Differences in Extracurricular Activity Participation Intensity Among Middle School Students: Implications for Hispanic Youths

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Abstract: *Extracurricular activity participation has been associated with a multitude of positive outcomes, including school completion, and research suggests that students at risk for school failure are particularly likely to benefit from participation. However, before extracurricular activity participation can be promoted to address such issues, predictors of participation should be examined. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the school-based extracurricular activity participation characteristics of middle school students, with an emphasis on that of Hispanic students. Hispanic students were less likely than European American students to participate in sports-related activities during the seventh grade. Additionally, within the Hispanic group, females and participants with a bilingual education background also reported lower participation. Results suggest that discrepancies in extracurricular activity participation rates for Hispanic students appear early, and they also underscore the significance of examining participation variability within this group.*

Beginning in middle school and continuing through high school, many adolescents participate in school-based, structured extracurricular activities. Associations between involvement in such activities and outcomes across academic, behavioral, and psychological domains are well-documented and suggest that extracurricular activities are beneficial to participants and can lead to long-term achievement, including high school completion (e.g., Darling, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Research in this area also indicates that early extracurricular activity participation is critical, as it is predictive of later participation (e.g., Bohnert, Kane, & Garber, 2008; Denault & Poulin, 2009; Pederson, 2005). Thus, promotion of participation in extracurricular activities, when they are first offered, may represent one strategy with which to improve outcomes of students at risk for school failure.

Notably, youths who are at the greatest risk for school failure seem to benefit the most from participation in extracurricular activities (Holland & Andre, 1987; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), and Hispanic students represent the largest and arguably most at-risk ethnic minority group in American schools (Aud et al., 2013; Passel, D'Vera, & Lopez, 2011). Additionally, social capital theoretical perspectives suggest that participation in extracurricular activities could be particularly beneficial to Hispanic students. However, relatively little is known about the participation experiences of Hispanic adolescents, especially at stages when these opportunities are first offered (i.e., middle school). This represents a substantial limitation, as knowledge of potential differential participation patterns could be used to strategically promote participation in extracurricular activities. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore possible variations in participation characteristics between Hispanic and non-Hispanic youths, as well as variations within the Hispanic group. Implications of the findings are presented within a social capital theoretical framework that considers the impact of early exposure to extracurricular activities.

Benefits of Extracurricular Activities and Early Participation

Academic clubs, individual or team sports, and performance clubs (e.g., band) are common examples of school-based extracurricular activities. These activities routinely include regular participation schedules, rule-guided engagement, direction by adult activity leaders, and voluntary participation (Larson, 2000; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Research on the effects of extracurricular activity participation indicates that it is related to mostly positive outcomes that endure over time. Regarding education, multiple studies demonstrate that participation is linked to higher academic aspirations, grades, and rates of high school graduation (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Brown & Evans, 2002; Darling, 2005; Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999; Diaz, 2005; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2007; Eccles & Barber, 1999; McNeal, 1995). Participation in extracurricular activities has also been associated with decreases in externalizing symptoms, risky and delinquent behavior, and interactions with antisocial youth (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2007; Cooley, Henriksen, Nelson, & Thompson, 1995; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Villarreal & Gonzalez, 2016).

Benefits of extracurricular activity participation are posited to result from opportunities to access and accumulate school-based social capital. Social capital can be broadly defined as connections to individuals within networks that provide access to resources and support (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Components of social capital include attitudes, behaviors, norms, and information channels (i.e., knowledge, skill sets, and resources; Smith, 2007); these components support and facilitate the accomplishment of goals. School-based social capital refers to those information channels, behaviors, and supports unique to school settings that support the accomplishment of school goals (e.g., school completion). School-based extracurricular activities fit within this framework, as they offer supportive organizational opportunities that allow for unique social interactions (Lin, 2001; White & Gager, 2007). For example, participating in

extracurricular activities enables students to access general network support, such as school organizations and related organizational support, and provides students with opportunities to establish connections with individuals exhibiting prosocial behavioral norms and aspirations (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001). This includes prosocial peers and school-based adults—including teachers and coaches who serve as mentors and leaders—that can lead to relationships and mentorship opportunities that uniquely increase school engagement and achievement (Denault & Poulin, 2008).

