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CIVIL RIGHTS—No Hitting Back: Schools Have to Play by the Title IX Rules; *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*, 544 U.S. 167 (2005).

*Elisa M. Butler*

**INTRODUCTION**

The Birmingham Board of Education hired Roderick Jackson in 1993 to teach physical education and to coach a girls basketball team.¹ Six years later, in 1999, Jackson transferred to Ensley High School.² Not long after his transfer, Jackson identified disparate treatment between the boys and girls basketball teams in terms of access to equipment and facilities.³ He also alleged that the girls team was receiving less funding than the boys.⁴ In December 2000, Jackson complained to his superior about the unequal treatment, but did not receive a response, and the disparity in treatment continued.⁵ Jackson persisted in advocating for the equal treatment of the girls basketball team, but his complaints went unheeded.⁶ Subsequently, Jackson received negative work evaluations, and was ultimately dismissed as the girls basketball coach in May 2001.⁷ At that time in his career, Jackson had taught and coached for the Birmingham School District for eight years.⁸ Although he was dismissed from coaching, Jackson continued to teach physical education for the duration of his case.⁹

After dismissal from his coaching duties, Jackson filed suit in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama claiming a violation of his civil rights based on Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.¹⁰ He claimed that the school board violated Title IX by retaliating against him for protesting the unequal treatment of the girls basketball teams.¹¹ The school board, however, argued that there was no Title IX private cause of action for third-party

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² *Id.*
³ *Id.*
⁴ *Id.*
⁵ *Id.*
⁶ *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 171.
⁷ *Id.* at 171-72.
⁸ *See id.* at 171.
⁹ *Id.* at 172.
¹¹ *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 172.
retaliation claims. The district court agreed and granted the board’s motion to dismiss.

Jackson appealed to the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, which also sided with the school board. It reasoned that Congress did not expressly create a private right of action when it enacted the statute, and the court would not imply one. The U.S. Supreme Court granted certiorari to settle the question and, in a 5-4 decision, reversed the Eleventh Circuit’s holding.

This note will generally examine private rights of action implied by the courts, and contend that the Supreme Court correctly decided Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education when it held that Title IX implies a private cause of action for third-party retaliation claims. This note will scrutinize the Court’s decision in Jackson, and after extensive analysis, illustrate that the Court’s holding in Jackson was ultimately correct. Furthermore, this note will consider some of implications that this decision has on Title IX as well as other statutes.

BACKGROUND

Title IX states, in pertinent part, that “[n]o 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.” Congress enacted Title IX pursuant to its Spending Clause power, and “patterned [it] after Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” Title IX’s purpose is to address issues involving discrimination on the basis of sex that are not covered by Title VI or VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IX is pervasive in its application “applying] to virtually all public and private educational institutions, and includ[ing] all institutional operations such as academic programs or athletics.”

12 Id.
13 Id.
14 Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ., 309 F.3d 1333 (11th Cir. 2002).
15 Id. at 1345.
18 Cannon v. Univ. of Chicago, 441 U.S. 677, 694 (1979); see also Bradford C. Mank, Are Anti-Retaliation Regulations in Title VI or Title IX Enforceable in a Private Right of Action: Does Sandoval or Sullivan Control this Question?, 35 SETON HALL L. REV. 47, 59 (2004).
19 See Mank, supra note 18, at 60.
20 Id. at 60.
Title IX was introduced to Congress for debate in 1972.21 While this was the first time this bill was introduced, the idea of equality in education dates back to the late 1960s.22 By the summer of 1970, Congress began focusing on sex bias in education with hearings before a special House subcommittee.23 Subsequently, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana introduced Title IX in 1972.24 Senator Bayh stated that the bill’s purpose was to battle “the continuation of corrosive and unjustified discrimination against women in the American educational system.”25 He stressed that inequities in education often lead to inequities in employment opportunities.26 Although the House and the Senate seemed to agree that there was a need for change, there were difficulties in passing this bill.27 Many members of Congress feared that passage of the statute would lead to reverse discrimination and quotas.28 Senator Bayh stressed, however, that “the amendment is not designed to require specific quotas. The thrust of the amendment is to do away with every quota.”29 Congress finally agreed when the House attached a floor amendment to the bill stipulating that quotas would not be required.30 The newly-clarified legislation was enacted as Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.31

The result of the debate in Congress over the specifics of Title IX was a broadly worded statute patterned after Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.32 Because this statute was worded so broadly, Congress left the task of interpreting the statute and creating regulations to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
The HEW subsequently adopted a multitude of guidelines to create a framework for the application of Title IX to education programs. Following the agency adoption of these regulations, Congress was given the opportunity to review them to determine whether they were consistent with Congress' intent in enacting Title IX. Although there were some disputes in Congress as to whether the regulations should be disapproved in whole or in part, ultimately Congress opted not to disapprove the regulations at all.

In 1980, the HEW split into two distinct departments, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. The regulations of the HEW were adopted by both departments. As additional protection, in 1980, President Jimmy Carter enacted Executive Order 12,250 which created power in the Attorney General to provide leadership for the "consistent and effective implementation" of various civil rights statutes, including Title IX. Because the Attorney General is the head of the U.S. Department of Justice, the agency was also charged with enacting rules for the application of Title IX. The Department of Justice did not use this power until 1999 when it published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to implement Title IX. The rules eventually adopted by the Department of Justice are virtually identical to both HEW and Department of Education regulations. The only changes made to the old

33 Title IX Legal Manual, supra note 21, at 23; see also Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,859.

34 See Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 45 C.F.R § 86 (2006); see also Title IX Legal Manual, supra note 21, at 23; and Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,859.


36 See Cohen, supra note 35, at 247. These regulations, approved by Congress included a regulation against retaliation. See 34 C.F.R. § 106.71 (2006) (incorporating Title VI regulation prohibiting retaliation, 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) (2006)).


38 See 34 C.F.R. §§ 106-106.71 (2006) and 45 C.F.R. §§ 86-86.71 (2006); see also Title IX Legal Manual, supra note 21, at 23. Some of the regulations adopted by the HEW include prohibitions of discrimination of the basis of sex in housing, facilities, access to course offerings, counseling, financial assistance, health insurance benefits, athletics, etc. See 45 C.F.R. §§ 86.32-86.41 (2006).


40 See id.

41 See Title IX Legal Manual, supra note 21, at 23.

42 Id. at 23-24; see also Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 65 Fed. Reg. 52,859 (Aug. 30, 2000).
regulations reflect statutory revisions and “modifications to ensure consistency with Supreme Court precedent.”

