

The Participation and Perceptions of Girls Within a Unit of Sport Education

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This study examined the participation and perceptions of a cohort of sixth-grade girls as they participated in a season of floor hockey that followed a sport education format. Thirty-five girls and 37 boys completed a 20-lesson season. During the initial skills practice sessions and preseason scrimmages, no significant differences in opportunities to respond (either in rate per minute or percentage of success) were found between the girls and boys. During the formal competition phase, boys had significantly more responses per minute and higher success levels. Nevertheless, the scores for girls during this phase exceeded those of earlier in the season. During interviews following the unit, girls commented that they enjoyed playing on mixed sex teams and taking increasing responsibility for the unit, even though some of the boys tended to dominate decisions and the power roles such as captain and referee.

In 1972, the United States government passed into law Title IX, which stated that no person in the United States shall be excluded from participation or subject to discrimination in any education program. The genesis of Title IX was the observed inequities in opportunities for women and girls within education, and one area in which this legislation had an immediate impact was sport. Indeed, the National Collegiate Athletic Association twice challenged the mandate in court and was defeated on both occasions.

Since the introduction of Title IX, there has been a large increase in the number of girls who participate in organized sport at the high school and collegiate levels (Durrant, 1992). Nevertheless, women athletes still lack opportunities that are comparable to those of men. Schrof (1994) reports that almost twice as many boys as girls play high school sports, and twice as many college men as women participate in sports.

Regarding physical education, Part 106.34 of Title IX stipulates that classes cannot be carried out separately on the basis of sex, except where the purpose or major activity involves bodily contact. Unfortunately, compliance with this section of the law is too infrequent. While some researchers have shown gender differences in perceptions about sport (e.g., Gould, 1982, found that young girls placed more emphasis on fun and friendship than did their male swimming peers, whereas Duda, 1985, suggested that boys are more ego-involved and girls are more mastery-involved),

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Griffin (1983) has commented that sex stereotyping is pervasive within physical education. Engel (1994) commented that girls' participation in sport also decreases where physical education was coeducational compared with schools where the subject was taught in single sex classes. Lirgg (1993) also reported that girls in middle school prefer sex-segregated classes. Both of these findings suggest that the intent of the Title IX legislation is not being transferred into the practice of physical education.

Griffin (1983) comments that student interaction and participation patterns are not solely the result of the teacher, since students already have sex-stereotyped beliefs about themselves, each other, and the activities being taught. However, it is perhaps more important to note that teacher inaction can further perpetuate these notions. Griffin (1983) suggests that

to the extent that teachers and students accept the resulting interaction and participation patterns as a normal part of the of the day-to-day experience in sex-integrated classes, the opportunity to learn activity skills will be limited to student perceptions of sex-appropriate behavior. (p. 84)

Confirming the statements by Griffin (1983), Eccles and Harold (1991) have concluded that although gender differences in children's attitudes to sport are quite strong and emerge at a very young age, these differences seem to occur more as a result of gender role socialization than of "natural" aptitudinal differences. Eccles and Harold (1991) found that even schoolteachers rate boys as having more athletic talent than girls. Wright and King (1991) also reveal that the subtle meanings carried in the language of physical education teachers also contribute to gender bias.

Of principal importance, Eccles and Harold (1991) found that boys rate themselves as more able than girls in sports (even as early as the first grade), and they also rate sports as more important, useful, and enjoyable than do girls. Deaux and Emswiller (1974) and Eccles (1987) also have suggested that women are stereotyped as less competent than men in the athletic domain. In addition, boys tend to categorize physical activity according to gender (Ignico, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

The research presented in the introduction to this study would suggest that there is a strong potential for girls to be marginalized within physical education. Because of this, the purpose of this study was to examine the participation rates and perceptions of girls as they participated in a unit designed according to the principles of sport education. It is important to examine participation in light of girls' (particularly those of low skill) being "at risk" with regard to the level of practice opportunities provided in classes (Siedentop, Doutis, Tsangaridou, Ward, & Rauschenbach, 1994). Indeed, the research by Siedentop et al. (1994) showed that lower skilled females were often recording response rates less than one per minute, with success rates lower than 50%. It is important to examine perceptions, given the negative responses of a number of students towards physical education (see Carlson, 1995b; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992).

