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ABSTRACT

This research explored three neglected facets of the relationship between athletics and achievement: (1) sex differences, (2) the broader range of extracurricular activities, and (3) the age range of adolescents. The sample consisted of 3000 males and females in grades 7 through 12. For both sexes, academic achievement was positively related to participation in each of the extracurricular activity areas. Substantial differences were found in the relationships for students of below- and above-average scholastic aptitude. Social class status had little effect on the relationship of extracurricular participation to grades or educational expectations. Analysis by age groups did not indicate any developmental trends in these associations. Students' perceptions of parental educational expectations were more associated with extracurricular participation than the students' own educational expectations. Many of the consequences of participation appeared to be similar for both males and females. (Author)

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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION OF ADOLESCENT MALES AND FEMALES

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Extracurricular Activities and Achievement Orientation of Adolescent Males and Females

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The objective of this research is to extend the findings and models focusing on the association of athletics and achievement for males into three neglected facets: (1) sex differences, since previous samples have generally not included females, (2) the broader range of extracurricular activities, and (3) the age range of adolescence to study developmental trends. The present sample therefore includes a sample of males and females from the 7th through 12th grades who responded to questions about participation in several areas of extracurricular activities in addition to information on achievement and family background.

Interest in the effects of extracurricular activities has focused on participation as a socializing experience. This informal achievement system associated with schools is said to stimulate the competitive spirit and act as a "catalyst for success goals (Spady, 1971, p.385)." Rehberg (1968) theorizes five possible consequences of extracurricular activities: (1) the student associates with achievement-oriented peers, (2) attitudes such as persistence and the value of hard work learned in sports transfer to the academic domain, (3) the student has a higher self-esteem which results in a better self-concept, (4) the generalization of pressure to achieve, and (5) athletes are given more counseling because of their higher visibility. Recognition of all types of accomplishments should contribute to one's feeling of success. Spady (1970) considers extracurricular activities as another dimension of interpersonal competition in the school setting. This leads to the perspective that the reward system of our educational settings is not monolithic.

Research has shown a positive relationship between participation in sports and the academic achievement or educational expectations of males (Schafer and Rehberg, 1970; Spady, 1971; Spreitzer and Pugh, 1973). Spreitzer and Pugh also found that this association of athletics and educational goals holds for boys even after controlling for such variables

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as scholastic aptitude, grades, social class and parental encouragement. Non-athletic activities have been shown to be distinct from athletics in terms of participation by youth (Hanks and Eckland, 1976). But comparisons of these activities have resulted in contradictory findings (Spady, 1971; Hanks and Eckland, 1976).

Few studies have been carried out examining the above relationships in samples of females, or males and females (Hanks and Eckland, 1976; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1977). Research has shown that it would not be wise to generalize to females from the findings on the achievement of males. Sex differences have been found in the achievement patterns of male and female youth, especially with regard to developmental trends (Shaw and McCuen, 1960; Maccoby, 1966; Stein and Bailey, 1973). In order to adequately compare the association of extracurricular participation and achievement for males and females, one sample should include both sexes rather than attempting to compare results of different studies.

METHOD

A questionnaire was administered to 3000 males and females in three school districts in the southern tier of New York State. This represented about one-third of the students in the 7th through 12th grades. In order to achieve a representative sample of students in the various tracks, a stratified sample of the English classes was used. Students responded while in their classes. Although no student was forced to participate in the study, neither was participation posed as a voluntary activity. Additional information was collected from printouts of previously administered aptitude tests.

Three dimensions of extracurricular activities were measured: (1) extent of participation, (2) intensity or quality of participation, and (3) self-assessment of participation. To tap the quality of committment, we asked students how often they had won awards, performed or been an officer. For self-assessment, students were asked on the questionnaire how good they were at each type of activity. Extracurricular activities are defined here as performing arts, clubs, community activities and athletics. The social class rating was determined by using Hollingshead's

(1957) classificatory system based on father's occupation.

RESULTS

The first objective was to investigate the possibility of sex differences in the extent and quality of participation in extracurricular activities in the past year for the students. From Table 1, it can be seen that students, on the average, generally take part in between one and two activities in each area during a single year. Not surprisingly, boys are significantly more active in and receive more awards in the area of athletics. On the other hand, girls participate more than boys in the performing arts, clubs and community activities along with a higher quality of participation in each of these areas.

Table 1

Extent and Quality of Extracurricular Participation by Sex

	Females		Males		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	t*
Extent of Participation					
Athletics	2.1	1.01	2.3	.97	5.8
Performing	1.8	.96	1.5	.84	9.1
Clubs	1.6	.08	1.3	.62	8.9
Community	1.8	.90	1.5	.75	10.0
Quality of Participation					
Athletic Awards	1.4	.76	1.7	.87	8.9
Performances	1.9	1.01	1.5	.87	10.4
Club Officer	1.5	.69	1.3	.61	5.9

*All t values are significant at $p < .001$

Table 2

Correlation of Participation in Extracurricular Activities (Females above diagonal; males below)*

	Athletics	Performing	Clubs	Community
Athletics	--	.23	.31	.27
Performing	.15	--	.24	.38
Clubs	.20	.31	--	.28
Community	.18	.41	.32	--

*All correlations are significant at $p < .001$

The correlations of activities shown in Table 2 demonstrate the commonality and/or distinctiveness of participation among boys and girls. While all the correlations are statistically significant, no two of the activity rates share more than 17 percent of the variance. The relationship of participation in athletics is always stronger for the females than for the males. That is, there appears to be a sex difference such that females who participate in sports are more likely to be active in other areas, while this is less so for the male sample. The weakest association for both sexes is that of the relationship between athletics and performing; the strongest between performing and community activities.

