

Challenges and opportunities for participation in extracurricular school futsal: perceptions of high school girls^{1 2 3}

Desafios e oportunidades para a participação no futsal escolar extracurricular: percepções de alunas do ensino médio

Desafíos y oportunidades para la participación en el fútbol sala escolar extraescolar: percepciones de estudiantes de secundaria

Oliveira, Flavia Volta Cortes de ⁽ⁱ⁾

Ricci, Christiano Streb ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

Marques, Renato Francisco Rodrigues ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

⁽ⁱ⁾ Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP, Faculdade de Educação Física, Campinas, SP, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0412-7880>, flavolta1@yahoo.com.br

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP, Faculdade de Educação Física, Campinas, SP, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4934-0244>, cstricci@hotmail.com

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Universidade de São Paulo - USP, Escola de Educação Física e Esporte de Ribeirão Preto - EEFERP, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brasil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7807-3494>, renatomarques@usp.br

¹ Responsible Editor: Carmen Lúcia Soares. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4347-1924>

² References correction and bibliographic normalization services: Andreza Silva (Tikinet) – revisao@tikinet.com.br

³ English version: Pamela Rossini (Tikinet) – traducao@tikinet.com.br

Abstract

The participation of women in men preserve sports, such as futsal, is permeated by struggles for spaces and legitimacy, including in the school context. For boys, moving is valued, whereas girls are taught to be quieter, making it difficult to access certain sports activities. This study aimed to analyze the challenges and opportunities for women participation in extracurricular school futsal, from the perspective of high school students from a private school. Data were obtained with semi-structured interviews and analyzed based on the Grounded Theory. The school's initiative to offer the opportunity for practice, the students' heterodox attitudes, the support of parents, and feeling of belonging to the group, make it possible for girls to play a legitimate role in futsal at this school.

Keywords: Sport, School, Futsal, Gender, Education.

Resumo

A participação das mulheres em modalidades esportivas de reserva masculina, como o futsal, é permeada de lutas por espaços e legitimidade, inclusive no contexto escolar. Para meninos, movimentar-se é algo valorizado, enquanto meninas são ensinadas a serem mais quietas, dificultando o acesso a determinadas práticas esportivas. O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar os desafios e oportunidades para a participação no futsal escolar extracurricular na perspectiva de alunas de ensino médio de uma escola privada. Os dados foram produzidos em entrevistas semiestruturadas e analisados com base na Teoria Fundamentada. A iniciativa da escola em oportunizar a prática, as atitudes heterodoxas das alunas, o apoio dos pais e o pertencimento ao grupo possibilitam às meninas uma atuação legítima no futsal nesta escola.

Palavras-chave: Esporte, Escola, Futsal, Gênero, Educação.

Resumen

La participación femenina en modalidades deportivas masculinizadas, tales como el fútbol sala, está impregnada de luchas por la conquista de espacios y legitimidad, incluso en el contexto escolar. Para los niños, mostrarse dinámicos y en movimiento es algo que se valora, mientras que las niñas son educadas para mantener actitudes pasivas, lo que dificulta su acceso a ciertas prácticas deportivas. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar, desde la perspectiva de las alumnas de secundaria de una escuela privada, los desafíos y las oportunidades existentes para la participación en el fútbol sala escolar extracurricular. Los datos se obtuvieron a partir de entrevistas semiestructuradas, y fueron analizados de en base a la Teoría Fundamentada. La iniciativa de la escuela a la hora de ofrecer oportunidades para la práctica, las actitudes heterodoxas de las alumnas, el apoyo de los padres y la pertenencia al grupo son factores que posibilitan que las niñas jueguen un papel legítimo en el fútbol sala en la escuela.

Palabras clave: Deporte, Escuela, Fútbol Sala, Género, Educación.

Introduction

The school is an environment conducive to the production and incorporation of knowledge, being dialectically structured by the agents involved, while also structuring their forms of action (Hodkinson, Anderson, et al., 2007). Due to its insertion in a specific society and historical moment, each school teaches values and contents arbitrarily legitimized in its own culture in a relational way to the social space in which it is located (Hodkinson, Biesta, et al., 2007). Thus, the school spaces present several forms of social relations, reproducing some forms of domination and inequality. Examples are the differences in access to learning opportunities between boys and girls in sports practices (Altmann et al., 2012; Altmann et al., 2018).

Observing boys being encouraged to incorporate certain forms of movement culture in an early, legitimate, and diversified way is quite common. On the other hand, girls often end up being educated in contexts linked to less active practices, which do not require much vigor or physical effort, disfavoring their performance and motor learning (Daolio, 2002). For boys, moving is something valued even in school spaces, while girls are often taught to be quieter and more reserved (Altmann et al., 2018).

