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High School Students' Attitudes Toward Providing Girls Opportunities to Participate in Sport

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In light of the increasing participation of girls/women in sport, we investigate the attitudes of high school boys and girls toward potential increased opportunities for girls' to participate in sport. There has been little research on high school students' attitudes toward girls' sport participation decomposed by gender and athletic status. We find that, on average, high school students are supportive of increased opportunities for girls to participate in sport. Girls are more supportive than boys on average. While there is no difference among girls by athletic status, male competitive athletes show the most negative attitudes toward opportunities for girls to participate in sport compared with male noncompetitive athletes. Lastly, racial minority groups express positive attitudes toward increased opportunities for girls to participate in sport compared with whites.

Considérant la participation accrue des filles et des femmes en sport, nous investiguons les attitudes des jeunes garçons et filles face à la plus grande participation des filles en sport. Nous avons trouvé qu'en moyenne, les étudiants et étudiantes de l'école secondaire sont en accord avec la participation accrue des filles en sport. En moyenne, les filles soutiennent plus cette idée que les garçons. Quoiqu'il n'existe pas de différence entre les filles selon le statut de participation sportive, les garçons impliqués en sport compétitif ont les attitudes les plus négatives en regard de la participation accrue des filles en sport, comparativement aux garçons impliqués en sport récréatif. Enfin, les jeunes des minorités raciales ont des attitudes positives en comparaison de celles des blancs.

Girls and women actively participate in sport more today than they ever have in the past (Stevenson, 2010). In 1971–72 for example, approximately 3.7 million boys participated in high school athletics, compared with less than three hundred

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thousand girls. By 2008–09 however, girls' level of high school sport participation increased to just over 3.1 million compared with just over 4.4 million boys (The National Federation of State High School Associations, 2009). Currently one in three girls are active in high school athletics (Stevenson, 2007), and women's intercollegiate sports teams constitute 52.9% of all NCAA championship sports (Vicente, 2006).

In light of the increasing participation of girls/women in sport, we investigate the attitudes of high school boys and girls toward providing increased opportunities for girls to participate in sport. This is an interesting group to examine given the greater equality of sport participation in high school. There is little research on high school students' attitudes toward girls' sport participation decomposed by gender and athletic status, though there is some research on students' attitudes toward gender and sport. In addition, understanding attitudes toward providing girls more opportunities to participate in sport is an important indicator of the acceptance of girls' sport participation. We further ask; does a student's attitude toward girls' sport participation depend on being an athlete? Last, we ask, how are sociodemographic characteristics of students associated with attitudes toward girls' sport participation? We use hierarchical modeling on the Educational Longitudinal Study's (ELS 2002) baseline sample to answer these questions. We locate our discussion within the previous research on attitudes toward girls' sport participation before the analysis of our results.

Background

What attitudes do boys and girls hold toward girls' sport participation? Recent research on younger boys and girls attitudes toward girls' sport participation suggests there is little support. Zittleman (2008) found that middle school students believe that an advantage of being a boy is being able to play sports. They added that sport was not even mentioned in relation to girls. There is a clear male advantage recognized by both boys and girls regardless of athletic status. In another study, McCallister, Blinde, and Phillips (2003) interviewed fourth and fifth grade girls and found that 41% of the girls describe athletes as males. In addition, the female students questioned whether girls even belong in athletics (McCallister et al., 2003). Shakib and Dunbar's (2002), in their study of younger boys and girls' attitudes toward gender and sport participation, discovered that both boys and girls believe girls are not capable of competing with boys. Schmaltz and Kerstetter (2006) also confirmed that among 8, 9, and 10-year-olds, most sports are perceived as gender-neutral yet a few sports still remain sex-stereotyped (e.g., football is masculine and figure skating is feminine). In another study of high school students, Alley and Hicks (2005) observed that students hold stigmatizing attitudes toward athletes who participate in gender nontraditional sports. Female athletes participating in nontraditional sports (e.g., karate) were described as more masculine, whereas male athletes participating in nontraditional sports (e.g., figure skating) were described as more feminine (Alley & Hicks, 2005; see also Matteo, 1986). Attitudes toward girls' equal opportunity to participate in sport are somewhat different among older boys and girls in the few studies that focus on this age group. Hardin and Whiteside (2009) reported that young men and women (aged 15–26) support equality in sports for men and women, and support women having the right to play sports.

