

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER

Developing a Strategy for Promoting Athletic Participation at the High School Level:

Benefits of Athletic Participation

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Abstract

More than ever, schools today are being asked to do more for students in the way of physical, mental, social, and emotional development. A simple and easy way to help students develop these areas is to encourage them to participate on a sports team at their schools. A comparative study of athletic participation at Badger High School showed that the participation levels were slightly above the national average but well below the state average. The question of why this was happening was thus further explored. Using a random sampling of students at BHS that reflected their grade, sex and participation status, surveys were distributed to try and determine why students do or do not participate in athletics. The students' parents as well as the coaches at BHS were also asked to participate. It was found that the main motivation for athletic participation at BHS was to improve physical fitness and ability. It was believed that this research would reveal reasons for non-participation such as having low physical abilities, not having friends that participate, or not having enough confidence to try out for a sport in high school. Instead the research showed that students choosing not to participate in sports were choosing to focus on other aspects of school such as participation in clubs and the arts or trying to keep up with school work. This research can be used as the foundation for further discussion to help improve participation levels at Badger High School.

Chapter One

Introduction

Youth today seem to be facing more problems than ever before. Rising rates of obesity, (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), depression (Harvard University, 2002), and drop outs (Department of Education, 2010) are examples of these problems. At the same time, schools are being asked to find an answer to many of these problems. One answer to these problems could be to encourage students to participate in athletics. Athletic participation has many benefits that go beyond the obvious physical benefits to include mental, emotional, and social advantages. These factors include a positive body image and self-esteem, better coordination and balance, increased strength and stamina, relief of stress and lower levels of depression, a developed sense of discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork and leadership skills, academic success, and an overall better quality of life (McEntire, 2010; Frazier, 2010).

Scope of Study

Badger High School (BHS) is located in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction stated that Badger's enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year is approximately 1332 students. BHS is under the Lake Geneva-Genoa City Union High School District when looking up these statistics. In the 2009-2010 school year, the Department of Public Instruction found BHS to be above the state average for Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies on their District Performance Report which is based on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (<http://dpi.wi.gov>). This report looked at the number of students that scored advanced or proficient on these examinations. In 2009-2010, 11% of Badger students were receiving special education services. Thirty-five percent of Badger

students were on the free or reduced lunch program. Seven percent of the student population also received services for English Language Learners (<http://dpi.wi.gov>).

Badger offers sixteen different sports in which students may participate. Most of these sports are offered at the freshman, junior varsity, and varsity levels leaving thirty-seven different levels for male and female athletes in which to participate. With so many sports options available to the student body, I believe there is a lack of athletic participation at this school. With many positive benefits and so many opportunities available to the students, it appears that there should be no reason for not participating in an athletic program. This problem became evident as a result of forfeited games due to the inability to field a full junior varsity softball team, open spots on swimming and track and field line-ups, and the inability to run scrimmages at varying levels for the basketball teams. These examples compelled me to conduct further research into participation levels at Badger High School to determine if indeed the participation levels are low. To determine the levels, a comparison to the state and national levels of participation was necessary. To adequately explore the topic of athletics, an in-depth review of literature on the many benefits of athletic participation is required to support the argument that athletic participation is beneficial. The goal of this project is to determine if there is a lack of participation as well as to figure out the reasons why students choose to participate or not to participate in athletics.

Purpose and Research Question

The project consisted of two major parts. The first part of this project was an in-depth look at the benefits of athletic participation through a review of literature in the areas of physical, mental, emotional, and social factors. By proving that athletics have a positive, lasting effect on

youth, it was made justifiable to encourage students to participate. A strong argument for participating in athletics was then made.

The second part of this project was to determine if athletic participation is indeed low at Badger High School. This will be done by determining the levels of participation from the previous five school years as compared to the total student population. To determine if levels are high, low, or average, a comparison at the state and national levels, for the same years, was completed. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) are both key advocates of high school athletics. Both of these associations compile data for sports in the state of Wisconsin and the nation. The data made available by these associations was used to compare data from BHS.

Once the category of participation to which BHS belongs was determined, a survey was developed to be administered to students and their parents to verify some of the reasons why students do or do not participate. This survey was conducted in hopes that the results would help discover why students chose to participate or not in athletics. These surveys were deemed important as this is an area where there has not been much research conducted. The coaches also received a survey to obtain their viewpoint on the participation levels at BHS as well as insight as to what could be done to improve it. There were several major questions that I hoped to answer by the end of this research. Does BHS have poor athletic participation when compared to the state or nation? Why do students make the decision to participate in a sport? Do the coaches at BHS have a good understanding of the overall level of participation? Lastly, if this information was made available to coaches, students, and parents would it be considered useful to help encourage future participation?

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Obesity in American adolescents has become a serious problem for today's youth. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) has determined that in the past twenty years the number of adolescents that are overweight has tripled. In addition, the number among children has doubled, meaning that nearly sixteen percent of children between the ages of nine to nineteen are overweight. A Harvard University study (2002) determined that depression among children has climbed by twenty-three percent in the past years. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) has determined that eight percent of students between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four drop out of school. Nearly 5.7 million teens in the United States have been involved in bullying each year; this is almost thirty percent of American youth and is considered to be a growing problem (Nansel et. al, 2001). These are just a few examples of the alarming statistics affecting today's youth. With schools being asked to accept the pressure of supporting today's youth, there needs to be effective ways of turning these statistics around. Encouraging students to participate in athletics is a simple yet effective way to address these and many more issues. Athletic participation has many advantages beyond the obvious physical benefits to include mental, social and emotional benefits. Researchers have been studying these benefits closely over the past years.

Research on the Physical Benefits of Athletic Participation

For purposes of this paper physical benefits include any information directly related to health and physical make-up.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2006) determined that the combination of obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes contribute to 300,000 deaths each year. All of these are a result of physical inactivity and unhealthy eating. However, regular physical activity can reduce these risks as well as improve one's weight and bone health and

reduce anxiety and depression. By promoting physical activity in youths and adolescents, schools and families can prevent obesity (Goran, Reynolds, & Lindquist, 1999).

Researchers Pate, Heath, Dowada, and Trost (1996) compared highly active adolescents to their less physically active counterparts. Students from all fifty states, totaling 11,631 respondents, were given a questionnaire that measured behaviors that had an impact on health. Positive healthy behaviors were associated with the students classified as highly active in the study. Behaviors such as eating fruit, watching less television, low frequency of drug use, and positive weight perception were all observed. Inactive students were found to smoke cigarettes, practice poor dietary habits, watch more television, neglect wearing a seat belt, and perform lower in academic situations. It is important to note that 60.2% of the high-active students in this study reported that they participated on a school-sponsored team sport.

Kaestner and Xu (2006) examined the increase of female athletic participation and its effects on physical activity, weight and body mass, and body composition. The researchers determined that Title IX was a direct result for the increase in female athletic participation but wanted to determine the physical effects participation had on these athletes. A comparison group of male athletes were used as Title IX had little or no effect on males. The results of their study determined that female participation in high school athletics was positively associated with an increase in physical activity as well as improved weight and body mass. They also determined that these effects were still associated with a seven percent lower risk of obesity 20 to 25 years later.

Additional research has found that physically active adolescents become physically active and healthier adults (Hallal, Victora, Azevedo, Wells, 2006). These same researchers determined that physical activity has a positive effect on bone health, improvement of asthma, and improved

mental health. Hallal et. al. (2006) determined that promotion of physical activity should start as early as possible to see the greatest benefits. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (1997) determined that sports also help to build healthy bones and muscles. In addition, youths that participate in sports have better blood pressure and cholesterol levels (Seefeldt, & Ewing, 1997).

Research on the Mental Benefits of Athletic Participation

For purposes of this paper mental benefits include academic and other school-related benefits.

Broh (2002) took information from the National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study of over 24,599 eighth graders from 1,052 public, private, and parochial schools in the United States. Broh followed these students from eighth grade until they were sophomores and seniors in high school. He used curriculum-based achievement tests in math, science, reading, and history to determine academic achievement. The dependent variable in his study was the relationship between participation and academic achievement, while his independent variable was whether a student's participation in sports during both tenth and twelfth grades had an effect on their test scores. Other variables addressed self-esteem, locus of control, and time on homework. These were measured using composite scores from National Education Longitudinal Study data.

Broh looked for results that would answer three main questions. Number one: Does playing high school interscholastic sports benefit students' academic performance? His results found that they do benefit students in a small way. More student athletes have higher scores in math and English. The second question: Does participation in interscholastic sports have personal and social benefits? Broh found that sports have a significantly positive effect on self-esteem, locus of control, and time on homework. He also found that sports increased students' links with peers that also find academics important. The last question answered by Broh: Do the

personal and social benefits explain athletes' improvements in grades and test scores? Broh determined that the findings show benefits for students personally and educationally but could not explain why.

In a similar study at the University of Chicago, Guest and Schneider (2003) looked at the association between athletic participation and academic success. Guest and Schneider used data from the Alfred P. Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development to do a five-year study of middle and high school students. The study found that participation in sports had a positive effect on a student's grade point average. In conclusion, the study determined that sports have a positive correlation with higher grade point averages. A positive correlation between participation in extracurricular activities, including sports, and higher achievement test scores and higher teacher-assigned grades were also found by researchers Cooper, Valentine, Nye, and Lindsay (1999). Additional research supporting these findings came from Marsh and Kleitman (2003) that also concluded that student athletes had higher grades and in addition found that they also have higher educational aspirations as well as overall educational attainment.

Silliker and Quick (1997) in New York had similar findings. These researchers found a positive correlation between in-and out-of-season soccer players. They looked at in-season and out-of-season grade point averages of both female and male athletes. They found that both the males and females had higher grade point averages during season than they did out-of-season. They also found that female athletes had higher grade point averages than male athletes.

McNeal (1995) determined that athletes have a significantly reduced likelihood of dropping out of school. His findings are based on data collected from the National Center for Educational Statistics. The sample McNeal used included 735 public schools and had a baseline and follow-up data.

