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# Assessment of factors that influence sport participation and dropout

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ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SPORT  
PARTICIPATION AND DROPOUT

by

Joanne M. Little

An Abstract

of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in the Division  
of Health, Physical Education,  
and Recreation at  
Ithaca College

December 1992

Thesis Advisor: Dr. A. C. Fisher

## ABSTRACT

Although there is substantial research of youth sport participants' motives for sport participation and attrition from sport, documentation for college athletes is limited. The overall purpose of this study was to assess college athletes' incentives for participating in and dropping out of sport. The Sport Motivation Preference Scale (SPMS) and Dropout Factor Preference Scale (DFPS) were administered to athletes (105 females and 61 males) from colleges in Central New York. Subjects were instructed to choose the statements that reflected their reasons for participating in and dropping out of sport. Data were scaled according to Thurstone's law of comparative judgment (Thurstone, 1927). Scaled values were used to examine the gender differences for participation and dropout. The relationship between incentives for participation and factors that may predispose sport dropout was also assessed. Spearman rank-order correlations revealed high commonalities between male and female incentives to participate and even higher similarities for dropout. A relationship was found between incentives for participation and attrition factors for females with respect to group affiliation. For both genders the most salient incentives for participation were excellence and sensory. Power and independence were the least salient incentives for participation. The most important reasons that predisposed sport dropout were academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest. The least important factors were parental pressure and

critical coaching. In conclusion, it appeared that male and female college age athletes participate and drop out of sport for similar reasons. They are motivated to participate for achievement reasons and influenced by academic grades and team atmosphere to drop out.

ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SPORT  
PARTICIPATION AND DROPOUT

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of  
the Division of Health, Physical  
Education, and Recreation  
Ithaca College

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In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

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by  
Joanne M. Little  
December 1992

Ithaca College  
Division of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation  
Ithaca, NY

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of  
Joanne M. Little  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Science in the Division of Health,  
Physical Education, and Recreation at Ithaca College  
has been approved.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

A great deal has been written in the psychological literature about human motivation. Sport researchers have also been interested in theories of motivation and their implications relative to sport participation and dropout. If researchers can understand the motivation behind a person's decision to participate in or drop out of sport, then coaches could utilize this information to modify the sport environment to improve the quality of the experience for the athlete.

Some important questions to consider are as follows (Alderman, 1976; Cratty, 1989): What incentives influence sport participation? What variables predispose persistence in competitive sport? Why do athletes terminate their competitive careers?

The study of motivation encompasses the activation, direction, and maintenance of behavior. Activation refers to the initial arousal and interest in an activity. The direction of a behavior indicates the interest in a certain activity to satisfy needs, and the maintenance is the persistence or continuance of a particular direction. In this light, motivation can affect the selection, course, and continuance of a person's behavior (Silva & Weinberg, 1984). In a competitive situation, motivational influences can have an impact on an athlete's performance. The study of

motivation may help to explain behaviors observed in competitive sport settings.

In their paradigm of human motivation, Birch and Veroff (1966) postulated that there are four major reasons that determine goal-directed behavior. These are availability, expectancy, incentive, and motive. These reasons are a function of both the characteristic of the person him/herself and of the person's environment. Availability is the extent to which a particular situation makes a certain kind of behavior possible (e.g., year-round golf in Florida). Expectancy functions as an important link between a course of action and its probable consequences (e.g., a parent expects a child to play a certain sport). Incentive is the specific consequence attached to a particular course of action (e.g., affiliation with friends on a team). Incentive may determine the strength of a behavior (e.g., society rewards a winner). Motive is the strength of repulsion or attraction to a general class of consequences (e.g., need to be competent). This refers to the basic personality disposition a person has to various general classes of incentives.

This motivational model is expanded into major incentive systems that account for all significant goal-directed behavior in which people engage. These incentive systems include achievement, affiliation, sensory, curiosity, aggression, power, and independence.

These seven incentive systems appear to be important to

consider in the search for explanations of sport motivation because these systems account for all goal-directed behavior. However, only a few investigators (Alderman, 1978; Alderman & Wood, 1976; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984) have directly applied these seven incentives to sport psychology research.

Concurrent with the interest in motives for sport participation, researchers have concern for those athletes who drop out. Research suggests that the attrition rate for children in organized sport programs is estimated to be between 22% and 37% (Klint & Weiss, 1986). Orlick (1974, 1978) and Sapp and Haubenstricker (1978) conducted early investigations that were catalysts for most of the current research.

In an attempt to understand the attrition process, many investigators have used motivational models as the basis for their studies. Nicholls' (1984) model of achievement motivation is based on the premise that the primary goal of individuals is to demonstrate high ability and not reveal low ability. Predictions made from this model indicate that negative expectancies will cause individuals to refrain from activities and search out new ones to satisfy the achievement needs.

Competence motivation theory (Harter, 1978) is based on the premise that individuals who perceive themselves as competent in achievement areas are more likely to continue when accompanied by successful performances. Conversely,

low perceived competence should result in activity dropout.

In an attempt to explain why individuals choose to invest energy or persist in a particular activity in more than simplistic terms, Maehr and Braskamp (1986) utilized an interactional framework, personal investment theory, that incorporates both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In order to understand why an individual invests in an activity, it is necessary to examine what it is about the activity that is attractive. Rather than only a psychological state, personal investment is an outcome of a process that is determined by both situational and personal factors. Examples of situational factors include the nature of the task, rewards, and punishments. Personal psychological factors include thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Drawing on this theory and other literature relative to sport dropout, investigators (Blinde, Greendorfer, & Hulac, 1987) identified six variables relative to projected reasons for dropping out of sport. These variables are goal-outcome congruency, perceived competence or skill dimensions, perceived alternative options, enjoyment of experience, constraints of college sport participation, and centrality of sport role.

Data collected in sport participation and sport dropout investigations have predominantly been derived from questionnaires and multi-item inventories. Most researchers have utilized Likert-type scale questionnaires. There are alternatives to this approach that can be used to collect

data to examine the incentive systems for sport participation and the variables that predispose sport dropout. Thurstone's (1927) law of comparative judgment, a linear scaling procedure, can be used to discern the importance of a number of statements (e.g., incentives) along a single continuum (Fisher, 1980).

This study was undertaken to assess the hierarchical structure of athletes' incentives for participating in sport and the factors that predispose sport dropout. Are there similar incentives for female and male athletes to participate in sport? Are there gender differences for projected reasons that may predispose sport dropout? Is there any relationship between the factors that influence sport participation and the factors that influence sport dropout?

#### Scope of Problem

This study assessed the factors that influence sport participation and dropout. Members (105 female and 61 male) of women's and men's lacrosse, women's basketball, women's softball, and men's baseball teams from three colleges in Central New York served as subjects for the investigation. The Sport Motivation Preference Scale (SMPS) was utilized to assess the degree to which each of nine incentive statements was prevalent in these athletes. The Dropout Factor Preference Scale (DFPS), developed from available literature on sport dropout, was used to determine the motivational factors that may lead to sport dropout. Data were scaled

according to Thurstonian procedures to examine the gender differences for incentives to participate in sport and the factors that may predispose sport dropout. Data were also examined to assess commonalities between incentives to participate and dropout factors.

#### Statement of Problem

The incentive systems for participating in sport and motivation for ceasing participation in sport were examined for both males and females. Specific questions pursued were as follows: Do female and male athletes participate in sport and drop out of sport for the same reasons? Do the factors that predispose sport dropout have any relationship to the incentives for sport participation?

#### Hypotheses of Study

The following hypotheses were investigated:

1. There will be significant differences in the incentives for male and female participation in sport.
2. There will be significant differences revealed in the factors that may predispose sport dropout for males and females.
3. Results will reveal a link between incentives for sport participation and the factors that predispose sport dropout.

#### Assumptions of Study

The following assumptions concerning this study were made:

1. The SMPS and DFPS were valid tools for measuring

incentive systems for participation in and drop out of sport.

2. Subjects could identify with the items presented on the SMPS and SDFS.

3. Self-report measures of the incentives represent, to a substantial degree, actual incentives that operate within sport participation.

4. Self-report measures of the factors that predispose sport dropout represent, to a substantial degree, actual factors that operate within sport dropout.

5. Self-report measures of participation incentives and dropout factors are similar across all sports investigated.

#### Delimitations of Study

The following were the delimitations of the study:

1. Only female basketball and softball athletes, male baseball athletes, and male and female lacrosse athletes from college athletic teams in the Central New York area served as subjects in this study.

2. The only tools utilized to determine the incentives for sport motivation and factors that predispose sport dropout were the SMPS and SDFS.

