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Extracurricular Activities: (Participation vs. Non-Participation) A Decision for Rural High School Students.

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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:
(PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION)
A DECISION FOR RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Field Study

Presented to the

Department of Educational Administration

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Educational Specialist

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Brett A. Nanninga

August 2002

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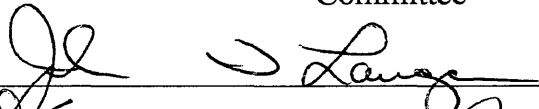


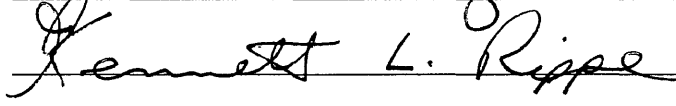
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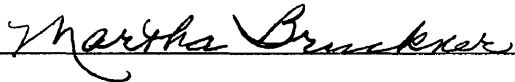
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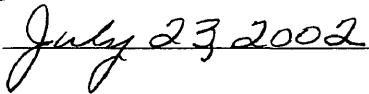
Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska,
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Educational Specialist
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee





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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:
(PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION
A DECISION FOR RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Brett A. Nanninga, Ed. S.

University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2002

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Twelve high school students (six freshmen and six sophomores) from two different schools were interviewed, surveyed, and interviewed a second time during the course of this study. The purposeful sampling of students consisted of a total of six females and six males; and the three categories within each grade level were defined as participants, non-participants, and those who use to participate but no longer participate in school activities.

The qualitative themes that emerged during this study indicated that there are a number of variables that influence a student's decision of whether or not to participate in extracurricular activities at the high school level. Some of those variables include parents, coaches, friends, siblings, time, and academic performance. Every student indicated that he/she was encouraged to become involved in activities outside the classroom, but for one reason or a combination of reasons decided to pursue extracurricular activities or walk away from them.

The researcher recommended to parents and educators that high school students be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and make good use of their energies and talents. The researcher also exhorted parents, educators, and students to

maintain proper perspective when pursuing extracurricular activities so that the desire to participate is not squelched prematurely.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Be present and work hard. Sounds simple, and yet for high school students to apply these simple tenets of the educational process is much more complex. Some teenagers apply these principles to involvement in extracurricular activities as well as academic pursuits. Others do not. What motivates a student to participate in extracurricular activities? What causes that motivation to wane, and students to disengage themselves from extracurricular activities?

High school students encounter many opportunities to become involved in extracurricular activities during their 4-year stint. The choices that these young people make concerning what to do and what not to do with regards to extracurricular activities may have a tremendous impact on other aspects of their high school career. This decision-making will lead to goal setting and thereby set the stage for most of what is accomplished in the ensuing semesters, and years of school. Educational process goals as well as achievement goals must be considered in order to increase educational productivity and efficiency (Walberg, 1978). Educational process goals are interpreted to include student perceptions of, among other things, participation in extracurricular activities. Ignoring these perceptions and experiences in favor of traditional goals measured by test scores may decrease motivation and ultimately lower educational achievement (Walberg, 1978).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study will be to determine the motivating factors that contribute to the involvement of high school students in extracurricular activities. The major focus of this qualitative inquiry is to determine why students do or do not participate in extracurricular activities, and furthermore, what causes them to discontinue their participation as they move into or through high school. Students will be purposefully selected from grades 9-10 to form three sub-groups in the study—those who participate in extracurricular activities, those who do not participate in extracurricular activities, and those who did participate in extracurricular activities but no longer are involved.

The hallmark of the qualitative approach emphasizes open-mindedness and curiosity. The essence of the qualitative paradigm provides the basis for this study, and the nature of the research will illustrate this as information is acquired over the course of 3 months. Students in grades 9-10 will be interviewed twice and surveyed once during this time span in an effort to collect data that pertain to the purpose of the study.

The intent of this project is to develop a clearer perception of how students can be impacted by their decision to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities. Because the qualitative approach does not begin with a theory, it will be interesting to see what emerges during the data collection and analysis phase. As the interaction with those involved in the study takes place, I will delve into new areas of questioning that are produced from the answers of previous questions.

What is learned from the discovery-like study could serve as a catalyst for new and improved student attendance and academic achievement strategies in education. Initially, the study will confine itself to interviewing, surveying, and observing students at the local school district. However, the scope of the study will broaden, as the procedure is taken to another nearby school of similar size and composition. The sampling procedure and findings will lend themselves to generalizations, subjectivity, and interpretation. Nevertheless, the significance of the study will provide researchers and practitioners with information that could conceivably improve practice and procedure in the educational arena.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study.

Grand Tour Question.

What motivates rural high school students to participate in extracurricular activities?

Sub-Questions.

1. How do students determine whether they will participate in extracurricular activities?
2. How does a student's general attitude toward school affect his/her decision to participate in extracurricular activities?
3. What causes students to avoid or stop participating in extracurricular activities?

4. What, if any, relationship exists between a student's gender and participation in extracurricular activities?

Theoretical Framework

The basis of theory for this study was derived from the previous research and analysis conducted by dissertation authors over the past decade, that there is a correlation between student achievement and participation in extracurricular activities (Burbes, 1998; Connors-Harris, 1999; Coyle, 1995; Kilrea, 1998; Reese 1990). Although there was not a need to verify the existing theory, the establishment of a new theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase of this research. Therefore, the intent was not being constrained by previous theory, but built upon that which was already known using the inductive model of thinking and logic.

Definition of Terms

The qualitative framework of this study lends itself to identifying important terminology. The following definitions are presented to clarify those terms that are frequently used throughout the study.

- Field Notes: Memos taken during the course of an interview to remind the interviewer of non-verbal behaviors that are not recorded on audiotape.
- Extracurricular Activities: Athletic, fine art, or organizational activities that are school-related, but lie outside the regular curriculum and carry no academic credit.
- Participation: The act of actually becoming engaged in an activity or event.

Limitations

The sampling procedure used in this study decreased the generalizability of the findings, and therefore they are not applicable to all areas of education. However, the results are important in gathering comprehensive knowledge about teenagers' decisions to participate in extracurricular activities.

The study was limited to 12 students from each grade level (9 and 10) who attended 2 community schools in southwest Iowa. Conclusions were drawn from the data produced by these studied groups. Six students per school was considered the appropriate number of study subjects, as it represented approximately one-tenth of the class enrollment from each school, and more students than that would have presented time constraint issues that would have hampered the feasibility of the project.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was founded upon what it will contribute to the understanding of why students begin, maintain, or discontinue their involvement in extracurricular activities. The study augments the present knowledge base, which drives the decisions that are made in an attempt to increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. It also clarified the role that extracurricular activities play in our educational process.

