THE EFFECTS OF ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION
ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Thesis
Presented in Fulfillment of the Requirement for
The Degree Master of Arts in the
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ABSTRACT

The effect of athletic participation on athletic achievement has long been debated. As each year passes it seems that interscholastic athletics become more and more important to each school involved and to each individual athlete participating in his or her sport. Via a survey, the researcher will collect data from teachers in Washington County who will provide personal beliefs and opinions pertaining to the effect of student participation in athletics on academic achievement, attitude, choices and behavior.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For nearly a century many students in middle school and high school have ended their school day, not with a bus ride home, but with a short walk to the gymnasium or practice field for a two hour practice session in the sport of the season. Interscholastic athletics are as popular as ever and are becoming more prominent on a national level. As the popularity and emphasis on sport grows, the relationship of athletics and academics is often questioned.

Does athletic participation have any effect on individual student performance in the classroom or on student development? Does a school district’s emphasis on athletic prowess weaken the curriculum of its schools? Does athletic participation have any affect on student decisions concerning health, drug and alcohol use and behavior? For years parents, teachers, administrators and coaches have formed opinions and argued about the answers to these questions (Stegman & Stephens, 2000; Naylor, Gardner & Zaichkowsky, 2001; Silliker & Quirk, 1997; Goldman, 1991; Rhea & Lantz, 2004; Goldberg & Chandler, 1995).

There is mounting evidence that athletic participation has a positive effect on the lives of participating students, especially in an academic arena (Stegman & Stephens, 2003). Extracurricular activity participation has been shown to be a positive factor in the development of students and has been associated with several positive student outcomes.
including higher career aspirations, better school attendance, improved social standing among peers and reduced delinquency (Silliker & Quirk, 1997).

This study will examine the relationship between athletic participation and several other areas of a high school student’s life including academic achievement, behavior, attitude as well as drug and alcohol use among high school students. These relationships will be examined via a survey which will be completed by teachers at Warren High School and Marietta High School and then evaluated and reported on by the researcher who will seek to show a positive effect from athletic participation on many aspects of student life.
Statement of the Problem

It is believed by many that the emphasis on and importance of athletic programs in American high schools has deteriorated from the education of all students, especially those who participate in one or more interscholastic sports (Silliker & Quirk, 1997; Goldman, 1991). It is also believed that participation in athletics causes students unneeded stress and low self-esteem (Goldman, 1991) and leads to drug and alcohol use, delinquency and poor attendance.

Purpose and Research Questions

Interscholastic athletics is a major part of the lives of many high school students throughout the United States and certainly can impact all participating students. Participation is invaluable to all who take part in interscholastic athletics. Students learn self-discipline, how to work with others in a team environment and how to live a healthy life. They develop a high self-esteem and social skills that help them form lifelong friendships. All of these lessons and values learned through athletics positively impact the life decisions of each participating student.

This study will uncover the differences in the lives of athletes and non-athletes. Data will be collected through a survey distributed to teachers at Warren and Marietta High Schools who will be asked to provide feedback on the personal qualities of athletes and non-athletes.

Research Hypothesis

Students participating in interscholastic athletics will perform at a higher level academically than those who do not participate. This researcher also believes that the
distributed surveys will reveal beliefs that athletes possess personal qualities that will help them be more successful in many areas of life.

*Null Hypothesis*

There is no difference between the academic achievements of athletes and non-athletes or a difference in personal qualities between members of the same group.

*Alternative Hypotheses*

Students who participate in interscholastic athletics achieve at a higher academic level than those who do not participate.

*Limitations of Study*

This study is limited by the demographic region for which the sample is collected. Achievements and abilities of students in southeastern Ohio may not reflect those of students across the country.

Although the study strives to prove a positive relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement, this may be more difficult to show than simply reporting opinions of teachers. It is likely that a student who is supported and encouraged by his or her family to participate in interscholastic sports is also given the same support in an academic arena. It certainly could be effective parenting and family life that leads to academic success and athletic participation.

