

Triumph of Backlash: Wrestling Community and the “Problem” of Title IX

Theresa A. Walton
Kent State University

Michelle T. Helstein
University of Lethbridge

Attempts to unify and mobilize the U.S. collegiate wrestling community to “save” it from decline frames Title IX as the main “problem” to overcome. The logic of a community of identification at work in this strategy limits the interventions that can be made for wrestling while enabling corporate men’s sport to remain the hegemonic form of U.S. collegiate athletics. We explicate and critique the varied articulations of wrestling as a community of identification following Helstein’s (2005) call to deconstruct assumptions of unified sporting communities and to consider communities of articulation. We illustrate how communities of identification necessarily fail and how moving toward communities of articulation offers an intervention that enables a reframing of the relationship between Title IX and collegiate wrestling that could motivate meaningful change.

Les tentatives pour unifier et mobiliser la communauté de la lutte universitaire américaine afin de la sauver du déclin identifient la loi « Title IX » comme problème principal à résoudre. La logique d’une communauté d’identification à l’œuvre dans cette stratégie limite les interventions qui peuvent être faites pour aider la lutte tout en permettant au sport masculin corporatif de rester la forme hégémonique du sport universitaire américain. En répondant à l’invitation d’Helstein (2005) à déconstruire les suppositions des communautés sportives unifiées et à considérer les communautés d’articulation, nous expliquons et critiquons les articulations variées de la communauté de la lutte en tant que communauté d’identification. Nous illustrons comment les communautés d’identification ne fonctionnent pas et comment les communautés d’articulation permettent une intervention qui offre l’occasion de recadrer la relation entre la loi Title IX et la lutte universitaire de façon à promouvoir un changement significatif.

In the last 35 years there has been a significant gender shift in higher education within the U.S. Whereas a majority of undergraduate students in the early 1970s were men, today a majority are women. This change, along with perceived gender performance differences in primary and secondary schools, has garnered significant media coverage as an impending “boy crisis.” In 2006 alone, PBS, the

Theresa A. Walton is with the School of Exercise, Leisure and Sport, Kent State University, 264G Gym Annex, Kent, OH. Michelle T. Helstein is with Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, AB.

New York Times, *Washington Post*, the Today Show, *Esquire*, and *Newsweek*, among others, presented reports outlining concerns of the growing domination of females in education (Mead, 2006). Ironically, in response, many smaller liberal arts colleges have returned to policies allowing for lower admissions standards for men that were in place before the passage of Title IX,¹ the U.S. federal law mandating equal gender opportunities within education. This time, however, it is being done to boost male enrollment rather than limit women's. Within attempts to understand the boy crisis, one interesting response is the focus on the perceived male need for physical activity. Thus, cuts in recess time, physical education, and sport are portrayed as having a disproportionate impact on boys. Such thinking leads John Tierney (2006) of the *New York Times* to ask, "now that the men are the underachieving minorities on campus," (p. 19) could we not just let the "boys" win one space to call their own—athletics?

In the article, Tierney (2006) equates collegiate sport with participating on the school yearbook, newspaper, choir, and band—revealing the problematic framing of the boy crisis. Although women now dominate undergraduate enrollment, men still dominate the most prestigious and higher paying fields, including athletics. Moreover, enrollment numbers are affected by the fact that working-class men of any ethnicity are less likely than working-class women to attend college. In contrast, men and women from the upper rungs of the socioeconomic ladder are equally represented. Further, there has been a steady increase in the number of men earning college degrees. The hysteria, then, as education scholar Sara Mead (2006) notes,

is partly a matter of perspective. While most of society has finally embraced the idea of equality for women, the idea that women might actually surpass men in some areas (even as they remain behind in others) seems hard for many people to swallow. Thus, boys are routinely characterized as 'falling behind' even as they improve in absolute terms. (para. 5)

Therefore, the focus on the perceived loss of men's minor sport must be understood within a context whereby sport is constructed as one of men's "last" cultural and educational spaces.

Threats to men's place of dominance in education, as well as society in general, could be understood as inextricably linked to the place of sport. This can clearly be seen through the hysteria over cuts to men's minor collegiate sport in the U.S. The most vocal outcries have come from advocates for wrestling, which traditionally has been a male-only sport. Throughout the 1980s everything from lack of heroes (such as 1970s wrestling legend Dan Gable, who went on to be even more successful as a college coach), not enough media savvy, too much emphasis on aggression, and too slow of action were discussed as possible reasons for wrestling's decline. Yet, beginning in the 1990s, when the growth of women's collegiate sport began to gain considerable attention, Title IX became the central culprit blamed for cuts to men's wrestling (Walton, 2003).

