Participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency

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The University of Montana

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PARTICIPATION IN INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS
AND DELINQUENCY

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Despite the considerable controversy surrounding highly organized competitive sport in America today, a not unfamiliar situation in the history of athletics in this country, it is nevertheless fair comment to make that this aspect of our society has seldom been subjected to analytical assessment and research. For those who support or merely accept the inclusion of athletics within the framework of the total educational program, this situation is now one which should be causing considerable concern. Whereas in past decades claims concerning the benefits of athletic participation were generally accepted, although specific programs may have been criticized for not emphasizing these benefits, the scene today is one in which the validity of these very claims is being seriously questioned.

The role of athletics in high schools seems always to have been a controversial one. Athletic programs have been the target of severe criticism from the moment they made their somewhat informal appearance on the American high school scene. For various reasons they continued to proliferate, and now occupy a very special position within the total
educational program.

Why, then, should we be unduly concerned about current criticism if this has always been part of the history of interscholastic athletics? The fact that athletic programs in the schools have survived thus far with little attempt having been made to substantiate their value may be an unwise criterion on which to predict their continuing success. An analysis of the nature of current criticism, coupled with an investigation of the present bases of support for interscholastic athletics, should convince anyone with a professional interest in these programs that the problem is one that demands serious attention.

**Athletics in the Schools**

Initially, few claims were made concerning the educational values of athletics. When organized sport first made its appearance in the high schools, educational theory was still firmly rooted in a belief in the dichotomy of mind and body. The 3R's dominated the curriculum, and athletics were very definitely regarded as an extra-curricular activity (7). The prevailing attitude of the time was one in which systematic gymnastics were regarded as producing the best results in the physical training of school children, athletics being regarded solely as a pastime (15;77).

Indeed, organized sports in the early twentieth century were not even popular with the faculty as an extra-curricular activity. The abuses of athletics in the direction of excess, an inordinate desire to win at all costs, and a spirit of commercialism along with an association with professionalism and gambling prevalent at this time in intercollegiate
athletics were the primary factors accounting for the unfavorable attitude towards organized school sport held by teachers and administrators (45). To the students, however, they provided a welcome diversion from the boredom of the classroom, and there was a steady nation-wide increase in the number of high school athletic teams (27).

Several factors appear to have contributed to a gradually changing faculty opinion towards organized sport. A more efficient organization which slowly reduced the initial objections to interscholastic athletics influenced the schools to assume administrative control of the athletic programs. In addition, the existence of athletics within the schools as a spontaneous activity was less likely to subserve ends acceptable to the faculty than if these same activities were fostered and controlled by the faculty themselves (75).

Probably of far greater significance than these factors concerning the future of athletics in the schools, however, was a change that occurred in popular educational theory. The early twentieth century saw a wide dissemination of the belief that play was a fundamental part of the educative process, and the emphasis in educational practice moved slowly away from a concentration on the classical course of study towards a new philosophy of education encompassing a much broader curriculum (55).

The advent of the progressive education movement brought a profound change to the climate of the classroom, with a new emphasis being placed on education for living, life adjustment, moral values, human relationships and civic responsibilities. Nor was the impact of this movement felt solely within the classroom. The way was now opened for the
advancement of a new conception of athletics - one in which athletics, with reference to these new educational objectives, was seen by many as having a legitimate place within school physical education programs (7; 36; 75; 77).

From this point onwards, claims concerning the beneficial effects of athletic participation based on these objectives have grown unabated. Two world wars and a depression have at times altered the emphases within physical education programs to a certain degree, but the role of athletics, while not unchallenged, has continued to receive support predominantly on the grounds of these largely unsubstantiated claims. Whether this justification of athletics on the basis of the beneficial effects of participation is as widely accepted today, and whether such justification hides other and perhaps less acceptable reasons - at least in terms of educational values - for the support of interscholastic athletics remains a pertinent area of investigation, and will be considered in a later section.

Current Research Interest in Athletics

In the past few years organized sport has indeed been subjected to more thorough investigation than at any other time in its history, but this has not necessarily been motivated by an interest in, or concern for, athletics per se. Recent developments in this field have been motivated primarily by an acknowledgement of the connections and similarities between organized sport and other societal structures and social phenomena. Sports settings are now recognized by many as providing fertile fields
for the development of psycho-sociological theory, and as being ideal proving grounds for the testing of such theory (20;33;40). Consequently, a considerable amount of recent research has been carried out by those investigators whose primary field of interest has been in psychology or sociology.

This is not to suggest that physical educators and others who have a professional involvement in this area have completely neglected the value of research of this type, but it is probably true to suggest that initially they lacked the background skills necessary to be able to attempt such investigation. Today the situation is changing, with the profession displaying more interest in, and recognizing the necessity for, a thorough psychological and sociological analysis of the institution of organized sport (33;40).

The American Sports Creed

In an examination of the claims made on behalf of athletics, Edwards formulated what he terms the American 'sports creed' - a creed representative of the core of publically expressed beliefs held by those directly involved in organized sport at all levels of American society (20). Edwards asserted that one of the primary components of the creed is that athletic programs may be justified on the grounds that they develop worthwhile character qualities such as reliance, perseverance, social discipline and self-control.

Indeed, one of the most popular specific claims advanced by the proponents of athletics is that participation fosters such desirable
character development, and the related assumption that such participation acts as a deterrent to delinquency. Fisher typifies this position with his statement that "Such participation will supply a desirable outlet for some of the surplus energy common to youth, (and) it will develop worthwhile character qualities such as self-reliance, perseverance, determination, (and) a willingness to abide by rules (23:16)". With reference to such claims, athletics have been promoted on the grounds that they can provide experiences that ensure the development of socially acceptable ideals and standards, and the desirable modification of undesirable tendencies (30; 34; 47).

While Edwards is justified in claiming that the belief in the beneficial effects of athletic participation has considerable 'folk' popularity, it must be remembered that his estimate is based upon the recorded opinions of those persons who, by and large, have a vested interest in organized sport. Without doubt, however, we can justifiably assert that no matter who the proponents may be, their claims are seldom substantiated. For example, Pietrofesa and Rosen argued that athletic activities in the high school contribute no more to citizenship than do other high school programs, and that claims that players succeed later in life because of their sports background have never been substantiated (53). Kenyon similarly concluded that while the influence of athletics as a socializing vehicle may be great, the degree to which such activity can shape human behavior and values in some desired direction may be no greater than any other group experience (33).
Supporters of the Creed

Notwithstanding some persistent criticisms of athletics, any examination of the literature will support Edwards' conviction that there is a wide base of support for the claimed benefits of athletic participation. Official support for the inclusion of athletic programs in the schools has come from such bodies as the now-defunct Educational Policies Commission.

"Participation in sound athletic programs, we believe, contributes to health and happiness, physical skill and emotional security, social competence and moral values.

Playing hard and playing to win can help to build character. So also do learning to 'take it' in the rough and tumble of vigorous play, experiencing defeat without whimpering and victory without gloating, and disciplining one's self to comply with the rules of the games and of good sportsmanship (19:1)".

