The Changing Face of Women’s Sports at Duke:
From Throwing Like a Girl to Competing with the Men.

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Gender at Duke
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The early years of Duke Athletics were marked by an absence of the very word “Athlete,” at least in regards to women. Perhaps Betsy Alden, who matriculated into Duke in 1960, put it the best when she explained that during her time at Duke, “Women were an accessory to male sports”. Moreover, the mere fact that Professor Sally Schauman (Duke Class of 1959), could tell a story about every other aspect of campus life that students questioned her on, and yet had nothing to say about women’s athletics in her era, also speaks volumes about the early Duke athletic culture, or lack thereof, for women.

Beginning with the appointment of Julia R. Grout to Director of the Department of Physical Education for Women (WDPE) in 1924, and lasting throughout and beyond her forty-year career, the official stance towards women’s sports was one that emphasized educating women about their bodies and introducing them to sports as a means of social preparation. Today, the college athletic culture could not differ more from its predecessor, as women’s sports has become centered on competition and the attempt to prove oneself or one’s school as better than the competitor. Although the Department of Physical Education still exists, maintaining its variety of recreational and educational opportunities, a separate body, the Athletic Department, now manages the intercollegiate competition of men’s and women’s teams under the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). While a variety of factors have contributed to this change in mentality, one could safely identify Title IX as the major catalyst for change.

Context

Although athletic competition has existed for millennia, the idea of competitive, organized team sports developed in the 19th century, as white men tried to find a way to
assert their superior manhood, and ensuing virility over lower class immigrants. The concept of a women’s role in sports, however, has been in a constant state of flux. As early as the 1830s, the perceived frailty of women incited reformers to promote female exercise. As science emerged throughout the 19th-century, and doctors categorized women as the weaker sex, many felt that physical activities might strengthen the fragile nature of women and help to regulate her body. The medical support for female exercise coincided with the rise of women in higher education around the turn of the century, and as such, intrigued many women educators. As a result, by the 1880s the Sargent School, and later others like it, were established to train women as physical educators.\(^1\) Physical education for women originated at a time of male resistance to educating women, under the argument that “mental strain would cause nervous disorder and reproductive dysfunction in female students”.\(^2\) Women physical educators thus formulated their argument that by promoting physical activities, they would redistribute mental energy throughout the body.\(^3\)

As time progressed, and women began to take sports more seriously, they started to push for more focused athletic training and simultaneously the positive image of women in sports began to tarnish. Critics posited, “sports posed other dangers to the female body […] including] both reproductive damage and the loss of sexual control”.\(^4\) Although the collegiate environment, with its large grouping of able bodied women and shared facilities, had initially fostered competition, the derogatory view of the new athletic woman threatened “the limited authority and marginal position of women

\(^1\) Cahn 13.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid. p.21.
physical educators, who were just beginning to lay claim to professional status in the academic world". As a result, although these woman physical educators felt confident about the value of their work, they had to negotiate a position for themselves in the male-dominated academy, while at the same time avoiding the slander of promiscuity and/or masculinity that women’s sports competition brought with it. To navigate this treacherous course, the women physical educators chose ‘moderation’ as their cue word and they promoted exercise that would invoke only the slightest bit of invigoration. “With this approach physical educators endeavored to protect their own professional interests and shield young women from the supposed physical and moral dangers of uncontrolled ‘masculine’ athletic games,” that took place in clubs throughout the country. At Duke, when Julia Grout was hired in 1924, calisthenics was the exercise of choice, and she, in kind, made it her outward goal simply to get women physically educated about their bodies.

Grout spent the next forty years of her life as the Director of the WDPE. Her career spanned many monumental events in American and World history, as well as many changing opinions about a woman’s athletic capabilities. After a boom in women’s sports participation around the turn of the century, accompanied by backlash about its masculinizing effects, the 1930s saw a shift towards individual sports. Since the Great Depression also occurred during this decade, it makes sense to assume that this increased emphasis on the individual would have bolstered the ideas of perseverance and self-determination thought to hold the keys to success. With the advent of World War II in the 1940s, inactivity transformed into vigor, as many agreed that women must be physically

5 Ibid. p.23.  
6 Ibid.  
7 Ibid.
prepared for warfare. In the 1950s and early 60s, the country desperately tried to get back to normalcy, and most felt that could be achieved through the family. As a result, the primary woman’s role became “the mother,” and many thought that colleges should merely facilitate the preparation of better wives and moms. Likewise, the emphasis within Physical Education fell upon teaching each woman recreational activities, in order that she might become a more desirable companion and a better social subject. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, this national image of perfection began to show its own imperfections: The fighting in Vietnam intensified, and its corresponding TV coverage invigorated the nation in opposition; the Civil Rights Movement pressed for racial equality; the Feminist Movement fought for equality of gender. In almost every social aspect of the country, discontent boiled to the surface. Then the Educational Amendments of 1972 passed, which included the controversial Title IX. While not specifically directed towards athletics, Title IX’s interpretation has greatly changed the nature of women’s athletic endeavors. It took several years for Title IX to really gain its strength, but with the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 and the election of President Clinton in 1992, the stipulations of the bill finally became enforced.

**The Importance of Sports**

As women have taken ownership of their bodies, they have proven that, far from collapsing at the least bit of exhaustion, they are in fact capable of enduring a great deal, even as much as men. Since the primary male sphere of recreation (athletics) has traditionally enjoyed a higher value than its counterpart (women’s crafts), participation in athletics has served as a way for women to enter into one of men’s realms and gain equality in his terms. Now, with the evolution of spectator sports, when a woman
competes, the world can watch, creating not only a sense of power and accomplishment for her, but also formulating her as an active woman role model for the young girl who watches her. This in turn allows girls to grow up with the feeling that they can achieve anything they put their minds to.

On a more basic level, the increasing emphasis on athletics has encouraged women to get involved in sports from a very early age. There can be no doubt about the health benefits associated with being active, especially in a country where the rate of childhood obesity is on the rise, a condition that is proving to cause serious health risks later in life.

Athletic participation carries with it many mental benefits as well. It creates a sense of confidence, and it teaches dedication, organization, time-management skills, and how to perform under pressure. While some would argue that the competitive nature of athletics detracts from the sense of collectivity and solidarity that women’s sports once fostered, there can be no doubt that women’s athletics has had many positive effects on the lives of participants.

Methods

This paper sets out to examine what sports looked like for Duke women at different stages in the University’s history: How have administrative attitudes evolved, and what has been the ensuing effect on student involvement? Since the administration sets out the expectations, it establishes the norm for students. I have chosen to analyze four distinct periods in the history of women’s sports and athletics at Duke: the 1930s, the 1950s, the Title IX transition, and today’s Title IX aftermath.
In the two earlier periods of my research, I based most of my analysis on data collected from the Duke University Archives. I focused on the administrative position towards women in sports, because I felt that it would give me the clearest sense of how women were taught to view themselves. More specifically, I tried to discover what the WDPE taught its women to value and embody.

To explore this issue, I looked primarily at the writings of Julia R. Grout, who served as first Director of Physical Education for Women. Hired directly by Alice Baldwin as plans were in the works for The Woman’s College, Grout entered the University on the ground floor, and thus held a strong influence. Her forty-year career spanned from 1924 to 1964, even longer than that of Alice Baldwin, making her a major constant force within the University. Moreover, since she built the WDPE from the ground up, hiring each staff woman herself and, for all intents and purposes really setting the agenda, she served as the guiding force behind the direction in which women’s sports and physical education developed. As Grout’s role phased out, and the WDPE became a more cohesive body, I also relied heavily on the WDPE’s records.

