# Catalysis report excerpts
*Cynthia F. Kurtz*

An optional but useful part of the process of participatory narrative inquiry (PNI) is **narrative catalysis**. Catalysis is similar to analysis in that patterns are explored in data using standard methods. However, instead of providing proof, catalysis provides *food for thought and discussion.*

I offer a **service** in which I take the stories you have collected and the answers to questions you have asked people about the stories, and I return to you a **catalysis report** for use in sensemaking about the topic of your PNI project. Prospective clients often wonder what my catalysis reports look like.

These pages are drawn from a catalysis report prepared in 2015 for a client who has graciously allowed me to share them with you. The full report has nearly 200 pages. I have pulled out just 13 pages to show you. The project was for a youth sports organization. I have obscured the location of the project and the type of sport. I have also removed any stories or excerpts from these pages.

Note that most of the images on the following pages have been shrunken so I could fit in the notes that tell you what the parts of the page are for. In a real report the images are larger (and easier to read). I almost always write my reports in PowerPoint, to avoid writing too much.

I also offer advice, coaching and training to people who want to plan and carry out PNI projects.

To learn more about PNI, see storycoloredglasses.com/p/participatory-narrative-inquiry.html

To learn more about my consulting practice, see cfkurtz.com.

# How this report was made

This is not an analysis report. It does not make any claims to truth. It does not provide conclusions, evidence, or proof. This is a catalysis report. Its purpose is to *catalyze thought and discussion* through revealing and exploring multiple perspectives on patterns of sports experiences, as expressed in stories and answers to questions.

The process by which this report was prepared is described thus.

> The introduction of the report explains the process.

| | |
|---|---|
| 206<br>7<br>8 | A web survey collected 206 **stories** from 206 people involved (or not involved) with the game. Participants were asked 7 **questions** about their stories and 8 questions about themselves and their involvement with the game. |
| 3<br>18 | The researcher *qualitatively* read and **annotated** the stories with answers to 3 additional questions related to story content, form, and scope. These included 18 summary themes (story topics). |
| ~2000 | The researcher prepared (roughly) 2000 *quantitative* **results** (graphs and statistical test values) that revealed patterns of coincidence and difference in the answers. |
| ~300 | The researcher reduced those results to a manageable number (roughly 300) by setting **thresholds** for consideration. The researcher then wrote **observations** describing each result above the various thresholds. |
| ~160 | The researcher divided the observations into those that were unremarkable (as expected), unusable (confounded or unclear) and **remarkable** (surprising *and* clear, worth considering). This reduced the observations to about 160 in number. |
| 98 | The researcher wrote 98 **interpretations**, at least two for each remarkable observation, drawing on the opinions and beliefs expressed in the stories as to what *reasonable people who disagree* might claim the observations mean. (Some remarkable observations did not generate interpretations because they reinforced patterns that were already considered.) |
| 10 | The researcher clustered the 98 interpretations into 10 **perspectives** on the stories and other data. |

# We need better lines of communication
*Perspectives*

From this perspective, many of the problems people have in the organization have to do with people not talking to each other: coaches not talking to parents, parents not talking to coaches, the organization not informing (or listening to) parents. From this point of view, opening up new channels of communication, and strengthening old ones, would alleviate many of the tensions we see today.

> This is a **Perspective** page. Perspectives are clusters of interpretations about patterns. There are typically 7-12 perspetives per report. For this project there were ten. The perspectives create a "bird's eye view" of what the people said. Report users tend to use the perspectives to look over the report quickly.

> After I **describe** the perspective, I provide an **example** observation and interpretation. The interpretation is always one of two or more competing interpretations for the same observation. (Thus the same observation can support multiple perspectives.)
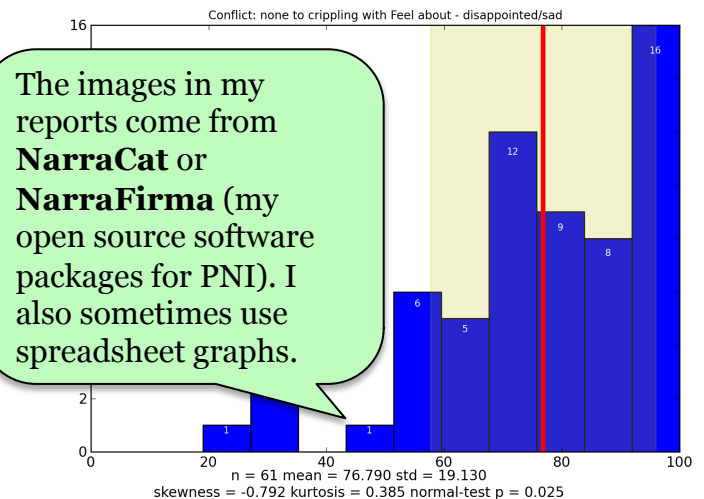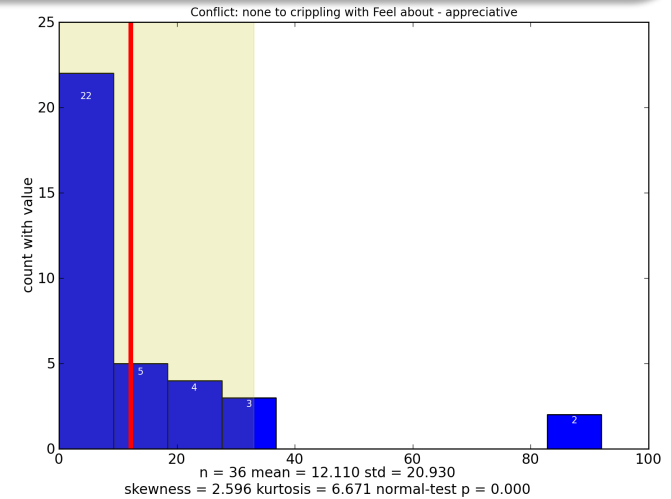
An example observation and interpretation (from Section F, page 11):

