



“Gender? What’s That?”

**WORKING TOGETHER AND ELIMINATING
GENDER DIFFERENCE IN JUNIOR KORFBALL**

KORFBALL

SPORT IN THE MIXED ZONE

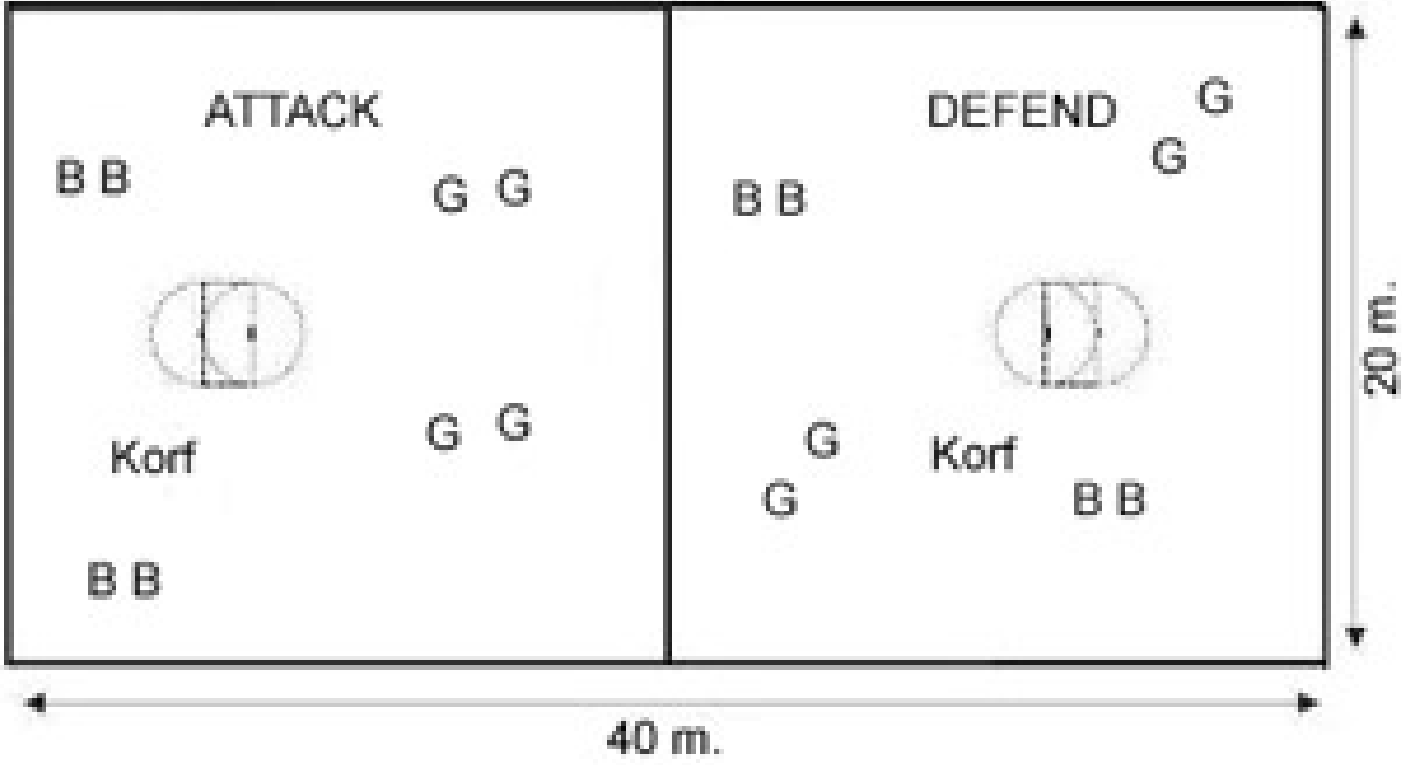
- ✗ “the world’s only mixed sport”
- ✗ “a passport to coeducation”
- ✗ “truly egalitarian sport”



WHAT IS KORFBALL?