A primary concern of the research in this area of extracurricular activities is the influence of participation on school achievement. Grades in school are used here as a measure of school performance. As shown in Table 3, grades are significantly related to each of the types of participation. The range of the associations is similar for both sexes. There seems to be a slight sex difference in the associations with grades and performing or club activities. For both sexes, participation is associated with better grades in school. There does not appear to be any support for the idea that involvement in such activities as sports would result in lower school performance, in general. However, the correlations are low enough to support the idea that these activities provide different settings within the school structure for success.

Table 3

Extent and Quality of Participation
Correlated with Grades*

	Females	Males
Extent of Participation		
Athletics	.13	.15
Performing	.22	.18
Clubs	.18	.23
Community	.13	.13
Quality of Participation		
Athletic Awards	.12	.14
Performances	.23	.17
Club Officer	.11	.12

*All correlations significant at $p < .001$.

As a second measure of academic performance and committment to the school's reward structure, students were asked how far they expected to go in their formal schooling. In addition, they responded to a question on how far they thought their parents expected them to go in their education. The correlations of educational expectations and extracurricular participation are shown in Table 4. It is striking that the association of the students' perceptions of parental expectations are stronger than the relationship of activity participation with their own educational expectations. The largest sex difference is in the correlation of athletic participation with parental encouragement for schooling. This relationship between sports and messages from parents for greater education is stronger for the male sample.

Table 4

Correlation of Participation with Educational Expectations

	FEMALES		
	Own Expectations	Father's Expectations	Mother's Expectations
Athletics	.06*	.13****	.11****
Performing	.10****	.22****	.18****
Clubs	.09****	.23****	.23****
Community	.06*	.19****	.16****

	MALES		
	Own Expectations	Father's Expectations	Mother's Expectations
Athletics	.07***	.20****	.22****
Performing	.04*	.13****	.12****
Clubs	.08***	.22****	.27****
Community	.08***	.16****	.14****

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .005
****p < .001

We speculated that social class or scholastic aptitude of students might account for part of the association between extracurricular activities and academic performance. Pressures for school achievement that vary with the social class of students might also exert influence on outside activities. From Table 5, we conclude that the relationship of school performance and extracurricular participation is generally independent of aptitude or social class. One area where scholastic aptitude appears to account for a portion of the relationship is between grades and performing or club activities, and this is true for both sexes. It is interesting to note that for females, social class and aptitude account for most of the relationship between club activity and parental educational expectations.

Table 5

Correlation of Participation, Grades and Educational Expectations Controlling for Aptitude and Social Class*

	FEMALES			
	Athletics	Performing	Clubs	Community
Grades	.13	.23	.20	.15
Aptitude Controlled	.13	.15	.14	.13
Social Class Controlled	.11	.19	.18	.14
Both Controlled for	.12	.13	.14	.12
Own Educational Expectations	.06	.12	.08	.11
Aptitude Controlled	.05	.08	.04	.10
Social Class Controlled	.05	.10	.06	.11
Both Controlled for	.05	.07	.04	.10
Parents' Educational Expect.	.13	.21	.23	.20
Aptitude Controlled	.13	.14	.18	.19
Social Class Controlled	.11	.17	.21	.20
Both Controlled for	.12	.12	.04	.10

	MALES			
	Athletics	Performing	Clubs	Community
Grades	.18	.18	.24	.13
Aptitude Controlled	.14	.14	.16	.08
Social Class Controlled	.17	.18	.23	.12
Both Controlled for	.14	.14	.16	.08
Own Educational Expectations	.10	.08	.13	.11
Aptitude Controlled	.08	.05	.08	.09
Social Class Controlled	.07	.09	.12	.11
Both Controlled for	.08	.05	.08	.09
Parents' Educational Expect.	.22	.19	.27	.16
Aptitude Controlled	.19	.15	.20	.11
Social Class Controlled	.22	.18	.26	.15
Both Controlled for	.19	.15	.20	.11

*Correlations may vary slightly from previous tables because of listwise deletion of missing data.

While the effects of controlling for aptitude were minimal, the relationship of extracurricular activities with achievement measures was investigated to see if differences existed between students of above and below average ability. The mean of the scholastic aptitude test scores for this particular sample was used to divide the students into the two groups. It is evident from Table 6 that the association between activities and achievement orientation (school grades and educational expectations) is much stronger, in general, for the low ability females than for the high ability ones. This trend is not as apparent for the male sample.