The largest differences in means among subsets of stories for the "Conflict" question were between appreciative and angry (though the number of angry stories was very small), followed closely by appreciative versus disappointed/sad. These patterns are as expected, but it is surprising that appreciative showed larger differences (with disappointed/sad, angry, and frustrated) than happy.

*Why did people who said they felt "appreciative" about their stories tell about less conflict than people who said they felt "happy"?*

A great season depends on the efforts of many people – the whole community, really. A lot of people don't realize that everyone needs to pull together to make the game work for kids. There is an over-emphasis on coaches as the make-or-break people in the game. Maybe if more people were aware of contributors other than coaches – team managers, community board members, just parents who help out but don't have a title – more people would be willing to step up and make the game better.



Conflict: none to crippling with Feel about - appreciative

n = 36 mean = 12.110 std = 20.930
skewness = 2.596 kurtosis = 6.671 normal-test p = 0.000



Conflict: none to crippling with Feel about - disappointed/sad

n = 61 mean = 76.790 std = 19.130
skewness = -0.792 kurtosis = 0.385 normal-test p = 0.025

> The images in my reports come from **NarraCat** or **NarraFirma** (my open source software packages for PNI). I also sometimes use spreadsheet graphs.

# We need better lines of communication
*Perspectives*

These are some story excerpts that exemplify this perspective.

> • (Story excerpts not shown here)

After the description and example for each perspective, there is a set of **excerpts** from stories that illustrate the perspective. (I have removed those from this page.)

There is also a list of pages on which the interpretations in that cluster can be found. People use this list to "**drill down**" into the report to look at the patterns behind each perspective.

The rest of these excerpted pages will show detailed pages of the report, as if you were drilling down from the perspectives section.

This table shows where the interpretations that make up this cluster can be found in the rest of the report. Pages marked with asterisks don't have interpretations, but reinforce related patterns on other pages.

| Strength | Page |
|---|---|
| 3 | D-3 |
| 3 | F-11 |
| 3 | F-18 |
| 3 | F-21 |
| 3 | F-24 |
| 3 | F-4 |
| 3 | F-4 |
| 3 | F-8 |
| 3 | F-8 |
| 3 | G-25 |
| 2 | F-10* |
| 2 | F-14* |

| Strength | Page |
|---|---|
| 2 | F-22* |
| 2 | F-27* |
| 2 | F-30* |
| 2 | F-31* |
| 1 | E-14* |
| 1 | E-15* |
| 1 | E-16* |
| 1 | E-16* |
| 1 | E-17* |
| 1 | E-17* |
| 1 | E-20* |
| 1 | E-6 |
| 1 | F-17 |
| 1 | F-26* |

# Feel about
*Choices*

This page looks at the "Feel about" choice question.

**How do you feel about this story?** Choose up to 2 answers.

☐ happy      ☐ appreciative      ☐ proud      ☐ inspired      ☐ enthused
☐ sad        ☐ angry             ☐ disappointed  ☐ frustrated   ☐ indifferent

This is how the question appeared in the **survey**.

The first part (in orange) is the **observation**, or what anyone can see in the graph.

Lumping: 14 "sad" answers were combined with 70 "disappointed" answers. 5 "enthused" answers were combined with 19 "inspired" answers. 8 "indifferent" answers could not be lumped and were left out of consideration.

The two most frequently selected answers were "disappointed/sad" and "frustrated." The positive answers (happy, appreciative, proud, inspired/enthused) add up to 111 total. The negative answers (disappointed/sad, angry, frustrated) add up to 180.

*Why did people tell more negative stories?*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| People are very unhappy about the game. The project tapped into a deep vein of discontent. | People were just responding to the questions in the survey. The questions about rumors and evaluation led people in the direction of negativity. People were just doing what they were asked to do. | People who aren't having problems were less likely to fill out the survey, because everything's fine and nothing needs to be improved. The fact that 111 stories were *still* positive means that things are fine! |

Feel about

| | |
|---|---|
| happy | 31 |
| disappointed/sad | 79 |
| appreciative | 42 |
| angry | 20 |
| | 16 |
| | 22 |
| | 81 |

The second part (in purple) shows the competing **interpretations**. They are introduced using a question about what the pattern means.
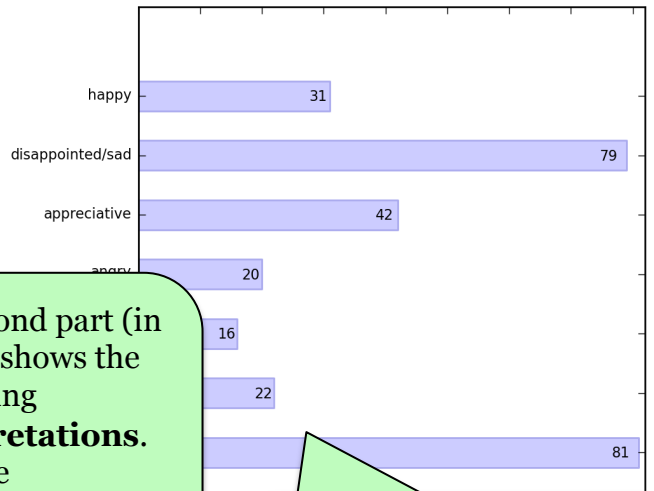
This **bar graph** shows how many people chose each answer to the "Feel about" question. Some answers were "lumped" together because of small numbers, such as "disappointed" and "sad."