The sport education curriculum model was designed to promote a positive sport experience to students through simulating the following key contextual features of authentic sport (Siedentop, 1994): (a) sport is done by seasons, (b) players

are members of teams and remain in that team for the entire season, (c) seasons are defined by formal competition (which is interspersed with teacher- and student-directed practice sessions), (d) there is a culminating event to each season, (e) there is extensive record keeping, and (f) there is a festive atmosphere in which the season (and particularly the culminating event) take place.

During units of sport education, students take on roles beyond that of player. While all students practice and participate in matches as part of their teams, they also have the opportunity to become coaches, referees, managers, organizers, statisticians, or publicity officers. The sport education experience, then, offers a more complete sport experience than that of simply being a player. Of critical importance is the notion of fair play. In addition to the absence of argument and dispute, fair play in this context relates to promoting the opportunity of all participants to take important roles. There is also an expectation that foregrounding fair play will promote positive social behaviors.

The idea of a curriculum revolving around sport as a vehicle to promote the participation of girls seems at first contradictory. For example, in reporting the voices of students (especially girls' voices) who feel alienated in gym class, Carlson (1995b) noted that excess competition is one negative factor for these students. Browne (1992) also reported that one reason girls do not choose physical education is that it is too competitive.

However, early but limited data concerning the participation of students of both sexes in sport education has been particularly positive. Students of both sexes report working harder than in regular physical education lessons (Taggart & Alexander, 1993), and many teachers have become advocates of sport education (Grant, 1992; Medland & Richards, 1993), particularly in the opportunities provided students of lesser ability. Low-skilled students have reported both feelings of importance and value as team members and comment positively on their improvements in skill (Carlson, 1995a; Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Despite these positive findings, Alexander, Taggart, and Thorpe (1995) still comment that, although many teachers reported more positive attitudes from girls during sport education programs, entries from girls' journals still referred to boys dominating in many instances.

Method

Participants and Setting

Students. Thirty-five girls from a middle school in rural Alabama were the primary participants in this study. This school enrolled students in the fifth and sixth grades, 63% of whom were Caucasian, 30% African American, and 7% Asian American. Together with 37 boys, these sixth-grade girls took part in a daily co-educational physical education program. Physical education was organized so that three classes would participated simultaneously in a 35-minute program organized by a specialist teacher and two aides. The 35 girls were comprised of 20 Caucasians, 12 African Americans, and 3 Asian Americans. The equivalent ratio of boys was 25:9:3. Seven of the students in this class (4 boys and 3 girls) attended a special education class, and were classified as educable mentally retarded (EMR). However, these students were fully integrated in physical education.

Teachers. I directed the sport education experience. Twelve university physical education majors were also involved as assistants during the preseason. The

primary role of these preservice teachers was to assist students in the beginning phases of skills practice and during the early period, when they were learning duty roles (scorer, statistician). During preseason scrimmages, these teachers also assisted players through skill feedback and helped the players make tactical decisions. In the formal stages of competition, team captains assumed total responsibility for their teams, transferring the accountability for performance from teachers to students.

It should be mentioned at this stage that my role as director of this unit could compromise the data collected in this study. However, it is important to note that during sport education, the teacher's role is more that of administrator than instructor. Indeed, during the 20 lessons of the unit, my formal interaction with the students was limited to the first day (where the sport education and season-long competition concepts were introduced), and Days 7 through 9 when I assisted beginning referees. The beginning skills components of the unit were taught by the university students (one per team), and these students were informed of the purpose of this current study. During the preseason and competition phases, the sixth-grade students essentially worked independent of any adult direction. They arrived at class, examined the daily notice board for the location of matches, and self-started all games. Any individual managerial responsibilities were handled by the regular physical education teacher, since she knew the children's histories and the most appropriate responses to any problems.