Since it is assumed that participation in extracurricular activities is beneficial for students, then learning about the reasons for student participation or non-participation in extracurricular activities is vital to students, teachers, counselors, administrators, boards of education, and the public. By perusing the data, listening to the feedback, and

observing behaviors, the researcher was able to determine if educators should be doing more to exhort high school student involvement in extracurricular activities and educate students on how this participation can have an influence on their total school experience.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature that is associated with student achievement, student attendance, and extracurricular activities. The review elucidates what research has been completed. Those who have already conducted research in the areas of student attendance and student achievement have offered recommendations and procedures. However, due to limited references concerning the study of what motivates high school students to participate in extracurricular activities, the establishment and theory of this topic was not available until Chapter 5. Chapter 3 outlines the study and elaborates on the methodology, while Chapter 4 reveals the results of the research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The essence of this literature review was to provide insight on the topics that are relevant to the subject of this research. The review is constructed around three aspects of literature, those being: (1) motivation for student involvement in extracurricular activities, (2) relationships of student participation in extracurricular activities and achievement, and (3) relationships of student participation and student attendance. The literature review includes studies on student participation in extracurricular activities at the high school level. The review of literature for student involvement examines the motivation for involvement, the degrees of participation, the effect that school size has on extracurricular participation, and the orientation of males and females. The literature review for student achievement zeroes in on academic achievement as it relates to required classes, GPA, achievement test scores, and discipline referrals. The student attendance literature focuses on variables that contribute to success in school concerning attendance rates, and the theory that involvement in extracurricular activities positively correlates with better attendance. Implications for practice and research that are associated with the connectedness of these three issues are discussed.

Motivation for Student Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

Students become involved in extracurricular activities for a variety of reasons. Those reasons are perceived as motivators. According to one principal components analysis, “to have fun” was the highest ranking motive category for involvement (Coyle, 1995). Involvement is understood to be an inclusion, a commitment, and an occupation

of one's time. High school students have a multitude of opportunities that create the choices and decisions associated with involvement.

Coyle (1995) examined the relationship between motivation for involvement in extracurricular activities, continuing motivation, and academic achievement and found that all students reported that they were motivated to perform better academically because of their extracurricular involvement. However, what motivates them to perform at a higher level? What motivates them to continue to remain involved in extracurricular activities? Because the research on this topic is overwhelmingly quantitative in nature, additional answers to these questions can best be attained through a qualitative study.

Reese (1990) determined that high school students with different degrees of extracurricular activity participation achieved at different levels. The results of his study indicate that students who were not involved in extracurricular activities achieved at lower levels than students who did participate. Those students in the part-time participation group scored at mid-range levels on the ACT and GPA scales, while the group of students involved at maximum levels of participation achieved the highest group mean ACT scores and GPAs.

The motivation to participate sometimes hinges on the number of potential participants, which in turn can be directly attributed to the size of the school. Coladarri and Cobb (1996) determined that students attending small high schools (less than 800 students) had higher extracurricular participation than students attending large high schools (more than 1,600 students).

The findings in these studies are discussed in terms of their implications for student involvement in extracurricular activities. The research is predominantly quantitative in nature. The common information that emerges from the quantitative studies consists of test scores, grade point averages, longitudinal studies, surveys, and statistics. Such numbers do not allow educators to understand reasons for adolescents' decisions to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities. The qualitative literature pertaining to this aspect of the study was virtually nonexistent. Therefore, the data that are extracted from this research project provide important information and may serve as the basis for future qualitative study.

Relationships of Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Achievement

Achievement is deemed to be that which is accomplished or attained. In the life of a high school student, achievement is an everyday occurrence. The level of that achievement can be directly affected by the student's participation in extracurricular activities. The literature in this section relates to that connection.

One of the interesting facets of the relationship between extracurricular activities and achievement is that of sex differences. Bender (1978) explored this issue through the sampling of 3,000 males and females in grades 7 through 12. He found that academic achievement was positively related to participation in each of the extracurricular activity areas. Many of the consequences of participation appeared to be similar for both males and females.

In a study by Levy (1982), the initial data revealed that academic achievement seemed to be related positively to participation in extracurricular activities, but the long-

range effects on the four-year grade point average and Ohio Survey Test results show no significant differences between the participants in extracurricular activities and the non-participants.

In 1998, Kilrea determined through two studies of extracurricular activities—academic activities and nonacademic activities—involving the participation of 186 high school seniors, that students were involved the most in athletics and the least in career organizations. However, both the statistics that pertained to the relationship between ACT composite score and the two academic variables, and the statistics that pertained to the relationship between the ACT composite score and the six nonacademic variables yielded a significant positive relationship.

In 1985, William Krone administered a questionnaire to a random sample of 25% of the seniors in three high schools outside of New York. The first portion asked for the student's history of participation in terms of number of activities and hours spent in them, the student's GPA, and his/her history of discipline referrals. Demographic data were also requested in this portion. The second portion consisted of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The data yielded strong positive Pearson product moment correlations between both measures of participation and the measure of academic achievement, and provided support for the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and the outcomes of achievement and discipline (Krone, 1985).

It is interesting that findings of three studies would be in such stark contrast to one another when the same theory was put to the test. One study was conducted early in the 1980s and then reinforced by another study piloted in 1998, but both are contradicted

by the research conducted in 1985. All research is once again quantitative by design, leaving the field open for qualitative study and new data.

Relationship of Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Attendance

Attendance is one of the success indicators in school that has a strong association with involvement in extracurricular activities. The quantitative data presented in the literature within this section point directly to the relationship between better attendance and extracurricular participation.

The Connors-Harris study of 1999 focused on the idea that there may be a connection between extracurricular participation and attendance, and highlighted participation in activities as being critical to students remaining in school. The information gained from studying the activity participation of marginal students pointed to the relationship between team focused activities and participating in activities over 7 hours per week with school persistence.

When the permanent records of 362 students at a high school in East Texas were reviewed to evaluate the variables that contributed to success in school with regard to attendance rates, it was discovered that those students who were heavily involved in extracurricular activities were more successful and had better attendance (Gold-Cunningham, 2000). Although Gold-Cunningham emphasized that further study should be conducted to discover the extent that the participation factor had in determining high school success, it was clear that her research was important.

The O'Brien and Rollefson study of 1995 examined the relationship between extracurricular activities and student engagement in school using data from 1992 public

high school seniors in the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS). The research also explored whether the availability of these activities varied according to school characteristics, and whether participation differed according to student background and school setting. Although it is not known if the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and success in school is causal, the data showed a strong association between extracurricular participation and each of the following success indicators: better attendance, higher academic achievement, and aspirations to higher levels of education (O'Brien & Rollefson, 1995).

