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PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY STUDENTS ATTENDING ASSISTED AND PRESTIGE SCHOOLS IN TRINIDAD[1]

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Participation in 19 extracurricular activities was investigated in 1,312 secondary school students attending assisted and/or prestige schools in Trinidad. The sample was 60% male, 21% African descent, 41% East Indian descent, and 30% Mixed descent. Research questions focused on mean number of activities and participation rates in activities by ethnicity and gender, and the relationship between extracurricular participation and student achievement and attitudes. Results indicated that ethnic and gender groups participated in the same number of activities on average, although there were gender-stereotypical rates of participation in some activities. Participation in steelband, solo instruments, debating, and chess were associated with higher student achievement, as was length of time on student council. Females reported playing in steelbands at significantly higher rates than males, and students of East Indian descent reported higher rates of involvement in cricket and lower rates in steelband than their peers of the same gender.

Extracurricular activities play an important role in the lives of secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, there are national school-based competitions in sporting events such as football (soccer), cricket, basketball, hockey, and swimming, and non-sporting events such as drama and debating. Schools also compete against each other annually in steelband competitions and biennially in the national music festival. When all of these activities are put together, it is clear that they require a substantial amount of time on the part of students. However, as in many other areas of education, there is little research on students' participation in extracurricular activities in Trinidad and Tobago.

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On the other hand, several studies have been conducted in the US on extracurricular activities and, more specifically, on the relationship between students' participation in extracurricular activities and other variables of importance in the educational arena. Some studies have focused on specific populations such as athletes, whereas others have focused on outcome variables such as personal and social development, academic achievement, and participation in activities related to delinquency. High school students have been the most frequently studied age group in the US, with the majority of the research focusing on the relationship between participation in athletics and academic achievement.

Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Marsh (1992) examined the effects of participation in extracurricular activities (PEA) during students' last two years of high school. Data on 10,613 students from the second follow-up of the sophomore cohort of the High School and Beyond study were examined for this study. He found total PEA to be positively related to 13 of 22 outcome variables studied. Total PEA was positively correlated with global self-concept, academic self-concept, taking advanced courses, time spent on homework, post-secondary educational aspirations, GPA, parental involvement, absenteeism, senior-year educational aspirations, being in the academic track at school, college attendance, parental aspirations, and high school seniors' occupational aspirations.

Silliker and Quirk (1997) also examined the effects of PEA on the academic achievement of high school students. They were interested in seeing whether PEA enhanced students' academic performance. Participants consisted of 123 high school students who participated in interscholastic soccer during the first quarter of the school year but were not involved in any extracurricular activity during the second quarter. The results of the study indicated that participants had higher grade point averages in the first quarter (i.e., during soccer season) than in the second quarter (after soccer season). Student attendance was also higher during the soccer season, but this finding was not statistically significant.

Most recently, Broh (2002) looked at the impact of PEA on the academic performance of high school athletes. She analyzed data on 12,578

students from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988. She reported finding academic benefits, as well as personal and social benefits from participating in sports. However, the results also indicated that academic performance had different relationships with different activities. For example, she reported that participation in interscholastic sports and music clubs was most consistently associated with high achievement, whereas participation in student council, drama, and yearbook had less consistent relationships with high achievement. On the other hand, Broh found that participation in cheerleading, intramural sports, and vocational clubs was associated with lower achievement.

Research on Ethnic Minorities

Several researchers in the US have examined the participation of ethnic minorities in extracurricular activities. Lisella and Serwatka (1996) looked at the relationship between PEA and academic achievement in minority students attending urban schools. Participants consisted of 766 8th grade students of African American, Hispanic, or American Indian descent attending poor inner city schools who had been included in the NELS study. The pattern of extracurricular involvement for minorities was similar to that of the general student body, as reported by other researchers, and was also similar to the pattern for White peers attending the same inner city schools. Lisella and Serwatka also reported that male minority students who participated in extracurricular activities had significantly lower academic achievement than non-participating males, whereas a smaller majority of females participating in extracurricular activities had higher academic achievement than their non-participating counterparts.

Schreiber and Chambers (2002) looked at data from a stratified sample of 8,305 8th and 10th grade students included in NELS. Extracurricular activities were categorized based on whether they were in-school or out-of-school, academic or non-academic, and organized or unorganized. Results indicated that all of the activity types predicted academic achievement, but their effects were different across school years, academic content areas, and ethnicity. In sum, studies of ethnic minority students suggest that the relationship of extracurricular activities to academic achievement in ethnic minority groups differs by gender, age, and ethnicity.