The little dot on each page gives an indication of the **strength** of each trend, usually based on statistical results.

The detailed pages of the report come in **sections** based on what type of graph is in them. This section is about choice questions.

# Wanted: players
*Choices*

What do you think the people in the story **wanted** most? Choose once per column.

| | players | parents | coaches | volunteers | referees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| to enjoy the game | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to build friendships | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to be part of a team | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to build skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to win | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to achieve goals | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to help others | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| to be physically active | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I'm not sure | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| there weren't any | ◉ | ◉ | ◉ | ◉ | ◉ |

Enjoyment and friendship account for 75% of the answers regarding players, but only about 39% of the answers regarding coaches. That's nearly double.

*Do players care more about enjoying the game than everyone else?*

Children just want to have fun playing a game, and all the adults get in their way. The game is supposed to be all about fun, and we grown-ups keep ruining it! We should do everything we can to improve the fun aspect of the game for kids.
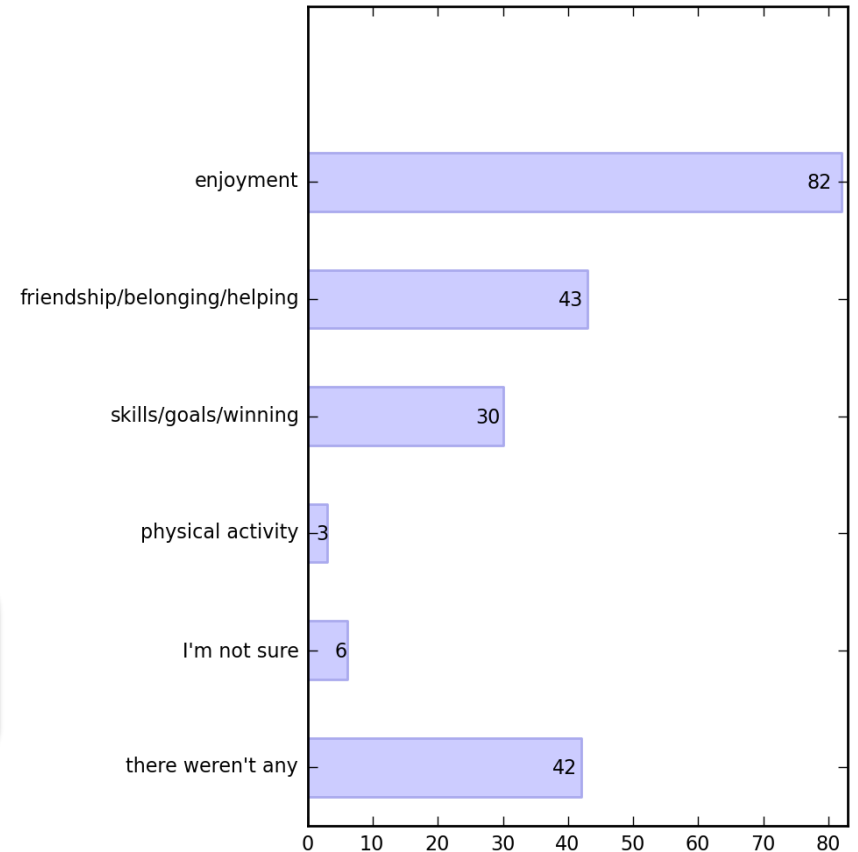
Of course children just want to have fun. That's because they can't take a long view and understand that they need to develop skills. If they don't need to develop game skills, they still need to develop life skills, like the ability to get along with teammates, to apply themselves to a difficult problem, to constantly improve themselves, and so on. The fact that players *want* to play doesn't mean that's what they *need*. We as parents and coaches have to think about more than just fun.

There are always **at least two** interpretations per observation.

Wanted: players

| category | value |
|---|---|
| enjoyment | 82 |
| friendship/belonging/helping | 43 |
| skills/goals/winning | 30 |
| physical activity | 3 |
| I'm not sure | 6 |
| there weren't any | 42 |