The fact that each student is a different person with different beliefs and values poses another problem. Although this study can compare the successes of athletes and non-athletes, it is impossible to know how each individual student athlete would have developed without athletic participation and how each non-athlete would have developed if they had participated in athletics. Studies comparing academic achievements of
individual athletes in-season and out of season attempt to address this issue, but cannot account for the belief that athletes develop skills through athletics that benefit them throughout their lives, not just during the season of play.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been done examining the relationship between athletic participation and academic performance. The studies have not only explored academic performance such as grade point average and test scores, but also school attendance, discipline issues, dropout rate, student attitude as well as student choices concerning drug and alcohol use.

*Athletic Participation: the Positive*

Mark Stegman, a teacher and football coach at Westside High School put together a study of his own in 2000. Westside High in Omaha, Nebraska has been designated a “world class school” by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and more than 80% of the graduates continue their education. Twenty-one interscholastic sports are offered to students during three athletic seasons. The math enrollment of the student population is nearly 100% so questionnaires were distributed to each junior and senior in his or her math class. The questionnaire requested name, grade, gender and number of high school sports played. The students were split into four subgroups: male athletes, male non-athletes, female athletes and female non-athletes (Stegman, 2000).
Athletically, the students were split into two groups. They were categorized as high participant or low participant according to the following guidelines. A student whose number of years in high school is greater than their number of seasons participating in athletics is categorized as low participant. A student whose number of seasons participating in athletics is equal to or greater than their number of years in high school is categorized as high participant. This avoids having a student who tried a sport or two as a freshman placed into the athlete category (Stegman, 2000).

The low participant and high participant groups were compared with respect to the GPA, class rank and math GPA. In all four subgroups, the high participant group outperformed the low participant group in all three measures. The high participant females significantly outperformed the low participant females while the high participant males also outperformed the low participant males, although it was not a significant difference. The difference between the low participant males and females was very minimal, however the high participant females achieved much more highly than the high participant males. The high participant females had by far the best average class ranks and grade point averages. The following tables exemplify the exact results.

**Table A. Comparison Within Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>MEANS</th>
<th>MATH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE JUNIORS</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>146.7</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE SENIORS</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>116.2</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE JUNIORS</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>168.3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>128.0</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE SENIORS</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>154.6</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>127.0</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After his study Mark Stegman says, “I feel confident arguing that athletic participation does not hurt academic performance and it instills desirable qualities such as physical fitness, goal setting, teamwork, and self-discipline that help in all areas of students’ lives (Stegman 2000).

Alan Silliker and Jeffrey Quirk performed a similar study using grade-point-average to compare the academic performance of soccer players in-season and out-of-season. The study showed that the students had significantly higher grade-point-averages during soccer season (1997).

Roger Whitley performed a study of North Carolina high school students. From 1993 to 1996 he collected data from 285,805 students and 306 high schools. Data was put together at the end of each year and students were categorized as an athlete or a non-athlete. Race and gender were used to categorize students as well. Eight subgroups were formed: white males, black males, white females and black females with an athlete and non-athlete subgroup of each (Whitley, 1999).

Grade point average, attendance, discipline referrals and dropout rates were all examined. Paired t-tests were also used to compare the percentages of discipline referrals and dropout rates. Because all the dependent measures within each school were correlated, paired t-tests were used rather than independent t-tests. The pairing of data eliminated the problem of school comparisons where dependent measures may have differed. Whitley used a Bonferroni Correction to derive a more conservative significance level. He divided the standard alpha of .05 by the number of paired t comparisons, 21, which produced .0024 as the alpha figure. Therefore Whitley did not
consider a comparison to be statistically significant unless it had a 2-tail significance
level of .0024 or less rather than .05 (Whitley, 1999).

Whitley’s study shows that North Carolina high school athletes outperformed
non-athletes in all areas of the study. The mean GPA of athletes was 22.66% higher than
that of non-athletes. Each of the four athlete subgroups outperformed their respective
non-athlete subgroup. Also, each athlete subgroup outperformed the non-athletes as a
whole. The difference between the highest and lowest mean GPA of the athlete
subgroups was .08 and the difference between the highest and lowest mean GPA of the
non-athlete subgroup was .19 which shows solid consistency (Whitley, 1999).