Feldman and Matjasko (2005), in a comprehensive review, found many other research studies that came to the same conclusions. As cited in their work, Crosneo found that in 2001 participation in sports and having successful peers helped increase academic success in both boys and girls. Another study by Hanson and Kraus, in 1998, sighted by Feldman and Matjasko, looked at the effects of sports on science. This study found that tenth graders' sports participation had a positive effect in science. It also saw that twelfth grade students' sports participation positively affected access and attitudes for females. Studies by Marsh and Kleitman, McHale et al. (2001) and Melnick et al. (1992) all reiterate the findings from these other studies that sports have a positive effect on students' grade point averages.

Research on the Social Benefits of Athletic Participation

For purposes of this paper social benefits refer to society as citizens as well as interpersonal relationships.

A great impact on society has been made by citizens that at one time participated in organized sports specifically in high school (Lopez and Moore, 2006). Their findings determined that student athletes turn out to be more civically engaged than other students. Student athletes were more likely to volunteer on a regular basis, participate in physically active charity fundraisers such as run/walk/rides, register to vote and vote, and follow the news, specifically the sports sections (Lopez and Moore, 2006).

Patrick et. al. (1999) looked at the role of peer relationships on extracurricular participation and talent development. The researchers selected forty-one adolescents from a larger study of 873 participants. These students participated in sports, music, or the arts and were all in high school. They conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews by following a protocol but allowed open ended responses. The major purpose of this study was to determine the role of peer relations in the involvement in a field of talent. Patrick et. al. found a positive correlation between participation and social relationships. Students reported that through their involvement

they had a greater opportunity to make friends, including those of different ages or peer groups, and reported an increased number of friends. Additionally, one-third of the study participants said that an overall opportunity to enhance their social skills in general was observed.

Athletes have an opportunity to communicate with a variety of individuals through their seasons. These interactions help to strengthen one's social skills. A study by Bengoechea and Streat (2007) looked at what groups of people helped to motivate athletes. In a qualitative cross-case study the researchers interviewed twelve adolescents to determine what groups of individuals influenced them the most. They found that five individual groups of people played a role in athletes' lives: providers of support, sources of pressure and control, sources of competence-relevant information, agents of socialization of achievement, and models to emulate. The study noted that these roles are not simply filled by the athletes' coach and parents, but a wide variety of individuals had influence on the athletes including teammates, spectators, teachers, and sports friends just to name a few. This distinction is important as it provides additional outlets for social interaction and opportunities to use different communication skills with each group.

A similar study by Stuntz and Weiss (2009) surveyed 303 middle-school students to determine the positive motivational outcomes that sports have on students. They determined that there are many social orientations associated with sports participation. Athletes felt that success in sports could be indicated by improvement in the sport, being accepted by peers, gaining close friendships, and receiving praise from the coach. It is noted that only one area involves physical ability while all others involve social acceptance and approval.

Additional research by Cote (2002) and Fraser-Thomas et. al. (2005) have also determined that sports lead athletes to become better citizens, build leadership skills, have

positive peer relationships, and have higher career achievement. Also, athletes experience positive interpersonal relations and higher social status. Cote found that sports even provide an opportunity for developing skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-control.

Research on the Emotional Benefits of Athletic Participation

For purposes of this paper emotional refers to internal factors of the athlete.

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (2010) has determined that significant health benefits can be seen by a moderate amount of daily physical activity. These health benefits reduced physical risks such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes but also included reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Researchers Sanders, Field, Diego, and Kaplan (2000) conducted a study on 89 American high school students to determine if sports-involvement has positive influence on their well-being. The 89 high school seniors were given a questionnaire that looked at involvement, depression, intimate relationships with parents and friends, and grade point average. Their findings indicate that lower sports participation correlated with a higher depression score than those students with greater sports participation. Their study was found to be consistent with a previous study the researchers conducted with Icelandic athletes. Research by Gore, Florence and Gordon (2001) out of the University of Massachusetts had similar findings. Interviews with 1,036 high school students found a significant association with team sports involvement and lower levels of depression for both male and female students.

In-depth research by Steptoe and Butler (1996) was conducted to determine if sports participation had an effect on the emotional well-being of 5061 male and female sixteen-year-old students in England, Scotland, and Wales. They used data from a 1986 follow-up survey from a 1970 British study. To determine well-being the researchers used the Malaise Inventory and a twelve item general health questionnaire. The researchers found that sports were positively

associated with emotional well-being independent of sex, social class, health status, and need for hospital services.

Slutzky and Simpkins (2009) out of Arizona State University looked at the effects team sports had on the self-esteem of elementary students. Their study followed students through three waves starting at kindergarten and ending in the sixth grade. These students went to twelve public schools in the Midwest. The study included 987 children, their parents, and their teachers. Slutzky and Simpkins looked at sports activity, children's self-concept, self-esteem, ability, peer acceptance, and family demographics. They found that children that participated in team sports had higher self-esteem than their peers. They also found that this was true across gender, sport ability, and peer acceptance. A similar study was conducted by Richman and Shaffer (2000). Their study focused on 220 female college students but found that participation in sports at the high school level resulted in higher self-esteem in college. They also noted that their research was consistent with prior research on male and mixed-gender samples.

Research conducted by Gadbois and Bowker (2007) found that the more a student participated in sports the higher their self-esteem and body satisfaction. This study measured participant's self-esteem and physical self-esteem. A total of 134 students in the eleventh grade filled out the Body Esteem Scale and the Physical Self-Description Questionnaire. They found that the students that had longer sports participation rated themselves as being more competent in their sport, more physically active, coordinated, and flexible, having greater endurance, more satisfied with their physical make-up and higher physical self-esteem.

Summary

As previously stated, today's youth are growing up in a world full of higher numbers of physical and mental health problems. Today more than ever schools are being asked to fix these

problems in a timely and cost-effective manner. Sports are an easy and efficient answer to many of these problems. Studies have found that sports can reduce obesity and other health-related problems that are caused from an unhealthy, sedentary lifestyle. Students that participate in sports have been found to have higher grade point averages, higher scores on academic tests of achievement, and lower rates of dropping out. Students that participate in sports report having more friends, better social skills, and are more active in their communities. Finally, higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression have been reported by athletes across a large range of ages.

Looking at athletic participation at BHS, these proven benefits of participation will be used to encourage more students to participate in sports in the future. The information could also be shared with their parents to further encourage their children to participate. This review of previous research and literature is a starting ground for proving how important athletic participation can be. By having this distinct research base, information can be provided to support the argument that athletic participation can lead to brighter, healthier, happier, and more involved students and adults.

There is one key area that much of the previous research has neglected to address, however. Most of the research has looked at specific benefits of athletics but never attempted to answer the true question of why children decide to participate or not participate. This project is designed to answer the question of why students do or do not participate. This question was addressed by surveying students to gain a better understanding of the reasons why some students participate while others do not.

Chapter Three

Method

An article by the National Federation of High School Associations states that students who participate in sports have higher grades and better attendance, become better citizens, have higher graduation rates than non-athletes, and have an overall better high school experience than non-athletes (NFHS, 2010). By looking at participation data, a determination of Badger's participation levels can be made. It is hypothesized that the number of participants on athletic teams at Badger High School in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin is low. With so many known benefits including physical, mental, social, and emotional advantages, these perceived levels of participation should not be so low. Therefore, this project focused on determining athletic participation at Badger High School and the underlying reasons of why this is true. Surveys with open-ended questions, which can be found in the appendix, were used to establish these reasons.

Timeline and Assessment

This project was completed in two major phases. The first data collection phase consisted of collecting athletic rosters and determining participation levels of student athletes at Badger High School. The collection of participation data from the state and national levels followed, which was completed during the summer of 2010. By the end of the summer, a comparison of the three sets of data was conducted. The second phase started the first two weeks of the school year. Surveys that asked open-ended questions about athletic participation for the students, parents and coaches were written. The student body was then put into strata groups based on grade, sex, and participation status, and five percent of each group was drawn at random from a hat and asked in person to participate. Five percent was considered a manageable amount by the researcher. The students and parents were then given three weeks to respond. After two weeks

had passed a written reminder was given to all participants that had not yet returned their survey. At the same time, the coaches were given the opportunity to participate in a similar survey. By November, the results of all the surveys were compiled.

Participants

Several different groups participated in this project in order to find the required information for the intended results. The Athletic Office at Badger High School was a key component in determining athletic participation at BHS. The National Federation of State High School Associations and the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association also helped to determine state and national averages. Each of these three associations provided the number of athletic participants in their region to determine a percentage of participants based on the total number of each population. In addition, the students, parents, and coaches at BHS were key contributors to the survey results. These participants were ideal because they were able to provide a better understanding of the answer to the question of “why” students make the decisions about their athletic participation at BHS.

The following tables provide an in-depth look at each set of survey participants. Table 1 represents all of the coaches at BHS. All coaches were given the opportunity to participate in the surveys with the exception of the gymnastics coaches. The gymnastics coaches are from a cooperative program outside of BHS, so while the gymnastic athletes are included in the survey the coaches opted out of the surveys based on their minimal familiarity with Badger High School.

The following is a breakdown of the sports offered at BHS as well as the number of coaches representing each sport. Some sports use the same coaches at multiple levels which are represented in the table. Also, some coaches do coach more than one sport; they will be

represented multiple times in the table but were not asked to take extra surveys. Additionally, some sports have volunteer coaches; they were also asked to participate in the surveys as they have a unique perspective, but they are not represented in the table because they are not recognized in the Badger Athletic Office files. The table will simply show a total number of paid coaches per sport.