This scenario legitimizes and reproduces symbologies linked to male physical dexterity to the detriment of female passivity and body fragility (Coakley, 2017), hindering women's access and participation in many sports activities (Anderson & White, 2018), both at school (Altmann et al., 2018), and in other scenarios (Delaney & Madigan, 2009; Oliveira et al., 2019).

The participation of women in sports traditionally preserved⁴ for the male public, for example soccer and futsal in Brazil, is permeated by stories of struggles for spaces and social legitimacy, and forms of male domination not always explicit (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2016), including in the school context (Oliveira et al., 2017). Consequently, women soccer and futsal players face countless barriers, of which we can mention the few places for training, remain engaged in practice, and prejudice against a stereotype that removes them from the standards of femininity expected by society (Goellner, 2005; Mascarín et al., 2017).

⁴ The term "male preserve" was first used as a reference to rugby clubs in the 1970s to conceptualize and express norms of masculinity of the English middle and emerging classes. These norms were derived from the *ethos* of an elite with military roots, the source and support of the English concept of gentleman (Dunning & Sheard, 1973).

There is a *doxa*, that is, “the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 57), linked to the differences between men and women in the sports field. This structure is shown to be the main limiting factor for them to be fully involved in the sport (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2015), a social space, historically and mostly dominated by men (Coakley, 2017).

In this sense, both the school and the sports field have a symbolic division between men and women (Altmann et al., 2018; Daolio, 2002; Pfister & Bandy, 2018), defined by a process of domination (Bourdieu, 2014a) that enshrines biological differences in the face of a paradox of binary configuration, under which men are male, manly and strong, whereas women are feminine, fragile and docile (Goellner, 2007). In this context, a sport is more likely to be adopted by a given group to the extent that it does not contradict the stereotyped body scheme, as a depository of a doxic view of the social world (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2015).

To assume that women play sports, but not as well as men, legitimize forms of domination delegating to them a secondary role (Anderson & White, 2018). Considering sports practiced by women as less violent, intense, and vigorous refers to a belief that this is not a legitimate place for them (Coakley, 2017). In this context, men position themselves as the established, orthodox group that watches over the ordinary functioning of social relations, whereas women are the newly arrived, heterodox agents, who seek to transform the prevailing *doxa* (Bourdieu, 2014a).

This binary process of domination also involves a form of stereotyped association between practitioners of a given sport and their sexual orientation (Coakley, 2017). The literature shows that women futsal players seem to be concerned with caring for their hegemonic feminine image as a strategy to better disseminate the team and its sporting achievements, especially since they practice a sport considered as a male preserve (Mascarin et al, 2017). The prejudice that associates certain sports, such as futsal to men (Silveira & Stigger, 2010), and rhythmic gymnastics to women (Boaventura & Vaz, 2010; Pfister & Bandy, 2018), strengthens and reproduces this concern.

Despite this scenario, different pedagogical approaches in the school can produce several behaviors in the groups of students. Such inequalities may be lower in learning cultures in which girls and boys are educated with less differentiation from each other (Altmann et al., 2012). An approach with more egalitarian offers of opportunities for experiences and

appreciation of achievements in the school environment seems to be a differential factor for the body development of boys and girls (Castejón & Giménez, 2015). In this context, the role of the school in contributing or not to avoid or reproduce such differences, besides assisting in the success or failure of the continuity of sports practice by girls, stands out (Altmann et al., 2012).

Within this context, this study aimed to analyze the challenges and opportunities for participation in school futsal in the extracurricular context from the perspective of high school girls from a private school in a country city in São Paulo state.

This study, when investigating the participation of girls in the practice of a male preserve sports modality in the school context, is justified by offering subsidies and related contributions: a) to the ways in which student-athletes perceive the barriers and opportunities related to their sports practice; b) the ways in which such relationships are expressed in the school environment; c) the means and attitudes which participants deal with the barriers and challenges to practice; and d) the participation and influence of the school institution on the practice of futsal by girls. We expect that the results of this study may contribute to future pedagogical interventions regarding the promotion of sports practice by girls in schools, and to reflections regarding the offer of more equal opportunities for social participation between men and women in contemporary society and the influence of school education in this process.

Method

Context:

This work followed a qualitative approach and the Grounded Theory was adopted as a methodological option (Charmaz, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In the case of this study, the data were produced from semi-structured interviews with the study participants: high school girls from a private school in a country city of the state of São Paulo who practice futsal.