The attendance data showed that athletes missed approximately 6 less days of
school per year than the non-athletes. In other words the athletes missed half the number
of days as the non-athletes. Once again each athlete subgroup outperformed their
perspective subgroup and outperformed the group as a whole. The highest average days
missed by a subgroup was 7.112 days by black males and the lowest average days missed
was 11.653 by white females. Clearly the athletes performed better in this area (Whitley,
1999).

The study found that just over 30% of athletes had some form of discipline
referral compared to over 40% for the non-athlete group. The discipline referrals of both
athletes and non-athletes rose from 1993 to 1996, but the percentage rose nearly twice as
much for the non-athletes (Whitley, 1999).

Larry Stephens and Laura Schaben performed a study of eighth graders in an
Omaha, Nebraska middle school in 1998/1999. 136 students were involved in the study
consisting of 73 athletes and 63 non-athletes and mean grade point average and
California Achievement Test (CAT) scores were observed. An athlete was defined as any student who participated in at least one of the five interscholastic sports offered (Stephens, Schaben, 2002).

Athletes had significantly higher GPAs than non-athletes which can be seen in the full group comparisons and in the same sex comparisons. Athletes had significantly higher math CAT scores than non-athletes as well. From this study it seems that involvement in interscholastic sports seems to enhance the academic performance of students. Stephens and Schaben feel that “participation in athletics can help students build discipline, set goals, organize time, and develop self-confidence.

| Table 1. Comparison of Mean GPAs Between Athletes and Nonathletes |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|
| **Group** | **n** | **Mean** | **SD** | **t** |
| Athletes | 73 | 3.151 | 0.807 | 4.85* |
| Nonathletes | 63 | 2.400 | 1.610 | |

*Note. GPA = grade point average.
*p < .05, one-tailed.

| Table 2. Within-Sex Comparison of Mean GPAs Between Athletes and Nonathletes |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|
| **Group** | **n** | **Male GPA** | **SD** | **n** | **Female GPA** | **SD** | **t** |
| Male | 42 | 2.997 | 0.800 | 26 | 2.310 | 1.040 | 2.91* |
| Female | 31 | 3.400 | 0.760 | 37 | 2.453 | 0.994 | 4.35* |

*Note. GPA = grade point average.
*p < .05, two-tailed.

| Table 3. Between-Sex Comparison of Mean GPAs |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|
| **Group** | **n** | **GPA** | **SD** | **t** |
| Male athletes | 42 | 2.997 | 0.800 | 2.34* |
| Female athletes | 31 | 3.400 | 0.760 | |

*Note. GPA = grade point average.
*p < .05, one-tailed.
John Gehring reports in his 2002 article in *Education Week* that the Brookings study found that “powerhouse” sports schools do no sacrifice classroom achievement. The report says that some schools with top ranked athletic teams performed slightly better on state exams than schools with less successful athletic programs. The author of the report, Tom Loveless, identified 163 athletic “powerhouses” using national and regional rankings from the 1990s. He then compared them to other schools similar in racial and socioeconomic backgrounds and found that the athletic powers actually performed slightly better. He found that powerhouse schools in urban and rural areas don’t drop off academically because of athletic success, however public schools with both strong athletic and academic ranking seem to be more likely to be in wealthy suburban areas (Gehring, 2002).

One thousand five hundred fifteen students representing fifteen high schools in Massachusetts were surveyed pertaining to drug and alcohol use. The study found that significantly more nonathletes than athletes have smoked cigarettes. Nonathletes also reported using cocaine and psychedelics with more frequency. Athletes were also less likely to use marijuana, amphetamines and barbiturates then were nonathletes, although the differences fell just short of being statistically significant (Naylor, Gardner & Zaichkowsky, 2001).