Table 1: Sports and Coaches at BHS

Sport	Number of Coaches
Freshman Baseball	1
Junior Varsity Baseball	1
Varsity Baseball	2
Freshman Boys Basketball	1
Junior Varsity Boys Basketball	1
Varsity Boys Basketball	2
Freshman Girls Basketball	1
Junior Varsity Girls Basketball	1
Varsity Girls Basketball	2
Junior Varsity Cheer (Basketball)	1 (All levels of cheer for both basketball and football share the two coaches.)
Varsity Cheer (Basketball)	1
Junior Varsity Cheer (Football)	1
Varsity Cheer (Football)	1
Junior Varsity Boys Cross Country	1 (Same coach as the varsity coach)

Varsity Boys Cross Country	1
Junior Varsity Girls Cross Country	1 (Same coach as the varsity coach)
Varsity Girls Cross Country	1
Junior Varsity Dance	1 (Same coach as the varsity coach)
Varsity Dance	1
Freshman Football	5
Junior Varsity Football	2
Varsity Football	5 (All football coaches coach all levels; they coach a position but they are split in this fashion.)
Junior Varsity Boys Golf	1
Varsity Boys Golf	1
Junior Varsity Girls Golf	1
Varsity Girls Golf	1
Junior Varsity Gymnastics	
Varsity Gymnastics	
Junior Varsity Boys Ski Race	1 (All levels of Ski Race for both boys and girls share the same coach.)
Varsity Boys Ski Race	1
Junior Varsity Girls Ski Race	1
Varsity Girls Ski Race	1
Freshman Boys Soccer	1
Junior Varsity Boys Soccer	1

Varsity Boys Soccer	2
Freshman Girls Soccer	1
Junior Varsity Girls Soccer	1
Varsity Girls Soccer	2
Freshman Softball	1
Junior Varsity Softball	1
Varsity Softball	2
Junior Varsity Boys Swim	1 (Both coaches work with both levels.)
Varsity Boys Swim	1
Junior Varsity Girls Swim	1 (Both coaches work with both levels.)
Varsity Girls Swim	1
Junior Varsity Boys Tennis	1
Varsity Boys Tennis	1
Freshman Girls Tennis	1
Junior Varsity Girls Tennis	1
Varsity Girls Tennis	1
Junior Varsity Boys Track	7 (All coaches work with all levels of the track program for both the boys and girls; they are split into specific track event areas.)
Varsity Boys Track	7
Junior Varsity Girls Track	7
Varsity Girls Track	7
Freshman Volleyball	1

Junior Varsity Volleyball	1
Varsity Volleyball	2
Junior Varsity Wrestling	4 (All coaches work with both levels.)
Varsity Wrestling	4
Total Number of Sports Offered: 24	Total Number of Coaches: 70

Table 2 shows the breakdown of student survey participants. The participants were chosen at random from a hat. The entire student populations were split into strata groups that included grade, sex, and participation status. Then five percent of each group were randomly selected and asked to participate in the survey. Five percent was considered reasonable by the researcher. Table 2 shows the breakdown of each group along with the number of participants selected. Once a participant was selected they were asked in person to participate in the survey. A description of the project was presented to the student as well as an explanation of how they were chosen to be a participant was given at that time. Each student had the option to participate or not. It was also explained to them at that time that if they chose to participate they would have to also ask their parents if they would be willing to participate as well. They would also have to get a consent form (Appendix A) signed by their parent before returning their survey. The table below shows the total number of students asked to participate over the total number of students in each population.

Table 2: Boys and Girls asked to Participate in the Surveys

	9th grade Girls	10th Grade Girls	11th Grade Girls	12th Grade Girls
Do Participate	6/125	5/93	4/70	3/48
Do Not Participate	4/80	5/107	7/139	6/117
	9th Grade Boys	10th Grade Boys	11th Grade Boys	12th Grade Boys
Do Participate	7/132	5/95	3/59	4/64
Do not Participate	5/93	5/102	6/113	5/109

Sampling Procedures and Research Design

It was essential to first determine if there were actually low participation levels at Badger High School. To determine the level of participation, athletic rosters from the past five school years were collected. Participation was determined as a percentage of athletes as compared to the total student population. Information from the previous five years will be used to determine if there are any apparent trends. Next, participation data at the state and national levels will be collected. This information will come from the National Federation of State High School Associations and the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association. By comparing the three sets of data, it will be determined if Badger High School has high, low, or average levels of participation as compared to the state and the nation. As participation will be determined by a

comparison, a difference of more or less than ten percent was considered relevant to the researcher.

Once the actual participation levels were determined, the information was used to write the surveys that were given to students at Badger High School. A stratified random sampling based on grade, sex, and participation level of students between the grades of 9 and 12 were randomly selected to participate in the surveys along with their parents. Five percent of each strata group was asked to participate. The surveys were used to determine the reasons students do or do not participate in athletics. The students' parents were surveyed to acquire their perspective on their child's participation as well. An additional survey was written for the coaches. This survey will determine how accurately the coaches perceive the participation as a whole at BHS along with what they suggest could be done to improve it.

Research Questions

It was assumed that based on the previous examples of low sports participation, the participation level at BHS is below average. If it is found that this is untrue the opinions stated by the survey participants will still be beneficial. Additional assumptions could be made as to what the students will answer as reasons for why they do not participate in sports. For example, some answers may include that they did not do so when they were younger and they believe it is too late to start in high school. Another response could be that some athletes will feel that they must specialize in one sport and play it year round, even if they have talents in other sports, to gain an edge over the competition. Positive reasons for why students do play a sport could include because it will keep them in shape and because their friends participate as well. I also believe that understanding the reasons for why students participate in sports will help not only

coaches but also teachers. It is assumed that the students' reasoning for choosing or not choosing sports could be used to determine why they make a decision in other areas of their lives as well.

I also believe that I will have problems getting students and coaches to participate in this research. The logic behind this opinion is that I believe that participation levels in sports are low, so I assume that this will cross over into getting survey participants. However, I hope that by giving students the opportunity to have their opinions heard it will encourage them to want to contribute to the surveys.

Chapter 4

Finding: Results and Data Analysis

Results for Participation Percentages:

The following tables show the findings from the first data collection phase. The tables are a visual representation of the athletic participation percentages for Badger High School, the state of Wisconsin, and the United States for the five school years between 2004 and 2009.

Percentages were determined using data provided from personal communication with representatives of the NFHS, by phone, WIAA, by fax, and in person at BHS. Total numbers of recorded athletic participants were divided by the total population for each locale to determine the percentages.

In the 2004-2005 school year, BHS had 54.9% of their students participating in sports as compared to Wisconsin which had 67.2% while the nation was at 52.9%. In the 2005-2006 school year BHS was at 52.8% while Wisconsin was at 66.8% and the nation was at 53.5%. In the 2006-2007 school year BHS was at 57.6% while Wisconsin was at 68% and the nation was at 54.2%. The 2007-2008 school year found BHS to be at 60% while Wisconsin was at 67.5% and the nation was at 54.8%. The final year represented in the data, 2008-2009, shows BHS to be at 60.5% while Wisconsin is at 69.3% and the nation is at 55.2%.

As previously stated, any percentages that have a difference of ten percent or more would be considered important. Ten percent of the current population at BHS is around 130 students. This many students would make a significant difference in the total number of student athletes if it were to be changed either way. For the school year of 2004-2005 athletic participation at Badger was 2% above the national average but 12% below the state average. This would indicate that Badger has much lower participation levels when compared to the state but is about average

when compared to the nation. For the 2005-2006 school year, Badger was 0.7% below the national average and 14% below the state of Wisconsin. This also indicated that Badger would be considered average when compared to the nation but still a great deal lower than the state. In the 2006-2007 school year Badger was 3.4% above the nation but 10.4% below the state. Again Badger would be considered about average when compared with the rest of the nation but still well below the state average. In the 2007-2008 school year Badger was 5.2% above the nation and only 7.5% below the state. While this would indicate that Badger is just slightly above average when compared to the nation and still below the state average but it would not be as considerably below as the previous years. The 2008-2009 school year found Badger to be 5.3% above the national average and 8.8% below the state average. This would still place Badger as just slightly above the nation average and below the state average but not in the considerable range as determined by a ten percent or more difference. It is unknown why there has been a slight growth.

This data indicates that on a whole BHS is slightly above the national average for athletic participation but is considerably below the state average. This information confirms the previous hypothesis stating that BHS has low levels of athletic participation when comparing BHS to the state. While it may seem that BHS has good participation levels because they do have over fifty percent of their students participating in athletics, when compared to the state of Wisconsin which are the schools against which they compete, they are at a numbers disadvantage. A difference of just ten percent would mean that BHS has over 130 more students participating in sports. Higher numbers means a larger pool of athletes to work with giving coaches more choices and flexibility. In addition, more students would be able to benefit from all the positive facets sports provide. The following tables will further illustrate this point.

Table 3: Participation Levels as Percents. Badger Compared to the Nation and the State of Wisconsin by Year