Due to the fact that my first period of research, the 1930s, occurred almost 80 years ago, it was impossible for me interview any women who worked at that time since they themselves would be at least 105 years old by now if still alive. For my second period, the 1950s, however, I did speak to Lorraine Woodyard, who joined the staff in 1953 and thus worked with Julia Grout. I also managed to speak to a few non-sports affiliated students from this period, but since the 1950s was a time in which the extent of women’s sports was P.E. and Intramural, I made it my goal to see if sports were even on their radar.
Since Title IX mandated equality in Athletics, Duke had no choice but to become more athletically oriented within women’s sports. Thus, in my third period of research, I attempted to discover how Duke negotiated this mandate. To do so, I examined the WDPE Records as the department came under assessment by the University Provost’s Task Force.

Due to the relatively recent nature of the Title IX related material, much of that data is not yet accessible in the archives. Since I want to give a more personal perspective on the current life at Duke and the attitudes towards women in sports, this has not been a huge limiting factor. Instead, I have relied on the accounts of various alumni and staff. Woodyard provided me with a wonderful transitive perspective, since she began work under Grout’s leadership, and remained throughout the transition to an athletic emphasis. I also spoke to Jaclyn Silar, who began as an assistant women’s Basketball coach at Duke in 1979, and currently works as an Associate Director of Athletics. To address the Title-IX period, when women’s athletics received the National spotlight, I spoke with individuals directly involved with the transition in hopes that it would help me to sort through the data and get a sense of this relatively recent period that people and universities are still trying to come to terms with.

Although I primarily focused on the administrative viewpoint throughout my paper, I did examine some of the Women’s Studies Program 1987 survey of all prior Duke Women graduates. I did so primarily to get an idea of the perspective that my approach might be leaving out. Within these surveys, which were focused on raising awareness about what Duke did well and poorly with regards to women, I encountered some responses specifically about athletics. While it is hard to tell if the responses of
few women over several decades are representative of a larger population, their words do point out that an undercurrent of aggravation about administrative stances did exist.

For my final area of research, the present, I have relied primarily on the contrast of my own experience as a Duke student-athlete with that of the women before me. As a member of the Women’s Cross-Country team and the Track and Field team, currently in my fifth year at Duke, I believe that I have enough first-hand experience behind me to contribute to this discussion. By considering my own experiences as a Division I athlete, I can use myself as a means of comparison with the past, to try to judge what things seem better, worse, or just different. While I realize that my own perspective is very subjective, I feel that I have a great deal to contribute to the discussion of women’s sports at Duke University.

The Early Years at Duke: Getting a Place at School

In the early years of Duke’s history, women had to struggle simply to access academic knowledge. With the standardization of science and the development of new fields of study such as evolution and genetics in the 19th century, also came justification for the lower status of women. One of the earliest excuses came through biology: Women were born with lower faculties, mental and otherwise, because their primary role in the species was bearing children. Moreover, the studies claimed that any taxation of the mind could suppress reproductive power, and as a result, women should be denied education to preserve their own well-being.

Some scattered women managed to achieve an education, but, as in the case of the Giles sisters, these were a wealthy few that operated in secret, and had the means to hire personal tutors and professors to train them. It was not until 1892 that “the [Trinity]
College’s Board of Trustees committed the school to co-education by formally voting to admit women to classes". From this humble starting point, the presence of women on campus slowly began to grow. But in a climate such as this, where mental activity was thought to sap the uterus of its strength, then woe to the woman who trained for physical prowess.

By 1902, “thirty-five female students were in attendance” (Women at Duke). That same year Duke hired Wilbur Wade “Cap” Card as the director of the gymnasium and physical education. In this role, “Card taught classes in calisthenics and basic gymnastics for women”. Calisthenics is defined as, “Gymnastic exercises designed to develop muscular tone and promote physical well-being” and it usually includes such activities as sit-ups, push-ups, squats, and other exercises which use one’s own body weight for resistance”. The emphasis of this activity was not vigor, but rather grace of movement, a fact made evident by the very etymology of calisthenics: It comes from the Greek words kalos, 'beauty' and sthénos, 'strength'.

From the way that Card’s colleagues described him and his program in Physical Exercise, it appears that he did not highly value or strictly enforce physical training for women. Julia Grout, the later Director of Physical Education for women, quotes him, in a way that attempts to capture his Southern dialect, as saying, “I used to give these girls exercise. Use to sometimes see ‘em walkin’ out with a boy over to West Durham as I came to class, but I didn’t say anythin’. Everybody’s got to have a little lovin’, and I

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8 “Women at Duke”.
9 “Skirts, Bloomers, and Shorts”.
10 Calisthenics, n.
11 Ibid.
guess that’s as important as doing exercise in the gym” [sic]. As his paraphrased comments show, Card saw little essential value in what he did for the women. Durham, located within the South, also absorbed the ideal of a Southern Belle: a diminutive woman who always displayed charm, femininity, and ladylike qualities. With such a conception, calisthenics must have seemed silly, and certainly probably less valuable than a date, which at least had the potential of finding a beau.

By the 1919-1920 school year, Trinity College began paying attention to more than just a woman’s mind: The College Bulletin “requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts [for women] included three hours per week of physical exercise”. One year later, in 1921, Delta Phi Rho Alpha, a women’s only athletic fraternity, became Duke’s first organization for women athletes. That same year Southgate Hall opened as a coordinate college for women, with its own gymnasium, and surrounding activity fields.

In 1924, the Duke Endowment given by James B. Duke established Duke University, and Alice M. Baldwin was hired as the Dean of Women at Trinity College. That same year Baldwin hired Julia R. Grout as “the first full-time Director of Physical Education for Women”. The next year the Women’s Athletic Association (WAA) began as an outgrowth of Delta Phi Rho Alpha, for the purpose of organizing intramural and extramural activities. In 1930, under Baldwin’s leadership, Trinity Campus (now East Campus) became the Women’s College of Duke University. With this step, “women

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13 “Skirts, Bloomer, and Shorts”.
14 Ibid.
gained sole use of the facilities” and Women’s Physical Education became a distinct program.\textsuperscript{16}

The Grout Era

The Woman

The appointment of Julia Grout to Director of Physical Education began a forty-year career in Durham, one which would greatly shape the nature of Women’s Sports at the University. Born April 1, 1898 in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, Grout, known affectionately as Jerry, graduated with a B.A. from Mount Holyoke (1920) and a M.S. in Hygiene and Physical Education from Wellesley (1924).

Sports played a large role in Grout’s life from an early age. She excelled on her High School basketball team, and by the time she graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1920, she had earned a coveted white sweater for her excellence in basketball. This award (a white sweater with an H embalzoned on the front) went to the four women who had won 45 points by playing on multiple teams, and who had made at least one All-Holyoke team. These four women were thought to be the “girls most worthy of representing Mt. Holyoke on the basis of physical fitness, posture, personal neatness and general attitude” [my emphasis].\textsuperscript{17}

At the opposite end of her life, at her retirement (1964), Grout earned praise for embodying similar qualities. In her retirement tribute album, Grout received many personal notes expounding on her virtues as well as her contribution to The Woman’s College. A note from Jim Cleland, the dean of the Chapel, best puts into words the

\textsuperscript{16} “Skirts, Bloomers, and Shorts”.
qualities which Grout embodied, and which were held as the ideal traits expected in a woman:

You have such a variety of interests, such a combination of gifts, and such a blending of qualities, that I often wonder about the genesis of such a balanced life: physical prowess and religious commitment; organizational ability and gentleness of manner; ramified membership and quietness of spirit. [my emphasis]\(^\text{18}\)

It seems that these attributes of worthiness, which Grout earned such praise for and must have worked hard to achieve in college, stuck with her for the rest of her life, both in her own person, and in the ways in which she managed the WDPE.