#### Limitations of Study

The following were the limitations for the study:

1. Results can only be generalized to athletes similar to those used in this study.

2. Results may not necessarily apply when motivation for participation in sport and sport dropout is assessed in a manner different from the present study.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review will focus on the following areas: (a) past research in motivation to participate in sport, (b) past research in sport dropout, (c) an alternative approach to analyze incentives, and (d) summary.

#### Past Research in Motivation to Participate in Sport

A great deal has been written in the psychological literature about human motivation. Sport researchers have also been interested in theories of motivation and their implications relative to sport participation and sport dropout. If researchers can understand the motivation behind a person's decision to participate in sport or drop out of an activity, then coaches could utilize this information to modify the sport environment to improve the quality of the experience for the athlete.

Birch and Veroff (1966) offered a theoretic schema of incentive motivation that has direct relevance to sport participation. They postulated that there are four reasons that predispose one to choose a plan of action: availability, expectancy, incentive, and motive. Availability is the extent to which a particular activity makes a certain kind of behavior possible. For example, aggressive actions are more likely to occur in contact sports than in sports such as figure skating or tennis. Expectancy functions as an important link between a course

of action and its probable consequences. Successful participation in a sport may generate expectancy of more attractive outcomes (Alderman, 1974). Incentive is the specific consequence attached to a particular course of action. Incentive may determine the strength of a behavior. Positive and negative incentive values affect a person's decision to engage in or avoid a particular situation. Motive is the strength of repulsion or attraction to a general class of consequences. This refers to the basic personality disposition a person has to various general classes of incentives. The incentive value of a certain consequence strengthens if there is strong motive for that class of incentives. The incentive value of winning in sport is higher for people with strong achievement motives.

In the Birch and Veroff (1966) motivational model, incentive value is separated into seven major incentive systems, which account for all major goal-directed behavior. These incentive systems include achievement, sensory, curiosity, affiliation, aggression, power, and independence.

Achievement is probably the master incentive working in sport in our culture today (Alderman, 1976). Achievement incentives are interpreted by the person as successful competition with standards of excellence applied to an individual's performance. If an individual's performance exceeds a previous one, that of a competitor, or that of an external standard, the individual has successfully competed with a standard of excellence. In sport strong achievement

incentives operate. The more difficult the task and the more public evaluation of the performances there is, the more emphasis will be placed on the incentive value for success.

The affiliation incentive system refers to social contact with others. The attraction to other people to gain reassurance of self-acceptance is important. Fear of isolation and fear of rejection are negative affiliation incentives, which are powerful in the realm of sport.

Sensory incentives depend on the stimulation of the sensory system or bodily experiences. The good feelings an individual gets from physical activity, bodily contact, or from smooth execution of a difficult physical skill can all be explained in terms of sensory incentive value (Alderman, 1976). Negative sensory incentives can operate when physical pain, for example, is experienced during activity. When unpleasant outcomes are experienced in sport, such as pain or injury, individuals will avoid them by not participating. However, if other incentive systems operating concurrently strengthen the action, the physical pain one feels during a workout might be tolerated if it helps the individual to attain certain goals.

Perceiving changes in stimulation is a characterization of the curiosity incentive. The recognition by an individual of some change in the pattern of stimulation is all that is needed to stimulate the curiosity incentive (Birch & Veroff, 1966). For children, one of the reasons

they choose to participate in sport is the incentive value they attach to trying something new or different (Alderman, 1976). Boredom with the present routine is a facilitator of the curiosity incentive. Children, especially, want to try new things and have fun (Ewing, Seefeldt, & Danish, 1990).

Alderman (1976) defined the purest aggressive incentive as the wish to intentionally injure someone, and the more serious the injury the greater the incentive value to the aggressor. This kind of aggression is rarely present in sport but may exist in sports such as boxing. Most aggressive behavior is instrumental in nature, directed toward goal achievement not directed at opponents.

The power incentive system is characterized by the condition of obtaining or exercising control over or influencing other peoples' attitudes, opinions, and decisions. This incentive also may attempt to indirectly establish one's self in a power position. Coaches may be motivated by power incentives in their attempts to fulfill their need to have control over players. The desire to resist any influence from others is also attached to power incentives. This resistance can occur between coaches and their athletes. Each is resisting the other's influence while at the same time trying to gain control over the other (Alderman, 1976).

Independence is defined as accomplishing an activity without any help. Independence incentives become salient when attached to courses of action that the individual

chooses and engages in without the direct aid of other people (Alderman, 1976). Independence seeking athletes enjoy individual sports where they train by themselves and are solely responsible for the successes and failures.

The seven incentive systems appear to relate well in the sport motivation context. Surprisingly, only a few researchers (Alderman, 1978; Alderman & Wood, 1976; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984) have applied the Birch and Veroff (1966) theory of incentive motivation to sport situations.

Alderman and Wood (1976) modified the seven incentive systems to examine the motivation of children in sport. Their incentive systems included affiliation, achievement (success and excellence), aggression, stress, power, and independence. Excellence incentives characterized the opportunity to perform an activity better than anyone else. Success incentives were attached to extrinsic rewards, and stress encompassed the excitement, pressure, and tension that sport can provide. The study involved the measurement of incentives using a questionnaire to assess the degree to which young hockey players from 11-14 years old reflected the strength of the incentive systems. The results indicated affiliation to be the strongest incentive expressed by the subjects. Excellence, stress, and success were the next salient incentives.

In a large study of several thousand athletes (Alderman, 1978), the order of incentive systems was

consistent with earlier findings. Aggression and independence were not viewed as important. Affiliation, excellence, and stress incentives were prevalent across variables of age, sport, gender, or culture. Results of these studies lead to the conclusion that children engage in activity predominantly for the affiliation and achievement incentives attached to participation.

In a more recent study, Petlichkoff (1984) partially replicated and extended the findings of Alderman (1978) and Alderman and Wood (1976). Participation motives of 270 junior and senior high school athletes were similar to previous studies. Excellence, affiliation, and stress were major incentives for both genders. Some important differences did emerge in gender, age, and sport experience. Males rated success, stress/arousal, aggression, power, and independence as more important than females. Females rated affiliation as significantly more important than males. Athletes with more seasons of sport experience rated stress and aggression as more important incentives than those less experienced.

Another study (Katz-Gunther, 1983) assessed the hierarchical structure of athletes' incentives across gender and age. Excellence was the most salient incentive common to both males and females, which is consistent with past research. The greatest gender differences occurred with the success incentive, which was more prevalent for males than females. This is consistent with the findings by

Petlichkoff (1984).

Other researchers have attempted to discover sport participation motives using questionnaires (Gould, Feltz, & Weiss, 1985; Jones & Williamson, 1976; Reis & Jelsma, 1978; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978). At least one or more of the seven incentive systems were found to be major reasons for involvement in sport.

Jones and Williamson (1976) examined attitudes towards sport by high school and college students, utilizing an Athletic Profile Inventory. The questionnaire included items that emphasized winning, achievement, hard work, sacrifice, and practice. Results indicated that achievement, power, and affiliation accounted for most of the variance. Differences were not found across sport, gender, or age.

An extensive examination of participation motives of young athletes was conducted by Sapp and Haubenstricker (1978). Questionnaires were administered to more than a thousand 11-18 year old athletes, asking their participation objectives. The results were quite consistent. The most salient incentive for participating for both females and males was to have fun. Improvement of skills and fitness benefits were the next prevalent. Gender differences were found in relation to participation for friendships. Males participated more because their friends did than did females. Also, females participated to make new friends more so than did males. This study suggests that sensory,

achievement, and affiliation are the main incentives operating in children's sport participation.

Recently, one of the largest surveys ever to be conducted on youth sports participation (Ewing et al., 1990) involved over 10,000 students aged 10-18. There is concern for declining participation of youth in sport activities. The study attempted to reveal, at different age intervals, if students intended to participate on a sport team outside school and on a school team. Both questions revealed a steady decline through the teen years. The findings are consistent across all forms of organized sports, both in and out of school.

This investigation found that having fun is the pivotal reason for participation in sport, which is supported by earlier studies (Gould et al., 1985; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978). Both girls and boys agreed on the importance of fun in sports. Improvement of skills and staying in shape were the next salient reasons for participation, which is also consistent with earlier results. Winning was a relatively low motive for participation in this study. This is an interesting finding because winning is highly publicized and apparently the ultimate goal in sport.