In this article, we offer a theoretical discussion of how community is and could be understood within the discourse of explanations for declines in team sponsorship and individual participation in U.S. collegiate wrestling. We use research on media representations of wrestling and Title IX (Walton, 2003), the

narratives surrounding the 2002–2003 U.S. Department of Education Commission on Opportunities in Athletics (Messner & Solomon, 2007; Rosenthal, Morris, & Martinez, 2004), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2007a) participation statistics, and information from organizations formed to reform Title IX policy (such as the College Sports Council) to argue that this focus on Title IX has been a powerful element in attempts to unify and mobilize the wrestling community to “save” itself. We highlight how the logic of community, what we will explicate as a community of identification, that is currently at work in the framing of the “problem” of Title IX limits the interventions that can be made for wrestling (as well as women’s sport and other men’s “minor” sport) while enabling big-business men’s sport to continue as the status quo of U.S. collegiate athletics. This examination therefore has two aims. First, in illustrating the limitations of a community of identification, we take up Michelle Helstein’s (2005) call to deconstruct assumptions of unified sporting communities and to consider the potential of communities of articulation. Whereas Helstein (2005) formulated the theoretical arguments distinguishing between communities of identification and articulation, this article extends that work by applying those theoretical arguments to make an intervention within a particular sporting context. We underscore not only how communities of identification necessarily fail, but more importantly, we provide a specific sporting example of the possibilities of thinking about community differently. In doing so, the article fulfills its second purpose, which is to illustrate that an alternative logic of community could be a meaningful intervention that enables a reframing of the relationship between Title IX and collegiate wrestling in the hope of motivating meaningful change.

As demonstrated by Naomi Klein’s (2007) work in which she carefully documents the influence of the ideas of Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of economics on the global spread of “free market” neoliberal capitalism, ideas, ideologies, and the frameworks used to deploy them matter. As Friedman explained:

Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable. (quoted in Klein, 2007, p. 6)

Thus, creating alternative visions of community, which are predicated on debate and difference and articulated in dynamic relationships, provide an important addition to the ideas that are “lying around” to be used in the aftermath of the perceived wrestling “crisis.”

Theorizing Community

Considerable theoretical debate focuses on what constitutes community. Following Helstein (2005) we draw on three common characteristics that have come to define popular notions of community (p. 4–5). First, as Bauman (2001) indicates, “community . . . is always a good thing” (p. 1). Within a popular imaginary, community is desired and celebrated. Second, as Cohen (1985) argues, people understand community to consist of two related aspects. People in a community have

something in common with each other, and this thing in common distinguishes them from nonmembers of the community (p. 12). This "common character" or "quality in common" marks belonging as it concurrently marks the boundary defining who does not belong: who is and will be excluded from the community. The third characteristic is the notion that the strength of any community lies in its unity, and thus plurality, difference, and conflict threaten the establishment and success of community (Sennett, 1998, p. 143). Together, these popular understandings of community characterize communities of identification (Helstein, 2005).

In the sense that a community of identification can be understood as "unified subjects coming together based on a solidarity, harmony, or agreement around an essence" (Helstein, 2005, p. 2), this article is concerned with wrestling as a community of identification. In this case, community is defined by a common interest in wrestling. This community of identification has faced significant challenges given the "crisis" of wrestling participation declines in the 1970s and particularly the 1980s (NCAA, 2007a). In situations in which a community feels threatened, the sense that the success of community lies in its unity often comes to the forefront and difference is marked as a threat to the "survival" of that community.

Citing the case of female athletes as an example, Helstein (2005) writes:

When individuals are marginalized, as female athletes have historically been in sport, there is an understandable desire and necessity to come together with others to share in mutual identification and to pursue mutual rights and affirmations. Community, as normatively representative of solidarity and unification, is understood to be productive. (p. 2)

For example, Nancy Theberge (1995) argues that a common focus on ice hockey united "women from diverse backgrounds and social locations" (p. 402). Wrestling advocates focus the same type of attention on community building. Given the worries over participation rates and access to resources, it is understandable that those who are invested in the sport want to work together to ensure its future. Significantly, though, this community is predicated not only on a common interest in wrestling but also on the perception that the community must come together in a common cause to "save" wrestling (Walton, 2003). That is, unity and homogeneity must triumph over (in effect excluding) difference and complexity to stop the decline of wrestling and return it to its (possibly illusory) former glory (a homogenous and successful community).

Catherine Kellogg (2005) suggests that "much post-war continental philosophy has suggested that we must be suspicious, even alarmed when the narrative of lost communalism becomes the starting point for any kind of politics" (p. 340). This point is exemplified by Gamal Abdel-Shehid (2000) with reference to hockey in the Canadian context. He suggests that hockey in Canada is almost always represented in terms of death, dying, or loss. Thus, he offers the following:

The death of hockey, and the way that Canada is imagined to be faltering in such representations, automatically names a series of villains who are threatening to kill hockey. These villains . . . are any form of masculinity marked as effeminate, and any form of popular culture marked as "foreign" or "homosexual." (Abdel-Shehid, 2000, p. 74)

Likewise, the perceived feminization of U.S. collegiate sport, “forced” by Title IX, is constructed as a “natural” threat to the “male” sport of wrestling (Walton, 2003).