This educational institution is part of a national network of Catholic schools and offers a series of optional extracurricular activities to students. Among the sports activities offered to high school students are futsal, dance, artistic gymnastics, handball, and volleyball.

Extracurricular women futsal began at this school with systematic training in the 1990s. At this time, championships that encouraged the continuity of this practice were scarce for girls and thus the teams ceased to exist, leading to an extended period of inactivity. In 2011, the coordinator of the school's extracurricular sports began work to encourage girls to practice futsal. For this, an interclass tournament between the eighth and ninth grades of elementary school was held in the second semester of that year, including the high school classes, in which girls could organize their teams by personal affinities, not necessarily divided by classroom. In 2012, the school took advantage of this moment when some girls were involved with futsal and structured a team for the high school girls.

In 2016, when the interviews of this study were conducted, the team consisted of 12 student-athletes. The interviewed girls voluntarily participated in the futsal team, which represents the school in competitions at regional and national levels. They used to train twice a week, for one hour each day, in the period contrary to that of the curricular classes. The team has a woman coach with a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Sport hired specifically for this group's futsal training.

Participants:

In this study, five student-athletes of school futsal were interviewed. They were named as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 to preserve their identities. The initial contacts were made with the school board and teachers/coaches responsible for the institution's futsal teams, who indicated the dates and the appropriate place for the interviews. Some criteria were followed for the selection of participants, those were high school girls who: a) practiced futsal by the representative team of the school; b) had participated in at least one JEESP⁵ match in 2015 and/or 2016 (this criterion is to ensure a deeper level of involvement of those interviewed with the practice of futsal); c) practice futsal systematically only in the school environment; d) had been participating in the team longer.

⁵The *Jogos Escolares do Estado de São Paulo* (School Games of the State of São Paulo – JEESP) are important due to their scope, involving Primary and Secondary School Units of the State and Municipal Public and Private schools, in addition to the State and Federal Technical Schools. The organization and realization of the JEESP are the responsibility of the State Secretariat of Education; Secretariat of Sport, Leisure and Youth; Secretariat for the Rights of People with Disabilities; and Secretariat of Economic Development, Science, Technology and Innovation.

After presenting the procedures and the voluntary nature of participation in the research, all the interviewed students signed the assent form, and their parents or guardians signed the informed consent form. Both documents were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the home university of the last author of this article.

Data acquisition and analysis:

The interviews took place individually, in person, and at the team's own training site. When more depth was needed for some topic that proved important for the research, a new interview was conducted with the participants.

Due to being semi-structured interviews, the initial question script is a starting point that can be modified during the interview, according to new themes that may arise and are relevant to the research (Minayo, 2006). Therefore, this instrument was continuously reconstructed during the data production and analysis process. From the first round of interviews and transcriptions, the analysis process began, which consisted in some back-and-forth movements between the categories and thematic axes: Microanalysis; Open coding; Axial coding; Selective coding; Validation of the theoretical scheme (Charmaz, 2009).

Results and discussion

From the perception of high school girls who play futsal in the studied school, we could reflect on the participation of women within the sports and school fields, in addition to some of its consequences. The results are presented in two thematic axes (TA): 1) "Perceptions about the women's participation in futsal," having as main categories the conceptions about the legitimacy of futsal practiced by women, the barriers to practice, the abandonment by classmates, the stereotypes and prejudices about sexuality and femininity; 2) "The engagement in futsal: the influences of the family and the school on opportunities for practice and social transformation," with main categories related to the first contacts with the futsal practice, the family influence on the engagement in this sport and the participation of the school in offering opportunities for practice and social transformation.

In this structure, the first axis presents challenges and barriers that involve the practice of futsal by women, whereas the second demonstrates the positive influence of the family and the school on the engagement of students in this sports practice, in addition to the opportunity for social transformation regarding more egalitarian opportunities of sports practice in school.

TA 1: Perceptions about women's participation in futsal

The first aspect evidenced in the interviewees' discourses was the difficulty of legitimizing futsal practiced by women, both at school and in society in general. All participants mentioned that the attention and recognition offered to this sport are scarce, especially when compared with the futsal practiced by men.