# Acted responsibly: parents x Acted responsibly: coaches
*Choice combinations*

These combinations happened more often than would be expected if the two groups were not linked:
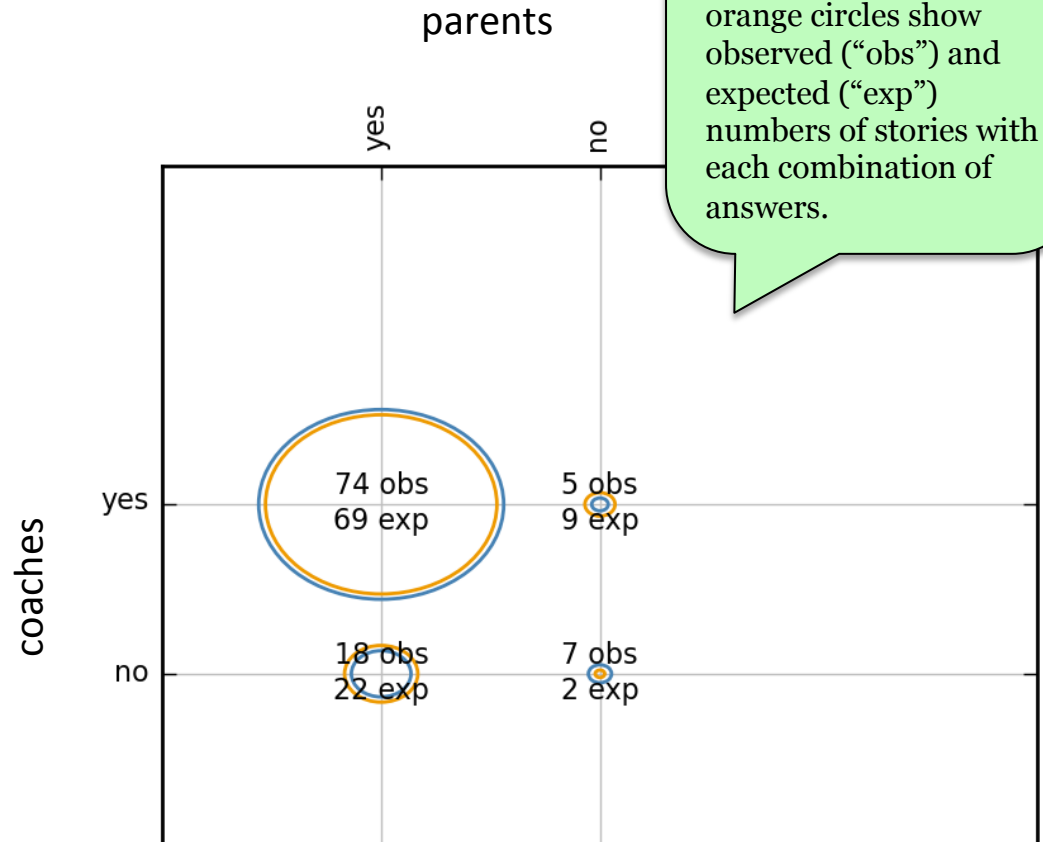- both parents and coaches acting responsibly (upper left)
- both parents and coaches acting irresponsibly (lower right)
- parents acting responsibly and coaches not (lower left)

This combination happened less often than expected:
- coaches acting responsibly and parents not

It is not surprising that the participants (who were nearly all parents) thought they acted more responsibly than coaches, but it is surprising that parent and coach behavior was seen as linked.

See next page for a detailed examination of this trend.

This **contingency table** shows co-occurrences of answers. For example, 74 people said that both parents and coaches acted responsibly in their stories. The blue and orange circles show observed ("obs") and expected ("exp") numbers of stories with each combination of answers.

parents

yes        no

coaches

yes
74 obs
69 exp          5 obs
                9 exp

no
18 obs
22 exp          7 obs
                2 exp

Acted responsibly: parents X Acted responsibly: coaches
Chi squared = 6.743, p = 0.009 (orange expected, blue observed)

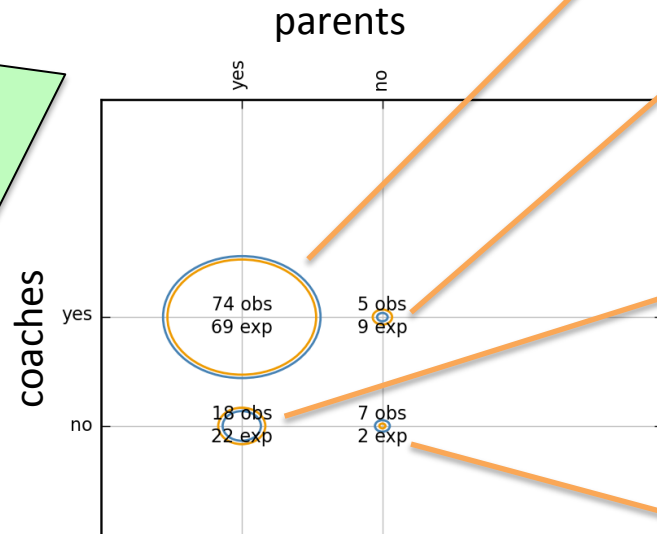# Acted responsibly: parents x Acted responsibly: coaches – detail
*Choice combinations*

Themes in the four groups of stories show that:
- Parents were responsible when coaches were amazing (perhaps helping them) and incompetent (perhaps making up for their inexperience), and when the organization was weak (perhaps making up for the flaws of the organization). This seems to say that parents see themselves as the people responsible for making the game work for their kids, no matter how much everyone else fails.
- When coaches were irresponsible and parents were not, these were the nasty coaches and those who ignore the needs of children.
- When coaches and parents were both irresponsible, the reference was mainly to the collusion that (some parents believe) happens when selection for teams is based on favoritism.

Interpretations for these patterns are shown on the next page.