Thomson (1975) concluded that absenteeism is an issue that is the problematic result of personal, institutional, economic, and social causes. Cohesive families, college preparatory programs, high grades, and extracurricular activities positively correlate with better attendance (Thomson & Stanard, 1975). It stands to reason that exemplary school programs also reflect strong attendance/academic eligibility policies that are cooperatively and consistently developed, well publicized, and enforced.

Mahoney and Cairns (1997) indicated that engagement in school extracurricular activities is linked to better attendance and decreasing rates of early school dropouts for both boys and girls. They discovered that such participation provides marginal students an opportunity to create a positive and voluntary connection to their school.

McNeal (1995) showed that different kinds of activities have varying abilities to improve attendance and control school dropout rates. He concluded that students who participated in athletics, fine-arts, activities, and academic organizations were an estimated 1.7, 1.2, and 1.15 times, respectively, less likely to drop out of school than

those who did not participate. Athletic participation reduces the probability of school dropouts by approximately 40% (McNeal, 1995).

The researchers strongly believe that involvement in extracurricular activities may support the marginal, at-risk student by maintaining, enhancing, and strengthening the student-school connection. The quantitative data and beliefs presented in the previously mentioned literature are very convincing. Given what is known, it would seem that educational decision makers would take a serious look at the benefits of encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities so as to get them to attend school regularly and work harder in the classroom.

Summary of Review and Implications

The educational aspirations and achievements of high school students rely heavily on the many variables they encounter during their 4-year career at the secondary level. The variable known as the extracurricular experience accounts for a large percentage of students' time outside the school's regular academic program. As students enter this phase of life, what motivational factors stimulate them to become involved in extracurricular activities? The decision to participate and the longevity of that participation are results of multiple influences. This study will attempt to discover those influences that affect the decision to participate or not.

Although the research on this topic has been mixed and at times difficult to interpret, the effects of the extracurricular experience on educational outcomes seems to be shifting from somewhat positive to very positive. The extracurricular program is an

integral component of most educational programs. Therefore, it was useful to study this area and gain a better understanding of why students become involved and stay involved.

Chapter 3

Methodology

There are many indicators of student achievement (i.e. test scores, grade point averages, etc.) but what about contributors? One of the contributing factors to improved student achievement is thought to be participation in extracurricular activities. The review of literature indicated that there is some disagreement concerning the effect of student participation in extracurricular activities on student achievement, although most studies suggested that participation in extracurricular activities can have positive effects on adolescents. This chapter focuses upon the methods of data collection and analysis for the study pertaining to a student's involvement in extracurricular activities. The qualitative design of this research contributes to the understanding of a student's decision to participate in extracurricular activities based on written and verbal responses of current high school students.

Qualitative research, designed to observe social interaction and understand the individual perspective, provides insight into what people's experiences are, why they do what they do, and what they need in order to change. It is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment are constructed as interpretations by individuals and that these interpretations tend to be transitory and situational. Researchers develop knowledge by collecting primarily verbal data through the intensive study of specific instances of a phenomenon, the cases, and subjecting these data to analytic induction (Gall, 1966). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is multi-method in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter

whereby the researcher studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Merriam (1988) characterizes qualitative research as an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help to explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible, and in which the focus of the study is on interpretation and meaning. The following are generally accepted characteristics of qualitative research (Merriam, 1988):

- There is an overarching interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed.
- There is an inductive approach to knowledge generation.
- The researcher focuses on gaining the insider's perspective.
- Meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions.
- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
- The end product is narrative and descriptive.

The characteristics of this study, which are similar to most forms of qualitative research, were that the design was emergent, flexible, and responsive to changing conditions while the study was in progress. The sample selection was nonrandom, purposeful, and small; and the researcher spent considerable time in the natural setting of the study, in intense contact with the participants.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a method of qualitative research. The aim of this approach is to discover underlying social forces that shape human behavior, by means of interviews

with open-ended questions and through skilled observations. A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents, which, in this case, was the decision-making process that determines a student's participation in extracurricular activities. Grounded theory is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

The following are rules and assumptions of the research design known as grounded theory:

- An exhaustive literature review is NOT done to allow theory to emerge directly from the data and remain “grounded in” the data.
- Literature is reviewed throughout data collection and analysis.
- Samples include people who are experiencing the social process being investigated.
- When describing the findings, descriptive language must be used to provide the reader with the steps in the process and the logic of the method.
- Data are compared continuously with other data to detect emerging categories and themes and to direct the data collection process.

Subjects

The study concentrated on students in grades 9 and 10. A total of 12 students enrolled in grades 9 and 10 for the fall semester of the 2001 school year were selected from High School A and High School B. The purposeful sample included an equal number males and females with varying grade point averages and similar attendance patterns. The two high schools in this study were rural, similar in school size and class size, belonging to the same conference, offering the same extracurricular activities, and located approximately 20 miles from the closest metropolitan area.

Students included in the study were divided into 3 categories: those who participated in extracurricular activities, those who did not participate in extracurricular activities, and those who initially participated but eventually quit. The sub-groups actually consisted of two students, one from every category within each high school. High School A was originally selected as the target sample for data collection because of the researcher's intimate knowledge of the educational program, activity program, and the student population. High School B was determined by the researcher to be a vital source of comparability that would provide a more in depth data analysis and substantiate the findings of the study.

Researcher's Role

It is said that researchers who work best in a structured situation and have no tolerance for ambiguity are not ideally suited to carry out qualitative research. There is a general consensus that certain researcher attributes are especially important, in some instances critically so, to successful qualitative research. These include a tolerance for

ambiguity, sensitivity to context and data, and good communications skills (Merriam, 1988). Yin (1994) insists that a qualitative researcher must have an inquiring mind and the willingness to ask questions before, during, and after data collection, and to constantly challenge himself as to why something appears to have happened or be happening.

The role of the researcher in this study involved a transfer and translation of responses and dialogue into manuscript form. “Every aspect of one’s work as a qualitative researcher demands more writing than would be the case for a quantitative scholar. Writing is to qualitative research what mathematics is to quantitative research” (Lancy, 1993, p. 3).

Ethical Aspects of the Study

The confidentiality and integrity of the study were of utmost importance. Therefore, the collection and recording of data was contingent upon the permission of the school district, parents, and students. Application for conducting this study was sought and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection

A series of 12 individual interviews was conducted in the middle of the 2001 fall semester. The same procedure was repeated at the end of the same semester in an effort to gain information that was overlooked, missed, or not called to mind during the first sequence of interviews. All interviews were recorded on audiotape to provide validation of questions and responses for both parties. The third aspect of this triangulation of data consisted of an informational survey that was given to each student to determine his/her

demographic information, degree of participation, attitude toward school in general, and to provide students with an opportunity to answer some open-ended questions in writing. Although observation is one of the two prevailing forms of data collection associated with qualitative inquiry, it was thought to be impractical for this study due to logistics and the unavailability of students in the group.