Many school administrators have adopted similar stands, as evidenced by Larson, the then President of the American Association of School Administrators. "I believe that athletics in our high schools help to develop good citizenship, .. fair play and good sportsmanship (36:259)". As is to be expected, those with a commercial interest in athletics have also lauded the character building qualities of sport. According to the late Branch Rickey, Executive Vice-President and General Manager of the Pittsburgh Baseball Club, "the college coach has, over the years, made a very great contribution to the education of (participants) entirely apart from any technical instruction. His contributions in the moral field have been tremendous (59:252-3)".

We would also expect successful athletes to lend their support
to school athletic programs, and evidence to support this conclusion is not difficult to find (34). In summarizing his views on the values of athletic participation, Jesse Owens stated that coaches teach athletes three things; a code of ethics by which athletes can live, a respect for the rights and properties of fellow man, and how to play the game of life as well as the game of athletics according to the rules of the society in which we live (51).

To do justice to the many people who have recorded their support for athletic participation, it should be made clear that while their views are seldom substantiated by research they are often qualified by the opinion that mere participation in athletics will not necessarily bring about the desired benefits claimed (46;48). "An athletic program is not beneficial per se. Its potential for good is matched by the possibility of bad outcomes (Duncan, 18:274)". As Mason has observed, "athletics in themselves are neither moral nor immoral, and can only be regarded as 'character building' if the participants recognize, desire and put into effect the morality contained in the activity, even when the pressure is extreme (41:14)".

Opposition to Interscholastic Athletics

Much of the opposition to interscholastic athletics has stemmed from the fact that these programs have often been poorly organized, and that the emphasis on claimed educational values has been completely lost sight of in the overwhelming desire for victory (53). Karner, for example, believes that athletics should be de-emphasized in the extra-curricular
program as athletes have a prestige in the school which is far beyond their importance in the activity program. He feels that the pressure placed on coaches to produce winning teams has lead to cheating and foul play, and consequently believes that such programs are more likely to produce criminals than good citizens (32).

According to Cosby, athletics as organized in the schools today have a negative educational value, and even if the programs were structured to emphasize educational values there would still be little or no benefit accruing to the great majority of students (13). Vernier is another, who, while not denying the potential benefits of athletic programs, criticized the undesirable practices that result when interscholastic athletics are promoted as public entertainment spectacles where the financial support of the program depends on gate receipts. "Unfortunately, in too many instances, the strong force of interschool athletics is misdirected. The over-enthusiastic self-interests of parents, civic groups, and even school administrators clash, causing many disturbing problems and detrimental practices that harass athletics (74:103)"

Others have also pointed out the dangers of overly-aggressive behavior resulting from the present extraordinary emphasis placed on winning.

"The routinization of violence in sports has never been quite complete in that there is a persistent tendency for uncontrolled violence to break through the limitations set by the rules, in the form of rough or dirty playing, and for the spectators to join the field of battle. Thus, the athletic contest may occasionally erupt into more total conflict, despite its long institutionalization (Matza, 43:205)".

Pietrofesa and Rosen believe that a major component of interscholastic
sports, particularly football, is violence, and that the negative educational values in this situation are obvious (53).

It is clear, then, that there are conflicting views concerning the values to be obtained from participation in athletics, and consequently as to whether athletics has a legitimate place within the high school curriculum. It should be noted that many whose opinions are cited in this section do tend to agree that properly conducted programs can produce desirable effects in terms of character development. Longtime critics of interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics such as Robert M. Hutchins, Arthur Bestor, and other respected educational leaders would deny the value of even the best conducted athletic programs, and would contend that athletics have no place within the educational curriculum (8).

The Nature of the Controversy

Despite criticism of interscholastic athletics, the central position of organized sport in the American high school cannot be denied (12;53;63;75). However, if we investigate the nature of the present controversy we may have a clearer picture as to why present criticisms can no longer be ignored. It seems clear that one justification for school athletic programs commonly expressed concerns the claimed educational values of these programs, and the ability of well conducted programs to foster desirable character development and to act as a deterrent to delinquency.

Such a justification for athletics presents a considerable problem at this particular time. One of the changing trends in the criticism of
athletics in recent years is that much of this criticism is now coming from the group that, by and large, has been the most loyal supporter of athletics since their inception in the schools - the students themselves. Young people of today have their critics, and the main source of conflict between the young and the not-so-young has been concerned with the traditional values of the latter group, or the 'establishment'. Organized sport is seen as being part of the establishment, as being conservative in nature (42), and it is this very conservatism and the attempt to impose traditional values that constitutes a situation which is no longer acceptable to a considerable number of the present generation of students.

It is possible, as suggested earlier, that one of the primary if not so commonly expressed justifications for a strong athletic program in the minds of many school administrators is in connection with public relations and community support of schools (53;60;77). Solberg suggested that the expectations of the tax paying public regarding appearances of school athletes is one of the traditional reasons for the support of school athletics (67), and there are many who believe that this motivation is not uncommon (8;70). To attempt to justify interscholastic athletics on these grounds is a somewhat dangerous path for concerned educators to tread, and Cosby (13), is not alone in deploiring this trend.

Another important justification of athletics in the minds of many is the belief that athletic programs are particularly useful as a means of unifying the entire school (53). According to Waller, there is a tendency for the school population to split up into its hostile segments of teachers and students, and that athletics helps to alleviate
this condition by building up a group spirit among faculty, students and administration (75). This notion of athletics being a useful device for enhancing the unity and solidarity of schools is also advanced by Coleman (12), and undoubtedly has considerable support. While the thesis that athletics alleviates teacher-student hostility may still hold true today, we should be prepared to admit that these programs are the basis for a new and more disturbing conflict. This is the developing confrontation among students themselves - between some of the participants and a significant number of nonparticipants. Examples of this confrontation are not difficult to find. Schafer cited an occasion where a high school principal gave the letter winners' club permission to 'persuade' a group of alienated intellectuals, during school hours, that it was their duty to attend pep rally assemblies, after they had refused to do so in violation of school rules (63). Increasingly, at both the high school and college levels, athletes have physically or verbally attacked nonconformists, hippies and radicals (29).

The justification of athletics, either on the grounds of public entertainment or on the grounds of diverting attention away from student-faculty hostility, is more likely than ever under today's conditions to lead to criticism of athletics by the students themselves. There is little doubt, as Babbidge suggested, that there is a 'credibility gap' between what we profess and what we actually deliver in our athletic programs (1). That students recognize and in many cases deplore this situation is to be commended. To react to such criticism by condemning the very idealism of youth which prompts such criticism is to immeasurably strengthen their
beliefs that our motives are other than what we profess in connection with our support of athletic programs.

When Rafferty, a former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and a man who began his career in education as a high school football coach, stated that "critics of (athletics) are kooks, crumbums, and commies (56:B1)", he displayed a callous disregard for concerned critics of athletics. Coach Woody Hayes of Ohio State University is another who has reacted unfavorably to the current research interest in athletics, and has been quick to condemn critics of organized sport, claiming that a movement to undermine athletics is being led by "these psychology and sociology professors (28:5)". Statements such as these serve only to heap coals on the fires which in the foreseeable future may reduce athletics within the educational program to ashes.

