

Title IX Compliance in Michigan Public High School Sports

By

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Abstract:

While trends for high school's Title IX compliance may be difficult to uncover, I theorize high schools in communities with lower household incomes, higher percent of students eligible for free lunch and possess a large competitive football team are on average less compliant with Title IX. The following study focuses on the relationship between Title IX compliance and three external variables: average household income, free lunch programs, and the presence of football. Using a geographically stratified sample and cross-sectional design method, I analyze the relationship these three variables have to high schools abiding by Title IX regulations. I evaluate the variables within the year 2017 across 18 Michigan public high schools. Using data from the Civil Rights Database, U.S Census Bureau, Casey Foundation Databank, and Michigan High School Athletic Association, I uncover evidence that schools with larger football programs and list sideline cheer as an athletic opportunity are less likely to be found compliant with Title IX. Additionally, many of the results were inconclusive from lack of accessibility to compliance information. These findings highlight the necessity for more research, stronger policy options, and better enforcement of Title IX at the high school level. The implementation of federal legislation can attempt to combat these issues of transparency.

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Introduction:

June 23rd, 2022 will mark the 50th anniversary for the federal civil rights policy, Title IX. This law prohibits sex-based discrimination in all educational programs receiving federal funding. A common area Title IX is used is sex-based discrimination within school sports. With 50 years of Title IX, progress has been made; however, compliance with the policy is still a challenge for educational programs across the nation. Historically, quotas were set limiting the number of women allowed to participate in extracurricular educational activities. Title IX prevents limiting regulations such as this and encourages the presence and involvement of women in sports. Sports provide invaluable skills for young people –teamwork, time management, and athleticism. Equality in opportunities is vital so all children can have the ability to participate, especially girls and young females who are often at a disadvantage. This issue not only affects 50.8% of the country directly, but the family and community members of females as well (U.S Census Bureau).

Prior research on Title IX compliance, in general, has illustrated that compliance alters depending on an institutions size, female population and the presence of football. Larger institutions with fewer female students were found to be more compliant; however, schools with football teams were found less in compliance. These trends for schools not complying with the policy are historically attributed to a few common reasons. One reason for schools not complying with Title IX is that girls' sports do not bring in money or revenue like boys' sports such as football do. Another common reason is funding as a whole. Schools may get donations specifically for their football programs or even allocate more of their own athletic funding for sports that draw larger crowds: again, such as football. These excuses for unequal treatment

disregard the core purpose and goals of Title IX. Girls and women should be given equal opportunities to participate and treatment in sports as their male counterparts.

Significant strides have been made toward equality within this half a century; however, the country has not been successful enough. Studies have been conducted researching universities compliance with this policy; yet little empirical research on high schools Title IX compliance exists. Specifically, the relationship between the school as a football school, average household income, and students receiving free lunch. A few studies have looked at compliance with Title IX at the collegiate level at universities. However, only a recent report on Michigan public school's is available from a task force created in 2019. High schools across the country still do not have equal opportunity and resources for girl and boy sports including practice times, facilities, and uniform quality.

My study will look at a stratified sample of Michigan public high schools. As a resident of Michigan for twenty-two years, I was particularly interested in understanding this state's compliance with Title IX. Additionally, this study is focused solely on Michigan, instead of the country, due to the study's time constraints. The cross-section study will include 18 schools across the state picked randomly from the geographically stratified sample. This study will unpack the relationship household income, free lunch program eligibility, and football have to school's compliance with the policy.

Background/Historical:

Title IX reads "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" (Title IX, 1972). To comply with Title IX, schools must provide proportionate athletic opportunities to each sex or show they

are “meeting the needs of the underrepresented sex” (Miller et al., 2000). Meaning, it is required for publicly funded educational programs to provide proportional and equal treatment of athletic activities. Historically, women were not always given opportunities. It was not until 1892 that women were allowed to compete in intercollegiate sports. The first college to introduce female athletics was Smith College. They offered basketball (Bell, 2008). Title IX was created to correct this injustice. The Commission on Opportunity in Athletics (COA), created by President George Bush, managed issues related to Title IX. As problems arose at a steady pace, the COA had to act. In 2003 they called for “clearer guidelines” and strict enforcement by the Department’s Office of Civil Rights (Stafford, 2004). The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) is the body currently in charge of enforcing Title IX. However, private lawsuits on the issues are significantly growing along with questions regarding the compliance and effectiveness of Title IX.