- ✘ Goals
- ✘ 4 girls and 4 boys (mark own sex)
- ✘ Non-contact
- ✘ No solo play (teamwork is key)
- ✘ Defended shots
- ✘ Players either attack or defend then swap





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OVERVIEW OF MY PROJECT

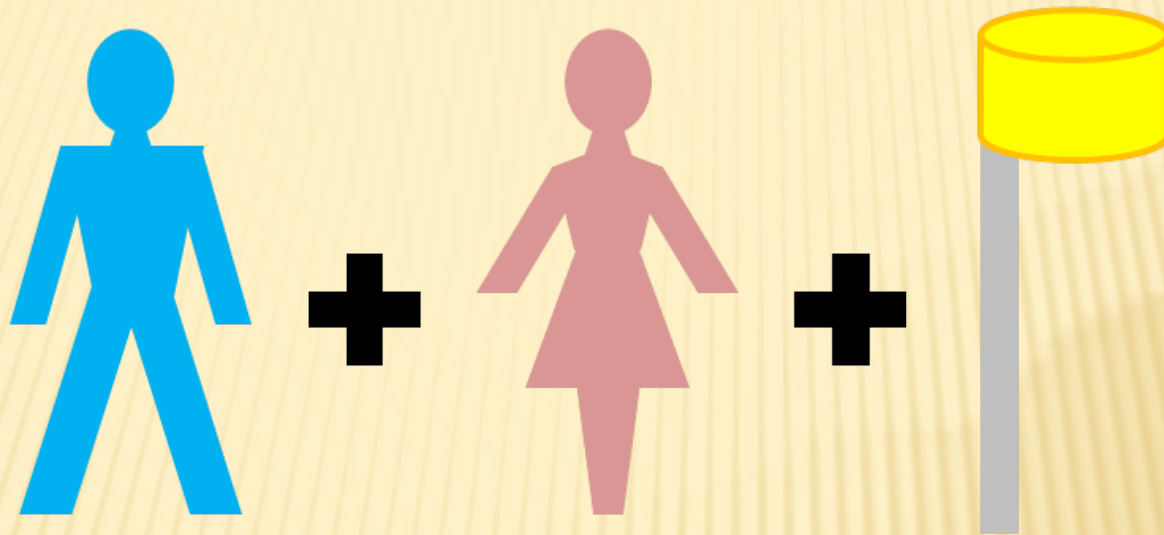


- ✘ The gendered attitudes and experiences of children that play korfbal
- ✘ Whether a non-mainstream sport, that was created to promote gender egalitarianism between children, is impacting on children's developing gender identities.
- ✘ Ethnographic visits
- ✘ Foucauldian analysis

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- ✘ Crum (1988) – The Netherlands
- ✘ Summerfield and White (1989) – UK
- ✘ Thompson and Finnigan (1990) – New Zealand





INITIAL FINDINGS

MATCH SPACE - OBSERVATION



- ✘ Importance of teamwork & use of all players
- ✘ Normalising judgement (Foucault, 1975)
 - + Minor humiliation and correction
 - + “use the boys!”
- ✘ Equality and Docile (korfbal) bodies (Foucault, 1975)
 - + Objects and instruments of exercise (Foucault, 1975)
- ✘ Use all players as useful instruments of exercise in a multi-segmentary (korfbal) machine
 - + Bodies used as object to manipulate and train
 - + confinement is needed because visibility = power (hence match space)

On and Off the Pitch

THE BIGGER PICTURE...

VOCAL

- ✘ Important for teamwork
- ✘ “when we get the ball I make sure every single time I shout, I’ll literally scream ‘party!’” (Megan)
- ✘ “Not just because she’s my sister but the fact that wherever you are on the pitch you’ll be able to hear her even if you’re in like the dugout sort of thing and she just shouts for anything really” (Billy)
- ✘ “Chloe shouts the most often erm, and mainly Megan, because Megan just loves shouting, I don’t know why” (Scott).
- ✘ “but obviously I think me and Megan are like, we’re quite happy to shout out and we’ll get angry at people or tell people like “make sure you depend that person next time” or do this next time, we’re not that like hid behind, like not worried” (Chloe).
- ✘ To do with experience and level

CONTRADICTIONARY RESPONSES TO GENDER NORMS

- ✘ Competitive – some boys and some girls more competitive
 - + “she’s very very very very very very very very very very competitive” (Jessie)
 - + Experience
- ✘ Emotion – pain and female/male difference
 - + “don’t cry – man up” (coach to Matt)
 - + Chloe cries when frustrated at training, Jess cries when told off, Chloe and Grace cry when hurt