A further problem arises when we consider the type of student who actually participates in organized sport within the high school. To begin with, we demand that participants in the athletic program meet certain academic requirements before they are eligible to compete, and insist that they maintain these standards in order to retain their eligibility. Thus we eliminate the low academic achiever.

Secondly, many coaches set strict standards of behavior for the athletes, both on and off the field, and practices are often rigidly structured - as are athletics themselves - in a way that eliminates or severely curtails the freedom and creativity of the individual. As Rafferty neatly summed up the situation, "There are two great national institutions which simply cannot tolerate either internal dissension or
external interference: our armed forces and our interscholastic sports program. Both are of necessity benevolent dictatorships because by their very nature they cannot be otherwise (57:14). A further example of this attitude is exhibited by Simpson, a Texas high school coach, who maintained that it "is time to show the American athlete that his most valuable characteristic is not physical ability but respect for authority (65:76)." Simpson declared that it is time for all men to stand up for the absolute principles of short hair or "go down with the rest of the women (65:78)." Thus to a certain extent we eliminate the non-conformers, the 'longhairs' and the determined individualists.

It has also been suggested that delinquents or potential delinquents are not likely to choose to participate in interscholastic athletics. According to the Gluecks (25), delinquents have markedly different interests concerning their leisure time activities than nondelinquents. A specific preference for adventuresome, exciting forms of activity is a dominant characteristic of the delinquent, and the Gluecks concluded that competitive games and sports do not measure up to their interests. Athletics require obedience to specific rules and regulations, and Wylie believes that it is this very demand for obedience to rules that divides the delinquents from adults and their conceived regulations (78). Thus it would seem that we also exclude the problem child. As Veller succinctly put it, the social deviate "needs close surveillance, especially if the old story about the rotten apple in the barrel is believed. When the bad boy fails to respond to treatment he must just be terminated (73:36)."

It would appear, then, that participation in athletic programs
may be restricted for various reasons to the conformer, the successful academic achiever, the student with a reasonable compliance toward the established values of society – in other words, the 'all-American boy'. If this proposition can be established, it would seem that whatever values our athletic programs may possess are being transmitted to the very type of individual who has already internalized these values, or at least exhibits behavior patterns which adhere to these values. As Van Pool suggested, participation in this phase of the school activity program is being denied to those who could most benefit from it (72). Ogilvie and Tutko echo this sentiment. They feel that most programs in competitive sports are really directed towards the young people who have the least need for athletics in terms of enhancing their characters, and that the youngsters who have the highest need for personality growth experiences have a higher probability of being eliminated (49), and there are others who support this view (39).

The nature of the controversy surrounding athletics in schools presents a many-sided problem. On the one hand, there is a desperate need to substantiate our claims concerning the beneficial effects of participation in athletics. On the other hand, there is an equally desperate need to construct and organize our programs in such a way that these values, if substantiated, are duly emphasized. We must also ensure that these programs are so constructed as to attract those students who are most likely to benefit from them.

To claim any values from athletic participation without attempting to substantiate them is irresponsible. To camouflage less acceptable
reasons for supporting athletics under the guise of educational values is equally so. That considerable research into this question is now being undertaken is merely an acknowledgement of our responsibilities in this area.

**Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the claim that participation in interscholastic athletics acts as a deterrent to delinquency. In the initial phase of this investigation, subjects were classified as athletes or nonathletes, and the relationships between these two groups and delinquency, the dependent variable, were established, in order to determine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups.

That the above relationships may be affected by other variables is obvious. Any negative relationship between participation and delinquency may be largely due to the fact that delinquents do not choose to participate in interscholastic athletics, or are denied the opportunity to take part because of school regulations, athletic codes of conduct, or the attitudes of coaches. Thus, the second phase of this study investigated the possibility that delinquents are less likely to participate in interscholastic athletics than are nondelinquents. For this reason, subjects were classified as delinquents or nondelinquents on the basis of their pre-high school records in order to establish the relationship between these two groups and participation in interscholastic athletics.
In addition, an attempt was made to establish whether two further variables, the type of participation and the amount of participation, showed significant differences in their relationships to delinquency.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, the following aspects of the relationship between participation in athletics and delinquency were examined:

1. Is there a relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency?

2. Is there a relationship between pre-high school delinquency and participation in interscholastic athletics?

3. Is there a relationship between participation in major versus minor sports and delinquency?

4. Is there a relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency.

2. There is no significant relationship between pre-high school delinquency and participation in interscholastic athletics.

3. There is no significant relationship between the type of sports participation (major versus minor) and delinquency.

4. There is no significant relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics (high versus low) and delinquency.
Definition of Terms

**Athlete:** Any subject who has completed at least two seasons of interscholastic athletic competition, one season of which is beyond the freshman level.

**Delinquent:** Any subject with a juvenile court record after commencing high school.

**High Participation:** Completion of four or more seasons of interscholastic athletic competition.

**Low Participation:** Completion of two or three seasons of interscholastic athletic competition.

**Major Sports:** Football and basketball, based on their popularity and prominence within the interscholastic athletic program.

**Minor Sports:** All interscholastic sports with the exception of football and basketball.

**Pre-High School Delinquent:** Any subject with a juvenile court record prior to commencing high school.

Limitations

1. This study was limited to 1969 freshman male students in two public high schools in the city of Missoula, Montana.

2. The classification of athletes and nonathletes from the athletic records published annually in the high school year books also has certain limitations. Although these records are carefully compiled, errors and omissions are possible.

3. The most obvious limitation in this study is the classification of
delinquency from an examination of the juvenile court records of the county. As Becker has observed, "there are a great many studies of juvenile delinquency, (but) they are more likely to be based on court records than on direct observation (2:166)". That court records underestimate actual delinquent behavior is obvious, and as Schafer has suggested this may be especially so for middle class boys and perhaps also for athletes (63). While such measurement must thus be considered as presenting only a gross indication, it was the only feasible method of attempting this study within the time limitations imposed.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Only two studies have been carried out which bear a direct relationship to this project, and these studies are summarized below. There has been related research in other areas, however, which is closely allied to the present enquiry, and these studies will also be reviewed in this chapter.

Participation in Interscholastic Athletics and Delinquency

Schafer's investigation into the relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency in males appears to be the sole contribution, in terms of research, to this particular question (63). Drawing on six general theories of delinquency, Schafer predicted that "other things being equal, participation in interscholastic athletics will have a deterring effect on delinquency (63:36)", and an examination of his theoretical framework would generally support his prediction. By utilizing such a framework, however, it may also be possible to formulate an hypothesis concerning the participation in interscholastic athletics by those students who have already been labelled as delinquent before
entering high school, a problem that Schafer did not attempt to investigate in his study in any direct fashion.