As Stuart Hall (1999) indicates, “often this very return to the [romanticized and illusionary] past conceals a struggle to mobilize ‘the people’ to purify their ranks, to expel the ‘others’ who threaten their identity” (p. 628). In the case of wrestling, the “other” who has (apparently) disrupted the community and threatens its “survival” is Title IX, its (feminist) advocates, and female athletes who are perceived as not wanting, nor deserving, their sport opportunities as much as males. Thus, a certain notion of community has been strengthened by a common focus in the 1990s on Title IX as the cause of wrestling’s problems. The sense here is that “if one identifies with and forms solidarity around the common (unifying) character and/or qualities, they belong to the community. This belonging marks the boundaries of exclusion” (Helstein, 2005, p. 5).

Helstein (2005) uses a poststructuralist theoretical perspective to challenge the unity and homogeneity implied within such communities of identification in sport. This offers a helpful lens with which to examine and deconstruct a wrestling community seemingly built on a shared identity (wrestlers) with a common bond (opposition to Title IX). “Similar to the logic of Western reason, community, homogeneity, and solidarity are thought to exist or be present only when individualism, heterogeneity, and difference are absent” (Helstein, 2005, p. 4). Derrida (1974), in his critique of Western reason, calls for a recognition of the violence of either/or binaries. Thus, as Helstein (2005) notes, “by exposing the internal contradictions of binary logic, it is hoped that community can be opened up to the logic of undecidability—the logic of neither, nor, and both” (p. 4), what has been called a “community of articulation” (p. 9).

Deconstructing a Wrestling Community of Identification

To convincingly emphasize the need for a community of articulation, we first illustrate the problematic consequences of a community of identification. To begin, then, we examine in some detail the narratives of wrestling and Title IX to demonstrate that the logic of a community of identification is at work and to highlight the limitations of that logic. The common bonds highlighted above (wrestling and opposition to Title IX) have not meant a unified wrestling community. Rather, the focus on Title IX has prompted as many responses as the divisions created by the previous disagreement over the causes of wrestling’s decline (Walton, 2003). A comparison with characterizations of standpoint differences within second wave feminism offers a fruitful theoretical exercise in understanding how the focus on Title IX has helped to shape wrestling as a community of identification.

An examination of second wave feminist theoretical positions is often laid out as a loose taxonomy (see, for example, Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1994). Interestingly, according to the media analysis presented in Walton (2003), these positions parallel responses by advocates for amateur wrestling in the United States: liberal, socialist/Marxist, and radical. Walton (2003) examines a variety of

mainstream, wrestling-specific media sources and education publications to offer an analysis of media coverage of amateur wrestling in the U.S. that explicates the framing of Title IX by those with an interest in wrestling. Within these representations, one can see the same general taxonomy of perspectives of second wave feminism.

Thus, the governing body of wrestling, USA Wrestling, offers a liberal approach, as can be found in their main publication, *USA Wrestler* (Walton, 2003). They believe wrestling is so great that everyone, men and women, should have access. Meanwhile, those who have been most outspoken against Title IX, such as Leo Kocher, founder of College Sports Council (CSC); conservative lobbyist and CSC Communication Director Jessica Gavora; and Mike Chapman, editor of *Wrestling International Newsletter*, have taken a radical approach. They argue that men and women are inherently different. They believe that wrestling, and sport in general, develops the inherent strengths and interests of men. Women do not really belong, are inherently less interested, and most important, men should not be punished (by cutting teams) for women's lack of interest (Messner & Solomon, 2007; Rosenthal, Morris, & Martinez, 2004; Walton, 2003).

High school wrestling official Kent Bailo, one of the main advocates for girls' high school wrestling and who founded the United States Girls' Wrestling Association in 1998, offers a more socialist/Marxist approach. Like feminist critiques of attacks on Title IX, Bailo, who has written for *Wrestling USA*, examines the structure of sport. He goes further to break down ideas of particular sport being "inherently" suited to any particular group of people. He calls for systematic changes in sport organization to offer equal opportunities to males and females. He still follows a basically male model of sport, however, and believes that equal should mean the same—offer the same sports, resources, scholarships, and support to males and females (Walton, 2003).

Yet, just as has happened with third wave feminism, perhaps a deconstruction of the various interests within the wrestling community can uncover the many essentialized gendered power constructions within the diversity of approaches toward the "problem" of Title IX. Each of the various positions mentioned previously advocate for different responses to the relationship between wrestling and Title IX, but they all rely on the same binary logic of communities of identification.

Derrida (1974) suggests that the tradition of Western philosophy relies on a series of binary oppositions in which there is a hierarchy in each binary pair. The "first term is privileged as original and authentic, whereas the second is derivative and subordinate" (Helstein, 2005, p. 3). Although a number of binaries are visible in the narratives above, including unity/multiplicity, homogeneity/difference, and belonging/exclusion, it seems apparent that male/female is a primary binary on which wrestling, as a community of identification, is predicated. That is, male wrestling is seen to be threatened by the forced inclusion (via Title IX) of female athletes within collegiate sport. Thus, although the problem may at times be reframed as wrestling versus Title IX, the male/female binary is what sustains the debates. The functioning of multiple binaries, each of which has a privileged and subordinate pair, means that unity, homogeneity, male, masculinity, and wrestling get set up in hierarchical opposition to multiplicity, difference, female, femininity, and Title IX. This logic becomes meaningful in the context of belonging and exclusion within wrestling as a community of identification.