A sport questionnaire study (Reis & Jelsma, 1978) administered to female and male college athletes to assess sport experiences included questions on participation, definitions of successful performances, and ego involvement. In relation to participation, results revealed that

competition, winning, and beating one's opponent were greater incentives for males than females. Females scored higher on items related to participation in the game and interaction with others. There were no differences in enjoyment of the sport or desire to perform well. The achievement motive was salient for both males and females, but next important for males was the power incentive, whereas for females it was the affiliation incentive.

In a study designed to assess participation motives of competitive youth swimmers (Gould et al., 1985), subjects responded to the Gill, Gross, and Huddleston (1983) Participation Motivation Inventory, which assesses 30 objectives for participation. Findings suggest that athletes' level of motivation results from the interaction of personal factors and situational factors. Results supported previous research indicating that swimmers rated fun, fitness, skill improvement, team atmosphere, and challenge as the most important factors. An important factor that prevailed for both males and females was the achievement incentive. Females were more concerned with affiliation incentives, which is consistent with some earlier results (Reis & Jelsma, 1978; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978). This is in contrast to findings by Alderman (1978) and Jones and Williamson (1976).

So far, few researchers have directly applied the seven Birch and Veroff (1966) incentive systems to sport. The results of these few studies (Alderman, 1978; Alderman &

Wood, 1976; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984), however, closely resemble those of other researchers. Although different techniques were utilized in other studies, most findings can be categorized into the seven incentive systems.

Achievement, sensory, and affiliation incentives appear to dominate the results of most research. Of these, achievement has been the most salient incentive revealed throughout the studies. Varying results for participation motives may be attributed to the age group studied, the culture in which the data are obtained, and the type of sport athletes participate in. There are investigations that contradict earlier studies with respect to gender, age, and sport. Reis and Jelsma (1978) and Katz-Gunther (1983) utilized college athletes and revealed gender differences relative to sport participation. Jones and Williamson (1978) used college athletes along with youth athletes and found no differences across gender or age.

#### Past Research in Sport Dropout

Considerable research has been conducted in the area of sport dropout because of the substantial numbers of individuals who cease participation in activities. The primary focus has been on youth and adolescent sport participants. Research suggests that the attrition rate for children in organized sport programs is estimated to be between 22% and 37% (Klint & Weiss, 1986). Many investigations are geared towards motivational frameworks

that rely on achievement orientations, perceived competence, or psychological approaches. Situational or structural components (i.e., nature of the task, rewards, or punishments) have frequently been ignored (Blinde et al., 1987). Research results are difficult to generalize due to the different parameters, which include definitions of sport dropout, program types, level of intensity, types of sport, and reasons for attrition (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989).

Orlick (1974) interviewed 60 children, ranging in age from 7 to 18 years, who had been participants in one of four sports. The majority of children who did not plan on participating the following season cited negative experiences for their decision. These experiences included lack of playing time, the competitiveness of the program, and an over-emphasis on winning. Orlick also reported that a causal agent for dropping out of sport was their former coach. Age differences were evident in the study, with children under 10 years stating that lack of playing time and lack of successful experiences were reasons for dropping out. Children older than 10 years reported conflicts of interest, such as interest in other sports or school activities, as their main reasons for dropping out.

The Michigan Youth Sport Institute studies in the 1970s represented the most extensive and systematic attempt to research youth sport involvement. As part of this investigation, Sapp and Haubenstricker (1978) surveyed 1,183 youths between the ages of 11 and 18 years and 418 parents

of children 6 to 10 years to reveal if they or their children would participate the following season. If not, they were asked to identify the reasons for discontinuing. The attrition rate was surprisingly high, with 37% of the older group and 24% of the younger group identified as potential dropouts. The most important finding and frequent reason for dropping out given by the older group was work. The younger group cited other interests.

A salient finding is that less than 15% of the athletes in this study identified dropping out of sport due to negative sport experiences, which were the most prevalent reasons for attrition in the Orlick (1974) study. The conflicting results may be a product of different populations. Orlick focused primarily on nonschool sports, whereas Sapp and Haubenstricker (1978) utilized both school and nonschool participants. Also, neither study attempted to find out if the dropouts were permanent, or if they had chosen another program, a different level of intensity, or a more informal setting. These could also account for the conflicting results.

Gould (1982) reported that both sport practitioners and researchers identified the topic of sport dropout as the most important youth sport issue in the 1980s. Studies in this area, across many different sports, have found an average attrition rate of 35%. Results indicating negative sport experiences as reasons for sport dropout have not been found to the extent that they were identified in the Orlick

(1973, 1974) studies. Generally, conflicts of interest and having other things to do have been the predominant reasons cited, regardless of age, gender, sport type, or culture (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989).

A study by Burton and Martens (1986) focused on the dropout motives of youth wrestling athletes. Wrestling coaches, participants, dropouts, and parents completed a 23-item dropout inventory. The researchers attempted to classify whether dropouts find other activities more appealing or if they turn to new activities because of failed achievement.

To assess why young athletes drop out of sport, tests based on the predictions of Nicholls' (1984) motivational model were administered to wrestling athletes. This motivational model is based on the premise that the primary achievement goal of every individual is to maximize the demonstration of high ability and minimize the appearance of low ability. From this model, one would predict that negative future expectancies should cause dropouts to devalue wrestling because they can no longer attain high positive experiences from participation. Subsequently, dropouts search out other activities to fulfill achievement needs. Findings were consistent with the predictions that wrestlers change activities when continued participation threatens their perceived ability.

A study (Feltz & Petlichkoff, 1983) that utilized competence motivation theory (Harter, 1978) examined the

relationship and length of involvement in sport programs for participants and dropouts. Individuals who perceive themselves as competent in achievement areas are more likely to continue when accompanied by successful performances. Individuals low in perceived competence are likely dropout candidates. The study was comprised of 239 school athletes and 43 former school athletes. The results showed that the current participants scored higher in perceived physical competence compared to the sport dropouts. The data revealed that conflicts of interest rated first out of 32 reasons offered for discontinued participation. Lack of skill improvement and not being as good as they wanted to be were also major responses.

Another study (Robinson & Carron, 1982) attempted to examine participation in and drop out from sport along a continuum of involvement. Three categories of subjects were defined, namely starters, survivors, and dropouts. A starter was an athlete who was a continuous participant; a dropout was an individual who withdrew; and a survivor was an athlete who was on the team but did not participate in competitions. The purpose of the investigation was to determine the motivational and situational factors associated with the decisions of the athletes to continue participation or to drop out of competitive sport. Ninety-eight high school football players were administered a number of different questionnaires and inventories that examined personal and situational factors. The findings in

this early study about sport dropout revealed that trait measures did not discriminate among the three groups. Personality dispositions generally were not predisposing factors to dropout behavior.

Dropouts felt they had a poorer relationship with the team and enjoyed their experience less than the starters or survivors. Dropouts also perceived the team to be a close unit but considered themselves to be excluded. The measurement of attitudes towards sport also discriminated the groups. Dropouts endorsed the "win at all costs" attitude. Dropouts perceived minimal influence and support from fathers and teachers. The measurement of causal attributions revealed that dropouts displayed a pattern that reflects a perception of low sport competence. Dropouts attached more weight to their ability after a failure than did survivors or starters. Dropouts also internalized personal effort to a lesser degree for situations that involved success. The failure of dropouts to internalize their successful experiences reflected a self-perception that future involvement in the sport may not be rewarding.

Although the research literature has provided a valuable profile of the youth sport dropout, issues have been raised that pertain to the operational definitions used by the investigators (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). Children and adolescents have been categorized into three distinct groups: participants, dropouts, or nonparticipants. The definitions are too broad and are not consistent across

studies. Questions have arisen as to whether dropouts can truly be categorized as such when these individuals might have chosen to engage in another sport activity or the same one at a lower intensity level (Klint & Weiss, 1986; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). In order to fully understand the dropout phenomena, it has been suggested that research needs to consider the reasons why people initially choose to participate in sport (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989).

One of the few studies (Klint & Weiss, 1986) to assess both motives for initial participation and reasons for withdrawal was conducted with competitive, recreational, and former youth gymnasts. Results were similar to previous studies on participation motives in children's sport. The gymnasts cited multiple reasons for their involvement but the most prevalent were competence, fitness, and challenge. Recreational gymnasts participated initially for competence, fitness, fun, and situational motives. Former gymnasts cited competence, action, challenge, and fun as important reasons for their involvement. There was no evidence found to link motives for participation and reasons for attrition. The most important reasons revealed for leaving the sport by the former gymnasts were having other things to do, injuries, not liking the pressure, too time consuming, and not having enough fun. Although this investigation was important because it explored both the reasons for participation and dropping out within the same study, future in depth research into the reasons given for dropping out

should be considered.