Notably, research indicates that early participation in extracurricular activities is a predictor of participation at later stages. For example, an investigation that followed adolescents over a four-year period showed that levels of extracurricular activity participation decreased over time; furthermore, the decrease was steeper at later years for students with lower initial levels of participation (Denault & Poulin, 2009). Similarly, a study that included students of various ages indicated that older adolescents participated in fewer activities than younger adolescents (Simpkins, O'Donnell, Delgado, & Becnel, 2011). Others have found that the percentage of students participating in school-based extracurricular activities decreases modestly across time or that the participation rate is mostly stable (Bohnert et al., 2008; Mahoney, Schweder, & Stattin, 2002; Pederson, 2005). Consequently, youth participation levels are likely to reach a peak in early- to mid-adolescence and then decline over time, and accumulation of school social capital is likely greater for those initiating participation at earlier ages. Therefore, understanding extracurricular activity participation characteristics at earlier stages may be especially beneficial.

Hispanic Students, Social Capital, and Extracurricular Participation

Access to the school social capital appears especially important for Hispanic students. As previously noted, Hispanic students continue to attain relatively low levels of educational achievement and attainment, including lower rates of high school graduation and completion of postsecondary degrees (Aud et al., 2013). Additionally, Hispanic youths likely have lower levels of access to social capital. Social inequality and low socioeconomic status associated with being Hispanic in the United States may hinder access to opportunities to acquire social capital in the home and community settings (Lin, 2001; White & Gager, 2007). For example, social networks of Hispanics have a narrow range of nonfamilial and professional members (Cornwell & Cornwell, 2008; White & Gager, 2007). Hispanic families also often perceive isolation from school systems and school staff (Gamoran, Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2004; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet, 2003), potential sources of school social capital.

Research that suggests that select, individual-level student characteristics impact the relationship between extracurricular activity participation and outcomes further suggests that Hispanic students are likely to benefit from participation in school-based extracurricular activities. Specifically, youths at the greatest risk for school failure benefit more from participation (Holland & Andre, 1987; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). However, before participation in extracurricular activities for Hispanic youths is suggested as one targeted, school-based method of addressing issues that lead to academic failure, an important step is to examine predictors of their participation and their participation characteristics.

When examining variability in extracurricular activity participation across different groups, research shows that African American students are as likely as European American students to participate in most extracurricular activities (e.g., Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Pederson, 2005). Although the use of Hispanic samples in studies of extracurricular activity participation is significantly lower than that of African American and European American samples, results indicate that participation rates are lower for Hispanic high school students (Brown & Evans, 2002; Darling, 2005; Davalos et al., 1999; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007). Little, however, is known about the participation rates of Hispanic students before high school, during the middle school period. This represents a critical limitation, especially when one considers that students are typically first provided opportunities for extracurricular activity participation during middle school and that early participation seems predictive of later participation. Additionally, few studies have explored characteristics within the Hispanic group that further predict participation.

The Current Study

The present study examines patterns of participation characteristics in school-based extracurricular activities among an ethnically diverse sample of middle school students, with a focus on Hispanic students. The first goal was to determine whether student ethnicity predicted extracurricular participation intensity during the middle school years. The second goal was to examine potential differences in participation between students within the Hispanic group. Student demographic characteristics, including sex, ethnicity, economic status, and bilingual status, were examined as they have been associated with different rates of extracurricular activity participation (e.g., Pederson, 2005; Peguero, 2010; White & Gager, 2007). This investigation contributes to the literature by focusing on participation characteristics of Hispanic students at an early stage, when patterns of future behavior and participation appear to be set, and it provides a foundation for continued research on Hispanic youths' extracurricular participation.