Derrida's general strategy of deconstruction (Derrida, 1981, p. 41) "aims to disrupt [such] binary pairs by using the binaries against themselves" (Helstein, 2005, p. 3). Within the logic of Western reason, there is an assumption that each term in the binary pair has a fixed and stable presence/meaning that is the exact opposite of the other term in the binary pair. Any sign/subject is *either* one *or* the other. "The deconstructionist works by attaching him/herself to the binary logic in order to unravel it or show how it unravels itself from within" (Cole, 1998, p. 266). Contrary to either/or logic, the presence and meaning of each term is inhabited by and relies on the other binary term. The meaning of each term in the binary pair is only intelligible in its relation to that which it excludes. The interrelationship of each of these terms to the other means that neither term can have a unitary presence, thereby, exposing the necessary internal contradiction of binary logic. Deconstruction works to make visible "the ways in which difference, disorder, and complexity are always already present within apparently oppositional terms but are violently subsumed by the either/or logic of Western reason" (Helstein, 2005, p. 4). In the paragraphs to follow, we will illustrate through a number of examples the difference, disorder, and complexity that necessarily inhabit the male/female binary (and the closely related masculine/feminine binary), even as wrestling as a community of identification continually works to subsume that complexity to binary, either/or, logic.

Divergent Boundaries of "Men's Sport" Community

Historically the male wrestling community rejected offers to join causes with women's sport under the shared interest of being among nonrevenue-producing sport (Festle, 1996). Forming that strategic alliance could have meant losing or subjugating the privilege within sport that comes just from being male and the aggressive masculinity associated with wrestling. Simultaneously, it would have elevated the common elements shared with most women's collegiate sport (for example, relative obscurity, nonrevenue producing, limited postcollegiate opportunities, and connections to the Olympic movement). In the 1970s and 1980s, responses from advocates of male wrestling instead tried to further strengthen ties and commonalities with men's major sport—focusing on shared masculinity (predicated on an oppositional femininity) in forming a community of identification. In the 1980s, with the beginning of the spread in the U.S. of AIDS/HIV and accompanied by a significant rise in male homophobia, the intimate contact between revealingly clad men in wrestling caused discomfort for some. Within that context, men's "major" sport did not reciprocate in always including wrestling within that shared community of identification (Walton, 2003). Thus, one of the least discussed but most obvious instances of the "blurring and wobbling" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 184) of the strength of a shared male/masculine identity rests with the fact that almost every wrestling program has been eliminated at the hands of White, male athletic directors (see Lapchick, 2006, for statistics on NCAA athletic directors). That those who have the power to maintain or eliminate particular sport programs do not receive the lion's share of attention points to the strength of the basic binary supported by the focus on Title IX within the wrestling community: that women's gains automatically mean men's losses. This diverts attention from athletic directors and a shared community of identification

among men's major sport that excludes wrestling (and other men's minor sports and all women's sports). The focus on Title IX and women's sport as the issue gave rise to a vocal backlash among wrestling advocates.

Leo Kocher, one of the most outspoken critics of Title IX policy, formed the College Sports Council (CSC) in the early part of the 2000s. Having learned from a decade of advocating for wrestling and for changes to Title IX, he was careful to frame the issue so as not to be read as antiwoman (Rosenthal, Morris, & Martinez, 2004). In comparison with the early antagonistic discourse, this was a smart marketing move to gain sympathy. As Kocher notes on the CSC (2005) website:

Informing American citizens of the truth and winning in the court of public opinion is—by far—the most important part of the effort to reverse the serious threat posed by the gender quota regime. (para. 3)

He notes that, “While Title IX’s original goal of equal opportunity was laudable, Title IX has been twisted by Federal bureaucrats into a law that is hurting males more than it is helping females” (College Sports Council, 2005, para. 2). Clearly, however, the CSC includes every collegiate male athlete, regardless of the protected-or-not status of his sport, within its community, drawing the line of exclusion on categories of gender rather than by sport—even as they assure that they are not antiwoman.

Along these lines, opposition to Title IX is used as a bond within not just the wrestling community but also all men's minor or Olympic sports. Thus, even in sports in which both men and women more fully participate, such as swimming, gymnastics, track and field, golf, and cross country, men are encouraged to identify with their shared masculinity rather than with all athletes—men and women—within their sport. Perhaps it goes without saying, but we will say it anyway, the underlying logic lies with the valuing of men over women culturally and, particularly, athletically. Women are viewed as less skilled, less entertaining, less interested, and therefore less deserving of athletic opportunities. Not only are male athletes in these sports encouraged not to form communities with their female athletic counterparts, some are disparaging of the perceived unfair advantages of women who have “undeserved” scholarships. For example, when the University of Iowa added women's rowing in 1993, a writer for the *Quad City Times* (Davenport) wrote:

There's going to be some male wrestler at Iowa who has spilled his sweat and blood on the mat for 15 years, practicing and refining his technique over and over, who is rewarded with a fraction of a scholarship. Then there is going to be some young lady who swims a lot and dabbled in the discus in high school, who two months ago didn't know which end of the oar to put into the water, who has her entire education paid for by a rowing scholarship. (Boyne, 1994, p. 36)

According to Walton (2003), “the basic underlying premise of the arguments against Title IX again maintain that girls are not as interested in sports as boys, thus boys should not be penalized for girls' lack of interest” (p.11). Indeed, Leo Kocher argues that only being “blinded by feminist ideology” would cause a

person to think that females have as much interest in sport as males (in Walton, 2003, p. 11).