Table 6

Relationship of Achievement Measures and Extracurricular Participation by Ability*

	FEMALES							
	Below Mean Aptitude				Above Mean Aptitude			
	Athl.	Perf.	Clubs	Commun.	Athl.	Perf.	Clubs	Commun.
Grades	.13	.16	.19	.17	.08	.18	.12	.03
Own Educational Expectations	.10	.18	.10	.16	.00	.05	.01	.01
Father's Educ. Expectations	.14	.17	.23	.20	.03	.12	.14	.09
Mother's Educ. Expectations	.16	.16	.21	.22	.04	.10	.16	.08

	MALES							
	Below Mean Aptitude				Above Mean Aptitude			
	Athl.	Perf.	Clubs	Commun.	Athl.	Perf.	Clubs	Commun.
Grades	.11	.16	.11	.08	.17	.18	.22	.12
Own Educational Expectations	.15	.04	.08	.09	.03	.12	.12	.11
Father's Educ. Expectations	.24	.13	.12	.16	.07	.16	.22	.10
Mother's Educ. Expectations	.26	.17	.20	.14	.07	.14	.24	.08

*All correlations above .14 are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 7

Correlation of Grades with Extracurricular Participation by Age and Sex

	FEMALES		
	7th and 8th grades	9th and 10th grades	11th and 12th grades
Athletics	.13***	.17****	.03
Performing	.18****	.21****	.25****
Clubs	.13***	.15****	.30****
Community	.14****	.12***	.13***

	MALES		
	7th and 8th grades	9th and 10th grades	11th and 12th grades
Athletics	.16****	.10**	.15****
Performing	.23****	.14****	.17****
Clubs	.17****	.26****	.29****
Community	.14***	.11**	.15****

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .005
****p < .001

As adolescents learn to cope with pressures and are socialized into the peer culture and adult norms, we might anticipate that developmental trends would occur with regard to extracurricular participation and achievement. The correlations from Table 7 that are broken down into three age groups make it difficult to generalize to all areas with respect to age differences. It is interesting to note the lack of an association between athletics and grades for the oldest group of girls. We are still considering the possibility that achievement-oriented students will engage in more activities as they age. On the other hand, less successful students might turn to activities in terms of an alternate reward system.

Table 8

Self-assessment of School Achievement and Extracurricular Participation Self-assessment

	FEMALES		
	7th and 8th grades	9th and 10th grades	11th and 12th grades
Athletics	.08*	.08*	.06
Performing	.31****	.11**	.16****
Organizations	.17****	.16****	.16****

	MALES		
	7th and 8th grades	9th and 10th grades	11th and 12th grades
Athletics	.14****	.13****	.14****
Performing	.23****	.19****	.25****
Organizations	.18****	.20****	.29****

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .005
****p < .001

One argument in favor of participation in extracurricular activities is that such participation results in a higher self-esteem which generalizes to the academic sphere. The correlations of self-assessment of school achievement and assessment in the areas of athletics, performing and organizations are shown in Table 8 broken down by sex and age groups. Self-esteem in one area does appear to be related to self-assessment in the other areas. That is, the higher one thinks of their school performance, the higher one rates oneself in extracurricular areas. It should be noted, however, that self-esteem in athletics is least related to academic self-assessment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The major findings are:

1. As expected, males are more active in sports, but girls participate more in performing activities, clubs and community groups. This sex difference was similar in the quality of participation.
2. Participation in one activity is significantly related to being active in other areas. This is true for both sexes.
3. There was a significant positive relationship between academic achievement and all types of extracurricular activities for both sexes. This association also held for quality of participation. While the strength of these associations was similar for males and females in the area of athletics, sex differences in the relationships appeared for performing activities and after-school clubs.
4. Little sex difference was found in the association of participation and the students' educational expectations. A striking finding was found in that perceived parental expectations were more highly associated with participation than the student's own expectations.
5. Social class status of the student and scholastic aptitude had surprisingly little effect on the relationship of extracurricular participation with grades and educational expectations. Controlling for scholastic aptitude did reduce the associations of participation in performing and clubs with grades and perceived parental expectations for schooling.
6. Substantial differences were found in the relationships between students of above and below average scholastic aptitude. Many relationships previously found for the entire sample did not hold for the high ability group.
7. Analysis by age groups have not yielded findings that would as yet support developmental trends.
8. Self-assessment of participation in each activity is, in general, significantly related to self-esteem in one's academic work. But the association is smallest when athletic self-esteem is involved, especially for females.

We now have a clearer idea of the patterns of participation in extracurricular activities, the extent and quality of such involvement and the

association with achievement for males and females during adolescence. In particular, we have pointed out where males and females differ in these relationships, although the consequences of participation appear to be similar for both sexes. The analysis of these variables acquires particular significance as opportunities for the athletic participation of females are expanded and sex roles become more diffuse. Increased knowledge of the social and psychological correlates of participation and achievement may enlighten school officials as to actions that can be taken concerning the informal achievement settings of schools. With the increasing participation of girls in extracurricular athletics, further surveys need to be carried out to investigate the effects of these activities on achievement and development.

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