In a conversation with Lorraine Woodyard, who began working in the WDPE in 1954 and thus interacted academically with Grout for ten years, she pointed out, however, that there seemed to be a bit of a division within Grout. In her eyes, Grout seemed like a very professional woman, strongly influenced by her New England roots, one who always wanted to do the right thing; “she didn’t want to overextend [and thus threaten the future of the program], but yet she wanted to try to meet the needs” of the students.

Although the trend among women physical educators was towards moderation and feminine women, which Grout clearly tried to embody, at the same time she seems to have carried a spark of competitive spirit with her from college. Elizabeth Bookhout, who became the Director of the WDPE after Grout, notes in her book that the WAA, established the year after Grout arrived at Duke, had a similar point system to Mt.

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Holyoke: The best senior woman earned a gold “D” “for encouraging school spirit, and promoting interest and participation in athletics on campus”.  

**The 1930s or Where it all started.**

In contrast to the laissez faire attitude towards women’s physical endeavors established by Card, Grout attempted to infuse legitimacy into her new program. As one of her first actions at the University, she changed the name of her department, previously known as Physical Training or Physical Exercise, to Physical Education. Grout firmly believed in the idea of education through physical education, as she felt that physical education played an essential part in becoming a physically fit and well rounded woman. As such she hoped that changing the title of the department might begin to give it some legitimacy.

Whereas under Captain Card’s leadership physical requirements for women were only loosely enforced, Grout pushed for Physical Education to become a required part of a woman’s undergraduate degree. Courses were offered in academic topics such as “the history and principles of physical education” as well as various sports, and each woman, upon matriculation, underwent a physical and medical examination. This exam involved nude “Posture Pictures” and tested motor ability, sports skills, and knowledge of good health practices. The results determined what activities each woman could participate in, and whether she needed to enroll in a course entitled ‘Personal Health Problems’ to bring her body mechanics up to par.  

In order to track the progress of each individual, as well as to judge the effectiveness of the program, women were retested at the end of their Freshman year, as well as at the end of their Junior year. These exams showed that the

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19 Bookhaut 16.  
20 Ibid. p.7.
women were at their most fit at the end of their Freshman year, when physical requirements were most strongly enforced. By the end of Junior year, although more fit than upon matriculation, the women’s fitness had slumped.\textsuperscript{21}

While Grout permitted intramural sports within The Woman’s College, she specifically states in 1933 that the WDPE has “never promoted intercollegiate competition among women at Duke” [my emphasis].\textsuperscript{22} As her justification, she puts forth two reasons:

In the first place, it would be hard to find competitors, for it practically ‘isn’t done’ in most colleges for women. Secondly, and more important, we feel that our instructors can do much broader and more valuable work by helping all students to become neuromuscularly proficient, healthy in body, socially minded through group games and \textit{stilled} leisure time activities than they can by putting an emphasis on the developing of winning teams. [my emphasis]\textsuperscript{23}

Grout’s main goal involved achieving a “well-developed, well-coordinated body, and a knowledge of good posture and efficient handling of the body in everyday activities”.\textsuperscript{24} Any competition that may have occurred was limited to certain preordained events such as play days. Woodyard described these play days as events where intramural teams from local schools got together to play their sport. She emphasized, however, that these days promoted comraderie and not competition: Upon arrival, the teams were jumbled, and

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Bookhout 7.
reformulated. In this way, the play days could help promote bonding with women from other schools.

Although Grout mentions in her writing that in her youth team sports were emphasized, and while her department did offer some team based activities, the emphasis of the Physical Education staff in 1933 settled on “individual sports because [they felt] the students should strive to become proficient in something which they can use after college, such as tennis, swimming, archery or riding”.25 Perhaps this individual focus was also meant as a way of invigorating the individual in a time of National depression, somewhat in keeping with the ‘pull yourself up by your own bootstraps’ mentality so predominant at that time. More importantly, however, at a time when competition was thought to unleash urges and incourage promiscuity, placing the emphasis on the individual would eliminate the threat of unladylike competition between women, because it creates oneself as the only standard of comparison.

**Aesthetics: Good Posture and Feminine Ladies**

In 1940, Grout wrote an Alumni Weekend address called, “Keeping Physically Fit,” in which she reflected on what, in the last ten years, had become the four main “criteria of physical fitness”.26 In keeping with the concept of Moderation, and promotion of femininity, these four tenets included Good Figure (weight distribution), Clear Skin (as a sign of good health), Radiant Vitality (inner spark), and the most important, Posture. For Grout, posture was the “first and foremost”. It meant, “being lived up for grace and action, the body carried in perfect balance, the bones lying

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 smoothly in place and all the muscles working on the right tracks”. In fact, Grout so valued good posture, that she even included a poem about it at the end of her address (Appendix A). Posture, in Grout’s eyes, and in the eyes of her contemporaries in Women’s Physical Education, held the keys to becoming a proper lady.

Given Grout’s emphasis on posture, it is not surprising that dance became the favored focus of the WDPE. With it’s emphasis on grace, beauty, emotion, and of course, posture, dance could not fit more perfectly with the idea of moderation promoted by women s. Moreover, since dance exists as a typically female form of exercise, there was little threat that it could be corrupted into a masculine form of competition. In fact, Grout favored dance above all other activites, because she saw it as an endeavor which would help transform the women into ladies. Bookhout notes that Grout strongly pushed dance, although she herself could not dance well,27 and Bookhout even comments on how happy the staff felt when they were augmented with a secretary-pianist, so that the instructors could focus on teaching.28 Grout herself spoke of dance in this way: “Creative movement in the form of dance, [is a place] where the students learn to express thoughts and feelings through movement. Modern dance is as much a creative art as is painting or music”.29 Of course, there was a certain irony in Grout’s strong emphasis on individual pastimes, particularly dance, because she herself did not excel at this endeavor, and in fact, her own past was so heavily, and it would also seem positively, affected by the team sport of basketball.

World War II

27 Bookhout 45.
28 Ibid. p.6.
With the advent of World War II, and the export of American men to life-threatening battles overseas, the WDPE had to find a way to justify its continued existence. The focus of the department suddenly shifted from leisure activities to an “emphasis on physical fitness and preparation for service”.\(^{30}\) Whereas in the past there seemed to be a national aversion towards making women sweat, suddenly Physical Education courses were assessed for their vigorousness: Warm-ups were intensified; the length of continuous exercise increased; and at the end of workouts, the goal was for the women to have achieved an elevated heart rate.\(^{31}\) The WDPE even took pictures of women climbing ladders, perhaps to serve as proof of their new vigor.