Acted responsibly parents+Acted responsibly coaches: yes+yes (134)
**26 Amazing coaches** (19.4%)
15 Weak structure/organization (11.2%)
15 Incompetent coaches (11.2%)

Acted responsibly parents+Acted responsibly coaches: no+yes (11)
4 Bad parent/player behavior (36.4%)

Sometimes a "detail" page includes stories or excerpts, but when I theme *all* of the collected stories (as I did in this project) the detail pages usually refer to story **themes**. Here, of the 134 stories in which both parents and coaches acted responsibly, there were 26 instances of the "Amazing coaches" theme. Themes are derived from reading the stories, using a grounded-theory-inspired "open coding" approach.

Acted responsibly parents+Acted responsibly coaches: yes+no (32)
7 Inattentive coaches (21.9%)
6 Weak structure/organization (18.8%)
5 Nasty coaches (15.6%)
5 Unfair evaluation/selection (15.6%)
5 Incompetent coaches (15.6%)

Acted responsibly parents+Acted responsibly coaches: no+no (11)
5 Unfair evaluation/selection (45.5%)
2 Hassles with process (18.2%)

**parents**

yes　　　no

coaches

yes | 74 obs / 69 exp | 5 obs / 9 exp
no | 18 obs / 22 exp | 7 obs / 2 exp

Acted responsibly: parents X Acted responsibly: coaches
Chi squared = 6.743, p = 0.009 (orange expected, blue observed)

# Acted responsibly: parents x Acted responsibly: coaches
*Choice combinations*

| *Are parents the glue that holds the game together?* | |
|---|---|
| Parents do not get enough respect in the game. They pick up the pieces when coaching and evaluation and team support fall through. Parents make the game work, but making the game work is harder than it needs to be. Parents need more help from the organization, and from groups, and from coaches and volunteers, to make the game work. They need complete and timely information, transparency, respect, and a voice in what happens in groups and in the organization in general. | Some parents are the glue that holds the organization together, and some parents are the knives that cut the organization apart. Some parents wouldn't need to expend so much energy making the game work for their kids if other parents weren't constantly jockeying to get their child in a better position than others. There should be better oversight, training, and evaluation of parent behavior in the game. There needs to be a "parents' code of conduct" or "parents' manual" to show people how to behave. And there should be consequences when parents put their own kids' needs above others, set a bad example, and make the game worse for everyone else. Conversely, parents who act the way parents should act should be recognized and rewarded. |

As I said at the start, I **cluster** all of these interpretations (in this project there were 98) into a set of Perspectives on the topic. Because the interpretations cover both sides of each pattern, and because I try to "channel" the voices of the storytellers while writing the interpretations, the resulting perspectives show the full range of "**what the people said**" in the project.

| *Are there two kinds of coaches – the well-meaning but limited, and the mean-spirited?* | |
|---|---|
| The reports of nasty coaches have been exaggerated. Sure, there are a few bad apples, but the great majority of coaches are good people creating positive experiences under difficult circumstances. Maybe it's the stories about a few bad coaches that keep people from volunteering in the first place. Maybe we need to spread the word about the great coaches we have instead of the few bad ones. | There is no doubt that some coaches should not be coaching children. Stories about coaches screaming at children, belittling them, destroying their self-confidence, and setting a bad example abound. It should be the responsibility of the organization to weed out these mean-spirited coaches before they ever get a chance to come near any children. All coaches should be evaluated by experienced professionals who can determine whether coaches will be mature, calm, and ready to take care of our children. |

　Example catalysis report – Choice Combinations　Copyright Cynthia F. Kurtz 2015

# Conflict + Coach defined success
*Scales*

There were significant differences between means of the "Conflict" question for most of the subsets of stories based on the "Coach defined success" question. (See next page for all t-test values.)

It is not surprising that people saw less conflict when coaches cared about building self-confidence or enjoying the game. It is not surprising that people saw more conflict when coaches concentrated on winning. What *is* surprising is that people saw more conflict when they didn't know how coaches defined success.

*Why is not knowing how a coach defines success associated with greater conflict?*

When coaches don't share their goals and methods and reasons with parents, parents have to guess, and conflicts arise. Coaches owe it to parents to explain their choices and plans. Coaches need to be trained and evaluated on whether they communicate well with parents, to avoid the inevitable conflicts that come from parents having to guess at what's going on.

The reason so many parents don't understand why coaches do the things they do is that many parents don't take the time to learn what coaches are doing. Some parents think they can outsource their kids' experience. It's not that hard to find out what coaches are doing and why, but parents have to step up and engage the coaches, and maybe help them as well.