In the previous examples, the either/or logic of the binary male/female, particularly as tied to athlete/nonathlete, which suggests that one is clearly and exclusively one or the other of the binary terms, is disrupted. In part this is because either/or binary logic assumes a presence/essence that does not exist. Helstein (2005), summarizing Derrida, suggests that:

language is a system of differences without positive terms and thus no entity (including the subject) can be determined in its presence. . . . The meaning of an element or sign (or subject) exists not solely in what something is, but also in its difference from and exposure to what it is not. (p. 10)

Therefore, a sign/entity only has meaning at the limit where it is exposed to the other (Derrida, 1974, p. 47).

Thus, "a subject (like any other entity) cannot be defined in its presence" (Helstein, 2005, p. 6). The fixed and stable subject that is assumed in the male/female binary of both the wrestling and larger sport community does not have meaning without reference to that which it excludes. Within any community of identification (such as wrestling, men's sport, women's sport), attempts to define who belongs and who does not is an extremely difficult task. In the case of male sport, the male subject of the community brings with it variations in race, gender, sexuality, class, age, cultural importance of sport, and ability, among others. Therefore any attempt to suggest that a male is this or that is fraught, in that to make such statements it is necessary to surrender the complexity of the subject (and thus the community), to assimilate the differences that exist, to some common conception of *male*. Whose definition of *male*—that is, of the commonness of community—becomes fixed? Keeping in mind that whenever something "is said to be fixed . . . this should be understood as less a disclosure of truth than as an act of power" (Seidman, 1994, p. 202). The male subject of the wrestling community, then, is not stable and fixed but rather is made to appear that way through the assimilation of difference.

There is within the larger sport community a marking off of difference in relation to men and masculinity (not all men are equal), as the hierarchy of particular sports illustrates. In some of the instances described previously, male wrestlers become derivative to other males, but this subordinate space is, in the either/or logic of the binary, reserved for the oppositional term *female*. The either/or binary logic suggests belonging to one or the other of the male/female binary—there is no in between space. Thus, although the male wrestler is not always afforded the same belonging to a larger male sport community, any difference and complexity that exists (and the resulting consequences) are ignored in favor of assimilating the complexities to the binary logic of either/or. This means that within wrestling as a community of identification, female, feminine, and Title IX are read as the "problem," whereas the fragmentation inherent in differing notions of maleness, masculinities, and privilege remains unstated and therefore unexplored. So, as representative of particular media constructions of Title IX (Walton, 2003), E.M. Swift (2006) of *Sports Illustrated* states: "It was designed to create, not eliminate, opportunity. But since its enactment more than 170 men's wrestling

teams have disappeared. Eighty men's tennis teams, 45 track teams and 106 men's gymnastics teams have been axed" (p. 2, para. 4).

Yet, unlike the common suggestion in popular discourse, athletic program cuts have affected sports other than those offered for men. We will explicate this elision with just two examples here, wrestling and gymnastics, using data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2007a). The number of Division I wrestling programs dropped from 117 in 1981–2 to 86 in 2003–4 (a 25% loss), and across all divisions from 363 to 223 in the same time period (a 39% loss); women's gymnastics teams dropped from 99 Division I programs in 1981–2 to 64 in 2003–4 (a 35% loss), and from 179 to 86 in all divisions (a 52% loss) in the same time period. Thus, even though women gymnasts started with fewer opportunities and furthermore faced substantially more relative loss in the time period that wrestling saw the greatest loss in the number of programs offered, these cuts are not likewise blamed on Title IX. Moreover, as seen previously, sport-by-sport comparisons are not performed, rather losses to particular men's sports are compared with overall gains in women's participation numbers. Yet when like figures are compared, we see that some women's and men's sports have faced losses, while some have made gains. Overall, both men's and women's sport participation numbers have increased, though women's sports started at such relatively low numbers that the growth of women's sport participation has been significantly greater.²

Despite these participation statistics, the logic of women's sport opportunities coming at the expense of men's minor sports, such as the cuts of seven men's teams and three women's teams at James Madison University in 2007 (Brady, 2007), are predicated on separate communities of identification that work to maintain the status quo and, in particular, the protection of football. As *Sports Illustrated* writer E.M. Swift (2006) opines:

The most recent, egregious example of male sex discrimination in intercollegiate sports occurred at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., where on Sept. 29 the visitor's board [sic] voted to eliminate 10 of the university's 28 sports teams in 2007: seven men's teams (archery, cross-country, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, swimming and wrestling) and three women's teams (archery, fencing, gymnastics). (para. 3)

With the focus on the male "victims" of Title IX, almost no attention goes to the three women's teams that were also cut.