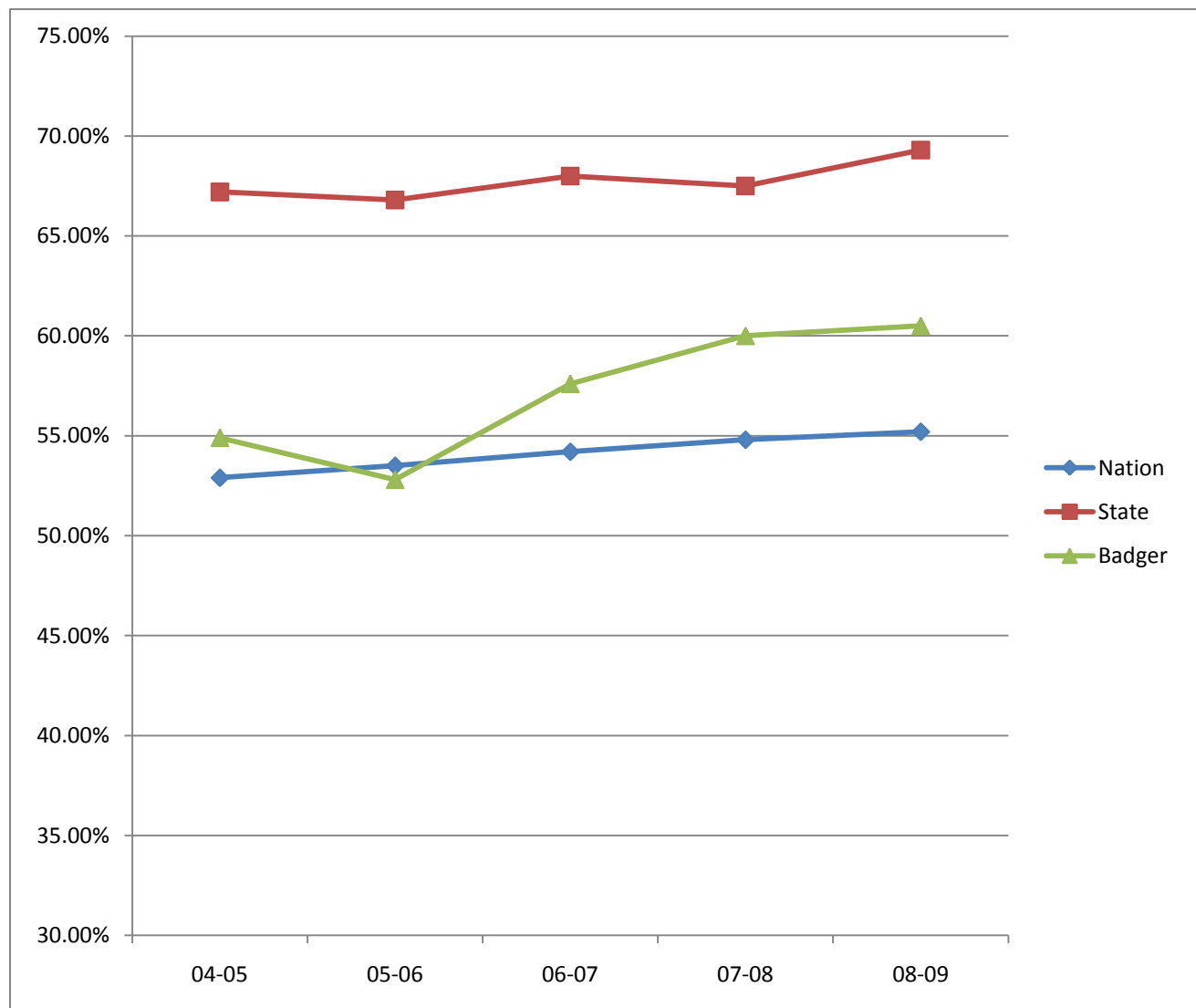


Table 4: Participation Levels as Percents. Badger Compared to the Nation and the State of Wisconsin by Year

Year	Nation	State	Badger
04-05	52.90%	67.20%	54.90%
05-06	53.50%	66.80%	52.80%
06-07	54.20%	68.00%	57.60%
07-08	54.80%	67.50%	60.00%
08-09	55.20%	69.30%	60.50%

- National numbers were provided by John Gillis, the Assistant Director of the NFHS from their handbook for each respective year including total population numbers (J. Gillis, personal communication, July 27, 2010).
- State numbers were provided by Joan Gralla, House Manager for the WIAA, from the WIAA records for each respective year (J. Gralla, personal communication, Aug. 8, 2010).
- Badger numbers were provided by Tami Buntrock, Athletics Secretary, from the Badger High School Athletic Department from their records for each respective year (T. Buntrock, personal communication, Aug. 31, 2010).
- Number for the total attendance rates for the state of Wisconsin and Badger High School came from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website (<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>, Aug. 19, 2010).

Coaches' Participation Totals

All coaches were given the opportunity to participate in the surveys. Twenty-one coaches out of the fifty-one coaches that were given the opportunity to participate returned their surveys. This means there was a 41% participation rate for the coaches. This does leave room for non-response bias in the answers. Table 5 shows the number of coaches that returned their surveys. The table was broken down by sport but does not differentiate between levels. Also some coaches may coach more than one sport. They were represented in both places but did not take multiple surveys. This explains the discrepancy in the table between total surveys completed and number of coaches that participated in the table. This table's intent was to show that the perspectives of the survey results were partially based on the sports coached by the respondent. It is also noted that the researcher in this study coaches multiple sports but did not participate in the surveys.

Table 5: Number of Coaches that Participated in the Surveys

Sport	Number of Coaches That Responded
Baseball	3
Boys Basketball	0
Girls Basketball	2
Cheerleading	0
Boys Cross Country	0
Girls Cross Country	0
Dance	0
Football	5
Boys Golf	2

Girls Golf	2
Gymnastics	0 (Not asked to participate.)
Ski Race	1
Boys Soccer	3
Girls Soccer	2
Softball	0
Boys Swimming	1
Girls Swimming	1
Boys Tennis	0
Girls Tennis	0
Boys Track	2
Girls Track	1
Volleyball	2
Wrestling	1

Results of Coaches' Surveys

Coaches' Opinions of the Participation Levels

When coaches were asked via the survey in Appendix D their opinion on the athletic participation levels at BHS, 70% of respondents believed that participation levels were average, while 10% believed Badger has below-average participation, and 20% believe that Badger has above average participation. Coaches' beliefs about whether there are differences in participation levels depending on the sport were inconclusive. Some coaches felt that individual sports have higher numbers because they are "low profile" sports that students can join simply

for the social benefits while other coaches felt that team sports have higher numbers for the same social reasons. One coach stated that “a student can be part of team while not having to fear the personal accountability that most individual sports encompass” while another coach felt that “if a child does not have skills in a team sport they will not see playing time, but they can still be a part of a team, while athletes in an individual sport will get to participate but their deficits will be easier to detect.”

Some coaches felt that female participation numbers were higher while others felt that male numbers were higher. Others felt that numbers were relative to the sport. For example, according to one coach, “the football team should have more participants than the golf team because of the number of athletes required to field a team”.

Coaches’ opinions on why students do or do not participate in sports

The coaches stated a number of reasons for their beliefs as to why students do not participate. One coach stated that “sports are hard and many students do not want to be embarrassed and are afraid of looking bad if they do not do well.” Many also felt that some students do not want to put the work in that is required to excel in sports. Another coach suggested that if a team has not had much success, students do not want to be associated with that sport. Many of the coaches also felt that a student is more likely to participate if their friends participate. Another coach stated that “high levels of athletic participation are created through the culture of a school and currently that is not a culture that BHS possess.” Some coaches stated that prior after school commitments such as jobs or babysitting younger siblings keeps some students from participating. Another coach stated that “a lack of professional role models for some sports that could help encourage participation” is a reason. One reason for low participation numbers that many coaches agreed upon is that many athletes now specialize in one

sport even though they have abilities in other sports which will help one program while it can hurt another.

There are just as many stated opinions as to why the coaches feel students do participate in sports. One coach that felt that participation was above average stated that this is so because

“There are no fees to participate in sports at BHS giving students with low income a chance to participate. There are also late busses at BHS which provides transportation to students that may not have been able to participate due to transportation issues that may come up at different schools”.

Many coaches felt that success draws athletes to a particular program. Some stated that since most programs do not make cuts, students are willing to participate. Multiple respondents also felt that if a student has friends on a team they will be more likely to participate themselves. Another thought was that students participate because they are simply good at the sport. One coach stated that “students realize that participation in athletics will lead to relationships with others and give them good life experiences.” Another felt that students participate because “of the good status that students have if they participate in sports and the value society places on athletes.” A few also stated that there are advantages after high school such as scholarships or additional extracurricular activities that can be put on college applications.

Coaches' opinions on how to improve participation

The coaches also had many ideas about how participation could be improved. Running successful programs was a theme agreed upon by many. “Success will naturally improve numbers,” said one. Coaches also felt that they need to encourage students to participate. “A coach needs to be like a sales person and promote their sport,” said a respondent. Another suggested that coaches be more aware of the different types of athletes that they are working with. “Coaches must understand that there are different types of participants. Some students want to be successful athletes while other simply want to be a part of a team and coaches should

understand these differences.” Many respondents stated that BHS needs to encourage more middle school and youth participation. Getting help from the physical education department to find athletes that are not currently participating in any athletics was also a suggestion of a few. One coach felt that “coaches need to teach a love for the sport, not simply a sport to athletes.” Another coach felt that coaches should “make your athletes feel important so that this will send a message to other non-participants.” It was also suggested “to teach sportsmanship and respect so athletes take you seriously.”

Many coaches said that coaches should not promote specializing in one sport. Athletes should be encouraged to cross-train in other sports. Another suggestion by many of the coaches was to get more coaches to participate in the off-season lifting program in the weight room. They felt that this would help more athletes to get to know the different coaches and encourage them to try another sport.

Student and Parent Participation Totals

Students and their parents were randomly selected from strata groups based on their grade, sex, and participation level. Five percent of each population was drawn at random. Five percent of each population was chosen to allow for an accurate representation of each population without surveying the entire population. Eighty surveys were distributed and twenty-six were returned. Although all students were asked in person if they would like to participate before being given the survey, only 32.5% of those that stated that they would like to participate returned their surveys. Table 6 shows the number of students in each area that returned a signed consent form along with completed student and parent surveys.

Table 6: Student and Parent Survey Respondents

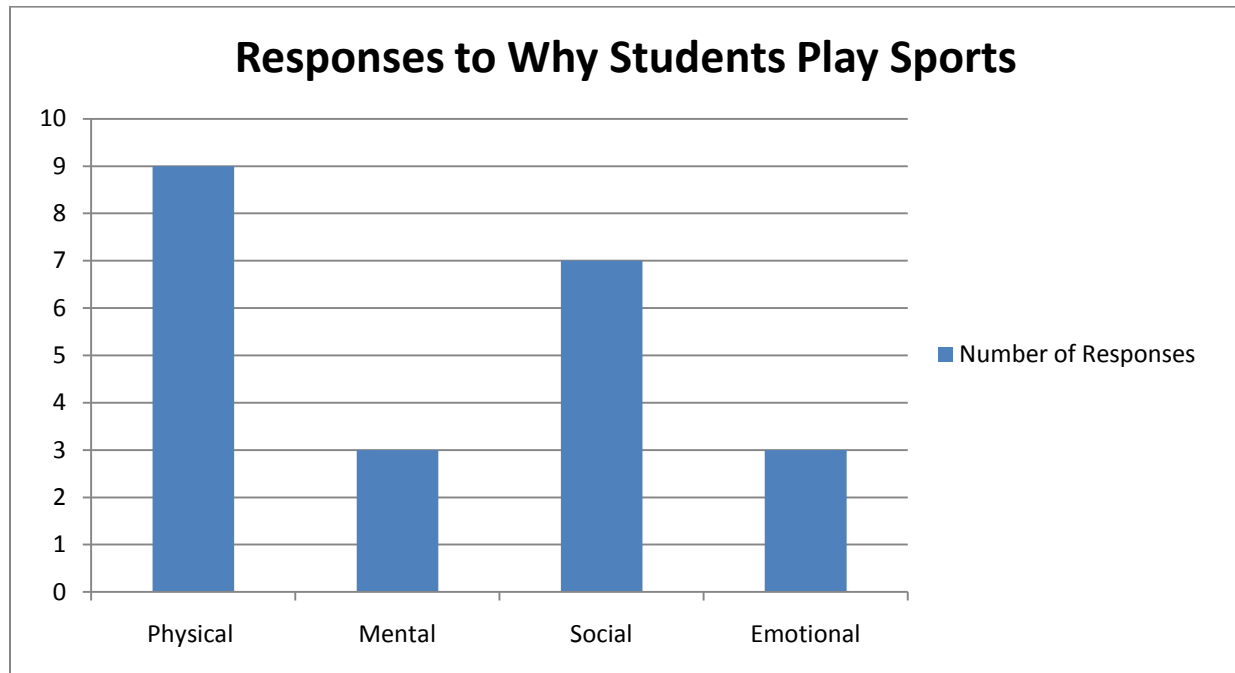
	9th grade Girls	10th Grade Girls	11th Grade Girls	12th Grade Girls
Do Participate	1	3	0	1
Do Not Participate	3	1	0	2
	9th Grade Boys	10th Grade Boys	11th Grade Boys	12th Grade Boys
Do Participate	1	4	1	2
Do not Participate	1	2	2	2

