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## A Study to Determine the Effect of Membership on a Varsity Athletic Team on the Discipline of High School Males

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT  
OF MEMBERSHIP ON A VARSITY ATHLETIC  
TEAM ON THE DISCIPLINE OF HIGH SCHOOL MALES

A Research Paper  
Presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the Department of Occupational and Technical Studies  
at Old Dominion University

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


By  
Lorraine Lia Batchelor

August, 1993

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Lorraine Lia Batchelor under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science of Education.

APPROVAL BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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8-7-93  
Date

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Norview student arrested with revolver and cocaine", "Schools are place to learn not fight" (The Daily Press, 1993). Headlines like these are found in the media almost daily. It is no secret that our schools are filled with behavior problems that are disruptive, time consuming to handle and often violent.

America's teachers constantly struggle to maintain safe and positive learning environments, while worsening discipline problems hamper their efforts. Our society is in desperate need of some answers to the question, "What can be done to reverse the alarming trend of behavior problems in our schools?"

One possible way to alleviate discipline problems in school would be to keep students physically and mentally busy with alternative, productive activities. While schools provide a variety of such activities, this study focused specifically on athletics. It examined the possibility that if students were active in athletics, their classroom discipline would improve.

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the effect of athletic team membership on the discipline records of high school males.

#### Research Goal

H<sub>1</sub>: Male students who are members of athletic teams have fewer documented incidents of both major and minor discipline problems.

## Background and Significance

This study was conducted to search for a possible solution to the deteriorating behavior of today's student. Personal experience has shown that teachers often spend more time maintaining discipline in the classroom than teaching the task at hand. As educators attempt to meet the educational goals and challenges of the 1990's and beyond, they must find ways to return order to the classroom.

Research conducted to find what positively motivates misbehavers (Roquemore, 1991) showed that they were low in self-esteem and had poor attitudes toward teachers. It was recommended that teachers foster individual relationships with students.

Additional research (Kearney & Silverman, 1991) found that students who skip school regularly do so to avoid the negative stimuli received at school. They prefer to be with their parents or friends receiving positive attention.

Based on this and other research, it can be theorized that membership on an athletic team could improve classroom behavior. Athletes are provided with many opportunities to receive positive feedback, increase self-esteem and build solid, one-on-one relationships with coaches.

Also, athletes have more at stake than non-athletes; if they misbehave, they may be punished at practice, they may not be allowed to play in a game, or they may even be dismissed from the team. In some cases, coaches personally monitor the classroom behavior of their team members.



If athletic team membership could positively impact student behavior, the benefits could be far-reaching. Sports could be valued for reasons other than revenue production. Perhaps more funding could become available, organized athletics could begin in earlier grades, or more students could participate. In addition, this positive effect may help teachers and employers become more tolerant and supportive of the student-athlete.

#### Limitations

This study was limited to students at Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Virginia, where access to records was readily available. In addition, in order to limit the number of participants in the study, only varsity, male athletes were used. A final limitation was that only student behaviors that were referred to an administrator and documented on a misconduct report (Appendix A) were used in the research.

#### Assumptions

In this study, it was assumed that:

1. Eligibility rosters were accurate lists of team membership.
2. All discipline referrals sent to administrators were acted upon and documented.
3. Teachers treated all students equally in referring them to an administrator for discipline.
4. Student referrals were an accurate representation of overall student behavior.

## Procedures

Eligibility rosters were acquired from the athletic director of the school. The files of these students were accessed and checked for records of suspension, in-school suspension or time-out. The same procedure was used on a random sample of students. Data was analyzed, the two groups were compared, and further recommendations were made.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study:

1. Administrator--One of four building principals or assistant principals who handle discipline problems according to the grade level of the student.
2. Behavior problems--Any behavior classified by the school system to be unacceptable such as fighting, disrupting class, skipping class or acting disrespectful.
3. Eligibility roster--Official list of team members submitted by coaches to athletic directors and to coaches of competing teams.
4. Major discipline infraction--Any discipline problem requiring ten days of suspension such as fighting or possessing a pager.
5. Minor discipline infraction--Any discipline problem requiring less than ten days of suspension such as excessive tardiness or skipping a class.
6. Misconduct Report--Form used by school personnel to document behavior and to request assistance from an administrator, which remains in student's record after punishment is administered.