In addition, by high school, sport becomes extremely hierarchical. Students must "tryout" to play on interscholastic teams. To stay competitive, students often will play community organized sports in the off season to maintain their skills and keep competitive. To our knowledge, there is no research that examines what athletes, particularly competitive athletes, think of providing further opportunities for girls to participate in sport. Given that competitive athletes are both male and female, one has to ask if the attitudes toward girls' participation would differ for male and female athletes. Harry ([1995] 2001) found that male college students learned sexist and homophobic attitudes through sports participation. Therefore, we can expect that male interscholastic athletes will have the most negative attitudes toward girls' increased sport participation.

Female athletes may identify as athletes, but they may feel alienated by some sports. For example, while many young women play nontraditional, aggressive sports such as ice hockey (Theberge, 2003), Hardin and Whiteside (2009) discovered that the "girls playing ice hockey" narratives they examined reinforced the image of the athlete as male. Competitive female athletes, then, may experience a conflict between being/feeling feminine and being an athlete, and engage in what's labeled the apologetic defense. The apologetic defense involves overemphasizing feminine characteristics (Cahn 1994; Theberge 2003). Malcom (2003), however, demonstrated that not all girls experience conflict between their feminine and athlete identities and engage in the apologetic defense. Only girls in the early stages of adolescence (age 12–13) show increased concerns with displaying feminine behavior though girls age 15 and 16 also show more concern than preadolescent girls. Ross and Shinew (2008) examined the female/athlete paradox directly by interviewing 14 division 1 college female athletes. They found that while competitive female athletes recognize the behaviors associated with traditional femininity, they are comfortable developing a personal notion of feminine behavior that works for them, which allows them to integrate femininity and sport. Therefore, female high school competitive athletes, who are mostly post adolescent, yet not as mature as college athletes may express this conflict by not supporting increased sport participation for girls, but then again, they may not be conflicted. Regardless, they will be more supportive than their male athlete counterparts. Thus, we expect there may be an interaction effect between gender and competitive athlete status.

In sum, among children, being an athlete is still equated with being male. High school students appear to support girls' participation in some sports. We will now examine what individual factors might further shape the attitudes toward increasing the opportunities for girls' participation in sports.

Factors Associated With Attitudes Toward Girls' Sport Participation

There is little research examining if attitudes toward girls' opportunities to participate in sport differ by racial group. According to Kauffman and Wolff (2010) athletes of color are more welcoming of female sport participation. In addition, minority groups tend to hold more liberal, meaning less hierarchical or hegemonic, attitudes in general. For example, whites hold more negative attitudes toward affirmative action compared with racial minorities (Bobo, 1998; Kravitz & Platania, 1993). Racial minorities have been shown to hold more concerned attitudes toward

environmental issues than whites (Harmon, 2009). Whites and Blacks, however are more supportive of homosexuals' civil rights than are other racial groups (Ruel and Campbell, 2006) suggesting, we should not assume all minorities are more liberal on all issues compared with whites. More relevant to the current topic, racial minorities have been found to be more supportive of gender equity than are whites (Cokley et al., 2010). Inferring from this, we expect minority students to be more supportive of girls' opportunities to participate in sport than whites.

There is little evidence indicating how social class affects attitudes toward female sport participation; however, previous research finds that socioeconomic status is not related to feminist identification (Cowan, Mestlin, & Masek 1992; McCabe, 2005; Renzetti, 1987). Fan and Marini (2000, p. 279) found that youth who come from highly educated families with mothers working outside the home, hold more egalitarian gender-role attitudes compared with other youth. Coleman (1961), McNeal (1999), and Videon (2002) all claimed that students from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to play sports than their peers. Veenstra (2007) studied sporting and social class practices in Canada and the United States, and found income to be related to sporting activity. In addition, individuals that identify as rich and engage in social and culture activities are highly involved in sport both as participants and spectators (Wilson, 2002). Sport participation differences by social class do not necessarily reflect social class differences in students' attitudes toward girls' sport participation, but they suggest that those from the lower social classes may be more conservative or less supportive toward girls' opportunities to participate in sport.