In a 1942 talk to the Dean and Counselor Staff of The Woman’s College at Duke University, Grout gave a ‘state of the department’ address, discussing what the program once was, what she and her staff had accomplished thus far, and what she felt was left to be done. She explained that due to the wartime state of affairs, the WDPE was “making certain changes and omitting certain courses which [they could not] justify in a program which stresses vigorous body building”.\(^{32}\) The Department stressed the values of teaching leadership and suddenly team sports became important ways for women “to learn to play as part of a group, to subordinate self for the good of the team”.\(^{33}\) The emphasis on individualism in the 1930s switched once again to the “valuable asset” of team sports in an era where most felt that “individualism must give way to cooperation, and subordination of self for the good of the whole”.\(^{34}\) While Grout still highly valued the


\(^{31}\) Bookhout 8.


\(^{33}\) Ibid. p.8.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
beauty of movement and the social preparation that could be gained through Physical Education, the emphasis had to be turned towards the common cause.

In 1942 the WDPE actually showed signs of expansion, with the addition of a full-time teaching major. In Grout’s discussion of the new major, however, one gets the impression that she felt obliged to justify its implementation by making it relevant to World War II. Grout did so by explaining that at the same time that primary and secondary schools were beginning to make physical education mandatory, those same schools were also losing their Physical Education staff. This meant that “women teachers [were] having to take charge of programs for both boys and girls as men teachers [were] called into service”.35 Through her appeal, Grout made the point that just as Rosie the Riveter was stepping up to the plate all around the country, so too could the Duke women, through their education in Physical Education, also serve their country.

**The 1950s: The Marriage Realm**

When World War II ended, Americans wanted to return to normalcy. Within the nation, all signs of women’s empowerment and equality came to a grinding halt. Whereas Rosie had been pushed during wartime to leave her home and become a Riveter, now it was her national duty to relinquish her job so that her husband could regain his role as breadwinner and Man of the House. With the ensuing development of the Interstate Highways and the growth of the suburbs, life became focused on domesticity: The number one place for a woman became the home; the number one role became the mother. In fact, to this day, when asked about life choices, the Duke women of the 1950s

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on the whole seem to possess a continued rejection of any women’s role besides that of
motherhood.

In the aftermath of WWII, the administration of The Woman’s College concurrently lost its sense of strong women’s leadership. Alice Baldwin stepped down in 1947, and the women did not have another strong woman in a place of power to look up to until The Woman’s College appointed Margaret Ball as Dean in 1963 for the specific purpose of improving the sense of self-worth and the goals of the women on campus.

In this environment, with domesticity as the rule, the vigor that had been inserted into Physical Education in order to prepare women to fill male roles suddenly became a liability. Grout, circa October 16, 1944/1946, gave an Assembly Talk. Judging from her response it appears as if she had been asked to answer the questions “What are we?” and “Why are we?” in regards to the Physical Education Department, because one gets the impression in reading her words that she had to sell Physical Education to her listeners.36

Grout answered the first question of “What are we?” by naming each of her all female staff members and listing all of their pertinent credentials, in an attempt, it would seem, to prove the department’s legitimacy. The second question, “Why are we?”, however, required far more detail, and Grout went about proving her point in this regard by listing the values she felt her department could offer a young woman. Many of these values were in fact common themes throughout the entire body of Grout’s writing: Improved Health, Aesthetic Value (primarily the beauty of dancing), Knowledge, and Professional (training as a Physical Education teacher in an ever growing field).

Interestingly, however, since she presented this talk at a time when domesticity

predominated, Grout particularly emphasized the Social relevance of Physical Education, and more particularly, how it could benefit men:

In this day and age when girls find so many opportunities to use their sport skills in a social way, it is our hope that we may help many to improve the skills they have and learn new ones so that every girl will be a social asset instead of a liability in her hours of recreation. It may be a tennis date with a V-12 boy, a badminton game at the Y in the city where you find a job, a sand-lot ball game with your young brother and his gang, a horseback ride in the country, a round of golf with Dad, or a swimming party at the beach next summer. The skills you learn here will stand you in good stead sometime somewhere. That is why we make our classes instructional classes rather than just play hours. [my emphasis]\(^{37}\)

Like any aspect of education, learning must have a purpose, but in this instance, it could no longer stand alone as a means for self-improvement as it once did. Instead, there seems to be a clearly defined men’s world, which the skills of the woman must somehow fit in and enhance.

In Betsy Alden’s reflection on her own Duke experience in the 1960s, she described an environment where finding a husband and preparing for domestic life took precedent over academic endeavors. Alden herself left Duke after her sophomore year in order to marry her high school boyfriend and have children right away. When asked about the athletic environment, she echoed Sally Schauman’s (Duke ’60) sentiments about women’s athletics being a muted subject. Alden described women as mere

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
“accessories to male athletics,” who were urged to make men’s competition better by displaying school spirit. Football games were a big deal in her time: All the women dressed up for the event and went wearing their Duke blazer and the pin of their date. The only real example of women’s participation in athletics that she could think of came in the form of cheerleading—an endeavor which in its very nature fits with the ‘women as accessories’ mentality. Alden explains that it meant a great deal to be a cheerleader, because in an environment where most things were segregated based on gender, these women got to be a part of the male sphere.

In the 1958-9 school year the Women Athletic Association (WAA), which had been established to promote athletics among women, underwent “re-organization and re-emphasis”. 38 The program changed its name to the Women’s Recreation Association (WRA), and began stressing recreation over athletics. The minutes from WAA meetings, however, show a push towards inclusion and collective activities as early as 1949. For example, in their discussion of the Speed Club, “it was brought up that this club should be for people who are interested in swimming rather than those who are good swimmers, and so it was suggested to change its name”. 39 Even the point system for earning awards underwent readjustment, in order that students with lesser athletic skills could still be awarded for trying. Moreover, the awarding of points itself shows what forms of recreation enjoyed greater value: Participation in the Neredians (synchronized swimming), Modern Dance, or Pegasus (riding) clubs, also the most ladylike pastimes.

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earned the most points (80 pts.) as compared to the max of 20 points for team sports, and a max of 10 points for individual sports.

Although women’s intramural teams did exist, the competition took place only between dorms and sororities. Any extra mural meeting of teams, such as the play days, deemphasized competition, because as Woodyard explained, that would be considered unladylike. In fact, as she describes it, “women were not even supposed to get hot and sweaty”. If “mini games” did occur, they were only with local teams.

Although the students may have pushed for it, as the 1946 WAA handbook emphasis on “Beating Carolina” in Field Hockey shows, this competitive spirit, and in fact sports in general, did not really seem to reach the radar of more than a small, sports oriented segment of the student body. Schauman specifically said there were no women’s teams, Alden could think of none, and even Julia Borbley-Brown, who graduated in 1970, said that “intramural sports might have existed, but she didn’t think so”. In fact, even though Borbley-Brown became highly involved in dance throughout her undergraduate career, and thus must have had a somewhat close relationship with the WDPE, she still had no conception of any form of women’s sports taking place. This serves as a testament to just how little emphasis the University and the WDPE put on women’s sports and competition.

**Continued Inequality and the Case of the Gym**

According to the archive article “Skirts, Bloomers, and Shorts,” “By the early 1950s, the program in physical education for women had reached maturity”. This maturity, however, did not signify equality of opportunities for women. Physical Education remained an academic endeavor, aiming to teach women about their bodies
and to prepare them to be better suburban wives. The WRA, with origins in the early 1930s but refocused towards recreation in the 1950s, cooperated with the WDPE to organize recreational athletic activities for the students.\textsuperscript{40} This was the time of Sally Schauman and Betsy Alden; a time when the main aim for most college women was finding a good husband, and education mattered only as far as it could make its pupils better wives.