Extracurricular Activities and Risk Status

In 1986, using the High School and Beyond database, Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock reported that dropouts had participated less in athletics in school than students who had not dropped out, and Finn (1989) argued that students' participation in school activities in general led to greater identification with school and lower probability of school dropout. Recent findings have supported a link between PEA and risk status. For example, Yin, Katims, and Zapata (1996), in a study of 1,200 low-income, at-risk Mexican American middle school students, found that these students were less likely to participate in *organized* after-school activities, and that participation in unsupervised activities was related to increased substance abuse.

Eccles and Barber (1999) examined student participation in prosocial activities, team sports, school involvement, performing arts, and academic clubs using participants from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (N = 1,259). They found that involvement in prosocial activities and team sports was related to doing well educationally, but involvement in prosocial activities was related to low participation in risky behaviors, whereas participation in team sports was related to increased alcohol consumption. Other authors have also reported findings that are nuanced. Mahoney (2000) found that PEA was related to lower dropout and arrest rates for criminal activity in high-risk students, but noted that decreases in antisocial behavior was dependent on the social networks developed in the extracurricular activities. In another study, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) noted that extracurricular activities were related to reduced dropout rates for at-risk students, but had much lower impact on students who were not considered to be at risk.

The Current Study

As indicated above, the research on participation in extracurricular activities in the US has yielded mixed results. There are data that suggest that PEA is beneficial for students, particularly those who are at risk in school, and is related to positive developmental outcomes (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh, 1992; Silliker & Quirk, 1997), but other research suggests that the benefits may differ by type of extracurricular activity (e.g., Broh, 2002; Yin et al., 1996) or student risk status (e.g., Mahoney,

2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). In this study, we examine PEA in a group of students from assisted and prestige schools in Trinidad and Tobago, a group that can be described as the least at risk, at least academically, on the basis of their educational assignment.

Several research questions were examined. The first question examined differences in mean PEA by gender and ethnicity. The second question focused on the relationship between PEA and academic achievement, school-related activities (e.g., turning in homework), and more general attitudes toward school and the future. The third question examined extracurricular participation rates by gender and ethnicity. Although tradition suggests that there are traditionally male (e.g., football) and female (e.g., dance) extracurricular activities, there is little literature that suggests that ethnic groups will differ along specific lines.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 1,312 secondary school students (59.4% male) with a mean age of 14.6 years (*SD* = 1.8) attending 11 assisted or prestige secondary schools in Trinidad. Five of the schools were assisted all-female schools (3 from the north, 2 from the south, and 1 from central Trinidad); five were assisted all-male schools (3 from the south and 2 from the north); and one school was an all-male government prestige school from north Trinidad. In sum, 56.7% of the participants attended schools in the north, 36.1% attended schools in the south, and 7.2% attended the school in central Trinidad. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 19, and all seven years of secondary schooling were represented, with the examination year classes, that is, Form 5 (5.5%) and Upper 6 (2.9%), contributing the smallest numbers. Participation across the other grade levels ranged from 15% to 24% of the sample. Participants were of several different ethnicities, including of African descent (20.5%), of East Indian descent (41.2%), of Mixed descent (29.7%), and Other (8.5%).

Individuals of African descent were under-represented, given their percentage in the population, and individuals of Mixed descent were over-represented. It is not clear if these percentages are an accurate representation of students attending the upper-tier schools in Trinidad, or a reflection of a societal shift in demographics that will first be

reflected in the younger members of the society. Students in the "Other" category indicated that they were Caucasian, Syrian, or unspecified Other. Seventy-one percent of the sample reported their fathers' education level and 75.8% reported mothers' education level, with the medians for both groups of parents being completion of A'Level examinations.

Measures

Students were administered a questionnaire which contained questions on demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity), single questions on academic achievement and homework completion, questions on participation in different extracurricular activities, the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APSR, Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001), and the Measure of Perceived Life Chances (MPLC, Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1990). Students reported their perceived academic achievement on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *Below 40%* average; 2 = *40 to 49%*; 3 = *50 to 59%*; 4 = *60 to 69%*; 5 = *70 to 79%*; 6 = *80% or* higher) labelled Marks. The question on Homework asked students to rate their homework completion rates over the last year using a 5-point scale with the following anchors (*Never, Rarely*, *Sometimes*, *Often*, and *Always*).