Past research indicates that urbanicity is positively related to identification as a feminist (McCabe, 2005). Powers et al. (2003) find that southerners are less likely to hold egalitarian attitudes regarding gender. Thus, potentially, there is reason to believe, geographic location may affect attitudes toward girls' sport participation opportunities as well.

In sum, based on inferences from a reading of the literature on attitudes toward girls' sport participation, the following are our hypotheses regarding student attitudes toward girls' opportunities to participate in sport:

H1. High School girls will hold more positive attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport compared with high school boys.

H2. Competitive athletes will hold more negative attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport compared with nonathletes.

H3. Male competitive athletes will hold more negative attitudes toward providing girls opportunities participate in sport compared with female competitive athletes.

H4. Minority groups will express greater support for providing girls opportunities to participate in sport compared with whites.

Methods

We use the Educational Longitudinal Study 2002 (ELS 2002) produced by the National Center for Education Statistics (2006). The ELS 2002 is designed for the purpose of monitoring the transition from tenth grade to postsecondary education and the labor force over a ten year span (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The

ELS 2002 used a two-stage probability selection process; first selecting schools with probability proportional to size (response rate 67.8%), then selecting approximately 26 sophomores per school from a list of all eligible enrollments, with an oversampling of Asians and Hispanics. Eligibility was restricted to the nonphysically or mentally disabled, and those proficient in English language skills. In the baseline year, which we use for this paper, the survey interviewed 15,325 high school sophomores in 751 schools (one school held no students) for a response rate at the second stage or student-level of 87%. We limit our sample to coeducational schools that offered sports and had at least five respondents per school to perform a clustered multilevel analysis. We eliminated 2,213 students because they did not respond to the feminist sport attitude items that we use as dependent variables (more about this later).

We use a large number of independent variables in our analyses and there is some item nonresponse on each variable. To analyze the data using listwise deletion would mean dropping many cases that are only missing on one or two variables. Thus, we imputed values for all missing cases on the independent variables using multiple imputation procedures in SAS, which assumes the data are missing at random (MAR) and which therefore, produces consistent, asymptotically efficient and normal estimates (Allison, 2002). We estimated the value of each missing case on the independent variables by drawing plausible random samples of the missing values. In other words, missing data were filled in using an expectation-maximization routine to create a complete data set. We created five complete and different data sets in this way. Then each data set was analyzed using standard statistical procedures, and the estimates from each data set were combined to yield pooled estimates and their standard errors. This procedure results in valid statistical inferences that properly reflect the uncertainty due to missing values (Yuan, 2000). Our final sample included 9,890 students within 693 schools.

The cases we dropped on the dependent variables however, may not be MAR. The measures we use as dependent variables were at the very end of a very long survey instrument, thus students who were slower or had a shorter attention span may be more likely to have not finished it in time, and thus may be missing. We examined patterns of missingness on the dependent variables to determine if and how our subsample is less representative of the population. In our analysis of missingness, white girls are somewhat overrepresented in the sample. Moreover, as suspected, those with lower test scores and lower socioeconomic status were more likely to be missing on the dependent variables. Importantly, the sport participation variables do not predict missingness on the sport attitude outcomes. The groups most likely to be missing were minority boys, rural residents and those from the south and the west. We include urbanicity, region of country, test scores, and SES in the models because they predict missingness, thus reducing the bias introduced by nonresponse. Sampling weights were used to adjust for the complex sampling design, but also to minimize the effects of item nonresponse. We are confident that we took the appropriate measures to address sample problems before analysis.[1]

Constructs

The ELS 2002 survey includes three questions that ask students whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree on the participation of girls in sports: (1) "some sports should be just for boys", (2) "for most sports, girls should

have the opportunity to be on the same team with boys", and (3) "girls should have the same opportunities in sport as boys". The items appear to reflect increasing the types of sport participation opportunities for girls rather than simply asking about attitudes toward girls' sport participation. We reverse coded the second item and then summed the three items into a single scale. The scale ranges from 3 or low support for girls' increased sport participation to 12 or high support for girls' increased sport participation. This variable is standardized with a mean of zero and standard deviation of one. The Cronbach Alpha for the three items is .60, which is a little low. This suggests that there is some noise in these items. Sensitivity analyses, however find that the noise added does not change the findings in any substantial manner.[2] Given that the items hold together quite well, we label this attitudes toward girls' increased opportunities for sport participation.