Student Survey Responses

Why Students Do or Do Not Participate

It was found that students have many different reasons for choosing to participate or not to participate in sports. Table 7 shows their answers. As the questions were open-ended, a student may have had multiple answers. All answers were separated into four main categories. The four main categories are physical, mental, social or emotional. A physical response would include answers such as staying in shape or getting a good work out or simply the person has physical strengths or weaknesses. A mental response would include anything related to academics or school in general. A social response would include anything relating to citizenship or interpersonal relationships such as making friends or meeting new people. Finally, an emotional response included answers dealing with internal factors such as improving one's self, becoming more confident, or other factors that would considered specific to that person.

Table 7: Responses to Why Students Play Sports

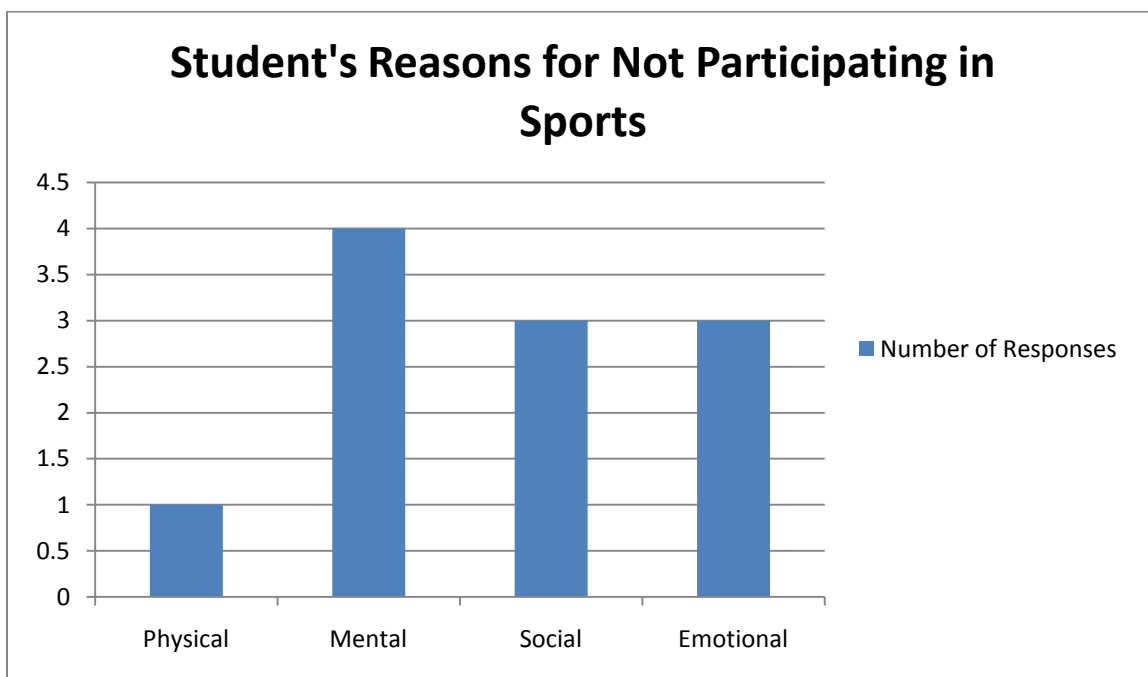


As the table shows the most popular answers, with 41% of the responses, were related to the physical aspects of sports. To stay in shape or to be fit were the major reasons many students decided to play a sport. Responses dealing with social issues were the second most popular response with 32% of the responses. Making friends was the most common response under this category. Many students felt that sports were a good place to meet people with similar interests. Mental and emotional reasons came in third, both with 13.5% of the responses. Some students felt that sports gave them an outlet to stay out of trouble after school. They could have been off with their friends, but instead they are at school working hard. “I could be out hanging out with friends or I could be at school working hard and keeping my priorities straight,” said one student. They also felt that sports helped them keep their grades up. Some students stated that in order to play a sport they had to have good grades, so they always had a reminder to do their best in and

out of school. Emotional responses included the ideas that sports can be fun as well as teach students hard work, dedication, and discipline.

The reasons students stated for not playing sports are many of the same ones the athletic students stated for wanting to participate in sports. Table 8 uses the same categories as the previous one to show why students chose not to participate in athletics.

Table 8: Student's Reasons for Not Participating In Sports



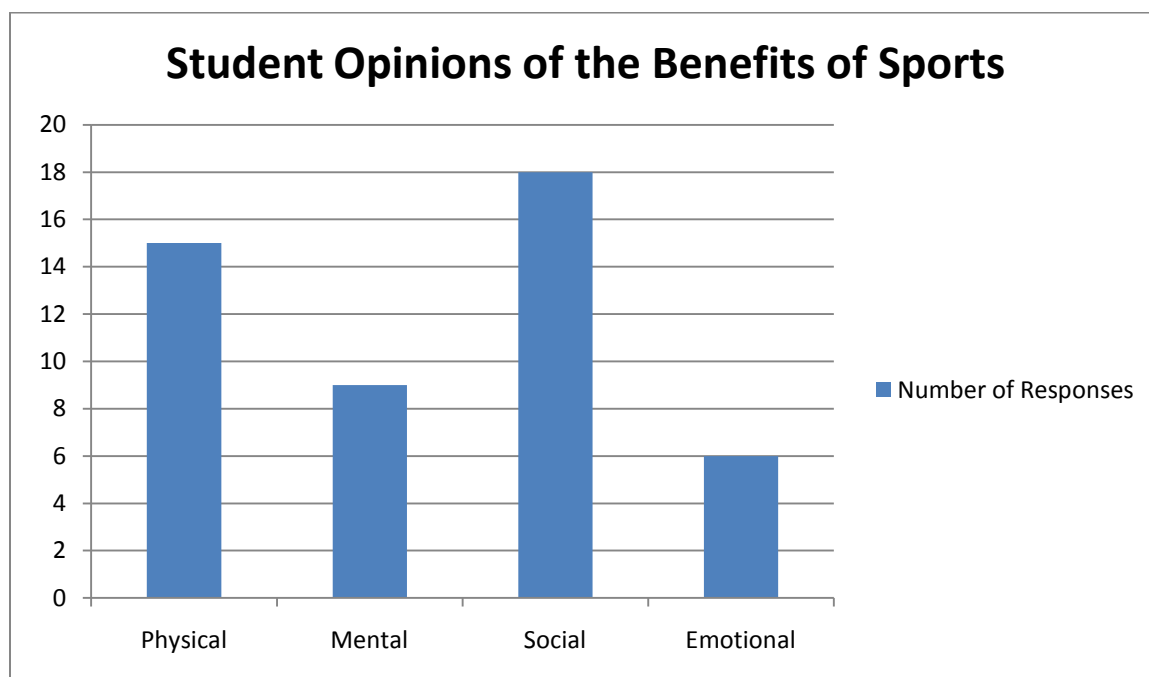
The most popular reason for not participating in sports by the respondents (36%) came in the mental category. These students felt that something else relating to school, such as grades, either good or bad, or participating in a club, was the main reason why they did not participate in athletics. One student stated, "I made some bad decisions when I got to high school and they kept me from being eligible for sports. If I could do it again I would have made different decisions so that I could have played sports." Other students stated that the time commitment required to play a sport took time away from participating in other school activities such as clubs.

Social and emotional answers tied for second, with 27% of the responses each, in this area. Some students felt that sports are taken too seriously and that makes them not fun. Some said they quit playing sports because they felt that their coaches did not like them or did not make them feel welcome. It was also found that some students simply did not like sports. Only one student stated that he or she did not play a sport for a physical reason. The reason was not that he or she did not have talents or felt unable to physically compete but because of an injury.

Student Opinions on the Benefits of Sports

Students were asked if they believe there are any benefits to playing sports. Table 9 includes responses from both athletes and non-athletes. This table shows the breakdown of how students look at the benefits of athletics.

