Why Children Play Sports:
A Parent’s, Coach’s and Athlete’s Perspective

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Master of Education in the
Graduate School of Marietta College

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Marietta College
2007

Master’s Examination Committee: Dr. William M. Bauer, Advisor

Approved by
Advisor
Department of Education
Beginning as young as five or six years of age, children participate in organized youth sports and there are an estimated 25-35 million children under the age of eighteen who participate in organized youth sports. Whether success records, statistics, motivational factors or personal reasons are the motivators behind participation in sports, athletes are often studied by the population. Despite a large contingency of children who participate in sports, professional or adult athletes’ thoughts and motivations are often studied. However, one thing is known: The reason children play sports is because they are fun. This study explored the viewpoints of parents, coaches and students from Marietta Middle School and their opinions regarding why children choose to participate in youth sports. More importantly, their viewpoints on whether or not the opinions of parents and coaches match the perceptions of the athletes themselves. The researcher conducted a survey of 6-8 grade students from Marietta Middle School, their parents as well as parent-coaches. The survey was distributed via the classroom to the students and distributed to the homes of parents/coaches via the students.
DEDICATION

To my parents Kenn and Toni Crandall. With their endless love, support, encouragement and guidance, my dreams have always been possible.

To my brothers Kenny and Michael who are constantly setting the bar higher and who inspire me to be my best.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. Greg Brewood who thought it was important for me to choose my own direction and has supported me throughout the entire process.

I am thankful for my entire family: Mom, Dad, Michael, Ken, Michelle and Kenny. Thank you for your support while I pursued this degree.

I wish to thank Dr. William M. Bauer for his suggestion of this topic as well as his encouragement to dive further into my interest of athletics.

Thank you to Dr. Tanya Judd-Pucella whose endless help, resources and patience guided me throughout much of the process.

Most importantly, thank you to my mother, Toni Crandall, whose love for the English language and guidance as a mother inspired me to become a teacher.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Athletes are often and meticulously studied. Physicians study athletes to better understand their health, fitness and performance. People (who may or may not be athletes themselves) study athletes as spectators. Even children who collect baseball cards, autographs, or hang posters of athletes on their bedroom walls are studying an athlete through a form of admiration. Due to the nature of sports today, most publicized sports are professional sports; therefore, much of the studying of sports today is conducted on the adult level. However, understanding children’s sports, more specifically, why children play sports is also important.

Whether it is joining a sports team in college, signing up for youth soccer in elementary school or playing a family game of football on Thanksgiving Day, people find ways to participate in sports. Sports are beneficial to help one stay in shape and to help people socially interact, but sports participation also teaches valuable life skills.

Youth sports are highly involved, popular activities that are “assumed to have important physical, psychological and social development consequences [and are] …thought to play a major role in improving children’s health and welfare for years to come” (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004). Hedstrom and Gould (2004) also state that the atmosphere of youth sports has become increasingly more competitive in nature during recent years. Furthermore, the enhanced stress and involvement are causing more injuries and “burnout” for youth athletes. Each child has their own specific reason why
they choose to be involved in sports. Whether it be learning to work together in a group, learning about practicing and sportsmanship, “magazines and newspapers as well as some coaching textbooks often suggest that ‘having fun’ is the major value of participating in youth sports” (Parents Plus, 2005).

Due to these various benefits sports involvement offers, athletics have become a large part of today’s society. These benefits are regardless of the participant’s age, for as athletes mature, so do their reasons for playing. Participation “in organized sports can have [both] physical and social benefits” (Pediatrics, 2001), for children. Thus participation in athletics provides and educates children these necessary life skills. Sports that are generally spontaneous and unstructured allow children to develop motor skills, socially interact, be creative, and enjoy what they do overall (Pediatrics, 2001). It is often the nature of the particular sports organization that determines whether or not sports involvement is a positive or negative experience, but the “majority of kids greatly benefit from just participating in sports” (Let the Kids Play, 2005).

Parental involvement is also a key aspect in youth sports; however, parents need to understand and remember the reasons children themselves choose to participate. Parental understanding of children’s “reasons for wanting to play sports is a critical first step towards helping children to have the best possible experiences in sport” (Parents Plus, 2005), and is an important topic parents need to remain focused on. According to the Columbus Children’s Hospital Sports Medicine Department, parents, “often times, look for sports to challenge their child, engage them in competition, and set winning as the goal.” These large “discrepancies between a child and parent’s interest in sports can
have negative psychological effects on the child, or lead to physical injury” (Columbus Children’s Hospital, 2005). Children play sports for a variety of reasons, some of which are defined by parents while others are identified by coaches, but what are these reasons defined by the children themselves?

This study tabulated quantitative data and explored the central phenomena – why do children choose to participate in youth sports? The researcher surveyed parents, parents who have been and who are coaches of youth sports as well as students (grades 6-8) from Marietta Middle School. This study intended to provide insight on the views of children compared with the perceptions of parents and coaches as to why children choose to participate in youth sports.
Statement of the Problem

Adults list health reasons, social interaction and development of certain life skills as the primary reasons they choose to have their children participate in youth sports. This researcher is intrigued by the lack of correlation between parents’ and coaches’ perceptions of why children play sports compared with the reasons of youth athletes who are actually participating in the sport.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore children’s views and their opinions regarding participation and perceived benefits of sports participation. By interviewing both male and female athletes as well as their parents and coaches, the researcher examined differing viewpoints regarding youth sports. The researcher believed a study would be helpful to both coaches and parents who are involved with children who participate in youth sports.

Hypothesis

There is no difference between parents’, coaches’ and athletes’ views about sports.

Alternative Hypothesis

There is a difference between parents’, coaches’ and athletes’ views about sports.