## Overview of Chapters

This chapter has provided a brief description of the purpose and need for conducting this research, the manner in which it was conducted and various terms that were used throughout. Chapter II will provide information on previous, related studies and experts' opinions on this topic. Chapter III will consist of a detailed description of the

process and procedure used to reach conclusions. Chapter IV will present all the relevant data which was collected and analyzed. The final chapter will summarize the study and make recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of this study was to determine if membership on an athletic team would have an impact on a student's behavior. While a complete review of the literature on this subject was done, no information on the specific topic was found. Information was, however, found on several topics which generally relate to athletics and discipline. For example, information was found concerning extracurricular activities in general, as opposed to specifically athletics. Also, discipline was not addressed, but certain aspects of discipline such as academics and attendance were discussed.

This chapter will discuss: 1) extracurricular activities and academic achievement 2) extracurricular activities and attendance, and 3) extracurricular activities and various other behaviors.

#### Academic Achievement

Much research has been done concerning the effect of sports participation on academic achievement. While academic achievement is not specifically a determinant of good behavior, it is certainly related. If participation in extracurricular activities can have an impact on one, it can have an impact the other.

Research conducted by Brown and Steinberg (1991) attempted to identify the impact of four influences, one of which was extracurricular activities, on the achievement patterns of high school students. On one hand, these activities are time consuming and may not leave much

time and energy to study. On the other hand, the contact with adults, or hopes of a future career, may motivate students to work harder.

Brown and Steinberg found that "extracurricular participation was associated with positive school outcomes". The more activities a student participated in, or the more hours he spent participating, the more hours he spent on homework, and the higher his grade point average was.

Surprisingly, however, this research found that in some instances participation in sports caused lower academic achievement. This was explained by lack of support for achievement from fellow participants.

Additional support for the theory that extracurricular participation can positively impact a student's academic achievement was found in Sport Sociology: Contemporary Themes (Phillips & Schafer, 1976, pp. 110-114). Even though athletes are sometimes stereotyped as anti-intellectual, there is evidence otherwise. Phillips and Schafer state, "Athletes generally receive slightly better grades and are more likely to aspire to and attain more education than comparable students." One statistic stated that 81.8 percent of the sample of superior athletes aspired to at least some college education as compared to only 56.1 percent of the non-athletes.

An article by Pugh and Spreitzer (1973, p. 119) provided some insight into why these statistics may be true. Three of these ideas could easily be applied to classroom behavior. They were:

1. Athletes may receive special academic encouragement and assistance from teachers, counselors, coaches, and peers.
2. The physical conditioning and discipline accompanying athletics might transfer to educational endeavors.

3. The prestige resulting from athletic participation may produce a more positive self-concept and higher aspirations in other activities, including academic work.

A final study (Ligon, 1988) researched the impact of the "no pass-no play" legislation on failures and dropouts. Under this legislation, students must pass every class with at least a 70 or sit out of sports for the next six weeks. From the years 1982-1988, students failed fewer courses and the dropout rate remained in check. Students agreed that the rule encouraged them to make better grades.

#### Attendance

A second area in which extracurricular activities could have an impact is student attendance. In this review of literature, studies were found which examined this correlation.

The first study (Hodge, 1991) focused on intervention programs for potential dropouts. It determined factors which were responsible for students being at-risk and what works to keep them in school. The study listed eight factors which were typical of effective programs. Of those eight, three were related in some way to participation in sports or extracurricular activities. First, effective programs identified students who did not participate in school activities and encouraged them to do so. Second, they offered opportunities for students to socially interact with responsible adult role models. This could easily be a coach or club sponsor. Third, they provided alternative programs and settings outside the regular academic environment. Based on this research, it was obvious that attendance and participation in extracurricular activities go hand in hand.

Also in support of this theory is a study (Kearney & Silverman, 1991) which was mentioned in the introduction of this paper concerning "school refusal behavior". This is defined as not going to school or staying in school all day. According to the study, students refused to attend school in order to avoid negative reinforcement and would rather pursue rewarding stimuli outside the school. A strategy to improve attendance by changing the negative stimuli at school could be increased participation in enjoyable school activities and interaction with adults who could provide positive reinforcement.

#### Sports and Other Factors

According to various other reports and studies, participation in sports can have an impact on a variety of other student behaviors which could reflect on their discipline. A study done in 1992 (Bechtel and Swisher) examined alcohol use among 7,799 adolescents. These researchers were attempting to correlate alcohol use with such variables as school misconduct, time spent on sports and extracurricular activities, religion and others. They found that alcohol use was negatively correlated with time spent on sports.