Title IX’s application is quite broad. This breadth is shown by the regulations promulgated by the agencies charged with its interpretation: they “appl[y] to all aspects of education programs or activities operated by recipients of federal financial assistance.” Title IX also applies to a broad spectrum of activities occurring within educational programs. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in housing, access to course offerings, access to schools, counseling, financial assistance, health and insurance benefits, and athletics. Title IX also prohibits educational programs from discriminating in employment practices.

Not only is Title IX broadly applied to activities within education programs, but it also broadly defines educational programs receiving federal financial assistance. Title IX applies to educational programs that receive federal financial aid through direct means, such as grants or loans applied directly to the institution. It also applies to educational programs that receive financial assistance indirectly, such as through federal grants and loans given to students who, in turn, use these to pay the institution that they attend. Although the agencies did not explicitly spell out that educational programs would be forced to comply with Title IX if they received federal financial assistance through indirect means, the Supreme Court ruled that this was the case in 1984. In *Grove City College v. Bell*, the

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43 *Title IX Legal Manual*, supra note 21, at 24; see also *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance*, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,859.

44 See, e.g., *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 25-55.

45 *Id.* at 7.

46 *Id.* at 7-8.

47 *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance*, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,871-72; see also *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 85-93.

48 *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance*, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,873-74; see also *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 73-75.

49 See, e.g., *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 25.

50 *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance*, 65 Fed. Reg. at 52,866; see also *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 26.

51 *Title IX Legal Manual, supra* note 21, at 30.

52 *Grove City Coll. v. Bell*, 465 U.S. 555, 564 (1984) (overruled on another point of law by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987). The Court looked at the legislative history of Title IX and determined that Congress intended for the statute to cover those institutions that receive assistance indirectly. *Id.* at 569-70.
Court ruled that it did not matter that the college did not receive federal financial aid directly from the government; it would still be required to comply with Title IX because it received funds indirectly.53

In *Grove City College*, the Court determined that Congress intended educational programs that receive federal financial assistance, either directly or indirectly, to be under Title IX’s thumb. The Court, however, tempered this ruling by finding that the entire educational institution could not be sanctioned for refusing to follow Title IX—only the part of the institution that was receiving federal financial assistance was required to comply.54 This ruling seemed to narrow the scope of Title IX and how it could be applied to educational programs.

Congress, however, again widened the scope of Title IX by amending the statute with the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (“CRRA”) after the Court’s *Grove City College* decision.55 Congress intended the CRRA to establish the “principle of institution-wide coverage” for Title IX.56 Therefore, if part of an educational institution receives federal financial assistance either directly or indirectly, it will be required to follow Title IX throughout the entire institution. This statute directly overruled the Court’s holding in *Grove City College*.57 Although this widened the scope of Title IX once again, it is important to note that Title IX only reaches educational programs.58 Therefore, if part of an institution is educational and part is not, sanctions for violating Title IX could not be applied to the non-educational portion of the institution.59 While Title IX only applies to educational programs, its reach is broad within this area. As shown, this is exactly what Congress intended.60 Title IX was deliberately enacted to reach into the farthest corner of education to remedy discrimination on the basis of sex.61

53 *Id.* at 563-70. The college was receiving federal financial assistance indirectly because students who attended the college were given federal grants which were used to pay tuition, fees, and room and board. *Id.* at 559.

54 *Id.* at 573.


56 *TITLE IX LEGAL MANUAL*, supra note 21, at 49.

57 If this case were decided after the CRRA was enacted the Court would be required to find that the entire college would be subject to sanctions because part of the college was receiving federal financial assistance indirectly. *See Grove City Coll. v. Bell*, 465 U.S. 555 (1984); *see also* Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, 29 U.S.C. § 794(b) (2006).

58 *TITLE IX LEGAL MANUAL*, supra note 21, at 49.

59 *Id.*

60 *See supra* notes 21-57 and accompanying text.

61 *See supra* notes 21-57 and accompanying text.
As a result of congressional intent to continually broaden Title IX, courts have consistently interpreted the statute very broadly. In fact, the Supreme Court stated that “[t]here is no doubt that ‘if we are to give [Title IX] the scope that its origins dictate, we must accord it a sweep as broad as its language.’” As part of this broad scope, the Court interpreted Title IX to imply private rights of actions. It also broadly interpreted Title IX to apply to employees as well as students. Finally, the Court allowed monetary awards when intentional discrimination occurs in violation of Title IX. The Court’s history illustrates the broad reach extended in this statute.

Because Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education rests on the question of whether a private right of action should be implied for claims of third-party retaliation under Title IX, Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc. is an important case to discuss. Sullivan signaled the first time the Court implied a private right of action for retaliation. Sullivan was a white man who leased his home to Freeman, an African-American man. Along with the rental, Sullivan assigned Freeman the right to use the community recreational facilities. The community park board of directors rejected Sullivan’s assignment because Freeman was African-American. Subsequently, Sullivan protested the board’s refusal. The board then told Sullivan that it was expelling him from the corporation. Sullivan sued the board, claiming that it illegally retaliated against him. The Supreme Court reasoned that if this retaliation were allowed to stand, it would “give impetus to the perpetuation of racial restrictions on property.” Sullivan, therefore, had a private right of action

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64 Cannon v. Univ. of Chicago, 441 U.S. 677, 709 (1979) (holding that there is a private right of action for Title IX violations).
65 North Haven, 456 U.S. at 520 (holding that Title IX applies to employees as well as students).
66 Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Sch., 503 U.S. 60, 76 (1992) (holding that monetary damages are available for intentional Title IX violations).
67 Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc., 396 U.S. 229 (1969). This case was not a Title IX case. It is similar to Jackson, however, because it was based on a statute protecting a certain class of people. See id. at 234-35. Similar to Jackson, Sullivan was a member of the non-protected class advocating for the rights of a person in the protected class, and was subsequently retaliated against. See id.
68 Id. at 235.
69 Id.
70 Id.
71 Id.
72 Sullivan, 396 U.S. at 235.
73 Id. Sullivan sued the board under 42 U.S.C. § 1982 which provides, “All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.” Id.
74 Id. at 237.
because “the white owner is at times ‘the only adversary’ of the unlawful restrictive covenant.”75 This is an important case because it provides the legal context in which Title IX was passed.76

Not only is the legal context in which the statute was passed important to understand, it is also important to explore established Supreme Court tests that deal with similar issues. Cort v. Ash provided just such a test. This case established a four-part test to determine whether courts should imply a private right of action when Congress has not explicitly provided for one.77 A corporate director had misused corporate funds.78 Ash, a shareholder, sued under a federal statute that “provide[d] only for a criminal penalty.”79 The Court was compelled to determine whether to imply a private cause of action under the statute.80 The Court pronounced four relevant factors: (1) whether “the plaintiff [is] one of the class for whose especial benefit the statute was enacted;” (2) whether “there [is] any indication of legislative intent, explicit or implicit, either to create such a remedy or to deny one;” (3) whether “it [is] consistent with the underlying purpose of the legislative scheme to imply such a remedy for the plaintiff;” and (4) whether “the cause of action [is] one traditionally relegated to state law . . . so that it would be inappropriate to infer a cause of action based solely on federal law.”81 While it articulated these factors, the Court refused to imply a private right of action in Cort because that would mean intruding “into an area traditionally committed to state law.”82 Although Ash failed in this case, courts continue to use this test to find that private rights of action exist under other statutes.83