Central Phenomena

Why do children play sports?
Definition of Terms

ENDURANCE SPORTS – The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines “endurance” as “the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially : the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity” (Merriam-Webster, 2006). When taken in the context of sports, “endurance sports” therefore is defined as the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful athletic effort or activity.

LIFE SKILLS – The term “life skills” refers “to a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions and actions toward others, as well as actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health” (UNICEF, 2006).

MARIETTA COMMUNITY – The area of Washington County in Marietta, OH.

PERSEVERANCE – Perseverance is considered to be the act or insistence on persevering, or persisting. To persist is “to go on resolutely or stubbornly in spite of opposition, importunity, or warning; obsolete: to remain unchanged or fixed in a specified character, condition, or position; to be insistent in the repetition or pressing of an utterance (as a question or an opinion); [or] to continue to exist especially past a usual, expected, or normal time” (Merriam-Webster, 2006).

SERIOUS LEISURE – The term “serious leisure” is defined as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting
for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge” (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997).

SPORT – For the purpose of this study, the term “sport” will be defined as “any activity promoting physical activity.”

YOUTH/CHILDREN’S SPORTS – Boys and girls aging from 10-13 years of age.
Limitations of the Study

This researcher explored the views of sports participation from the perception of children as well as adults. This study’s sample will be limited to Marietta Middle School students (grades 6-8) who participate in youth sports.

Also, as a small Appalachian town in southeast Ohio, the Marietta, Ohio Community is not particularly diverse.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

During the 1970’s the look and role of sports changed dramatically. It was during this time that professional sports began dominating the historically predominant amateur sporting world and the “significance” of winning also changed. A victory was no longer just a symbol, but had concrete financial, commercial and political consequences” (David, 1999). This emphasis on material success meant sports became less focused on the sporting aspect of the game and increased the public’s appetite for more fantastic sporting events. “Children were some of the first victims,” during this shift in the role of sports, for “sports trainers [were] no longer asking how sports could benefit children but rather how children could benefit sports” (David, 1999).

Dating back to the early 1900’s, prior to the shift in sport’s professionalism, the number of children who participate in sports has been steadily increasing. It is currently estimated that there are between 25 and 35 million children under eighteen years of age who participate in organized school or community sports (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). While it is not uncommon to interview the reasons behind a professional sports team’s or athlete’s reasons for participation, the views of youth athletes are continually overlooked. Research shows a variety of perceived notions of why children play sports.
Social Benefit of Sports Participation

Characteristically, youth involvement in sports has “been viewed as a positive leisure involvement because of its contribution to healthy lifestyles and character development” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). Sports involvement shows to have a positive impact on the psychological development and social aspect of children’s lives. Psychologically, “participation in school sports programmes can have a positive immediate effect upon self-image during the adolescent years” (Kirkcaldy, Shephard, & Siefen, 2002). Children’s bodies are continually changing and developing during adolescence. Participation in youth sports helps strengthen a child’s self image when these “socially-accepted changes in body build – increases in muscularity (particularly for boys) and reductions in surplus body fat (particularly in girls)” (Kirkcaldy, Shephard, & Siefen, 2002), naturally occur.

Children’s involvement in sports “can also provide a basic framework for friendships that extend beyond practices and games” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997); therefore, youth sports participation provides an opportunity to strengthen social skills. Children who participate in sports are seen by teachers to be “more socially competent than peers who were less involved in such activities,” and to have “higher levels of psychosocial maturity” (Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003). It is the “confidence [children build] through participation in sports…. [which] carries over into all aspects of life” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997), and enables them to be competitive in today’s ever-growing society.
For children, being “part of a team can stimulate and reinforce moral development through positive role models” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997), as well as provide a sense of identity, belonging and opportunity for children. Youth sports can also “bring at-risk youth together with positive role models and provide an appropriate outlet for physical aggression and a safe environment for recreation and socialization” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). Youth sports participation helps keep children out of harm, but these sports programs also help keep children out of trouble they might cause in otherwise unstructured time. It is stated that children who have vast quantities of unstructured time “risk being caught up in unfair practices, violence, discrimination, doping, and eating disorders” (Anderson, 2001), and that children “who were regularly involved in…[sports] also reported a significantly lower use of cigarettes…[and that] cannabis use was significantly more frequent among those adolescents who ‘never’ engaged in…sports” (Kirkcaldy, Shephard, & Siefen, 2002). These might be considered potential hazards for any child, regardless of their individual involvement with sports. However, “learning to abide by the rules in sports serves as a building block in moral development” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997), and sports also add a sense of structure to a child’s day in a manner that leaves little time for delinquency.

Not only does sports participation increase a child’s self-image, improve their life skills and help keep children out of trouble, it is found that “elementary-aged children who participate in structured leisure activities experience greater psychological development and academic competence than do their less involved peers” (Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003). Again, the structure provided by sports participation creates
life skills (dedication, time management, etc.) that children will use throughout all aspects of their lives.

**Health Benefits**

There are two sides to the health benefits of sports participation. One side is the mental/physical health component, while the other is the impact of sports on nutrition.

For children four to seven years of age, “playing outdoors and high-activity playing already have important health-maintaining effects” (Suadicani, & Gyntelberg, 2004). Some of these positive health effects include “lower anxiety scores…much less social behavioural inhibition…positive shifts of mood state and perceived health, [and] an increased sense of self-sufficiency” (Kirkcaldy, Shephard, & Siefen, 2002). Another benefit to sport participation is that children will be receiving an appropriate means by which to obtain levels of physical activity that are recommended by doctors. This “early adoption of a physically active lifestyle, including sports program participation, may carry over from youth to adulthood, thereby providing long-term health benefits” (Sirard, Pfeiffer, & Pate, 2006), and the potential to maintain these healthy-lifestyle habits.