In the fifty years since the Act’s passage, there has been a significant increase in girls’ access to sports; however, to this day, women athletes must fight for equality against sex discrimination in sports. A current and public display of this was the 2021 NCAA tournament. A video revealing the women’s weight room conditions went viral on social media. Individuals across the country were able to visually see the disparities and people were immediately shocked at how athletic inequalities is an ongoing issue. The abundance of backlash the event created caused the NCAA President to conduct an independent review to ensure the equality for all student athletes. This situation is not the first instance of injustice in women’s sports and will not be the last until change occurs. Another public example was the disparities in women’s hockey in 2017. The U.S Women’s Hockey team “threatened to boycott the world championships” due to the disparaging policies (O’Connor, 2021). Specifically, the men’s teams would fly business class, sleep in individual rooms, and were allowed to bring guests. On the other hand, women

hockey athletes were given coach seats, shared accommodations, and no guests. The women athletes were supported financially by USA Hockey to correct the inequity. These two examples are success stories, although should not have occurred to begin with.

Literature review:

This paper adds to the relationship between high school compliance and internal factors about individual schools. The three internal factors evaluated are Average Household Income, Free or Reduced Lunch programs, and Athletics (mainly football).

Average Household Income (AHHI)

Average Household Income has been studied frequently over the years and effects other variables as well. One study looked at the relationship between participation in sports to age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The study took place in Ontario Canada and started in 2004. They studied student's athletic participation overtime, starting when they were in 4th grade until 8th. One result found by researchers was "neighborhood household income effects are constant over time for both boys and girls" (Cairney et al., 2015). Meaning, the Socioeconomic status (SES) impacts were the same over time. Low SES is a constraint on children and their sports participation, while high SES is advantageous. Regardless of age. This finding does not necessarily allude to inequities between genders, but it does illuminate inequities caused by different SES's. One reason for this trend is athletic budgets. These programs cost money. Schools in communities of lower SES may not have the resources to provide as many sport opportunities for students. This study highlights the disparities some communities have compared others. Additionally, how the gap in resources leads to less opportunities and participation among students. This literature contributes to my study because I believe SES, measured by a family's average household income, will contribute to my results as well. I

believe girls that go to high school in areas with a lower SES will have less opportunities and participate less than their male counterparts as well as female students at other Michigan high schools.

Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL)

Student's eligibility for free or reduced lunch is decided by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This body determines FRL eligibility in two ways: household income or direct certification. For household income, householders provide income information. Students will qualify for a reduced-price lunch if the reported income "is less than 185% of the federal poverty guidelines" and "less than 130% of the poverty guidelines" for free lunch (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010). Direct certification can be determined in a multitude of ways but includes when households have foster children, participate in federal assistance programs, or collect food stamps. Unlike those qualifying from household income, students qualifying due to direct certification do not have to fill out forms or applications to receive FRL. My study will include information on the number of students eligible for FRL in each of the 18 High School's communities. The information above is how eligibility for FRL was determined in my data.

Athletics

Historically, studies have been conducted to understand Title IX's relationship to women's participation in sports. In one study, the NCAA evaluated universities' compliance with Title IX in two ways. First, they measured if university sports programs matched the female student body's interests. Schools not meeting the interests of women students would be considered a Title IX violation. The study reached out to 455 randomly selected undergraduate female students and received completed surveys from 382 women. The survey given to each participant included questions on five topics—demographic information, high school activity

participation, level of interest in college athletics, participation in college athletics, and interest in activities they were not currently involved in (Miller et al., 2000). The second study aimed to compare these levels of interest to those of men. The study was a convenience sample of 46 men and 62 women. Students were asked to complete the Student Interests in Athletics, Sports, and Physical Fitness survey used in the first study. The study concluded three significant findings. First, males were found to report a higher interest in sport activities than women. Second, men had more participation in varsity high school sports. Lastly, the study found a drastic difference in male and female expressed interest to participate in sports not currently offered. Women revealed a higher expressed interest than males (Miller et al., 2000).

Together, these studies show women to have a significant interest in college sports but low participation. Some argue low participation to be a legitimate reason for disproportionate opportunities among sexes. However, the fewer athletic activities may be the reason for women's low participation rate. Men are drawn to universities for sports and receive significantly more financial support to play in college. Giving women athletes these similar monetary incentives can help increase their participation. The additional money also can eliminate other reasons for low participation such as job responsibilities and time constraints.

As literature, this information is valuable; however, I would not consider it to be an extremely strong group of studies. The voluntary collection method used offers the possibility for false data or bias responses. This type of convenience sampling may have influenced the results and findings.