A recent study (Ewing et al., 1990) is the largest investigation that has involved both sport participation and dropout. Both girls and boys ranked a loss of interest and not having fun as the most salient reasons for sport dropout. This suggests a relationship between the incentives for participation and factors for dropout.

The majority of studies on attrition from sport focus on youths and adolescents. An investigation by Blinde et al. (1987) involved 433 former female intercollegiate athletes from a variety of sport programs. The continuation group consisted of 201 athletes. There were 168 athletes in the dropout group. This study was based on former research in sport dropout combined with the theory of personal investment (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986). This dynamic motivational theory attempts to explain why individuals choose to invest energy or persist in a particular activity. Personal investment results from a combination of internal or personal factors and external or situational factors. Internal factors include thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. External factors include nature of the task, rewards, and punishments.

Drawing from the literature, investigators (Blinde et al., 1987) identified six variables that account for continuing or dropping out of sport. These variables were goal-outcome congruence, perceived competence or skill, perceived alternative options, enjoyment of the experience,

constraints of participation, and centrality of the sport role.

Results indicated that dropouts, in comparison to continuing participants, reported greater goal-outcome incongruencies, were more likely to have negative skill evaluation, perceived themselves as less skilled than their teammates, and developed other interests in college. Dropouts cited increased enjoyment from their high school sport and post-college sport participation and perceived college sport as a time constraint to other activities, schoolwork, and social life. Despite dropouts and continuing participants having similar levels of sport role commitment during their freshman year of college, dropouts were less likely to claim that the athletic role influenced other roles and non-sport situations compared to the athletes who continued participation.

This study broadened the perspectives used to investigate the dropout phenomena and offered insight into the intercollegiate athlete's reasons for attrition from sport, but it failed to reveal the underlying factors. An important aspect that needs to be considered when conducting attrition research is the initial motives for participation. Weiss and Petlichkoff (1989) conducted a review of children's motivation for participation and drop out from sport. They suggested several issues be incorporated into research studies that address solutions to questions about attrition from sport. These issues includes consistent

definitions, program type, level of intensity, type of sport, particular reasons for attrition, developmental differences, and the social structure surrounding the sport.

#### An Alternative Approach to Analyze Incentives

Most researchers have utilized a Likert-type scale on their questionnaires to assess both sport participation and sport dropout. An alternative approach can be used to collect data and analyze findings. Fisher (1980) explained that, in an attempt to better understand human behavior, methodologies need to be devised to assess important aspects of person-situation variables. Thurstone's (1927) law of comparative judgment, which uses psychological scaling, is a model for constructing scales. The scales measure attributes, such as motives and incentives.

The Thurstonian method of scaling incorporates paired comparisons, often statements, presented in pairs. Subjects distinguish the more preferred statement in each paired comparison. The data recorded are dominance data, which when compiled result in a matrix in which each cell contains the extent to which the column statement is dominant over the row statement. Research that utilizes comparative judgments by a number of individuals, with each paired comparison being judged once by each individual, is a particular version (Case V) of Thurstone's law of comparative judgment (Fisher, 1980).

Important principles that underlie the Thurstonian

model are as follows: (a) each statement elicits a discriminial process that has some value on the psychological continuum of interest, (b) on repeated judgments by the same individual or judgments by a large number of individuals, there will be fluctuations in the discriminial process of each stimulus and the frequency distribution for each stimulus will be normal, and (c) the mean and standard deviation associated with a given stimulus are taken as the scale value and discriminial dispersion, respectively (Torgerson, 1958).

Potential biases in the discriminial process can be controlled by keeping paired common stimuli separated in order of presentation. This can be accomplished by randomizing relative positions and orders (Torgerson, 1958).

Thurstonian scaling was illustrated by Fisher (1980), who used statements to represent each of Birch and Veroff's (1966) seven major incentive systems, to assess the hierarchical structure of incentives for high school male and female athletes. This scaling proves useful when an attempt is made to depict intervals between rankings of statements. Ordinal data can be transformed into interval data to assist in discriminating items that fall in the middle of a ranking, which are more difficult to discriminate. Thurstonian scaling simplifies the ranking process by presenting only two items at a time.

Kroll (1976, 1977a, 1977b) utilized Thurstonian dimensional scaling in several investigations to assess the

measures of sportsmanship for athletes, officials, coaches, and spectators. Comparative judgments of constructs included attitudes, opinions, and values. Katz-Gunther (1983) also utilized Thurstonian scaling to assess the hierarchical structure of athletes' incentive systems across age and gender.

#### Summary

Despite issues raised, the participation motivation and attrition research offers a good base from which to continue serious investigations. Although there is variation in the motives cited, results indicate that individuals have multiple reasons for participating in and dropping out of sport.

In general, the most salient reasons for athletes' initial involvement in sport are affiliation, excellence, success, skill improvement, and fun. Prevalent reasons identified for attrition from sport are conflicts of interest and having other things to do. Other reasons athletes cite as reasons to drop out are because of negative experiences (lack of playing time, little skill improvement, lack of peer support, dislike for the coach), injury, and lack of fun. Multiple reasons for sport participation and dropout make the problem complex and certainly points to the need for multidimensional solutions.

An alternative approach to collect data and examine the incentive systems for sport participation and the variables that predispose sport dropout incorporates Thurstone's

(1927) law of comparative judgment. This scaling procedure has been utilized previously by researchers (Fisher, 1980; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Kroll, 1976, 1977a, 1977b) to measure variables in their sport investigations. It has been found to be a useful alternative when attempting to depict intervals between rankings of statements or reasons (Fisher, 1980), and therefore might be a fruitful approach in assessing the reasons why individuals are attracted to and drop out of sport.

## Chapter 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter will review the methods and procedures used within this study and will include the following sections: (a) selection of subjects, (b) selection and description of testing instruments, (c) method of data collection, (d) treatment of data, and (e) summary.

#### Selection of Subjects

Subjects (105 female and 61 male athletes) were solicited from women's and men's lacrosse, women's basketball, women's softball, and men's baseball teams from three colleges in Central New York during the spring and fall of 1989. Consent to ask the teams to participate in the study was granted by the coaches of the various teams. The researcher spoke with each team individually. The study was explained and the athletes were asked to complete two questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from the subjects who volunteered to participate in the study.

#### Selection and Description of Testing Instruments

Seven major incentive systems account for most of our goal-directed behavior (Birch & Veroff, 1966). These incentives are achievement, affiliation, sensory, curiosity, aggression, power, and independence. Each incentive system was represented by a statement that best described it. Both the achievement incentive and the affiliation incentive are two-dimensional in meaning and were each divided into two

statements. The statements representing the incentive systems can be seen in Table 1.

A Sport Motivation Preference Scale (SPMS) was constructed from these statements (Katz-Gunther, 1983). Statements were presented in 36 pairs and placed in random order on the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

The Dropout Factor Preference Scale (DFPS), developed from available literature on sport dropout, was used to determine the factors that may lead to dropout. Reasons likely to predispose sport dropout include the development of outside interests, competitiveness of the program, lack of fun, lack of playing time, and the former coach. The dropout statements can be seen in Table 2. Statements were presented in 45 pairs and also placed in random order on the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Subjects were asked to first complete the participation questionnaire before the dropout questionnaire. They were requested to read each pair of statements, decide which statement from each pair better reflected their incentive for participation in sport, and then place a check beside their choice. For the dropout questionnaire, subjects were instructed to choose the paired statement that better reflected the reason they might drop out of sport and again place a check mark beside their choice.

#### Method of Data Collection

The coaches of the teams were contacted in person or by

Table 1

Statements Representing the Incentive Systems


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<u>Incentive Systems</u>	<u>Statements</u>
Achievement (EXC)	I want to be the best I can be
Achievement (SUC)	I want to be a winner
Affiliation (AFF <sub>r</sub> )	I can be with my friends
Affiliation (AFF <sub>g</sub> )	I like to be part of a group
Aggression (AGG)	I can express my aggressive nature
Curiosity (C)	I like to try new things
Independence (IND)	I like to do things by myself
Power (POW)	I can control my opponents
Sensory (S)	I enjoy the thrills

---

Table 2

Statements Representing the Reasons for Dropout

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Statements</u>
Critical Coaching (CC)	The coach was too critical of my athletic ability
Parental Pressure (PP)	My parents place unwanted pressures on me to be successful
Allotted Playing Time (APT)	I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved
Required Practice Time (RPT)	The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit
External Rewards (EXR)	I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)
Quality of Coaching (QC)	The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level
Team Atmosphere (TA)	The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)
Philosophy of Winning (PW)	The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished
Academic Grades (AG)	My academic grades diminished and needed more attention
Conflict of Interest (CI)	I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

telephone, and the purpose of the study was described. After permission was granted by the coaches, convenient dates and times were arranged to conduct the investigation with the teams.