While the Court articulated a test concerning private rights of action, it was not until Cannon v. University of Chicago that it was applied to Title IX.84 The

75 Id. (quoting Barrows v. Jackson, 346 U.S. 249, 259 (1953) (holding a restrictive covenant preventing African-Americans from buying property in a neighborhood valid as long as it was agreed to voluntarily)).
78 Id. at 70-73.
80 Cort, 422 U.S. at 74.
81 Id. at 77-78 (quoting Tex. & Pac. Ry. v. Rigsby, 241 U.S. 33, 39 (1916)).
82 Cort, 422 U.S. at 85. With this factor, the Court is inquiring as to whether a federalism problem would arise if a private right of action were implied. See id.
83 See, e.g., California v. Sierra Club, 451 U.S. 287, 293-95 (1981) (holding that a private right of action should not be implied because the plaintiff failed the first factor of the Cort test); see also Cannon v. Univ. of Chicago, 441 U.S. 677, 688-709 (1979) (holding that a private right of action exists because the plaintiff met all four factors of the Cort test); and Piper v. Chris-Craft Indus., Inc., 430 U.S. 1, 37-41 (1977) (holding that a private right of action should not be implied because the plaintiff failed the first factor of the Cort test); and Reeves v. Cont’l Equities Corp. of America, 912 F.2d 37, 40 (1990) (holding that a private right of action should not be implied because the plaintiff failed the first two factors of the Cort test).
University of Chicago Medical School denied admission to Geraldine Cannon.85 She maintained the University’s rejection was based on her sex and sued, claiming that the school’s denial violated her rights under Title IX.86 In allowing a private action, the Court relied heavily on the four-part test articulated in *Cort v. Ash*.87 Cannon satisfied the first prong because the statute protects those participating in or attempting to participate in federally-funded education programs, and the University of Chicago Medical School was a federally-funded educational program.88

For the second prong, the Court analogized Title IX to Title VI claims, in which it had already implied a private right of action for racial discrimination.89 Title IX was “patterned after Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” and, at the time, the federal courts had already developed a private right of action under Title VI.90 Therefore, Congress would assume Title IX would be “interpreted and applied as Title VI had been during the previous eight years.”91

Cannon satisfied the third prong, as well.92 Title IX has two purposes. The first is to “avoid the use of federal resources to support discriminatory practices.”93 The second is to “provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices.”94 The first purpose is satisfied by federal procedures which may terminate funds if institutions discriminate.95 But this protection does not completely fulfill the second purpose of the statute.96 Terminating federal funding is often a punishment that is too severe.97 Therefore, a more appropriate remedy for discrimination on an individual basis would be a private right of action against the institution.98 According to the Court, “it makes little sense to impose on an

85 *Id.* at 680.
86 *Id.*
88 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 693-94.
89 *Id.* at 694-95; Title VI is identical to Title IX except instead of “on the basis of sex” in Title IX, Title VI uses the language “on ground of race, color, or national origin.” Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d (2006). The second prong of the *Cort* test considers whether there is a legislative intent to create the remedy in question. *Cort v. Ash*, 422 U.S. 66, 78 (1975).
90 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 694-96; *see also* Bossier Parish Sch. v. Lemon, 370 F.2d 847, 852 (5th Cir. 1967) (implying a private right of action for Title VI claims).
91 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 696.
92 *Id.* at 704-05. The third prong of the *Cort* test considers whether the remedy in question is consistent with the purpose of the legislative scheme. *Cort v. Ash*, 422 U.S. 66, 78 (1975).
93 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 704.
94 *Id.*
95 *Id.*
96 *Id.* at 705.
97 *Id.*
98 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 705.
individual, whose only interest is in obtaining a benefit for herself, . . . the burden of demonstrating that an institution’s practices are so pervasively discriminatory that a complete cut-off of federal funding is appropriate. Requiring individuals to prove this level of discrimination would create an enormous burden on both the individual and the institution.

Cannon also satisfied the final prong. Since the Civil War, the federal government has traditionally been the shield against discrimination. Protecting citizens against discrimination is not a “subject matter [that] involves an area basically of concern to the States.” Therefore, a federalism problem did not arise from implying a private right of action in federal anti-discrimination statutes. Since all four elements weighed in favor of implying a private right of action under Title IX, the Court implied a private right of action for Cannon.

By implying a private right of action in *Cannon v. University of Chicago*, the Court gave individuals an opportunity to challenge institutions’ discriminatory practices. The Court provided this remedy without burdening victims with the responsibility of proving such pervasive discrimination that it warranted terminating federal funds. This decision also allowed individuals an opportunity to protect themselves from discrimination rather than relying on the federal government to threaten refusal of funding to educational institutions to gain protection.

The Court went further in broadening the scope of Title IX with its decision in *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*. This was the first case authorizing monetary damages for private Title IX actions. The Court, however, limited monetary recovery to individuals experiencing intentional Title IX violations.

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99 Id.
100 See id.
101 Id. at 708-09. The fourth prong of the *Cort* test considers whether the cause of action is “traditionally relegated to state law.” *Cort v. Ash*, 422 U.S. 66, 78 (1975).
102 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 708.
103 Id. at 708.
104 Id.
105 Id. at 709
106 Id. at 705.
107 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 705.
108 Id.
109 *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Pub. Sch.*, 503 U.S. 60 (1992). Franklin involved a student’s allegation that she had been sexually harassed by a teacher. Id. at 63. The student reported the harassment, but no action was taken against the teacher. Id. at 63-64.
110 Id. at 76.
111 Id. at 74-75.
First, the Franklin Court reiterated the Cannon private right of action for Title IX violations.\textsuperscript{112} If a private action is available, the Court reasoned, a remedy to cure the injustice must also be available.\textsuperscript{113} Without a remedy there would be no reason to bring suit.\textsuperscript{114} Although this reasoning alone was sufficient, the Court buttressed its position with numerous cases finding a remedy available when a right of action exists “under the Constitution or laws of the United States.”\textsuperscript{115}