I think it's very small [legitimation and disclosure] and it should be bigger. Everything that is connected to soccer⁶ is male only, only boys play soccer, or that it's not a girl's thing. These days my mom said she was taking me to futsal session and her friend said: "But does she play futsal? Wow that's different!" And I said: "Isn't it, right!" And she said she only played volleyball, stuff like that. Not that it's bad for her to just play volleyball, but for her it's weird playing futsal, because it's a woman. (P1)

It's a little different from the boys' [futsal]. Because in the boys' they [school] encourage much more, so much so that they have boys' interclass [tournament], but not girls' anymore. (P2)

When they see a guy playing, they say, "Wow, there's gonna be a futsal game!" When it's girls [futsal] they say "There's gonna be women futsal." Like it's a difference. It's less recognized. There is a difference. (P3)

This small legitimation of futsal practiced by women is greatly related with its labeling as a masculinizing sports practice (Goellner, 2005). Among the consequences of this arbitrary value would be the lack of sponsorships for the teams (Mascarin et al., 2017), especially due to lower media support, besides being associated with the masculinization of women (Silveira & Stigger, 2013).

⁶ Futsal is considered, in this study, as a specific and autonomous sport, different from soccer. However, due to its historical origin in *futebol de salão* and, consequently, in soccer, futsal commonly shares cultural values with soccer (Mascarin et al., 2017). For this reason, in some moments of the text, the approach mode and interpretations about social phenomena specific to these sports shows a semantic proximity. The interviewees, when talking about one, also refer to the other sport. For this reason, in some excerpts of the discourses, soccer was mentioned, sometimes referring to the practice of futsal, sometimes showing a certain generalization of "games with balls on the feet" (Scaglia, 2011, p. 23).

We noticed that the interviewed students position themselves as agents who seek social legitimacy within an androcentric scenario, in which they need to act to subvert the established *doxa* (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2015). Then heterodoxy can be related to women (and adolescent girls) who play, since they are part of a field where men hold power and legitimacy.

For a long time, women were restricted to opportunities for sports practices due to discourses that suggested the loss of female characteristics, or the harm to the generation of children. Historically, soccer and futsal are part of this group of sports that women have been banned from practicing in the past (Mascarin et al., 2019; Salvini & Marchi Junior, 2016). In P1's discourse, we can verify the consequences of this prohibition when it is reported that people perceive with strangeness a woman playing futsal but perceive with normality their participation in volleyball. An interesting discourse in this sense was P3, when it said that people refer to futsal practiced by women differently, with less recognition. We perceive an emphasis on the term "women futsal," indicating that it lacks the same value as futsal practiced by men, without the use of any adjective. That, in turn, is commonly legitimized only as "futsal," based on a *doxa* under which qualifying the sports practiced by men is unnecessary, different from that which involves women.

Currently, despite experiencing a process of greater valorization and material and symbolic recognition (Mascarin et al., 2019; Souza & Martins, 2018), the futsal practiced by women is still on the margins of futsal practiced by men in the realm of legitimacy in our society. Organized and mostly governed by men, women are left restricted spaces in federations, media, gaming spaces, and in encouragement to the practice (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2015). As mentioned by P2, futsal practiced by men receives greater incentive in the school environment, since there is a male but not women futsal interclass tournament.

As for the common idea in society about a girl who plays futsal, most of the interviewees said that those who are not used to watch girls who practice this sport find it strange. Nevertheless, the students show awareness that this fact is something related to the culture of a society. They often believe that people still have this perception, but that this is something in a transformation process.

In relation to other people, no one is used to seeing women playing and, as many as there are, there's a lot of people who still think it's weird [...] there's people who think girls play because they want attention, you know? And I don't think it has anything to do with it either, because we play because we like it, like the boys. (P1)

When a boy and a girl are born, the first thing the girl gets is a doll, and the boy gets a ball [...] she will start or not to enjoy any sport or go to dance, volleyball, that kind of thing [...] My family, for example, never differentiated. It's more a question of how society sees [...] the person who plays [practices some sport]. I think it doesn't change anything. It even gets better, because you're not going to be that little girl who like, any touch she'll start complaining [...] it's more question of how society sees it. (P2)

Sometimes people say, "Wow, you're a girl and you're going to play soccer?" They [futsal women players] stop playing thinking about the opinion of others. Society is very sexist. (P4)

The participants of this study mentioned strangeness on the part of society, and exemplified some habits, as P2 says, regarding the differentiated education between boys and girls, especially by the games usually encouraged. Virility is something culturally expected and related to men and boys, as is frailty to women and girls, and consequently the option for activities that reproduce these values are more usually encouraged and taught (Daolio, 2002).

Symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1983) is perceived in the interviewees' reports when they denounce a masculine view of society (P4). Futsal would fit into these so-called manly practices, and, for this reason, people would be inclined to be surprised when it is a woman practicing it. Nevertheless, the girls who made this choice seem to believe that there is no direct relationship between a sport being masculine or not. As P1 and P2 said, playing futsal is not a problem and any form of estrangement is a perception of society built to reproduce arbitrary and prejudiced values based on a doxic and binary relationship between men and women.