Along with sports being mentally and physically beneficial, participation in organized youth activity such as sports imparts onto children the importance of a healthy diet. According to the “1995 Gallup survey ‘Food, Physical Activity and Fun: What Kids Think’ suggest[s] that most American children have positive attitudes about food, nutrition, and physical activity” (Borra, Schwartz, Spain, & Natchipolsky, 1995). This positive attitude may be attributed to the environment created by athletics. Parents,
coaches, or other athletes often encourage children to be able to “give 100%,” or to perform to the best of their ability, which means eating right, maintaining a balanced and nutritional diet, and exercising to stay healthy. By emphasizing these enjoyable physical activity (such as sports) behaviors and nutritional habits, “children [may] better succeed in attaining positive health and…sustain[ing] wellness” (Borra, Schwartz, Spain, & Natchipolsky, 1995), throughout childhood and into an athlete’s adult life.

Parent Views

When it comes to the reasons behind playing sports, children perceive parents in two ways. The first type of parent is one who facilitates the children’s activities. This parent allows the child choices when it comes to sport participation, not only whether or not to play sports, but also deciding the particular sport in which to participate. The second type of parent is one who is more controlling. This parent manages the child’s involvement in a particular sport and also places standards on the child’s performance. (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003). While the types of parental involvement differ, no significant difference is noticed in parental participation when it comes to an athlete’s gender (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003). Does the type of parent matter when it comes to children’s involvement in sports? When considering a child’s motivation behind playing sports, parental involvement plays an important role.

As illustrated by the two different types of parental involvement, children perceive their parents to have varying influences when it comes to sports participation, but the question remains: Why is the child playing sports?
A study in New York State found that “the majority of athletes...prior to age 13...[reported that] their parents were the major influence on sports participation.” In fact, a child’s perceived “parental influence was predictive of sports involvement” (Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003), for most children. As stated before, children begin playing sports between five and six years of age, so the dependency of these young children gives logical reasoning behind the notion of parents being the source of a child’s first involvement in sports. However, parental involvement also plays a major role on whether or not the child continues to participate in youth sports. “Many parents believe that competition and striving to win are important to character building and prepare children for adult life” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). Therefore, many parents insist on their child participating in sports, but too “often parents and coaches expect children to think and play like adults,” and when adults “become consumed with the competitive nature of sport they may lose sight of its purpose” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997), “for sports participation is meant to create “durable benefits...of self enrichment, self-renewal, enhancement of self-image, and feelings of accomplishment” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). The pressure of parents constantly demanding a child to win or to become a “champion” becomes a stressor and this “pressure has no place to go but the child...[and] anything less than champion will be perceived as failure” (Brothers, 2007).

Parents tend to look at life skills, or more simplistically what participating in a sports team can “give to” or “do for” their child. These reasons do not often parallel the reasons identified by children regarding participation with sports and; therefore, parental involvement can often have a more negative rather than positive effect on a child’s
participation in youth sports. It is the belief that once a child is able to make decisions regarding their participation and have some control, he/she will continue to be involved with sports. Parents need to recognize the “desire to win can be motivational…and that participation in a sport is a privilege…earned through skill and hard work” (Brothers, 2007). If the child isn’t competing for himself/herself, burnout and stress will result (Brothers, 2007).

*Coaching Influence*

Coaches, like parents, have a large influence on an athlete’s motivations for playing sports, and in some instances the reasons to quit. When a “child is not properly guided by adults in his/her sporting activity, sports can enter the realm of abuse and exploitation” (David, 1999). Due to their large role for athletes, it is important that coaches “be trained to understand the physical, emotional, and social needs of the children they are coaching” (Sirard, Pfeiffer, & Pate, 2006), so that they are better able to recognize the needs of their athletes and make appropriate coaching choices.

“Overemphasis on competition by parents, coaches, and the environment of youth sports has many negative consequences” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). A coach may not already know why his/her athlete has chosen to participate in sports, but it is not until a coach understands the needs of his/her athletes, that he/she will be able to better understand the athlete’s motive to play. Then the chance for an athlete’s success is increased.
**Student/Athletes Reasons**

Most children begin their participation in sports between five and six years of age. “Typically, two or more factors combine to draw young people into organized sports programs.” These reasons may include “to have fun; develop skills; feel the excitement and challenges of competition; be with friends; and obtain fitness, achievement and status” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). In addition to wanting to have fun, boys in particular tend to want to play sports for the “competition, social benefits and fitness…[while for] girls, the factors were social+skill benefits and fitness” (Sirard, Pfeiffer, & Pate, 2006). On average, girls are more drawn to the social side of sports participation while boys concentrate a larger part of their fondness on competition. However, both boys and girls choose to participate as a means of enjoyment. “Because fun is the primary reason children and youth engage in sport, a demand to win creates stress” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997), and the reasons for children wanting to participate are lost. Today’s society is a “subculture that values winning over everything else [and] sacrifices the continued participation of many children” (Siegenthaler, & Gonzalez, 1997). Nearly 75% of children drop out of organized sports by the age of thirteen, while 80-90% will quit by the age of sixteen. Athletes do “thrive on competition and find it a motivating force;” however, what they “can’t stand is if their sport stops being fun” (Brothers, 2007).

As illustrated, “enjoyment is an important construct in youth sports programs” (Sirard, Pfeiffer, & Pate, 2006), for without enjoyment (whether from pressure to win, parental involvement, etc.), children do not want to participate in sports.
There are apparently a wide variety of benefits to sports participation as well as known factors to cause dislike with organized sports involvement. With all of these known advantages (and disadvantages), are the reasons of parents, coaches and athletes alike in regards to participation in organized youth sports?
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Understanding the reasoning behind why children play sports may often be misconstrued depending on whether or not the individual being questioned is an adult or a youth athlete themselves. The variability in data often leads to the misunderstanding of why children participate in youth sports. This researcher used a mixed method grounded theory, which uses both quantitative as well as qualitative data. A mixed method design is further defined by Creswell (2005) to be helpful to provide a better understanding of a research problem then when one type of data is explored on its own. This researcher explored the opinions of parents, coaches and students regarding their perceptions on why children participate in youth sports and whether or not the perceptions of parents and coaches align with the opinions stated by the students themselves.

