

Leadership California Research Highlights

Conducted by the Sport Management Master's students of Cohort 14S in Orange County

The Cohort 14S masters students in USF's Sport Management Program conducted service learning-based research in the Fall of 2012 under the direction of Assistant Professor Dr. Nola Agha. The students sought to examine how sports, in all of its forms, intersect with the lives of the women of Leadership California, a state-wide women's leadership organization.

The research investigated sports in terms of participation, spectatorship, volunteering, work, stress, and fitness, while specifically acknowledging that women who grew up before the passage of Title IX might have unique experiences from later generations of women who benefited from increased access to sports provided by Title IX.

Highlights of their research are presented below.

The Women of Leadership California are Busy

This should be unsurprising given that 88% work in Management or Executive positions. Virtually all of them work over 40 hours a week (93%) while 21% work more than 60 hours a week.

Ninety-three percent take work home at least once a week. Of the pre-Title IX generation of respondents 27% take work home more than four times per week while only 13% of post-Title IX respondents take work home more than four times per week. This generational difference may reflect that the pre-Title IX generation, in general, have higher positions and fewer dependents at home.

In addition to work responsibilities, 39% of respondents have children under the age of 18 and an additional 10% have elderly dependents. Within women born in the post-Title IX generation, 44% have children under 12.

On top of work and family responsibilities, 95% of respondents participate in charity events and 73% of those are sport-themed events like walks, runs, hikes, and bike rides.

The Women of Leadership California are Stressed

Only 5% are rarely stressed, 65% are stressed sometimes, and 30% are stressed always or most of the time. The sources of stress are issues related to work (50%), family (28%), time (21%), money (14%), work-life balance (9%), and self-imposed expectations (8%).

To release work-related stress, 41% of respondents turn to exercise, 25% relax, 13% eat, and 7% drink alcohol.

The Women of Leadership California Love to Exercise

Not only do the Women of Leadership California use exercise as a way to reduce stress, 76% find times in their busy lives to exercise 3 or more times a week even though only 61% engaged in recreational or competitive sports from childhood through college. Despite these high levels of fitness over 65% said there were obstacles preventing them from exercising as much as they would like. For the post-Title IX generation the biggest issue was a lack of time stemming from family commitments and too much work. For the pre-Title IX generation the

biggest issue was lack of time stemming from too much work and the second most common issue was arthritis, injuries, or other aging issues.

Interestingly, even though 38% of women work for a company that provides an on-site gym facility, two-thirds of those women do not use the facility and the presence of the facility in no way affects the number of times exercised in a week when compared to women without access to a work-supported on-site gym.

Work-Life Balance Includes Sport Spectating

Ninety percent of respondents said it was important or very important to balance their career and the rest of their life, with the post-Title IX generation putting statistically more emphasis on work-life balance than the pre-Title IX generation.

Although they struggle to create the balance, they appear to be doing a pretty good job: 75% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their personal relationship, 72% with their job, and 61% with their personal health/wellness.

As evidence that the respondents placed a high value on a work-life balance, the women of Leadership California engage as sport spectators either in person or live at events. Eighty-three percent of respondents find the time to go to one or more pro or college sporting events each year with almost 20% finding the time to go 6 or more times a year.

Perhaps one reason they attend in person so much is that it allows them to spend time with family—39% report that they normally attend MLB games with family and 66% normally attend with a spouse or significant other.

While there is no generational difference in in-person spectating, there is a big difference between pre- and post-Title IX women in TV spectating. Almost half of post-Title IX women watch no sports on TV in a given week and 40% watch only once a week. On the other hand, only 19% of pre-Title IX women watch no sports on TV. This generational difference in TV spectating may reflect the increased family demands of younger women.

Work Environments are still Tough but there are Upsides too

Although 72% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, over 50% report feeling unwelcome at work at some point by both male and female superiors. Over half of respondents work in firms where senior management is 60%-100% male.

Half of the respondents felt that more opportunities are given to males in senior management positions in their workplace. While not a fantastic number, it shows that about half are in environments where males are NOT given more opportunities.

More inspiring is an interesting phenomenon where the pre-Title IX respondents who spectate much more than pre-Title IX respondents seem to carry this spectating behavior over to the work environment too.

Specifically, 78% of pre-Title IX respondents talk about sports at work while only 65% of post-Title IX respondents talk about sports at work. In addition, 74% of pre-Title IX respondents believe that women who participate in conversations about sports in the workplace have better relationships with men than women who don't participate in conversations about sports. On the other hand, only 54% of post-Title IX respondents agreed.

Specifically, talking about sports at work was perceived to increase social support, preference for team work, team morale/spirit, and team communication.

To test this perception of sports conversations mattering in the workplace we compared people who did talk about sports with those who didn't on measures of friendship and cohesion

at work. Those who did engage in sport conversations at work scored statistically higher on the following items:

- I have the opportunity to develop close friendships at my workplace.
- I have formed strong friendships at work.
- I can confide in people at work.

Finally, in support of these findings, 44% of women reported that they learned a sport (both participating and spectating) with the specific intent to improve relationships at work: golf (33%), football (10%), baseball (7%), running (3%) and tennis (2%).

While talking about sports at work is not a universal formula for improved workplace relations, there is some evidence that it may help or that it is may still be necessary in some fields as a way to fit into a traditional hegemonic environment.

Not Everyone Engages in all Aspects of Sports

Finally, we want to clearly recognize that not all women are engaged in all components of sports. Thirty-nine percent participated in no organized sports as children, 4% do not exercise, 30% do not watch sports on TV, 17% never attend live professional or college sporting events, 26% do not consider themselves a fan of professional sports, 28% do not converse about sports at work, 56% have never learned a sport to improve workplace relationships.