Table 9: Student Opinions of the Benefits of Sports



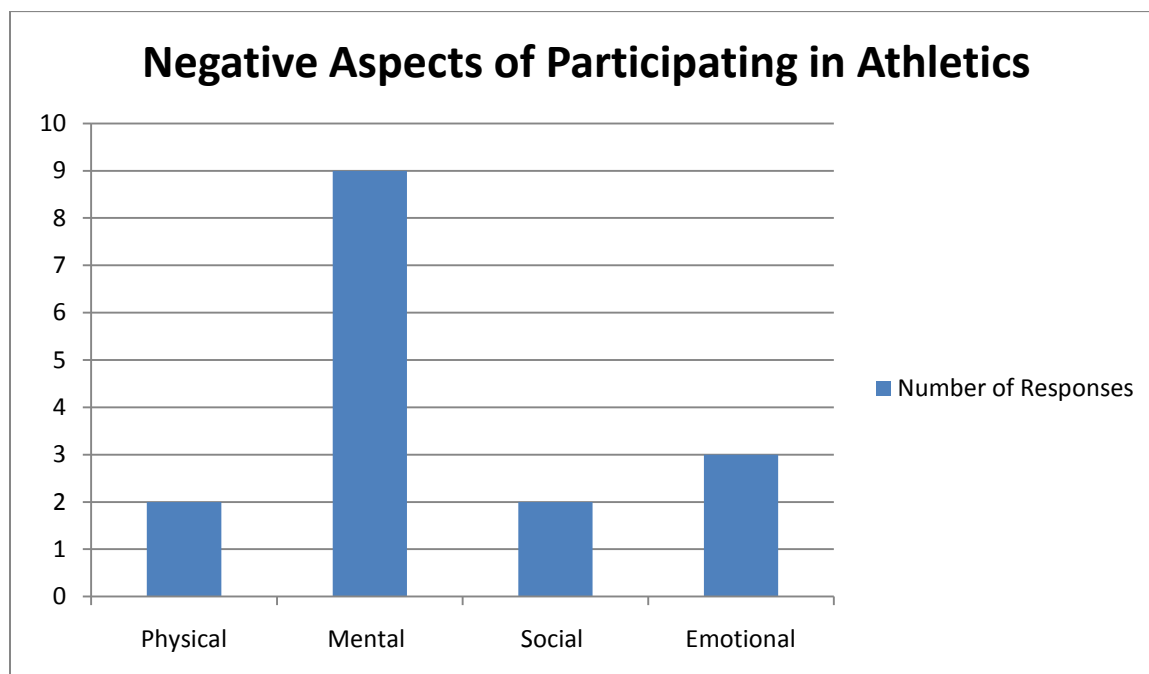
Responses that would fall under the social category came in first with 37.5% of the responses. The most popular answer stated by most of the students was that one can make good

friends by participating in sports. The second most popular answer, with 31.25% of the responses, was for physical reasons. Sports keep students in shape. The third most popular answer, with 18.75% of responses, was that participation was for mental reasons. These respondents stated reasons such as keeping grades up and that participation looks good on a college application. A few students, 12.5%, stated emotional reasons such as sports teach teamwork, leadership, courage, confidence, and determination.

Negative Aspects of Sports

Students also felt that there could be some negative aspects of choosing to participate in sports. Most students, both athletes and non-athletes alike, stated that in general the positives outweigh the negatives. But, they could still name a few negative aspects of athletic participation. Table 10 illustrates these reasons.

Table 10: Negative Aspects of Participating in Athletics



Mental factors that have to do with school were stated the most, with 56.25% of the responses, when discussing negatives of sports. Many of the students stated that sports can be stressful because of the time commitment, and that sports take away time that can be spent on homework or other activities. Others felt that athletes exemplify a bad stereotype which could hurt them emotionally, 18.75%, or socially, 12.5%. One student stated that “if you are not a good athlete you could feel singled out.” A few, 12.5%, stated that there are some physical concerns specifically that one could get injured.

How to Improve Participation

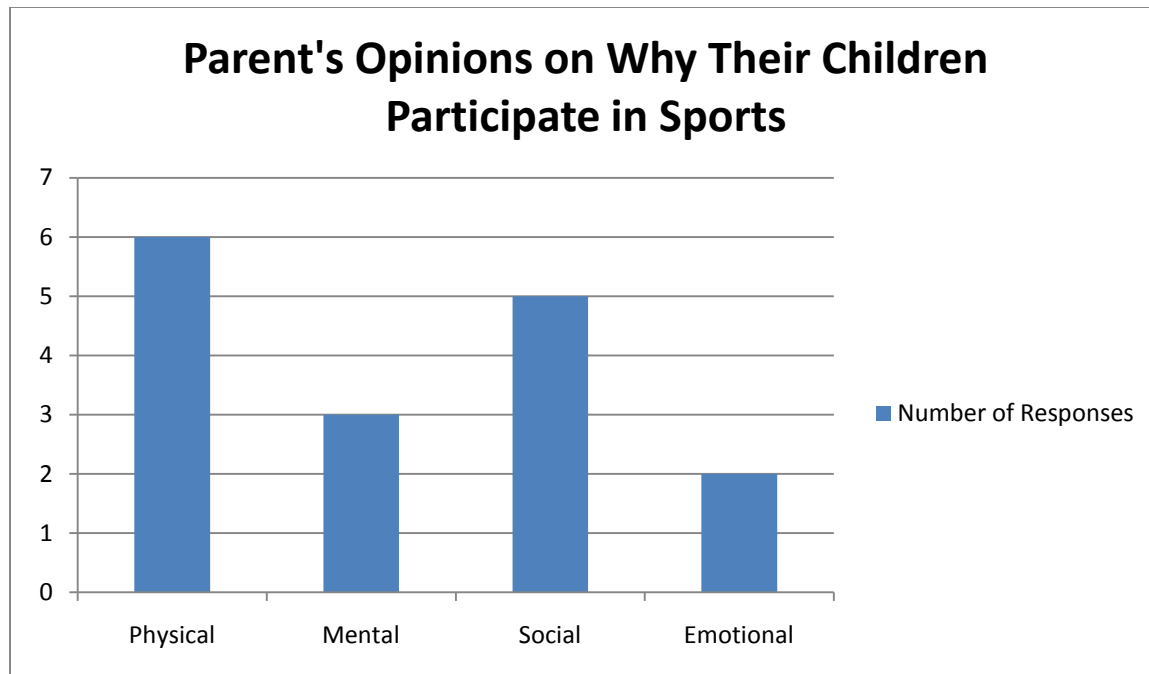
Finally students were asked what could be done to help encourage them to want to participate in the future. Many of the athletes stated that nothing should be different, and they felt that their participation could not be impacted by any changes. The number one item stated by non-athletes to make them want to participate in a sport was to make the time commitment not so great. Seven of the eleven responses in this section had to do with the large time commitment. Students felt that coaches needed to be more understanding about missing practices because of needing time for school work. They also felt that the teachers could be more understanding and supportive of student athletes by not giving so much homework. Some students felt that getting better or different coaches would make them want to participate. Others stated that better promotion of the athletic opportunities would be helpful. One student stated that it was too hard to pay for the sports physical. A common response from a few current athletes was that they would like to be able to participate in more than one sport in the same season and they hoped that this would be allowed in the future.

Parent Survey Responses

Parents Opinions on Why Students Do or Do Not Participate

When the parents were asked why they believe their child participates in a sport, they stated many of the same reasons as their children did. Table 11 shows these reasons.

Table 11: Parent’s Opinions on Why Their Children Participate in Sports

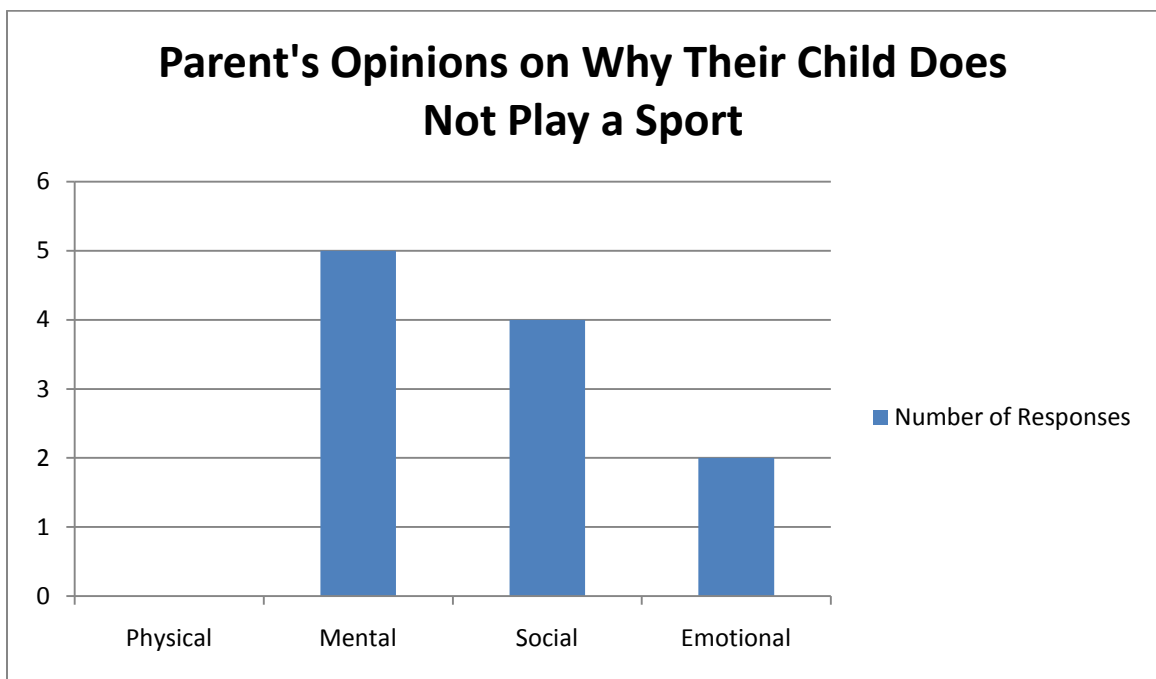


The students’ parents had many similar responses to their students in this category. When parents were asked why they believe their student participates in sports, the most popular answer had something to do with the physical aspect of playing a sport, which had 37.5% of the responses. Answers such as “it keeps my child in shape and fit” were the most common responses for this question. Secondly parents believed that their child participated for social reasons (31.25% of the responses). They felt that their child was an athlete because their friends were also or to make new friends. Thirdly, 18.75% of responses, some parents thought that there were some mental benefits to sport such as participating meant their children had to keep their grades up and it helped them stay out of trouble at school. Finally, some, 12.5% of responses, felt

that their child was an athlete for emotional reasons. They felt that their child had a true love for the sport or that it taught them confidence and determination.

The reasons parents felt their child did not participate were more varied. As the following table shows, the main reason parents of athletes felt their child did play a sport, for the physical benefits, was not even a response by the parents of non-athletes. Non-athlete parents felt that physical ability had nothing to do with why their child did not play a sport. Table 12 illustrates this point.