Students were asked to indicate if they participated in 19 activities: basketball/netball, cadets, chess, cricket, dance, debating, drama/acting, football (soccer), hockey, junior achievers, music (choral), music (solo instrument), music (steelband), photography, religious clubs, scouts, student council, swimming, and table-tennis. There was also an option for *Other*, indicating that they participated in an activity not included in the list of 19. For each of the 19 activities that they indicated participating in, respondents were asked to report how long they had participated in the activity. Two psychologists, a high school principal, and a teacher trainer came to consensus on this list of common extracurricular activities that students participated in.

The Almost Perfect Scale-Revised

The APSR (Slaney et al., 2001) is a 23-item scale designed to measure perfectionistic attitudes, and consists of three subscales: High Standards, Discrepancy, and Order. High Standards is a 7-item adaptive perfectionism subscale, which assesses individuals' striving to reach

personal goals (e.g., *I try to do my best at everything*). Order, a 4-item adaptive perfectionism subscale, reflects respondents' concerns with organization and neatness (e.g., *I think things should be put away in their place*). Discrepancy is a 12-item subscale measuring maladaptive perfectionism. This subscale assesses respondents' failure to live up to the standards that they set for themselves (e.g., *I am hardly every satisfied with my performance*). APSR items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (7), with higher scores indicating higher levels of each construct.

There is substantial reliability and validity information for APSR scores (Slaney et al., 2001; Vandiver & Worrell, 2002). Slaney et al. reported support for the three-factor structure in two independent college samples using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and internal consistency estimates for the subscale scores ranged from .83 to .92 (*Mdn* = .86). APSR scores also had correlations in the appropriate direction with other perfectionism scales as well as measures of depression and worry. Vandiver and Worrell (2002) reported similar findings for APSR scores with school-aged academically talented adolescents. They reported moderate to high internal consistency estimates for APSR scores and support for the three-factor structure, as well as significant correlations between APSR subscales and students' academic achievement.

Vandiver and Worrell (2002) also found that Item 5, a High Standards item, did not load on any of the three factors and this finding was replicated in a Trinidad and Tobago sample (Worrell & Cammack, 2003). Thus, only six items were used for High Standards in this study. In keeping with the recommendation of Worrell (2000), internal consistency estimates of scores are reported for all of the subgroups examined in the study, and these reliability estimates are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the estimates were in the moderate to high range as in previous studies (High Standards *Mdn* α = .77; Order *Mdn* α = .79; Discrepancy *Mdn* α = .86).

The Measure of Perceived Life Chances

The MPLC (Jessor et al., 1990) is 10-item unidimensional scale that assesses the subjective likelihood of a number of future events (e.g., what are the chances that you will graduate from high school or own your

own home). Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale with verbal and numerical anchors indicating the respondent's subjective probability that a certain event will happen, ranging from *Very Low* (1) through *About Fifty-Fifty* (3) to *Very High* (5). Jessor et al. reported that students with higher perceived life chances were less likely to engage in risky behavior, and Worrell, Latto, and Perlinski (1999) found that academically talented students had higher scores than at-risk youth on this measure. Since the academic events are predicated on the American school system, these items were reworded to match school completion markers in Trinidad and Tobago (e.g., attaining at least 5 CXC passes, completing A'Levels), resulting in a 12-item measure. This modified version of the MPLC yielded two factors, labelled *academic* perceived life chances (APLC) consisting of 3 items, and *general* perceived life chances (GPLC) consisting of 9 items. The reliability estimates for APLC and GPLC scores by subgroup are also presented in Table 1 (APLC *Mdn* α = .78; GPLC *Mdn* α = .83).