The ELS 2002 survey asks respondents if they play a variety of team and solo sports at the competitive and intramural level. Another question asks how often students play sports outside of school. We created three sport participation dummy variables from these questions. First, we created a variable for respondent plays at least one interscholastic sport (1) versus does not play any interscholastic sports (0). It turns out that all of those that play interscholastic sports also play extensive levels of community sports. Therefore, this dummy variable indicates playing competitive interscholastic and community sports. A second dummy variable distinguishes those that play competitive sports in the community, but not interscholastically. Lastly we created a dummy variable for students who play intramural sports, but no interscholastic or competitive community sports.[3] The reference category are students who play no sports at all.

We include a dummy variable for female (1) with male (0) used as the reference category. We include an interaction between female and competitive athlete to distinguish between male and female athletes.[4] We create five indicators for race: Black, Hispanic, multiracial/Native American, and Asian, with white used as the reference category.

We include controls at the individual level as mentioned previously to deal with missing data, and to specify the model, but we do not show these variables in our tables. We include a dummy variable for whether the student works and whether the student participated in nonathletic school activities.[5] We include standardized test scores which consist of a composite of math and reading scores. Test scores are the average of the standardized mathematics and reading test scores that are restandardized to a national mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. Socioeconomic status is an index created by the ELS personnel and includes family income, mother and father's education, and mother and father's occupation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006).

At the school level, we control for whether the school is in an urban or suburban location with rural areas as the reference category. We created dummy variables for Catholic school and private school with public school used as the reference category, not shown in the regression results.

Analysis

SAS v9.2 proc mixed procedure to estimate two-level models with a random intercept as students are nested within schools. The multilevel model predicts individual-level responses to attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to

participate in sport as a function of individual characteristics and the aggregate school-level characteristics. We use hierarchical models as they have the advantage of properly estimating autocorrelated errors, partitioning variance into its within- and between-school components, and modeling within school differences in the attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport. The model is:

$$\gamma_{ij} = \alpha_j + \beta_j \chi_{ij} + \mu_s$$

Where γ_{ij} corresponds to the attitude toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport where respondent *i* is in the *j*th school, $\beta_j \chi_{ij}$ is a vector of explanatory variables and coefficients that predict the attitudinal level, and μ_s represents the random effect associated with schools. A negative coefficient can be interpreted as a lower support toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport, while a positive coefficient means a greater support toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport.

Results

Table 1 contains descriptive information about the dependent, independent, and control variables at the individual-level and school-level. The girls' increased opportunities in sport participation scale ranges from 3 to 12, and has a mean of 8.75. Our sample is 52% female; 68% play competitive interscholastic and community sports, another 14% play competitive community level sports only and 3% play intramural sports. Our sample consists of Asians (4%), multiracial/Native Americans (5%), Blacks (11%), Hispanics (14%), and whites (66%). The students have an average score on their standardized tests of 51.3 with a standard deviation of 9.9. Students have an average standardized SES index of .06 with a standard deviation of 0.74. A little more than a third (39%) of students hold a job and 51% of students are involved in nonsport activities.

Most of our students attend public schools (92%), 5% attend Catholic schools, and 3% attend secular private schools. Most of the schools are located in suburban areas (52%), 28% are in urban areas, and 20% in rural areas. Finally, 19% of the schools are located in the Northeast, 25% are located in the Midwest, 30% are located in the South and 26% are located in the West.

Table 2 presents results of random intercepts multivariate regression model on attitude toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport. Model 1 shows that high school girls express attitudes that are significantly more supportive than are high school boys (b=.71) net of athletic status which supports hypothesis 1. Interscholastic athletes' attitudes are significantly less supportive of increased opportunities for girls' sport participation (-.17) net of gender, which supports hypothesis 2. Participating in community or intramurals sports is not significantly associated with attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport.