Table 12: Parent's Opinions on Why Their Child Does Not Play a Sport



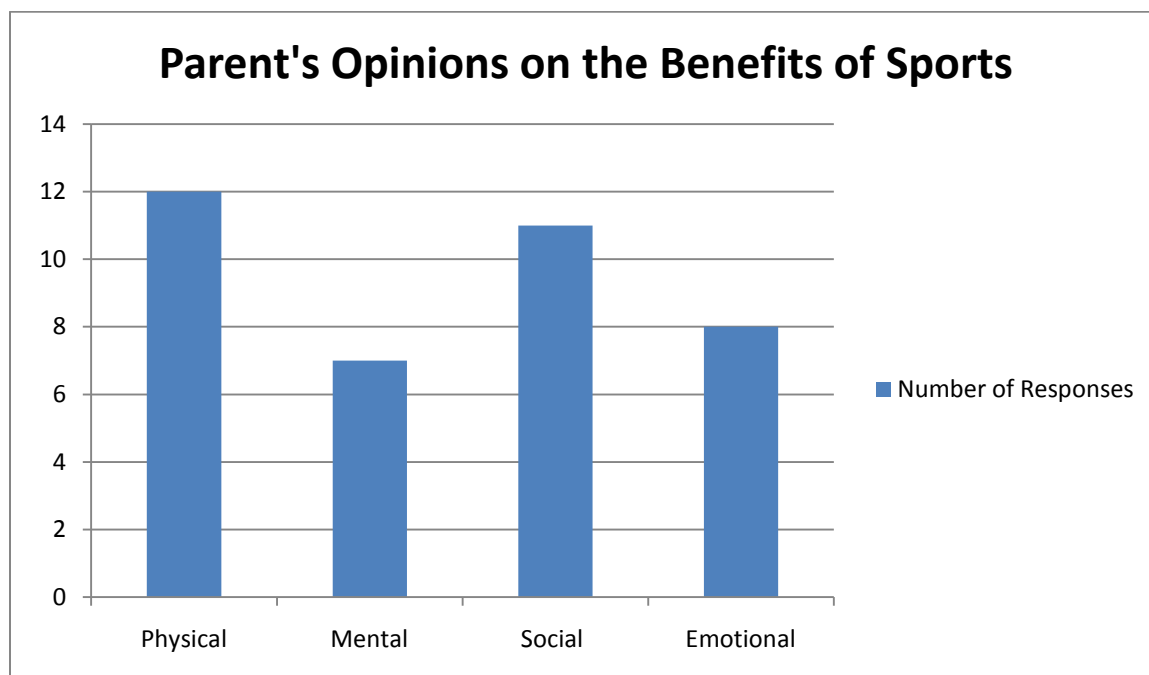
The number one reason, 45.45% of the response, stated by parents as to why their child does not play a sport was for mental reasons. The time commitment that sports require takes away time for homework and other activities at school. A few parents stated that their child's grades were not good enough to make them eligible to play a sport and that was holding them back. Some parents also stated that their child works instead, but this still dealt with time so was put into this category. The second most popular response, with 36.36% of the responses in this

category, was for a social response. Most parents felt that their child did the same thing that their friends did. Since their friends did not play a sport neither did they. Finally, some parents, 18.18%, felt that their child did not or no longer played a sport because of emotional or internal issues. Some felt that sports are taken too seriously which took away the fun of the sport. One parent stated that their child got cut from a team and was not willing to try a new sport in its place. Another parent stated that sports are too political. “If you or your child doesn’t know someone they won’t make the team or get much play time,” one replied. As previously state, not a single parent responded that their child had a physical reason for not playing a sport.

Parent’s Opinions on the Benefits of Sports

Parents of both athletes and non-athletes felt that sports have many benefits. The following table shows their answers together as a benefit was considered a benefit regardless of participation. Please see Table 13 for the results.

Table 13: Parent’s Opinions on the Benefits of Sports

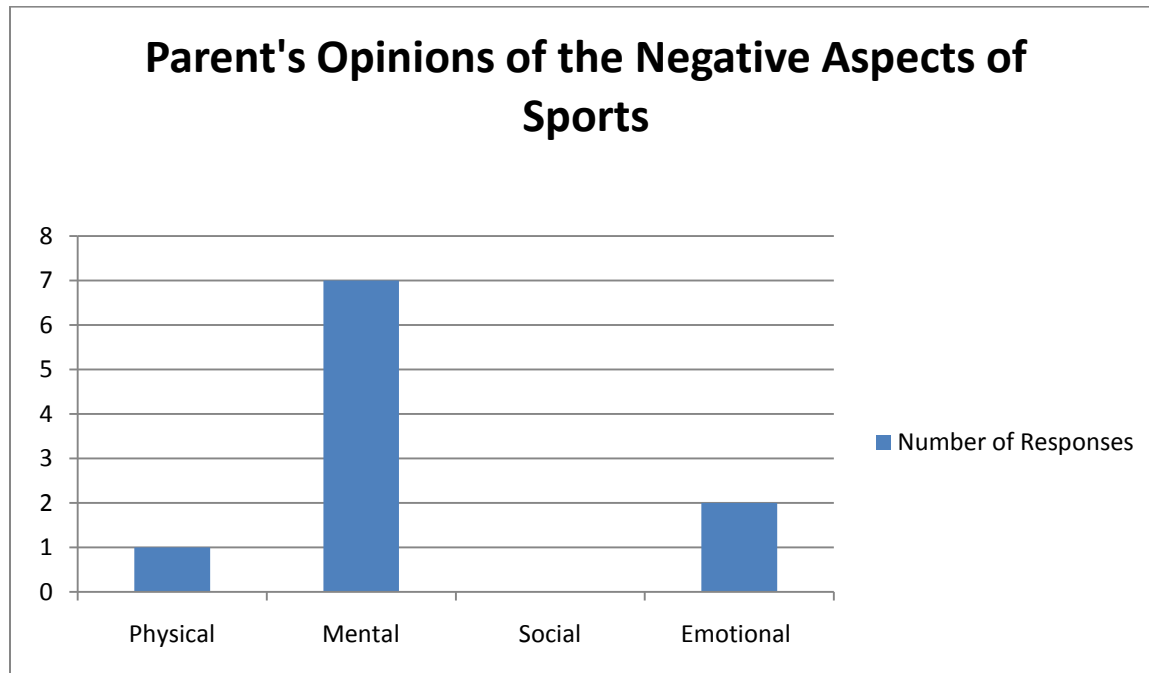


The most popular answer, with 34.3% of the responses, was the obvious physical benefits. Staying in shape, learning a healthy lifestyle, and getting better at a sport were all mentioned. Many, 31.4%, also stated social benefits such as friendships as a huge benefit of playing sports. One parent explained that her child had recently moved and although he did not play a sport, she hoped he would in the future because she believes that this would help him to meet some new friends at the school. Mental related answers came in third with 20% of the responses. Parents believed that students would have better test grades and better connections at school, which would keep them out of trouble, if they were in a sport. Finally the 12.3% of responses in the emotional category included the idea that sports teaches a student to be proud of their school and themselves as well as teaching sportsmanship, confidence, and teamwork.

Parent's Opinions of the Negative Aspects of Sports

Parents could also name some negative aspects of athletic participation. This table includes the responses of both parents of athletes and parents of non-athletes. Table 14 displays their responses.

Table 14: Parent's Opinions of the Negative Aspects of Sports



The most popular response, 70%, was the in the mental category and mainly dealt with the time commitment. The time commitment included the practice times, traveling to and from events, and the events themselves. Parents felt that the large time commitment took away from school work and participation in other activities at school. Emotionally, a few parents, 20%, worried about their child being upset if they did not do well or were not so strong an athlete as the others on the team. Others stated that maybe a coach would not pay as much attention to their child if they were not a star athlete, and this would hurt them internally as well. One parent had a concern about the physical nature of sports and was worried about injury. Parents could not name many other negative aspects and in general thought that sports are seen as a positive way for students to spend their time, regardless of the few negative aspects.

Parents' Opinions on How to Improve Participation

The parents had many suggestions for improving sports at BHS. The most popular response in this category had to deal with the time commitment. They felt that if the time commitment were

not so great their child might participate in a sport or participate in more sports. They felt that the time commitment would hurt their student's grades and their participation in other activities at BHS. They also suggested talking to teachers about being more understanding with homework requirements to help alleviate some of the pressure. Some parents felt that the coaches should focus a little more on improving the student internally through teaching skills such as determination, dedication, and perseverance and not focus simply on winning. If they felt their student would learn more of these skills, they would be more likely to encourage their child to participate. One parent stated that adding another sport that is not offered would make her child want to participate.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Interpretations

The research in this project shows that the original hypothesis, that Badger High School has low athletic participation levels, was correct. As Table 3 shows, Badger's percentage of participation is slightly higher than the national average but is significantly lower, as determined by a ten percentage point difference, than the state average. This information is vital to take into consideration as Badger High School competes against other schools in the state, not against the rest of the country. By comparing the numbers of participants, it is clear that Badger is at a disadvantage. Having a smaller number of athletes on a team makes it harder for coaches to perform well against other teams that are pulling from more athletes.

The second major question to be answered through this research was whether the coaches at BHS understand the student population that make up their athletes. The coaches revealed, through their surveys, that they felt there was no problem with the athletic participation here. Most of the coaches felt that participation here was average. This information can be used to show the coaches that there is still a large amount of students at BHS that they could be encouraging to participate in their sport. Taking advantage of the hidden talents in these students could help coaches improve their programs. By taking the average of the participation percentages from the past five years, I can determine that Badger has about 57.16% of their students participating in a sport, while the average for the state is at 67.76%, and the nation is at 54.12%. For the current school year there are 1332 students at Badger High School. If the average percentage of students participating in sports is just under 60 percent that leaves 570 students that are not participating in any sports. I would also consider it safe to say that there are

more than 570 students not participating in a sport as many of the student participants may be participating in more than one sport. Considering the vast array of answers given by the coaches to all the survey questions, one can also deduce that while the coaches believe their programs are successful they did not have much of an overall understanding of athletics at BHS in general.