Data Recording

A basic decision going into the interview process is how to record interview data. Patton (1990) found that whether one relies on written notes or a tape recorder appears to be largely a matter of personal preference, but the tape recorder is indispensable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons because they maintain that the recording devices are intrusive and harbor the possibility of technical failure.

Because recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes might, the aspect of recording can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview rather than scripting. Therefore, the interviews conducted in this study were audiotaped to capture the entirety of the exchange and to provide more opportunity for building rapport and trust. Field notes were taken during the interview to capture the non-verbal tendencies such as facial expression, body language, and mannerisms that occur during the dialogue. Lofland (1984) acknowledges that the use of field notes in addition to audiotapes creates a means by which the setting is accurately captured. The data from the interviews and field notes was organized and analyzed as described in the following section on data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Bilken (1992) define qualitative data analysis as working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data (Patton, 1990).

Analysis begins with identification of themes emerging from raw data, a process sometimes referred to as “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During open coding, the researcher identifies and tentatively names the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed will be grouped. The goal is to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories that form a preliminary framework for analysis. These categories were gradually modified or replaced during the subsequent stages of analysis that follow.

The next stage of analysis involves re-examination of the categories identified to determine how they are linked, a complex process sometimes called “axial coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The discrete categories identified in open coding were compared and combined in new ways so the researcher could begin to assemble the “big picture.” The purpose of coding was not only to describe, but also to acquire a new understanding of the chosen phenomenon. During the axial coding, the researcher built a conceptual model and then determined whether sufficient data existed to support the interpretation.

Finally, the researcher translated the conceptual model into the story line that would be read by others. Ideally, the research report is a rich, tightly woven account that “closely approximates the reality it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 249).

Verification Methods

In qualitative research, the value of the study hinges on the researcher’s ability to keep the data, the interpretations, the reductions, and the resulting conclusions closely tied to their points of origin. Therefore, the credibility of the research is left hanging in the balance while the standards of trustworthiness are developed.

Credibility is determined to be the connection between the data and the interpretation by the researcher while taking into consideration the participants in the interview pool. Many of the qualms with trustworthiness can be squelched through the design of the study. The method of triangulation used with this study involved two interviews and a survey—all involving the same participants. Field notes further substantiated the interview process and the survey provided another means of data to reinforce the dialogue that took place in the interview sessions. Member checks were conducted to ensure the integrity of the transition from raw data into narrative form. The data was reported back to the data sources for verification.

The confirmation of the data is contingent upon the believability of the narrative. In order for this study to be replicated it must be clear, concise, and context specific.

Qualitative Narrative

Despite the debates about methodology and what constitutes rigorous research, qualitative research has evolved into a very credible means of studying an issue or

phenomenon. Through the use of multiple interviews in natural settings, and a questionnaire designed to provoke thought and solicit open-ended responses, this study produced a narrative format that reveals several themes concerning students' decisions to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities. The final report is an assemblage of the researcher's experiences and the significance he attaches to them. This approach affords readers the opportunity to peer through the glass and focus on the challenges and rewards felt by those who took part in the study.

Chapter 4

Research Data

What motivates rural high school students to participate in extracurricular activities? The answer to this, the Grand Tour Question, was sought through a series of questions posed to each of the research participants during an initial interview session (See Initial Interview Questions Attachment E), a written response survey (See Survey Attachment F), and a follow-up interview (See Follow-up Interview Questions Attachment G) that was conducted 5 weeks after the initial interview. All interviews were held on site at each school in a room adjacent to the principal's office area. Students were questioned individually during the initial interview and collectively during the follow-up interview. The survey was distributed to each participant after the initial interview and he/she was allowed one week to complete the survey and return it to his/her high school principal in a sealed envelope. All participants had been purposefully selected by their respective high school principal prior to the commencement of the interview process.

The data in this chapter that was obtained through the tools of interview and survey seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

1. How do students determine whether they will participate in extracurricular activities?
2. How does a student's general attitude toward school affect his/her decision to participate in extracurricular activities?

3. What causes students to avoid or stop participating in extracurricular activities?
4. What, if any, relationship exists between a student's gender and participation in extracurricular activities?

Participant Information

The real names of the students who constituted the research group are not used in the analysis of the data. However, a brief synopsis of each participant is provided to help the reader better understand the personality and background of each student.

Jodi Packard was a freshman female that attended a rural school and was in a class of 64 students. Jodi was always involved in extracurricular activities, as were many of her friends. She had aspirations of becoming a college athlete and felt that all of her experiences in extracurricular activities so far had been very beneficial. Jodi's parents and family were strong supporters and they readily encouraged her to become involved in extracurricular activities and remain in them throughout high school.

Paula Trimble was a sophomore in a class of 62 students that attended a rural high school. She was involved in extracurricular activities in the form of athletics, clubs, and music. Some of her friends had been involved in extracurricular activities when she was younger, but now most have chosen not to participate. She was in drill team, but did not like to get up early for practices. Paula did not feel any pressure from her parents to be in activities, but her friends did encourage her to join when she was in junior high.

Amy Wingert was a sophomore attending a rural school whereby she had 60 students in her class. Amy had trouble getting along with her peers and therefore if

anyone she was at odds with was in a given activity, she decided not to become involved just to avoid that person. Some of her friends were “not into” athletics and activities and they would rather just be at home or hanging out somewhere. Amy’s parents really did not care what she did—they left it up to her to decide. However, she acknowledged, “participating in extracurricular activities makes you feel better about yourself and feel good when your friends are cheering for you.”

John Morton was a freshmen lad who attended a rural school and who participated in absolutely nothing the school had to offer in the way of extracurricular activities. Oddly enough, John’s concern was being able to get good grades so he could play sports. Unfortunately, his grades were not good enough, so consequently he was not allowed to participate. He understood that other high school students, “really don’t want to come to school, but they want to play sports so they show up anyway.”

Corey Jones was a sophomore male who had his share of participation in extracurriculars when he was younger, but decided that he had had enough of the pressure and time constraints that were placed on him so he said goodbye to athletics. He was strongly encouraged by his family and friends to participate, but like most of his friends, he chose not to carry his experience any further than his freshmen year.

Patrick Dorn was a sophomore male who barely had enough energy to get to school each day, let alone participate in extracurricular activities. Patrick had not been involved in activities and had no inclination to do become involved in the future. He indicated that some of his friends had tried to get him to go out for things when he was in

junior high, but he refused. Patrick felt that a student's attitude toward school was the same whether or not he/she participated in activities.

Annie Garner was a freshmen student who attended a rural school located close to a metropolitan area. She was involved in extracurricular activities and so were some of her friends. Annie stated, "Whether or not I go out for something depends on who is going out and who I get along with." She did not want to be in show choir because it was not fun anymore, and she opted out of track because she did not want to look like a "freak." According to Annie, "Softball demanded too much practice and time, and I had other things to do."