Procedure

Participating schools were members of the School Leadership Center of Trinidad and Tobago, and were asked to participate by the Director of the Center. Teachers administered the questionnaires to all students in classrooms at their home schools, and the questionnaires were completed anonymously. Teachers were provided a master administration copy to standardize administration procedures and were available to answer questions as the students completed the measures. Completed forms were collected and sent via mail to the School Leadership Center of Trinidad and Tobago for analysis. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Pennsylvania State University.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Major Variables in Study

Variable	Male			Female		
	M	SD	α	M	SD	α
African Descent (171; 98)						
Age	15.07	1.84	-	15.01	1.97	-
Marks	4.23	1.06	-	4.68	0.89	-
Homework	2.80	0.92	-	3.08	0.83	-
Total Extracurricular	2.89	1.95	-	2.79	2.28	-
High Standards (6)	5.95	1.08	.86	6.07	0.77	.75
Order (4)	5.32	1.13	.70	5.07	1.28	.84
Discrepancy (12)	3.90	1.29	.86	3.82	1.19	.86
Academic PLC (3)	4.20	0.83	.78	4.55	0.59	.78
General PLC (9)	4.15	0.59	.84	4.17	0.46	.79
East Indian Descent (321; 220)						
Age	14.35	1.78	-	14.10	1.63	-
Marks	4.31	0.96	-	4.94	0.80	-
Homework	3.14	0.89	-	3.30	0.75	-
Total Extracurricular	3.08	2.28	-	2.66	2.28	-
High Standards (6)	6.00	0.73	.70	6.03	0.82	.79
Order (4)	5.40	1.20	.79	5.44	1.18	.78
Discrepancy (12)	4.19	1.20	.86	3.88	1.31	.90
APLC Score (3)	4.28	0.68	.77	4.50	0.63	.81
GPLC Score (9)	4.14	0.52	.81	4.26	0.55	.87
Mixed Descent (230; 160)						
Age	14.37	1.79	-	14.70	1.90	-
Marks	4.12	1.12	-	4.67	0.88	-
Homework	3.02	0.92	-	3.04	0.84	-
Total Extracurricular	3.29	2.71	-	2.84	2.81	-
High Standards (6)	5.95	0.78	.67	5.84	0.94	.81
Order (4)	5.30	1.14	.71	4.98	1.31	.83
Discrepancy (12)	4.04	1.23	.86	4.17	1.25	.88
Academic PLC (3)	4.15	0.80	.75	4.36	0.74	.75
General PLC (9)	4.19	0.61	.87	4.08	0.55	.84
Other (57; 55)						
Age	14.80	2.10	-	15.16	1.78	-
Marks	4.19	1.22	-	4.69	0.81	-
Homework	3.00	0.91	-	2.89	0.69	-
Total Extracurricular	2.69	3.28	-	2.34	1.93	-
High Standards (6)	5.71	1.00	.82	5.82	0.77	.74
Order (4)	4.96	1.29	.81	5.26	1.06	.73
Discrepancy (12)	3.66	1.02	.80	4.11	1.23	.89
APLC Score (3)	4.16	0.85	.71	4.38	0.69	.79
GPLC Score (9)	4.21	0.46	.77	4.09	0.50	.80

Note: Numbers in parentheses next to groups indicate the number of male and female participants, respectively. Numbers in parentheses next to scales indicate the number of items making up the subscale. APLC = Academic Perceived Life Chances; GPLC = General Perceived Life Chances.

Results

As indicated in the Method section and Table 1, males outnumbered females in each ethnic group, but the gender by ethnic differences were not significant, X2 (1, 3) = .15, p .05. Males and females also did not differ significantly in age, F (1, 1295) = .60, p > .05, but there were age differences by ethnic group, F (3, 1295) = 13.72, p < .001, with students of African descent (M = 15.05) being older than students of East Indian (M = 14.25) and Mixed (M = 14.51) descent, and students of Other descent (M = 14.98) being older than students of East Indian descent. These differences reflected, at maximum, a mean difference of 9.6 months. Females (M = 4.79, SD = .85) reported higher Marks than males (M = 4.23, SD = 1.05), t (1249) = -9.97, p < .001), and as in other studies (e.g., Vandiver & Worrell, 2002; Worrell & Cammack, 2003), students reported higher scores on High Standards and Order than on Discrepancy. Scores on APLC and GPLC were also high. Most of the variables were normally distributed; however, scores on High Standards and APLC were negatively skewed (both at -1.2) and positively kurtotic (2.3 and 1.2, respectively).

Mean Number of Extracurricular Activities

Students reported participating in two to three extracurricular activities, on average, across gender and ethnic groups. Means in Table 1 indicate that East Indian and Mixed descent males were on the high end of the distribution, and that East Indian and Other descent females were on the low end of the distribution. However, a univariate ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences on number of extracurricular activities reported by gender, F (1, 1092) = 3.51, p > .05, or ethnicity, F (3, 1092) = 1.29, p > .05, nor an interaction between these two variables, F (3, 1092) = .26, p > .05.