Of more importance, however, is the research question. It was not the purpose of this study to investigate whether students preferred this format of physical education to their previous experiences. The central question was whether girls received differential opportunities to practice and play in a unit of sport education, taking particular note of the potential for many girls to be marginalized during competitive sport settings. Given the minor role I played in the instructional phases of the unit, any differences in participation should be a direct manifestation of the sport education curriculum.

Unit of Study

The sixth-grade class completed a 20-lesson season of floor hockey. The teams each had 4 players on the field during the games, and the captains placed their players in specified positions (2 as forwards, 2 as backs) at the beginning of each game. At halftime during each game, the forwards and backs were required to trade playing positions.

During the season, students took the following roles: player, captain, referee, scorer, and statistician. The class was divided into nine teams of 8 players, each team being selected by the regular physical education teacher and the director. All teams were coeducational, with an even ratio of boys to girls throughout.

The season closely followed the key principles of sport education. The first lessons consisted of teacher instruction and student practice, followed by a preseason competition and formal competitions. Teams continued to practice during the competitive phases of the unit. As director, my role was to coordinate the daily program by attending to the major administrative tasks: constructing preseason and formal competition schedules, advising classroom and physical education teachers of the program, and providing general leadership to the university students during the instructional phases of the unit. The university students' roles were to

Table 1 Floor Hockey Season Outline

Lesson	Content	Teacher's role	Students' roles
1	Introduction Rules to game Beginning skills	Class leader	Participant
2-5	Whole class skill instruction	Class leader	Participant
6	Team allocation	Present team lists Discuss roles Discuss fair play	Determine team roles Decide team name
7-9	Pre-season scrimmages Players learn and practice duty roles	Head coach Referee advisor	Coaches, players Learn duty role
10	Team practice	Program director	Coaches, players
11-16	Formal competition	Program director	Coaches, players Duty team roles
17	Team practice	Program director	Coaches, players
18-19	Play-offs	Program director	Coaches, players Duty team roles
20	Championship game Awards & presentation	Program director Master of ceremonies	Coaches, players Duty team roles

act as mentor coaches to the team captains (during the preseason only), who could be approached for ideas about strategy for game play or for assistance during duty roles (i.e., scorer, statistician). A full outline of the season is provided in Table 1.

Data Collection

Each of the lessons was videotaped using a portable video camera. The camera was situated in such a way as to be unobtrusive, yet able to capture as much of the class as possible. From these tapes, analysis was made of the frequency and success rate of student opportunities to respond (OTR).

The notion of OTR was used to determine student responses across the unit, since it has been demonstrated that successful responses are the best indicators of achievement in physical education (see Silverman, 1991). An OTR was recorded each time a target student had the chance to perform a skill action. Each OTR was judged as either successful (student performed the skill task successfully), unsuccessful (student performed the task unsuccessfully; e.g., failed to trap the puck, lost control of the puck), modifying the task (student was performing the structure of the set task, but modified the original demands to make that task easier or more difficult), or off task.

In recording OTRs, randomly selected students were followed throughout the lesson at 4-minute intervals each. After 4 minutes, attention was redirected to another student who was either in a different training group during the skills practice component or on a different team during scrimmage and formal competition.

Reliability

Interrater reliability checks were conducted during each of the three phases of the season. Simultaneous observations of three 5-minute segments of videotape produced the following percentage of agreements for rate: preseason = 94%, scrimmage = 91%, competition = 92%. Percentage of agreements for success were as follows: preseason = 95%, scrimmage = 92%, competition = 93%. These percentage scores were calculated as total agreements divided by agreements and disagreements.

