – can have significant consequences for historically-marginalized groups. Our findings illustrate the fragile fault lines of support for gendered policies, including Title IX’s athletic and anti-harassment protections during such crises, especially among men. These insights echo how the politics of “crises” can often prioritize the recovery of dominant groups while placing the needs of more vulnerable populations at the periphery (e.g., Strolovitch 2013; n.d.).

Dynamics within the data also highlight the importance of policy knowledge (e.g., Mettler 2018). Despite widespread Title IX investigations by the U.S. Department of Education at colleges around the country (see discussion in online appendix 2), respondents to our survey exhibit very little knowledge of investigations on their campus (among schools with ongoing sexual assault investigations, only 15% were accurately knowledgeable of the investigation). This raises important future questions about how protections might be valued, even during crises, if or when recipient populations even comprehend the nature of current enforcement.

This study illustrates two lessons for scholars of politics and gender. First, we show why beneficiaries need strong legal protections and enforcement of gender equality policies so that protections are not readily undermined when systems are under stress. Second, we illustrate that

post-crisis recovery efforts require close oversight on protections for vulnerable groups, irrespective of whether such groups are in a position to advocate on their own behalf. The future for further incorporation of historically-marginalized groups will depend on it.

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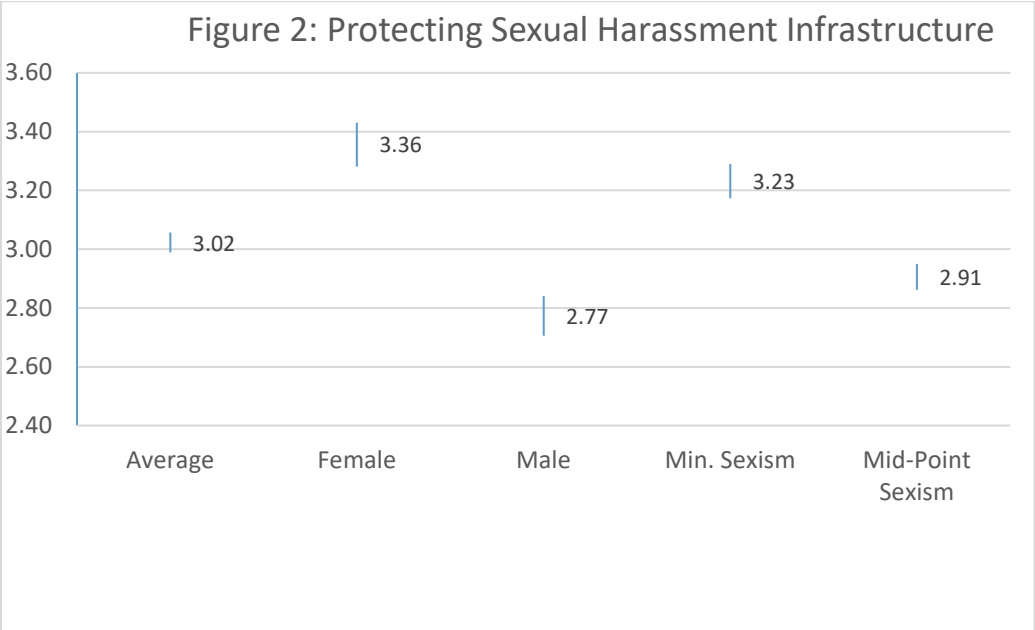
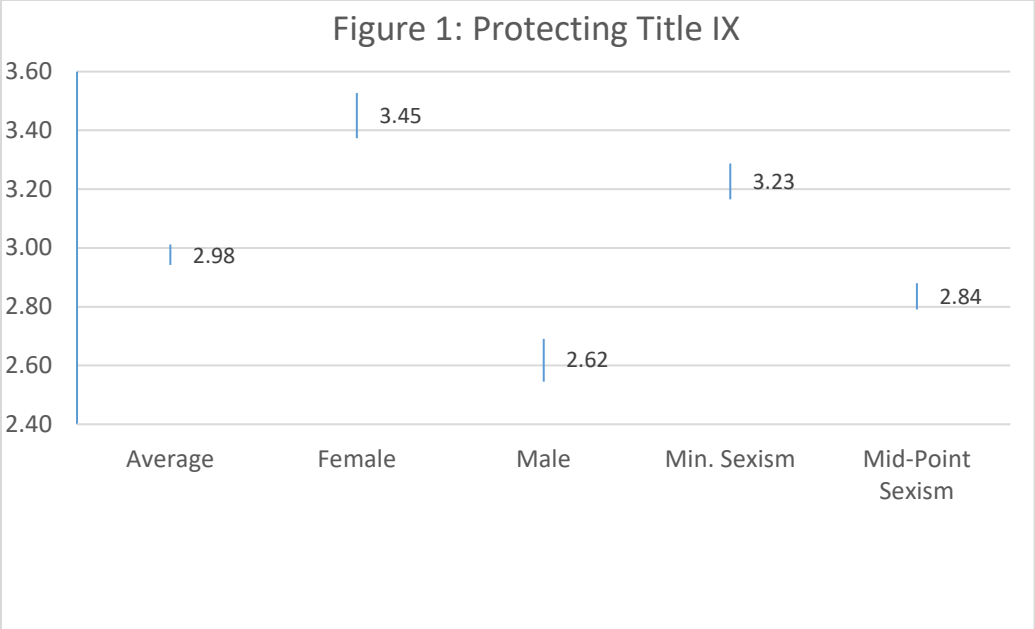
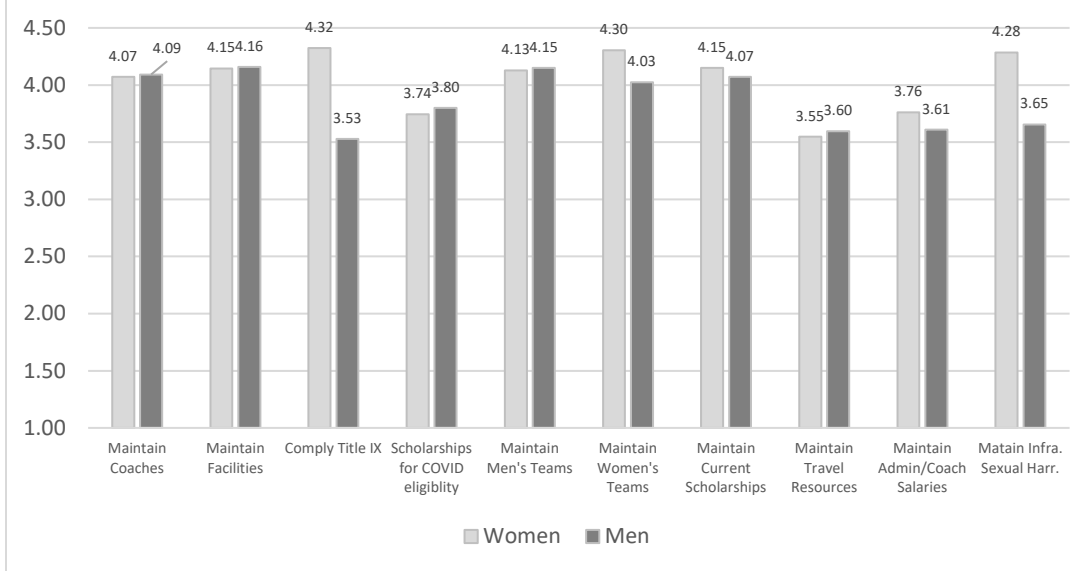


Figure 3: Importance During COVID-19 Recovery



Online Appendix 1: Sample Construction

Our population includes student-athletes for varsity sports at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) schools.¹ We began by taking a random sample of NCAA schools. At the time of our sampling in the winter of 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Equity in Athletics Data Analysis (EADA), there were a total of 1,099 colleges and universities in the NCAA.

Of the schools initially selected into our sample, we checked for the availability of publicly-accessible e-mail addresses for student-athletes. If no such e-mails were available, the school was dropped from our sample and replaced with another randomly selected school. If e-mails were available, the school was included in our sample. Our final sample included 57 schools.

We identified individuals for solicitation by identifying all student-athletes listed on the online sports rosters of the institution's athletic department website. Overall, we ended up with a sample frame of 20,559 individual student-athletes (although see below on e-mail bounce-backs). We acquired e-mails for each of these individuals by accessing the aforementioned rosters and searching for publicly available emails for athletes through each institution's email search engine.