Another aspect of sports participation which may have an impact on behavior is the status system which accompanies being a high school athlete. In 1957, James Coleman concluded that athletic prowess was the single most important criterion for high status in school. In 1975, D. Stanley Eitzen replicated those results (Eitzen, 1975, pp. 114-119).

He gave questionnaires to students from nine schools, asking items such as, "If you could be remembered here at school for one of the three

things below, which would you want it to be? Athletic Star? Brilliant Student? Most popular? He also asked the question, "What makes a guy popular with the girls around here?"

Answers to both questions indicated that athletics are extremely important to a high school student's status. "Being an athlete" was the number one answer to both questions. Alcohol consumption and status are just two of the many areas in which sports can impact an athlete's life.

### Summary

This review of literature attempted to discuss various books, studies and experts' opinions on the correlation between participation in athletics and behavior in school. While research is not strong in this specific category, we have seen that sports and extracurricular activities can have a major impact on many related aspects of a student's life.

Research shows that participation in activities can reduce the dropout rate and help curb teenage drinking. These are certainly two issues which are of major importance in today's schools. It has also shown that participation in activities can help students improve their overall academic performance. This is important when so many other methods for reaching students are currently failing.

It has been concluded that in many, many ways, sports participation can impact high school students. This paper will attempt to show that discipline is also an area in which it could have a major impact.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The problem of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between athletic team membership and discipline. In order to determine this, a population was selected, data were collected and compiled, and statistical analyses were performed. This chapter will discuss each of these areas, in addition to the research method used in the study.

#### Research Method

The main methods of research used in this study were finding and analyzing existing data. First, sample lists of students were generated. Next, the discipline record of each student in the sample was examined. Finally, data were collected by hand, recorded on a master list, and analyzed to search for a correlation. This was an *expost facto* study.

#### Population

The population in this study was the 1992-1993 student body of Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Virginia. From this population, two sample lists of students were generated for the purpose of comparing them to each other.

The first list was comprised of all the male students who have been members of varsity athletic teams at Woodrow Wilson during this school year. It was compiled by obtaining the eligibility rosters from every sport, combining each list, and deleting duplicates. Seventy-two students were on this list.

The second list was a stratified random sample of an additional seventy-two males who were in the same grades as those students who were on the list of athletes. A master list of all Woodrow Wilson High School students which contained the sex and grade of the student was used. Every tenth name from the correct grade was selected, unless it was the name of an athlete, in which case the eleventh name was chosen.

#### Data Collection

In order to collect the data needed, each student's file was reviewed, and its contents were recorded. First, permission for access to files was granted by the assistant principal of the school. Second, in order to quickly locate the files, the grade and homeroom of each student was accessed by computer and recorded. Third, beside the name of each student, a column was checked NR for no discipline referral, MN for a minor discipline referral, MJ for a major discipline referral, or NO for no file found, based on the contents of the record. Once the data were collected from students' records, it was compiled and counted in preparation for analysis. There were six sets of data which were determined in order to perform the necessary calculations. These were:

1. The number of athletes without a misconduct report.
2. The number of non-athletes without a misconduct report.
3. The number of athletes guilty of a minor infraction.
4. The number of non-athletes guilty of a minor infraction.
5. The number of athletes guilty of a major infraction.
6. The number of non-athletes guilty of a major infraction.

#### Statistical Analysis

Once the data collection and compilation were completed, statistical analyses were performed. The chi-square was selected for its

ability to determine if there is a significant correlation between two sets of numbers which occur in frequencies. The purpose of the first chi-square was to determine if there was a correlation between athletic team membership and minor discipline infractions. The purpose of the second chi-square was to determine if there was a correlation between athletic team membership and major discipline infractions. The results of these analyses are reported in Chapter IV.

#### Summary

This chapter has discussed the methods and procedures which were followed in order to accomplish the stated research goals. A population was defined and data were collected, compiled and analyzed. The findings, conclusions and recommendations which were drawn from this research will be presented and discussed in Chapters IV and V.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This study was conducted in order to determine if there was a correlation between athletic team membership and discipline. This chapter will present the findings of the research conducted.