There is a culture of mistrust between parents and coaches. Each group thinks the other group is being unfair, or holding things back, or selfishly promoting only their own interests. There needs to be a détente between parents and coaches. Both groups need to understand the challenges the other groups face. They need to walk a mile in each other's shoes.
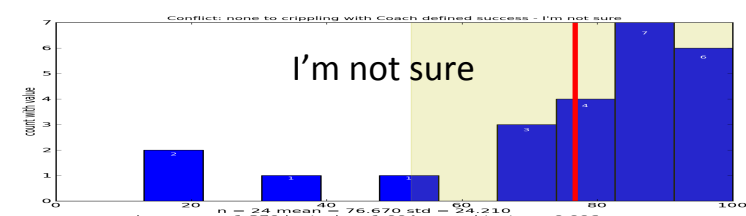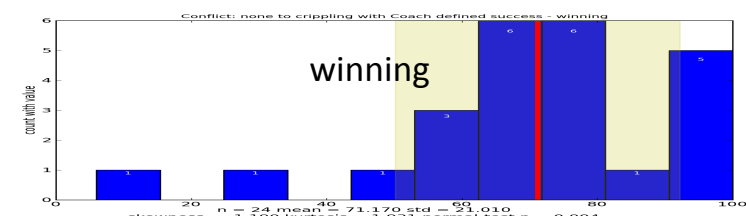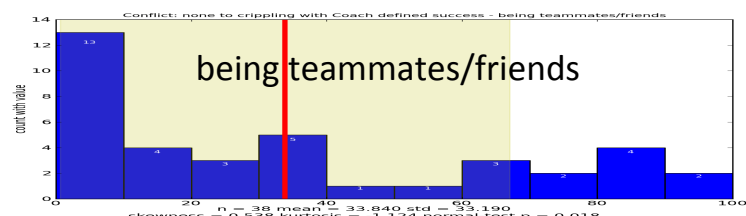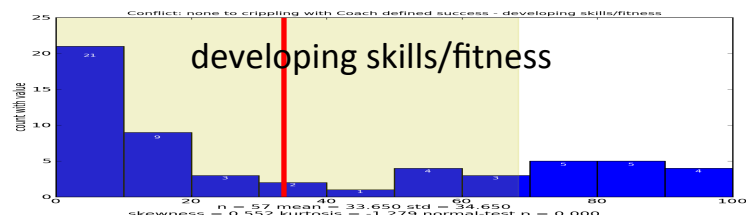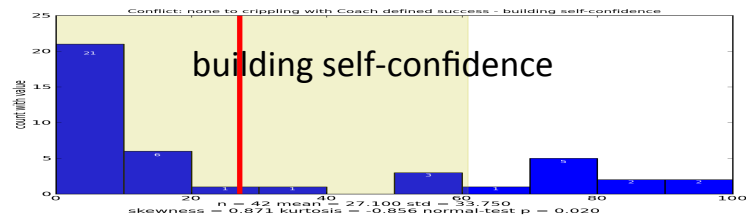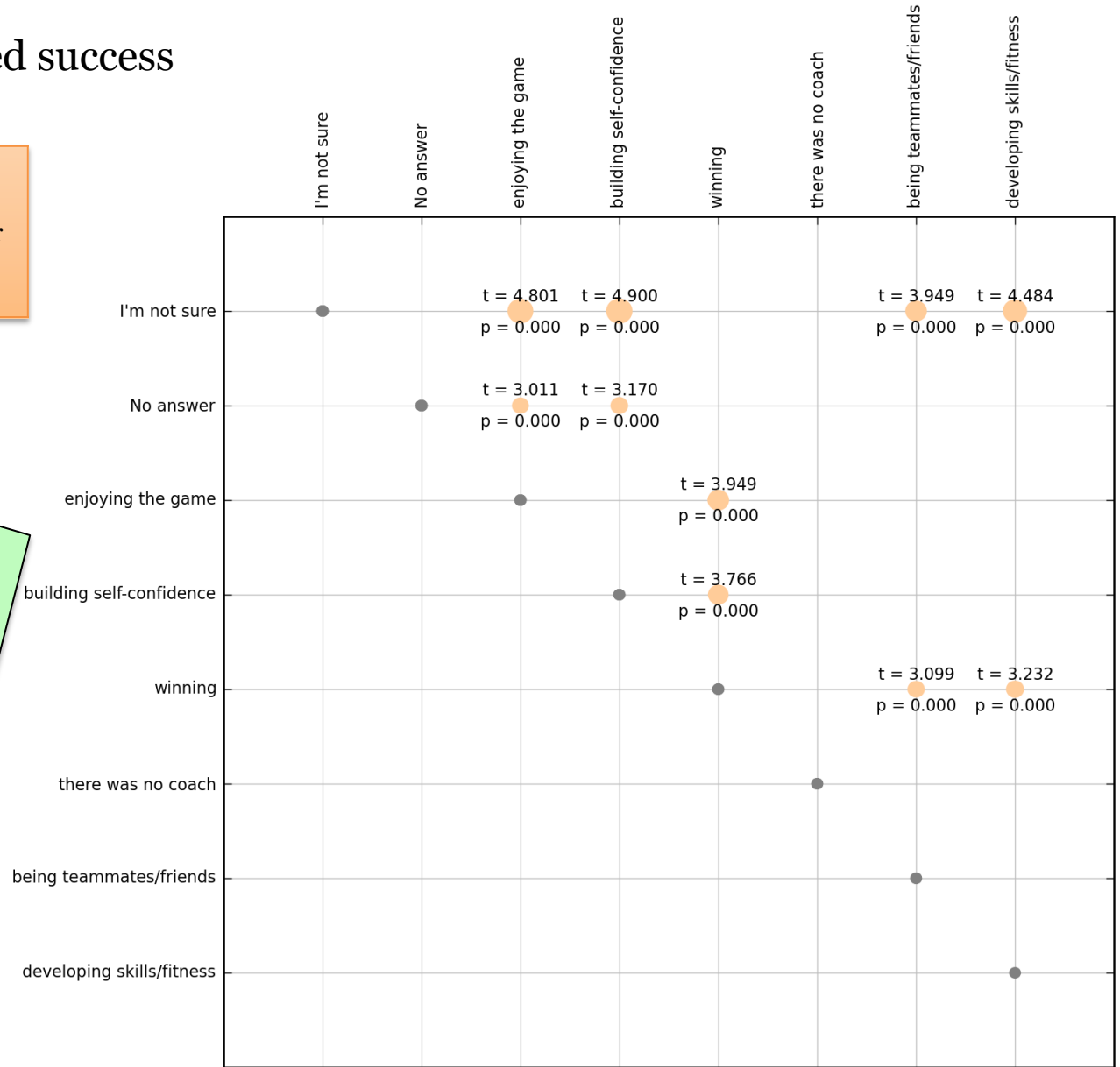
# Conflict + Coach defined success
*Scales*