Most tellingly, none of the mainstream constructions of wrestling as a community of identification question women's exclusion from the most exclusive of sporting spaces—football. For radical feminists football is dismissed as the worst of men's essential nature, radical masculinists see women as essentially lacking in qualities necessary for football, and liberals on both sides argue for equal opportunity. Sport, however, with its separate and unequal structure, remains a challenge. Interestingly, the idea of equal opportunity to mean the *same* opportunities has only been put forward by Kent Bailo, an activist for girls' wrestling, who calls for women to be given opportunities to play football. Further, Bailo recommends that women and men each be given 50 college scholarships to play football (rather than the current practice of men receiving 85 and women receiving zero in NCAA

Division I programs; Walton, 2003). The focus on male victims of Title IX shifts the focus away from how the most prestigious sporting spaces remain closed to women.

Of course, this assimilation of complexity to the logic of either/or is not only happening within the male wrestling community, it happens within all communities of identification. The term *male* within the larger men's sport community, or *female* within the women's sport community, is no more fixed and stable than the term *male* in the wrestling community. In every community there is difference and multiplicity, both within the subject (a subject is always already a fragmentation of socially constructed identities such as class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, age) and between subjects, that denies defining the subject (and thus the community) in its presence.

For example, with some wrestling supporters working to expand wrestling opportunities for women, the lines become blurred between traditional boundaries—wrestlers versus women. Although both those in control of women's and men's collegiate sport historically have been opposed to women's participation in traditionally "male" sport, there have always been women interested in transgressing those boundaries. In response, there have been those within various communities of identification responding to Title IX in ways that are protective of an assumed "common quality" (such as male, female, athlete, wrestler) of a particular community, even as the example above highlights the impossibility of the either/or logic that is assumed in that common quality. Clearly, traditional fights within collegiate athletics that create the underlying concerns of where to draw the boundaries of various communities of identification (women's sport, wrestling, men's sport) rest on questions of power and who will have it.

Communities of Articulation

This brings us to the primary distinction between a community of identification and a community of articulation. As is stated previously, in any community there will be difference, disorder, and multiplicity. We have highlighted this fact throughout the initial portions of this article. Obviously these differences exist regardless of how we conceptualize community. The differentiation between a community of identification and articulation lies in where and how community is thought to exist and function (Helstein, 2005). In the former, difference has to be subsumed into some common property around which a group identifies as a community. That commonness might be around being an athlete, being male, being female, being a wrestler, being an advocate of Title IX, or being an opponent of Title IX. Regardless of how we try to define that common property, there will be exclusions, limitations, overlaps, and assimilations. The community is fragmented, but in a community of identification it is made to appear as unified. In communities of articulation we do not have to ignore or subjugate complexity to establish community.

A community of articulation³ is defined as "fragmented, anti-essentialized subjects in some form of relation" (Helstein, 2005, p. 9–10). The logic of communities of articulation owes much to Derrida's (1974, 1978, 1981) concept of the trace. As indicated earlier in the article, Derrida's critique of Western reason

suggests that no entity (including the subject) can be determined in its presence. The meaning of any term (or subject position) is defined not only in relation to what it is but also necessarily in relation to what it is not. The sign/entity only has meaning at the limit where its difference is marked, where it is exposed to the other (Derrida, 1974, p. 47). "This play at the limit between presence (what something is), and absence (what something is not, an other) [is] the trace" (Helstein, 2005, p. 10).

In *Of Grammatology*, one of the ways in which Derrida (1974) formulates the trace is as "a limit which can be understood concomitantly as a space and/or articulation" (p. 66–69). By way of explanation, Helstein (2005) draws upon the example of words in a sentence:

Following Derrida's famous example of speech and writing, consider a sentence. The words in a sentence are separated by spacing (whether that is in the form of blank space on a written page or time in a spoken sentence). The space is not a part of the word that proceeds it, but it is not not a part of the word that proceeds it (in that, it marks its end/limit). At the same time, the space is not a part of the word that follows it, but it is not not a part of the word that follows it (in that, it marks its beginning/limit). The trace is the limit space where something both is and is not present and absent; it is neither, nor, and both. (p. 10)

What is significant in this logic is that the trace, as both a joining and a separating, is an antitotalitarian structure (Helstein, 2005). As the "space of the relationship with the other" (Helstein, 2005, p. 10), the trace acknowledges that there can be no unifying/totalizing presence, because at the same time that the trace is joining, it is also necessarily separating. The trace, "is that which does not let itself be summed up in the simplicity of a present" (Derrida, 1974, p. 66) because it requires meaning to be deferred to something outside of itself.

The logic of the trace (Derrida, 1974) is significant to an understanding of the concept of singularities (Agamben, 1993). Helstein (2005) summarizes Agamben's notion of singularity as a "being/entity which always matters regardless of its ties (or lack of ties) to any common property (being man, being woman, being athlete)" (p. 11). Therefore a singularity and an individual exist according to substantially different logics of being. Whereas the modern individual is often conceptualized as a unified and fully present subject, the singularity denies those characteristics. Singularity reclaims the "such and such being" from "its having a this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that classification" (Agamben, 1993, p. 1). "It is reclaimed not for another classification or for the simple absence of a classification, but for 'its being *such*, for belonging itself'" (Helstein, 2005, p. 11).