Model 2 introduces an interaction between gender and interscholastic sport participation as it was the only significant athlete status variable in Model 1. Given the interaction term, the intercept can be interpreted as the score for male noninterscholastic athletes. Female noninterscholastic athletes continue to hold significantly higher attitudes (b=.59) toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport; they score over half a standard deviation higher on the scale compared with male

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Attitude and Independent Variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range
Attitude toward Providing Girls Opportunities to Participate in Sport[a]	8.75	1.90	3–12
Independent Variables			
Female	0.52	0.50	0–1
Interscholastic Athlete	0.68	0.50	0–1
Competitive Community Athlete	0.14	0.35	0–1
Intramural Athlete	0.03	0.17	0–1
Non athlete	0.15	0.34	0–1
Asian	0.04	0.20	0–1
Multiracial	0.05	0.22	0–1
Black	0.11	0.31	0–1
Hispanic	0.14	0.35	0–1
White	0.66	0.47	0–1
Standardized Test Scores[b]	51.30	9.92	20.91–81.04
Socioeconomic Status[b]	0.06	0.72	-2.11–1.98
Work	0.39	0.49	0–1
Other Activity	0.51	0.50	0–1
School-Level Variables			
Public School	0.92	0.27	0–1
Catholic School	0.05	0.21	0–1
Private School	0.03	0.29	0–1
Urban	0.28	0.45	0–1
Suburban	0.52	0.50	0–1
Rural	0.20	0.40	0–1
Northeast	0.19	0.39	0–1
Midwest	0.25	0.43	0–1
South	0.30	0.46	0–1
West	0.26	0.44	0–1

Note. Number of students: 9,890, number of schools: 693

[a] Outcome is standardized with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1 for all analyses.

[b] Continuous variables were centered around their mean before all analyses (mean = 0).

nonathletes, net of individual and school level characteristics. Male interscholastic athletes hold significantly lower attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport (b=-.28) compared with male nonathletes. Female interscholastic athletes, on the other hand, hold significantly higher attitudes toward increased opportunities for girls' sport participation compared with male nonathletes, (b = .22).

Model 2 also adds controls for individual-level and school-level characteristics. All of the racial minority groups show significantly greater support for increased opportunities for girls' sport participation compared with whites except Hispanics

Table 2 Estimates from Random Intercept Regression Models of Attitudes toward Providing Girls Opportunities to Participate in Sport on Gender and Competitive Athletic Status: Raw coefficients and (Standard Errors)

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-0.27***	-0.29***
	(0.02)	(0.04)
Female	0.71***	0.59***
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Interscholastic Athlete	-0.17***	-0.28***
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Competitive Community	-0.01	-0.03
Athlete	(0.03)	(0.03)
Intramural Athlete	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.06)	(0.06)
Female*Interscol. Athlete		0.22***
		(0.04)
Asian		0.13*
		(0.05)
Multiracial		0.22***
		(0.04)
Black		0.08*
		(0.04)
Hispanic		0.05
		(0.03)
Socioeconomic Status		-0.03*
		(0.02)
Urban		-0.003
		(0.04)
Suburban		0.01
		(0.03)
Northeast		0.06
		(0.04)
Midwest		0.05
		(0.03)
West		0.08*
		(0.04)
	Random Intercept	0.038***
		(0.005)
	Residual	0.832***
		(0.012)
	-2LL	29302.9
	Student N = 9,890	
	School N = 693	

Note. Males, male athletes, public school, rural, and south are omitted categories. Standard errors are in parentheses.
[a]In a stepwise entry of variables into a series of nested models, the effects for gender, athlete status, and gender *athlete status never changed, therefore, we present a single model.

*** p<=.0001, **P<=.01, *p < .05

(Asian=.13; Multiracial =.22; Black =.08) net of gender, athletic status, and the control variables. This supports hypothesis 4. Net of the other variables, as socioeconomic status increases by one unit, attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport significantly decrease by .03 standard units. This is the opposite of what we expected. Attending schools in urban or suburban areas does not have an effect on attitudes compared with students attending schools in rural areas controlling for gender, athlete status and individual-level characteristics. Students attending schools in the west are significantly more supportive toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport (b=.09) compared with students attending southern schools. Students from the northeast and Midwest do not hold significantly different attitudes compared with southern students.

The random intercept is significant across both models suggesting between-school variation in attitudes, though the estimates are quite small. Model 2 is an improvement in model fit over Model 1. The residuals are quite large and remain large across both models. This is consistent with the large level of noise in our scale, and also suggests that there is more work to be done to explain attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport.