Jill Francis was a sophomore student who had been involved in extracurricular activities quite extensively in junior high, but then took a job and decided to work towards her career aspirations of being a doctor rather than play sports in high school. Jill sensed that sports took a lot of time after school. She thought softball became too competitive and therefore, it was not fun anymore. On the subject of showing favoritism, Jill offered, "If your name is not known, then you don't play."

Arthur Wiggins was a freshmen student who had participated in extracurricular activities because some of his friends had been involved. Arthur described most students had an "okay" attitude toward school and that if they were involved in things outside the classroom they may want to be in school even more. He indicated that one of the benefits of becoming involved in extracurricular activities is, "You might learn something."

Becky Williams was a freshmen student who really loved to be involved in virtually everything when it came to activities. Her parents were really big into sports

and church and therefore, left a big impression on her. When asked about students' attitudes towards school, Becky stated, "The attitude is probably not the best, so people don't want to do sports because they really don't want to be in school anyway."

Tom Barnes was a sophomore student who was quite outspoken about student involvement in extracurricular activities. Tom himself was very active and enjoyed football and wrestling the most. His buddies were involved in many of the same things that Tom was in, and their encouragement, along with his father's, spurred Tom to participate. Tom cited, "I noticed that some kids faded out when we came into high school from junior high. The coaches were harder on some of them, and others just concentrated more on grades than sports." On the issue of extracurricular activities being risky business, Tom expressed, "Some kids don't want to be second best and when they find someone is better than they are they just give up or don't try anymore, or make excuses." Tom looks forward to the day when he can share his athletic experiences with his own kids.

Hank Wurtz was a sophomore student who participated in choir and had some friends involved in extracurricular activities. His dad did not push him into things, but his mom insisted that he be in everything. Hank does not believe that what he does will affect him in the future. He believed things that happened now were for now. On the issue of involvement in extracurricular activities being risky, Hank offered, "It is risky because you don't always know what you are getting into."

Participant Demographics

Name and Grade Level. The first question of the initial interview, “What is your name and grade level?” provided each student with an opportunity to establish his or her presence in the research process. Six students were females (3 from School A and 3 from School B), and six students were males (3 from School A and 3 from School B). There were 3 freshmen and 3 sophomores from each participating school.

Emerging Themes

The questions were designed to be thought provoking as students were asked to describe their reasons for the “whys”, “why nots”, and “what fors” associated with their decisions to participate. It was then, that themes began to emerge and the conversation became more personal.

Students who were involved in extracurricular activities, but chose not to participate any longer cited the following as their primary reasons:

- Extracurricular activities take too much time and create too many conflicts
- The extracurricular practices are too early
- The activity got too competitive and it wasn't fun anymore

When the research participants were asked what factors determined whether or not they would be involved in extracurricular activities they provided the following:

- I don't get along with some of the kids
- I wanted to be with my friends
- My brother/sister were involved in extracurricular activities
- My parents are big into sports
- It depends how it went the year before

- If I have a job and need to go to work
- I wanted to become stronger and better

✓ The variables such as time, time management, competitiveness, relationships, and personal or family experiences seemed to be the overriding determinants. These were then used to set the stage of inquiry for what the 12 students thought about the attitudes of their fellow students toward school, and whether that attitude had any effect on participation in extracurricular activities. The dominant feedback on this issue was simply that if students didn't like school, then chances were good that they wouldn't be involved in anything. It was also mentioned that, in some cases, the student doesn't really want to come to school, but he/she wants to play sports so that is his/her motivation for showing up. It was quite clear amongst the research participants, that those who enjoyed school were involved while those who did not like school declined the opportunity to participate in anything outside of the classroom. ✓

Nevertheless, what was the opinion of students as to why other students lost interest in extracurricular activities? Their responses included:

- They receive too much pressure from the coach or teacher
- They just don't want to be in activities anymore
- Some kids don't go out because they are afraid they will fail
- Some kids don't get to play as much as others so they quit
- Kids get tired of the practice time and time spent in activities
- They lose interest and the activity gets boring
- Some students need to work on grades rather than activities

- Kids want to hang out with their friends who are not in activities

During this vein of the conversation, it became obvious that a few other themes such as playing time, grades, social priorities, fear of failure, and pressure were ✱ developing. These provided a great lead into the next two questions that dealt with relationships and risk.

The resounding answer to whether friends and relationships served as motivators for involvement in extracurricular activities was “yes.” The value placed upon peer pressure and the magnetism of friendship cannot be underestimated when it comes to doing things, and the decisions facing teenagers in regards to being a part of group or team certainly don’t exclude peers and friends.

The aspect of risk created a division among the interviewees. When asked if involvement in extracurricular activities was risky or created a fear of failure, half of the responses were “no” and the other half were “yes.” It was pointed out several times that the risk in junior high was not as great because there was less pressure involved.

However, when it was time for high school, the stakes went up and, with that, so did the anxiety level. It was also mentioned that self-confidence plays a big role in how one sees ✱ herself/himself. A thought that surfaced in the midst of this dialogue was that students don’t always know what they are getting into, so when reality sets in they may sense fear or failure. This is where encouragement may play a huge role.

There was no exception on question nine (Have your parents, family, friends, and teachers encouraged you to become involved in extracurricular activities?). Almost every student responded with affirmation that their parents, family, friend, or teachers had ✱

encouraged them to become involved in extracurricular activities. Needless to say, this didn't mean that every student took that exhortation to heart, because some of them did not become involved in any activities and others became engaged in activities only for a short while.

The key here is that the kids were provided with support and advice from other significant individuals in their lives. It then became their decision to explore the benefits of participation or pass up the opportunities as they presented themselves.

The concluding question of the initial interview dealt with the immediate or long-term benefits of participating in extracurricular activities. The range of responses was very broad.

- I could play in college
- I would stay in shape and become more outgoing
- Activities make me feel stronger and better about myself
- Involvement in activities causes me to manage my time better
- Activities will give me something to tell my kids about and help them to carry on a tradition
- Things that happen now are for now—these things won't affect my future
- Involvement in activities helps my social skills

The field notes taken during the series of 12 interviews provided the basis for the follow-up interview, which would be conducted several weeks after the written survey responses were collected.

Written Survey

In seeking written feedback from each of the research subjects, the researcher felt it was imperative to provoke thought through open-ended questions. Due to the volume of the responses, a short synopsis of the data will be offered in relation to each question.

First, the students were asked if they felt they had made good decisions in regards to their involvement or quitting extracurricular activities. Eight of the twelve students responded with “yes” and the other four indicated that they wished they had done things differently—one way or the other. Two students expressed regret for not getting involved in activities.