Methods

Participants

Participants in the current study were originally recruited from one of three school districts in Texas across two sequential cohorts in first grade during the fall of 2001 and 2002. At the time of initial recruitment, consent was received for 784 participants. From this group, participants were included in the present study if they had not left the study and were in the seventh grade during

the 2007–08 or 2008–09 academic years. Analyses of a broad array of variables indicated that students meeting eligibility criteria for the current study (n = 471) were more likely to come from the first cohort of participants than those original participants not included in the current study (n = 313); however, participants and nonparticipants did not vary on variables relating to performance on a district administered test of literacy, age, sex, ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, or bilingual class placement.

Of the participants, 54.6% were male; the ethnic composition was 25.1% African American (n = 118), 35.5% European American (n = 167), and 39.5% Hispanic (n = 186). Although information regarding specific country of origin for the participants in the Hispanic group was not available, it can be assumed that the majority of participants had origins in Mexico, as recent data indicates that approximately 83% of Hispanics in Texas are of Mexican origin (Brown & Lopez, 2013). The average age of the participants was 13.57 (SD = .37). The economic status for students was based on whether or not they received free or reduced price lunch; 66.0% were economically disadvantaged. A majority of the students in the current study remained within one of the three initial recruitment districts: 52.9% of the participants attended District l, 25.7% attended District 2, and 10.4% attended District 3. The remaining participants were still active in the study, but had moved and attended a district outside of those utilized in the initial recruitment process.

Procedures

In the present study, data collected when students were in the seventh grade were examined. Demographic information (sex, age, ethnicity, and economic status) and school information (district, school, teacher, and grade level) were collected from school rosters. Using an established protocol to ensure standardized data collection procedures, trained research staff also conducted individual interviews during which extracurricular activity participation data were collected. Students were interviewed once during the academic year and received nominal compensation for their participation.

Measures

Extracurricular activity involvement. Based on a previous study that gauged student time use (Shann, 2001), participants were asked to indicate whether they had participated, either after school or during weekends, in any of five different school-based extracurricular activity domains. The assessed activity domains included: sports, fine arts/performance clubs, academic clubs, government, and service clubs. For each activity selected, students were subsequently prompted to estimate the number of hours per week spent in that activity. For data analysis, the five initial categories were collapsed into two summative categories: sports- and non-sports-related extracurricular activities. This was done because much of the literature in this area distinguishes between sports and other activity types, as research suggests that precipitates to participation and participation outcomes between these two categories may be different (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Holland & Andre, 1987; McNeal, 1995). For the current study, participation intensity was examined; participation intensity refers to the amount of time, in hours per week, students spent in activities within each activity category.

Data Analytic Strategy

Student demographic characteristics were examined as predictors for the number of hours per week spent in each activity category. Poisson regression was chosen for the analysis as this method is well suited for data relating to extracurricular activity participation, in which a large percentage of participants indicate spending zero hours participating in extracurricular activities. Estimated marginal means were calculated based on the Poisson regression models to aid in interpretation of the findings. The first set of Poisson regression analyses compared the participation of students across the three ethnic groups. I entered demographic variables, including sex, economic status, student ethnic group dummy variables, and school district dummy variables. The first ethnic group dummy variable compared the Hispanic to the European American group; the second dummy variable compared the Hispanic to the African American group. Additionally, I utilized dummy codes for the different school districts for statistical control purposes. I also examined product term interactions between each study variable; statistically significant interaction terms were to be included in the final model. The second set of regression analyses examined only the participation of Hispanic students. In these analyses, sex, economic status, bilingual status, and the school district dummy variables were included. Statistically significant interaction terms between each variable were to be included in the final model.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics representing the percentage of students participating in each activity type are presented in Table 1. Overall, approximately 50% of the students in the study participated in sports-related activities; about 26% participated in non-sports-related activities. Descriptive statistics representing participation intensity are presented in Table 2.