**Delinquency as a Result of Differential Association**

Expanding on the theory posited by Sutherland, Cohen and Cressey (69;10;16), that delinquency was the result of exposure to deviant influences, Schafer argued that within a particular school, the chances of a student becoming delinquent vary directly with the amount of exposure to deviant sub-groups and inversely with exposure to conforming influences.

Schafer believes that athletes internalize the strict standards of behavior set by coaches, and feels that athletes are much more likely to be exposed to strong conforming influences reinforced by the school and community, concluding that athletes should be delinquent less often than nonathletes on the basis of the theoretical reasoning of differential association. Evidence presented later, however, would suggest that it may be just such authoritarian demands by coaches concerning the behavior of athletes which deter a great many delinquents from participating in interscholastic athletics, and as Schafer pointed out, violation of these rules often results in expulsion from the team.

**Delinquency as a Result of Weak Social Controls**

Applying the theory developed by Reiss, Gold and Cohen (58;26;11), that delinquency is sometimes the result of weak external social controls, Schafer posited that the training rules regulating off field behavior of athletes deter some of the athletes from engaging in delinquent behavior, the strong social controls imposed by coaches resulting in less deviation
on the part of their charges. Again, this theory may also be used to support the proposition that delinquents may be less likely to participate in interscholastic athletics.

**Delinquency as a Result of Rebellion**

Cohen, Stinchcombe, Polk and Schafer have contended that delinquency is mainly a result of rebellion against the school (11;68;54;62). Such rebellion may result from failure, frustration in achieving goals, insufficient encouragements and rewards, or resentment against punishment. Thus, for the successful athlete, school is likely to be a less frustrating and more positive and meaningful experience than for the non-athlete, and consequently athletes are less likely to rebel and become delinquent.

The implications of this theory insofar as the unsuccessful athlete is concerned, or for the athlete who is expelled from the team, should cause sober reflection on our present athletic policies.

**Delinquency as a Result of Boredom**

Bordua has argued that delinquency often arises out of sheer boredom (5). As Schafer pointed out, sports occupy much of the athlete's spare time, and he is less likely to be bored and less likely to 'get his kicks' by "slashing tires, stealing, beating on drunks, and smoking pot (63:37)". However, Kvaraceus and Miller have contended that "Some school-connected experiences such as football - with its long, tedious practice periods and drills, interspersed with a weekly battle that calls for a sharp focus of all physical skills and strength in concentrated measure
and for a short duration - find analogies in lower-class life (35:294)
and that a "dull, slow, and typical week in this subculture frequently culminates in a 'night out on the town' and by 'hanging one on' (35:294).

Delinquency as a Result of Need to Assert Masculinity

Cohen, Ferdinand and Parsons are three theorists who believe that delinquency may arise from the motivation to assert masculinity through daring or illegal acts (11;22;52). Ferdinand and Matza have both pointed out that force, skill, strength and competitiveness are part of the fabric of interscholastic athletic competition, and athletes can thus demonstrate their manliness through participation (22;43). Equally certain, however, is the fact that peer pressures within athletic sub-groups often result in athletes being forced by fellow athletes to commit illegal acts in order to save face.

Delinquency as a Result of Labelling

A popular belief today is that deviancy is not something inherent in the act itself but is created by the 'power' class who enforce social standards of behavior (2;21;38;71). According to Schafer, "a white middle class youngster may well not be referred to the juvenile authorities for a minor theft. For him, the act is defined as a mere adolescent prank. On the other hand, a lower class Negro youth is much more likely to be . . referred to the court for the same act (63:36)". Schafer argued that successful athletes, especially from small communities, are protected by the 'halo' effect of the public image of an athlete - that of the clean-cut, all-American boy.
This theory also adds weight to the proposition that the delinquent may be less likely to participate in interscholastic athletics. The student classified as a delinquent before entering high school is more likely to get "caught in the negative, self-fulfilling cycle of action, labelling, repressive or alienating sanctions by teachers, increasingly negative self-images, identification with other troublemakers, rejection of school standards, (and) further deviancy (Schafer, 63:36)."

Thus, while Schafer argued that popular theories of delinquency generally support the proposition that participation in interscholastic athletics can be expected to act as a deterring or negative influence on delinquent behavior, certain of these theories also support the contention that membership of an athletic subgroup may encourage delinquent behavior. Some of the theoretical positions also support the possibility that delinquents will be unlikely to choose to participate in interscholastic athletic competition, or are prevented from doing so by the structure and regulations associated with such competition.

In his investigation of the proposition that athletes are likely to be delinquent less often than nonathletes, Schafer utilized the high school records of freshman male students in two mid-western senior high schools (63). The results showed a negative association between interscholastic athletic participation and delinquency, as Schafer had predicted on the basis of his theoretical framework. The delinquency rates of participants in major versus minor sports and between high versus low participation groups were virtually identical.

However, although Schafer's findings established that athletes
were less often delinquent than nonathletes, the findings also suggested a strong possibility that this relationship may have been largely the result of a selection of conformers to the athletic program, rather than the result of the deterring influence of athletics in this direction.

Further examination of this relationship was carried out by Buhrmann (9), this time using high school girls as subjects. His investigation utilized 857 girls in grades nine through twelve from seven rural and small town high schools in Iowa. An athlete was defined as a girl student who had participated in at least one interscholastic sport in the year prior to the collection of the data. Deviancy was self-reported, each subject being asked to respond to five questions concerning the commission of deviant acts.

The results of this study indicated that athletic participation was significantly and negatively related to deviant behavior among the high school girls in the sample. As Buhrmann pointed out, however, the findings should not be interpreted as meaning that athletics prevents the occurrence of development of delinquency, and the argument that students join athletics because they have greater tendencies to conformity, or that deviants are weeded out of teams because they do not follow required standards of behavior, remain plausible explanations of the relationship. Buhrmann also suggested that regulations in certain schools preventing low achievers from joining athletic teams may have considerably influenced the strength of the relationship, as the low achieving group in his study were found to be more prone to be delinquent than high achievers.

It is also interesting to note that the profiles of athletes and
deviants compiled from the data collected by Buhrmann were almost diametrically opposed to one another. The profile of the typical girl athlete was one of a white collar background, high educational attainment and expectations (the girl and her parents), active participation in school and extra-curricular activities, and leadership in many of these and out-of-school organizations. Almost the reverse was true for deviants who came from a background where education was not highly valued or rewarded, who had lower educational aspirations and achievement, and who participated less actively as well as passively in school or outside activities and held few positions of leadership in organizations or clubs. It would appear from such a profile that the girl athlete is less likely to favor delinquent behavior, but that this stems not necessarily from her participation in athletics but rather from factors in her background which tend to predispose against delinquency.

Athletics and Character Development

For more than ten years, Ogilvie and Tutko have been studying the effects of athletic competition on personality, including in their study athletes from every sport and at all levels from interscholastic competition to professionalism. In 1963 they established the Institute for the Study of Athletic Motivation to start research aimed at helping athletes reach their potentials. In collaboration with Lyon they developed the Athletic Motivation Inventory (AMI) to identify sport-specific personality traits, an inventory which measures eleven traits common to most successful sportsmen. Since the founding of the Institute, the AMI has been
administered to more than fifteen thousand athletes, and the results of these tests seem to indicate that general sports personalities do exist (50).