Another study was conducted to understand compliance as well as enforcement mechanisms used for universities intercollegiate athletic programs. The researcher, Sarah Stafford, administered econometric regressions to assess participation and financial compliance

at Division I universities. The research studied characteristics of each university –number of athletes, operating budget, and football revenues. Together, these aspects of each schools helped determine their size and prestige (Stafford, 2004). With this information, Stafford was able to understand the makeup of each school and possible factors for their incompliance. She then studied institutions proportionality in scholarships to help her understanding of school's compliance. This is because universities must provide proportional opportunities for each sex. To understand if formal or informal enforcement mechanisms were effective, she studies the relationships between the filing of lawsuits and compliant with the resolution of complaints. During the studies chosen timeline of 1991-2000, 260 complaints were filed and 97 were alleged to be at Division I institutions. They found lawsuits were increasing overtime and arising from individual students as well as the National Women's Law Center. They also found cases were naming dozens of Division I schools (Stafford, 2004). Stafford concluded larger institutions with a lower number of female undergraduates were more in compliance or addressing the issues among their campus. Additionally, universities with football teams were found to be less compliant. The presence of this sport decreases school's probability of maintaining proportionality. The study also found existing enforcement mechanisms are ineffective at increasing compliance (Stafford, 2004). It argues for a transformation in policy or enforcement. The issues each school face to comply with the legislation differ. To meet the unique needs of each institution, enforcement tactics and standards must be flexible. The study illustrates how the one-size-fits-all method is ineffective and inefficient.

Overall, this study continued literature on the compliance of institutions and was the first to collect data on Title IX enforcement efforts. Along with Stafford's own conclusions, the study

referenced other research findings. The researcher explains the amount of analysis on the topic to be scarce but lists three empirical analyses of Title IX compliance –Sigelman and Wahlbeck, Rishe, and Carroll and Humphreys. One main finding by Rishe concluded southern historically black universities are less likely to be in compliance with Title IX (Stafford, 2004). Carroll and Humphreys studied the behavioral decisions made by Athletic Directors under Title IX. They found directors will eliminate men's sports to comply instead of increasing the amount of women's sports offered. They also concluded this decision made by Athletic Directors is inversely relation to the size and prestige of the school's athletic department (Stafford, 2004).

Current data and information regarding Title IX, women in sports, and Michigan specifically can be found in the Task Force on Women in Sports Report. In 2019 Michigan's Governor, Governor Whitmer, signed an executive order creating a Task force on Women in Sports. The task force was established to bring leaders together to generate solutions and strategies to encourage the opportunities available to Michigan girls in sports. No similar legislation has ever been created at the state level allowing Michigan to spearhead the initiatives and goals. The task force produced an extensive report with results instilling the need for the girls in sports. (Armstrong, 2020).

The report evaluated three factors effecting girl's participation in sports: socioeconomic status, geography and community type, and school and class size. The study found a variety of results related to the three variables. First, girls at schools with a lower socioeconomic status were seen as less likely to participate in sports than girls from more affluent areas (Armstrong, 2020). This stark difference in participation can be attributed to the variety of sports offered at each school. The schools in higher socioeconomic areas offered a larger variety of sports to females than their lower socioeconomic counterparts. Additionally, different regions of Michigan

alter girls' participation in sports. The study found girls in rural or city locations had lower participation rates than girls attending school's in suburban areas (Armstrong, 2020). Lastly, in relation to school and class size, the report found larger schools to have greater participation by girls and more opportunities offered. Overall, the report found that these three variables contribute significantly to children's participation in athletics; however, boys' participation is still higher than girls. The report states that the male participation rate for Michigan K-12 school athletics is 57%, while the female rate is 48% (Armstrong, 2020).

In addition to these main findings of the report, the task force did extensive research on why there is a significant decline in girls' participation in athletics at the age of fourteen. They came up with three possibilities. First are girls' teams appearing as less important than their male counterparts. Many times, schools give support and priority in resources to boys' sports making the girls feel inferior. Next is the lack of female leadership. Coaching positions for female teams are increasingly becoming occupied by men due to the rise in income for coaches of women's sports. This factor not only contributes negatively to the overall recruitment, retention, and morale of women athletes, but deprives them of having a female role model in a position of power (Armstrong, 2020). Lastly is parental support. There is a high financial cost associated with participating in sports. This factor can contribute to students leaving or never competing in athletics. Together these three reasons make up the main reasons for the lack of female representation after age 14.

It is clear the fifty years since Title IX's passage has helped; but the disparity still exists. Public opinion and outcry on this topic support a transformation. Currently, studies relating to Title IX compliance for college sports have been published. The relationship between these schools and their compliance has been shown; however, real change has not occurred.