At a meeting with the teams the purpose of the study was explained, and the athletes were asked to take about 20 min to complete the questionnaires. Informed consent forms (Appendix C), the SMPS, DFPS, and pencils were distributed to team members. The athletes who chose to participate in the study completed the questionnaires and returned them to the investigator.

#### Treatment of Data

The data for the SMPS and DFPS were calculated similarly. For the SMPS, data were placed on a matrix that indicated the number of times (frequency) the incentive systems in columns dominated the incentive systems in rows. For the SDFS, data were treated accordingly for the reasons to dropout. The result is a frequency ( $f$ ) matrix. The matrix was then transformed to a proportion ( $p$ ) matrix. These proportions were subsequently expressed as unit normal deviates and read from statistical tables that represent  $z$  scores (Edwards, 1957). The scale value for each statement is derived from the  $z$  matrix and then plotted on a single continuum for female and male groups, for both participation and dropout.

Assessment of the relative importance of each stimulus (both incentives and dropout reasons) was derived by

dividing the scale value of one stimulus by that of another. This was possible because of the interval scale properties of the psychological continuum (Fisher, 1980). The rank ordering of incentive systems to participate and reasons for dropout between female and male athletes was assessed by Spearman rank-order correlation.

An internal consistency check (Edwards, 1957) was performed, indicating the adequacy of the scaled values along the psychological continuum. This is a measure of the discrepancy between observed proportions and those expected from derived scale values.

Kendall's (1948) coefficient of agreement assessed the extent to which the female and male athletes agreed in their comparative judgments of the salience of incentive systems for participation and reasons for dropout. Chi-square provided a significant test for agreement. This test compares obtained frequencies to expected frequencies and indicates the probability that they are different. A significant chi-square does not imply lack of inconsistencies, only that there is a statistically significant level of consistency.

The data from the hierarchical structures of incentives for sport participation and reasons for dropout were analyzed to explain the similarities or dissimilarities between sport participation and dropout. The relative importance of each stimulus was also assessed to determine possible relationships.

### Summary

Subjects (105 female and 61 male athletes) were solicited from various varsity sport teams in three colleges in Central New York. The athletes were asked to complete two questionnaires after signing consent forms. Subjects first completed the SMPS, representing incentive systems, presented in 36 randomly paired statements. The DFPS, representing factors that may predispose dropout, was presented in 45 randomly paired statements.

Data were calculated similarly for SMPS and DFPS. Data were placed on a frequency matrix and then converted to a proportion matrix.  $Z$  scores were calculated and subsequently conveyed as a scaled value for each statement, and plotted on a single continuum.

Assessment of the relative importance of each stimulus was derived by dividing the scale value of one stimulus by that of another. Rank ordering of statements was assessed by Spearman rank-order correlation.

An internal consistency check was performed, along with Kendall's (1948) coefficient of agreement, and a chi-square analysis to examine a significant test for agreement. Data were also analyzed to explain any similarities or dissimilarities between sport participation and dropout.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

The analysis of data presented in this chapter includes the following areas: (a) the comparative judgments of incentives and dropout reasons, (b) assessment of relative importance of each stimulus, (c) Spearman rank-order correlation, (d) internal consistency and overall agreement analysis, and (e) summary.

#### Comparative Judgments of Incentives and Dropout Reasons

The scaled value for each incentive statement for participation and dropout reasons, derived from the  $z$  matrix, is represented along a single continuum. The hierarchical structure of incentives for sport participation for male and female athletes is represented in Figure 1. The hierarchical structure of reasons for sport dropout for male and female athletes can be seen in Figure 2.

#### Assessment of Relative Importance of Stimuli

Data analyses indicated the incentives for sport participation for males and females to be similar. The three most salient incentives were achievement (excellence), sensory, and achievement (success) for males. For females, they were achievement (excellence), sensory, and group affiliation. The least important participation incentives for males were independence, power, and curiosity. For females, the least important incentives were power, aggression, and independence.

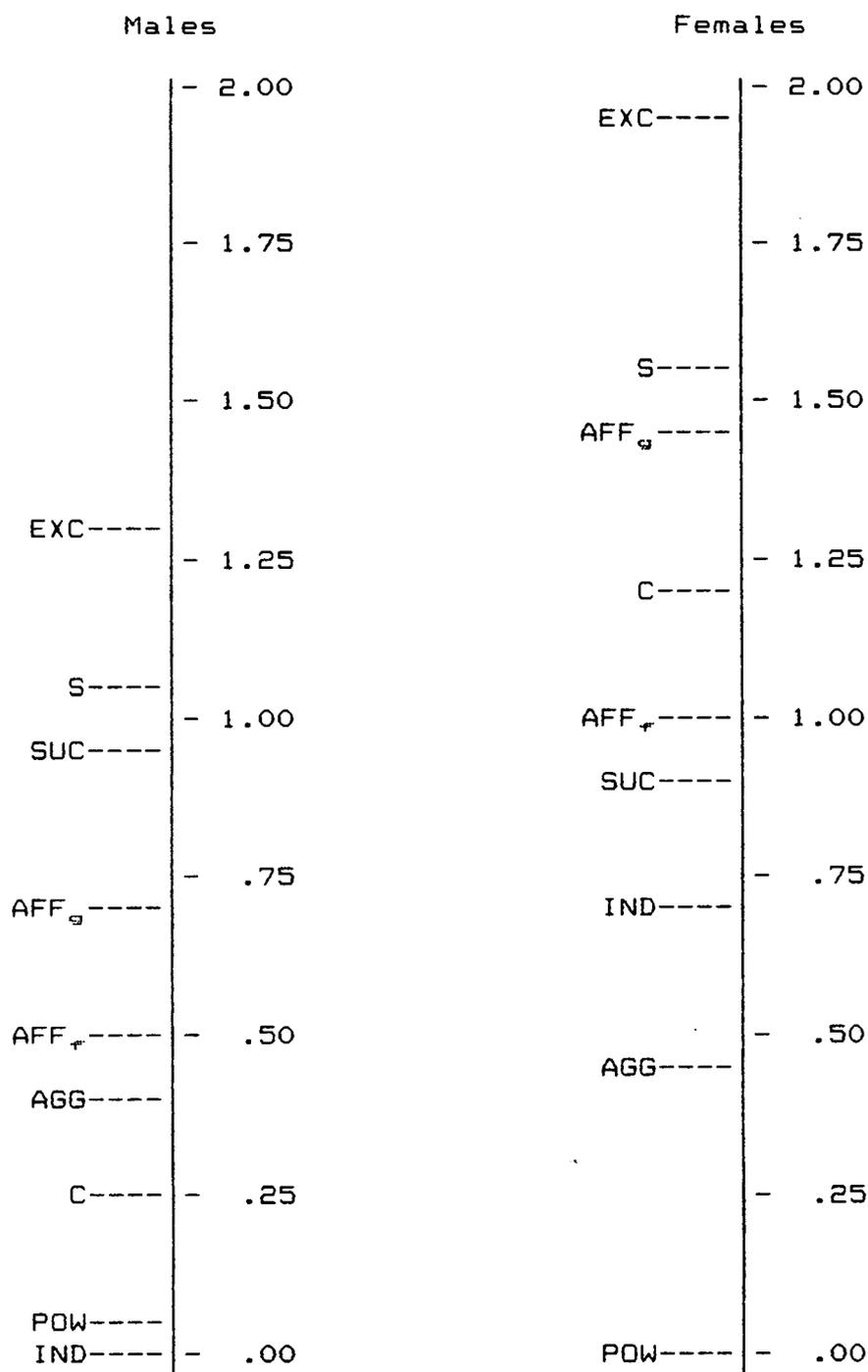


Figure 1. Hierarchical structure of incentives for sport participation for males and females.