*Athletic Participation: the Negative*

Quantitatively, most studies have found that athletic participation does not have a negative effect on a student’s life, however there are certainly some opinions to the
Robert Willis, superintendent at Rock Island-Milan School District in Illinois who has worked as an administrator in Minnesota and South Dakota as well, says he has found overemphasis of athletics in all three states, including instances “where coaches will try to influence teachers to pass kids or to encourage teachers to change grades of students who had failed.” He also says he worries about students receiving a “lousy academic experience with a great athletic experience” (Goldman 1991).

Joseph Villani chaired the Montgomery County task force in Montgomery County, Maryland which recommended replacing athletic and cheerleading teams with intramural programs in order to involve many more students. One of the main goals of this task force was to reduce the competitive pressures placed on students. Villani says, “The psychological literature on cognitive development is pretty clear that competitive environment is not healthy at that age in terms of developing youngsters’ self-esteem” (Goldman 1991).

Deborah Rhea and Christopher Lantz uncovered another possible negative of athletic participation. This study examined violent behaviors of athletes and nonathletes. The study found that male athletes reported higher aggressive responses than male nonathletes, however female nonathletes reported higher aggressive responses than female athletes. Rhea and Lantz’s findings support the belief that aggressive behavior is not only present in athletic competition, but it is taught and encouraged (2004).
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Study Design

A comparison of achievement between athletes and non-athletes will be done using mixed-method research. This will be accomplished with a survey which will be sent to all teachers at Marietta and Warren High School. Qualitatively, through an open-ended question in essay form, the survey will ask teachers to comment freely on their personal beliefs about the affect of athletic participation on student life. A quantitative analysis will be done using the same survey. Using an interval scale from 1 to 5 teachers will answer seven questions stating his or her level of agreeability, from negative effect (1) to positive effect (5), with statements about the relationship between athletic participation and other areas of student life.

Participants

A survey will be distributed to high school teachers at Marietta and Warren High School. Each teacher will express his or her feelings and opinions on the effects of athletic participation on student achievement and several other areas of student life. Teachers have interaction with students on a daily basis and the researcher feels that teacher experiences and opinions will be the best analysis of the effect of athletic participation.
Procedure

The researcher will obtain permission from the heads of each institution being surveyed prior to the issuing of the surveys. The anonymity of the individuals and their institutions will be protected by filing away the names of each teacher participating and using only the survey results for the study. The identity of the individuals and their institutions will remain private and confidential.

The researcher will contact the principals of Warren and Marietta High Schools. With permission, the researcher will place a survey, letter of explanation and consent form in each teacher’s mailbox. Upon completion, teachers will return their surveys to the office where the researcher will have an envelope for collection. On the designated date, the researcher will pick up the envelope and begin analysis.

Instruments (See Appendix, p. 30)

The study will be conducted by administering a survey. The first seven questions will utilize an interval scale in which teachers will rate their beliefs and opinions on the effect of athletic participation on academic achievement, attitude, self-esteem, choices concerning drug and alcohol use and study habits. Question eight will ask the teachers about the time demands placed on athletes while the final question will be of the open-ended variety which will allow teachers to provide personal beliefs and feelings.

Validity

To ensure content validity of the survey, experts will be asked if the questions are equally representative of the areas being tested. To ensure validity to the threat of selection the researcher will issue surveys to all teachers in two high schools with the intent of providing a sample representative of the whole.
Data Analysis Procedures

The data will be organized and coded for review. The researcher will manually tabulate the quantitative data by calculating the percentage each interval was selected for each question as well as the mean selection for each question. Qualitatively, the written responses to the open-ended question will be reviewed by the researcher and grouped together to form common themes.

Preliminary Results

The data will show that athletics participation has a positive effect on many aspects of a student’s life. The athletes will perform at a higher academic level than non-athletes and teachers will report positive effects in other areas of the students’ lives.

Ethical Issues

The researcher will obtain permission from the principals of each school being surveyed prior to the issuing of the survey, letter of explanation and consent form. The anonymity of the individuals and their institutions will be protected by assigning numbers to the returned instruments. The numbering of the consent form and survey will allow for simple removal of a survey from the study if the subject wishes this to happen. The identity of the individuals and their institutions will remain private and confidential.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Surveys were distributed to ninety-four teachers while thirty-three of the surveys were returned for analysis. A response rate of more than thirty-five percent implies an interest of teachers in the study which was seen in the responses to the survey which revealed strong feelings in many participants.