Ethnic Group Difference in Participation

Sports participation intensity. The first Poisson regression model examined participation intensity in sports-related extracurricular activities. In this case, two of the school district dummy variables were associated with participation intensity. More importantly, after accounting for differences in participation between school districts, three of the demographic variables were associated with sports participation intensity. The mean number of sports participation hours for males was approximately 1.5 times greater (M = 3.51) than for females (M = 2.35, Wald 2 = 55.65, p < .001). The mean number of sports participation hours for non-Hispanic European Americans was approximately 1.6 times greater

Table 1

Percentage of Students Participating in Extracurricular Activities

Group	Sports	Non-sports
Hispanic		
Female	38.6	27.3
Male	49.0	20.4
Total	44.1	23.7
European American		
Female	57.4	29.4
Male	64.7	26.2
Total	61.7	27.5
African American		
Female	38.0	25.9
Male	51.7	26.7
Total	44.9	26.3
Total		
Female	44.4	27.6
Male	55.6	24.1
Total	50.5	25.7

Table 2

Average Hours Per Week Spent in Extracurricular Activities

	Sports	Non-sports
Group	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Hispanic		
Female	2.15 (3.42)	.97 (1.95)
Male	3.22 (4.30)	.64 (1.81)
Total	2.72 (3.94)	.80 (1.88)
European American		
Female	3.44 (4.63)	.87 (1.79)
Male	4.40 (4.36)	.98 (2.04)
Total	4.01 (4.48)	.93 (1.94)
African American		
Female	1.90 (2.96)	.95 (2.24)
Male	3.87 (4.72)	.90 (1.96)
Total	2.90 (4.06)	.92 (2.10)
Total		
Female	2.49 (3.78)	.93 (1.98)
Male	3.83 (4.44)	.83 (1.94)
Total	3.22 (4.20)	.88 (1.95)

(M = 3.57) than for Hispanics (M = 2.30, Wald 2 = 39.23, p < .001). The mean number of sports participation for economically disadvantaged students was approximately 1.3 times greater (M = 3.21) than for not economically disadvantaged students (M = 2.56, Wald 2 = 11.67, p < .01). See Table 3 for these results.

Non-sports-participation intensity. The second Poisson regression model examined participation intensity in non-sports-related extracurricular activities. In this case, only the school district dummy variables were significant, indicating that there were differences in levels of participation based on student school district membership. Conversely, none of the other variables in the model (ethnic dummy variables, sex, or economic status) were predictive of participation in non-sports extracurricular activities. Hispanic students had similar levels of participation intensity in non-sports extracurricular activities as did students in the other ethnic groups, and interactions between variables were excluded from the model as they were insignificant.

Hispanic Group Differences in Participation

Sports participation rates. The third Poisson regression model examined participation intensity in sports-related extracurricular activities of only the Hispanic participants. In this case, two of the demographic variables were associated with sports participation intensity; Hispanic youths who were male and youths who did not have a history of bilingual education had a higher level of participation intensity than those who were female and did have a history of bilingual education; see Table 4 for these results. The mean number of sports participation hours for Hispanic males was approximately 1.8 times greater (M = 2.85) than for Hispanic females (M = 1.59, Wald 2 = 5.00, p < .05). The mean number of sports participation hours for non-bilingual Hispanic participants was approximately 2 times greater (M = 2.93) than for bilingual Hispanic participants (M = 1.50, Wald 2 = 4.84, p < .05).

Non-sports-participation intensity. The fourth Poisson regression model examined participation intensity in non-sports-related extracurricular activities of only the Hispanic participants. In this case, none of the included variables in the model were predictive of differences in participation intensity in nonschool-based extracurricular activities. In other words, student sex and bilingual status were not predictive of participation intensity in nonsports events for Hispanic participants (see Table 4 for results of the model). Finally, interactions between student characteristics were nonsignificant, so they were excluded from the model.