While the Supreme Court allowed monetary damages, it qualified its holding by allowing recovery only in cases of intentional discrimination.\textsuperscript{116} The Court reasoned that when Congress enacts a statute under its spending power, as with Title IX, the statute is “much in the nature of a contract.”\textsuperscript{117} This means that federal funds are distributed to institutions in consideration for their agreement to the statutory conditions.\textsuperscript{118} In the case of Title IX, the federal government agreed to distribute federal funds to educational institutions on the condition that these institutions not discriminate on the basis of sex.\textsuperscript{119} Because this arrangement is “much in the nature of a contract,” Congress must clearly define the conditions with which an institution must comply.\textsuperscript{120} An institution must be aware of the funding conditions, so the Court cannot allow individuals to recover monetary damages for unintentional discrimination.\textsuperscript{121} If discrimination is unintentional, the receiving institution is not aware of the discrimination or of the fact that its funding may be in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{122} There is no notice problem, however, when the
discrimination is intentional because the discriminating entity is aware, and even intends to discriminate. Because entities receiving federal funds know that they are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex, and because intentional discrimination occurs when the entity knows that it is discriminating, the entity cannot then say that it was not on notice that it could lose federal funding.

While both Cannon and Franklin broadened Title IX protection and its remedies, the Court narrowed these protections in the case of Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District. Gebser, like Franklin, was based on a high school student’s allegations that a teacher had sexually harassed her. Unlike Franklin, this student failed to report the harassment, though other students complained that the teacher had acted similarly toward them. As a result, the principal apologized to the complaining students and parents for the teacher’s behavior. The principal did not, however, report the incident to the superintendent of the school district.

The Court held that the plaintiff was not entitled to monetary damages under Title IX because the school district did not have actual notice of the plaintiff’s harassment, and the district should not be held liable for something it was not aware of. Again, the Court relied on the premise that congressional legislation passed under the Spending Clause is a contract between the federal government and funding recipients. Because this is a contract, Congress must be unambiguous about the conditions placed upon these recipients. The school district, ignorant of the harassment, did not have adequate notice that it would be liable for a Title IX action brought by this student. The Court asserted that because Title IX focused on protection rather than compensation, institutions are not liable when they are not given the opportunity to remedy the situation. In Gebser, the school did not have an adequate opportunity to remedy the harassment

124 Franklin, 503 U.S. at 74-75.
126 Id. at 277-78.
127 Id.
128 Id.
129 Id. at 278.
130 Gebser, 524 U.S. at 285; see also 14 C.J.S. Civil Rights § 168 (2006).
131 Gebser, 524 U.S. at 286.
133 Gebser, 524 U.S. at 287.
134 Id. The Court stated that “Title IX focuses more on ‘protecting’ individuals from discriminatory practices carried out by recipients of federal funds.” Id.
because it did not have notice of the incidents so it could not be held financially responsible.135

Although some of the previous cases explain how the Court has interpreted Title IX, it is also important to understand how the Court has interpreted Title VI because these statutes mirror one another.136 Alexander v. Sandoval involved an extensive analysis of Title VI regulations promulgated by the Department of Justice that prohibited disparate-impact discrimination.137 This case began in Alabama, which had recently declared its official language as English.138 Because of this, the Department of Public Safety administered driver’s license tests only in English.139 Sandoval, as a representative of the class opposing the regulation, argued that this provision violated Title VI because it had the effect of discriminating against a class of people based on their national origin.140 The district court agreed with Sandoval and enjoined the state from administering the tests in English only.141 The Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit upheld the injunction.142

The Supreme Court reversed the Eleventh Circuit, reasoning that the Department of Justice regulations forbade conduct that Title VI itself permitted.143 Since Title VI permitted the conduct, the regulations were irrelevant to determining whether a Title VI private cause of action should be implied in this case.144 The Court further stated that Congress is responsible for creating private rights of action.145 Therefore, if Congress does not establish a private right of action when writing a statute, “courts may not create one.”146

135 Id.
138 Sandoval, 532 U.S. at 278-79.
139 Id.
140 Id. at 279. Sandoval represented a class of people who could not take the driver’s license test because they did not speak the English language. Id.
141 Id.
142 Id.
143 Sandoval, 532 U.S. at 285. The Court stated that if a statute allows certain conduct, the administrative agency charged with making rules under that statute cannot forbid the same conduct. Id. In this case, the regulation forbade disparate treatment that resulted in discrimination on the basis of race. Title VI, however, allowed such conduct. Id.
144 Id. at 285.
145 Id. at 286.
146 Id. at 286-87.
The Court further analyzed whether section 602 of Title VI implies a private right of action to enforce regulations promulgated under the agency’s authority. The Court maintained that individuals could not sue to enforce regulations promulgated under section 602 because the statute’s language did not display a “congressional intent to create new rights.” In contrast with allowing individuals to sue, the agency already had an express provision provided in section 602 to terminate funding in discrimination cases. Because Congress had already provided the agency with a method to enforce the statute, this suggested that Congress intended to exclude others. In Justice Scalia’s most famous line from this case he stated, “it is almost certainly incorrect to say that language in a regulation can conjure up a private cause of action that has not been authorized by Congress. Agencies may play the sorcerer’s apprentice but not the sorcerer himself.”

The preceding cases referred to the protections provided under Title IX and similar statutes. Looking solely at these statutes, however, does not provide a complete background. Agency regulations are vital to understanding Title IX and how it applies to third-party retaliation claims. Under Title IX, the responsibility of “effectuat[ing]” the statute falls on the federal agencies providing the financial funds. The agencies charged with providing financial funds carried out this task, adopting a multitude of regulations to effectuate Title IX. These regulations include a prohibition on retaliation. Specifically, the regulation states that “[n]o recipient or other person shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by [Title IX], or because he has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this part.”

Important to the analysis of any agency regulation is the case of *Chevron U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.* This case established the principle that courts must defer to agency rules when interpreting an ambigu-

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147 Id. at 288; see also Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-1 (2006).
148 Sandoval, 532 U.S. at 289.
149 Id. at 289-90.
150 Id. at 290-91.
151 Id. at 291.
154 See id. at § 106.71 (incorporating Title VI regulation against retaliation 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e)).
155 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) (2006).
ous statute. It established a two-part analysis to determine whether a court should defer to an agency regulation. The first question that a court must ask is whether Congress has clearly spoken on the issue. If it has, that is “the end of the matter.” If Congress has not addressed the issue, or the statute is ambiguous, the court does not “impose its own construction on the statute.” Rather, the court must determine whether the agency’s solution is “based on a permissible construction of the statute.” The Court held that statutes enacted by Congress create agency power, and agencies have the responsibility of filling any gaps—through rules and regulations—that Congress has left. If a gap is explicitly left in a statute for an agency to fill, the agency regulations are “given controlling weight unless they are arbitrary, capricious, or manifestly contrary to the statute.” In Chevron, the Court deferred to the EPA’s interpretation of the Clean Air Act because the statute was ambiguous and the agency’s interpretation and subsequent rules were a “permissible construction of the statute.”