This diagram shows all of the significant differences between means of the "Conflict" question for subsets of stories defined by the "Coach defined success" question.

This section of the report explores the **scale** questions. Here a scale question ("Conflict") is being examined in subsets based on a choice question ("Coach defined success").

I use only three simple statistical tests in my catalysis reports:
- **chi squared** (for choice combinations)
- **t-test** (for differences between means, as in this page)
- **correlations** (between scale questions)



| | I'm not sure | No answer | enjoying the game | building self-confidence | winning | there was no coach | being teammates/friends | developing skills/fitness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I'm not sure | ● | | t = 4.801 p = 0.000 | t = 4.900 p = 0.000 | | | t = 3.949 p = 0.000 | t = 4.484 p = 0.000 |
| No answer | | ● | t = 3.011 p = 0.000 | t = 3.170 p = 0.000 | | | | |
| enjoying the game | | | ● | | t = 3.949 p = 0.000 | | | |
| building self-confidence | | | | ● | t = 3.766 p = 0.000 | | | |
| winning | | | | | ● | | t = 3.099 p = 0.000 | t = 3.232 p = 0.000 |
| there was no coach | | | | | | ● | | |
| being teammates/friends | | | | | | | ● | |
| developing skills/fitness | | | | | | | | ● |

T tests - Conflict: none to crippling with Coach defined success

# Motto + Wanted: players
*Scales*

People who told stories in which (they said) players wanted friendship/ belonging/helping were more likely to choose a motto of "Friendship" than people who told stories in which (they said) players wanted skills/goals/winning (p=0.015, t=-2.513). This was the only significant difference for the "Wanted: players" question.
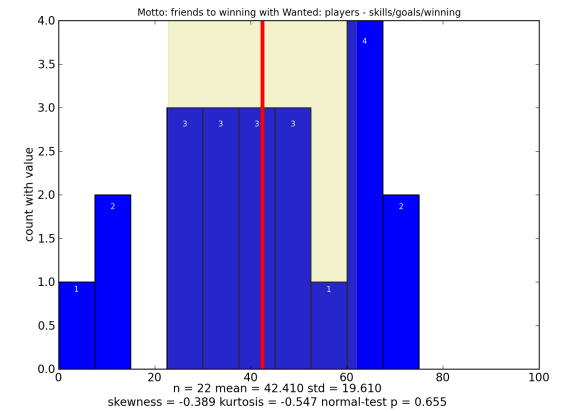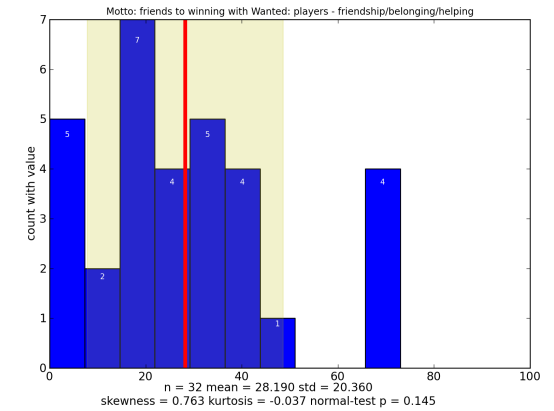
It is not surprising that people told stories in which the things they said mattered most mattered most. What is surprising is that this pattern appeared in the "Wanted: players" question and not in the "Wanted: parents" question. For the "Wanted: parents" question, the means of the two distributions shown here (friendship vs. skills) were 32.0 and 34.5, respectively. This seems to imply that the parents care about these things – their motto – not because of something they want themselves, but because of what their *children* want out of the game.

*Do players need a separation between skill-oriented and fun-oriented games?*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Players who want to have fun and players who want to learn skills need completely different things. It's like they want to play two different games. The organization should separate the two groups instead of continuing to try (and fail) to meet the demands of both. | Some kids are driven to play the game and some just want to have fun. But those are the extremes, and there are many points between them. What players want can change from one year to the next. It's not reasonable to demand that kids (and parents) choose either fun-oriented or skill-oriented games when most people want some of each. | There is already an option for kids who want to live and breathe the game: it's called special game schools. Those kids can already get what they want. But kids who just want to have fun have no other option but to quit playing. *Those* are the kids the organization needs to pay more attention to. |



Motto: friends to winning with Wanted: players - friendship/belonging/helping

n = 32 mean = 28.190 std = 20.360
skewness = 0.763 kurtosis = -0.037 normal-test p = 0.145

Motto: friends to winning with Wanted: players - skills/goals/winning

n = 22 mean = 42.410 std = 19.610
skewness = -0.389 kurtosis = -0.547 normal-test p = 0.655

This is a situation where a question about an opinion ("What would your team motto be: winning or making friends?") is juxtaposed with a question about a story ("What did the players in this story want?"). The places where opinion and experience agree and disagree can be important in understanding what people feel and believe.