The second question asked the students for the top two reasons upon which they based their decision. The complexity of these responses mirrored those of the interview question that dealt with the same topic. Issues such as coaches, parents, friends, grades, staying active, and competitiveness topped the list.

Students were then asked about their own attitude (not that of their classmates) towards school. Several indicated that they didn’t like school that much anyway, while others wrote of how they liked school and being with their friends everyday. Once again, these were consistent with the responses from the interview session that pertained to how other students’ attitudes were towards school.

In delving below the surface of how other people influence student’s choices, the fourth question sought feedback on the issue of whether the coach or sponsor had much of an impact on the student’s decision to participate. This is where the emotional side of the students started to come out. Some students described coaches as encouraging and

complimentary, while other students mentioned coaches/sponsors as being jerks and playing favorites. Everyone was in agreement that the coach/sponsor did have an impact on his/her decision.

Self-confidence, which was a theme that emerged during the interview process, was thought by all students to play a big role in deciding to take part in extracurricular activities, and each one wrote expressively according to their situation.

A universal concern was presented to the students when they were given the opportunity to write about the emphasis that is placed on extracurricular activities. The responses were mixed, with some yes and some no, which leaves one to wonder if the kids don't sense the "emphasis factor", that being the extreme level that interscholastic competition is taken to, as much as adults or supporters.

The parental encouragement was a split response, with slightly over half of the students indicating that their parents did encourage them to become involved in extracurricular activities and the total school concept.

Item 8 sought some advice from the participants of the study. It asked them to give underclassmen some insight concerning involvement in extracurricular activities. The philosophy here was really twofold and included "do what you want to do" and "get involved early and in as much as you can." Much of what was written pertained to doing what one likes to do and then enjoying it to the fullest.

Finally, the students were asked to reflect on their experience in school thus far, and write about how it has been or could have been better by participating in

extracurricular activities. In the context of the feedback for this question, one could sense either regret or feeling pleased. Some of the comments were as follows:

- “School activities can make school better, because they can bring you closer to others in your school that you wouldn’t have talked to for any other reason.”
- “I might have been more popular if I had gone out for football.”
- “Activities take my mind off something that happened in school or everyday life.”
- “Activities made me more talented in a way and I stay active and in better shape.”
- “If I would have been in sports or extracurricular activities, my grades would have been better.”
- “My experience so far has been very enjoyable, and I can only hope for more in the next four years.”
- “I think being involved in activities would have been better, because I would have felt better about myself and about being on a team.”
- “I think it has been more fun not being in activities, because I don’t have to go to late practices and I can hang out with my friends.”
- “If I would have enjoyed activities and played them longer I would have made it, but I don’t enjoy sports at all so I think they are a waste of time.”
- “I have a blast and I love doing sports.”
- “People get so many life skills from participating in extracurricular activities.”

At the completion of the final series of second-round interviews, I felt like I had developed a better understanding of each individual’s circumstances and feelings regarding participation in extracurricular activities. Since the participants were given

multiple opportunities to respond to similar questions or questions that were direct spin offs of those incorporated into a previous interview or survey, I felt the data was a true reflection of their inner most feelings and experiences. The validity of the data was established and a multitude of themes emerged as the information was analyzed. The stage was now set for the unveiling of the theory in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Summary of Findings

Methodology Review

The essence of qualitative research is to understand individual perspective as the researcher gains some insight into the experiences of people and the rationale behind their decisions. The focus of this study was to determine what motivates rural high school students to participate in extracurricular activities. The design of this study was to be emergent, flexible, and responsive to changing conditions as the process continued. The sample selection was determined to be nonrandom and purposeful. The participants were the instigators of the emerging themes and they caused the scenario surrounding each interview discussion to be unique, thereby creating a different pattern of question/answer in almost every setting.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical standards were observed as I interviewed participants, analyzed surveys, and synthesized the collected data. Prior to the research activities, I informed potential participants and their parents of their rights, the purpose of the study, the confidentiality that would be enforced, the process of collecting the data, the analysis of the data, the verification of the data, the risks of the study, the benefits of the study, and the fact that I would share the completed study with them upon completion. I obtained written permission from the participants and their parents before proceeding. The anonymity of each participant was maintained throughout the process. Although

participant narratives were provided, they were written so that no individual respondent could be identified.

The initial interviews, surveys, follow-up interviews, and all field notes were stored for audit.

I obtained the approval of the Institutional Review Board.

I did not receive any funding for the research, nor were any incentives offered to those who participated.

Data Collection Strategies

I contacted the principal's office at both of the schools to schedule face-to-face interviews (Appendix C) with each of the participants during the months of October and January. Each interview was approximately one hour in length and the entire interview session was tape-recorded. In addition to the tape recording, I took field notes that provided me with information concerning my perceptions of the participant's behaviors. The participants were eager to share their views, perspectives, and experiences involving the participation of high school students in extracurricular activities. At times, the conversations began to wander into areas outside the realm of the study, so I had to re-establish the focus and maintain the continuity of the interview.

During the period of time between these two months, the participants completed a survey (Appendix D) and returned it to me in a sealed envelope via the building principal.

Data Analysis Procedures

The audiotapes were transcribed and coded into categories based upon the research questions and themes that emerged during the process. The categories and

themes that were beyond the obvious ones such as gender and grade level, included the following:

- A participant's present involvement in extracurricular activities
- A participant's past involvement in extracurricular activities
- A participant's perception of students' attitudes towards extracurricular activities at the high school level
- The impact of friends and family on the participant's decision to become involved in extracurricular activities
- The participant's conflicts that prevented him/her from becoming involved in extracurricular activities
- The participant's attendance and academic performance
- The primary factors that determined the decision to participate or not participate on the part of each subject

The initial interview process proved to be an excellent experience for me as the researcher because I was able to listen to the students who participated in the study and gain a better understanding of their feelings about school, extracurricular activities, growing up, and the relationships they have with teachers, coaches, sponsors, parents, families, and friends. The data actually became overwhelming, which made it tough to sift through and determine what to toss and what to keep in terms of pertinent information. The latitude of this study could potentially be huge because of the wealth of diverse experiences, scenarios, and situations that exist in the lives of high school students.

Reporting the Findings

Since this is a qualitative narrative study, I am communicating the evidence and findings based upon my perceptions of the information that was collected in the triangulation of data during the initial interview, the survey, and the follow-up interview. The descriptions of the participants, their realizations and perceptions, and my own interpretations are included in this descriptive account of the study so that the reader can sense and truly understand the significance of what impacts a high school student's decision to participate in extracurricular activities.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine factors motivated high school students to become involved in extracurricular activities. Twelve high school students from two rural high schools were interviewed to provide some insight into the "reasons" and assist me in ascertaining the "whys" that are enveloped in the answers to the questions of this study.