Allocation of Student Roles. Data were tabulated on the allocation of students to various playing and administrative roles. That is, count was taken of those students who acted in the "positions of power," in particular, the roles of captain and referee.

Group Interviews. Twenty of the girls involved in the study attended group interviews, which took place following the final event. Each interview consisted of 4 or 5 students and myself. The girls were able to choose their interview groups so that they would be with whomever they felt most comfortable. Interviews lasted 20 minutes and were conducted in the media center during school hours. Students' and parents' permission was given for involvement in the interviews, and all participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Each interview followed a structured format. The same questions were asked of all groups, although the conversation was sometimes diverted because the group might initiate a new topic or to seek clarification of an issue. Specific questions relating to this unit were on the following topics: how they enjoyed participating in this form of physical education; their feelings about being on the same team throughout the unit; how important they felt towards the team; how well the competitions worked; whether their skill level improved, and why or why not; whether they contributed to their team, and why or why not; and how they would rate their contribution to the team, and why. Though I attempted to avoid leading questions, particular attention was placed on examining the girls' perceptions of playing alongside and against boys, and the extent to which boys dominated.

Group interviews were used in preference to individual interviews. The advantages of using group interviews in this study were the same that had been found in previous research into sport education (see Carlson & Hastie, 1997): (a) the interactions between students, which would have been absent in a one-on-one situation; (b) the social support peers could provide; (c) the development of a positive attitude toward interviews because the students were accompanied by their friends; and (d) the possibility of expressions emerging that probably would not have if individual interviews had been conducted (see Tannivarra & Enright, 1986). These questions allowed the girls to articulate their thoughts on the coeducational nature of the class and the interaction between the two sexes. Although I conducted these interviews, it is common in any action research project for the teacher to collect data from students. Moreover, the nature of the questions did not relate to my instruction; rather, it related more to the girls' perceptions of the curriculum model as an opportunity to participate in class, particularly with regard to playing with and against boys in a competitive setting.

Data Analysis

OTR Data. Summary statistics (mean and standard deviation) were determined for each of the frequency and rate categories of OTRs. This was completed for each of the instructional contexts of sport education (i.e., teacher-directed practices,

preseason scrimmages, and formal competitions), as well as for the samples of boys and girls. Univariate ANOVA was conducted to determine any significant gender or contextual differences, with the Newman-Keuls method of post hoc testing incorporated. Throughout this paper, results are reported with exact probabilities, although the .05 level was chosen as the criterion of significance.

Interview Data. In developing themes across the total interview pool, a three-stage process was followed (Seidman, 1991):

1. Items of interest were marked and were provided with a key word label.
2. The contents of all similarly labeled passages were compared, with repetition of a particular aspect of the labels then being described as a theme.
3. A memo was written to describe why these sections were selected and what significance these had to the girls' perceptions of this sport education unit.

Results

The following results (with associated objectives) are presented in this section: (a) students' opportunity to respond (to determine whether girls were disadvantaged with regard to participation and skill development), (b) allocation of roles (to determine the extent to which girls were given the opportunity to take positions of power), and (c) group interviews (to provide the perspective of the girls about their participation).

Students' Opportunity to Respond

Data relating to the students' practice opportunities and success rates are presented in Tables 2 and 3. ANOVA results reveal that the only significant difference between the opportunities for girls and boys to actively participate was during the formal competition phase of the season. During this phase, both the response and success rates of boys were significantly higher than the girls'. However, the success of both boys and girls was significantly higher during this phase than at any time during the season: boys, $F(2, 34) = 27.3, p = .000$; girls, $F(2, 35) = 5.1, p = .01$.

Figure 1 provides an analysis of response rates across the three phases of the floor hockey season, and Figure 2 provides an analysis of the percentage of successful responses during the three phases. The box plot provides the 25th and 75th percentile, with the horizontal line indicating the median score. Highest and lowest scores are also shown.