Discussion

Several studies have shown that participation in school-based extracurricular activities is associated with positive outcomes (e.g., Darling, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). If participation in these activities is to be promoted among Hispanic students, an important step is to examine predictors of their participation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to contribute to

Table 3

Poisson Regression Models for Demographic Characteristics Predicting Intensity of Extracurricular Activity Participation at Grade 7

	Sports Activities		Non-sports Activities	
	EM	Wald Chi Square	EM	Wald Chi Square
School District Dummy 1[a]		.01		18.46***
District 1	2.88		3.11	
Other	2.86		1.02	
School District Dummy 2		4.40*		19.43***
District 2	3.15		3.21	
Other	2.60		.99	
School District Dummy 3		8.20**		14.24***
District 3	3.34		3.10	
Other	2.40		1.03	
Ethnic Dummy 1		39.23***		1.03
Hispanic	2.30		1.66	
European American	3.57		1.91	
Ethnic Dummy 2		.85		1.63
Hispanic	2.78		1.65	
African American	2.96		1.93	
Sex		55.65***		.95
Male	3.51		1.70	
Female	2.35		1.87	
Economically Disadvantaged		11.67**		.24
Yes	3.21		1.72	
No	2.56		1.84	

Note: EM = estimated marginal means.
[a]Dummy coded school district variables compare students in each original recruitment district to students not in one of the three original recruitment districts.
*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 4

Poisson Regression Models for Demographic Characteristics Predicting Intensity of Extracurricular Activity Participation at Grade 7 for Hispanic Students

	Sports Activities		Non-sports Activities	
	EM	Wald Chi Square	EM	Wald Chi Square
School District Dummy 1[a]		1.78		1.41
District 1	2.86		1.28	
Other	1.57		0.71	
School District Dummy 2		.87		.07
District 2	2.73		.92	
Other	1.70		.1.07	
School District Dummy 3		1.09		2.09
District 3	1.57		1.43	
Other	2.86		.56	
Bilingual Status		4.84*		0.44
Yes	1.50		.88	
No	2.93		1.10	
Ethnic Dummy 2		.85		1.63
Hispanic	2.78		1.65	
African American	2.96		1.93	
Sex		5.00*		1.50
Male	2.85		.82	
Female	1.59		1.16	
Economically Disadvantaged		0.27		.01
Yes	2.01		.98	
No	2.42		1.00	

Note: EM = estimated marginal means.
[a]Dummy coded school district variables compare students in each original recruitment district to students not in one of the three original recruitment districts.
*$p < .05$.

the literature by examining participation characteristics of Hispanic students in comparison to other groups (i.e., African Americans and European Americans) that have not been understudied and to explore predictors of extracurricular activity participation within the Hispanic group. The study results suggest that, at some of the earliest opportunities to participate in school-based extracurricular activities, Hispanic students were less likely to participate in sports-related activities than were European American students. Additionally, it seems necessary to also examine potential differences in participation within the Hispanic group, as female Hispanic students and Hispanic students with a history of bilingual education participated less intensely than male Hispanic students and Hispanic students with no bilingual education background.

Ethnic Differences in Participation Characteristics

In regards to ethnic group membership, the results of this study extend previous findings that Hispanic high school students participate at lower rates in extracurricular activities than European American students (Brown & Evans, 2002; Davalos et al., 1999). Implications of lower participation in school-based extracurricular activities for Hispanic students are significant. Hispanic students are arguably the most at-risk ethnic group of students in our schools, and the finding that they participate less in

activities that are shown to promote school achievement and other positive outcomes is discouraging. Additionally, this study found that the nonparticipation trend emerges early, at the onset of extracurricular activity participation opportunities in middle school. This finding is especially problematic when one considers the fact that early participation is predictive of later participation (Bohnert et al., 2008; Denault & Poulin, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2002; Pederson, 2005) and that the shift to middle school begins a period of transition in which patterns of adaptation are being reorganized, transformed, and set for future behavior (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). By not participating in school-based extracurricular activities, students in this high-risk group are likely to miss immediate and long-term benefits of extracurricular activities and the accumulation of school social capital.