Title IX is an expansive statute that the Court has, with limited exceptions, continually interpreted broadly. Although these cases assist in determining the outcome in Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education, agency regulations also play a role in determining whether Title IX implies a private right of action for third-party retaliation claims. Understanding Title IX’s background is critical in understanding the reasoning of both the majority and the dissent in Jackson.

**Principal Case**

The Supreme Court decided Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education in a 5-4 decision. It held that Title IX implies a private cause of action for third-party retaliation, and allowed Jackson’s claim against the school board to proceed. Justice O’Connor wrote the majority opinion, and Justice Thomas wrote the dissent joined by Chief Justice Rehnquist and justices Scalia and Kennedy.

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157 Id. at 842-43.

158 Id. at 842.

159 Id. at 842-43.

160 Id.

161 Chevron, 467 U.S. at 843.

162 Id.

163 Id. at 843-44.

164 Id. at 866.

165 See supra notes 84-135 and accompanying text; see also supra notes 62-66 and accompanying text.


167 Id.
The *Jackson* Court articulated three major reasons for its decision. The first was that Title IX’s text explicitly prohibits retaliation against those who complain of sex discrimination.\(^{168}\) It held that retaliation against a person based on complaints of sex discrimination is a form of “intentional sex discrimination.”\(^{169}\) Explaining this theory, the majority expressed that “[r]etaliation is, by definition, an intentional act. It is a form of ‘discrimination’ because the complainant is being subjected to differential treatment.”\(^{170}\) Therefore, retaliation is a form of sex discrimination because “it is an intentional response to the nature of the complaint: an allegation of sex discrimination.”\(^{171}\)

The majority next asserted that *Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc.* provided the legal context for Title IX.\(^{172}\) The Court decided *Sullivan* shortly before Congress enacted Title IX.\(^{173}\) Congress was, therefore, aware of the Court’s decision to interpret “a general prohibition on racial discrimination to cover retaliation against those who advocate the rights of groups protected by that prohibition.”\(^{174}\) Just as the Court explained in *Cannon v. University of Chicago*, the legislature expected the courts to interpret statutes prohibiting racial discrimination in the same way that *Sullivan* was decided.\(^{175}\) This meant interpreting these statutes to prohibit retaliation based on third-party complaints of discrimination.\(^{176}\)

The Court based its final contention on policy: Title IX would become unenforceable if it allowed retaliation against those who complain about violations.\(^{177}\) If retaliation were not prohibited, those who witness discrimination would be less likely to report it.\(^{178}\) “Reporting incidents of discrimination is integral to Title IX enforcement . . . .”\(^{179}\) If people in a position to report such abuse are discouraged from doing so, the entire “enforcement scheme” of Title IX would be undermined.\(^{180}\) The Court pointed out that without embracing prohibitions on retaliation, Congress’ intent would be subverted.\(^{181}\) Congress could not have

\(^{168}\) *Id.* at 173-78.

\(^{169}\) *Id.* at 173.

\(^{170}\) *Id.*

\(^{171}\) *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 174.


\(^{173}\) *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 176.

\(^{174}\) *Id.*

\(^{175}\) *Id.*; see also *Cannon v. Univ. of Chicago*, 441 U.S. 677 (1979).

\(^{176}\) *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 176-77.

\(^{177}\) *Id.* at 180-81.

\(^{178}\) *Id.*

\(^{179}\) *Id.*

\(^{180}\) *Id.* at 181.

\(^{181}\) *Jackson*, 544 U.S. at 181.
intended to allow retaliation against those trying to protect the integrity of Title IX.\footnote{Id.}

Contrary to the majority, the dissent was adamant that a private right of action should not be implied when Congress has not explicitly provided for one. The dissent’s first contention was that Title IX’s text does not prohibit claims based solely on retaliation.\footnote{Jackson, 544 U.S. at 185 (Thomas, J., dissenting).} Title IX claims are permitted only when sex discrimination occurs.\footnote{Id. (Thomas, J., dissenting).} Justice Thomas reasoned that Title IX prohibits discrimination “on the basis of the plaintiff’s sex, not the sex of some other person.”\footnote{Id. (Thomas, J., dissenting).} Because Jackson was not discriminated against because of his own sex, the dissent reasoned, he should not be permitted to bring a retaliation action.\footnote{Id. at 187 (Thomas, J., dissenting).}

Justice Thomas’s second contention was that institutions receiving federal funds were not on notice that they may be liable for acts of retaliation against complaining employees.\footnote{Id. at 190-92 (Thomas, J., dissenting).} The Board agreed to comply with statutory conditions in exchange for federal funding, but the contract was ambiguous about whether the Board would be subject to liability based on retaliation.\footnote{Jackson, 544 U.S. at 191 (Thomas, J., dissenting).} Therefore, the district should not be held liable without notice.\footnote{Id. at 191 (Thomas, J., dissenting).}

Finally, the dissent contended that Title IX does not clearly show Congress’ intent to create a private right of action for third-party retaliation claims.\footnote{Id. at 193 (Thomas, J., dissenting).} By imposing liability on entities for retaliation, the statute would be expanded beyond its scope.\footnote{Id. at 194-95 (Thomas, J., dissenting).} It was persuasive, stated Justice Thomas, that Title IX does not explicitly provide for retaliation claims when similar statutes do.\footnote{Id. at 194 (Thomas, J., dissenting).}

**Analysis**

Ultimately, the Court accurately concluded that Title IX includes private rights of action for third-party retaliation claims. But the majority could have employed additional persuasive arguments. One of the majority’s most convincing lines of reasoning was its comparison of *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*...
to Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc.193 The majority’s policy reasoning was also persuasive.194 There were three key arguments that the majority could have used, however, that would have created a more compelling opinion. The first of these was included in the dissent. The dissent compared Title IX to Title VII and ultimately used this as a reason why retaliation should not be included in the Title IX prohibitions.195 This was an erroneous contention. Second, the majority also refrained from using agency regulations to strengthen its opinion.196 Third, the Court neglected to use the four-part Cort test to determine whether a private right of action should be implied.197 The Court declined to utilize these three important arguments. Had the majority done so, it would have created a more comprehensive opinion.