On the basis of the evidence gathered thus far, Ogilvie and Tutko claimed to be able to make some broad value judgments. They found no empirical evidence to support the traditional claim that participation in athletics builds character - indeed, there was evidence to suggest that athletic competition limits growth in some areas. They maintained that the personality of the ideal athlete is not the result of any molding process, but comes out of the "ruthless selection process that occurs at all levels of sport (50:61)". It is their belief that athletic competition has no more beneficial effects than intense endeavor in any other field, and that success in sport or elsewhere comes only to those who are already mentally fit, resilient and strong.

Athletes who survive the high attrition rate associated with sports competition are characterized by several traits. Ogilvie and Tutko maintained that a large majority of athletes were highly organized, orderly, respectful of authority and dominant, adding further credence to the possibility that students participating in interscholastic athletic programs may have already internalized many of the values before entering the program that many would claim to be the end-products of such participation.

Their extensive study of the personality of coaches would also support the possibility that delinquents or potential delinquents may not be attracted towards participation in athletics, and that those who are
so attracted are likely to be quickly 'selected out'. "Conflict over values manifests itself in struggles over discipline. . The coach sees hair as a problem of authority; he orders the athlete to get it cut and expects his order to be obeyed. . Most coaches believe that a truly good athlete is also, by definition, a red-blooded, clean-living, truth-telling, prepared patriot (50:63)". At the same time, however, Ogilvie and Tutko asserted that "most coaches go by the Vince Lombardi dictum that 'winning isn't everything - it's the only thing' (50:63)", which to an extent contradicts the 'selecting out' theory. It seems obvious that coaches who feel so strongly about winning will be only too willing to overlook delinquent behavior in their charges, especially if the student involved happens to be a key member of the team.

In a study by Biddulph (4), the personal and social adjustment of high school boys of high athletic achievement was compared to the adjustment of boys of low athletic achievement. His findings that boys ranking high in athletic achievement demonstrated a significantly greater degree of personal and social adjustment than did boys ranking low in athletic achievement is supportive of Ogilvie and Tutko's findings previously discussed. For Biddulph to conclude, however, that because of the significant relationship established it is important for all boys to develop high motor ability is to fall into the trap of assuming a causal relationship between the variables under examination where in fact only an association between the variables has been established.

As Kenyon has remarked, "it is time to modify traditional claims. Arguing that (athletics) is a preventative or cure of anti-social behavior
such as juvenile delinquency makes no more sense than stating categorically that being born on the wrong side of the tracks 'causes' antisocial behavior (33:9).

In a similar study by Berger and Littlefield (3), differences in personality among outstanding football athletes, non-outstanding football athletes, and nonathletes were measured but no significant differences were established. They concluded that participation in varsity football may not develop more favorable characteristics of social interaction and social living than nonparticipation. As they prudently pointed out, because of the multitudinous factors affecting personality it is difficult to assess the effects of sports participation alone on personality.

Cowell and Ismail have indicated that boys who do well on physical ability tests "are likely to have leadership potentialities, . . and to be well adjusted socially (14:42)", but Frost is another who emphasized that "care must be taken not to infer 'cause and effect' relationships between participation in sport and specific personality traits (24:171)."

As Lawther pointed out,

"it has not been established that the athletic participation alone causes the development of a higher level of the desirable social traits which are often listed as characteristics of young athletes. . As the child moves into higher levels of competition, and degree of athletic success becomes a selective factor, perhaps such differences as are found may be partially due to the selective factor caused by the elimination of those of lower performance levels (37:91)."

Singer is another who feels that the evidence available at present does not support the view that participation in athletics has a desirable influence on personality or social traits (66), and one of the
few longitudinal studies that have been carried out in this area would tend to support this belief. On the basis of their past histories of athletic participation, Werner and Gottheil classified a group of three hundred and forty cadets entering the United States Military Academy as athletes, and another group of one hundred and sixteen cadets were designated as athletic nonparticipants (76). Despite four years of regular athletic participation, the designated nonparticipant group was not found to change in personality structure to a greater extent than the athletes, in a different pattern than did the athletes, nor so as to become more like the athletes.

On the basis of this evidence it would seem reasonable to assume that participants in interscholastic athletic programs are not necessarily transformed in terms of personality structure as a result of such participation, and Rushall is another whose work supports this view (61). Desirable character traits and social characteristics which have been noted by many who have studied young athletes could well be a part of 'natural selection', those students not exhibiting such characteristics either opting out of athletics or being selected out by coaches. Again, the attitude of the coach would seem to be a crucial variable concerning the participation of delinquents in interscholastic athletics.

Athletic Participation by Delinquents

In a study to determine whether delinquent boys had been successful athletes while at high school, Inchausti looked at the extent to which these boys had participated in interscholastic athletics before their
arrest, and also attempted to establish whether or not athletics provides experiences which contribute to the development of favorable social actions. Inchausti interviewed one hundred and ninety boys at the Karl Holton School for Boys, Stockton, California, each of these boys being a declared delinquent between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one (31).

Of the total sample, thirty-nine boys claimed to have been lettered in an interscholastic sport and were classified as successful athletes. As some of the boys were very young, lettering at a junior high school was also accepted as evidence of a successful athlete. Attempted athletic participation was also determined, and reasons were elicited from those boys who had not attempted to participate. An attempt was also made to determine the reasons why boys who had made athletic teams had failed to gain a letter.

Fifty-one per cent of the total sample comprised those boys with no athletic participation; those who attempted to participate but did not make a team totalled three per cent; those who had made a team but did not letter totalled twenty-six per cent; and those who claimed to have lettered totalled twenty per cent. By an overwhelming margin, the two most common reasons given for nonparticipation in interscholastic athletics were absence from school and a lack of interest in organized sport.

When the claims concerning the award of athletic letters were checked, it was found that only twelve were confirmed by the schools concerned. Thus, only six per cent of the total sample had been successful high school athletic competitors. On the basis of the claims made concerning letters, it seems possible that if all the claims had been
checked the overall participation in interscholastic athletics may have been even lower than Inchausti's figures would suggest.

Other studies support the possibility that delinquents are not attracted towards participation in organized sport. According to the Gluecks, and based on extensive studies of delinquent boys, the leisure time interests of the latter differ quite markedly from the interests of nondelinquents. From a sample of nine hundred and seventeen boys, four hundred and forty-five of whom were classified as delinquent and four hundred and seventy-two classified as nondelinquent, only seven per cent of the delinquent boys showed any preference towards organized competitive sport as compared to nearly thirty per cent of the nondelinquents (25).