Reasons for lower participation among Hispanic youths are complex and multiple explanations must be considered. At the broadest level, the extant literature suggests that lower familial socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to lower participation rates; adolescents of low-income families are typically less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than their wealthier counterparts (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Pederson, 2005; White & Gager, 2007). Low SES is associated with a limited ability to afford participation fees and related expenses and with attendance at poorer schools that may offer fewer extracurricular opportunities. Adolescents in families with limited economic resources also often spend their time after school supporting their family through household tasks or by working (Lareau, 2003), limiting their ability to access alternative opportunities. Given that Hispanic students are traditionally more likely to come from low SES backgrounds (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Ramani, 2010), it may be of no surprise that their participation rates are lower. Notably, results of this study further confirmed that, in general, SES status is related to extracurricular activity participation intensity.

Other factors among Hispanics may also play a role in moderating the likelihood of extracurricular activity participation and exposure to school social capital opportunities. For example, recent immigrant status among Hispanic families has been associated with lower rates of participation (Peguero, 2010). Recent immigrants express lower levels of familiarity and comfort with navigation of the school system and communication with school staff, resulting in a limited understanding of additional opportunities available to students (Gamoran et al., 2012; Peguero, 2010; Simpkins, Delgado, Price, Quach, & Starbuck, 2013). Relatedly, an important predictor of adolescent behaviors is whether parents engaged in the same behavior during their childhood. Some immigrant parents may be less familiar with organized extracurricular activities—and less likely to encourage participation in them—if they grew up in places where organized activities were not available (Simpkins et al., 2013; Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011). That recent immigrant parents are likely to have limited English proficiency further complicates this matter, as Hispanic parents' use of English predicts their understanding of schools (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003); this ostensibly limits their understanding of school-based extracurricular activity opportunities.

Hispanic Group Differences in Participation

Results of this study expanded upon previous findings by also highlighting differences in participation characteristics in students within the Hispanic group. Such an examination is necessary as there are significant differences among Hispanic youths based on individual characteristics, so promotion of participation may need to be further targeted. In this regard, cultural orientation may explain results that indicated that (a) Hispanic students with a bilingual education background participated less than Hispanic students with no history of bilingual education and (b) female Hispanic students participated less than male Hispanic students.

Cultural orientation, including levels of acculturation and enculturation, may influence extracurricular activity participation. Although this study did not include a direct measure of cultural orientation, it is reasonable to examine bilingual education status as a related domain; bilingual education status is associated with parents who do not speak English as a primary language and more recent immigrant status, for both parents and their children. Additionally, Spanish language proficiency has been identified as an important component of ethnic identity and cultural orientation (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Thus, Hispanic youths receiving bilingual education are likely to be less acculturated and more enculturated than Hispanic youths with no history of bilingual education. In regards to extracurricular activities, previous research suggested that acculturation positively predicted the time that Hispanic adolescents spent in organized and leisure sport activities (McHale, Updegraff, Kim, & Cansler, 2009), and foreign born and nonnative English-speaking Hispanic high school students, those with ostensibly lower levels of acculturation, have been shown to have lower participation in extracurricular activities than their peers (Peguero, 2010). Other studies have also typically found significant variability in participation based on markers of cultural orientation, with those reporting higher traditional Hispanic cultural orientation also reporting lower levels of extracurricular activity participation (Simpkins, O'Donnell, et al., 2011; Simpkins, Vest, et al., 2011).