MARKED SEX DIFFERENCE



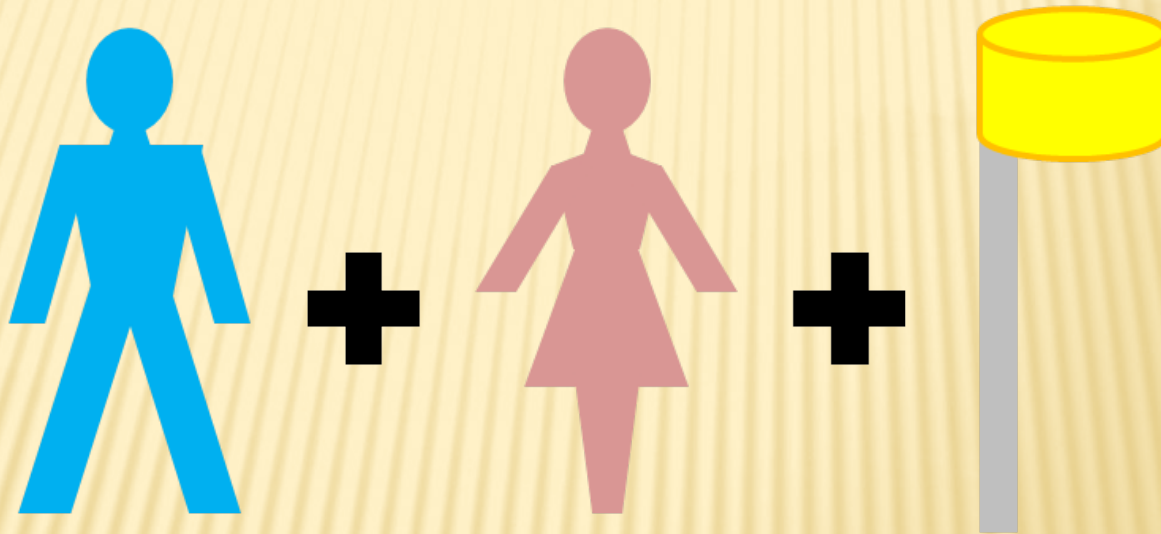
✗ Aesthetics – Skorts and shorts

+ “basically it makes it easier, I’ve got an answer to that one. It makes it easier for you to like understand like when you look at that and when they turn around and you can see the thing swirling round so you know that’s the girl so you can know that you’re that’s the one you’re marking” (Abby)

✗ Separation of sexes

- + “it just sort of goes better, it would be easy, sort of thing, if you could just switch on anybody” (Billy)
- + Difference, not inequality

UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDER



PROBLEMATIC TERMS

- ✘ Megan and Chloe are not masculine, just “*stronger than most girls*” (Scott).
- ✘ “being strong isn’t masculine it’s feminine” (Chloe)
- ✘ The ability to be both ‘girly’ and ‘masculine’, “so I have girly sides but I have a masc... a sort of *tomboy side*” (Megan)
- ✘ Tomboy as a label is negative: “Yeah well we’re not like tomboys, we have a girly side and a *sporty side*” (Grace)...
 - + “Sporty side is nicer” (Megan).
- ✘ Being masculine is not a negative thing for a girl, “it isn’t bad to be masculine” (Scott),
 - + “Yeah, it is for a girl, yeah” (Grace)

SEXUALITY

- ✘ Being a masculine female is “different” (Scott), and leads people to “call you a “lesbian” (Megan).
- ✘ Megan - girls who do not participate in boys sports would assume that girls that do participate in boys sports are gay,
 - + “No because like if they think we’re masculine yeah then we’re with the boys and then they’ll sort of like, cos like we’ll probably do all the boys sports and then when we’re with the girls they’ll probably think we want to have a go with them” (Megan).

FEMALE MASCULINITY

- ✘ Women need some masculine traits, such as strength during childbirth,
 - + “it depends because you need to have some masculine I think, because when you have your baby, I think you need the strength to actually carry on and push yourself” (Scott)
- ✘ “No I don’t think it’s a bad thing” (Scott)

CONCLUSIONS

- ✘ Observation: Korfball match space offers *something* with regards to equality
 - + Coaches
 - + Parents
 - + Players
- ✘ Interviews: Gendered notions and understandings are not eradicated

