INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Griffin (1984, 1985) described participation styles of sixth graders in coed school physical education. She found: JV players, cheerleaders, female fatales, lost souls and system beaters among girls, and machos, junior machos, nice guys, invisible players and wimps among boys.

Among a group of high school students, Pope and O’Sullivan (2003) discovered “Darwinism” consisting of bullies, contestants, jousters, benches, buzzers, vandals and hangers in free-gym settings.

In terms of young adults in university-level exercise classes, Bain (1985) identified serious runners, social butterflies, social interactors and adapters. Bennett (2000) discovered similar participation styles but labeled them as ex-athletes, sidekicks, socializers, manipulators, underachievers and minimalists.

More recently, Zimady, Curtner-Smith, and Steffen (2009) examined children over week-long summer camp and identified go-getters, explorers, limelight seekers, fear conquistadors, light hikers, guided supporters, honorees and mint-rough house in such adventure education.

In a developmental soccer league, Neels and Curtner-Smith (2012) described MVPs, half boys, chest thumpers, overreactors, free spirits and entertainers among children aged eight to 12 years.

The purpose was to describe the participation styles of women and men aged 20–94 years with a mean of 68.85 years (SD = 9.078) enrolled in chair/floor exercise, water aerobics, bowling and after-five (o’clock) fitness classes.

METHODS

Participants were recruited from the fitness center of a university. The participants were divided into six age groups: 18–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–60, 61–70 and 71+. The participants included 32% men and 68% women.

Participants were given a list of potential participation styles and asked to identify themselves. The participation styles were classified as follows: Stickers, Enthusiasts, Freestylers, Busi
dey, Chatterboxes, Adapters and Chameleons.

RESULTS

The physically active groups (i.e., the stickers, enthusiasts and freestylers) mirrored the “serious” and “sweaters” participants in the previous research (Bain, 1985; Bennett, 2000).

Bain’s (1985) social interactors and Bennett’s (2000) socializers could also be found in the shadows of the busyboxes and chatterboxes.

The freestylers’ behavior and attitude toward physical activities were not as consistent as the rest of the SAs, which made them a unique category.

Regardless of their participation styles, all SAs appeared to have a positive experience toward the fitness program from either the physical benefits or the companionship they were willing to be engaged.

The practical implication was to make sure that a successful fitness program designed to cater to older generations should focus on the physical routines that improve/maintain SAs’ daily living as well as the social environment where they can meet new people and make friends with common interests.

REFERENCES