Relationship of PEA to Achievement-Related Variables

The relationship of PEA and achievement-related variables was examined in three ways. First, point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated between participation/non-participation in an activity on the one hand and Marks and Homework on the other. For these analyses, the significance level was set at .001, given the large number of correlations involved, and only correlations accounting for at least 9% shared variance (i.e., r > .3) were interpreted. Neither Marks nor

Homework was significantly related to participation in any of the 19 activities. Second, the relationship between number of years participating in an activity and Marks, Homework, High Standards, Order, Discrepancy, APLC score, and GPLC score was examined. Marks was positively correlated with length of time on student council (r = .31, p < .001), and Homework had significant negative correlations with length of time in photography (r = -.56, p < .001) and length of time in scouts (r = -.35, p < .001).

Finally, independent t-tests were used to examine the differences between participants and non-participants in the 19 activities on Marks and Homework. For this family of analyses, the critical alpha level was set at .002 to control for Type I error. Given the significant difference between males and females on Marks, this variable was included in these analyses. Significant differences at the .001 level were found for three comparisons. Individuals who played solo instruments and chess reported higher Marks than their counterparts who did not participate in these activities, with moderate effect sizes (Cohen's d) of .31 and .37, respectively. Students who played chess also reported turning in Homework more frequently than those who did not (Cohen's d = .42).

Extracurricular Participation Rates

To ascertain the specific extracurricular participation rates by gender and ethnicity (e.g., what percentage of males of African descent play football), data were analyzed using 4 (ethnicity) by 2 (participation/non-participation) cross-tabulations for each of the 19 extracurricular activities, and calculated separately for males and females. These results are presented in Table 2. The critical alpha for these analyses was .001. The highest participation rates for the entire sample were in the areas of football (35.2%), cricket (29%), swimming (28.7%), and religious clubs (25.8%). Additionally, 51.4% of the respondents indicated that they participated in an extracurricular activity not included in the 19 options provided. Activities with the lowest participation rates included photography and cadets for males, and photography, scouts, cadets, and hockey for females, all with rates of less than 5%. Four percent of the sample reported not participating in any extracurricular activities at all.

Gender and ethnic comparison

Significant differences between gender and ethnic groups are flagged in Table 2. Female participation rates were about 1.5 to 3 times greater than

males in dance, the three music categories, drama/acting, and debating, and males participated in chess, football, cricket, and table tennis at rates that were 1.5 to 3 times greater than females. Additionally, the male rates in scouts and cadets were 7 and 11 times greater, respectively, than female rates in these activities. Ethnic group differences were found in steelband, hockey, cricket, and other participation, and as can be seen in Figures 1 to 4, gender and ethnicity seemed to interact in these activities.

In steelband (Figure 1), female participation rates are higher than males for all ethnic groups; however, both male and female East Indian participants participated at far lower rates than other groups, with East Indian females participating at rates comparable to Mixed and Other descent males, and East Indian male rates approaching zero. Rates for hockey (Figure 2) are generally low with seven of the eight means being less than 10%. Females reported participating at lower rates than males in every group but the Other descent category, which reported the only participation rate of almost 15%. The pattern for cricket (Figure 3) is the mirror image of the steelband pattern, with males participating at higher rates than females, and East Indian males and females participating at the highest rates, and East Indian female rates paralleling those of African and Other descent males.

Finally, males reported greater participation in activities other than the 19 that were listed (Figure 4). However, the male participation rates fluctuated considerably by ethnic group, ranging from a high of 74% (East Indian descent) to a low of 42% (Other descent). However, females in the three identified ethnic groups had similar participation rates, with the Other descent group reporting less participation in other activities. Moreover, males of African and East Indian descent reported participating in other activities at substantially greater rates than females, but the gender differences for the other two groups were less than 10%.