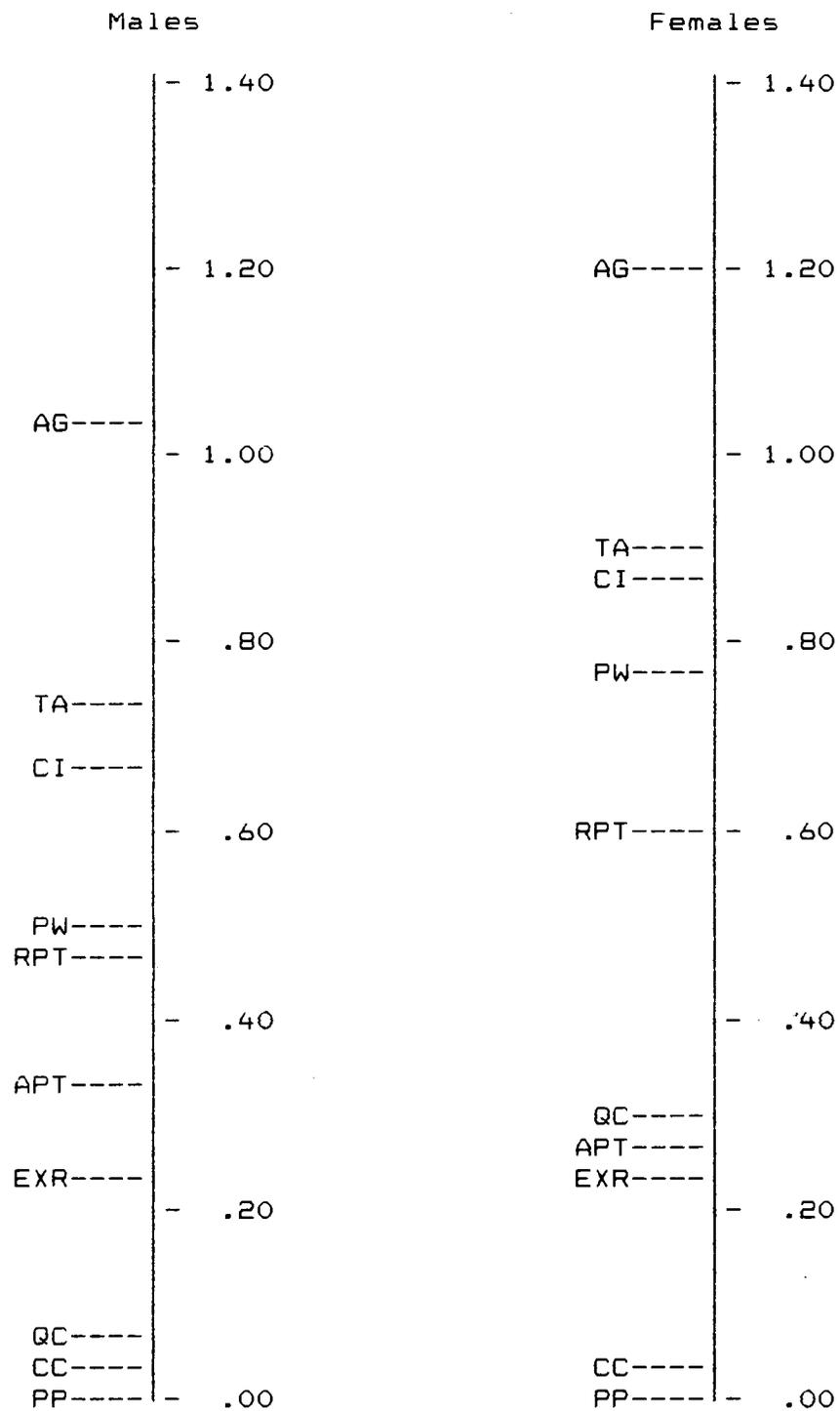


Figure 2. Hierarchical structure of reasons for sport dropout for males and females.

A striking similarity was evident between males and females in their reasons for sport dropout. The most salient reasons for both males and females were academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest. The least important reasons likely to predispose sport dropout for males indicated parental pressure, critical coaching, and quality of coaching. For females, results revealed parental pressure, critical coaching, and playing only for external rewards as least important reasons.

#### Spearman Rank-order Correlation

Spearman rank-order correlation ( $r_s = .77$ ) of the incentive systems to participate between male and female athletes revealed high commonality between the sexes. Both males and females judged excellence and sensory as their top two incentives for participation in sport. This finding led to the rejection of Hypothesis 1 that there will be significant differences in the incentives for male and female participation in sport.

Spearman rank-order correlation ( $r_s = .96$ ) of the reasons for dropout between males and females also revealed high similarity between the sexes. Males and females judged their top three reasons for dropout to be academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest. This finding led to the rejection of Hypothesis 2 that there will be significant differences revealed in the factors that may predispose sport dropout for males and females.

Hypothesis 3 stated that results will reveal a

relationship between the incentives for sport participation and the factors that predispose sport dropout. The data support this hypothesis in one area and, thus, this hypothesis was accepted. Female athletes reported affiliation with a group as an important incentive to participate and negative team atmosphere as one of the top reasons to drop out of sport.

#### Internal Consistency and Overall Agreement Analysis

Internal consistency, coefficient of agreement, and chi-square values for the incentives for participation and reasons for dropout are displayed in Table 3. For participation, the absolute average discrepancy for males and females (.049 and .055) are lower than reported earlier (Fisher, 1980), but slightly larger than reported in paired comparison studies (Edwards, 1957). For dropout, the absolute average discrepancy for males and females (.036 and .039) are only marginally larger than those reported in paired comparison studies (Edwards, 1957).

The extent to which male and female athletes agreed in their comparative judgments of the salience of incentives and dropout reasons was assessed by the coefficient of agreement (Kendall, 1948). Kendall's coefficients of agreement ( $\underline{u}$ ) for male and female athletes were +.26 and +.32 for participation, and +.12 and +.18 for dropout. There was greater consistency among female athletes, shown by the larger  $\underline{u}$ -statistic. Because these are positive values, there is some degree of agreement among judges.

Table 3

Internal Consistency and Overall Agreement of Incentives for  
Participation and Reasons for Dropout

		Internal Consistency	Coefficient of Agreement	Chi- Square
Athletes	<u>N</u>	Ave. error	<u>u</u>	$\chi^2$
Participation				
Male	61	.049	.26	610.17**
Female	105	.055	.32	1267.37**
Dropout				
Male	61	.036	.12	382.46**
Female	105	.039	.18	912.80**

\*\*p < .001.

When tested by chi-square analysis, the results for males and females for participation each revealed a statistically significant level of consistency,  $\chi^2 (38) = 610.17, p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2 (37) = 1267.37, p < .001$ . Dropout values tested by chi-square analysis for males and females also each indicated a statistically significant level of consistency,  $\chi^2 (47) = 382.46, p < .001$ ,  $\chi^2 (46) = 912.80, p < .001$ .

#### Summary

The hierarchical structure of incentives for sport participation and reasons for sport dropout for male and female athletes revealed high similarities. Achievement and sensory incentives were judged most salient by both genders. The most salient judgments for both genders' reasons for sport dropout were academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest.

An internal consistency check and overall agreement analysis were performed to measure the average error and to assess the extent to which the athletes agreed in their comparative judgments. The scaled values fit within tolerable limits. Kendall's coefficients of agreement revealed positive values, indicating some degree of agreement among judges. The coefficients of agreement were statistically significant, which substantiates the claim that both the male and female athletes showed significant agreement in their comparative judgments.

The high commonality ( $r_B = .77$ ) of incentives for male

and female athletes led to the rejection of the hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the incentives for male and female participation in sport. Likewise, the high commonality ( $r_B = .96$ ) of dropout reasons for male and female athletes led to the rejection of the hypothesis that there will be significant differences revealed in the factors that may predispose sport dropout for males and females.

Data revealed a degree of congruence between female athletes' incentives for sport participation and factors that predispose sport dropout. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was accepted.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken to assess the incentives that influence sport participation and the factors that may predispose sport dropout in college athletics. This chapter includes discussion of (a) hierarchical structure of incentives for participation, (b) reasons for dropout, (c) relationship between sport participation and dropout, and (d) summary.

#### Hierarchical Structure of Incentives for Participation

Spearman rank-order correlation ( $r_s = .77$ ) of the incentive systems revealed high commonality in the judgments of male and female athletes. Excellence was judged to be the most salient incentive for both sexes. This is consistent with early expectations in research by Alderman (1976), who argued that achievement is probably the master incentive working in sport in our culture. This finding also concurs with past results of studies of youth, high school, and college athletes relative to sport participation (Fisher, 1980; Gould et al., 1985; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984; Jones & Williamson, 1976; Reis & Jelsma, 1978). Achievement was the most prevalent incentive system revealed in these investigations. If not the most salient, achievement has been found to be one of the top incentives for participation (Alderman, 1978; Alderman & Wood, 1976; Ewing et al., 1990; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978).

Affiliation and curiosity have also been among the top incentive systems judged by athletes. Affiliation and curiosity seem more prevalent for younger athletes, whereas achievement appears to be more important for college athletes.