A telling example of the continued inequality for women can be seen in the case of the Trinity Campus Gym. When Trinity Campus became The Woman’s College, Grout found herself mocked for desiring the facility to be cleaned: When she asked for a cleaning squad to remove the mercurochrome and sweat that pervaded the facility she was told, “That building is a Gymnasium. You can’t expect to make a living room out of it”.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1936, twelve years into her career, Grout submitted her annual report as Chairman of the WDPE in which she “stated that the gymnasium in East Campus was inadequate for a modern program of physical education and recreation”.\textsuperscript{42} From that year on Grout continued to stress the importance of improved facilities, and yet even when plans for a new building “held high priority in the first and second ‘five-year’ plans,” still only minor changes were made.

By February 20, 1953, Grout wrote personally to Doris Duke appealing for funds to build an additional building for the Physical Education building.\textsuperscript{43} She explained that

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40}“Skirts, Bloomers, and Shorts”.
\end{flushleft}
Memorial Gym, the current facility, “was built soon after the first World War and its purpose was to accommodate a program for men which included mass gymnastics and intercollegiate sports” but that “in woman’s programs, with so much more emphasis on recreational sports and modern dance, the one teaching space [wa]s entirely inadequate”.\(^44\) Her list of requested facilities went on for several lines (Appendix B).

It appears, however, that nothing ever came of the “five-year plans” or the Doris Duke request, because in 1981 Grout still fought the same battle. Though architectural plans had been made for a new East Campus Activities Center, and Grout herself had donated money to help fund the project, she received a letter from Marion B. Peavey, Director of the Office of Institutional Advancement, on January 30, 1981 to the effect that the Board of Trustees had decided to renovate the gymnasium on East rather than building a new facility.\(^45\) Their reasoning being that the project would be too expensive, and they needed immediate use of the gymnasium.\(^46\) Frustrated with the turn of events, Grout requested that the money she had donated be returned to her, so she could “hold it until such time as a modern facility [wa]s assured and underway”.\(^47\)

Grout passed away in April 1984, with her gym dreams unfulfilled; in fact, her wish for an East Campus Recreation Center remains unanswered to the day of this paper’s creation. Her hopes did reach a roundabout fulfillment, however, as a new athletic and recreation facility, the Wilson Center, opened on West Campus in 1999, at a total cost of $20 million. While this new facility, with its increased amount of classroom

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{46}\) Ibid.
and administration space, does in many ways fit Grout’s dream, the choice of location on
the traditional ‘men’s campus’ nevertheless seems quite ironic.

**Title IX: The Legislation that Changed the Face of Women’s Sports**

*Influence from Outside: The Laws*

In November of 1972 Congress passed several amendments to the Higher
Education Act, and the bill became a law with President Nixon’s signing on July 1, 1972.
Included within these amendments was Title IX, an item that, although not specifically
related to athletics, has in effect entirely changed the face of women’s sports. Title IX
specifically states that, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be
excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination
under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid”. This meant that if any
part of a university received federal funds, then the entire school became subject to the
stipulations of Title IX. Since virtually every college received financial aid, at the very
least through federal tuition aid to students, Title IX had an extremely far-reaching affect.

The creation of Title IX posed a logistical and financial challenge, if not threat, to
many universities: Up until its enactment, little effort had been made to create
intercollegiate sports for women. In fact across the country Physical Education
Departments for Women, much like Duke’s WDPE, explicitly tried to create a distinction
between women’s sports and recreation, and competitive men’s athletics. With men’s
football teams totaling some 100+ male athletes alone, not to mention all the other men’s
sports, the thought of having to match the number of women athletes to the males created

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48 Suggs 4.
49 This also applied to K-12 schools.
protest on many levels—the Men’s Sports Lobby, the Federal Government, and Colleges/Universities.

As a result, the interpretation, and in fact the very existence of Title IX faced a great deal of challenge and scrutiny. Initially schools were given until 1978 to comply. Since schools often tried to fudge their compliance in various ways, however, in 1979 a three part test developed out of a variety of court rulings: “1) similar participation and enrollment rates for men and women; 2) a history and strategy of expanding opportunities for women; or 3) proof that women are completely satisfied with the sports programs being offered” (Suggs 5). Option one is considered a “safe harbor,” meaning that as long as the ratio of women at the university and within athletics is proportional, the school is in the clear. Since the third option is hard to prove, option two has become the most common route of compliance, since it merely requires an attempt towards improvement. In 1984, the Supreme Court ruling in the case of Grove City vs. Bell, limited the scope of Title IX, making it applicable only to departments that received aid directly. While schools, for the most part, still continued to expand their athletic programs for women, the urgency in their actions abated for a short time. The passage of the Civil Rights Restoration Act in 1987, however, “made it clear that if any program at an educational institution or school district received federal grants, then the entire entity is covered by Title IX". This Act, along with the election of President Clinton in 1992 and his enforcement of this ruling, finally gave Title IX legitimacy and power.

Women becoming Athletes

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50 Suggs 90.
51 Suggs 4-5.
After the creation of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1970, the WDPE began to develop intercollegiate teams for women during the 1971-2 school year. The Varsity offerings included seven teams: Basketball; Competitive Swimming; Fencing; Field Hockey; Gymnastics; Tennis (Fall and Spring); and Volleyball. Lorraine Woodyard became the Women’s Intercollegiate Coordinator in 1972, and in her remembrance of that time, she can recall little equity. While the men had a Physical Education Department and a separate Department of Athletics that oversaw men’s intercollegiate competition, the WDPE became the sole body overseeing everything relating to women’s sports. In order to create a team, students had to show interest and then find a staff woman from the Women’s P.E. Department to serve as the coach. Woodyard explains that they often got pushed into coaching sports that they had little interest or experience in due to staff shortages. For instance, in Woodyard’s case, although she had played Basketball in college, she initially coached both Basketball and Field Hockey. Then after cutting down to just Basketball, she once again got pushed into coaching Swimming.

The intensity remained relatively low: Practice occurred three times a week, and the teams would compete in a maximum of 6-8 games per season. As a 1972 flyer for a IM Cross-Country race shows, for the most part, the idea of women competing remained a novelty: “For the second year…WOMEN ARE ALLOWED TO COMPETE” [Appendix D].

Woodyard noted other discrepancies between the men’s and women’s intercollegiate programs. According to her, the women’s teams “were not furnished with anything”. They competed in their gym clothes, which consisted of blue shorts and a white shirt, and which she noted “weren’t very good”. They received only warm-ups from the University. They also did not have access to any treatment facilities or staff: They had to pay somebody from physical therapy by the hour to come to their games or to administer treatment to an injured player. Moreover, while the men took buses to their competitions, the WDPE staff had to use their own cars to get to games, which thus placed any liability on them and their insurance. Woodyard explains, however, that at the same time many members of the WDPE preferred to maintain control over women’s athletics, because they felt that if the management went to the male dominated Department of Athletics, then they would consider themselves to have lost footing, both in terms of equality and also in their goal of creating a unique, women’s form of sport.

Within the WDPE there existed a strong emphasis on gaining equality in their terms. In order to do so, however, the women had to make every situation count. When Jan Disque competed in the Intercollegiate Golf Tournament in 1973, her participation became a fight for a bigger cause. After what she describes as a mortifying performance, Jan Disque wrote a letter of apology to Dr. Bookhout, the current Director of WDPE, that “the investment” of her trip did not “have some additional more far reaching consequences”. This desire seemed to include the “stimula[tion] of enough interest among the Duke women to begin a golf team with nearby, regularly scheduled

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matches,” as well as perhaps, a means of justifying the existence of WDPE [Appendix C].