A fair number of e-mails bounced back to us, presumably due either to the individual no longer being enrolled at the given school, the athletic websites from which we obtained information being out of date, or an incorrectly recorded address. (We ignored auto-responses with the presumption that the e-mail still reached the potential respondent.) Overall, we received 755 bounce-backs; thus our actual sampling frame was 19,804. Our final sample – that is, respondents who completed the entire survey – is 1,925, leading to a response rate of 9.7%. Relative to other targeted samples and other work in this domain – including a COVID-related survey of student-athletes fielded by the NCAA itself during the spring of 2020 for which response was 9% (NCAA 2020) – this response rate is standard.

Online Appendix 2: Survey Administration

We administered the survey from May 19, 2020, until June 16, 2020. To each individual for whom we had an e-mail, we sent a personalized invitation inviting him/her to participate in an *anonymous* survey aimed at learning “what student-athletes think about various issues involving college sports” (on personalization, see Druckman and Green 2013). We sent a reminder e-mail roughly one week after the initial invitation and then a second reminder approximately two weeks after the first reminder.

We did not ask individuals to identify their school so as to ensure their anonymity. However, we were interested in knowing whether their school had an open Title IX investigation during the prior year. This enables us to observe the extent of policy knowledge (see Mettler 2018). We identified the set of schools that had an open Title IX sports and/or sexual assault investigation as of May 1, 2020, by using the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the Department of Education database of open Title IX investigations (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/index.html>). We used this database to search for all schools in our sample. We next performed Google searches to identify any high-profile Title IX lawsuits that had not been pursued through OCR

¹ We thus exclude non-NCAA (e.g., NAIA schools). We also excluded athletes from cheerleading and dance, which do not count in terms of compliance with Title IX or under the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA).

but which may have permeated the local media/institutional environment during the months preceding our survey. We then grouped the schools into our sample into one of three resulting categories:

1. Schools under no investigations.
2. Schools under an assault investigation only.
3. Schools under both an assault and a sports investigation.

We used distinct survey solicitation links for each type of school so that we could then know the Title IX context the respondent had experienced, while still maintaining anonymity. Among respondents, 36% were from schools with no Title IX investigation, 62% had an assault investigation ongoing and 2% had both. In our analyses, we did check for a direct impact of Title IX investigations (and respondent knowledge thereof) but found no clear effects.

Online Appendix 3: Sample Demographics

We weighted our sample based on gender to ensure representativeness. Our weighted sample demographics appear in the below table.

Appendix Table A: Weighted Sample Demographics

Variable	Distribution / Average
Gender	Male: 57%; Female: 43%
Race (that best describes the respondent)	White: 78%; African-American: 10%; Hispanic/Latino: 4%; Asian/Pacific Islander: 5%; Other: 3%
Religion	Protestant: 38%; Catholic: 24%; Non-Christian Religion: 8%; Not Religious: 31% ^A
Parent With College Degree	86%
High School in the United States	93%
Familial Income	< \$30,000: 4%; \$30,000-\$69,999: 11%; \$70,000-\$99,999: 18%; \$100,000-\$200,000: 38%; >\$200,000: 30% ^A
Year in School	First Year: 30%; Sophomore: 26%; Junior: 23%; Senior: 19%; Post-Graduate: 1% ^A
Athletic Scholarship (full or partial)	36%
Academic Scholarship (full or partial)	38%
Coed Team (self-reported)	9%
Athletic Division	Division 1: 48%; Division 2: 10%; Division 3: 42%
Control Sports (see appendix 5)	Men's Basketball: 3%; Football: 12%; Wrestling: 1%
Mean Political Ideology (1-7 scale with higher scores indicating more conservative)	3.55 (std. dev.: 1.51)
Mean Racial Conservatism (1 to 7 scale)	2.55 (std. dev.: 1.18)
Mean Hostile Sexism (1-7 scale with higher scores indicating more sexism)	2.93 (std. dev.: 1.64)
Average Percentage Time of Male-Female Student-Athlete Contact	34% (std. dev.: 15%)
Average Percentage Time of African-American/White Student-Athlete Contact	26% (std. dev.: 17%)

^A This does not sum to 100% due to rounding error.