There are multiple ways in which cultural orientation may influence extracurricular activity participation. As previously noted, recent immigrant parents may not encourage participation in extracurricular activities if they are unfamiliar with those opportunities. In addition, higher level of enculturation in Hispanic families is associated with parents being more protective of their children; this is exhibited through stronger monitoring and less unsupervised time (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006). Parents with this high cultural orientation also reported that extracurricular activities interfered with quality family time (Simpkins, Vest, et al., 2011). Notably, friendship networks of Hispanic students with a higher proportion of co-ethnic friends or foreign-born Hispanics have been associated with lower

activity participation (Simpkins, O'Donnell, et al., 2011), possibly because they are high on enculturation and lower on acculturation. This may limit social relationships that Hispanic students develop with their peers. For example, one study found that Hispanic students reporting higher enculturation were less likely to report having nonfamilial peers (Roosa et al., 2011). Similarly, results of a different study indicated that Hispanic students were less likely than others to identify having friends or a "best friend" at school (Vaquera, 2009). Hispanic youths with social networks that include few students participating in extracurricular activities are thus less likely themselves to participate in such activities.

In general, previous research indicates that extracurricular activity participation in sports is higher for males than females (Bouffard et al., 2006; McHale et al., 2009). The results of the current study are in line with those of previous studies and suggest that factors contributing to this trend are true for Hispanic females as well. However, in this study the estimated marginal mean for Hispanic female participation was lower than it was for females in all ethnic groups; Hispanic female students participated less intensely in extracurricular activities than non-Hispanic female students. These results are similar to those of another study that found that Hispanic females were less likely to participate in sports (Simpkins, O'Donnell, et al., 2011). Thus, it is important to consider unique cultural factors that may play a role in these findings. For example, Stanton-Salazar, Chávez, and Tai (2001) found that Hispanic girls were less likely to be involved in community-based extracurricular activities; they attributed differences in participation to parents' greater expectations for girls' involvement in household activities. Similarly, Hispanic parents, particularly those indicating higher adherence to traditional gender roles and values, are more likely to monitor girls more than boys (McHale et al., 2009; Prelow, Loukas, & Jordan-Green, 2007). These differences in parental monitoring and in behavioral expectations between boys and girls are reasonably related to different participation rates. Overall, these findings suggest that characteristics of students within the Hispanic group need to be considered when examining extracurricular activity participation and outcomes.

Implications for Practice

Knowledge of differences in participation in school-based extracurricular activities is significant given the literature suggesting beneficial effects for participants. Results from this study suggest areas to consider when promoting this participation. First, it is important for schools to bolster parents' knowledge and value of school-based extracurricular activities. This is especially important for Hispanic parents and others who may have little experience or exposure to extracurricular activities. In bolstering this knowledge, it is critical to discuss what extracurricular activities are available, as well as goals and benefits of participation. This information could be delivered directly to parents as part of parent-teacher meetings or related school functions. However, if parents cannot be reached in this way, targeting adolescents may be useful as they can serve as a bridge between the family and school (Simpkins, Vest, et al., 2011). Second, interventions to increase participation in school-based extracurricular activities among nonparticipating students should be made early, when students are first exposed to these opportunities and their patterns for future behavior are being set. Students at greater risk for school failure, and subsequent low educational attainment, should be especially encouraged to participate. Results of this study indicate that this group includes Hispanic students in general, as well as female Hispanic students and Hispanic students with bilingual education backgrounds.

Limitations

It is important to consider that school contextual variables, in addition to the individual level variables included in this study, may influence the participation characteristics. For example, different schools may provide different participation activities, and participation intensity might be influenced by school size, school ethnic group composition, and other related factors. Although school district codes were utilized in this study to attempt to account for these possibilities, a more nuanced examination of these variables was not possible. Another limitation of this study is that data on student motivations for participating or not participating in school-based extracurricular activities were not available. As such, it is difficult to know why the participation patterns of this sample of students emerged as it did, both between and within the ethnic groups studied. Future studies should explicitly address reasons for nonparticipation. It should also be reiterated that the participants in this study were all from a single state (Texas) in the United States and likely of Mexican origin. Thus, generalizations based on this study should not be made to Hispanic populations in the United States of a different origin from different geographic regions. Additional research from dispersed Hispanic populations is necessary.

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