The second goal of this project was to determine why students do or do not participate in a sport. As the results from the surveys show, most athletes participate because they want the physical benefit of participating in a sport. Staying in shape, getting in shape or pushing their bodies to be the best they can be was their major goal. The second reason most students decide to play a sport is for the social benefits. Students felt they could make friends by being a part of a team.

To better understand why students do play sports one must also understand why they do not play sports. The survey results showed that most students at BHS do not play a sport because they want to focus on other activities that Badger has to offer. Some wanted to focus on school work or stated that their poor grades held them back from being eligible for a sport. Others found a different interest at Badger that they preferred to focus on such as a club or the arts.

A parent's perspective on these same questions was also taken into consideration to determine if there were any underlying reasons that the students may not have wanted to address. The parents felt that the main reason their child played a sport was because of the physical benefits. Their child was either good at the sport or wanted to stay fit. The parents also felt that there were many social benefits for their children such as meeting new friends or having friends with common interests.

The fact that the parents and students both stated that the main reason they participated in a sport was for the physical benefits can lead one to believe that most athletes play sports

because they can physically excel or stay in shape. A limitation of this study, though, is that it is based on self-reports. Although the surveys were anonymous, students' self-understanding may not be perfect. The parents and athletes both stated that the second major reason why they participated in a sport was because of the social aspects of sports. Making friends was seen as a major reason why students play sports.

On the other hand, the parents' thoughts on why students did not participate in a sport had nothing to do with the physical nature of sports. No parents stated that they felt their child did not play a sport because they physically could not do so. Most of the parents stated that their child did not play a sport because they were focusing on something else related to school, such as clubs or the arts, or on their schoolwork. This is also consistent with the reason where the largest percent of student responses came from. It could be assumed that based on the low number of physical responses by both the students and their parents that not being able to play a sport is not the major reason holding students back from participation. The major reason for not participating in a sport at BHS is a mental, school-related reason. While many students felt they have athletic talents, they decided to focus their efforts elsewhere such as in the arts or academic areas.

The final question that I sought to answer through this research was if this information was provided to coaches, parents and students at BHS would it be useful in encouraging participation? I believe that by providing the results of this research to these groups it would indeed be helpful to raise awareness and in turn improve participation. If coaches understood why some students do not participate, they could use this information to better promote their sport. If students knew this information they could better understand the benefits of a sport beyond simply getting in shape and be more interested in athletics. Finally, if parents were

provided this information they could too understand the benefits and help to encourage participation.

Limitations

While this study can be helpful for many different groups, it has numerous limitations. The largest limitation is in the number of responses. As was stated previously, if athletic participation is low I may find that getting people to participate in this survey may also be hard. With only 41 percent of coaches and 31 percent of students and their parents participating there could be a large amount of non-response bias in this research.

Also, when making comparisons for determining the percentage of total participants, each category included different sports than what Badger has to offer. When making a comparison with the state of Wisconsin, it is important to note that the state does not include cheer or dance as a sport. This could actually cause the percentage or participation at Badger to be even lower than the state because cheer and dance were included in their numbers. On the other hand the national numbers include many more sports that Badger does not have which again makes it hard to compare the numbers.

Finally, one of the biggest limitations in this research would be that of the interpretation of the survey responses. As a researcher I determined that I would like to ask open-ended questions in my surveys so as not to lead any of the participant's responses. However, when it came time to compare answers I had to interpret the responses to the best of my ability based on which of the four categories they best fit. This could leave room for error based on my own interpretation of the responses.

Implications

Finally, I would like to suggest some uses for this research. As previously stated I believe that this information could be used to encourage future athletic participation at BHS. As all three of the surveys asked the respondents to comment on what they believe could be done to improve participation, that information should be shared with the coaches and administration. In addition, information pertaining to athletic benefits should be shared with the students and their parents. If they understood the many benefits including the scientific research that backs these findings, maybe they would be more encouraged to participate in the future.

For future use an informational brochure could be made for the coaches to help them better understand their athletes' reasons for being on the team along with the reasons why so many other students choose not to be. Coaches should also be made aware of how large a number of students out there are not participating. By understanding this coaches would know that there are a lot of students to encourage. I also feel that athletic participation should be encouraged at a younger age. By sharing benefits as well as exploring the youth opportunities in and around Lake Geneva the parents of grade school students could help encourage participation at a younger age.

At one point in this research it was asked by a peer if Badger could handle having a ten percent improvement in their athletic participation. I believe the answer is yes. If Badger could improve their participation by ten percent there would be an additional 130 students participating in athletics. If these students were divided evenly by all the teams available that would only be an additional six athletes per sport. This is not for each level of the sport but the sport in general. Since most sports have three levels that would be two additional athletes per team. This would only be scratching the surface of some of the number shortages in most programs.

On a personal note, all of this information has been eye-opening for me. Coming from a smaller town that had a large focus on athletics I always felt that my opinion of the participation here was jaded because of my perspective. Now that I have actual numbers to back up such feelings, I believe I can more effectively help coaches improve these numbers as well as help to encourage students to participate in a sport. In the future I would like to further this research by providing it to the coaches, students, and parents of BHS. I believe that the data from my research along with the list of proven benefits of athletics could be used to improve the participation levels at Badger High School.

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Appendix A: Research Consent Form

Developing a Strategy for Promoting Athletic Participation at the High School Level

Dear Parents/Students/Coaches:

I am currently in the process of attaining my Masters in Education-Professional Development with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. In accordance with the classes that I am taking, I will be conducting an action research project with various students at Badger High School. If you have any questions regarding the consent form, procedures, or information presented here, please feel free to contact me. The following are some special areas I would like to highlight:

Why have you been asked to take part in this research?

You or your child has been asked to take part in this research so that I can better understand how to meet the needs of all students in the areas of athletic participation. You or your son or daughter may or may not participate on an athletic team here at Badger and I would like to conduct research to discover some of the underlying factors that resulted in this decision.

How many people will be in this study, and how long will it last?

Approximately 110 coaches, students, and parents of Badger High School will participate in this study. Data collection will begin in November 2010 and run through the end of March 2011.

What will happen if you agree to take part in this study?

I will ask you to fill out a short survey with questions pertaining to the athletic participation at Badger High School and your opinion of athletics in general. Once I have received the survey responses I will compile my findings into a report. It can be assured that the identity of all participants will be kept confidential throughout the study, and pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of study findings.

How will you benefit from being part of the study?

It is anticipated that through my findings all current and future Badger students will experience increased access to and participation in athletics and their known benefits.

What if you do not want to take part in the study?

If you would prefer not to participate or have your son or daughter participate please return the attached sheet with the appropriate response checked. If you change your mind and would like to withdraw, for any reason, from the study you may do so at any time.

Additional questions?

Please contact Ms. Sarah Eiserman, the principle investigator of this study at: 262-348-2000 x 2138 or at sarah.eiserman@badger.k12.wi.us or my faculty advisor Kelly Witte at wittek@uww.edu.

Sincerely,

Sarah Eiserman

Informed Consent/Parental Consent (for children/adolescents ages 11 through 17)

Child/Adolescent's Assent:

Have all your questions regarding how the research study might affect you been answered?

Yes/No (Circle One)

If you want to be a part of the study, please sign your name. If you do not want to be a part of the study, then do not sign your name. You can say no to being in the study, and it will not be held against you.

Child/Adolescent's Signature

Date of Signature

Printed Name of Subject

Parent/Court Appointed Guardian/Coach's Consent

What does signing this consent form mean?

- The child/adolescent and their parent/guardian or coach have read the above information.
- The child/adolescent and their parent/guardian or coach understand that there are no apparent risks associated with this study.
- The child/adolescent and their parent/guardian or coach have freely decided to take part in this research study.
- The child/adolescent and their parent/guardian or coach understand that they may withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason.

Parent/Guardian/Coach Consent:

Have all your questions about how the research study is going to affect your child and/or yourself been answered?

Yes/No (Circle One)

I believe my child and/or I have been fully informed and am willing to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian/Coach Signature

Date of Signature

Investigator/Researcher:

I have discussed this study and the possible risks and benefits of the study with the child, parent, guardian or coach and I believe he/she is fully informed and is willing to participate in this study.

Researcher's Signature

Date of Signature

Appendix B: Student Survey

Name: _____

Your identity will remain confidential all identifying information is for my use only.

Please Circle One:

Male

Female

Grade:

9

10

11

12

Do you play any sports at Badger High School?

Yes

No

If yes how many and which ones:

Why do you or don't you play any sports here?

What do you believe are the benefits of playing sports here at Badger High School?

Do you believe there are any negative aspects of participating in sports at Badger High School?

What would need to be different (currently on in the past) in order for you to want to participate in a sport or more sports at Badger High School?

Would you be willing to answer any further clarifying questions I might have once I have read your responses?

Yes

No

If so please leave your class schedule below:

Appendix C: Parent Survey:

Name: _____

You and your child's identity will remain confidential all identifying information is for organizational use only.

Student's Name: _____

Please answer the following identifying information for your son or daughter:

Please Circle One:

Male

Female

Grade:

9 10 11 12

Does your son or daughter play any sports at Badger High School?

Yes

No

If yes how many and which ones:

What is the main reason your son or daughter does or does not play a sport at Badger High School?

What do you believe are the benefits of playing sports here at Badger High School?

Do you believe there are any negative aspects of participating in sports at Badger High School?

What would need to be different (in the past or currently) in order for your son or daughter to participate in a sport or more sports at Badger High School?

Would you be willing to answer any further clarifying questions I might have once I have read your responses?

Yes

No

If so please leave your contact information below:

Email:

Phone:

Appendix D: Coaches Survey

Coach's Survey

(Your identity will remain confidential identifying information is for my organizational use only)

Name: _____

Sport(s) you coach: _____

What is your opinion of the athletic participation here at Badger High School? Is it poor, average or excellent and why do you feel this way? Please elaborate as much as you would like.

What do you believe could be done to improve the participation and the quality of athletes here at Badger High School? Please be as specific as you would like.

If you believe that participation here is already excellent and cannot be improved why do you feel this way?

Do you believe there is a difference in the participation levels for individual vs. team sports or male vs. female sports? Please be specific.

Would you be willing to answer additional questions to clarify your responses?

Please circle one:

Yes

No

If yes please indicate the best way to contact you (phone, email, in person) and that additional information as well.