Three further studies, however, would tend to indicate that criminals or delinquents do manifest at least an expressed interest in competitive sport. In a study to investigate the relationship between participation in sports and the commission of violent, aggressive crime, McTeer assessed the sports participation backgrounds of twenty-nine criminals from the Deer Lodge State Penitentiary, Deer Lodge, Montana (44). The results of his study indicated that violent criminals participate in more organized sports than do non-violent criminals, and also express a greater desire to win in such activities.

Shanas, in an extensive study of recreation and juvenile delinquency in Chicago, reported that many delinquents took part in active competitive sports supervised by the local recreation centers, although quite obviously such participation would involve little of the structure and regimentation to be found in interscholastic athletic competition.
Shanas also found that while most of the boys under fourteen participated in some form of supervised recreation, a smaller proportion of the delinquent boys over fourteen took part in these activities (64).

A favorable response towards competitive sport on the part of delinquents was also noted by Brademas (6) in his investigation of the leisure time interests of fifty delinquent boys prior to their commitment to the Illinois State Training School for Boys at St. Charles, Illinois.

However, while these latter three studies provide evidence to suggest that delinquents do manifest an interest in organized competitive sport, the interesting possibility that their delinquent careers began after being 'cut' from athletic teams or as a result of frustration at being unable to make a team was not investigated, but remains a logical area of investigation. It is probably fair to suggest that on the basis of the data available concerning the participation in interscholastic athletics by delinquents or potential delinquents, these boys are less likely, for a variety of reasons, to participate in such programs than are nondelinquents, and this possibility will be investigated in this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Selection of Subjects

Permission was obtained from the Principals of two public high schools in Missoula, Montana to use as the subjects for this study the 1969 freshman male students enrolled at these particular schools. At the time the data was compiled, all of the subjects had graduated from high school.

One of the high schools had a total enrollment of 1,847 students in the fall of 1969, the other school having a total enrollment of 1,790 students at this time. Both schools are located in a predominantly middle class university community, the population of which was approximately 43,000 in December, 1969. For the purposes of this study, the subjects from both schools were treated as a single sample.

Classification of Subjects

Athletic participation was determined from an examination of the athletic records contained in the high school year books published annually by each school. Of the four hundred and fifty subjects in the total sample,
one hundred and sixty-one were classified as athletes, the criteria for such classification being completion of at least two seasons of interscholastic athletic competition during the four years of high school, with at least one of these seasons being beyond the freshman level. Those classified as nonathletes numbered two hundred and eighty-nine or sixty-four per cent.

The classification of delinquency, the dependent variable, was determined from an examination of the files of the Missoula County Sheriff's Office and the Missoula City Police Department. Permission to obtain access to the court records of these juveniles was granted by two Montana District Court Judges, the Missoula County Sheriff, and the Missoula City Police Chief.

All those subjects with a court record after commencing high school were classified as delinquent, and of the total sample of four hundred and fifty subjects, two hundred and forty-three or fifty-four per cent were classified as delinquent. The remaining two hundred and seven subjects (forty-six per cent) were classified as nondelinquent.

Subjects were also classified as delinquent or nondelinquent from the same source on the basis of their court records prior to commencing high school. In this category, twenty-eight or six per cent were classified as pre-high school delinquents, and four hundred and twenty-two (ninety-four per cent) as nondelinquents.

In the classification of athletes as to type of sports participation, eighty-seven or fifty-four per cent had participated predominantly in major sports (football and basketball), the remaining seventy-five athletes (forty-six per cent) having participated in minor sports,
this sub-classification including all interscholastic sports other than football and basketball.

In the final classification of athletes as to the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics, eighty-six or fifty-three per cent were placed in the high participation category, this category being reserved for those athletes who had completed four or more seasons of interscholastic athletic competition. It was possible for any given athlete to participate in three seasons of interscholastic athletic competition in any one year, one in each of the different seasonal sports. Seventy-five or forty-seven per cent of the athletes were placed in the low participation category (completion of two or three seasons of interscholastic athletic competition, at least one season of which was beyond the freshman level).

Analysis of Data by Hypothesis

Any null hypothesis for which the statistical analysis was significant at the .05 level was rejected. For each chi square test computed, Yates' correction for continuity was applied (16). A phi coefficient was reported for each hypothesis to indicate the magnitude of the relationship established.

Hypothesis 1: Subjects were classified as athletes or nonathletes, and delinquents or nondelinquents, and a 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency.
Hypothesis 2: Subjects were classified as pre-high school delinquents or nondelinquents, and athletes or nonathletes, and a 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between pre-high school delinquency and participation in interscholastic athletics.

Hypothesis 3: Athletes were classified as major or minor sport participants, and as delinquents or nondelinquents, and a 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the type of sports participation and delinquency.

Hypothesis 4: Athletes were classified into high participation or low participation categories, and as delinquents or nondelinquents, and a 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine certain aspects of the relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency. Four specific hypotheses were formulated, and the statistical analysis of the data pertaining to each of these hypotheses is presented below.

In addition, further analysis of the data obtained was carried out and is presented in this chapter. A comparison of the results obtained in this study with those obtained by Schafer (63) is also included, along with an analysis of the delinquent acts committed by the subjects in this study.

Analysis of Data by Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency was not rejected following statistical analysis of the data. The 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine the significance of this relationship (TABLE 1) failed to establish a significant difference between
athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of delinquent acts. The chi square value of 0.49344 was not significant at the .05 level.

### TABLE 1

**Chi Square Analysis:**

**Participation in Interscholastic Athletics and Delinquency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonathlete</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 0.49344 \]

\[ df = 1 \]

\[ p = \geq .50 \]

\[ \Phi = 0.03311 \]
Hypothesis 2: The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between pre-high school delinquency and participation in interscholastic athletics was not rejected following statistical analysis of the data. The 2 x 2 chi square test computed to determine the significance of this relationship (TABLE : ) did not establish a significant difference between pre-high school delinquents and nondelinquents with regard to participation in interscholastic athletics. The chi square value of 0.0444 was not significant at the .05 level.

**TABLE 2**

Chi Square Analysis: Pre-High School Delinquency and Participation in Interscholastic Athletics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-High School Delinquency</th>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Nonparticipant</td>
<td>Row Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28 6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nondelinquent</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>422 93.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>450 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
x^2 = 0.0444
\]

\[
df = 1
\]

\[
p > .90
\]

\[
\Phi = 0.00994
\]
Hypothesis 3: The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the type of sports participation (major versus minor sports) and delinquency was not rejected following statistical analysis of the data. The $2 \times 2$ chi square test computed to determine the significance of the relationship (TABLE 3) did not establish any significant difference between major and minor sports participants with regard to the commission of delinquent acts. The chi square value of 0.04622 was not significant at the .05 level.

**TABLE 3**

**Chi Square Analysis:**

**Type of Sports Participation and Delinquency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sports Participation</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Sports</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Sports</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 0.04622$

$df = 1$

$p = .90$

$\Phi = 0.01694$
**Hypothesis 4**: The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency was not rejected following statistical analysis of the data. The $2 \times 2$ chi square test computed (TABLE 4) did not establish any significant relationship between the amount of sports participation and delinquency. The chi square value of 2.65093 was not significant at the .05 level.