Participants

The subjects of this study consisted of athletic and non-athletic Marietta Middle School students in grades 6-8, their parents/guardians as well as their parents/guardians who coach youth sports.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the Marietta College Human Subjects Review Board, the Marietta City Schools Superintendent, Marietta Middle School as well as the
parents/guardians of Marietta Middle School students. Homeroom teachers were provided with in-class instructions for all survey distribution. Parent/guardian permission slips and parent surveys were distributed to students’ homes via the student. Permission slips were returned the next day along with completed parent surveys and if applicable, student surveys were then distributed by the homeroom teacher according to guidelines listed by the researcher.

Completed permission slips, parent surveys and student surveys were then placed in the provided manila envelope and returned to the Marietta Middle School front office in the box provided by the researcher. The researcher then picked up all returned materials on the specified date. After materials had been collected, organization and analysis of the data was completed.

**Instruments**

A survey design was conducted in the form of parent and student questionnaires (See Appendixes E and F), and was used to assess opinions of parents, coaches and students according to quantify their opinions. A scale (Likert Scale) was used to rank certain aspects of sport in accordance with perceived importance. Surveys also inquired as to the age of the student or parent/guardian, whether or not the student currently participates in a sport or has in the past, which sport he/she participates (has participated) in, whether or not a parent/guardian is currently coaching or has in the past, as well as an open-ended question regarding their perception of why children play sports.
Data Analysis

Data was collected, organized and coded into the SPSS data analysis program. Data was reviewed using a cross-sectional design according to frequency of response to determine valid percentages for each sample population per survey variable.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Results and Data Analysis

The data collected for this study consisted of parents’ views, coaches’ views and students’ views regarding why children participate in youth sports and was collected in April, 2007. For each sample (parent, coach and student), a fourteen question survey was distributed to each sample to be based on a scale (Likert Scale), (rating 1 to 5, with 1 being “extremely important” and 5 being “not important”). The survey also contained one qualitative question, an open-ended question regarding the sample’s viewpoint on why children participate in youth sports. The researcher used the perspectives of parents, coaches and students to compare the frequency of similar or differing opinions. The variables used to examine why children participate in youth sports were: “To improve skills;” “For the excitement of competition;” “To do something you’re good at;” “To stay in shape;” “Having Fun;” “For the challenge of competition;” “To be part of a team;” “Winning;” “To get to a high level of competition;” “To get exercise;” “To learn new skills;” “For the team spirit;” “To hang out with friends;” and “Because adults want you to play.” These areas of inquiry were the same areas sampled in the article “Winning: It Gets Low Grades” from Gatorade Lanelines, (Lanelines, 1992).

The researcher used students from Marietta Middle School in grades 6-8, their parents and the parent-coaches as samples in this study. The number of subjects per population were 157 parents, 54 coaches and 100 students. No names were used in the
researcher’s analysis and interpretation of the data. Distributed surveys were anonymous and SPSS data software assigned numbers to each sample to ensure confidentiality. Each sample subject was provided with a letter or statement regarding the intention of the survey and informed that their opinions were to be based on themselves as an individual. The researcher used the SPSS software program to statistically analyze the data and report frequencies, focusing on the analysis of valid percentages for each variable per question per population. Reports were generated in the form of a descriptive analysis, frequency of distribution of valid percentages and graphed summaries.

The following table, Table 1.0, shows opinions regarding improving skills as a reason to play youth sports.

Table 1.0 – Improving Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.0 illustrates that more students than either parents or coaches believe that the excitement of competition is extremely important, but the majority of the populations find excitement of competition to be important rather than extremely important.

The following table, Table 1.1, shows opinions regarding youth sports participation based on the excitement of competition.

Table 1.1 – For the excitement of competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</table>

Table 1.1 shows that parents, coaches and students alike all believed that the excitement of competition was an important reason for children’s participation in sports.
Table 1.2 illustrates the samples’ opinions based on children participating in youth sports in order to partake in something they are good at doing.

Table 1.2 – To do something you’re good at

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 shows that students found participating in sports as a reason to so something they are good much more important than either parents or coaches; however, once again the majority of the population found this reason for participation to be “important” when ranked on the scale.

Table 1.3 shows results based on the opinions children participate in youth sports to stay in shape.
Table 1.3 discovered that the majority of the populations found staying in shape to be an “extremely important” or “important” reason for why children choose to participate in youth sports.

Table 1.4 depicts responses from samples regarding having fun as the reason for children to participate in youth sports.
Table 1.4 – Having fun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 illustrates that “having fun” proved to be a major motivator behind the reason children choose to participate in youth sports. This is evidenced by the population’s survey response that having fun is an “extremely important” reason for children’s involvement.

Table 1.5 illustrates the opinions regarding the challenge of competition being the reason children participate in youth sports.
Table 1.5 – For the challenge of competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that there is a variety of opinion regarding the challenge of competition as a motivator for children’s participation in sports. However, the majority of all three populations: parents, coaches and students all agree that the challenge of competition is important when asking why children play sports.

Table 1.6 illustrates the samples’ opinions based on children participating in youth sports as a means to be part of team.
Table 1.6 – To be part of a team

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being part of a team proves to be an important factor for children’s youth sports participation. The majority of populations agree that this is either an “extremely important” or “important” attribute, but coaches’ found this to be a more “extremely important” factor than did either parents or students.