The Plain Text of Title IX Does Not Include Prohibitions on Retaliation

The majority began its opinion by asserting that the text of Title IX included prohibitions on retaliation.198 On this point, however, the dissent had the stronger argument.199 Justice Thomas pointed out that prohibitions on retaliation are not explicitly stated in the text of Title IX.200 Title IX prohibits discrimination only on the “basis of sex.”201 The majority attempted to cajole this small phrase to encompass those who complain about discrimination that occurred on the basis of another person’s sex.202 The majority also pointed to Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools, which held that Title IX covered forms of “intentional discrimination.”203 Although Jackson was subjected to “intentional discrimination,” the Court stretched the language of the Title IX too far when it claimed that

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193 See infra notes 220-229 and accompanying text for an analysis of Sullivan and how it compares to Jackson.
194 See infra notes 209-219 and accompanying text for a discussion of policy reasons behind this decision.
195 See infra notes 230-243 and accompanying text for a comparison of Title IX and Title VII.
196 See infra notes 244-261 and accompanying text for a discussion of the anti-retaliation regulations adopted by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice.
197 See infra notes 262-273 and accompanying text for a discussion of the four-part Cort test and how it applies in this case.
198 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 173-78.
200 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 185.
202 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 173-74.
203 Id. at 173-74; see also Franklin v. Gwinnett County Pub. Sch., 503 U.S. 60, 74-75 (1992). An intentional act is defined as “[a]n act [that] is foreseen and desired by the doer, and this foresight and desire resulted in the act through the operation of will.” BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 26 (8th ed. 2004). Retaliatory acts are “foreseen and desired by the doer.” Id. When an entity such as the school district acts in retaliation of another, it is “foreseen and desired” because this entity is attempting to “repay an injury” that has been paid upon it possibly through complaints of sex discrimination. Id.
Jackson was discriminated against “on the basis of sex.” The majority based this assertion on the fact that retaliation “is an intentional response to the nature of the complaint: an allegation of sex discrimination.” Jackson, however, did not experience discrimination on the basis of his sex. Rather, the Board retaliated against him because he complained of discrimination that occurred because of his basketball players’ sex. It was not imperative, and may have been damaging, for the majority to include this reasoning.

The Policy Considerations of Title IX Call for Protection Against Retaliation

The majority also reasoned that if retaliation were not covered under Title IX, the statute would become ineffective. As pointed out, “if retaliation were not prohibited, Title IX’s enforcement scheme would unravel.” The dissent reasoned that students and parents are also able to report incidents of Title IX violations without the risk of retaliation. But this is not entirely true. Often students subjected to discrimination are reluctant to report abuse because of a fear that retaliation will occur. Contrary to the dissent’s argument, students who experience violations of Title IX are not in a position of power when it comes to reporting these violations. In fact, research has shown that “low-power persons are particularly susceptible to retaliation.” In the hierarchy of a school, students are at the bottom when it comes to power. This means that students are the

204 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 173-74; see also Russo & Thro, supra note 199, at 792; and Reply Brief of Petitioner at 6-7, Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ., 544 U.S. 167 (2005) (No. 02-1672).
205 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 173-74; see also Reply Brief of Petitioner, supra note 204, at 6-7.
206 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 171.
207 Id.
208 See, e.g., Russo & Thro, supra note 199, at 792.
209 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 180-81; see also Cassandra M. Hausrath, Note, Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education: Expanding the Class of the Protected, or Protecting the Protectors?, 40 U. Rich. L. Rev. 613, 627 (2006) (“[P]rotection against retaliation is potentially critical to protection from discrimination in the first place.”).
210 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 180.
211 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 195 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
212 See, e.g., Brake, supra note 123, at 26 (“Research in social psychology has documented a marked reluctance among the targets of discrimination to label and confront their experiences as such.”) This is especially true when students are sexually harassed. See, e.g., Gebser v. Lago Vista Indep. Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274, 278 (1998) (concluding student did not report sexual harassment by a teacher because “she was uncertain how to react”).
213 See, e.g., Gebser, 524 U.S. at 278 (even students who reported sexual harassment were not taken seriously, and steps were never taken to remedy the abuses committed by the teacher); see also Brief of the National Education Association et al. as Amicus Curiae in Support of Petitioner at 4, Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ., No. 02-1672 (Aug. 19, 2004).
214 See Brake, supra note 123, at 39-40.
215 See, e.g., Brief of the National Education Association et al., supra note 213, at 4.
most likely to be retaliated against when reporting discrimination. Simply reviewing the evidence shows that the dissent’s contention that students are powerful enough to report discrimination and avoid retaliation is entirely incorrect. Because students are considered inferior in the school setting, teachers are in the best position to report abuse because they have more power. Therefore, they must be protected from retaliation for taking steps to remedy the violations.

The Legal Context of Title IX Calls for Protection Against Retaliation

Also important to the majority’s opinion was the case of Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc. which provided the legal context of Title IX. Because this case provided the legal context of Title IX, it also created a strong precedent for Jackson. When stripped to their most elemental, Jackson and Sullivan are virtually identical. Because these cases’ facts are so similar the outcome should be equally similar. In Sullivan, a white man was retaliated against for protesting statutory violations made against a black man. Similarly, in Jackson, a male basketball coach was retaliated against for protesting illegal discrimination against a girls basketball team. In both cases, the people who were retaliated against complained of violations of anti-discrimination statutes designed to protect a certain class of people. Although these cases are very similar, there are also differences that must be addressed. Most noteworthy is the fact that these are two different statutes that call for prohibitions on two different forms of discrimination.

216 See id.
217 See id. at 4.
218 See McCuskey, supra note 152, at 160; see also Brief of Women’s Sports Foundation as Amici Curiae in Support of Petitioner at 17-18, Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ., No. 02-1672 (Aug. 19, 2004).
219 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 181.
224 Sullivan, 396 U.S. at 235.
225 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 171-72.
226 Id. at 173; Sullivan, 396 U.S. at 235.
IX calls for a prohibition on sex discrimination committed by federally funded institutions. The statute used in Sullivan calls for a prohibition on discrimination based on land ownership. Although these statutes are different, they are both attempting to prohibit the same conduct: discrimination.

The Dissent’s Comparison of Title IX and Title VII Was Misplaced

Although some of the majority’s reasoning was convincing, there were some key points that could have been utilized to create a more complete opinion. The first of these points is based on one of the dissent’s arguments which compared Title VII to Title IX and used this as a reason for denying private rights of action for retaliation claims under Title IX. Justice Thomas was misleading when he reasoned that if Congress wanted a Title IX private right of action for retaliation, it should have explicitly included such a right in the legislation. He compared Title VII to Title IX to support his contention. When Congress enacted Title VII, it explicitly provided for a private right of action for retaliation in the statute, but did not in Title IX. The dissent reasoned that this illustrated Congress’ intent, stating that “[i]f a prohibition on ‘discrimination’ plainly encompasses retaliation, the explicit reference to it in . . . Title VII, would be superfluous—a result we eschew in statutory interpretation. The better explanation is that when Congress intends to include a prohibition against retaliation in a statute, it does so.”