**TABLE 4**

**Chi Square Analysis:**

Amount of Sports Participation and Delinquency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Participation</th>
<th>Delinquent</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Participation</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Participation</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[x^2 = 2.65093\]
\[df = 1\]
\[p > .20\]
\[\bar{g} = 0.12832\]
Further Analysis of Data

As stated earlier in the definition of terms, any subject with a juvenile court record after commencing high school was classified as delinquent. Such a definition necessarily includes traffic offenses however, and consequently there were numerous instances of subjects being classified as delinquent solely as a result of their having incurred a single traffic penalty. For this reason, a separate analysis of the data excluding all traffic offenses was carried out. Again, no significant differences emerged and the null hypotheses were not rejected following statistical analysis of the data (TABLES 5, 6, and 7). The data compiled to investigate Hypothesis 2 did not include traffic offenses and consequently it was not necessary to subject this data to further analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th>Delinquency (Excluding Traffic)</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonathlete</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 1.83616$  \hspace{1cm} df = 1

$p = > .20$  \hspace{1cm} $\bar{p} = 0.06388$
### TABLE 6

**Chi Square Analysis:**

**Type of Sports Participation and Delinquency -**

**Traffic Offenses Excluded**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sports Participation</th>
<th>Delinquent</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Sports</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Sports</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 0.01148 \quad df = 1 \]

\[ p = >.95 \quad \Phi = 0.00843 \]

### TABLE 7

**Chi Square Analysis:**

**Amount of Sports Participation and Delinquency -**

**Traffic Offenses Excluded**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Participation</th>
<th>Delinquent</th>
<th>Nondelinquent</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Participation</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Participation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 0.61563 \quad df = 1 \]

\[ p = >.50 \quad \Phi = 0.06184 \]

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Additional analysis of the data was also carried out to determine whether any significant differences emerged between the two schools when subjects were classified by school according to the variables under investigation in this study. No significant differences were established between the two schools for any of these variables.

**Comparison With Schafer's Results**

In order to make a direct comparison with the results obtained by Schafer in his earlier investigation (63), further analysis of the data was carried out, this time using the same definition of an athlete as Schafer had used in his study. Schafer had defined as athletes those subjects who had completed at least one full season in interscholastic athletic competition at the varsity or junior varsity level.

Using this particular definition of an athlete in the analysis of the data in this present study, no significant differences emerged between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of delinquent acts. The chi square value of 0.00029 was not significant at the .05 level. When traffic offenses were excluded from the delinquency classification the resulting chi square value of 1.95892 was again not significant at the .05 level. These results differ quite markedly from those obtained by Schafer in his study. A chi square analysis of his data disclosed that athletes were significantly less delinquent than nonathletes. The chi square value in this latter instance was 9.63813 which was significant at the .01 level (TABLE 8).
TABLE 8

Comparison With Schafer's Results

Chi Square Analysis: Participation in Interscholastic Athletics and Delinquency

A: Schafer  B: Thomson\(^2\)  C: Thomson\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonathlete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2 = 9.63813\)  \(df = 1\)  \(p = >.01\)  \(\hat{O} = 0.1273\)

\(X^2 = 0.00029\)  \(df = 1\)  \(p = >.99\)  \(\hat{O} = 0.001\)

\(X^2 = 1.95892\)  \(df = 1\)  \(p = >.20\)  \(\hat{O} = 0.0658\)

1. Classification of athletes using Schafer's definition.
2. Classification of delinquents as per definition of terms.
3. Classification of delinquents excluding traffic offenses.
Similar analyses were carried out for two further variables, the type of sports participation and the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics, again using Schafer's definition of an athlete. In these analyses, the results were comparable to those obtained by Schafer, with no significant differences emerging (TABLES 9 and 10).

**TABLE 9**

**Comparison With Schafer's Results**

Chi Square Analysis: Type of Sports Participation\(^1\) and Delinquency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sport</th>
<th>A: Schafer</th>
<th>B: Thomson(^2)</th>
<th>C: Thomson(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>Delinquency</td>
<td>Delinquency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>6 77 83</td>
<td>33 30 63</td>
<td>21 42 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>5 69 74</td>
<td>34 26 60</td>
<td>18 42 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11 146 157</td>
<td>67 56 123</td>
<td>39 84 123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7% 93% 100%</td>
<td>54.5% 45.5% 100%</td>
<td>31.7% 68.3% 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = 0.03899 \]
\[ \text{df} = 1 \]
\[ p = > .90 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.01575 \]

\[ x^2 = 0.08759 \]
\[ \text{df} = 1 \]
\[ p = > .80 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.02668 \]

\[ x^2 = 0.04123 \]
\[ \text{df} = 1 \]
\[ p = > .80 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.01833 \]

\(^1\) Classification of athletes using Schafer's definition.

\(^2\) Classification of delinquents as per definition of terms.

\(^3\) Classification of delinquents excluding traffic offenses.

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TABLE 10

Comparison With Schafer's Results

Chi Square Analysis: Amount of Participation and Delinquency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A: Schafer</th>
<th>B: Thomson $^2$</th>
<th>C: Thomson $^3$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5 74 79 56.8%</td>
<td>20 17 37 30.1%</td>
<td>10 27 37 30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5 55 60 43.2%</td>
<td>47 39 86 69.9%</td>
<td>28 58 86 69.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 129 139 100%</td>
<td>67 56 123 100%</td>
<td>38 85 123 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 0.01478 \]
\[ df = 1 \]
\[ p = >.95 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.01029 \]

\[ \chi^2 = 0.01861 \]
\[ df = 1 \]
\[ p = >.90 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.01229 \]

\[ \chi^2 = 0.15689 \]
\[ df = 1 \]
\[ p = >.70 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.03569 \]

$^1$ Classification of athletes using Schafer's definition.

$^2$ Classification of delinquents as per definition of terms.

$^3$ Classification of delinquents excluding traffic offenses.
Perhaps the most notable difference in the comparison of the data from the two studies is that while the percentage of athletes from the total sample of subjects is virtually identical (28% in Schafer's study; 27.3% in this study, using Schafer's definition of an athlete), the number of recorded delinquents in Schafer's study was considerably lower than in this present investigation, even when traffic offenses are excluded from the delinquency classification (Schafer: 14.2%; Thomson: 29.3%).

Factors in the populations studied may have had some bearing on the differences between these two investigations. In Schafer's case, one school (with a considerably higher total enrollment than either school in this present study, presumably resulting in greater competition for places on interscholastic sports teams) was located in a middle class university community of over 70,000 inhabitants. The other school was located in a predominantly working class industrial community of about 20,000.

The significant difference that Schafer found between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of delinquent acts was "almost entirely the product of a sizable association among blue collar, low achievers (63:43)". There was a similar significant difference between white collar and blue collar groups with regard to the commission of delinquent acts.

It seems possible, therefore, that had the school in the university community been separately analysed in terms of the relationship between athletic participation and delinquency, a significant difference between athletes and nonathletes may not have emerged, based on the
assumption that a large majority of the blue collar group would have been enrolled in the smaller school located in the working class industrial community.