About boys and girls playing together in the context of the school studied, we questioned how the girls entered this male preserve space and whether girl and boy players are differentiated. They said they play together with boys often and that it is not very well accepted by them at first when the girl plays well, since it delegitimizes the pretentious greatest success and legitimacy of men in futsal. Moreover, they believe that even if this is rooted in the culture of a given group, women are seeking to legitimize their achievements in the sports and school field, demonstrating that they have bodies capable of practicing any sport with good performance.

Women are gaining more space, they are playing better, and we are almost at the same level as men [...] we go out to play sometimes, gather the girls to rent a court, and sometimes men stay there looking: “Wow, a lot of women playing.” (P3)

I went to a club and asked the boys if I could play with them. There were me and some of my cousins. Then I managed to steal the ball from one of them and another said: “Wow, are you losing the ball to the girl?” And he said: “Oh, I’m letting her, you know?” (P1)

We notice a process of delegitimization on the part of boys of the sports achievements of girls. Masculinity, as a matter of honor, finds in the sports field a place where arbitrarily established traditional standards are publicly expressed and can be preserved (Elias & Dunning, 1992). The divisions of the social order, more precisely the social relations of domination between men and women, are inscribed as opposing body *hexis*⁷ by principles of division that classify and legitimize the practices between men and women (Bourdieu, 2014b). A struggle for symbolic power in the sports field is clear from this perspective, which, in the case of this study, extends to the school field since the girls place themselves as a group that is improving, performing feats previously reserved for men, and thus gaining space and legitimacy, causing a bother and questioning the current *doxa*.

On the other hand, some interviewees expressed that classmates abandoned the school’s futsal team due to external influence, mainly by parents.

I have a friend who trained with us, she trained for three months and stopped because her father didn’t let her anymore play. He is very sexist, and she does not train with us anymore [...] At first, I was a little scared, you know? I said: “Why doesn’t your father let you play? Mine’s okay with it, why isn’t yours?” And she said she wasn’t going to argue with her father, that he gets angry easy, and there’s no way to fight it. And in a way there isn’t, you know? It’s her against her father. (P3)

Expressions similar to this prohibition by parents can be found in the literature regarding the historical restriction imposed on women in certain sports practices under the claim of physical and emotional fragility (Barreira et al., 2018; Oliveira et al., 2019). The fact that the sporting environment strengthens the “spirit of the male warrior” is underpinned by the logic that sees men and women as beings in opposition. This binary opposition stiffens

⁷ The concept of *hexis* consists in incorporating body forms and postures, which in the long term becomes a visible system of knowledge and social recognition. *Hexis* is a physical or body capital corresponding to an individual disposition and trajectory in addition to a group dimension (Bourdieu, 2014a).

relationships as it tries to determine fixed behaviors directly related to biological sexual differences (Goellner, 2007).

The attitude of the parents mentioned by the interviewed students agrees with what is expected of a patriarchal society that denies women practices that are considered masculinizing. The construction/body presentation of women is the main limiting factor of practices whose basis is the discourse of domination of legitimate agents in the sports field, in this case, men (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2015).

Sexuality also emerged as a prominent theme in the participants' discourse, all of which believe sports has no relationship with sexual orientation, despite been numerous times a form of questioning and even a barrier to practice.

My dad wouldn't accept [her playing futsal], because he's an old-fashioned guy, very sexist. He had friends who were lesbians and played soccer, so he said that futsal was only for lesbian girls, and that I might want to be one in the future for wanting to play futsal. And it was very difficult, because my father didn't accept it because he didn't understand all this. (P4)

The insertion of women in futsal was constituted over time with the confrontation of barriers, some of which related to prejudices about sexuality. There is a recurrent association established in a prejudiced and arbitrary way between women who play soccer and futsal with homosexuality (Mascarin et al., 2017). The participants of this study mentioned that they were repeatedly questioned about their sexuality just for choosing futsal as a sport. This social construction leads to a violent suspicion that women who play soccer and futsal are homosexuals, and the constant reference to this tries to legitimize such a relationship with a false naturality. The students demonstrate this by saying that people make an association that they will go "to the other side" regarding their sexuality, due to practicing a sport of male preserve, as shown P1's speech.