This *belonging itself* is a *being-called*, or to put it another way, a *being in language*. For example, there may be an athlete who is White, male, strong, and aggressive. The word *athlete* signifies this athlete in his being. However, this athlete in his being must be differentiated from his *being-called* athlete. *Being-called* athlete does not inform what is affirmed or denied about actually being an athlete. If calling this athlete an athlete meant that all athletes were White, male, strong, and aggressive, then another athlete, because s/he was Latino/a or Black, or short,

or passive, and so on, could not be an athlete. Clearly, not all athletes are White, male, strong, and aggressive. This is the differentiation between this athlete in his being, and his *being-called* athlete (Helstein, 2005, p. 11). *Being-called* athlete assures a belonging but only to a “set that is at the same time a singularity” (Agamben, 1993, p. 9). A singularity is fragmented and nonessentialist and therefore “cannot be defined in its own positive terms; it is only ever one in relation to a group of others that necessitates *belonging itself* (as opposed to belonging to)” (Helstein, 2005, p. 12). As Helstein (2005) suggests, simply by virtue of *being-called* an athlete, beings are exposed to certain relations (around such cultural constructions as sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, age, ability, nationality, and so on). It is in the limit spaces between these relations that community exists.

This is the point of departure for communities of articulation. As Agamben (1993) says, these are necessary relations, such that they always matter regardless of a tie to any common property. Rather than turning attention away from differences, there is an acknowledgment that, in *being-called* athletes, singularities are put into relation. In the same way that the limit space between words in a sentence is a trace that both joins and separates, “the limit space where these relations are exposed to each other is the trace that both joins and separates” (Helstein, 2005, p. 12). Community exists in the limit space where singularities relate, join, and separate; where they are in articulation, and thus communication, with each other. “[Jean-Luc] Nancy (1991) suggests that we might more usefully understand ourselves as beings who only become intelligible to each other socially, but that this sociality is never a way of “being in common” but rather a form of what he has called ‘being singular plural’” (Kellogg, 2005, p. 340).

Thus the logic of a community of articulation creates a space for a more critical examination of collegiate sport. Fights over resources in athletics are predictable, as has been noted again and again since the first systematic examination of collegiate athletics by the Carnegie Foundation (Savage, 1929) through George Hanford’s (1974) report and the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate athletics investigations (1991, 2001): The “rich get richer” with the development of big business sport. Yet, though all male athletes (and men in general) have historically benefited from the popularity of particular male sports, wrestling (and to a lesser extent men’s minor sports) try to fight for a space within the community of identification of other men’s sports, which is ambivalent toward their inclusion. No sport enjoys greater systematic protection than men’s football, with many collegiate conferences mandating that institutions field football teams and the NCAA supporting the professionalization of collegiate sport by requiring specific numbers of spectators only for football (Sack and Staurowsky, 1998). Football’s protected position is most notable in the common refrain that the “reasonable” solution to gender equity within athletics is to set football aside and create equity between men and women in the remaining sports (Rosenthal, Morris, & Martinez, 2004; Walton, 2003). That this issue would be framed as football’s exceptionalism, rather than either women’s exclusion from the most prominent and protected place in athletics, or as “special rights” for men, is telling. Thus, as might be predicted, these communities of identification fail. Because belonging to these communities is marked by exclusion of difference, they fail as a result of the ongoing process of “negating or assimilating” difference, even as difference cannot be eliminated (Helstein, 2005).

Many researchers and interest groups that focus on U.S. collegiate athletics call for reform (for example the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics; the Drake Group; Hanford, 1974; Knight Commission, 1991, 2001; Sack & Staurowsky, 1998; Savage, 1929). Some (such as Francis, 2001; Hanford, 1979; Porto, 2003; Suggs, 2005) even suggest that a focus on Title IX policy requirements could be the prompt needed not only to force conversations about the role and purpose of athletics on college campuses, but also to motivate reform of unethical behaviors encouraged by a structure of business within an academic setting. These observers suggest that articulations over Title IX could be a catalyst for understanding the confluence of concerns over wrestling and other men's minor sport, women's rights for equal educational opportunities afforded by Title IX (including those made available through athletics), and the systematic exploitation of particular collegiate athletes. As Francis (2001) suggests, "efforts to remedy discrimination against women and minorities in university athletics thus take place against a background of at best mixed [ethical] support for the enterprise generally" (p. 252).

A community of articulation would be predicated on the diversity of perspectives, the sometimes paradoxical frameworks of narration, and, most of all, centered on dynamic communication as the central focus of their relationship—the trace. For example, Francis (2001) questions the ethics of complete inclusion for women in collegiate sport when the institution itself is potentially harmful for participants. Yet, she is careful to note that such questions should not end with discussion of women's inclusion, they should be asked of all participants. She writes in regard to contact sport, "universities may decide that some sports are too risky to offer at all, but not that their risks warrant limiting them to men" (Francis, 2001, p. 258). This then shifts the focus from tired old binaries (such as women versus men, Title IX versus wrestling), which ultimately serve to maintain the status quo, toward a reflection on broader narratives at play, which might then open up space for recognizing those processes of power maintenance that go unexamined.