Online Appendix 4: Survey Wording

Which sport(s) did you play at a **varsity** level this past academic year? If you played on multiple varsity sports teams, select all teams on which you played. If you did not play due to injury or another reason, select the team(s) with which you affiliate.

- | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acrobatics and Tumbling | <input type="checkbox"/> Equestrian | <input type="checkbox"/> Pistol | <input type="checkbox"/> Squash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baseball | <input type="checkbox"/> Fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> Rifle | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basketball | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Hockey | <input type="checkbox"/> Rodeo | <input type="checkbox"/> Tennis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beach Volleyball | <input type="checkbox"/> Football | <input type="checkbox"/> Rowing | <input type="checkbox"/> Track and Field |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bowling | <input type="checkbox"/> Golf | <input type="checkbox"/> Rugby | <input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross country | <input type="checkbox"/> Gymnastics | <input type="checkbox"/> Sailing | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Polo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diving | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice Hockey | <input type="checkbox"/> Skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheelchair Basketball |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Lacrosse | <input type="checkbox"/> Soccer | <input type="checkbox"/> Wrestling |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Lightweight Rowing | <input type="checkbox"/> Softball | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Did you play on a men's team, a women's team, or a co-ed team? Check all that apply.

Men's *Women's* *Co-ed*

In which NCAA division did your team(s) compete?

Division 1 *Division 2* *Division 3*

What was your year in school this past academic year?

First year *Sophomore* *Junior* *Senior* *Graduate student* *N/A*

This past academic year – were you on an **athletic** scholarship, and if so, was it partial or full?

No athletic scholarship *Partial athletic scholarship* *Full athletic scholarship*

This past academic year – were you on an **academic** scholarship, and if so, was it partial or full?

No academic scholarship *Partial academic scholarship* *Full academic scholarship*

Did you go to high school in the United States?

Yes *No*

Which of the following best describes your religion?

Christian religious Catholic Jewish Muslim Hindu Other Not

What is the highest level of education completed by one of your parents? (Think about the parent who has received the highest level of education.)

Less than high school High school Some college 4 year college degree Advanced degree

What is your estimate of your family's annual household income (before taxes)?

< \$30,000 \$30,000 - \$69,999 \$70,000-\$99,999 \$100,000-\$200,000 >\$200,000

What is your gender?

Male Female Other

Which of the following racial or ethnic categories **best** describes you (*please check just one on this question*)?

White Black/African American Hispanic/Latino Asian/Pacific Islander Middle Eastern/
Northern African Native American Other

Given your knowledge of Title IX, do you disagree or agree with its requirements as applied to college athletics?

Definitely disagree Somewhat disagree Slightly disagree Neither disagree nor agree Slightly agree Somewhat agree Definitely agree

Some people think more should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws in college athletics (e.g., within teams, athletic departments). Others think less should be done. What do you think?

Much less should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws Somewhat less should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws A little less should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws About the right amount is being done to enforce sexual harassment laws A little more should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws Somewhat more should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws Much more should be done to enforce sexual harassment laws

As far as you know, was there a significant controversy (e.g., lawsuit or major debate) regarding Title IX that **involved athletics** at your school during this past academic year?

Not that I know of Yes

As far as you know, was there a significant controversy (e.g., lawsuit or major debate) regarding Title IX that **did NOT involve athletics** at your school during this past academic year?

Not that
I know of

Yes

Of the total time you spent with other student-athletes, what percentage, in the last year, did you spend interacting with each of the below demographic groups. The total cannot exceed 100% but it also need not sum to 100% since we do not list an exhaustive set of demographic descriptions.

White men _____

Black men _____

White women _____

Black women _____

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Extremely
liberal

Liberal

Somewhat
liberal

Moderate;
middle of the
road

Somewhat
conservative

Conservative

Extremely
conservative

The following statements concern women, men, and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with each statement.

	Definitely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Definitely agree
Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."							
Women are too easily offended.							
Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.							
When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.							
	Definitely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Definitely agree

To what extent do you oppose or support affirmative action programs designed to help blacks and other minorities get access to better jobs and education (e.g., a college education)?

Strongly oppose Moderately oppose Slightly oppose Neither oppose nor support Slightly support Moderately support Strongly support

Now we'll present you with a few statements. After each one, we would like you to tell us how strongly you disagree or agree.