Just because you play, just because you do something different, they think you're going to the other side, for me it doesn't influence anything. (P1)

Women elite futsal athletes (Mascarin et al., 2017) and the Brazilian women rugby national team players (Oliveira et al., 2019) mention that demonstrations of femininity in men's preserve sports are directly linked to a need to be well-seen by the sports market. In this context, the players need to adopt a pattern of femininity close to that hegemonically imposed,

which would facilitate attracting sponsors and spectators to the games, configuring as a form of violence against women athletes. Thus, the sportswoman seeks to incorporate actions from other social spaces into the sports space to legitimize a socially expected femininity and establish themselves in the sports field. This way of incorporating elements belonging to the “being feminine” already recognized, such as behaviors, long hair, or more fitted clothes, seeks to legitimize a body that is both feminine, in its various possibilities of manifestation, and capable of developing characteristics required by the sport, such as strength and resistance (Salvini et al., 2012).

We noted that, both in the discourses of the students interviewed in this study and in that of elite athletes, the discomfort with the prejudiced association between the practice of male preserve sports and women homosexuality. However, while demonstrating dissatisfaction, the athletes end up subjecting themselves to the symbolic and binary violence of presenting a single hegemonic form of femininity, something implicitly incorporated and externalized also among the interviewed students, according to P3’s example.

It’s got nothing to do with it. I’m super feminine and I’ve been playing futsal for three years, I play handball, but I’m totally feminine. It doesn’t interfere with anything. It has to do with, I don’t know, if you like to run, if you like to jump, you’re good at it, but not as an aesthetic form, or something else. Sometimes they ask if I’m gay because I play futsal. It’s very sexist. (P3)

This manifestation reflects the need to justify itself, even in a position of disagreement with the current *doxa*, recognizing the actions of violence and reproducing the hegemonic female stereotype that traverses and influences the sports and school fields.

TA 2: The engagement in futsal: the influences of the family and the school on opportunities for practice and social transformation

Regarding the forms of first contacts of the participants with the practice of futsal, the family influence since childhood stands out, especially from the father, siblings, or cousins. We can evidence a connection between families and the culture of soccer and futsal from leisure-related customs, such as watching matches of other family members, watching soccer matches on television, or playing soccer with cousins and siblings.

I always thought it was really cool, I watched it on TV, my dad watched the games. I used to go to the field with him, so I think it's really cool. (P4)

Me and my dad, we always went to the park [...] we had a lot of fun. He played with his friends, and I went to watch his futsal at night. (P5)

The influence of a family cultural inheritance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014) that made possible the early and naturalized contact of the interviewed girls with futsal, in addition to the development of a liking for this sport modality, is remarkable. Families pass on to their children a cultural capital that influences the *ethos*, that is, a system of implicit and internalized values that help to constitute the attitudes of the individual (Bourdieu, 1998).

Most of the interviewed students in this study had family support to practice futsal. In some cases, at first parents questioned and even discouraged the practice of other sports culturally seen as more appropriate for women. However, these positions changed as the girls demonstrated real interest and involvement with futsal practices.

I started doing judo and my mom kept insisting that I do ballet. It just wasn't something I wanted, that I felt like doing. Then came a time when she gave up and let me do whatever I wanted. (P2)

My mom supported me a lot [...] I had support from my mom, and we went over my dad, and I played. Today my dad's changed. (P4)

As the participants of this study, the elite South American women futsal athletes studied by Altmann and Reis (2013) also received family support and encouragement throughout their pathway, especially from the father's figure. Despite receiving some support, most of the athletes mentioned that they also suffered some resistance from at least one family member, but that it was overcome in a second moment by demonstrating their sports competence.

In the literature presented and the participants' reports, a tendency to support the practice is shown, which helps student-athletes to remain involved with futsal. However, this support was given by the previous demonstration of competence, of willingness to play, and not an incentive at first, as is usually the case of boys (Daolio, 2002).

However, in the face of the barriers and challenges manifested in thematic axis 1 and the initial resistance of the family to the practice of futsal, the school in which this study was

conducted had a decisive influence on the engagement of student-athletes with the practice of futsal.

Most of the interviewed girls started this practice at school, when they decided to join the futsal team in the period contrary to that of their regular classes.

I started right here [...] My friend told us to start playing and if we didn't like it, we could stop. It's just that we started playing and started liking it, we formed the team and continued to play. (P1)

When I was little, I didn't play much. But three years ago, me and the girls agreed to form a team, it was just the girls from the same class, and high school, which was separate, joined this year. (P3)

The school seems to be an environment of great importance in offering opportunities for initiation and engagement in practice, especially in the case of futsal practiced by women, as in the study by Santana and Reis (2003) with elite futsal players in the state of Paraná, in which the main place of initiation of most athletes was precisely the school, both in physical education classes and in extracurricular activities. In these scenarios, the potential of the school to disseminate a sports culture linked to futsal and the transformative and heterodox action regarding the prejudices and stereotypes that involve this practice, stands out.