Concluding Remarks

Communities of articulation exist, not in common property and unity, but rather in the debates, discussion, and communication that occur at the limit spaces. As invested as we are in the popular imaginary of community, these are things that we often see as being antithetical to community, and as such we encourage efforts to find a unified politics based on commonality (in the case of Title IX, for example, man, woman, wrestler, advocate, opponent, athlete). Yet the assimilation that commonality requires does not encourage or perhaps even allow for a politics of articulation. We are not challenged within communities of identification to look for communication (that is, articulated community), rather we seek only to protect our own interests, even as this "our" does not exist in any unified way. Communities of articulation occur at the limit spaces where communication and debate are not only allowed for but implied. In *being-called* man, or woman, or athlete, or wrestler, singularities are put into relation with each other such that each always matters. Arguably, communities would be improved by the discussions and

debates that both join and separate because no being would be subsumed to the other (whether through assimilation, exclusion, or secondary status) without at least an ongoing and lively discussion of the politics that define, join, and separate the various positions in specific moments of intervention.

Thus, the potential of communities of articulation is an opportunity to ask important questions about the context that prompts the communities of identification that are playing out in collegiate athletics. Complicating the binaries through which Title IX is so regularly framed provides an intervention that disrupts the essentialisms of the arguments that so often constrain both productive debate and change. The constant framing of the Title IX question around the either/or logics of male/female, masculine/feminine, athlete/nonathlete rules out other questions. Not least of which is, as many reform groups have asked: What is the purpose of collegiate athletics? If the purpose truly is education, then the successful sports appear to be women's, which on average have a graduation rate 15 percentage points higher than either male sports or the general student body (NCAA, 2007b). On the other hand, if the purpose is moneymaking, which is the logic that scaffolds the special status accorded to moneymaking sports, then none of the nonrevenue producing sports (men's or women's) should be protected from market forces.⁴

Although it may seem naïve to suggest that a reframing of the logic through which we view collegiate athletic success could alter practices within the multibillion dollar business, it is actually probably one of the only strategies to create effective change. In the last three decades in the U.S., the New Right and the Republican Party have given a stunning example of shifts in consciousness orchestrated by changing the frames through which people judge the world around them. Changes in education provide one example of this shift in consciousness, and more importantly the subsequent material change effected by the reframing of ideas. Public education remains one of the largest socialized systems within the U.S., yet the calls for free-market capitalism to "solve" the problems of education have gained momentum. Klein (2007) demonstrates that more extreme economic reform is possible after an economic shock such as a natural disaster. She outlines how these forces were drawn together after Hurricane Katrina, which was a catalyst for radical changes to privatize the education system of New Orleans: "Before Hurricane Katrina, the school board had run 123 public schools in the city; now it ran just 4. Before the storm, there had been 7 charter schools in the city; now there were 31" (Klein, 2007, p. 5). Thus, the shock of Hurricane Katrina was strategically exploited as an opportunity to move the education system toward the Chicago School of Economics version of free market capitalism.

Given narratives of the "boy crisis" and "wrestling crisis" within U.S. education, the surrounding ideas available for framing and guiding the solutions become important. Thus, this article has illustrated how the logic of communities of identification that is currently pervasive in sport (and society generally) necessarily fails. But more importantly, through the demonstration of that failure, this article builds on the work of Helstein (2005) to elucidate and make available the potential of a new logic through which we might make sense of communities and effect change. Clearly, the ideas discussed via communities of articulation around scholastic sport have the potential for more far-reaching interventions in frameworks of understanding for U.S. education and the place of sport within it. Thus, it is

time to reframe collegiate sport through communities of articulation, rather than remaining stuck in the framework of the status quo. What Klein's work shows is that this is not just a theoretical exercise, but an important contribution to the landscape of ideas "lying around" waiting to be put into action.

Notes

1. Title IX of the Higher Education Act, a federal law passed in 1972 states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."
2. All participation figures available, though specific numbers vary slightly, show these trends. For complete figures see the NCAA (2007b) publication, *Participation: 1981–82–2005–06 Sport Sponsorship and Participation Report*, the Government Accounting Office reports, Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act figures (available from each individual institution or searchable on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website), and Acosta and Carpenter's (2008) longitudinal report.
3. In the paragraphs to follow, we offer a summarized account of this concept. We borrow from the conceptualization provided by Helstein (2005). Please refer to that article for a more detailed theoretical explanation of the formulation and functioning of a community of articulation.
4. The purpose of collegiate athletics in the U.S. has been debated since the early 1900s. More recently, the U.S. Congress has been reviewing the nonprofit status of the NCAA. So, although collegiate sport in the U.S. is a billion-dollar business, the NCAA, conferences, and universities enjoy nonprofit status. Meanwhile, though, very few programs actually generate profit, but a common ideology holds that profit from football sustains all collegiate sport, which is not factually correct. See Sack and Staurowsky (1998) for a historical overview, and Zimbalist (1999) for an economic analysis.

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