



Title
Name

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 50 years, there has been a greater emphasis on gender equality and the impact that modern society has on women in the business world; however, stigmas and biases against females still exist. This bias is largely seen in the business world, where a significant gender pay gap remains. This specific bias is often referred to as the “invisible bias” against women because it describes the unfair advantages men have that many people do not recognize. These disparities often stem from women not having access to the same opportunities to develop business skills when entering the workforce.

This capstone investigates this invisible bias and how women, especially those from under-resourced communities, can overcome it by learning essential business skills early in life—specifically through engaging in competitive sports.

II. OVERVIEW

Gender inequality in the business world has existed since the early modern era. Although progress has been made, many women remain trapped in a cycle of experiencing unfair treatment and being overlooked for roles even

when they possess the same qualifications as men. One major reason for this is that many women do not receive the same leadership opportunities that foster confidence and resilience in their youth, a disadvantage that is even more pronounced for those from under-resourced communities. This omission is not always due to intentional sexism by employers or decision-makers, but rather a lack of access to experiences that build essential skills that translate to a future career in business. These skills include determination, stress management, negotiation, and goal setting, skills often learned through early engagement with sports. Without early exposure to these opportunities, many women enter the workforce at a disadvantage. Greater emphasis on exposing girls to sports in their youth will eliminate the root of these disparities.

A. Relevance

Participation in sports is critically important for girls, as it fosters self-confidence, develops leadership skills, and strengthens psychological resilience. Through the challenges of sports, young athletes learn how to persevere and handle failure at an early age. In a world with a lack of female leadership, where “women make up just 3.4% of CEOs worldwide”, teaching young girls the skills needed for leadership is vital (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2015). Young female athletes learn how to lead a team, work

collaboratively toward a common goal, and build resilience; skills that are essential for future leaders. As Julie Foudy stated, “sports turn girls into women who lead,” and it is through the growth of women’s sports that society is able to “watch female leaders rise” (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2015). To combat invisible bias in the workplace, young women should be encouraged to participate in team sports to develop these critical skills. Building this foundation early in life can transform how young women view themselves and how they approach opportunities in the business world.

III. HISTORY

A. Current Stances

Gender inequality has existed throughout much of Western society. While many Native American societies operated under matriarchal systems, based on the idea that women bring life, European society has historically been patriarchal. Specifically, before the 1900s, women were expected to remain at home and handle domestic duties. There was even a popular phrase coined in the late 1700s after the Revolutionary War, “Republican Motherhood,” which meant that a woman’s primary role was to teach her sons about the importance of liberty and democracy.

This idea continued until World War I, when women had to take the place of men in business and manufacturing. For the first time, society widely recognized that women were capable of doing the same work as men. Not only that, but they were able to care for their children and manage domestic responsibilities while taking on their husbands’ roles. It was only after this period that women gained the right to vote; however,

bias against women did not end there.

In the 1950s, there was a renewed emphasis on the nuclear family, where women were once again expected to stay home and focus solely on domestic duties. It was not until the 1970s that the United States experienced the Second Wave Feminist Movement. During this time, pivotal laws passed, including *Roe v. Wade* and Title IX, giving women sole authority over their reproductive rights and equal opportunities in education and sports. Congress passed the Equal Rights amendment in 1972, legally banning discrimination against women, though the status of state ratification remained uncertain until 2020. While progress has been made, bias has never fully disappeared. It continues to exist in subtle ways in conversations, negotiations, and interviews—earning the name “invisible bias.” There needs to be a shift in how women are taught proper business skills so they can overcome this bias and level the playing field in the business world.

As of a recent study “94% of women in C-suite positions played sports” with “74% of respondents believed that their athletic endeavors developed their leadership muscle, attributing skills that they learned through sports – communication, problem-solving, confidence and resilience – as critical to driving their achievements in business” (Forbes). Not only did the majority of female leaders today engage in sports at some period in their lives, but many of them directly attribute their success to sports. This is because sports, especially starting from a young age, teaches invaluable skills that translate to the business world. In fact, a recent Forbes article asked six women in powerful business roles the most invaluable skills they have gained from their

careers. They responded with building courage, leadership, and the team mentality of “less me, more we” (Forbes).

Less women than men participate in sports, especially as kids mature into their teenage years. These findings highlight the need for a greater emphasis on female participation in sports as it plays a crucial role in developing the confidence, leadership, and teamwork skills women need to navigate and challenge ongoing gender bias in the business world.

IV. POLICY PROBLEM

A. Stakeholders

B. Risks of Indifference

C. Nonpartisan Reasoning

V. TRIED POLICY

VI. CONCLUSIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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