The following table, Table 1.7, depicts opinions regarding winning as the motivator behind youth sports participation for children.
Table 1.7 – Winning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>22%</td>
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<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opinions regarding winning as a motivator varied among all populations. Parents did not find winning to be an extremely important reason for children’s sports participation, but parent opinions were close throughout the remainder of the scale. Coaches found winning to be the least important out of any category with an overwhelming response in the “neither” category believing winning was not important nor unimportant for children. Students’ opinions were more opposite on the scale with the predominant responses of the population varying between being more important or less important.
Table 1.8 illustrates the samples’ opinions surrounding the student-athlete’s desire to compete at a high level to be the motivation behind participating in youth sports.

Table 1.8 – To go to a high level of competition

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
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<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1.8, student responses were larger than either parents’ or coaches’ responses with regard to a high level of competition being a factor for youth sports participation. Both parents’ and coaches’ opinions were similar in all categories.

Table 1.9 illustrates the samples’ belief that exercise is the reason for children wanting to participate in youth sports.
Table 1.9 – To get exercise

Table 1.9 shows that exercise is a strong motivating factor for youth sports participation for all populations. The majority of all populations surveyed answered that exercise was an “extremely important” or “important” factor for the desire for children to play sports.

Table 2.0 regards the ability to learn new skills as a reason for youth sports participation according to the position of the samples.
Learning new skills was most important to students than to either parents or coaches with the majority of students answering that skills were an extremely important reason for children to play sports. Table 2.0 further illustrates that parents, coaches and students alike all found learning new skills to be an important part of children participating in sports.

According to the samples’ responses, Table 2.1 illustrates the percentage behind team spirit being a driving force for youth sports participation.
Table 2.1 – For the team spirit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Sort of Important</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 shows that coaches found team spirit to be an extremely important part of youth sports participation. Parents and coaches agreed; however, a larger part of both parent and student populations believed that team spirit was only “important” on this scale.

Table 2.2 shows the role hanging out with friends plays in youth sports participation according to the samples’ responses.
Table 2.2 – To hang out with friends

In Table 2.2, student opinion shows that hanging out with friends is an extremely important aspect to youth sports participation. While the majority of populations believed friends are important part of sports participation, both parents and coaches did not see it to be as important a reason as students.

Surveyed opinion regarding adult motivation as a reason for youth sports participation is shown in Table 2.3.
According to the survey results in table 2.3, parents, coaches and students all agree that adult motivation is “not important” when determining reasons why children choose to participate in youth sports. While responses were shown in all categories, the majority of the three populations answered that adult motivation was “not important.”

**Overall Results**

The results of this study show consistency across population groups for each inquired variable. For all three populations, “having fun” proved to be the leading reason behind children’s involvement in organized youth sports with 72%, 78% and 77% for each respective sample group’s surveyed opinion.
While having fun proved to be the primary response, each group’s secondary response differed. For parents, exercise (50%) followed having fun (72%) as a leading motivator in youth sports participation. Exercise was also the second leading percentage for students following fun as the number one reason children participate in youth sports. Coaches, however, found belonging to a team to be second to having fun as an incentive to youth sports participation. 78% of the coaching population felt fun was the number one reason to play sports while 56% believed “to belong to a team” was most important.

Considerable difference was shown in the category of “not important” for each variable. For both parent and coaching populations, adult motivation was perceived as the least influencing factor in youth sports participation with 60% and 61% of the sample answering accordingly. However, for students, winning proved to have the least effect on the desire to participate in youth sports with 28% of the group believing that winning is least important in a child’s desire to want to play sports.
Summary

Predominant existing literature centers around the differences between parents’ and students’ opinions regarding having fun versus winning as the primary driving forces for children’s youth sports participation.

This study intended to further examine the viewpoints of parents, coaches and students to discover if a discrepancy truly exists within each group’s perceived motivating factors in youth sports participation. By obtaining the opinions of Marietta Middle School parents, parent-coaches and students, the researcher analyzed each population’s opinions surrounding children’s youth sports participation.

Survey questions were broken down into fourteen different motivating factors and used an ordinal scale to determine importance (see Appendixes E and F). Each of these survey questions involved a perceived motivating factor for children’s participation in youth sports. These “perceived motivators” were used from a previous study (Lanelines, 1992) and provided each sample with a tangible area on which to base his/her opinion. “Having fun” proved to be the number one reason each population felt was “extremely important” when asked why they thought children want to participate in youth sports.
Discussion

With the exception of “winning” and “hanging out with friends,” the percentages of opinions for each variable did not significantly vary between populations. The similarities in the viewpoints of both parents and coaches could be attributed to the fact that the coaches who were surveyed were also parents of the students being surveyed.

Contrary to current research, parents did not believe winning to be the largest motivating factor behind youth sports participation. According to all populations, “Having fun” and “To hang out with friends” were the number one and number two leading reasons for youth sports participation respectively.

Most interestingly winning appeared to be more important to the students than to either the parents or coaches overall. Parents’ and coaches’ opinions alike predominantly tended towards the unimportant end of the spectrum, while students’ opinions were split between believing winning was an important (27%) or not important (28%) motivator for youth sports participation. The difference in these statistics might indicate that parents have considered other factors (health benefits, enjoyment, etc.) to be a larger contributor of a child’s motivation to play sports, that parents are talking to their children about why they want to play sports, or perhaps that that parents are answering what they “think” they should answer rather than what they truly believe to be the reason for children’s involvement in youth sports.
Further Research

Why do children play sports? What is the most significant reason behind a child’s wanting to participate in youth sports? These questions are significant when looking into the opinions of youth sports participation and need to be added to the questions explored by the researcher.

With the ever-changing attitudes, professionalism and beginning age of youth sports, more research needs to be conducted on the phenomena of why children choose to participate in organized sports. Future studies need to focus on the sample individual’s opinion rather than the perceived opinions of children and future studies should also strive to broaden the area being researched (both geographically and physically). For anyone wishing to broaden this research, adding an interview portion to the research would be recommended. An interview with coaches, parents as well as students would add more personal insight to the views of parents on the overall subject of youth sports and perhaps clarify generalities made within the survey.