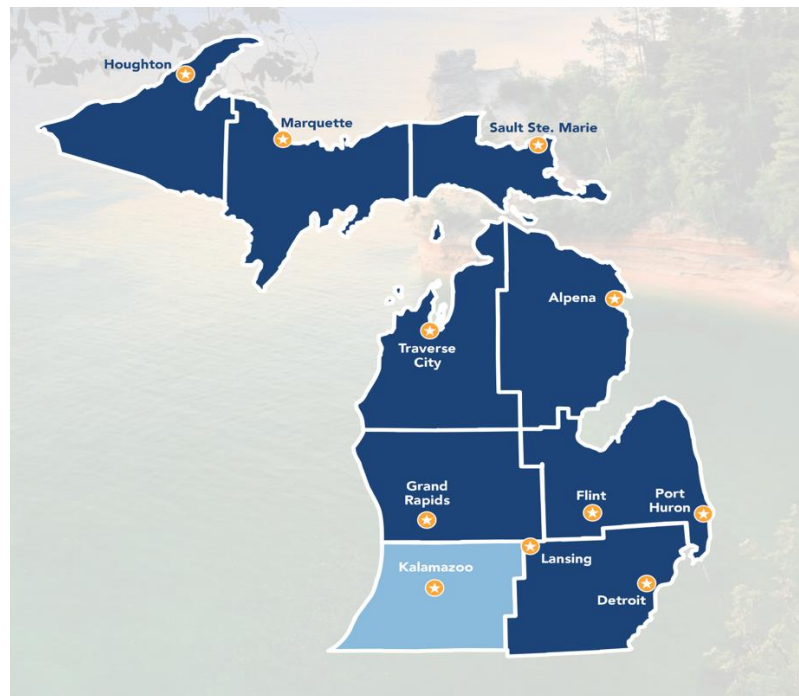
In contrast with studies about colleges, information on high school's compliance with Title IX is scarce. With that in mind, I seek to fill this void by conducting research on this relationship. This study hopes to create a concrete correlation between high schools, average household income, free lunch programs, and the presence of football. Specifically, my hypothesis is that high schools in areas with low average household incomes, more students receiving free lunch, and have large competitive football teams are on average less compliant with Title IX rules. My hypothesis targets poor, rural, and small communities because of the resources available for them to oversee compliance compared to wealthier communities. My hypothesis also aligns with trends found in previous studies on universities. This is because I believe my findings on high schools will mimic those found about undergraduate institutions. As a correlation study, this will not prove causation; however, filling this gap will aid future studies on proving causation.

Data and Methods:

My data comes from a multitude of credible databases and organizations. I used the U.S Census Bureau for information regarding average household income (AHHI). A data bank from The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided students eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL). Lastly, the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) was used to supply each school's football class. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) along with individual research on each school assisted in determining compliance with Title IX. All of the data will be collected from 18 public high schools in Michigan from the year 2017. I am conducting my research based off of 2017 because that is the most recent year the Civil Rights Data Collection had information for.

The 18 Michigan high schools were randomly selected using a stratified sampling method. The state was split into nine groups based off the different geographic regions of Michigan. This is an extremely common way of dividing Michigan and multiple organizations use these groupings such as “Pure Michigan”. Specifically, the groups are the Western Upper Peninsula, Central Upper Peninsula, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Northwest Michigan, Northeast Michigan, West Central Michigan, East Central Michigan, Southwest Michigan, and Southeast Michigan. Together, these geographic regions of Michigan split the state for the sample of high schools to be representative of the state as a whole. The 903 total Michigan public school districts were split into these 9 subgroups. The visual below illustrates these 9 regions of Michigan.

Figure 1



(Pure Michigan, n.d.)

Next, two districts were randomly picked from each subpopulation to create the sample. The application “random picker” was used to complete this step in a nonbiased manner. If a

district had more than one high school, the randomizer app was used again to determine which school within the district would be used. The 19 high schools are listed below.

Table 1

Region	School 1	School 2
Wester UP	Lake Linden-Hubbell High School	Watersmeet Township School
Central UP	Burt Township School	Manistique Middle and High School
Easter UP	DeTour High School	Cedarville School
Northwest LP	Bear Lake High School	Central High School
Northeast LP	Standish-Sterling Middle School	Johannesburg-Lewiston high school
West Central LP	Mt Pleasant Adult and Community Education	Mona Shores High School
East Central LP	Midland High school	Port Huron High school
Southwest LP	Pathfinders Alternative Ed	Bangor High School
Southeast LP	Concord high school	Woodhaven high school

As stated above, for the average household income of each school’s community, I have obtained data from the U.S Census Bureau. On their website, this data is titled “median household income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019” (United States Census Bureau, n.d.) . The Census Bureau did not have a dataset solely for the year 2017; however, this data includes the year in question. There is no reason to believe a drastic change in average household incomes between the years 2015-2019. Additionally, the average household income for every city used in this study comes from the same dataset, preventing any difference in the calculation process. Other than the average household income, all data collected and used in this study are solely from the year 2017.