Although the case of the school in which the interviewed girls study is not a scenario immune to prejudices and stereotypes that present barriers and challenges to futsal practitioners, it acts as an auxiliary environment in the construction of sports dispositions and tastes, since it enables and values some practices these students would not have access to.

In addition to the family cultural inheritance and the opportunities offered by the school in question, another aspect that influenced the students' engagement with futsal was their identification with the group of classmates interested in this sport. The support network created between them proved to greatly influence supporting the involvement and dedication to futsal at school.

This involvement is evident in the descriptions of the initiatives of some students, who invited friends to participate in the training and, in the form of a network, set up a team. In this scenario, friendship was a great driver for several students to start the practice of futsal at this school. Thus, the importance of forming networks of coexistence and searching for associations with individuals who share similar dispositions stands out (Bourdieu, 1986).

I thought [futsal] it's a very cool sport [...] all girls do it because it helps the fitness [...] I always liked it, my friends came together, we got changed together, and said "Let's go to futsal". (P4)

The girls here are super cool, we see each other at recess, I spend the recess with them, we have a super strong friendship [...]. We have traveled to play in other cities and end up connecting more during the time on the bus. It's the coolest part of the trip. We sleep everyone in the same room and have all those little travel games, and I like that. (P5)

Because of futsal we became friends [...] it's very good to train, it's an off-court relationship that we can keep on the court. (P2)

This importance given to teammates and friends, in the case of the students of this study, were also reported by futsal players from Paraná as factors that contribute to the continuity of their involvement with the futsal practice (Santana & Reis, 2003).

In addition to the contact with friends and the formation of a group that shares dispositions for the futsal practice, the school still contributes in this case to the engagement with a male preserve sports practice, creating an environment of cultural manifestation of resistance and affirmation of girls, consisting of a learning culture (Hodkinson, Biesta, et al., 2007) important to the interviewed students of this study. Moreover, the opportunity to represent the school in external competitions is another factor that unites them and strengthens the bond with the practice of futsal, legitimizing both this activity within the institution and the symbolic value of student-athletes before the school community.

We have to represent the school. And when you go out and play out in other schools, it's very tense because all their fans are booing and cheering. We stay there, like, we need to win to go back [to the school of origin] and tell everyone that we won. And there are friends who come out of here to follow and cheer for us [at the games outside of school]. So, it's a lot of pressure, but it's cool. (P4)

This perspective demonstrates the potential of futsal to affirm the tastes and dispositions of the students, as well as legitimize their practices and strengthen bonds of friendship. These relationships are important for a differentiated and stronger perception of the practice in which they are inserted (Silveira & Stigger, 2010).

The interviewees show the importance of offering a sport practice at school since maybe they would not be playing futsal if not for this link with this environment. The ease of practicing in the environment where they study, alongside the encouragement of their friends, was an influencing factor for several students to remain involved as part of this team. In this

context, the school also acts as a space for transformation and social learning, not only for student-athletes, but also for the classmates who follow practices as spectators and supporters. The relationship with school friends was strengthened both on and off the court after the team was formed, and the other students began to mobilize to watch the games. The presence of the futsal team in the school turns girls playing into something incorporated in the learning culture (Hodkinson, Biesta, et al., 2007) of the institution, transforming prejudiced logics of estrangement of women's participation in this sport.

Inside the school nothing happens [about manifestations of prejudice], everyone even thinks it is normal [...] even call us to play, invite us when there's a game, you know? We go out to play out of school sometimes. We rent a court to play. (P1)

My classmates think it is normal [women participation in futsal]. They see no difference between boy and girl. They even encourage the team like that, you know? When there's a game, they come to cheer, with them there's no differentiation. (P2)

Every year we have school games, and the boys support us a lot [...] They support us and say, "Wow, my God, you're my idol." They keep saying these little jokes. (P5)

Most of the positive opinions and incentives of schoolmates about the students practicing futsal show the lack of strangeness, possibly due to their insertion in this group and learning culture of a school that offers the opportunity of practicing futsal for girls, legitimizing such involvement with their community, including contributing to the naturalization of a certain perception of equality. Altmann et al. (2012) point to the importance of the school environment in the reproduction of the differences between boys and girls, and how these expectations can be determinant for them to engage in sports practices or not. As mentioned by the participants of this study, within this school there seems to be no strong differentiation and prejudice with girls who play futsal.