Quantitative Analysis

Table 4 shows the percentage by which each interval was selected as well as the mean score and standard deviation for each of the first eight items. Figures 1-8 show the results of survey items 1-8 respectively.

Responses to items one and two were identical as a strong majority of teachers reported a positive effect of athletic participation on student academic achievement as well as student attitude toward school and academics. No teachers reported that athletics had even a somewhat negative effect on either of these two areas while only one person felt there was no relationship. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed felt athletics affected these two areas in a somewhat positive manner while thirty-three percent reported a positive effect. A mean score of 4.303 represents the feeling that athletics does in fact affect student achievement and attitude toward school and academics in a positive manner.
A mean response of 4.0 to item three reflects a belief that athletic participation impacts student work ethic in at least a somewhat positive manner as well. Eighty-eight percent reported a somewhat positive effect while six percent reported a positive effect. Again, no reports of any negative effect were reported.

The highest mean score (4.667) was reported on item four which addressed athletic participation and student self esteem. Seventy percent reported a positive effect while twenty-seven percent reported a somewhat positive effect. One person reported no effect with zero reports of a negative effect.

All intervals were selected by at least one person in response to item five, the student’s choices concerning drugs and alcohol. Six percent reported a negative or somewhat negative effect while more than thirty-six percent felt there was no effect. A positive effect was reported by fifteen percent of the respondents while more than forty-two percent reported a somewhat positive effect. Although still on the positive end of the spectrum, a mean score of 3.634 is considerably lower than the other mean scores.

No one reported any level of negative effect to item six concerning student behavior in and out of school. Ninety-one percent reported at least a somewhat positive effect while only nine percent felt athletics had little to do with student behavior. A mean score of 4.091 again represents a positive response.

Fifty-five percent of teachers reported a somewhat positive effect of athletic participation on development of student social skills while thirty-six percent reported a positive effect. Three people, nine percent, feel there is no relationship and none reported a negative relationship. The mean of 4.273 was again shifted toward the side of positive effect.
The eighth item was coded for analysis in a different way. Participants were asked to choose the statement he or she agreed with concerning athletic participation and time demands. For analysis, the researcher recorded the choices as a one, two or three; one being the first statement, two the second statement and three the final statement. Percentages, mean and standard deviation were then calculated in the same manner as the previous seven items. Nine percent reported that time spent on athletics is a hindrance to a student’s academic efforts. Fifteen percent stated athletics has little effect on a student’s study habits as students should still have plenty of time to complete assignments. Nearly seventy-six percent of respondents, however, felt that the extra time demand placed on athletes leads these students to build better time management skills and actually has a positive effect on study habits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4.303</td>
<td>.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4.303</td>
<td>.521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>4.667</td>
<td>.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3.636</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4.091</td>
<td>.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4.273</td>
<td>.617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>.636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Achievement

Figure 1 -- Question 1

Attitude toward school and academics

Figure 2 -- Question 2
Work ethic in the classroom

**Figure 3 -- Question 3**

Self-esteem

**Figure 4 -- Question 4**
Student choices concerning drugs and alcohol

Figure 5 -- Question 5

Behavior both in and out of school

Figure 6 -- Question 6
Development of social skills

Figure 7 -- Question 7

Time Management

Figure 8 -- Question 8
Qualitative Analysis

The Quantitative analysis reports the strong feeling of the respondents that athletic participation has a positive influence on all areas of student life involved in the survey. Qualitatively, the researcher sought to find more specific and personal feelings of the teachers being surveyed and how and why they reported these findings. Again, many teachers reported that athletic participation has a positive effect on other areas of student life, however others reported reasons for a negative effect while some reported the belief that athletic participation affects different types of students in different ways.