The plots from Figure 2 and data from Tables 2 and 3 support the sport education principle of an extended season. When students made the first transition between skill practice and preseason scrimmages, success rates (and OTRs for girls) decreased. However, with a longer participation period, final success and OTR levels were increased. From an anecdotal analysis of the videotapes, the quality of game play certainly appeared superior in the later matches of the season. There was less hacking at the puck, and teams used more space to pass and attack. Goalkeepers had also developed new strategies to prevent scoring.

Allocation of Roles

Table 4 provides a summary of gender participation in the roles of the unit. These figures show that the boys in this class had more opportunities to take positions

Table 2 Analysis of Students' Response Rates

Phase	OTRs/min		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Skills practice				
Boys	3.73	1.47	0.87	.36
Girls	3.25	1.26		
Preseason scrimmages				
Boys	3.79	1.25	3.13	.09
Girls	3.02	0.77		
Formal competition				
Boys	4.88	1.01	10.98	.002
Girls	3.74	0.94		

Table 3 Analysis of Students' Success Rates

Phase	% success		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Skills practice				
Boys	68.0	10.14	1.37	.25
Girls	73.0	12.99		
Preseason scrimmages				
Boys	76.0	9.38	2.76	.11
Girls	67.6	12.40		
Formal competition				
Boys	88.86	3.67	9.44	.005
Girls	81.14	9.36		

of power, whereas girls were more often placed in passive positions that required little or no interpersonal interaction or assertiveness.

Interview Data

All the girls interviewed expressed a preference for this sport education unit over their previous physical education experience. The major reason throughout was that it was more fun. When asked to clarify this, a key feature was that they got to play more often. Regular physical education was characterized by "running laps" and "spending all our time learning the skills."

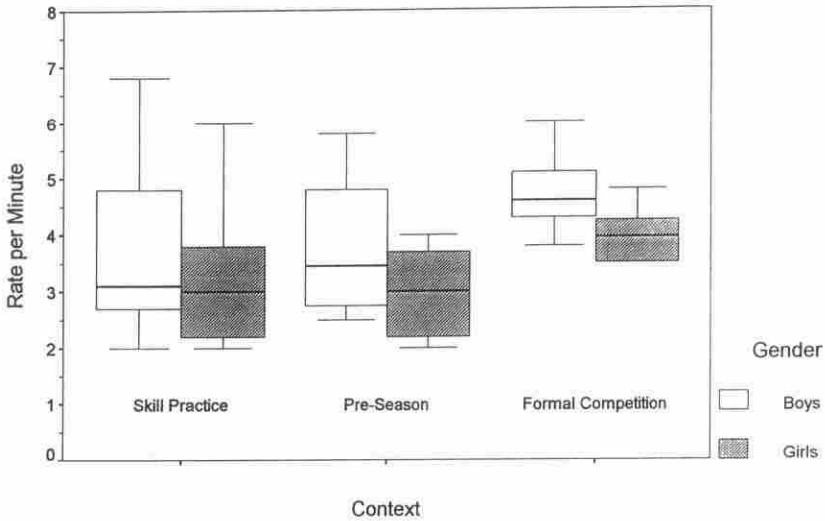


Figure 1 — Response rates for boys and girls across the three instructional phases.

