

Boys and girls in a single-sex compared with mixed-sex gifted center: Who is more competitive?

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Abstract

The present study adds to an existing controversy, whether there are differences in the degree of competition between boys and girls, or rather competitiveness is context-sensitive. The specific context examined in this study is that of two gifted centers: one with single-sex classrooms and the other with mixed-sex classrooms. The competitiveness of 129 students was examined in physical (running), visual-spatial, and verbal tasks. The results indicated that boys performed better than girls on all tasks, with the exception of a competitive verbal task. Contrary to initial hypotheses, there was no significant difference in students' achievements in single-sex compared to mixed-sex classes, and girls were more competitive than boys on verbal tasks. This conclusion adds to the recent literature that is skeptical as to the merits of single-sex education, assigning higher achievement to other social reasons. The results also coincide with the literature that views competitiveness not as a single trait which one gender has more or less of overall, but as a context-dependent trait.