The Court should be wary, however, when comparing Title VII to Title IX. These statutes were enacted according to two different Congressional powers. Title VII should be narrowly construed while Title IX should have a broader reach. Congress enacted Title VII using “its general constitutional authority under the Commerce Clause.” Conversely, Congress enacted Title IX under the

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230 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 189-90 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
231 Id. at 189 (Thomas, J., dissenting).
234 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 190 (Thomas, J., dissenting); see also Thomas & Salaam, supra note 232, at 434.
235 Mank, supra note 18, at 85.
236 Id. at 88.
237 Id. at 87; see also U.S. CONST. art. 1, § 8, cl. 3 (stating that Congress has the power “[t]o regulate Commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States, and with Indian Tribes”).
Spending Clause. Because Title VII was enacted under the Commerce Clause, it applies to all employers affecting interstate commerce. Title VII is not voluntary. Instead, if an employer is “above a certain size” and “in the private labor market,” Title VII applies. Title IX, in contrast, only applies to entities that opt to use federal educational funding. Because Title VII applies to a wider range of entities, there is a good policy reason for construing it more narrowly than Title IX.

Agency Regulations Prohibit Discrimination under Title IX

The Court also neglected to address agency regulations that prohibit retaliatory conduct under Title IX. This reasoning could have lent additional support to the majority opinion. Although the Court previously determined in Alexander v. Sandoval that an agency’s power in creating a private right of action was limited, this does not mean that agencies do not have substantial room to define those rights created by congressional statute or interpreted by the courts. Indeed, while Sandoval “may prevent agencies from creating private rights of action by themselves, they can achieve much the same effect by expansively interpreting the statutory rights of action created by Congress.” In Cannon v. University of Chicago, the Court determined that private rights of action were available under Title IX for acts of intentional discrimination. The majority failed to consider in Jackson that the anti-retaliation regulation could be applied under the “intentional discrimination” ban. Although the HEW promulgated its rule against retaliation

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238 See Mank, supra note 18, at 87; see also U.S. Const., art. 1, § 8, cl. 1 (stating that Congress has the power to “collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts, and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States”).

239 See Mank, supra note 18, at 87. “The term ‘employer’ means a person engaged in an industry affecting commerce who has fifteen or more employees for each working day in each of twenty or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year, and any agent of such a person . . . .” Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(b) (2006).

240 Id. at 88-89.

241 Id. at 89.

242 Id. at 88. Because Title VII applies to a wider range of entities, it is important to narrowly construe the statute to ensure that all entities are aware of the standards to which they will be held. Id.

243 Jackson, 544 U.S. at 171-84.


245 See Gorod, supra note 245, at 940.


247 See Gorod, supra note 245, at 943.
before Cannon, when the HEW was dismantled the agencies that inherited the responsibility for effectuating Title IX did not adopt the anti-retaliation regulation until after Cannon. This means that the agencies could have implicitly adopted the anti-retaliation regulation by applying Title IX’s prohibition on intentional discrimination. If this is the case, then the anti-retaliation regulation did not create a new private right of action, as prohibited by Sandoval, rather, the agency was simply interpreting retaliation to be a form of intentional discrimination. The Court in Sandoval stated that “[w]e do not doubt that regulations applying [Title IX’s] ban on intentional discrimination are covered by the cause of action to enforce [Title IX]. Such regulations, if valid and reasonable, authoritatively construe the statute itself.”

Given that the agency could have been applying Title IX’s ban on intentional discrimination, the only question left is whether the regulation is valid and reasonable. To determine whether an agency’s regulation is “valid and reasonable,” the Court must use the Chevron analysis. According to the Chevron doctrine courts should defer to an executive agency’s regulations when Congress’s intent is unclear or ambiguous. In using Chevron’s two-part test, the Court must first determine whether Congress’s intent is clear. As here, when Congress’s intent is ambiguous concerning whether retaliation is to be protected under Title IX, Chevron requires the Court to determine “whether the agency’s answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.” The agencies’ regulation states that “[n]o recipient or other person shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual . . . because he has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing.”

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249 See Perez, supra note 37, at 1149. In 1979, the HEW was dismantled. Id. at 1150. This led to the creation of the Department of Education, which was given the enforcement authority of Title IX. Id.

250 See Gorod, supra note 245, at 943.

251 Id. The Court in Sandoval prohibited agencies from creating private rights of action under § 602 of Title VI. Id. This is the section that empowers the appointed agency to create regulations interpreting Title VI. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-1 (2006). The Sandoval decision, however, did not apply to § 601 of Title VI. See Gorod, supra note 245, at 943. This section prohibits intentional discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d (2006).

252 Sandoval, 532 U.S. at 284.

253 See id.


255 Id.; see supra notes 156-164 and accompanying text.

256 Chevron, 467 U.S. at 842-43.

257 Id.

258 34 C.F.R. § 100.7(e) (2006). This regulation has been adopted by all three agencies (Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice) given the power to effectuate Title IX by incorporating Title VI’s regulation against retaliation. See 34 C.F.R. § 106.71 (2006).
The interpretation was reasonable when it prohibited retaliation.259 “[I]t is neither inconsistent with the text of [Title IX] nor an unreasonable construction of that section for an agency to construe it to cover those who are purposefully injured for opposing the intentional discrimination Congress made unlawful via [Title IX].”260 Given that the agencies’ regulation is permissible under the statute, the Court should give this regulation the deference that is called for under *Chevron*.261 Because the Court neglected to address agency regulations prohibiting retaliatory conduct, an opportunity to expand its opinion was lost.

The Cort Test Calls for a Private Right of Action

Another line of reasoning that the Court clearly neglected to consider is the test pronounced in *Cort v. Ash*.262 The Supreme Court in *Cort v. Ash* established a four-part test to determine when courts should imply a private right of action when it is not explicitly called for by Congress.263 The Court first utilized this test to determine that a private right of action should be applied to people subjected to discrimination in violation of Title IX.264 Although *Jackson* comes nearly 30 years after the Court determined that a private right of action exists under Title IX, this case created an opportunity for the Court to revisit this test. Although the *Cort* test is a four-part test, the only factor that would be in dispute in this case is the first. Therefore, this is the only factor addressed here.265

The first factor in the *Cort* test is whether the plaintiff is “one of the class for whose especial benefit the statute was enacted.”266 The Court’s analysis in *Cannon v. University of Chicago* is telling on this point, however. In a footnote of that case, the Court asserted, “the right- or duty-creating language of the statute has generally been the most accurate indicator of the propriety of implication of a cause of action.”267 The Court then cited the case of *Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park* to

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261 *Chevron*, 467 U.S. 837.