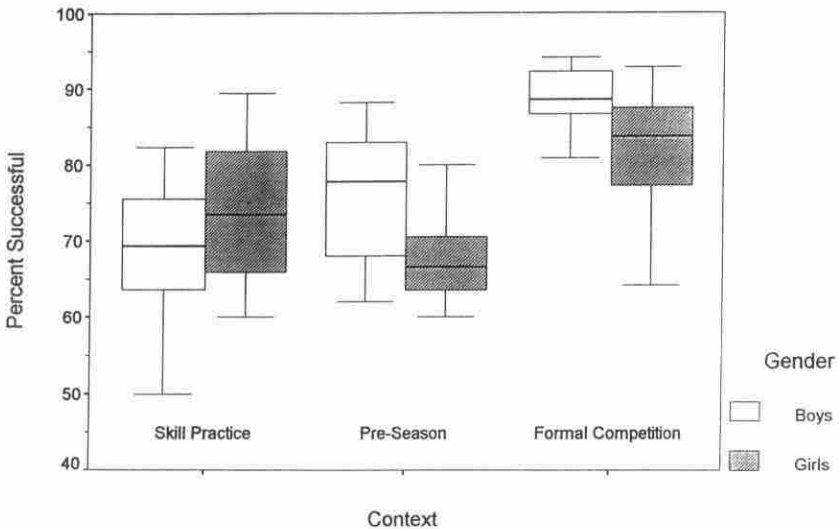


Figure 2 — Success rates for boys and girls across the three instructional phases.

The length of the unit was one key factor in this preference. The longer than normal season allowed for more games, which proved attractive, as explained by one student:

We got to do a lot more. Competing is the best part, and if you only to get to play one game, it's no good. They'd teach us the skills and then have maybe one game at the end. It's still important to learn how to play before you play the games, but you get to play more this way. In other units, they don't give us time to do anything.

Table 4 Students' Role Participation

	Boys	Girls
Captain ^a	8	3
Referee	14	4
Scorer	6	12
Statistician	20	16

^aTwo teams chose 1 boy captain and 1 girl captain.

A longer season also allowed for more skill development, as two students discussed:

Playing longer also helped the teams that did not have many good players, because they improved more.

I was a pretty sucky hockey player, but after a while I started playing better, and I had a lot of influence on my team and help from them.

The persisting team concept was also a positive aspect of the unit. The girls felt they were important to their teams. A key feature here was that the playing units were small (4 on a side), and the girls could make a contribution to its success. For example, one girl commented that because "there wasn't any extremely great players on my team, we worked out strategies, and I was a part of these." Being a valued member of a team was important:

If I didn't score, they didn't make me feel bad.

Yeah, like if you were a goalie and you accidentally let them score, they wouldn't complain, they'd just say, "That's OK. Good job, try again." We learned to work well with other members of our team.

Furthermore, in this unit, the girls did not give the impression that the boys dominated play. One girl commented that "the boys in our team would not pass it just to each other. They'd pass it to all members and give all the members a chance to score."

A third key feature relating to fun was that the girls believed that they were more involved in class management, particularly as this required less teacher input. Three of the girls described this feature in the following ways:

It was more fun because we got to organize everything. We got to, like, referee and be in charge. We still had to play by the rules.

Most of the time in PE, we just sit there, and they start talking to themselves, or they are explaining things, and everything is slow. They don't really let us take control.

It was fun having students as refs because the teachers holler at you so much. The students helped you more. The student coaches are less strict, and they help you more.

Consistent with findings from other sport education studies (e.g., Carlson & Hastie, 1997), the girls particularly enjoyed taking roles other than player. Refereeing, keeping statistics, and scoring were attractive nonplaying options, mostly because the people in these roles actually have to "be in the game." Indeed, many girls commented that they learned more about hockey by taking these roles than they would have in regular physical education. As one girl said, "Being a referee or statistician helped you learn more about the rules of the game."

Refereeing, however, was again the role of preference (see Hastie, 1996) for all participants. It was seen as containing a lot more action, "instead of writing stuff down." However, as only 3 of the 18 referees were girls, I sought the reasons why the girls did not take this role. For some, it was simply that the captain made the decision: "I would have liked to referee, but Eddie said he wanted to do it, and he just picked the people." For most however, it was a case that they thought someone else (always a boy) was more qualified: "I wanted to ref, but there were other people who wanted to and they knew more about it than me. All the boys knew how to do it already." These comments were made even though none of the students in this class had previous experience of officiating in physical education.