The researcher would further recommend looking into the central phenomena of why children choose to not participate, or choose to quit youth sports. This study combined with children’s motivators to play youth sports would add interesting comparison and depth to the study, and hopefully provide further insight to the purpose of youth sports participation.

So, why do children participate in sports? The simple, yet broad answer is that children simply play sports for the enjoyment the activity provides. Hanging out with friends, getting exercise, improving skills and having fun all contribute to the overall
enjoyment children have when playing sports and it is important for parents, coaches as well as the athlete’s themselves to always keep the children’s enjoyment a priority. The want to participate in youth sports will then rise and the other perceived benefits of participation in youth sports will soon follow.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM/APPROVAL

Marietta College
Human Subjects Committee

LONG REVIEW FORM

Send the completed, typed proposal to the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee: Dr. Jennifer McCabe, Psychology Department. Electronic submission (via attachment on e-mail) of proposal materials is preferred (Jennifer.McCabe@marietta.edu). Proposals from student investigators must be accompanied by an e-mail from a faculty or staff member stating that he or she has read and approved the research proposal. Each student investigator must have "Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams" certification on file with the HSC (see HSC web site for details).

Project Title: Why Children Play Sports: A Parent's, Coach's and Athlete's Perspective

Date Submitted (MM/DD/YY): 2/28/07 HSC # (to be assigned): 07-021

Contact Information

Principal Investigator(s): Emily Crandall
Phone Number(s): (740) 376-4107 E-mail(s): ejc001@marietta.edu

Project Status

This research is for (check one):

[ ] Faculty Project [ ] Undergraduate Student Project [ ] Graduate Student Project
[ ] Class Project [ ] Other (specify):

If Student Project, name of faculty supervisor(s):

If Class Project, course name, number, and instructor:

This research proposal is (check one):

[ ] New [ ] Renewal [ ] Re-evaluation
[If Renewal or Re-evaluation, describe the changes in #15]

Proposed start date (MM/DD/YY) (or, if renewal, original start date): 3/19/07
Projected end date (MM/DD/YY) (or, if renewal, revised end date): 3/19/07
1. Describe your project, including objectives, design, and what will be required of subjects (including a time frame). Include details regarding the types of procedures and tests to be used in the investigation, and the method(s) of data collection.

Beginning as young as five or six years of age, children participate in organized youth sports and there are an estimated 25-35 million children under the age of eighteen who participate in organized youth sports. Whether it be success records, statistics, motivational factors or personal reasons for participation in sports, athletes are often studied by the population. Despite a large contingency of children who participate in sports, professional or adult athletes’ thoughts and motivations are often studied. However, one thing is known: The reason children play sports is because they are fun. The purpose of this study will be to explore the viewpoints of parents, coaches and athletes in youth sports programs. More importantly, why children choose to participate in youth sports and whether or not the opinions from parents and coaches correspond with the perceptions of the athletes themselves. The researcher will conduct a survey of students from Marietta Middle School, grades 6-8 who participate in organized youth sports. A consent and parent survey form will be sent home prior to the collection of data. A survey will then be distributed in person via the classroom by the principal investigator to the students.

2. Who will be your subjects and how many do you plan to include in your study? Are there any inclusion or exclusion criteria?

All students of Marietta Middle School (grades 6-8) who participate in organized youth sports. As classified by the principal investigator, "youth sports" is defined as involvement in any activity promoting physical activity for boys and girls between 8-13 years of age.

Exclusion criteria would be failure to obtain parental consent for participation in the survey.

3. How will your subjects be recruited? Specify whether recruitment and data collection will take place on or off the Marietta College campus. Include any specific requirements of the subjects, and criteria used for inclusion or exclusion of subjects.

Students will be recruited through a core curricular class at Marietta Middle School. The parental consent form will be distributed to the teacher with instructions and then to the student. The principal investigator will then collect data in person at the school via that same teacher's classroom. All students of Marietta Middle School (grades 6-8) who participate in organized youth sports and who have parental consent will be eligible to complete the survey.

4. Describe how informed consent will be obtained or justify why it will not be obtained.
Informed consent will be obtained through a parent permission slip. A letter will be sent home with the student describing the study and its purpose. If a parent/guardian wishes for their child to not participate in the survey, he/she will return the signed form opting their child out of the survey.

5. Have previous research or pilot studies indicated any significant dangers or risks in the procedure being used? [ ] YES [ ] NO

If you answered ‘YES’ to the above question, identify and describe the potential dangers or risks (physical, psychological, ethical, social, economic, legal, etc.) of this type of study you have found in previous research. Cite sources in APA, AMA, or MLA style.

6. Regardless of your answer to Question 5, assess and describe the potential dangers or risks (physical, psychological, ethical, social, economic, legal, etc.) involved with your study. Estimate their likelihood and seriousness.

Stressors may include singaling out students whose parents/guardian choose to opt him/her out of the study, or segregating those students not involved in any type of youth sport from those who are involved.

There is a possibility for children to become frustrated or anxious. The possibility also exists for parents to become anxious having to describe his/her child's behavior. With proper explanation and the answering of any potential questions, this stressor will hopefully be minimal/reduced.

There is a strong likelihood for children being opted out of the survey or not involved in youth sports. However, I believe the situation poses little social stress, or potential danger.

7. Describe any procedures that will be employed to minimize potential hazards and give an assessment of their potential effectiveness.

The survey will be short and anonymous in nature. Any time attention is drawn towards a particular group versus another (i.e. youth sports participants vs. those who do not participate) will be minimal. I believe this will cause as little disruption as possible.

8. Does your study involve any deception (i.e. misleading or false information) of subjects?
If you answered 'YES' to the above question, respond to the three statements below.