Part of my hypothesis is the presence of a competitive football team can alter the atmosphere of a school. To determine the presence of a football team and a competitive football team, I use the MHSAA’s classification for football programs. Many times, competitiveness aligns with their individual classification. The MHSAA separates each school into one of four

classifications A-D. A is considered the most competitive and contains high schools with larger student bodies. Specifically, an “A” classification is a high school with 863 students and above, “B” is 395-862, “C” is 189-394, and “D” is 188 and below (Mighican high school athletic association, n.d.). To understand these variables in relation to compliance, it is important to understand how a school can be compliant with Title IX.

To comply with Title IX at the high school level, each school must provide equality in two ways: 1) opportunity to participate and 2) equal benefits and treatment. Schools must satisfy both to be in compliance with Title IX.

Equal Opportunity to Participate

Equal opportunities are met through a three-prong test. Each school must satisfy one of the three prongs. Schools can determine which prong to perform; however, one must be carried out. The first prong is substantial proportionality. To satisfy this prong, schools athletic participation must be proportional to each gender’s enrollment (Meyer, 2021). If the underrepresented gender (almost always female) does not have substantially the same number of opportunities to participate in sports as its population at the school, then prong one is not satisfied. For instance, if a school’s gender makeup is 45% male and 55% female, their participation in athletics should reflect these same numbers. However, a school can satisfy prong two. If the school has a history of or is currently expanding opportunities for that underrepresented sex, then the school can still meet the participation opportunities requirement. To meet prong 2, high schools must prove they are actively attempting to increase participation or have tried in the past and, despite their best efforts, the underrepresented sex’s participation rate remained constant. Prong three is lack of interest. Specifically, schools can argue (as a defense) that there is no interest by girls to play any additional sports or that sports they want to

play have no available competition. To ensure schools are abiding by this prong, they must understand the athletic interests of their student body. Surveys of students and interviews of coaches or athletic directors are a few ways this can be accomplished. However, these activities alone cannot qualify a school as meeting prong 3 because students may not respond to these surveys or questionnaires. They may not be aware of their existence or simply believe taking the time to respond will have no effect. Schools cannot misinterpret non-responsiveness for uninterest in athletic participation.

Equivalent Benefits and Treatment

Once satisfying an equal opportunities prong, each school must also provide equal benefits and treatment of athletes in order to comply with Title IX. Schools are required to give equivalent treatment in these areas to male and female athletes overall. These benefits are referred to as a laundry list and includes “equipment and supplies, scheduling of games and practice times, travel and daily per diem allowances, access to tutoring, coaching, locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities, medical and training facilities and services, publicity, recruitment of student athletes and support services” (Women’s Sports Foundation, n.d.). Schools are not necessarily required to spend an equal amount of money on sports played by each gender if the quality and benefits are equivalent based on an overall programmatic analysis. For example, if a boys basketball team uniforms cost more, it is not a violation if they’re as identical as possible to the girls’ basketball uniforms. However, if the school buys the highest quality boy’s uniforms, and do not make up this benefit in some way for female athletes, they do not meet this requirement. In addition, equal benefits and treatment are evaluated based on the entirety of the athletic program. Meaning the school must provide equivalency between boy’s athletics and girls athletics, not between individual sports. As the example above states, buying a

boys' team high quality uniforms is a red flag. To satisfy equality of benefits and treatment, the school must provide female athletes with a resource of equal quality. This benefit could be anything, does not need to be uniforms, as long as it is a benefit to their female athletes. It is vital to also note money raised for athletics is not an exception. Booster clubs can raise money and private donors are allowed to allocate funds to a specific sport; however, it is the high school's duty to ensure resources and treatment stay equal. High schools can ensure this in three ways. One is finding a donor for sport's played by the opposite gender. If this is not possible, the school will have to pay this money to keep funds proportional. For example, if a booster club raises money for the men's baseball team to acquire new equipment, the school must either use their own funds or solicit outside funding for the girls' team. The last way is to provide the teams equal access to where the money goes. This could be a facility or equipment. If the school cannot find a way to purchase a second, they must provide the girl athletes equal opportunity to use where the money was distributed.

Results

Average Household Income (AHHI)

School	AHHI (\$)
Central High School	\$ 63,575
Midland High School	\$ 62,625
Pathfinders Alternative Ed	\$ 55,107
Bangor High School	\$ 54,485
Johannesburg-Lewiston High School	\$ 54,332
Concord High School	\$ 53,658
Mona Shores High School	\$ 50,854
Bear Lake High School	\$ 50,055
Cedarville School	\$ 47,983
Woodhaven high school	\$ 47,301
DeTour High School	\$ 46,486
Burt Township School	\$ 45,570
Manistique Middle and High School	\$ 45,500
Mt Pleasant Senior High School	\$ 45,116
Lake Linden-Hubbell High School	\$ 43,183
Standish-Sterling Middle and High School	\$ 42,290
Watersmeet Township School	\$ 38,839
Port Huron High School	\$ 38,808

Table 2

The AAHI in Michigan is \$57,144 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Only three schools within the study have AAHI's above Michigan's average. The two schools with the highest AHHI are Central High School (\$63,575) and Midland High School (\$62,625). The two schools with the lowest AHHI are Watersmeet Township School (\$38,839) and Port Huron High School (\$38,808).

Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)

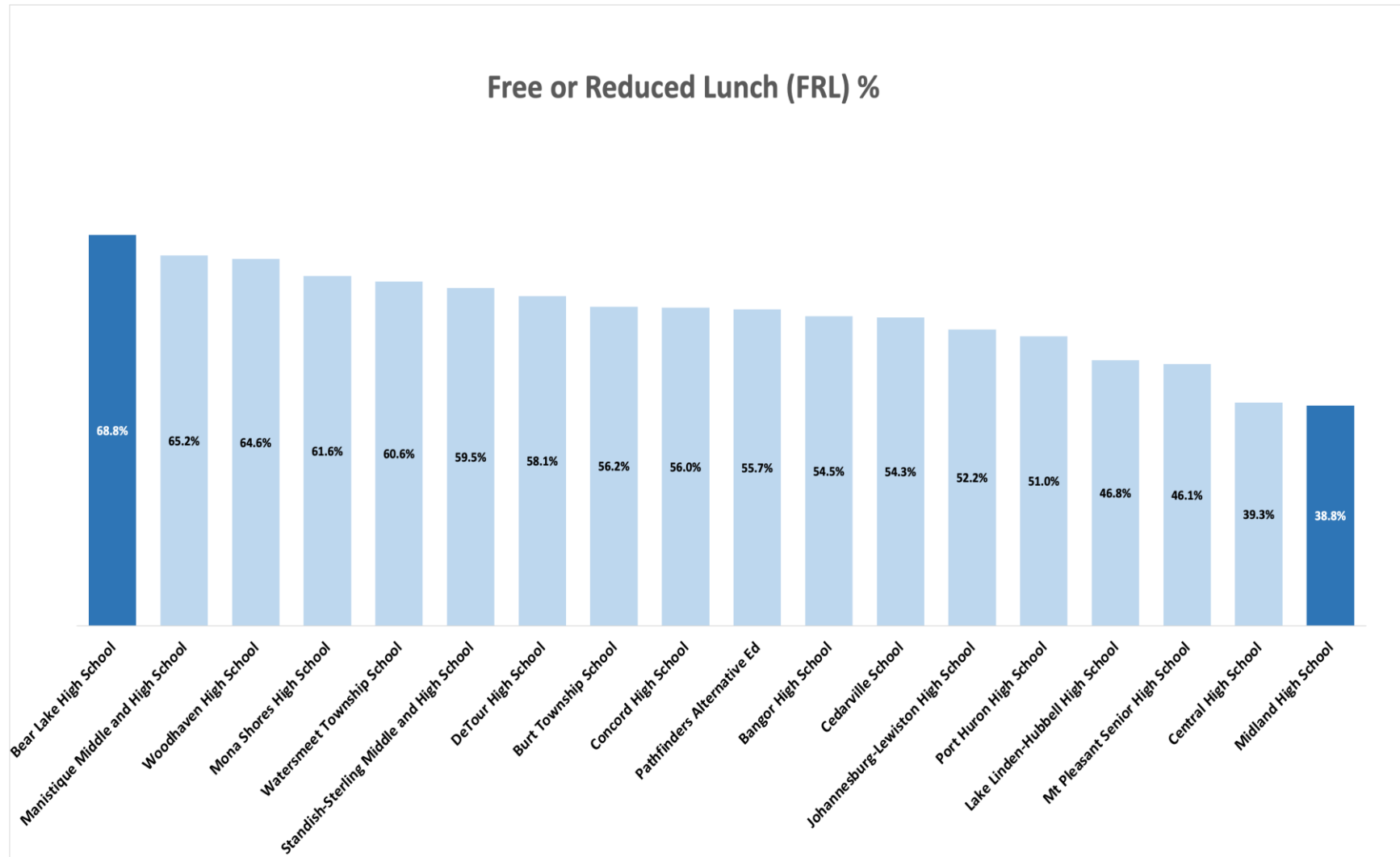


Figure 2

Figure 2 measures the percent of students eligible for free and reduced programs at each of the high schools. The two schools with the highest percent of students eligible to receive free or reduced lunch are Bear Lake High School (68.8%) and Manistique Middle and High School (65.2%). The two schools with the lowest percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch are Midland High School (38.8%) and Central High School (39.3%).