In the present study the sensory incentive was the next highest incentive for both males and females. This is in agreement with past research (Alderman, 1978; Gould et al., 1985; Fisher, 1980; Katz-Gunther, 1983). The thrills of competition and positive feelings attained from activity appear to be a consistent incentive for sport participation.

Among lower ranked incentive statements judged similarly by both genders were independence, aggression, and power. This is comparable with past research (Alderman & Wood, 1978; Fisher, 1980; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Klint & Weiss, 1986). Conflicting results were reported by Alderman (1970) in a study of soccer and water polo players. Aggression was ranked first as the reason for sport participation. Perhaps the difference in sports provides an explanation for these conflicting results. The present investigation did not measure the aggressive sports as in Alderman's study.

Females ranked aggression slightly higher on the scale than males, which is inconsistent with past results (Fisher, 1980; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petchlikoff, 1984; Reis & Jelsma, 1978). The Katz-Gunther study revealed aggression to be equally ranked by females and males. The other studies all found that males ranked aggression higher than females.

Perhaps the present results are a product of the changing attitude towards women in sport. Women have become more accepted in the competitive sport arena, as opposed to the earlier recreative or "play day" concept. It is not viewed as unfeminine to be aggressive, and striving for excellence is an accepted goal for participation by both genders.

Males ranked success as the third highest incentive, while females ranked success sixth. Males may be culturally motivated at a younger age for achievement, which may account for the difference. This gender difference is consistent with findings of junior high, high school, and college age subjects (Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984; Reis & Jelsma, 1978).

The curiosity incentive statement also revealed differences in judgment for participation motivation. Females judged curiosity higher than males. This also may involve a social issue because females may find sport as a new interest, even at the collegiate level.

Affiliation was judged more prevalent by females than males, which is consistent with past research (Fisher, 1980; Gould et al., 1985; Petlichkoff, 1984; Reis & Jelsma, 1978). This may also be attributable to social or cultural variables operating in the study. Sport may still be a relatively new area for females compared to males. Even though excellence is a salient incentive for females, the opportunity to be part of a group is also an important aspect of sport participation.

It is interesting to note that results from past research indicate group affiliation to be fairly salient and, in some cases, the strongest incentive for sport participation. In this study, female athletes ranked group affiliation third highest and males ranked group affiliation fourth highest. This may be explained by the age of the subjects. Overall, affiliation appears not to be as important an incentive for college age athletes as is it for younger athletes (Katz-Gunther, 1983). Evidence from this study revealed that the relative importance of excellence is 1.8 times more salient for females than the group affiliation incentive. For females, excellence is 1.4 times more salient than the group affiliation incentive.

Participation in sport to be with friends was even less important than excellence on the hierarchical scale, ranked fifth for both genders. The relative important of excellence is 2.6 times more salient than affiliation with friends for males, and 2.0 times for females.

#### Reasons for Dropout

Spearman rank-order correlation ( $r_s = .96$ ) revealed a high commonality between male and female athletes' projected reasons for dropout. Male and female athletes judged equally the top three reasons for dropout. The most salient factors were concern for academic grades, negative team atmosphere, and conflict of interest. Perhaps the concern for academic grades is institution specific. Subjects utilized in this study were enrolled at Division III

colleges of high academic caliber. The Ewing et al. (1990) major study of sport participation and dropout revealed that the need for more study time as a reason for dropout was fairly low. This is in contrast to the present findings. The difference may be explained also by an age factor. The Ewing et al. study included athletes from junior high and high school, whereas the present investigation utilized college age athletes.

Conflict of interest has been found to be a major reason for attrition in sport (Blinde et al., 1987; Burton & Martens, 1986; Ewing et al., 1990; Feltz & Petlichkoff, 1983; Klint & Weiss, 1986; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978). Burton and Martens suggested that sport dropout for youth males might be attributed to an ability factor, but dropping out of sport because of conflict of interest rather than ability-related reasons may enhance perceived ability. This makes the decision process easier, because choosing an alternative activity that is more appealing than the present one enables the dropout to maintain the highest possible level of perceived ability. In this light, dropouts may choose to explain their attrition due to conflict of interest. This may have occurred in the present study because the athletes have already demonstrated an achievement motive for participation, and it may be difficult for some to acknowledge low skill ability as a potential reason for dropout.

Team atmosphere was judged to be a strong factor that

would predispose sport dropout. If the atmosphere created by team members was not congruent with the athletes' personality, then it might have an effect on attrition.

An interesting finding was revealed among the least important factors that may predispose sport dropout. These factors are coaching ability, playing time, and parental pressure. It appears that athletes would not drop out because of communication differences. The Ewing et al. (1990) study of youth athletes, who had recently dropped out, judged poor coaching as a fairly high factor for attrition. Two explanations may be given for this difference in findings. First, the age difference might be a factor in the decision process. Second, the present study asked current participants to judge factors that may cause them to drop out of sport. Athletes still participating in sport might perceive future reasons for attrition different than athletes who have actually dropped out of sport. Until athletes are put in the position where they make the decision to leave a sport, results only rely on current athletes' estimated predispositions.

Academic grades, shown to be the most salient factor for dropping out of sport, was 24 times as salient than critical coaching for males, and 67 times as important for females. This also indicates the insignificance of the coach in determining potential reasons for dropout by the athletes in this investigation.

Philosophy of winning was ranked fourth on the

hierarchical scale for both genders. Academic grades were only 2 times as salient for males, and only 1.6 times for females. It appears that if a "win at all costs" attitude was predominant within the team, this statement might become as important as academic grades for dropout potential.

#### Relationship between Sport Participation and Dropout

There is a link between sport participation and dropout for female athletes with respect to affiliation. Females judged affiliation with a group to be an important incentive for participation. They also indicated that negative or team atmosphere incompatible with their personalities would predispose them to drop out of sport.

The affiliation incentive statement appears to be the only relationship revealed between sport participation and dropout. A consistent relationship between participation motives and dropout factors cannot be found, which is in agreement with an earlier study (Klint & Weiss, 1986) that measured both participation motives and factors for dropout.

The recent major study of youth sport athletes (Ewing et al., 1990) did reveal similarities for sport participation and dropout. The similarities included wanting to have fun, playing for the excitement and challenge, and to win. This study was from large samples of active participants and recent dropouts. Revealing only one similarity between participation and dropout in the current investigation may have occurred because active participants responded to potential reasons for dropout.

### Summary

There was high correlation between males' and females' incentives for participation in sport. Results from the present investigation are generally consistent with earlier studies (Fisher, 1980; Gould et al., 1985; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Petlichkoff, 1984; Jones & Williamson, 1976; Reis & Jelsma, 1978) with respect to participation motives. Excellence was the most salient incentive for both genders. The pattern of achievement incentives being judged more importantly than affiliation for older athletes is replicated in the present study. Females ranked affiliation higher than males, which may be explained by social or cultural trends. This may also explain the higher ranking of the curiosity statement by females.

Independence, aggression, and power were ranked among the lowest incentive systems, which is consistent with a number of earlier investigations (Alderman & Wood, 1978; Fisher, 1980; Katz-Gunther, 1983; Klint & Weiss, 1986). Results conflict with those of Alderman (1970) whose soccer and water polo players judged aggression as the more salient incentive. This may be explained by the aggressive nature of these sports.

Potential reasons for sport dropout also revealed high similarity between males and females. Academic grades, negative team atmosphere, and conflict of interest were judged the most salient factors for dropout. Concern for grades may be institution specific. The importance of

grades may also be attributed to an age factor. Younger athletes ranked study time fairly low (Ewing et al., 1990) as a reason for attrition.

The least important factors that may predispose sport dropout were coaching ability, playing time, and parental pressure. Communication differences appear not to impact on an athlete's decision to leave a sport.

A degree of congruence between incentives to participate in sport and reasons for dropout was discovered with respect to group affiliation for female athletes. There are only two studies to compare results with the present investigation. Although it might appear likely that similarities would be found, results have not substantiated a relationship between participation incentives and factors that predispose sport dropout. The Ewing et al. (1990) study did reveal agreement between participation incentives and dropout factors in sensory and achievement areas. Klint and Weiss (1986) discovered that motives for attrition were not related to initial incentives for participation. More in depth investigations are needed in order to support theories about the relationship.

## Chapter 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the hierarchical structure of athletes' incentives for participating in sport and the factors that predispose sport dropout. A Sport Motivation Preference Scale (SMPS) and Dropout Factor Preference Scale (DFPS) were used to assess the motives to participate and factors that may lead to sport dropout, respectively. Data were scaled accordingly to Thurstone's law of comparative judgment (Thurstone, 1927) to determine gender differences for participation and dropout. Data were also examined for a possible relationship between incentives to participate and factors that may predispose sport dropout.