	Definitely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Definitely agree
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America.							
Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions.							
	Definitely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Slightly agree	Somewhat agree	Definitely agree

A few more questions about COVID-19. Answer to the best of your ability and do not worry if you are unaware of some of the details about how the NCAA or your school will respond to COVID-19.

Do you disagree or agree that compliance with Title IX's equality of athletic opportunity provision should be relaxed during the recovery (to save financial resources)?

- Strongly disagree that Title IX should be relaxed.
- Somewhat disagree that Title IX should be relaxed.
- Neither disagree nor agree that Title IX should be relaxed.
- Somewhat agree that Title IX should be relaxed.
- Strongly agree that Title IX should be relaxed.

How worried are you that Title IX compliance requirements (regarding equality of athletic opportunities) will be relaxed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Not worried at all.
- Slightly worried.
- Moderately worried.
- Very worried.
- Extremely worried.

If Title IX compliance requirements were relaxed, how worried would you be that they would not be restored?

- a. Not worried at all.
- b. Slightly worried.
- c. Moderately worried.
- d. Very worried.
- e. Extremely worried.

Would you consider the relaxation of Title IX compliance requirements as violating federal law?

- a. Definitely not.
- b. Probably not.
- c. Possibly
- d. Probably.
- e. Definitely.

Would you consider the relaxation of Title IX compliance requirements as undermining equal opportunity?

- a. Definitely not.
- b. Probably not.
- c. Possibly
- d. Probably.
- e. Definitely.

Which is a more important priority: ensuring compliance with Title IX or ensuring student-athletes who return for an extra year due to COVID-19 retain the same scholarship support they previously had?

- a. Definitely compliance with Title IX.
- b. Probably compliance with Title IX.
- c. Equally important
- d. Probably ensuring the same scholarship support.
- e. Definitely ensuring the same scholarship support.

Another area that could come under discussion due to the financial impact of COVID-19 is the investment in infrastructure to strengthen the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports. In light of financial pressures, do you believe that the investment in sexual harassment infrastructure should be decreased, kept the same, or increased during recovery?

- a. Definitely decrease investment in infrastructure to enforce sexual harassment laws
- b. Probably decrease investment in infrastructure to enforce sexual harassment laws
- c. Keep the investment in infrastructure to enforce sexual harassment laws the same
- d. Probably increase investment in infrastructure to enforce sexual harassment laws
- e. Definitely increase investment in infrastructure to enforce sexual harassment laws

How worried are you that infrastructure for the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports will suffer during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- a. Not worried at all.
- b. Slightly worried.
- c. Moderately worried.
- d. Very worried.
- e. Extremely worried.

If infrastructure for the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports were relaxed, how worried would you be that it would not be restored?

- a. Not worried at all.
- b. Slightly worried.
- c. Moderately worried.
- d. Very worried.
- e. Extremely worried.

Would you consider the relaxation of infrastructure for the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports as violating federal law?

- a. Definitely not.
- b. Probably not.
- c. Possibly
- d. Probably.
- e. Definitely.

Would you consider the relaxation of infrastructure for the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports as undermining equal opportunity?

- a. Definitely not.
- b. Probably not.
- c. Possibly
- d. Probably.
- e. Definitely.

Which is a more important priority: ensuring the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports or ensuring compliance with Title IX's equality of athletic opportunity provision?

- a. Definitely enforcement of sexual harassment laws
- b. Probably enforcement of sexual harassment laws
- c. Equally important
- d. Probably ensuring compliance with Title IX
- e. Definitely ensuring compliance with Title IX

How unimportant or important are each of the below during the COVID-19 recovery:

	Very unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Neither unimportant nor important	Somewhat important	Very important
Maintaining the same staff/coaches					
Maintaining the same level of facilities					
Compliance with Title IX					
Ensuring student-athletes who return for an extra year due to COVID-19 retain the same scholarship support that had had					
Not cutting any men's teams					
Not cutting any women's teams					
Maintaining current scholarship levels.					
Maintaining current travel resources for competitions					
Maintaining current administrator/coach/staff salaries					
Maintaining infrastructure for the enforcement of sexual harassment laws in college sports					