A. Explain the nature of the deception, and the rationale for including this deception in your study.

B. Describe the expected reaction or consequences (immediate or long-term) that the deception may have on subjects. Include potential negative reactions.

C. Explain how and when the subjects will be informed of the deception, typically via a debriefing procedure.

9. If you answered ‘NO’ to Question 8, indicate how and when subjects will be informed of the purpose of the research, and how this feedback will be provided.

The parents/guardians will be informed of the study, the survey and its purpose on both the letter home regarding the child's participation as well as on the parent/coach's survey itself. Contact information will also be made available to contact the investigator if there are any further questions to be addressed by the parent/guardian. When surveys are distributed in the classroom, a brief description of the study, its purpose and its feedback will be explained to the students.

10. Describe the methods by which you will maintain the confidentiality of information collected in the context of your study (e.g., store all documents with identifying information in a locked cabinet; destroy all documents with identifying information within a year of the study’s completion; allow access to identifying information only to members of the research team; report the study’s results in aggregate form, with no individuals identified; identify participants with a number). Be sure to specifically address the following three questions in your response.

A. Who will have access to confidential information?
   The principal investigator.

B. How will confidential information be stored and protected?
   Surveys will be numbered for accountability purposes only. There is no need to collect any private personal data (i.e. name, phone number, address, etc.). Age, grade, gender and sport(s) participated in is the only data by which the participant would be
identifiable. The researcher will not use the provided data for anything other than statistical data collection. All data will remain with the researcher until completion of the study, after which the data will be destroyed.

C. What will happen to confidential information after the study?
Upon conclusion of the data collection and statistical analysis, all confidential information will be destroyed (shredded) by the investigator.

11. For each of the following general requirements of Human Subjects research, place a check mark in the column for “YES,” “NO,” or, if the description is not applicable to your project, “N/A.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Subjects will participate voluntarily.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subjects will have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time,</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>and without consequence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The data collected will not be used for any non-approved purpose.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Subjects will be guaranteed confidentiality.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Subjects will be informed about the nature of their participation in the study before they begin the study.</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. All reasonable attempts will be made to minimize physical and/or</td>
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<tr>
<td>psychological harm to subjects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Individual performances will not be disclosed to anyone other than the investigator(s).</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Subjects are given the opportunity to ask questions, and all questions</td>
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<td>will be answered to the satisfaction of the subjects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. All subjects will provide consent with their signature on a consent form.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Appropriate debriefing procedures will explain the purpose(s) of the study following the subject’s participation in the research.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Explain any ‘NO’ answers below:

No. 8 - Clarifications will be provided, but not "explanations" per se, as child/parent/coach opinion is what is being sought by the investigator.
No. 9 - Parents/Guardians will only return a signed form if they wish for their child to not participate in the study.

12. Describe the extent of your training on ethical guidelines for treating human subjects within this field or discipline. Cite, in APA, MLA, or AMA style, at least two sources you have consulted for research ethics guidelines in your field.

Masters degree class - Education 640, "Research Methods." Chapter eight discusses collecting qualitative data.

Ethics guidelines have also been researched through the American Psychological Association Website:

13. Additional comments:

14. The following documents are appended to the end of this form (if applicable):

☑ Informed consent form ☑ Letters of permission ☑ Tests/surveys/questionnaires
☐ Recruiting ads ☐ Human Subjects Training certificate(s) ☐ Additional items (specify)

15. If this proposal is a “Renewal” or “Re-Evaluation” (see cover sheet), please specify the changes from the original submitted proposal. If not, leave this section blank.
Email from HSR Committee sent 3/1/07

Emily,

Congratulations! Your proposal, Why Children Play Sports: A Parent's, Coach's and Athlete's Perspective, has been approved by the Human Subject Committee. The approval form is attached. A hard copy may be obtained from Dr. McCabe. Your approval expires on 6/19/07.

Good luck with your project.

One minor correction:
In the letter to the principal, you may want to correct the following sentence.

All information obtained from the study will remain confidential. I intend to cause as little disruption as possible in the classroom and within the school environment. I appreciate your attention to this matter and I hope to work with the students at Marietta Middle School.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Holly Menzel
HSC Member
March 27, 2007

Dr. Doug Baker  
Superintendent, Marietta City Schools  
111 Academy Drive  
Marietta, OH  45750  

Re:  Research for Master’s Thesis Project of Emily Crandall

Dr. Baker,  

My name is Emily Crandall and I am a graduate student in the Master’s of Education program at Marietta College. I am in the process of finishing up my master’s thesis project entitled, “Why Children Play Sports: A Parent’s, Coach’s and Athlete’s Perspective.” As part of my study I would like to survey all students at Marietta Middle School, grades 6-8 who participate in youth sports.

The first part of research is to obtain parental/guardian consent in order for the students to participate in this study. I also would like to distribute surveys to the parents/guardians of students to obtain their viewpoints on youth sports participation along with the consent form. This first part will be conducted by sending students home with a letter/consent form as well as the parent/guardian survey. Students will then return the consent from (if their parent/guardian wishes to opt them out of the survey) and the parent/guardian survey if so desired.

The second part of my research would require me to survey students in the classroom at Marietta Middle School. I would like to target all students in grades 6-8 who participate in youth sports.

Please see the following enclosures for more information regarding my thesis project:

1. Letter from Dr. Bill Bauer CRC, Director, Master’s in Education Program;  
2. Copy of the Abstract section of Emily Crandall’s thesis project;  
3. Copy of the Parent/Guardian letter/consent form;  
4. Copy of the Parent/Guardian survey; and  
5. Copy of the student survey.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Emily J. Crandall  
Enclosures
APPENDIX C

ENCLOSURE TO SUPERINTENDANT’S LETTER FROM MARIETTA COLLEGE

Dr. Doug Baker
Superintendent, Marietta City Schools
111 Academy Drive
Marietta, OH  45750

Re:  Research for Masters Thesis Project of Emily Crandall

Dr. Baker,

Emily Crandall is currently in her second year at Marietta College and is in the process of finishing her master’s thesis project. Her project is entitled: “Why Children Play Sports: A Parent’s, Coach’s and Athlete’s Perspective,” is intended to research the motives and incentives provided by sports from the perceptions of each parents/youth coaches as well as youth athletes.