The literature shows the importance of the school revealing that both teaching attitudes and the pedagogical environment as a whole influence the academic and social education of the student, since early childhood education (Hodkinson, Anderson, et al., 2007). The school's own culture can stimulate the formation of groups, experiences, and relationships, which can be done through words, ideas, and attitudes that will be fundamental for segregation or inclusion (Altmann et al., 2012). The insertion of practices that give opportunities for more equal social participation to boys and girls at school makes learning

occurs not verbally or in an imposed way, but through experiences and constructions on social issues that are incorporated by students and become part of their own culture (Hodkinson, Biesta, et al., 2008), to some extent, under the impression of naturalization of such phenomena.

Inserted in this context for their involvement with futsal, the interviewed students think that for the continuity of the development of the sport practiced by women, more girls need to get involved with the practice. From this, the number of people and teams would increase, providing more games, better results and, consequently, more opportunities for legitimacy in the sports and school fields.

I wanted more people from school to play, because we're having interclasses [championship] and there's only men's team, and we can't play. In the other schools too. (P1)

The process of transformation and social learning that takes place at this school demonstrates, by increasing the incentive to the practice, a form of demystification of certain stereotypes (Salvini & Marchi Júnior, 2016), presenting a new form of legitimation of futsal practiced by women.

Sport, as a sociocultural phenomenon, is subject of transformations and adaptations related to the involved individuals and their dispositions for action. For this reason, it has a key role in education and in the formation and transformation of paradigms, stereotypes and cultural traits of society as a whole (Coakley, 2015). It is a phenomenon with great relationship with educational processes, exerting an important influence on the formation of opinions of practitioners, spectators, and consumers (Marques, 2015). Thus, the school stands as a privileged space for such transformations (Sanches & Rubio, 2011), especially in a sense that can undo prejudices and stereotypes that present barriers to the full social participation of girls and women.

Final considerations

This study aimed to analyze the challenges and opportunities for girls' participation in school futsal in the extracurricular context from the perspective of high school students from a private school in a country city in São Paulo state. Although several scenarios still show the prejudice with women who practice futsal, this study demonstrated a coping position presented by the interviewed students, besides suggesting that the initiative of a school to offer opportunities for students to practice futsal and represent the institution in inter-school competitions can be an interesting way to promote social transformations on forms of perceptions still present in the culture of our society.

The school institution plays a fundamental role in the process of education and social transformation, being responsible for disseminating different forms of cultural baggage that go beyond academic knowledge, besides influencing the formation of students' dispositions on different aspects of life in society. It is up to the school to act as an agent of reproduction or transformation of social inequalities and manifestations of domination present in society. The heterodox attitudes of the students within the school context, the support of parents, and the feeling of belonging to a group were important factors that allowed participation in futsal practices, making it a more legitimized form of social affirmation.

Regarding the interviewed students, the cultural inheritance was also present in the choices for practices. Girls who opted for futsal report sport dispositions from the family, with a certain support for the engagement in futsal, some of which came at a later point. In addition, reports of abandonment due to resistance and pressure from the family occurred and raised an important warning for the dissemination of the discussion about opportunities for social participation among boys and girls in a broad and intergenerational way among the students and involving the family members of the school community.

This study offers theoretical support that can support practical interventions regarding school administration related to sports activities, for example, the promotion of opportunities for sports practices of male preserve to students who would not have other means of getting involved with such activities. Likewise, it also subsidizes pedagogical interventions that demystify socially and arbitrarily stipulated differences between boys and girls, men and women, and the engagement in various practices by naturalizing conviviality in sports practices and valorizing the girls' athletic achievements.

New studies are relevant to deepen this discussion, especially those that can explore new environments, such as public schools, and consider the perspective of other important agents in this social space: teachers, managers, family members, and other students.

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Corresponding author:

Flavia Volta Cortes de Oliveira: UNICAMP – FEF, Faculdade de Educação Física, Av. Érico Veríssimo 701 - Cidade Universitária Zeferino Vaz - Barão Geraldo, Campinas, SP, 13083-851 Brasil.

Authors' contributions:

Volta Cortes de Oliveira, Flavia: *Conceptualization (Lead); Data curation (Lead); Formal analysis (Lead); Funding acquisition (Lead); Investigation (Lead); Methodology (Lead); Project administration (Equal); Resources (Lead); Writing – original draft (Lead)*

Ricci, Christiano Streb: *Data curation (Supporting); Formal analysis (Supporting); Methodology (Supporting); Writing – original draft (Supporting); Writing – review & editing (Supporting)*

Francisco Rodrigues Marques, Renato: *Conceptualization (Equal); Formal analysis (Equal); Methodology (Equal); Resources (Equal); Supervision (Equal); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Equal); Writing – review & editing (Equal)*