**Title IX and Duke**

Title IX’s creation had a huge impact on Duke University, particularly with regards to the WDPE. By 1973, the Provost’s Task Force on Physical Education and Recreation had been created to analyze the Physical Education Departments of both the men and women, and decide their future direction. Although the Task Force set out to first research and then come to a decision, the nature of the staff meetings presents the picture of committee with a premeditated decision in mind. Both the men’s and women’s P.E. staff preferred separate departments, but at the very least they pushed for required courses; student surveys showed an overwhelming majority in favor of the same; and analysis of 31 other schools, while providing no overwhelming evidence, did on the whole show trends towards required P.E. Yet, when the Provost’s Task Force presented its Report on Physical Education in 1974, they proposed the following: 1) The merger of the men’s and women’s P.E. departments into the Department of Physical Education, Recreation, and Health; 2) That the curriculum requirement be dropped; 3) Phasing out of the Physical Education Major by 1976; and among other things 4) That intercollegiate athletics come under the control of the Department of Athletics.  

Even as the women tried to resist attempts at reorganization throughout the process of the Task Force analysis, communications between departments and the committee make it seem as if the WDPE received a good deal of pressure to keep quiet. The men’s Department of Physical Education urged the women to accept consolidation of

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55 Ibid.
the departments “in order to take a strong unified stand on any PE matters in the
University,” because, as the men put it, “we may lose ‘everything’ […] unless we
combine”. At a curriculum committee meeting on March 26, 1973, committee members
gave a thinly veiled threat when the women argued against merger, saying that the
University needed to cut costs, and that in fact the WDPE should be grateful:

> With the phasing out of departments, staff could be deleted without
> violating AAUP regulations; however, the University has decided not to
do this. They do, however, foresee that staff members may not wish to
remain if their teaching and their line or work discontinued.\(^{58}\)

When Dr. Elizabeth Bookhout, Director of WDPR after Grout, rebutted this statement by
noting that 9 of the 11 men on staff in the Men’s P.E. Department were also “partially
supported by athletics,” and asked “whether the drastic cut in staff [wa]s, not, in fact,
aimed at the female portion of the total staff,” she received the somewhat vague response
that the committee had “no intention of discriminating”.\(^{59}\)

> According to Jaclyn Silar, who began at Duke in 1979 and experienced the
schools transition into women’s athletics, “everything was a fight”. In order to be an
assistant coach in Women’s Basketball, Silar also had to work in the equipment room, all
for the meager pay of $6 thousand dollars a year. Though not drastically off the national
pay pattern for university women in the 1970s, it is very likely that Silar had a lower

University Archives. Box 4. Folder 287.

\(^{58}\) Memorandum, Frederic N. Cleavland, Robert Krueger, Harold W. Lewis to the Members of the Men's and Women's Department of
Box 4. Folder 295.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
salary than her male counterparts.\textsuperscript{60} She also recalls an instance where she and the head coach Debbie Leonard, had to personally go to the athletic director, Tom Butters’ office, and request that the women be issued sports bras as part of their practice gear, a request they viewed as only fair since the men were issued jocks. According to Silar, Butters turned bright red and quickly agreed, but she used this story as an example of how the women in athletics had to push, and sometimes fight, to take each and every step forward.

At the same time, however, the women also had a sense that they must be grateful for even having these opportunities. Although Woodyard, in my interview with her, spoke frequently about the challenges and discrepancies of Women’s Athletics, in an interview with Duke University’s student newspaper, The Chronicle, published November 4, 1975, she presents an image of contentment. Although Title IX requires “a proportionate number of scholarships for women athletes,” Woodyard states, “we [the women] would be happy with any number of scholarships”.\textsuperscript{61} When asked more specifically about the satisfaction of the women in athletics, she in fact makes a statement entirely contrary to the reality she later described to me: “This fall women have gotten everything they’ve asked for and I haven’t heard any complaints”.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Getting to the Present}

With the transfer of all athletes to the control of the Department of Athletics, the newly combined Department of Physical Education, Recreation, and Health lost much of its input on the athletic scene on campus. Today the teaching staff is mostly male, except for the primarily female gym instructors. The majority of course listings are half credit,

\textsuperscript{60} Dr. Jean O’Barr noted that her starting salary as a Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1969 was $12,000, and that when she began at Duke in 1972 she earned $10,000 a year. I do not have comparable figures for 1979. I have made the above assertion based on Dr. O’Barr’s personal experiences at Duke University in the 1970s.

\textsuperscript{61} Ingram.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
pass/fail classes meant purely for pleasure or recreation, and not a required part of the curriculum. There are certain resources within the Department that some student athletes do utilize, such as the sports psychologist, Greg Dale, or the nutritionist, Franca Alphin, but choices to meet with these people are purely personal.

Athletically since Title IX, Duke has slowly moved toward equity. Women’s teams continued to be gradually added to the initial AIAW seven. Golf came early on (1975), and the remainder slowly trickled in: Cross-Country, Indoor Track & Field, and Outdoor Track & Field (1984), which replaced Gymnastics and constituted three sports, although the athletes were mostly the same; Soccer (1988); Lacrosse (1996), and Rowing (1999). In 1982, Duke women athletes came under the jurisdiction of the NCAA, which meant that recruiting expenses could be covered by the athletic department and scholarships slowly increased.

Although the situation gradually improved, the teams continued to lack equity: “They still had part time coaching, menial travel,” and as more teams were added, the pool of resources spread thinner. As Silar puts it, “Duke was making the effort, but it was slow, it was late […] other schools had gone way beyond us as far as resources in the women’s sports”.

In 1997, the 25th anniversary of Title IX, Duke University was sued along with 24 other schools by the National Women’s Law Center for its non-compliance to Title IX. Previous to this legal action, Duke had traditionally claimed Part Two of the Title IX test, i.e. that they had a history of continued expansion. This lawsuit, however, gave Duke “a kick from the outside,” as Silar described it, and forced the school to take action and make a plan. Joe Alleva, who became athletic director in Feb 1998, went with the ‘safe
harbor’ route (Part 1), and implemented 34 additional women’s scholarships over a seven-year period to move the athletic expenditure for men and women towards proportionality.

Statistics from the Chronicle of Higher Education reflect this change.\(^6\) The 1997-8 term, the year of the lawsuit, shows an -11.95% discrepancy between the percentage of enrolled undergraduate women and the percentage of women athletes. The very next year, that discrepancy dropped to -5.60%, and continued to decline until the 2001-2 school year, when it reached -3.90%. In fact, the 2001-2 school year seemed to be the best year over all for Duke in terms of athletic equality, as proportions seemed to be at their best across the board. Initially Alleva had made 2008 his goal for equality, but under both internal and external pressure, especially from the WDPE alumni, he accelerated the timeline.

Since that year, however, attempts at equality appear to have slackened as the proportionality jumped back to -7.57%, the highest it has been post-lawsuit. In 2004-5, the percentage of the recruiting budget for women actually dropped to the lowest it has ever been. Likewise, the women’s share of the total coaching budget, which had been steadily increasing, dropped from 36.82% in 2003-4, to 25.59% in 2004-5. With the threat that the men’s basketball coach, Mike Krzyzewski, might accept an offer to coach in the NBA, he received a large pay increase as an incentive to stay at Duke. No other coach, particularly any women’s coach, received a corresponding increase. Perhaps once Duke reached an acceptable level of compliance, the need to emphasize equality lessened.