Table 2. Extracurricular Participation Rates by Gender and Ethnicity

Variable	Male					Female				
	AD	ED	MD	OD	Total	AD	ED	MD	OD	Total
Dance[a]	9.0	9.7	9.4	7.5	9.3	31.5	28.9	40.9	30.0	33.1
Solo Instrument[a]	19.2	23.9	20.2	21.8	21.6	37.8	31.0	27.1	30.0	31.0
Choral Music[a]	13.9	16.0	19.5	9.4	16.1	40.9	30.2	32.0	18.0	31.4
Steelband[ab]	15.6	1.3	10.3	9.3	7.7	31.8	11.1	26.5	22.0	20.5
Student Council	8.4	14.2	5.9	13.0	10.4	13.8	7.7	11.6	7.8	10.0
Drama/Acting[a]	6.1	11.8	15.8	10.9	11.7	19.0	15.2	26.9	23.5	20.2
Debating[a]	6.1	7.2	5.4	3.8	6.2	16.5	10.1	12.0	14.0	12.2
Chess	12.8	20.0	12.7	11.3	15.6	6.1	11.8	6.3	4.1	8.4
Photography	1.2	2.3	4.1	5.7	2.8	2.4	2.0	2.1	4.2	2.3
Religious Clubs	20.0	27.6	24.7	20.0	24.5	25.0	35.2	28.6	34.0	31.4
Scouts[a]	23.6	20.1	27.4	19.6	23.0	7.4	0.5	4.2	4.2	3.2
Cadets[a]	5.5	4.3	5.0	3.8	4.7	1.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.4
Junior Achievers	9.8	7.9	8.2	11.3	8.7	8.8	10.3	9.2	10.4	9.7
Football[a]	57.3	46.2	55.0	46.2	51.3	16.3	18.5	18.3	14.9	17.7
Hockey[b]	5.2	2.7	8.0	5.1	5.1	3.8	1.0	5.0	14.9	4.1
Basketball/Netball	27.5	18.4	15.4	21.1	21.1	22.2	13.8	15.5	6.3	15.0
Cricket[ab]	24.5	54.8	33.9	24.0	39.9	14.6	26.9	13.7	8.5	19.0
Swimming	32.1	26.8	37.0	27.5	31.1	34.9	28.1	35.7	29.4	31.7
Table Tennis[a]	19.6	22.6	22.4	11.8	21.1	4.9	14.4	7.4	2.2	9.5
Other[ab]	63.8	73.9	57.3	42.3	64.3	50.0	51.0	49.3	39.2	49.0

Note: AD = African descent; ED = East Indian descent; MD = Mixed descent; OD = Other.
[a]Significant differences by gender at the .001 level.
[b]Significant differences by ethnicity at the .001 level.

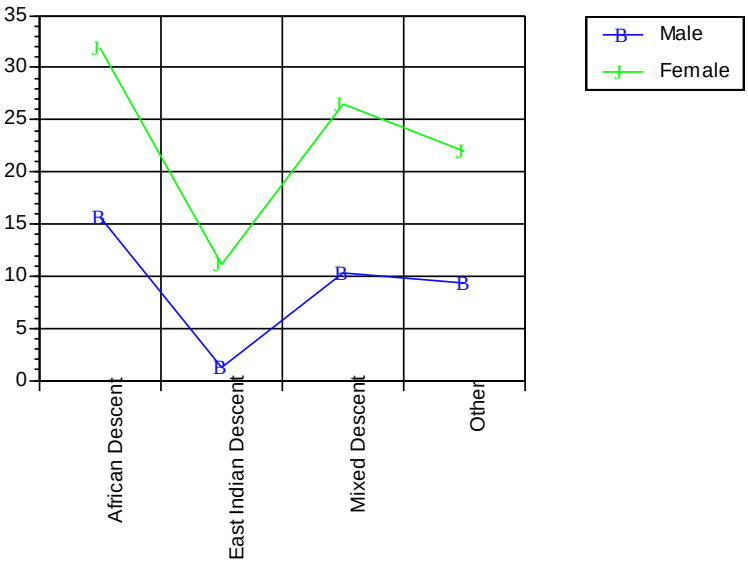

Figure 1. Participation rates in steelband by gender and ethnicity.