Football

School	Football Class
Midland High School	A
Mona Shores High School	A
Mt Pleasant Senior High School	A
Port Huron High School	A
Traverse City Central High School	A
Woodhaven High School	A
Standish-Sterling Middle and High School	B
Bangor High School	C
Concord High School	C
Johannesburg-Lewiston High School	C
Manistique High School	C
Bear Lake High School	D
Cedarville School	D
DeTour High School	D
Lake Linden-Hubbell High School	D
Burt Township School	N/A
Pathfinders Alternative Ed	N/A
Watersmeet Township School	N/A

Table 3

Three schools within the study do not have football programs. This is labeled as “N/A” in Table 3. One of these three schools, Pathfinders Alternative Education, does not offer any athletics to students. Six schools are in class “A”, one in class “B”, four in class “C”, and four

are in class “D”. Concord and Woodhaven are both located in Southeast Michigan and in the “A” football classification.

Overall Compliance with Title IX

School	Male population	Female population	Male participation	Female participation	Are they proportional? Y/N
Cedarville School	52.70%	47.30%	53.60%	46.40%	Yes
Bangor High School	55.40%	44.60%	54.20%	45.80%	Yes
Concord high school	56.60%	43.40%	57.30%	42.70%	Yes
Woodhaven high school	50.80%	49.20%	52%	48%	Yes

Table 4

Four schools met the requirements of prong one, substantial proportionality. These schools are Cedarville School, Bangor High School, Concord High School, and Woodhaven High School (see table 4). Meaning, they offer athletic opportunities proportional to their gender enrollment. However, results relating to these schools meeting the equal benefits and treatment requirement was inconclusive leaving the results of their compliance unknown. Extensively unpacking the laundry list associated with equal benefits and treatment is tedious, time-consuming, and difficult to ensure confidence in accuracy of findings. Every school has a large amount of these program components. Much of the information is held by the schools. One would need to contact the school directly for information or visit in-person to visually see inequalities.

With this in mind, the results of eleven more schools were found inconclusive. These schools did not meet prong 1’s standards. Their ability to satisfy prong two or three was unable to trace leaving their results inconclusive. However, three schools were found to not be in compliant with Title IX. These schools are Mt. Pleasant Senior High School, Mona Shore High School, and Midland High School. Together, three schools were found incompliant and fifteen had inconclusive results.

Analysis

When analyzing the data, a few significant trends were found among the three schools not compliant. All three schools listed sideline cheer as a sport or athletic opportunity for girls during certain seasons. On the surface, this detail may seem irrelevant to compliance due to cheer's current prevalence in athletics. However, sideline cheer is not covered under Title IX as an athletic opportunity due to its nature of "focusing on enhancing the game day experience" (USA Cheer, n.d.). It is important to note sideline cheer is inherently different from stunt cheer which is covered under Title IX. Stunt cheer focuses on competing and the "technical and athletic components of cheer" rather than the crowd-pleasing aspect of the sport (USA Cheer, n.d.). Another similarity found between the three schools not compliant, is that they are all members of the "A" football class. This class is the largest and most competitive. As stated previously, these schools have a student body over 863 students.

A few trends were also uncovered regarding the fifteen schools with inconclusive results. First, the two schools with the highest AHHI (see table 2) are the same schools with the lowest percentage of students eligible for FRL (see figure 2). These schools are Central High School and Midland High School. They highlight the close relationship AHHI, FRL, and Socioeconomic status have to one another.

Additionally, both schools from Southeast Michigan (Concord High School and Woodhaven High School) satisfy the first prong: proportionality. Concord High School's makeup is 56.6% male and 43.4% female. Woodhaven High School's makeup is 50.8% male and 49.2% female. Both school's athletic participation mirrors these gender percentages. No other region was found to have both schools meet a prong, or the same prong. Cedarville School and Bangor High School, both also satisfying prong one had gender enrollment makeup's of 52.7% male and

47.3% female for Cedarville, and 55.4% male and 44.6% female for Bangor. These were proportional to athletic participation for each gender.

There was no statistically significant relationship found between the three schools with no football program. Information regarding their community's average household incomes, and students eligible for free or reduced lunch was extremely inconsistent. Also, no definitive correlation was found between average household income, free lunch eligibility and the three schools in compliance with Title IX.

Stronger conclusive findings, proving or disproving the thesis, demand more time and research.