#### Presentation of Data

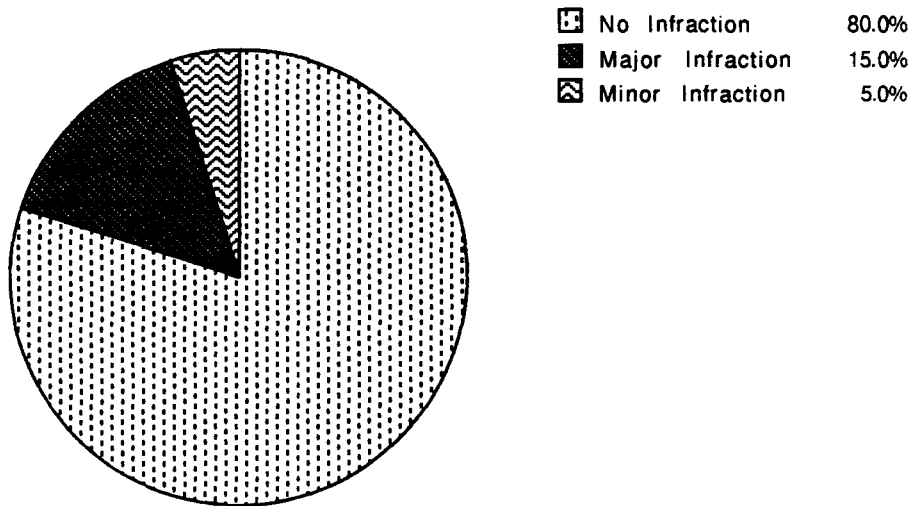
There were seventy-two males who participated in varsity athletics at Woodrow Wilson High School during the 1992-92 school year. Twelve of these files were not found, therefore, sixty students' files were reviewed in this section of the study. Figure 1 shows the following results:

1. Nine files contained misconduct reports for major offenses, comprising 15 percent of the total.
2. Three files contained misconduct reports for minor offenses, comprising 5 percent of the total athletes.
3. Forty-eight files contained no misconduct reports, comprising 80 percent of the total athletes.

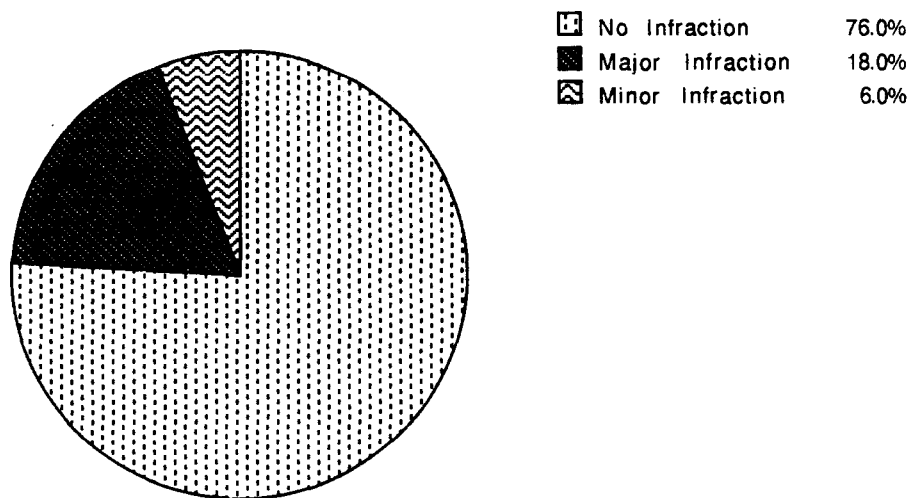
From a list of seventy-two non-athletes, twenty-one files were not found, leaving fifty-one files for review. Figure 2 shows the following results of this section of the study:

1. Nine files contained misconduct reports for major offenses, comprising 18 percent of the total non-athletes.
2. Three files contained misconduct reports for minor offenses, comprising 6 percent of the total non-athletes.
3. Thirty-nine files contained no misconduct reports, comprising 76 percent of the total non-athletes.

**Figure 1**  
**Percentage of Athletes**  
**Receiving Misconduct Report**



**Figure 2**  
**Percentage of Non-Athletes**  
**Receiving Misconduct Report**



## Comparison of Groups

Three chi-square tests were performed using the findings of this research (Appendix B). The results were as follows:

1. Test 1, used to determine if members of athletic teams had fewer misconduct reports for major discipline problems, had a chi-square of .042, showing no significant difference at any level.

2. Test 2, used to determine if members of athletic teams had fewer misconduct reports for minor discipline problems, had a chi-square of .142, showing no significant difference at any level.

3. Test 3, used to determine if members of athletic teams had fewer misconduct reports for either major or minor discipline problems, had a chi-square of .203, showing no significance at any level.

## Summary

This chapter has reported the results of a comparison of the discipline records of athletes and non-athletes. Chapter V will analyze these findings as well as provide conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize previous chapters, to draw conclusions based on the data presented, to make recommendations, and to suggest ideas for further study.