Subjects (105 female and 61 male athletes) were solicited from various college men's and women's teams from three colleges in Central New York. Subjects were given the SPSS and DPFS, which they completed and returned to the investigator. Data were placed on a frequency matrix and then transformed to a proportion matrix.  $Z$  scores were calculated and subsequently expressed as a scaled value for each statement. Each value was plotted on a single continuum for females and males, for both participation and dropout.

Spearman rank-order correlations revealed high

similarity between males and females for incentives to participate and even higher similarity for dropout. There was a relationship found between incentives for participation and attrition factors for females.

Excellence and sensory statements were found to be the most salient incentives for participation. Success was more important for males than females. Females judged affiliation and curiosity incentives higher than males. Power and independence were common low rankings for participation for both genders.

Academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest were the most important reasons for dropout, ranked similarly by both genders. Parental pressure and critical coaching were also equally ranked as the least important reasons for dropout by males and females.

#### Conclusions

Based upon analysis of data obtained from the SMPS and DPFS used in this study, the following conclusions are made:

1. Achievement (to be the best I can be) appears to be the major incentive for male and female athletes' participation in sport.
2. Achievement (I want to be a winner) emerges as a more prevalent incentive for males than females.
3. Affiliation with a group and curiosity incentives are more salient for females than males.
4. Power, independence, and aggression are among the least important incentives for sport participation for both

genders.

5. Academic grades, team atmosphere, and conflict of interest are the three significant reasons that may predispose sport dropout.

6. Parental pressure and critical coaching are the least significant reasons for sport dropout.

7. Group affiliation emerges as the only link between incentives to participate in sport and the reasons that may predispose sport dropout for females.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Based upon results obtained in the present study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Conduct a similar study at institutions that have differential emphases (i.e., more or less) on academics.

2. Conduct a similar study of athletes on successful teams versus less successful teams.

3. Conduct a similar study utilizing athletes who have dropped out of sport.

4. Study the incentives for participation and factors for dropout comparing athletes from contact and non-contact sports.

5. Conduct a similar study that encompasses Division I, II, and III athletes to assess possible differences in incentives for participation and reasons for dropout.

6. Design a study that assesses the participation motives and reasons for dropout over multiple time periods, to evaluate potential changes that may occur.

7. Assess the participation motives and dropout reasons of individual athletes.

## Appendix A

### SPORT MOTIVATION PREFERENCE SCALE

This questionnaire consists of 9 statements that describe reasons why people participate in sport. I am interested in finding out which reasons are important to you. To make your task easier, these 9 descriptive statements will be presented in pairs. Your task is to read each pair of statements and then decide which of the two statements reflects more your reason for playing sports. There will be 36 paired decisions for you to make.

Here is an example:

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group

Read the statements and then place an (x) in the space beside one of the two statements that better reflects your reason for playing sports. Sometimes both statements will appeal to you, sometimes neither statement will appeal to you, and sometimes only one statement will appeal to you. In all cases please make a better choice for each pair of statements.

HERE IS THE LIST OF STATEMENTS THAT YOU WILL SEE IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE. SOME EXAMPLES THAT MIGHT ASSIST YOU WITH THE MEANING OF EACH STATEMENT HAVE BEEN PROVIDED.

I like to try new things  
(Meaning: sports lets me try new activities; sports offers lots of new experiences for me)

I like to be part of a group  
(Meaning: sports gives me the opportunity to be with a group of people)

I enjoy the thrills  
(Meaning: exciting things happen in sports; playing sports makes me feel good)

I want to be the best I can be  
(Meaning: sports tests my ability; my performance is always or nearly always important to me)

I can express my aggressive nature  
(Meaning: sports lets me be rough; sports lets me shout at others; this does not mean just playing hard or being assertive)

I can be with my friends  
(Meaning: I can choose to participate in those sports in which my friends participate)

I like to do things by myself  
(Meaning: sport gives me a chance to succeed or fail by myself)

I can control my opponents  
(Meaning: sport lets me dominate others; sport lets me show how powerful I am against others)

I want to be a winner  
(Meaning: the outcomes of games are always important to me)



\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

\_\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be

\_\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends

\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature

\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends

\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be

\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group

\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents

\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills

\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I want to be a winner

\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature

\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents

\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends

\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to do things by myself

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills

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\_\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents

\_\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature

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\_\_\_\_\_ I like to be part of a group

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be

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\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the thrills

\_\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends

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\_\_\_\_\_ I can control my opponents

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to be the best I can be

\_\_\_\_\_ I can be with my friends

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\_\_\_\_\_ I can express my aggressive nature

\_\_\_\_\_ I like to try new things

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## Appendix B

### DROPOUT FACTOR PREFERENCE SCALE

Although you are presently participating in athletics, you might have concerns that could eventually cause you to discontinue your participation in sports. You may consider some of these concerns or reasons more important than others. Perhaps, you might not even be aware of these concerns. I am interested in finding out which reasons are more important to you. I have tried to make it easier for you to make your judgments by representing these concerns (in the form of statements) in pairs. Please read each pair of statements and then decide which one of the two statements would be more of a reason to drop out of athletics.

Here is an example:

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt  
I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play  
exceeded my limit

Read the statements and then place an (x) in the space beside one of the two statements that better reflects why you might leave a sport. You may find that sometimes both statements may appeal to you, sometimes neither statement will appeal, and sometimes only one statement will appeal to you. In all situations please make the better choice for each pair of statements.

HERE IS THE LIST OF STATEMENTS THAT YOU WILL SEE IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

The more likely reason I would have for dropping out of sport would be if:

1. The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit
2. I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved
3. My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful
4. The coach was too critical of my athletic ability
5. The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level
6. The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)
7. My academic grades diminished and needed more attention
8. The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished
9. I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport
10. I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

Please provide the information requested below.

Sex M F (circle)

Sport Team \_\_\_\_\_

Read each pair of statements and (x) your best choice.

The more likely reason I would have for dropping out of sport would be if:

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my sport

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

---

\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

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\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

\_\_\_\_\_The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

---

\_\_\_\_\_My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

---

\_\_\_\_\_I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

---

\_\_\_\_\_The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

---

\_\_\_\_\_The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

---

\_\_\_\_\_The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

\_\_\_\_\_My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

---

\_\_\_\_\_My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

---

\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

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\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents place unwanted pressures on me to be successful

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\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

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\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

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\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

---

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ My parents placed unwanted pressures on me to be successful

---

\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ The time required for practice and game play exceeded my limit

---

\_\_\_\_\_ My academic grades diminished and needed more attention

\_\_\_\_\_ I was not getting the allotted playing time I felt I deserved

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\_\_\_\_\_ The coach was too critical of my athletic ability

\_\_\_\_\_ I was only playing to gain external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons) and not for internal reasons (e.g., fun, love of the sport)

\_\_\_\_\_ The quality of coaching that I received was not up to the standards needed at this level

\_\_\_\_\_ The atmosphere created by team members both within and outside the athletic setting did not fit with my personality (e.g., peer pressure to do drugs or alcohol, lack of team togetherness)

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\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy of winning at all costs had become so predominant that the enjoyment of playing the sport had diminished

\_\_\_\_\_ I experienced an increase of interest in some other activity that conflicted with my present sport

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. a) Purpose of the Study. To assess athletes' incentives for participating in sport and factors that predispose sport dropout.  
b) Benefits. To gain statistical information as to why athletes participate in and drop out of sport. The data collected can be utilized from both a research and a coaching perspective.
2. Method. You will complete two questionnaires. The Sport Motivation Preference Scale consists of nine statements that describe why people participate in sport. The nine statements will be presented in pairs. Your task is to read each pair of statements and then decide which of the two statements reflects more your reason for playing sports. There will be 36 paired decisions for you to make. The Dropout Factor Preference Scale consists of 10 statements that describe why people might decide to drop out of a sport. The 10 statements will be presented in pairs. Your task is to choose the best statement that reflects more why you might leave a sport. There will be 45 paired statements for you to make. The questionnaires should take about 15-20 min to complete.
3. Will this hurt? No physical or psychological risks are evident.
4. Need more information? Additional information can be obtained from either Joanne Little (315-781-1703) or Dr. Craig Fisher (607-274-3112).
5. Withdrawal from the Study. Participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and drop out at any time. Please participate only if you want to.
6. Will the data be maintained in confidence? All data will be confidential. The questionnaires do not ask for your name, therefore it is impossible to identify your particular responses.
7. I have read the above and understand its contents, and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 year of age or older.

---

Signature

Date

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