A common theme reported by several teachers was the feeling that athletic participation is the backbone and reason for the success of many students in the classroom. One teacher wrote, “I have seen many students attend school just to participate in athletics. It is often where they excel [in athletics] and they do enough academics to be eligible. If it weren’t for the athletics there would be no academics for these students.” Several teachers made the comment that weaker students know they must to well enough in school to participate in athletics, which provides incentive for academic success. Others commented that athletics gives some students a reason to attend school in the first place and makes them feel more accepted. Another teacher wrote that athletics provides an opportunity for friendships between student who achieve at different levels academically. “I see athletics as an equalizer. Some students excel academically and athletically and these students are brought together with lower achieving students (academically) in athletics. They build friendships that otherwise would not happen if it weren’t for athletics.”
One teacher took the role of athletics even further and expressed feelings about the grade-point-average requirements of many schools. “I believe minimum GPA requirements for participation in athletics are a farce. Those students who failed to reach the GPA requirement are normally low achieving students with poor work habits. Denying those students a chance to be an athlete and represent the school in a positive manner will not motivate those students to study more and work harder academically. Instead it creates a void in their life that is often filled with negative social habits.”

Another common theme reported by the respondents was that students are affected in different ways. Several teachers felt that high achieving students were affected by athletic participation in a positive manner while low achieving students were affected in a negative way. The reasons given for this belief is the fact that athletes have extra time demands placed upon them. The teachers feel that low achieving students are less likely to have the ability to manage time and commitment to academics that the high achieving students possess. In turn, the extra time demand makes the better student more efficient while it takes valuable study time away from less committed students.

One teacher reported that female athletes seem to be affected by athletics more positively than male athletes. This was not a common theme reported by the respondents but prior quantitative research has shown this to be an accurate observance as female athletes have often academically outperformed all other subgroups in many studies.

Although most of the responses to the final question reported a positive relationship between athletics and other areas of student life, a few teachers reported some negative effects that could be caused by athletic participation. Item five in the quantitative section of the survey received the most concern about a negative effect of
athletic participation. That qualitative section provided an opportunity for teachers to comment further. These teachers claim that older athletes in schools are often times the students who experiment with drugs and alcohol and that popularity, athletic participation and drug and alcohol use go hand in hand. Younger student-athletes look up to these students and often feel pressure from teammates to use drugs and alcohol.

Another teacher reported the belief that athletes expect teachers to make exceptions in the classroom. To these students, athletics become more important than academics and school work takes a backseat to athletic success.

The most resounding theme reported by teachers was the effect athletic participation can make on the development of life lessons within a student-athlete. Several teachers reported that through athletics, students are taught to be more responsible, goal-oriented and organized. One teacher wrote, “athletic participation teaches life lessons that students may otherwise not learn…goal-setting, fighting adversity and responsibility.” The development of strong social skills and self-motivation were reported as well. Another life lesson mentioned was that of living a healthy lifestyle. Teachers reported that athletic participation leads to a healthy lifestyle which will benefit a student throughout his or her life. One teacher wrote that, “physically active students become mentally active students” which supports that a healthy body promotes a healthy mind.

Summary of Results

The quantitative data analysis agrees with the qualitative data analysis. The teachers surveyed reported that athletic participation does have a positive effect on other areas of student life including academic achievement, student attitude, work ethic, self-
esteem, student choices concerning drug and alcohol use, student behavior and
development of social skills. The quantitative data shows the majority of responses at the
positive end of the scale on all eight of the items. The qualitative data reports themes that
support the numeric data from the first section of the survey.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Prior studies have been done comparing grade-point-averages, attendance records and discipline referrals of athletes and non-athletes. The majority of these studies have shown that athletes outperform non-athletes in many areas. Qualitative studies have been done using the opinions of administrators and professionals in the field of education who have developed theories and themes about the role of athletic participation.

The purpose of this study was to uncover the relationship between athletic participation and other areas of student life in a different manner. The researcher sought the responses of teachers whose personal feelings and experiences with students could be used to report upon this relationship. An explanatory mixed method design was used in order to establish quantitative data to be followed up and explained by qualitative data.

