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Sanctified Suffering: Mens Sana in Corpore Sano, Title IX, and the Genealogy of Institutional Silence Among Female Athletes at Phillips Academy Andover

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Abstract

This paper examines how a culture of institutional silence surrounding pain and injury in female athletics emerged as an unintended consequence of formal gender inclusion without structural equity. It argues that the classical athletic ideal of mens sana in corpore sano, long embedded within hypermasculine educational institutions, was transferred onto female athletes following Title IX without a corresponding redesign of training norms, injury protocols, or evaluative standards. Using Phillips Academy Andover as a case study, the paper traces how athletic participation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries functioned as a moral technology for producing disciplined male subjects, particularly under administrators such as Alfred Stearns, who framed endurance and bodily restraint as indicators of character rather than health. After the 1973 merger with Abbot Academy, this ethos became the unmarked institutional norm applied to female athletes, shaping expectations of pain tolerance and silence. Methodologically, the study employs a multi stage archival and discourse analysis of athletic department reports, student publications, coaching manuals, merger era governance documents, and post merger media coverage from the 1960s through the late 1980s. By comparing how male and female athletes were documented, evaluated, and discussed, the analysis situates institutional silence within the legal architecture of Title IX, focusing on the Three Prong Test introduced in 1979, and concludes by asking whose bodies were normalized through integration and whose were compelled to adapt in order to belong.

Keywords: Female Athletes; Gendered Injury; Institutional Silence; Structural Equity; Title IX