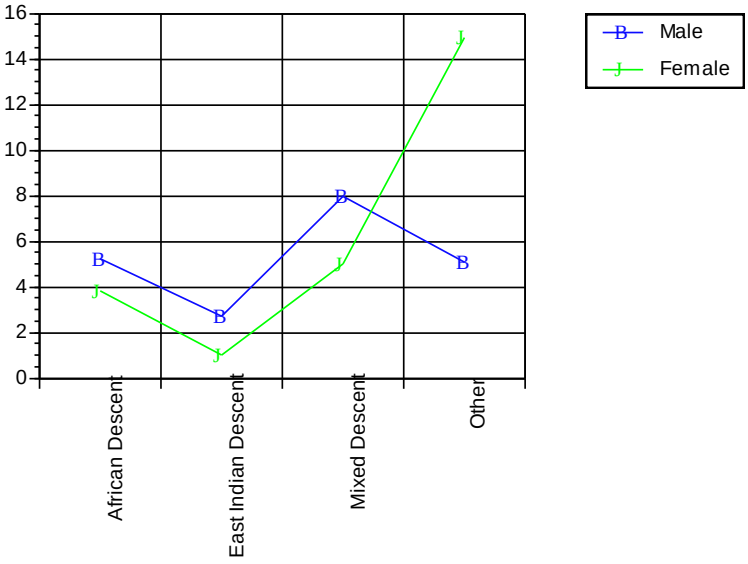

Figure 2. Participation rates in hockey by gender and ethnicity.

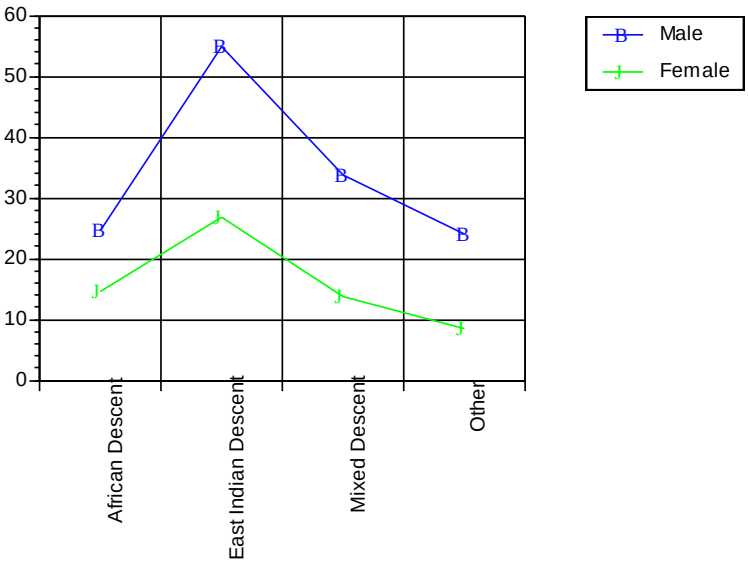

Figure 3. Participation rates in cricket by gender and ethnicity.

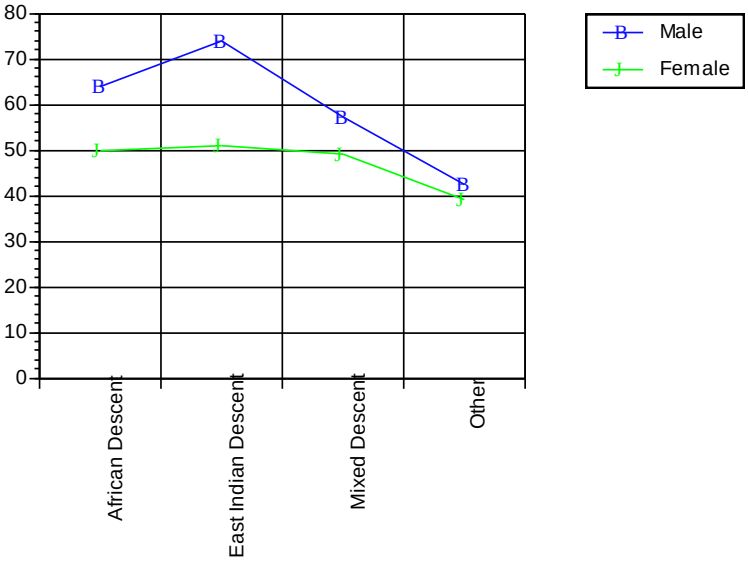

Figure 4. Participation rates in other extracurricular activities by gender and ethnicity.

