PREFACE

by Claude Bouchard

It is an honor for me to be given the opportunity to contribute to this Festschrift recognizing the many accomplishments and the global legacy of Professor Robert M. Malina. Over the last 40 years, I have had the privilege of being able to observe from a front-row seat the numerous contributions made or spearheaded by Professor Malina, and this commentary is inspired by sustained contacts with him over these decades.

Anyone who has reviewed the curriculum vitae of RMM realizes that his research interests extend from human biology in the broad sense to exercise science, with a particular focus on growth and a variety of pediatric issues. His contribution to science spans a period of 50 years. He published his first research paper in 1962 in the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* (Rarick et al., 1962). Since then, he has contributed to the advancement of knowledge in areas as diverse as the morphological growth of children; motor development and motor skills across the growing years; maturation, including age at menarche; skeletal age; growth and sports performance; the risk factor profile for common chronic diseases in children; and the role of social, cultural and economic circumstances as seen in developed and developing countries on growth and maturation.

Robert M Malina has published almost 400 peer-reviewed research papers and about 300 book chapters, technical papers, book reviews and other reports. He has also written several monographs and books. His publications have been cited more than 7,600 times in the world literature.
CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH SPORT PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS IN MEXICO CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Sport is a primary context for physical activity for youth and has high social value in many societies. Given the media’s overwhelming interest in youth competing in sports at national and international levels, it is not surprising that the important role that organized sport plays in the health and development of children and adolescents is often overlooked. The highly talented are a very visible minority whereas the overwhelming majority of youth who participate and never attain elite levels often pass under the radar (Malina, 2009). This is of particular concern since only a small percentage of youth will ever play sports at a professional or international level, whereas the majority of youth can benefit physically and psychologically from participating in sports (Malina, 2008).

A consequence of our preoccupation with elite young athletes is that relatively more is known about elite young athletes in contrast to youth sports participants in general. This is especially apparent in the literature dealing with the physical growth and biological maturation of young athletes (Malina et al., 2004). The literature on sport-related injuries in youth often includes both the general participant and the elite (Malina, 2001a). In contrast, the literature on overuse injuries and burnout is generally concentrated on the elite (Weinberg and Gould, 2010; Gould and Dieffenbach, 2003).

The literature dealing with characteristics of the general population of youth sports participants, in contrast, is less extensive and uneven. Although considerable discussion of psychosocial outcomes associated with participation in youth sports exists, a good deal of the literature deals with social influences. Social influences include parents, coaches, and peers – in contrast to the psychosocial characteristics of participants and the influence of sport on aspects of psychosocial development such as self-concept and self-esteem, perceived competence in sport and social interactions, peer interactions, parent-child and coach-child relationships, values of fair play, and so on.