Limitations and implications

Unfortunately, this research has holes regarding a definite answer to school's compliance with Title IX. Determining compliance is a complicated, time-consuming and multifaceted process. With the time constraints of this study, it was difficult to uncover all the extensive information and details of each prong for all 18 high schools. Specifically, prong 3 and the equal benefits and services requirements. Uncovering these findings requires time, research, and access to the data and situations. Most information on schools offering equal benefits and treatment is difficult to locate. Without easy public access, those determining compliance need to contact the school directly or physically visit the academic campus. With that in mind, this study illustrates the need for Federal legislation requiring high schools to submit extensive information and data regarding Title IX compliance. This policy addition will build trust among schools and their athletes. It will also aid future researchers by being an accurate resource with easily accessible data. Transparency is vital to ensure safety, equity, and proportionality.

Another limitation of this study is the sample size. I was limited to two schools from each region due to time constraints. However, larger samples are more representative and have the ability to yield results of higher accuracy.

The last limitation worth mentioning is this data's relevancy to the current year, 2022. Information in this study is collected from 2017. The most recent data from the Civil Rights Database, used to evaluate each school's compliance with Title IX, was from this year. Solely for this reason, information on all variable's (AHHI, FRL, and football programs) needed to be from this year. If the information from my study was from a more current year, it has the possibility of yielding different results that would be considered more accurate. However, the only way to be certain is to re-do the study when the Civil Rights Data Collection releases their next report. On November 18th, 2021 the Office of Civil Rights released their request for a collection of data for the 2021-2022 school year. This new collection, if administered, will acquire information related to Covid-19's impact on students along with restoring completed collections with updated data (U.S Department of Education, n.d.).

These injustices must be corrected. To do so, the government must enact strict oversight on public high schools as they have done for colleges and universities. In 1994, Congress passed the Equity in Athletic Disclosure Act. The act requires postsecondary institutions, colleges and universities, to submit information relating to "athletic participation numbers, scholarships, program budgets and expenditures, and coaching salaries by gender" (NCAA, n.d.). This act is an accomplishment for sports equity; however, the high school level does not have this same legislative oversight. We need to mirror this act and requirements for the high school level.

Conclusion

The hypothesis was partially confirmed and denied. It is true, a connection between school size, football class and compliance was found. The three schools not in compliance were in the “A” football class. The pure size of football teams is a red flag for Title IX compliance. This male only sport contains roughly 40 to 50 players. No female sports have a team equally as large. However, not ever school with the “A” football classification followed this trend. In fact, it was only three out of six (50%) schools in the study. This ratio is not a strong conclusion and requires additional research to confirm. Additionally, no relationship was found between the three not compliant schools, AHHI and, FRL eligibility. Although, because of the literature cited and limitations of the study, there may be a relationship waiting to be uncovered through an extensive study conducted by experts. One study suggestion is to analyze all class “A” high school’s compliance with Title IX to either confirm or deny this study’s finding.

On the other hand, all studies involving Title IX compliance struggle to produce concrete results. Compliance with the policy is subjective and can lead to time consuming arguments. Overall, conversations surrounding equal opportunities, resources and participation in athletics are vital. They keep compliance at the forefront of athletic directors, coaches, parents, and student athletes’ minds. As a society, everyone must understand Title IX and its goal of ensuring equity in the educational setting. More research, implementation of policy, transformative of Title IX’s narrative, and better enforcement tactics at the federal level are necessary for this to occur.

During the 114th congress, the Patsy T. Mink Gender Equity in Education Act of 2016 was introduced to the Senate floor. This bill would create an Office for Gender Equity to assist educational programs implement Title IX to its fullest extent (Patsy T. Mink Gender Equity in

Education Act of 2016, n.d.). Unfortunately, this bill, and several others with similar intentions, never turned into legislation. Also currently, all high schools are required to have a Title IX coordinator. The role of this position is to enforce Title IX and prevent sex-based discrimination within school. This job is important; although, there is little oversight on the quality of individuals holding these positions. Many times, a school will name an unqualified candidate as the coordinator. Strict enforcement at the federal level is necessary for this role to be effective and create real change.

A cultural change is also needed. There is a stigma against girls standing up and speaking out. These individuals are viewed poorly by their peers. People look down upon those vocalizing the injustice and see them as an annoyance or attention-seeker for suing. This mindset must change. Instead of making these females feel unimportant, society must celebrate their bravery and stand beside them in support.

Currently, the only oversight at the high school level is the Office of Civil Rights investigations. As an important organization for Title IX research, the government must allocate more funding to the OCR. The Office of Civil Rights does not have funding to administer all research needed. Additional money given to this office's budget will help combat this issue.

As a society, parents and educational leaders would never allow inequality of resources in the classroom. Schools provide all students laptops, not just male students. We must view the inequity of opportunities and benefits to female athletes similarly. Sports have the power to teach athletes many lifelong skills. However, if females are continuing to be treated as second class citizens, they may feel this way forever within their personal and professional lives. Injustice surrounding high school athletics deserves a proactive solution to protect the well-being and opportunities of our nation's young females.

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