One caveat that must be noted in looking at the figures, however, is that although the men

\(^6\) “Gender Equity in College Sports”.
appear to enjoy a distinct financial advantage, in fact it is difficult to pinpoint any discrepancies because these statistics do not differentiate between higher spending revenue sports (Basketball and Football) and their less funded counterparts, non-revenue sports (the remainder). Although there is no women’s football to use as a means of comparison, there is however, women’s basketball, and it is clear that the financial situations are not equitable, especially in terms of coaching salaries.

While not perfect, and often slow, the trend at Duke seems to be one of gradual progress towards equality. In Silar’s view, a combination of factors contributed to the present state of affairs: The lawsuit provided the “kick from outside”; Joe Alleva brought a new perspective to the role of Athletic Director, and he realized that it was time for Duke to catch up; and Nanneral Keohane, who became Duke’s first woman President in 1993, had a vision for women’s sports and made things happen from the top. In addition to major administrative changes, people like Silar asserted their presence more discreetly: In fact Silar explains that she jumped at the opportunity to become Duke’s first women’s athletic administrator because it allows her to better serve the student-athletes by “becoming a pain in somebody’s side and pushing for what the women’s teams need”.

**The Absent Student Voice**

Since I have mainly analyzed the administrative perspective throughout this paper, I realize that I largely missed the voice of the student-athlete. The few women whose notes I read or who I talked to were either involved with the WRA, and thus directly influenced by administration, or had no direct involvement with women’s sports, and thus little opinion on it. The voice of Jan Disque, the one student athlete that I did encounter in my archival research, appeared as a formal letter to Dr. Bookhout, the Director of WDPE,
which most likely would have affected her ability to provide candid feelings about the nature of women’s sports at Duke in the 1970s: While Disque does note some dissatisfaction with the dynamics of her golf training and competition, she does so in a very guarded and polite way.

In 1987, the Women’s Studies Program conducted surveys of all past women graduates. In reviewing the responses one must keep in mind that as reflections on their Duke experiences, sometimes 50 years hence, the chance of misremembered details runs high, and moreover, any past memories most likely have been colored by interim life experiences. Also, since the return rate on this survey, like most, was low, the responses typically record the extremes of opinions: The people that respond usually do so because they feel passionate about what they have to say, while those whose experience fell somewhere in the middle may not feel motivated to reply. Yet, since all of those questioned were post-graduate women, responding to a survey specifically about women, these surveys did provide the responders with a space to honestly voice their feelings about Duke with a low fear of repercussions.64

In the response of a 1965 graduate, who describes herself as “a ranked tennis player,” the woman notes with some irony the menial position allotted to women in sports:

We were given the “privilege” of umpiring some of the men’s matches.

My senior year we had one match against Carolina. The rest of the

64 Note also, however, that these surveys were not anonymous, which could have also skewed responses and/or response rates.
women’s athletic program was not supported either. Inappropriate for Southern women to exert themselves.\(^{65}\)

While this woman confirms the recreational stance of the WDPE, her response also suggests a degree of student chafing under the restrictions on women in sports.

The response of a 1984 lacrosse club member presents a much stronger sense of resentment.

I came to Duke to play on the women’s lacrosse club under the impression that by 1982 it would be a varsity sport. With people like Tom Butters saying he liked sports where women wore short skirts and looked cute, there was no possibility of a women’s varsity lacrosse team. It was an infuriating experience and though I continued to play on the club team, I was constantly frustrated by lack of support, playing space and funding, all the while looking at the treatment of men’s revenue-producing athletics in comparison. I still have a lot of anger about this situation.\(^{66}\)

Though three years removed from Duke, this woman readily admits to her frustration as a women athlete in an environment that claimed to be moving towards equality in women’s athletics. Her response completely counters the sense of contentment publicly presented by Woodyard in her 1975 Chronicle interview, and suggests that by the 1980s, a period strongly affected by the feminist movement, students expected more out of collegiate athletics than just being given the chance to play. Interestingly, it would take until 1996,


another nine years after this survey, for Women’s Lacrosse to become an official team at Duke.

While two survey responses can by no means be considered representative of the average student experience in sports, these words do show that views about sports were far from harmonious. The responses highlight a divide, or perhaps lack of communication between the administrative stance and the student outlook, one that in fact exists quite often over divisive issues.

**My Experience**

As a woman athlete on full scholarship at Duke, one who has competed in every season, fall (Cross-Country), winter (Indoor Track), and spring (Outdoor Track) since Freshman year, and who is currently in her fifth and final year of collegiate eligibility, I feel I have received a full dose of Duke athletics, and can thus look back on my experiences with an informed perspective. Overall, I can honestly say that my experience as an athlete at this University has been an extremely positive one. Have I felt slighted at times? Yes; but never to the point of disrespect for my gender, at least directly. Any discrimination I felt stemmed from the fact that I participated in a sport that was not Duke Basketball (that being Coach K’s version), or Division I Football: Even when we travel to our own competitions, people often ask us not about our own team, but rather if we know any basketball players.

Most often any dissatisfaction my teammates, or I felt, occurred when we compared the plethora of perks given to men’s Basketball and Football, with the complete absence of the like for our own team. As we lift leg weights in our make shift weight room on the running track in Card gym, because we have been pushed out of the
one weight room shared by all university teams other than Football and Basketball, and
the mouth watering aromas of Basketball’s nightly catered dinners wafts up to us, we get
a little frustrated. When we find ourselves not even allowed to weight lift because men’s
Basketball is using the floor below for practice, and their staff has commandeered our
space in order to videotape them from every angle, then our frustration gets amped up a
notch more. When the basketball players start having to find ways to get rid of the
endless piles of clothes and shoes they receive, we start to feel slighted as we reflect on
the one towel and single t-shirt that each Track athlete was given this year. It’s hard to
see the fully funded, 100+ person Football team take off for a hotel stay the night before
every home game, especially when our 15 person Cross-Country team has had to forego
our Fall break trip due to budget cuts.

Now this is not to say that some inherent gender inequalities do not exist. Simply
just looking at the spectator differences between the men’s and women’s basketball
games points out the higher value placed on the men. At the same time, however, I must
admit that this gender inequality often swings the other way within the non-revenue
sports. The men’s Cross-Country and Track teams at Duke have it far worse than we (the
women) do. While the women’s running programs may lack full funding by around six
scholarships, give or take one or two on a certain year, the men have a total of 2 1/2 to
offer to their entire team of approximately 70 men. Additionally, they have a budget even
more lacking in funds. In fact, often the women’s team helps to make some of their
endeavors possible. Put this way, the men often feel like we, the women, are the spoiled
ones, and perhaps this scenario can help to account for the animosity towards Title IX.
As bitter as these comparisons sound, I need to reiterate that my team does not sit around and stew in our juices. For the most part, my teammates and I (I cannot speak for others), go about in our own little world, making a team of our own, and sharing a unique bond that only comes from sweating, straining, crying, and laughing with someone day after day. Most often we do not even think about the differences, and simply count ourselves lucky to have what we do. We have come to accept that our sport, for whatever reasons, is a low priority, so we do not expect special treatment.