262 See supra notes 77-83 and accompanying text; see also *Cort v. Ash*, 422 U.S. 66 (1975).

263 *Cort*, 422 U.S. at 78.

264 See *Cannon v. Univ. of Chicago*, 441 U.S. 677 (1979) (holding that a private right of action should be implied for victims of discrimination that violates Title IX).

265 Congress’s review and approval of administrative regulations against retaliation shows its intent to create a remedy for victims, satisfying the second factor. See supra notes 34-36 and accompanying text. For the third factor, protecting those trying to remedy discrimination fulfills Title IX’s purpose. *TITLE IX LEGAL MANUAL*, supra note 21, at 16; see also *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 704. The Court previously recognized that the federal government has historically been the primary protector “against invidious discrimination of any sort, including that on the basis of sex,” satisfying the fourth factor. *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 708.

266 *Cort*, 422 U.S. at 67.

267 *Cannon*, 441 U.S. at 691 n.13.
support this statement. The facts of Jackson, as discussed above, are very similar to the case of Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park. That the Court used Sullivan to illustrate its point supports the contention that Jackson was a member of the class whose especial benefit the statute was designed to protect.

Even if the reasoning based on Cannon is not dispositive to prove the first factor of the Cort test, the Court’s own reasoning in this case is. As noted earlier, the Court asserted that the retaliation that Jackson experienced was discrimination “on the basis of sex.” However disingenuous this reasoning seemed, the Supreme Court is still the highest court in this country. Therefore, relying on its language is not in fact disingenuous. Because the Court interpreted the retaliation experienced by Jackson as discrimination “on the basis of sex,” the first factor of the Cort test is fulfilled.

In 1975, the Supreme Court announced that this was the test to be used when determining whether a private right of action exists when Congress does not explicitly provide for one. The majority in Jackson, however, declined to utilize this test to strengthen its opinion. The reason for this is not clear. Although the first factor would ordinarily be difficult to prove, the majority’s opinion that Jackson was discriminated “on the basis of sex” fits perfectly into the argument that Jackson fulfilled the first factor of the Cort test. The majority had the opportunity to revisit and reaffirm this test, but ultimately it decided against using a very convincing argument.

Jackson’s Ramifications

The Court’s decision in this case will significantly affect all educational programs. An educational institution receiving federal assistance directly through grants, loans, and even federal property will be subject to private actions if it retaliates against a person reporting Title IX violations. Not only will institutions receiving federal assistance directly be subject to this decision, but also educational institutions receiving federal funds indirectly through their students. This decision reaches almost every educational institution in the country.

268 Id.
269 See supra notes 220-29 and accompanying text.
270 See supra notes 220-29 and accompanying text.
271 See supra notes 198-208 and accompanying text.
272 Cort, 422 U.S. at 78.
273 See supra notes 198-208 and accompanying text.
274 See supra notes 44-48 and accompanying text.
275 See supra notes 49-53 and accompanying text.
Not only are the majority of institutions subject to this decision, so is every facet of the educational institution. This includes retaliation that occurs for reporting violations of Title IX in housing, access to course offerings, access to schools, counseling, financial assistance, health and insurance benefits and athletics. Even the most mundane act of retaliation could subject the entire educational institution to a lawsuit.

The decision in this case affects the application of Title IX in the future, but it will also affect other statutes. As noted earlier, Title IX was patterned after Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Historically, courts have interpreted these statutes interchangeably. Thus, the interpretation of Title IX in the Jackson decision is bound to find its way into a Title VI case.

Although Title VI will obviously be affected by this decision, courts have cited Jackson favorably when interpreting other statutes as well. The Jackson decision is now used as a justification for implying private rights of action in third-party retaliation claims for a number of cases. The astonishing thing about many of these cases is the fact that some of the statutes involved are not even federal. States are now using the Jackson decision to bolster their opinions when private rights of action are implied under their own laws. Although there are decisions both citing and approving of the decision in Jackson, this is still a relatively new case. There is no way to predict what kind of impact Jackson will continue to have in courts throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the U.S. Supreme Court came to the correct conclusion when it decided in Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education that Title IX provides a private right of action for claims of third-party retaliation. The Court asserted three reasons for its decision. First, it concluded that the plain text of Title IX include claims of retaliation because the term “on the basis of sex” covers those who complain about discrimination on the basis of another person’s sex. This line

276 See supra notes 44-48 and accompanying text.
277 See supra note 47 and accompanying text.
278 See supra note 18 and accompanying text.
281 Id.
282 See Taylor, 144 Cal. App. 4th at 1240; see also Yanowitz, Cal. 4th at 1043.
of reasoning, however, was not convincing. Second, the majority determined that
the policy behind Title IX requires private rights of action for third-party retal-
iation claims. This was an especially persuasive argument. Title IX’s protec-
tions could not be realized unless the protectors were shielded from retaliation. Finally,
the Court reasoned that the legal context in which Title IX was passed provides
proof that Congress intended Title IX to cover private third-party retaliation
claims.

While the Court’s reasoning was convincing in some respects, there were
three major—but never articulated—arguments that could have significantly
bolstered the opinion. First, the Court should have rebutted the dissent’s conten-
tion that, because Title VII specifically calls for protection against retaliation and
Title IX does not, this means that retaliation is not covered under Title IX. This
argument was erroneous and the majority could have pounced on it. Second, the
majority neglected to make any arguments based on Title IX regulations. There is
a specific regulation that prohibits retaliation that, if used, would have made for
a more complete opinion. Finally, the Court overlooked the four-part Cort test
that it had previously used to determine when to imply rights of action. Given the
major ramifications of this decision, a more thorough and convincing analysis was
appropriate.

It is still unclear how Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education will impact
future litigation. Some see this decision as a form of judicial legislation.283 Others
see this decision as right and natural given Title IX’s long history.284 Whether one
views this decision as right or wrong, it is now clear that institutions receiving
federal funding are on notice that they are at risk of losing federal funding if they
retaliate against someone who has reported Title IX violations. No longer can
federally-funded institutions claim that Congress did not give proper notice that
they may be held liable. It would be prudent for practitioners—especially those
representing federally funded institutions—to make clear that the courts will not
tolerate retaliation.

283 See Thomas & Salaam, supra note 232, at 434; see also Russo & Thro, supra note 199, at
790.

284 See John A. Gray, Is Whistleblowing Protection Available Under Title IX?: An Hermeneutical
Divide and the Role of the Courts, 12 WM. & MARY J. WOMEN & L. 671, 695-97 (2006); see also
Hausrath, supra note 209, at 628-30; and McCuskey, supra note 152, at 163-64; Perez, supra note
37, at 1173; Mank, supra note 18, at 106-07.