The girls were divided as to whether the decision made about who would referee was a sports-based reason or a "boys being bossy" reason. Some girls stated that role allocation within their team was by vote, whereas others suggested that the boys did not hog the referee's job, but "we let them, because we didn't feel we knew enough." A number of girls commented that even in some cases of "girls' sports" (their example being gymnastics), the girls would still wait for the boys to decide the girls should be referees because they "knew more about the sport." That is, although the boys would be willing to let the girls take the more powerful roles in certain sports, the girls would take these roles only after the boys told them to.

The notion of boys being bossy and occasionally dominating team decisions ("they weren't always bad") still did not alter the fact that the girls unanimously preferred mixed sex teams to single sex teams. The girls indicated that they believed mixed teams made for better games and made for much more fun. This was because boys added a perceived skill advantage: "This was much more fun, because we had the advantage of having boys on our team to help. It's pretty hard when you are playing all girls, because we don't know all the rules and the skills." Although some boys were described as "bossy," these girls did comment that playing with boys was preferable because girls-only teams were expected to perform poorly: "If you are just with girls, you are expected to lose. When I'm with my friends, we don't usually try, but when you are with boys and girls, you have to. You are in competition." The girls believed their teachers were the main producers of this "girls are not as good" image, and they often commented that they typically played "boys' sports" during physical education. Games, when they did take place, were always girl teams against girl teams and boy teams against boy teams.

Discussion

The most general conclusion that can be made about this study is that the girls enjoyed their experiences in the sport education unit, and enjoyed it more than their regular physical education lessons. It should be noted that the reasons for this preference stemmed from the structural arrangements of sport education (e.g., a longer season, consistent team membership, a significant amount of time

allocated to game play), rather than any effect of the teacher. Both quantitative and interview data supported the notion that the girls improved in skills, whereas the girls believed they learned more about hockey and stated they enjoyed participating in a student-directed experience. All of these findings reflect positively on the objectives of sport education (Siedentop, 1994).

A key factor in this study was that the girls enjoyed playing hockey and enjoyed the format of the unit because it gave them "fun." Fun in this case included a skill dimension and a social dimension. Fun came from improvement and being part of a team, and feeling important as part of that team. The data clearly suggested that the girls believed they were important to their teams.

Fun also came from being in mixed teams. The social dimension of fun here came from girls interacting with boys and taking some control of the lessons. Freedom from direct teacher control correlated with fun. These findings are consistent with those of Carlson and Hastie (1997), who suggest that the student social agenda in sport education works with, rather than against, the objectives of the unit.

A second variable in promoting the enjoyment and participation of the girls during this unit was the length of the season. This sport education experience lasted over 20 lessons, whereas a regular unit for these students was mostly between 10 and 12 lessons. Many girls commented how they spent more time practicing and in playing games, whereas the OTR data showed the benefits of an extended period in elevating game success after an initial decrease when competition first occurred.

As can be noted from Figures 1 and 2, when the girls and boys first participated in competitive contexts, both OTR rate and success decreased. However, in the third phase of the unit (Lessons 11–20), OTR rate and success were the highest they had been for the entire unit. Although many teachers become frustrated about the decrease in skill performance during games, these data suggest that extra time provided by longer units allows for gradual improvement. The fact that these students played matches of 4 versus 4 was another probable factor in promoting improvement, given that this allowed an increase in the number of contacts.

It must be noted that although girls were given high levels of opportunity to participate in skill practice and in game play during this unit, they were not given extensive opportunities to take key power positions within teams (e.g., captain or referee). Boys were given these power positions, and a number of gendered notions became evident. In particular, the following perceptions given throughout the interviews seemed salient: boys are naturally better at sports, boys automatically make better players, boys are more serious about sport, and certain sports are easily categorized as boys' sports and girls' sports.

This sport education unit, although not outwardly promoting these opinions, did nothing to correct or modify them. The girls mentioned throughout the interviews that the boys should probably take refereeing jobs because they knew more about the game. However, a discussion with the teachers revealed that none of these students had participated in a floor hockey unit before. Furthermore, the quantitative data, except for the final stages of the unit, showed no significant difference between the success rate of boys and girls, or any differences between their opportunities to participate. Hence, although the girls perceived that playing with boys made a better game, they seemed to focus on the highly talented boys. Certainly for the overall group, I did not perceive any great difference in skill level.