Figure 1 presents the estimated attitude toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport by sex and interscholastic athlete status. While the regression model suggests there are differences between female nonathletes and female interscholastic athletes, substantively as Figure 1 shows, the differences between them are minor. High school girls, regardless of athletic status, are equally supportive of increased opportunities for girls' sport participation. Male nonathletes, on average, hold attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport that are about .6 deviations lower (8.46) than female nonathletes' average attitude. Male intramural athletes hold attitudes that are slightly lower than that of male nonathletes (8.44), followed by male community athletes (8.43), and lastly by male interscholastic athletes (8.18), almost a full deviation below that of female nonathletes. Hypothesis 3 is supported by this figure. All of these scores, however, fall in the neutral to supportive range of the scale for increased opportunity for girls' sport participation.

Discussion

Given the increase in girls' sport participation, this paper examines current high school students' attitudes toward providing high school girls' opportunities to participate in sport. We began this study with four hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that girls would demonstrate more supportive attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport than would boys, and this was supported by the analysis. We further hypothesized that competitive athletes would be less supportive of increased opportunities for girls' sport participation than non athletes. This too was supported in our findings. However, when we interacted gender by athlete status, it turns out that this finding was dominated by the attitudes of male competitive athletes. Female competitive athletes are not less supportive of increasing opportunities for girls' sport participation than are female nonathletes. Lastly, we hypothesized that minority groups would hold more supportive attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport. There is evidence in this analysis to support this last hypothesis as well.

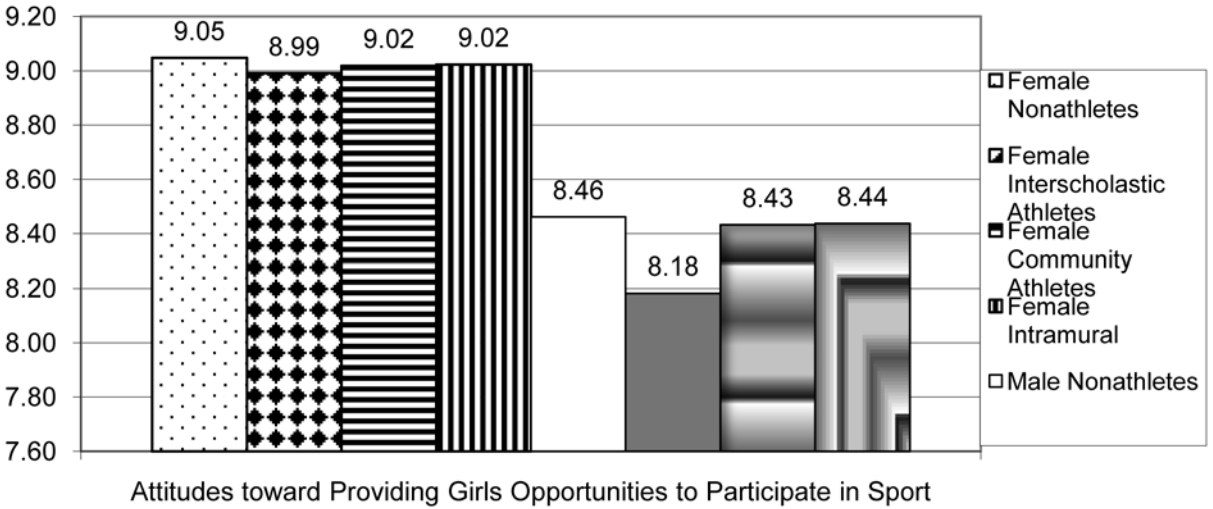

Figure 1 — Estimated Attitudes toward Providing Girls Opportunities to Participate in Sport (based on Model 2) by Gender and Athletic Status.

One interesting finding is that the attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport are considerably supportive on average across both male and female high school students. This argument is not consistent with findings regarding gender and sport found among younger students (McCallister et al., 2003; Shakib & Dunbar, 2002; Zittleman, 2008). This suggests a possible developmental growth between younger children and teenagers. Or it may reflect a cohort effect. It cannot be determined with the data at hand. Regardless, even male competitive athletes hold fairly positive attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport. The attitude scale ranged from a possible score of 3 or extremely negative attitude to 12 or extremely positive attitude. An average score of 8.18 for male interscholastic athletes corresponds to a minimum of agreement with two of the three items that make up the scale. If the items that made up the scale were measured better, we might speculate that girls' participation in sport has become more acceptable. Given that these are not the best measures, we recommend more research with more rigorously operationalized measures before making such a conclusion.