Discussion

This paper examined PEA in students attending assisted and prestige secondary schools in Trinidad. The results indicated that the majority of participants engaged in extracurricular activities, with participation rates in some activities falling along gender-stereotypical lines. Differences by ethnic group were also evident for some activities. The data also indicated that males and females as well as ethnic groups do not differ in the mean number of extracurricular activities that they engage in. Although there were no significant relationships between the number of activities that students participated in and student achievement or frequency of turning in homework, students who played a solo instrument and students who played chess had higher perceived achievement than non-participants, and chess players also reported turning in homework more frequently than students who did not play chess. Additionally, length of time participating in student council had a positive relationship with perceived achievement, and length of time participating in scouts and photography had negative relationships with turning in homework.

PEA and Perceived Achievement

The findings of this study suggest that the number of extracurricular activities students participate in is modest—two to three—and bears no relationship to their perceived achievement and, in most cases, PEA was not related to students' perceived achievement at all in contrast with some of the findings in the US (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Lisella & Serwatka, 1996; Marsh, 1992; Silliker & Quirk, 1997). This conclusion is tentative at best, however. First, participants were from the top-tier secondary schools in Trinidad, and it is probable that the perceived academic achievement variable is restricted in range. Moreover, we do not know if students at other types of schools participate in a similar number of extracurricular activities and this needs to be examined in subsequent work. However, the findings were similar to the more nuanced findings of Broh (2002) in that the relationships that were found differed by activity. Paralleling Broh's findings, participation in one musical category was associated with higher achievement, as was length of time on student council. However, unlike Broh's study, neither positive nor negative relationships were found between sports or drama and student achievement.

Gender Differences

The data from this study indicate that a substantial majority of secondary school students participate in extracurricular activities, and neither gender seems to be at a disadvantage with regard to finding activities to participate in. As suspected, participation rates indicate that there are some activities that are still predominantly male (e.g., scouting, cadets, chess, football, cricket, and table tennis) and others that are predominantly female activities (e.g., dance, choral music, drama/acting, and debating). As is evident from these lists, the activities that are predominantly male are more physical, consisting of sports and activities that take place outdoors, whereas the activities that are predominantly female are more cultural, less physical, and primarily indoor activities, suggesting that there is still a substantial gender gap. However, the picture is a little more complicated than these activities suggest. For example, activities that did not have gender differences in participation range included active sporting activities (e.g., hockey, basketball/netball, and swimming) and some less active activities (e.g., religious clubs, junior achievers and student council) as well.

One surprising finding is the participation rate for females in steelbands. Early in their history, steelbands were equivalent to gangs in the US—note names like Renegades and Desperadoes—and as such were traditionally male in membership. However, the increased national emphasis on the steelband as a cultural icon of Trinidad and Tobago and its incorporation into schools have resulted in a sea change in membership, with female participants outnumbering their males counterparts by almost 300%.

Ethnic Differences

As indicated in the introduction, we had no hypotheses about ethnic differences in PEA at the outset. Nonetheless, some ethnic differences were found. East Indians had much lower participation rates than other ethnic groups in steelband and much higher participation rates than other groups in cricket, and these differences were found for both males and females. Traditionally, the East Indian population has had lower participation rates in Carnival-related activities than other groups, and this pattern may explain the lower steelband participation rates for this

group. However, there have been reports of increased participation by East Indians in Carnival in general, and studies in the future may yield a different picture. Unfortunately, there are no previous data on PEA to compare the current data to. Also, East Indian participation in the other musical activities was comparable to their peers. The finding in cricket, particularly for females, was also unexpected, and may be related to East Indian participation rates in cricket nationally and at the international level (i.e., the West Indies team), but this is an area that requires further consideration.

Limitations and Conclusion

This study had several limitations. First, participants were a sample of convenience and may not be representative of assisted and prestige schools in Trinidad, although the size of the sample does mitigate this concern to some extent, as does the distribution of the schools. Additionally, junior and senior secondary schools and traditional five-year government schools were not included, and PEA at these schools may be different. Third, the number of participants who indicated that they participated in an extracurricular activity other than the 19 ones listed was substantial and a delineation of these activities by type may lead to different conclusions. Certainly, future studies should include all types of secondary schools in both Trinidad and Tobago, and should allow students to write in activities that are not listed so that we can see what categories these activities fall under. Limitations notwithstanding, this study makes an important contribution to the educational literature in Trinidad and Tobago, in that it provides a baseline for comparing student PEA in other schools currently, and for examining changes in PEA over time in future studies.

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