# Remember x Conflict + Themes
*Scale correlations*



Remember X Conflict
Themes: Unfair evaluation/selection
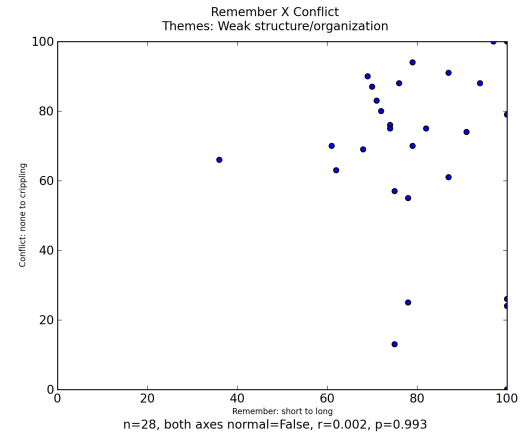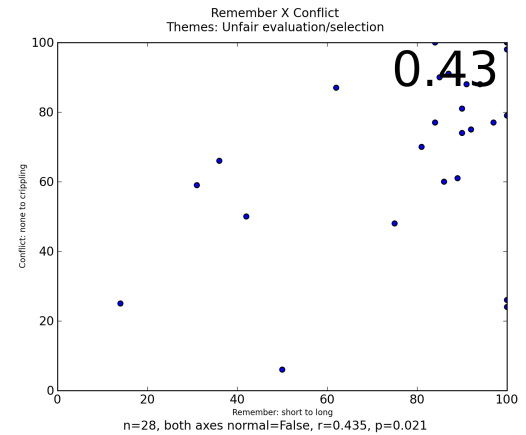
0.43

n=28, both axes normal=False, r=0.435, p=0.021

When people told stories about unfair evaluation/selection, the more conflict in the story, the longer they thought they would remember it. This was not true for any other theme.

This implies that people felt that the conflict involved in unfair evalauation and team selection was more memorable than any other kind of conflict.

*Is evaluation and team selection the biggest problem in the organization?*

| | |
|---|---|
| Evaluation and team selection is easily the biggest problem in the organization. Yes, some coaches don't do their jobs; but it's really the the systemic unfairness that so many players experience that turns players and parents away. Nobody wants their kid to be told they can't play the game, but it happens far too often. If selection isn't made fair, the organization will keep losing players. | The people who took this survey were the vocal minority. Yes, team selection and evaluation are a problem in the organization, but they aren't the only problem or the biggest problem. Let's not get carried away and let our energies get hijacked by people with an agenda, but listen to everyone who has a need. |



Remember X Conflict
Themes: Weak structure/organization

n=28, both axes normal=False, r=0.002, p=0.993

| Answer | significance | correlation coefficient | sample size |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amazing coaches | 0.1829 | -0.2208 | 38 |
| Unfair evaluation/ selection | **0.0206** | 0.4353 | 28 |
| Weak structure/ organization | 0.9934 | 0.0016 | 28 |

This section of the report explores **combinations of scale questions**. This page in particular considers differences in correlations between the scales "Remember" and "Conflict" for subsets based on the choice question "Themes." The themes question is actually just the themes I derived during my qualitative analysis (one to three themes are associated with each story). Thus the qualitative work on theming contributes to, and blends into, the quantitative work on numerical patterns.

# Remember x Effect of telling + Type of text
*Scale correlations*

This is an example of a pattern that formed across three questions: two scales and a choice question.

When people gave an overview of their experiences in a game season, the more memorable their story, the more likely they were to say it would draw people in to the organization. This view is very different from the view seen in the previous pages, in which people were upset about unfair evaluations or bad coaches.

*Are there two different game experiences taking place?*

The way people experience the game has to do with how old their children are. Little kids have a fun, no-pressure experience; so their parents think the game is all fun. Things like evaluation and bad coaches only come in when kids get older. So there aren't really two experiences of the game. There are just two age ranges.

Whether your game experience is wonderful or awful depends on where you happen to live. Each area is different. The lack of geographical consistency is a big problem for the organization, and it's one the organization has to handle to survive. A combination of standards, training, and consequences can help to create a good game experience for everyone.

People responded to the survey for one of two reasons: they wanted to help, or they wanted to complain. The survey results make it look like there are two different game experiences, but it's just an artifact of the two prevailing motivations to fill out the survey. If it were possible to survey everyone involved in the organization (without self-selection), the results would be different.

| Answer | significance | correlation coefficient | sample size |
|---|---|---|---|
| General experience | 0.6165 | -0.0758 | 46 |
| Incident | 0.1065 | 0.2496 | 43 |
| Season overview | **0.0055** | -0.5024 | 29 |

Remember X Effect of telling
Type of text: Season overview

-0.50

n=29, both axes normal=False, r=-0.502, p=0.005

Remember X Effect of telling
Type of text: General experience

n=46, both axes normal=False, r=-0.076, p=0.617