Summary

This research was conducted in response to the ever-growing problem of student discipline in today's classroom. A review of literature showed that participation in athletics could have a positive impact on attendance, academic achievement and even alcohol use. Thus, the purpose of this research was to find out if participation in athletics could have a similar impact on student discipline.

The problem of this study was to determine the effect of athletic team membership on the discipline of high school males. It was hypothesized that male students who are members of athletic teams have fewer documented incidents of major and minor discipline problems.

The population of this study was limited to the 1992-1993 male student body of Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Virginia. From this population, two samples, athletes and non-athletes, were drawn. An additional limitation was that only behaviors which were documented and referred to an administrator were used in the study.

This research was conducted by reviewing the school files of one hundred forty-four students. One half of these students were males who participated in varsity sports during the 1992-1993 school year. The

other half was a stratified random sample representing male non-athletes in similar grades as the athletes. The discipline record of each of these students was recorded in terms of major infractions, minor infractions, or no infractions. These results were reported in Chapter IV.

When the research was complete, chi-square tests were performed to determine if there was a significant difference in the occurrence of discipline infractions between the two groups.

### Conclusions

The hypothesis in this study was that male students who are members of athletic teams have fewer documented incidents of both major and minor discipline problems. Based on calculated results, this hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that membership on a varsity athletic team had no significant impact on the discipline of a student. Specifically, athletes did not have fewer major, minor, or total misconduct reports on file.

### Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Coaches should expect and demand higher standards of classroom discipline from their athletes.
2. School boards and school administrators should institute a policy which requires a student to have a clear discipline record in order to participate in athletics.
3. This study should be repeated using students with varying ethnic and economic background.



4. Further study should include interviews with teachers as this study was limited to only behaviors which were referred to an administrator.
5. Further research should be conducted to determine if a student's discipline improves during the season of the sport in which he participates.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Misconduct Report**

White Copy - Teacher  
 Canary - Assistant Principal - return to teacher  
 Pink - Assistant Principal

**MISCONDUCT REPORT**

Stock No. 03500600  
 PS-598-82

Student:				Referred By:	
Date:	Sex:	Race:	Homeroom	Grade:	Period:

**INFRACTION**

- Cut class (state exact dates)
- Excessive Tardiness (state exact dates)
- Disrespectful or discourteous
- Disturbed class or other pupils
- Damaged school property
- Lack of class materials
- Opposition to authority
- Excessive talking
- Left class without permission

**ACTION TAKEN BY:  
 (Teacher)**

- Held conference with student
- Parental conference
- Detained after school
- Telephoned parent
- Guidance counselor referral
- Assigned different seat
- Pupil verbally corrected
- Referred to the office previously
- Sent previous report home

**ACTION TAKEN BY:  
 (Administrator)**

- Held conference with student
- Next referral will result in a suspension
- Student placed on probation
- Held conference with parent
- Student will make-up time at your convenience
- Parent conference required before student can return to your class
- Student suspended from school for \_\_\_ days
- Student regrets incident - must apologize
- Case referred to \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER COMMENT(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADMINISTRATOR COMMENT(S): DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADMINISTRATOR'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**Chi-Square Calculations**

Chi-Square Calculations

Major Infractions

N=111

	Major Infraction	Other
Athletes	9	51
<hr/>		
Non-Athletes	9	42

$$X^2 = \frac{111([51 \times 9] - [42 \times 9])^2}{(51+9)(42+9)(51+42)(9+9)}$$

$$X^2 = \frac{111(459-378)^2}{5,122,440}$$

$$X^2 = \frac{111(81)^2}{5,122,440}$$

$$X^2 = \frac{72,871}{5,122,440}$$

$$X^2 = .14217$$

Chi-Square Calculations

Minor Infractions

N=111

	Minor Infraction	Other
Athletes	3	57
<hr/>		
Non-Athletes	3	48

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111([57 \times 3] - [48 \times 3])^2}{(57+3)(48+3)(57+48)(3+3)}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111(171-144)^2}{1,927,800}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111(27)^2}{1,927,800}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{80,919}{1,927,800}$$

$$\chi^2 = .04197$$

Chi-Square Calculations

Total Infractions

N=111

	Infraction	No Infraction
Athletes	12	48
<hr/>		
Non-Athletes	12	39

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111([48 \times 12] - [39 \times 12])^2}{(48+12)(39+12)(39+48)(12+12)}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111(576 - 468)^2}{6,389,280}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{111(108)^2}{6,389,280}$$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{1,294,704}{6,389,280}$$

$$\chi^2 = .20264$$