Online Appendix 5: Statistical Results

Appendix Table B includes the regressions used to generate Figures 1 and 2. We included a number of control variables that have been shown to affect attitudes about college sports. We include religion indicators to capture variation in values that may affect gender equity beliefs. We include family income because those with lower incomes may be more supportive of protections during COVID-19 given financial needs. NCAA Division dummies control for the reality that financial concerns around the pandemic impact student-athletes competing in the NCAA Divisions differently (i.e., most of the cancelled teams have been in Division II or III). We include an ideology control because conservatives may generally oppose policy innovation in the domain of sports (Zorn and Gill 2007). We include year in school since Druckman et al. (2014) show year in school impacts attitudes about college sports issues. We control for attendance at a high school in the U.S. because such athletes are likely to be more familiar with debates around Title IX than are international student-athletes. Parental college education (i.e., if any parent has a college degree) is an indicator of student-athlete socio-economic status. We include dummies for whether the respondent has a full or partial athletic or academic scholarship since these individuals may differently value protections during COVID-19 contingent on financial needs. We include a variable indicating self-reported co-ed team membership (primarily track & field/swimming & diving teams) since training in such an environment likely increases gender equality support. We include controls for membership on the football and men's basketball team given these are the main revenue sports invoked in popular discourse about financials. We include a control for membership on the wrestling team because wrestling has been highly politicized in previous Title IX debates (Sharro 2020). We include a control for racial identity as a demographic control, and racial conservatism because prior work accentuates the importance of racial attitudes when it comes to opinions about college sports (e.g., Druckman et al. 2016).² We include a self-reported measure of contact between male and female athletes because other scholarship indicates it is a relevant predictor of support for gender equity policy; and this same work suggests cross-racial contact conditions college sports attitudes (Druckman and Sharro 2019).³ (Indeed, we find here that male student-athletes who interact more with women student-athletes become more supportive.)

The question wordings for these control variables included are in Appendix 4. All the independent variables are scaled from 0 to 1. The N reduces slightly due to item-non-response.

² Racial conservativeness is the average of the three relevant items ($\alpha = 0.6504$).

³ Men-women contact is the percentage of time men student-athletes report spending with women student-athletes, regardless of race while White-African-American contact is the percentage of time white student athletes report spending with African-American student-athletes regardless of gender.

Appendix Table B: Regressions

	Protect Title IX	Protect Harass
Men's Basketball Team	-0.004 (0.109)	-0.052 (0.118)
Football Team	-0.049 (0.066)	-0.095 (0.068)
Wrestling Team	-0.347 (0.244)	-0.084 (0.169)
Co-ed Team	0.004 (0.057)	0.034 (0.056)
NCAA Division 2	0.017 (0.066)	-0.011 (0.061)
NCAA Division 3	0.062 (0.049)	0.072 (0.047)
Year in school	0.081 (0.060)	0.122** (0.058)
On Athletic Scholarship	-0.050 (0.052)	-0.061 (0.049)
On Academic Scholarship	0.079** (0.039)	0.035 (0.038)
Parental College Education	-0.033 (0.054)	-0.040 (0.057)
High School in the US	0.091 (0.064)	0.153** (0.063)
Income	0.089 (0.074)	0.043 (0.078)
Catholic	0.078 (0.048)	0.059 (0.047)
Non-Christian Religion	0.172** (0.072)	0.055 (0.065)
No Religion	0.167*** (0.048)	0.112** (0.048)
Ideology (Conservatism)	-0.511*** (0.105)	-0.594*** (0.103)
African-American	-0.004 (0.074)	0.136* (0.077)
Hispanic	0.146 (0.099)	0.109 (0.102)
Asian-American	-0.131* (0.076)	-0.166*** (0.064)
Male	-0.833*** (0.078)	-0.602*** (0.080)
Racial Conservatism	-0.590***	-0.717***

	(0.125)	(0.121)
Hostile Sexism	-0.849***	-0.692***
	(0.083)	(0.086)
Male-Female Contact	0.743***	0.717***
	(0.181)	(0.197)
White-African-American	-0.012	0.167
Contact	(0.119)	(0.114)
Constant	3.693***	3.596***
	(0.111)	(0.112)
Observations	1,855	1,855
R-squared	0.440	0.393

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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