As only the athletes in the blue collar, low achiever group were significantly less delinquent than their nonathlete counterparts, the possibility also suggests itself that the former group were significantly less delinquent because of a desire for 'upward mobility' rather than as a result of the deterring effect of athletic participation in this direction. As Kvaraceus and Miller suggested, these students may be a part of the "successfully aspiring lower class", a group "which includes those who have both the will and the capacity to elevate their status (34:295-6)". These students may view athletics as a vehicle for achieving status elevation, and are less delinquent because of this desire to improve their social standing rather than as a result of their athletic participation.

Another factor which may account for the differences in the results obtained in the two studies is that Schafer's investigation was carried out in two senior high schools. It could be, as Schafer suggested, that many delinquents or potential delinquents had been "formally or informally screened out of sports by coaches during junior high school (63:43)".

The differences in the number of delinquents in the two studies may be explained in terms of differing philosophies of the police departments in the different localities studied. It may well be, also, that the 'halo effect' protecting delinquent athletes from prosecution could have been a more significant factor in the mid-western locality where Schafer's
investigation was carried out. The amount of publicity given local athletes and community expectations may have been stronger forces acting in favor of athletes in this particular community. As no investigation of any such factors was undertaken in either study it is difficult to do other than speculate in this particular instance.

Analysis of Delinquent Acts

A final statistical analysis was carried out to determine whether there was a significant difference between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of more serious delinquent acts. A 2 x 2 chi square test was computed to determine the significance of this relationship (TABLE 11), but no significant differences emerged between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of felonies. The chi square value of 0.71338 was not significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 11

Chi Square Analysis: Participation in Interscholastic Athletics and the Commission of Felonies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th>Commission of Felonies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonathlete</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 0.71338 \]
\[ df = 1 \]
\[ p > 0.50 \]
\[ \Phi = 0.03979 \]
A 2 x 2 chi square test was also computed to determine the difference between athletes and nonathletes regarding the commission of felonies and misdemeanors (i.e. all delinquent acts excluding juvenile and traffic offenses), and again no significant differences emerged. The chi square value of 1.84529 was not significant at the .05 level (TABLE 12).

TABLE 12

Chi Square Analysis:
Participation in Interscholastic Athletics
and the Commission of Felonies and Misdemeanors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Participation</th>
<th>Commission of Felonies and Misdemeanors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonathlete</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>289</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 1.84529 \]

df = 1
p = >.20
\[ \Phi = 0.06391 \]
The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency. Four specific hypotheses were formulated concerning aspects of this relationship. Chi square was utilized to test for significance for the four hypotheses. A comparison of these results with those results obtained by Schafer (63) was also carried out, and a statistical analysis of the delinquent acts was also undertaken.

Male students from two Missoula, Montana public high schools were chosen as subjects for this study, and were classified as athletes or nonathletes from an examination of the high school records. The subjects were also classified as delinquent or nondelinquent during their high school careers following an examination of the juvenile court records of the county. Subjects were separately classified as delinquent or nondelinquent based on their juvenile records prior to attending high school.

In addition, the athletes were classified according to two further variables, the type of sports participation and the amount of
participation in interscholastic athletics.

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency.

2. There is no significant relationship between pre-high school delinquency and participation in interscholastic athletics.

3. There is no significant relationship between the type of sports participation (major versus minor) and delinquency.

4. There is no significant relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics (high versus low) and delinquency.

Results

1. No significant differences were established between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of delinquent acts.

2. No significant differences were established between pre-high school delinquents and nondelinquents with regard to participation in interscholastic athletics.

3. No significant differences were established between participants in major versus minor sports and delinquency.

4. No significant differences were established between high and low amounts of participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency.

5. When traffic offenses were excluded from the classification of delinquency, no significant differences emerged concerning the above relationships.

6. In comparison with Schafer's results (63), marked differences
were noted regarding the relationship between participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency. Schafer found that athletes were significantly less delinquent than nonathletes, a finding that was not replicated in this study.

7. No significant differences were established between athletes and nonathletes with regard to the commission of more serious delinquent acts.

Conclusions

On the basis of the results of this study, the following conclusions seem justified:

1. The claim that participation in interscholastic athletics acts as a deterrent to delinquency would appear to be unjustified. The results from this study indicate that, in this particular locality at least, athletes are just as likely to commit delinquent acts as nonathletes.

It would appear that specific conditions must be met before the claimed deterrent effect of athletic participation on delinquency can be supported. Many factors obviously affect the ultimate value of athletic experience. The personality and character of the coach, the size of the school, the philosophy of the school administration, the aspirations of the individual athlete, the expectations of the community - these are but a few of the features which may combine to shape and control the nature of such experience. Future claims concerning the benefits to be obtained from participation in interscholastic athletics would do well to take cognizance of such factors.
2. The claim that delinquents or potential delinquents are less likely to participate in interscholastic athletic programs would appear to need further substantiation. The results of this study indicate that delinquents are just as likely to participate in these programs as nondelinquents, but again many factors combine to make generalizations unwise.

Obviously, if a coach is subjected to intense pressure to produce a winning team, delinquent acts committed by star performers may possibly be overlooked. Local circumstances are probably of considerable importance in any investigation of this claim, as delinquents may find the experience of participation rewarding in some programs and intolerable in others.

3. The type of sports participation does not seem to be of any great significance in terms of the relationship between major versus minor sports and delinquency. Both the results of this and Schafer's study failed to establish a significant difference between football and basketball as opposed to other interscholastic sports and delinquency.

4. The fact that both this and Schafer's study failed to find a significant relationship between the amount of participation in interscholastic athletics and delinquency adds support to the possibility that the claimed deterrent effect of athletic participation on delinquency is unwarranted, or at least highly specific.

If such participation did act as a deterrent, it would be reasonable to assume that those subjects with high participation would be significantly less delinquent than those who had participated for only two seasons. Such a relationship was not established in either study.
Recommendations

Future research into the relationship between athletic participation and delinquency should be extended to schools in different communities, and should include an attempt to contrast other variables such as coaching styles, the general philosophy of the athletic director and the school administration concerning the interscholastic athletic program, and community expectations and opinions with regard to high school athletes, as well as taking into account the aspirations of the individual athletes.

Such research may also provide a more accurate insight into the relationship between athletic participation and delinquency if the classification of delinquents is determined by self-reported delinquency rather than from juvenile court records.

Where an investigation reveals that in certain schools a significant relationship between athletic participation and delinquency is established, attempts should be made to isolate those factors which appear critical in influencing such a relationship.

The potential for research into delinquency within athletics, or the delinquency of the 'athletic subculture', is also considerable, and would make a useful contribution to add to the present scant information available in this area.

With the greater participation of girls in interscholastic sports competition, there are obvious possibilities for future research in this area, and studies involving both girls and boys could well provide valuable comparative data.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


64. Shanas, Ethel, Recreation and Delinquency, Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1942.