We could speculate further and suggest that Title IX played a role in the positive support for increasing opportunities for girls' sport participation. Congress passed Title IX of the Educational Amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Acts in 1972. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination by any education program or activity receiving federal funds (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). One aspect of it indicated that men and women would receive equitable treatment, opportunities, and funding in high school and college athletics. When Title IX was signed into law, only 1 in 27 girls participated in high school sports but by 1978, already participation increased to 1 in 4 girls participating (Stevenson, 2010). It is estimated that girls' sport participation rates have increased more than 500% between the late 1960s and the early 1980s (Cahn, 1994). We speculate that this may have had a strong effect on changing attitudes toward girls' sport participation, though we cannot demonstrate this with the data used.

We find no real differences in attitudes between female athletes and female nonathletes. In the literature, younger girls' and boys' attitudes suggest a belief that sports are meant for boys only (Zittleman, 2008), or that girls are not capable of competing with boys (Shakib & Dunbar, 2002). Blinde et al. (1994) and McClung and Blinde (2002) argue that female athletes may unknowingly accept their subordinated position in sports reinforcing patriarchy. Thus, we find little support for the apologetic defense argument in this study. Rather, our findings are more in line with Malcom's (2003) findings that not all girls experience conflict between their feminine and athlete identities. Or, if they do, it is not associated with their attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport. It is possible that, in line with Ross and Shinew's (2008) findings that female college athletes have developed a notion of feminine behavior that works for them, these high school female athletes may have begun the process of reconciling their femininity with their athlete status.

Race and class also presented us with some confusing first results. Except for Hispanics, the racial minority groups expressed more positive attitudes toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport than did whites. This is in line with Cokley et al.'s (2010) finding that minorities are generally more supportive of gender equity than are whites (Cokley et al., 2010). But not all minority groups differed from whites. Socioeconomic status operated in the opposite effect than

we anticipated. Despite upper class students' greater participation in sport, these students are less supportive of increased opportunities for girls' sport participation. Whites are the privileged race, upper classes are the privileged class, and men are the privileged gender. These findings in combination with literature on racial differences in attitudes suggests that a lack of privilege may make a group, on average, more sympathetic toward other groups that also lack privilege whether it be race, class or gender. More research to develop this is needed.

Our study does have some limitations. First, with cross-sectional data, it is impossible to do more than speculate, as we have done. We do not know if the attitudes lead to the sport behavior or if the sport behavior has led to the attitudes that we are examining. Second, we are using secondary data and thus are limited to the items available in the data set, and the problems associated with the administration of the instrument. The sport attitude scale we used consisted of the last items included on the survey and over 3,000 students ran out of time completing the study and thus were missing. We also adjusted our models with the variables that predict missingness on these items. The scale also has considerable noise, but sensitivity analyses show that the findings on individual items do not differ from the scale findings. Despite these limitations, this research is one of the only studies to examine attitudes of high school students toward providing girls opportunities to participate in sport decomposed by gender and athletic status.

Notes

1. We also ran comparable analyses for the complete cases and found no substantive differences in our results.

2. We ran ordered logistic models on each item separately and on an averaged version of the scale. The results were consistent across the various operationalizations and modeling techniques. Due to the ease of interpreting regression on continuous outcomes, we chose to present findings from the summed scale.

3. Sensitivity analyses were performed to determine if solo versus team competitive sports mattered. It did not and therefore, we combined solo and team into a single construct. We further examined if athletes who played intramural sports responded similarly to athletes playing competitive sport. Intramural athletes held attitudes that were more similar to nonathletes than competitive athletes, which is consistent with our argument and thus were considered nonathletes.

4. It is unknown if women who hold positive attitudes toward girls' sport participation are more likely to play sports or if it is athletic participation that influences these attitudes. The ELS 2002 data only allows the researcher to examine the relationship between gender, athletic participation, and sport participation attitudes.

5. Students were asked if they participated in band or chorus, plays or musicals, student government, academic honor society, yearbook or newspaper, service club, academic club, hobby club, and vocational club.

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