The responses of the participants' lent themselves to some themes that kept resurfacing throughout the study. Themes were related to such things as the involvement of friends, parental pressures, getting along with peers, having conflicts with coaches, having conflicts with work, the lack of enjoyment, the infringement upon social time, the emphasis of competition, the level of one's confidence, and staying in shape.

Societal Pressures

Interestingly enough, many of the themes dealt with the same sort of societal pressures that kids and adults deal with in everyday life, so it wasn't surprising to me that

students made mention of these very same things in relation to school and extracurricular activities. However, I couldn't help but wonder if some of the pressures and conflicts were self-imposed or the result of some expectations being set forth by adults serving as parents, coaches, or otherwise.

Reasons for Non-Participation

Although the research participants were quick to identify the extracurricular activities that they were involved in currently or had been involved in during past years, they weren't as fluent in providing multiple reasons for why they themselves chose to be involved, quit, or never became involved to begin with. Nevertheless, when asked to provide their opinion about what caused students in general to lose interest in extracurricular activities, the conversations became quite candid. Comments such as, "pressure from the coach," or "too much practice time," or "they lose interest because things get so repetitive," or "maybe they don't like the teacher," or "they just get bored," began to pop up repeatedly. Most of the participants felt that involvement in extracurricular activities is risky business because it exposes weaknesses, provides opportunity for failure (in front of your peers), and opens one's eyes to the fact that "somebody else is actually better at something than I am."

Relationship of Participation and School Achievement

The connectivity between involvement in extracurricular activities and the level of attendance and quality of academic achievement was echoed unanimously throughout each one of the interviews as the students. Responsibility and discipline were cited as

major reasons for this pattern, which has already been substantiated by previous quantitative research on this same topic of study (Coyle, 1995).

When asked in the written survey if they felt they made a good choice (becoming involved or not) only one student responded “no.” Every response on this question included a sentence or two from the respondent indicating why he/she felt that way. I felt this was their way of further justifying their decision of whether or not to participate in extracurricular activities.

It seems that the reasons upon which a high school student bases his/her decision to do things are often related to such things as coaches, time, and jobs. Coaches will come and go just as will the bosses, employers, and supervisors throughout one’s career. Time is certainly a factor in life, but why should a teenager be constrained by time during his/her formative years? If a teenager’s “free” time is consumed with a job, then someone has allowed a certain young lady or young man to think that working in order to buy a car or clothes, or whatever else is more important than enjoying school and everything school has to offer—outside the classroom. If there is too much emphasis being placed on competition and extracurricular activities then we need to take corrective steps, but if there is too much emphasis being placed on working after school and making money then we need to correct that issue as well. Are we as a society forcing our kids to become adults long before they need to be or are ready?

Advice About Extracurricular Participation

During the written survey, participants were asked to give underclassman some advice concerning involvement in extracurricular activities. I was not surprised to find

that many of them wrote, “Get involved early,” and “Do what you want to do.” One student even penned the following, “They (extracurricular activities) will help you to manage your time and teach you people skills that will help you the rest of your life.”

This statement coincides with Gold-Cunningham’s (2000) concept in the literature review that students who were heavily involved in extracurricular activities were more successful in life. I concur wholeheartedly.

Qualitatively researching this topic provided me with ample time to reflect upon my experiences as a high school student, teacher, coach, and administrator. As I heard and read the comments from this relatively small pool of high school students, I was reminded of how often the simple (just for fun) becomes too complex (dog eat dog and too competitive). And yet, we, especially in the educational and family circles are the ones primarily responsible for manipulating the variables that determine such outcomes as fun times, successful experiences, challenges, rewards, and values.

Research provides us with knowledge about things we may not know or substantiates that which we already know but do not fully understand. The factors that influence the decision of rural high school students to participate in extracurricular activities may virtually be the same as they were 25 years ago, but the complexity of priorities and opportunities, coupled with a skewed sense of what high school activities were established for, has brought us to edge of the precipice whereby what we see below is not good—we are reaping what we have sewn. Students are becoming disillusioned with extracurricular activities and too many are staying away from them or opting out after one or two years.

Recommendations to Educators and Parents

The research of this study has shown that young ladies and men in rural high schools are tremendously affected by their parents, teachers, and coaches/sponsors. Therefore, it makes the roles of educators and parents even more paramount as they are continuously in a position to influence the decisions made by high school students. It is often said that a ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are for—they are made to sail. As educators and parents, we need to exhort our youth to set sail and stay the course (extracurricular activities) with proper focus and perspective on the part of everyone. Should we fail in our attempt and our obligation to encourage participation in extracurricular activities, our students/children will exit high school without experiencing some of the greatest things that a secondary education has to offer. Let us be sure that we do our part in building the legacy in the lives of our high school students as they reflect upon their high school endeavors with contentment rather than regret.

Closing Statement

Finally, the emphasis of open-mindedness and curiosity that is associated with qualitative research opened the door for questions and conversation between the participants and myself that enhanced the interaction and flow of information. I am thankful to them for their candor and willingness to participate. The intent of this project was to provide a clearer picture of how high school students are influenced to participate in extracurricular activities. It is my hope that this research will help us to understand the complexity of these decisions, and that we will do everything we can to encourage our high school students to participate in extracurricular activities—while the opportunities exist.

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Appendix A

IRB#: 387-01-EP

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: (PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION) A DECISION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

INVITATION

You are invited to permit your child to participate in this research study. The information in this consent form is provided to help you decide whether to allow your child to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

WHY IS YOUR CHILD ELIGIBLE?

Since your child is a high school student enrolled as a freshmen or sophomore he/she is eligible to participate in this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study will be to determine the motivating factors that contribute to the involvement of high school students in extracurricular activities. Why do kids participate? What causes some kids to discontinue their participation as they move into or through high school?

WHAT DOES THE STUDY INVOLVE?

Participants will be interviewed twice by the principal investigator and they will respond to a written survey one time. Each interview will be approximately 45 minutes in length. The first interview will be in mid-October and the second interview will be in mid-December. All interview data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS YOUR CHILD COULD EXPERIENCE?

The potential risks associated with each intervention consist of your child feeling uncomfortable with the interview process and the possibility of him/her visiting with other students about the interview questions.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO YOUR CHILD?

The potential benefits that are associated with the research that may directly affect your child are the experience of having been interviewed and the opportunity to express his/her feelings and reflect upon his/her decisions associated with the purpose of the study.

_____ Parent Initials

IRB#: 387-01-EP

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY?

The potential benefits of the research to society would be to provide qualitative data that could be utilized to better understand student decisions to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATING?

The alternative to participating in the study simply consists of not choosing to participate. You and your child will be afforded that option.

HOW WILL YOUR CHILD'S CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

In addition to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), the only persons who will have access to your child's research data are the principal investigator and the advisor of the field project. The information from this study may be published, but your child's identity will be kept strictly confidential.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT?