Just as prior research has shown this study supports the contention that athletic participation has a positive effect on areas of student life including academic achievement, attitude, work ethic, self-esteem, drug and alcohol use, behavior and development of social skills. A strong majority of teachers included in the survey feel that students who participate in athletics have more success in all of these areas. Each of the first seven questions received a majority of responses in the 4-5 range and all received a mean score of greater than 4 except the question concerning drug and alcohol use which received a mean score of 3.64.
Teachers reported that students who participate in athletics are encouraged to perform at a higher level in the classroom and that for low achieving students, athletics is a main factor in the success of these students. Likewise, skills such as organization, responsibility and goal-setting which are vital to athletic success were reported to also be present in the classroom for many athletes.

Although still a positive overall response, the teachers felt the weakest effect of athletic participation was on student choices concerning drug and alcohol abuse. Again, this holds true with much of the current research on this topic. The qualitative analysis revealed the common theme that teachers believe athletes are peer pressured by teammates to experiment with drugs and alcohol and that drug and alcohol use is viewed as accepted behavior for athletes. This is an area that needs further and more in depth research.

On the whole, this study, like many before it has shown that athletic participation has a positive effect on the students who participate. Students should be encouraged to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities in general. Life lessons learned through athletic participation and competition are beneficial to students throughout his or her life.
Gehring, J. (2001). Sports and academics can go hand in hand. *Education Week*


Dear Teacher,

Hello, my name is Nathan White. You may remember me as I have subbed several times at Marietta High School and also did my student teaching with Mrs. Schramm last spring. I am currently in the middle of my master’s thesis and hope you can help me with the completion of a quick survey. It was my goal to make the completion of the survey take less than five minutes as I know these last few weeks of school are often the busiest.

Here is a quick overview of my study. I am researching the effect of athletic participation on several aspects of a student’s life...academic achievement, attitude, work habits, social skills, self-esteem and behavior. I have found much research expressing the opinions of administrators and writers of education journals, however it is my goal to collect and analyze the opinions and feelings of teachers, who in my opinion are much more likely to have first hand daily experiences that effect beliefs and opinions.

It is my goal to report the data expressed in the returned surveys with no personal bias as I am simply seeking a relationship between athletic participation and athletics, not to prove that my opinions are correct.

Upon the return of your material, I will number your consent form and survey and then file away the consent forms. Your name will remain confidential and you may contact me at any time if you would like your survey dismissed from the study. I can assure you that I am only interested in the results of the surveys, not who has completed them.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 740-704-2706 or email me at whiten@marietta.edu. Please return completed surveys and consent forms to Barb in the main office. I will pick up the completed surveys on...

Sincerely,

Nathan White
Survey

Please use the following scale to answer questions 1-7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative Effect</td>
<td>Somewhat Negative Effect</td>
<td>No Effect</td>
<td>Somewhat Positive Effect</td>
<td>Positive Effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is my belief that a student’s participation in athletics has the following effect on…

1. the student’s academic achievement. _____
2. the student’s attitude toward school and academics. _____
3. the student’s work ethic in the classroom. _____
4. the student’s self-esteem. _____
5. the student’s choices concerning drugs and alcohol. _____
6. the student’s behavior both in and out of school. _____
7. the student’s development of social skills. _____
8. It is true that athletes have extra time demands placed upon them as most sports require a minimum of two hours of a student-athlete’s time on a daily basis.

I agree with the following statement…

_____ This extra time demand has a negative effect on a student’s academic performance because this is valuable time that could be spent studying.

_____ This time spent on athletics has little effect on a student’s study habits as students should still have plenty of time to complete assignments.

_____ This time demand causes those participating to build better time management skills and actually has a positive effect on study habits.

I do not agree with any of these statements, instead I feel that…

9. Please explain any personal feelings or beliefs about athletic participation and its effect on student academic achievement, attitude, work habits, social skills, self-esteem or behavior (use back if needed).
Consent Form

I understand that my survey results will be used for analysis in the master’s thesis of Nathan White. My name will be kept confidential although my opinions, responses and quotes may be used in the analysis and reporting of the study. I also understand that it is my option to remove my survey from the study at any point in time. I give consent to Nathan White to use my survey results in his study.

__________________________________________________________
Signature Date