The opinion that boys are naturally better was not supported by the actual performance of the students in this class. As a result, boys were given opportuni-

ties denied to a number of girls simply because of a perception was based upon no direct evidence, at least not within hockey.

The girls also perceived the boys as more serious, in that when they were playing with boys, there was an expectation that you would work harder and try harder. The girls made it clear that if they were to play with only their girl friends, they would not try as hard, but would be more socially oriented. Again, there was a perception that girls were not expected to work as hard, or to be as proficient at sport, as boys. It was notable that the class teachers also promoted these images. The girls believed that during regular physical education, they played mostly boys' sports, that more attention was placed on the boys, and that even the female teacher tended to choose boys' sports and to favor the boys.

These findings suggest that the girls in this class were participating in a physical education environment that promoted gender role socialization. That is, their comments suggest agreement with researchers such as Griffin (1983), Eccles and Harold (1991), and Wright and King (1991), all of whom suggest that sex stereotyping is pervasive in physical education.

Although the sport education unit in this study provided equal opportunity for girls to practice and become skillful, it did not overtly address equity issues. As Eder and Parker (1987) comment, "simply providing the opportunity for equal participation in athletic events is not enough to produce major social changes" (p. 210). However, the sport education model does have within its mission the potential to be proactive in this regard. For example, where sport education programs involve a student-directed sports board, discussions of equity and the provision of a gender-fair physical education could be addressed. Furthermore, as indicated by Curnow and Macdonald (1995), the role of "equity officer" might be a useful addition to those managerial roles of referee, scorer, and statistician. This equity officer might be responsible for documenting the allocation of students to roles across the school year and providing advocacy for the potential role of girls in power positions. Furthermore, this equity officer, together with the sport board, may discuss ways in which traditionally "boys' sports" might be made less gender biased.

Eder and Parker (1987) also suggest that the extracurricular activities of schools seem more readily incorporated into informal peer culture. They reason that academic classrooms provide little opportunities for significant student interaction compared with more social occasions. Because sport education, with its student-directed pedagogy, is one subject in which significant student interaction occurs, there exists the potential for its values to be incorporated into the peer culture. Where girls' equal participation and leadership in sport are seen as appropriate, sport education (which foregrounds this equality of opportunity) may be one valid vehicle for promoting these attributes.

In conclusion, the girls in this class found this sport education experience to be more attractive than their regular physical education experience. In contrast to the findings of Lirgg (1993), who suggested girls preferred single-sex classes, this group of girls enjoyed mixed-sex teams and suggested they worked harder (and were expected to work harder) than when they were in all-girl teams. Furthermore, the notion of competition was attractive. Though Browne (1992) noted that excessive competition in physical education was a turn-off for many girls, those interviewed in this study stated they enjoyed the competitive aspect. The idea of an authentic sport experience is important here. In this sport education unit, fair play was promoted and openly rewarded, thus diminishing arguments with referees and

open abuse of teammates. Teams were small, and all players were seen as important to the team, particularly as the teams remained the same throughout the entire season. The key, however, was that the students played more games than in a regular physical education unit, because the unit was of sufficient length to include both skill practices, scrimmages, and a formal competitive season.

The persistent team concept and the enhancement of student decision making provided by sport education was certainly an attractive feature of this experience. A number of girls commented that their increased personal investment came not from the coercion of the more talented boys, but "because everyone was more together, working as a team, because we were on the same team." This experience was seen as different from regular physical education, not because it was conducted by an outside teacher, but because "we sort of got to do what we wanted; we got to score keep or referee if we wanted, or got to be goalie if we wanted. We decided together as a group, and we agreed on these."

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