As part of the master’s thesis process, Ms. Crandall’s project will need to conduct research in the form of a student-based survey. Ms. Crandall’s surveys (both student and parent) along with her letter of consent have all been approved by the Marietta College Human Subjects Review Committee. With the support of Marietta City Schools, Ms. Crandall would like to conduct her research at Marietta Middle School through the process of an in-class survey.

Please feel free to contact me regarding the master’s thesis process at Marietta College, or any other questions that you might have. I appreciate your time and consideration to this matter.

Dr. William M. Bauer CRC
Director, Master's in Education Program
Hello Parents/Guardians!

My name is Emily Crandall and I am a graduate student in the Masters of Education program at Marietta College. I am in the process of finishing up my masters thesis project entitled, “Why Children Play Sports: A Parent’s, Coach’s and Athlete’s Perspective.” As part of my study I would like to survey all students at Marietta Middle School, grades 6-8 who participate in youth sports as well as their parents/guardians.

Both surveys contains three parts and all answers given will remain confidential. For the student survey, Part I asks the child’s gender, age and sport(s) he/she participates in. Part II requests the children to rate perceived importance of qualities provided by sports. Part III is an open-ended question asking athlete’s thoughts on why children participate in sports.

The survey will be conducted at Marietta Middle School in the classroom by their homeroom teachers on Thursday, April 5, 2007. Please fill out and sign the consent form below and return it to school prior to April 5, 2007 with your student. Your participation in the parent/guardian survey would also be appreciated. The parent survey should be returned along with the consent form to school with your student prior to the study on April 5, 2007.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Please do not discuss your thoughts on youth sports with your student prior to the survey to help protect the integrity of the study. Thank you.

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GRADUATE STUDY SURVEY - PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

I, ________________________________, acknowledge that I have been notified in
(name of parent or guardian)
writing of Emily Crandall’s Masters of Education thesis study and her intention to administer a survey regarding youth sports participation at Marietta Middle School on Thursday, April 5, 2007.

My student may participate in the survey

My student may not participate in the survey

Student’s Name: _________________________ Grade: _______

Parent/Guardian Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
APPENDIX E

MARIETTA MIDDLE SCHOOL HOMEROOM TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Homeroom Teachers –

**Tuesday, April 3**

1. Please distribute one letter/survey packet to each student and inform them that they are due back in class by Wednesday, April 4.

**Wednesday April 4**

1. Collect all returned consent forms
2. Read the following statement prior to students completing the survey:

   Please complete the survey on your own and to the best of your ability. For this survey, sports are anything that encourages you to be physical and active, so things such as playing soccer, cheerleading, or playing golf would all be considered sports.

3. Please distribute a survey to every student who returns/has returned a consent form that is checked “My student may participate in the survey.”
4. Place all completed permission slips, parent surveys and student surveys into the manila folder labeled “Completed Permission Slips & Surveys.”
5. Once all materials have been placed inside the envelope, place manila folder in box labeled “Graduate Student Research Surveys” next to the teachers’ mailboxes. Thank you all for your help.

**Thursday April 5**

1. Surveys will be collected by the graduate student.
APPENDIX F

PARENT SURVEY

PART I

1. Your Age: _______________

2. Do you currently coach youth sports? (circle one): Yes No

3. If you answered “Yes” to question number 2, how long have you coached youth sports (in years)? ________________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have a child who currently participates in a sport (circle one): Yes No

5. If you answered “Yes” to question number 4, what sport(s) does your child currently participate in: ________________________________________________________________________________

PART II

Using the scale below, circle which answer you think best answers the following questions regarding reasons to play sports:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Sort of Important</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 2 3 4 5 To improve skills

1 2 3 4 5 For the excitement of competition

1 2 3 4 5 To do something you’re good at

1 2 3 4 5 To stay in shape

1 2 3 4 5 Having fun

1 2 3 4 5 For the challenge of competition

1 2 3 4 5 To be part of a team

(Turn Survey Over to Answer Questions on Reverse)
1  2  3  4  5  Winning
1  2  3  4  5  To go to a high level of competition
1  2  3  4  5  To get exercise
1  2  3  4  5  To learn new skills
1  2  3  4  5  For the team spirit
1  2  3  4  5  To hang out with friends
1  2  3  4  5  Because adults want you to play

PART III

Why do you think kids want to play sports?
APPENDIX G
STUDENT SURVEY

PART I

1. Your Age: _______________

2. What Grade are you in? _______________

3. Do you currently participate in a sport (circle one): Yes No

4. If you answered “Yes” to question number 3, what sport(s) do you currently participate in: __________________________________________________________

PART II

Using the scale below, circle which answer you think best answers the following questions regarding reasons to play sports:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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1 2 3 4 5 To improve skills
1 2 3 4 5 For the excitement of competition
1 2 3 4 5 To do something you’re good at
1 2 3 4 5 To stay in shape
1 2 3 4 5 Having fun
1 2 3 4 5 For the challenge of competition
1 2 3 4 5 To be part of a team
1 2 3 4 5 Winning
1 2 3 4 5 To go to a high level of competition

*(Turn Survey Over to Answer Questions on Reverse)*
1 2 3 4 5  To get exercise
1 2 3 4 5  To learn new skills
1 2 3 4 5  For the team spirit
1 2 3 4 5  To hang out with friends
1 2 3 4 5  Because adults want you to play

**PART III**

Why do you think kids want to play sports?