Your child has rights as a research subject. These rights are explained in the pamphlet *The Rights of Research Participants* that you have been given. If you have any questions concerning your child's rights, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), telephone (402) 559-6463.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE?

You can decide not to allow your child to participate in this study, or you can withdraw your child from this study at any time. Your decision will not effect your child's education, or your relationship with the investigator. If any new information develops during the course of this study that may affect your willingness to allow your child to continue participating, you will be informed immediately.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED AND DECIDED TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE ALSO MEANS THAT THE INFORMATION ON THIS

_____ **Parent Initials**

IRB#: 387-01-EP

CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN FULLY EXPLAINED TO YOU AND ALL YOUR QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED TO YOUR SATISFACTION. IF YOU THINK OF ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS DURING THIS STUDY, YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE INVESTIGATOR. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

DATE

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

DATE

MY SIGNATURE AS WITNESS CERTIFIES THAT THE PARENT(S)/LEGALLY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES SIGNED THIS CONSENT FORM IN MY PRESENCE AS THEIR VOLUNTARY ACT AND DEED.

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

DATE

I CERTIFY THAT ALL THE ELEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT DESCRIBED ON THIS CONSENT FORM HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED FULLY TO THE PARENT(S)/LEGALLY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE PARENT(S)/LEGALLY AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE IS/ARE VOLUNTARILY AND KNOWINGLY GIVING INFORMED CONSENT AND POSSESS(ES) THE LEGAL CAPACITY TO GIVE INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Brett A. Nanninga, Superintendent, Tri-Center Community Schools
School: 485-2257 Home: 483-2074

Parent Initials

Appendix B

YOUTH ASSENT FORM

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:
IRB#: 387-01-EP (PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION)
A DECISION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in this research study. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We would like you to talk this over with your parents before you make a decision whether or not to be in this study. We will also ask your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study.

WHY ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

You are eligible to be in this study because you are a high school student enrolled as freshmen or sophomore.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study will be to determine the motivating factors that contribute to the involvement of high school students in extracurricular activities. Why do kids participate? What causes them to discontinue their participation as they move into or through high school?

WHAT DOES THE STUDY INVOLVE?

Participants will be interviewed twice by the principal investigator and they will respond to a written survey one time. Each interview will be approximately 45 minutes in length. The first interview will be in mid-October and the second interview will be in mid-December. All interview data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS YOU COULD EXPERIENCE?

The potential risks associated with each intervention consist of you feeling uncomfortable with the interview process and the possibility of you visiting with other students about the interview questions.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO YOU?

The potential benefits that are associated with the research that may directly affect you are the experience of having been interviewed and the opportunity to express your feelings and reflect upon your decisions associated with the purpose of the study.

_____ **Participant Initials**

IRB#: 387-01-EP

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY?

The potential benefits of the research to society would be to provide qualitative data that could be utilized to better understand student decisions to participate or not participate in extracurricular activities.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATING?

The alternative to participating in the study simply consists of not choosing to participate. You and your parents will be afforded that option.

HOW WILL YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

In addition to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), the only persons who will have access to your research data are the principal investigator and the reviewer/advisor of the field project. The information from this study may be published, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO PARTICIPATE?

You can decide not to participate in this study, or you can withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision will not effect your education, or your relationship with the investigator.

DOCUMENTATION OF ASSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED AND YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS ASSENT FORM.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Brett A. Nanninga, Superintendent, Tri-Center Community Schools
School: 485-2257 Home: 483-2074

_____ **Participant Initials**

Appendix C

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: (PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION A DECISION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 1. WHAT IS YOUR FULL NAME AND YOUR PRESENT GRADE LEVEL?**
- 2. WERE YOU INVOLVED IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST? WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS?**
- 3. WHAT FACTORS DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WILL PARTICIPATE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT?**
- 4. ARE THERE ANY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES THAT YOU WERE INVOLVED IN LAST YEAR (OR DURING PREVIOUS YEARS) BUT CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 5. DO YOU THINK THAT A STUDENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL AFFECTS HIS/HER PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?**
- 6. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT CAUSED STUDENTS TO LOSE INTEREST IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?**
- 7. DO FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS SERVE AS MOTIVATORS FOR YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED, REMAIN INVOLVED, OR BECOME SEPARATED FROM EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?**
- 8. DO YOU SEE INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS BEING RISKY BUSINESS DUE TO A FEAR OF FAILURE OR NOT SEEING ONESELF AS BEING AS GOOD AS OTHER KIDS?**
- 9. HAVE YOUR PARENTS, FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND TEACHERS ENCOURAGED YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?**
- 10. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BENEFITS (IMMEDIATE AND LONG-RANGE) OF PARTICIPATING IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?**

Appendix D

SURVEY

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

**EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:
(PARTICIPATION vs. NON-PARTICIPATION)
A DECISION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

1. PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- I am involved in Extracurricular Activities**
 I have never been involved in Extracurricular Activities
 I used to be involved, but no longer participate in Extracurriculars.

2. WHAT GRADE LEVEL ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN: 9 OR 10
(Please circle one number)

3. IN REGARDS TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, DO YOU FEEL YOU MADE A GOOD DECISION WHEN YOU DECIDED TO BECOME INVOLVED, NOT BECOME INVOLVED, OR QUIT? WHY?

4. WHAT ARE THE TOP TWO REASONS UPON WHICH YOU BASED YOUR DECISION?

5. HAS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL AFFECTED YOUR PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?

6. DOES THE EXTRACURRICULAR SPONSOR, COACH, OR DIRECTOR HAVE MUCH OF AN IMPACT UPON A STUDENT'S DECISION TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT? WHY?

7. DOES SELF-CONFIDENCE PLAY A ROLE IN THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

8. DO YOU BELIEVE TOO MUCH EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?

9. HAVE YOUR PARENTS ENCOURAGED YOU TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE TOTAL SCHOOL CONCEPT? (ACADEMICS AND ACTIVITIES)

10. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO UNDERCLASSMEN REGARDING PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (MIDDLE SCHOOL OR ELEMENTARY)?

11. PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL THUS FAR AND WRITE ABOUT HOW IT HAS BEEN OR COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER WITH PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

Appendix E

Demographics of the Participants

Name	Sex	Grade Level	High School
Tom Barnes	M	10	B
Patrick Dorn	M	10	A
Jill Francis	F	10	B
Annie Garner	F	9	B
Corey Jones	M	10	A
John Morton	M	9	A
Jodi Packard	F	9	A
Paula Trimble	F	10	A
Arthur Wiggins	M	9	B
Becky Williams	F	9	B
Amy Wingert	F	9	A
Hank Wurtz	M	10	B