I have received many benefits as a Duke Student Athlete. If I feel sick, I can see the athletic doctor without an appointment, and receive many of my medical necessities for free or at a reduced price. If I am injured, I have free access to trainers and treatment. All student athletes also have access to athlete specific tutors and advisors. As a full scholarship athlete, I have been entitled to not only a free education at one of the nation’s top universities, but also free books, room, and board. Moreover, because I had a fifth year of eligibility, I have also managed to have 2/3rds of my Masters Degree paid for through my athletic scholarship.

In the current state of affairs, where many seem to be questioning the value of a student athlete’s presence, I think that it is important for people to realize that with the privilege of becoming a Duke athlete also comes an enormous commitment. I spend, on average, approximately 40+ hours every week in training and treatment alone. This of course, does not take into account the effects of the physical strain that I undergo during those hours, which then require an 8-9 hour sleep minimum in order for me to function and perform again the following day. At a university like Duke, schoolwork cannot fall by the wayside, so that consumes another major chunk of my life. Then of course I also
must eat and do the various other realities of life. Factored all together, I am left with
time for very little else. This is the reality of life for a typical student athlete.

Yet, I am willing to say unequivocally that my experience as a Duke athlete has been one of the best of my life. I have to admit to my slightly slanted perspective, since I have been fortunate enough, for the most part, to have had my hard work pay off with success on the course and track. I am lucky in that I have stood out, and I know that for my teammates who do not leave the sport with accolades to add to their resume, it sometimes becomes hard to justify making such a huge commitment in their life. And yet they do.

So there must be something else to athletics besides just material success. There are the personal aspects: The skills gained that better prepare us for life; the meditative moments that only come through intense activity; the chance to push our limits, and see what we are made of. There are also the social aspects of pride, both in being an athlete, and in being a member of a team. More than anything, there are the bonds of friendship that often sustain us for life. In sum, perhaps Grout did have it right in her emphasis on education through physical education. Although in the current state of affairs, student-athletes have little explicit connection to Physical Education, I hope that my experience as an athlete has shown that you can also receive an education through physical activity in general. As I have found, sports first teach us about ourselves, and then, through that gained knowledge, they teach us how to relate to others. What could be more worthwhile than that?

**Conclusion**
Before sports could even become an issue at Duke University, women first had to secure a legitimate place for themselves in the classroom. Although achieved relatively early in Duke’s history, women’s academic role has continued to change as the accepted role for a women within American society has also evolved.

The relationship between women and sports at the University has likewise changed with the times. Historically, National events have had a profound impact on whether a woman’s individual improvement or the team dynamic was emphasized at Duke. But, since the initial, official stance first taken by women physical educators in the 1880s was moderation, the details of women’s sports in the collegiate environment always revolved around ladylike leisure and recreational activities as a means of social preparation. Since men had already carved out the sphere of competitive athletics for themselves, the women physical educators had to create a unique form of women’s sports that would protect their impressionable young ladies from both masculinity and also promiscuity. Thus, from the 1880s to the 1970s, Women’s Physical Education never strayed far from its mantra of moderation.

With such deep seeded beliefs about the proper form of sports for women, it took National legislation, in the form of Title IX and its following clarifications, to bring about competitive athletics for women. Although some might view the loss of an inclusive, recreational ideal with sadness, it is hard to deny the many positives that have come out of this change. Although equality itself remains an ideal, on the whole athletics now presents women with opportunities like never before, such as the chance to earn a scholarship to a university that may have been financially out of reach, or the exposure to diverse people from diverse places through athletic competition. Moreover, as more
women athletes finish their collegiate career and yet maintain the desire to continue competing, they have opened up new post-collegiate athletic venues for women. Most importantly, though, simply having men and women share the same athletic standards brings both genders to an equal playing field, preventing women’s accomplishments from being disregarded as ‘other’ while also providing a new language through which men and women can communicate.

In order to understand progress, one must know where he/she came from. Since I was born in 1984, I have never questioned whether women could be athletes. In coming to Duke, I had no concept of the role that women’s physical education standards had in shaping women’s athletic involvement, or lack thereof. All of the rules and regulations I encountered seemed ageless, and yet as I have researched this topic, I have discovered just how new and transitive this subject really is. I now understand how much things have changed, but at the same time I applaud the fact that the nature of women’s sports at Duke in 2006 could not be more different from its 1920s predecessor, I also acknowledge just how far we have to go.

Though I have been involved in sports my entire life, as have most of my teammates, I found it interesting just how little any of us knew about the origin of the thing which has shaped our lives, namely sports: If the athletes themselves do not know where they came from, how can they expect anyone else to? I hope that by making available the history of women’s sports at Duke, and highlighting the fluidity of something often perceived as rigid, I can enliven someone else to use their own voice to further shape women’s sports opportunities.

If you would cut a figure
In business, home, or school
Just mind the Posture Precepts
Obey the Posture Rule.

Don’t thrust your head out turtle-wise
Don’t hunch your shoulders so
Don’t sag and drag yourself around
No style to that, you know.

Get uplift in your bearing
And strength and spring and vim
No matter what your worries
To slouch won’t alter them.

Just square your shoulders to the world
You’re not the sort to quit
“It isn’t the load that breaks us down
It’s the way we carry it.”


Requested Facilities: “a modern dance studio with mirrors, floor, and hangings to give the proper background for work in this area; another exercise floor; a body mechanic room; bowling alleys; indoor golf and archery ranges; a recreation workshop with a dark room for photography; a health education classroom and workshop unit; a Woman’s Athletic Association board room; a kitchenette and lounge for small parties, entertaining visiting players, meetings, etc.; a physical education major room and library; better office space and dressing facilities for faculty; a new swimming pool with more spectator space […] and finally a solarium for the ever popular sun bathing during the spring.”

Dear Dr. Bookhout,

I want to thank you again for making possible my trip to Massachusetts and my participation in the Intercollegiate Golf Championship.

I presume that by now Miss Lloyd has reported my achievements—or rather, lack of them—to you. I cannot tell you how very mortified I am over my performance or how sorry I am that I let both you and Duke University down. Please take consolation, as I have done, however, in the fact that although the trip was a wasted one with regard to my finish in the tournament, I have profited from it in many other ways.

For instance, it was my very first visit to New England! Before going I had heard numerous comments, all favorable, about this part of the country. Indeed it is a magnificent portion of the United States.

More importantly, the trip to Mount Holyoke afforded me the opportunity to meet girls my age from all over the nation and from all walks of life, both in the spirit of camaraderie and in the spirit of healthy competition. It enabled me to compete in a first-class, professionally run event which featured the best golfers from forty-six different colleges and universities. In short, it was truly a thrill, and an unexpected one, for me to participate.

In addition, I could not have asked for a more concerned and helpful coach, friend, and traveling companion than I found in Miss Lloyd. I only hope that she enjoyed the adventure as much as I did. (And it certainly was an adventure going first to Chicago to return to Raleigh!)

I realize, however, that you did not send me to this National Championship in order that I might receive the personal benefits that I just mentioned. You expressed to me your hope that the investment might have some additional more far-reaching consequences—a hope which I share with you. Perhaps my experience will stimulate enough interest among the Duke women to begin a golf team with nearby matches. Certainly if my own enthusiasm and hard work are sufficient to bring this about, it will become a reality.

Please, once again, accept my sincerest apologies for my disappointingly poor performance and my sincerest thanks for providing me with such a marvelous opportunity!

Yours very truly,

Jan Disque
Works Cited


Bookhout, Elizabeth. Fifty Years of Physical Education for Duke Women.


http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/calisthenics


http://www.lib.duke.edu/archives/exhibits/WomenHist/womduke.html