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THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE: PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETES

By

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ABSTRACT

THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE: PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETES

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Semi-strucutred interviews were used to examine the attitudes and subjective feelings of female collegiate athletes concerning their roles as student-athletes. The women began college with an idealistic view of education, and were strengthened in their view over time. The athletic subculture the women were a part of, as well as their classroom and academic experiences, may have influenced or reinforced to some degree their educational optimism. The results of the current study were then compared to those of Adler and Adler (1985) who sampled male athletes and to those of a control group of nonathletes. The experiences in question were discussed at length in the thesis and possible explanations for the gender related similarities/ differences explored.

I feel it only appropriate to dedicate my thesis to the five people whose encouragement, love, and guidance provided me with the foundation to pursue my goals and dreams.

To my parents who have always given me their unconditional support--both financial and emotional--and who have consistently made sacrifices on my behalf. I am more grateful than they will even know.

To my older sisters Susan, Claudia, and Janie for their endless interest in and concern for all areas of my life.

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In this space it is customary to write profound statements about graduate education. As anyone who has ever a written a thesis should realize, however, the last thing I want to do now is write any more than I have to. All I have to say is, "It's done," and I could not have finished without the help of the following people.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Review of Literature

Prejudice and discrimination against females in sport are not recent phenomena; sexist attitudes and practices have shaped the participation rates of women in sport throughout history (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983). The women of Greece were forbidden to participate in or watch the events of the early Olympics. Physical prowess was not considered feminine among the ancient Greeks, and often led to questions about a woman's sexuality. During the Victorian era, sport participation was influenced by social class. It was assumed that middle class women were too weak and passive to participate in rigorous physical activity. Women in the upper class engaged in occasional games of tennis, bowling, golf or other socially acceptable and "ladylike" activities; at the same time women in the lower class spent too much time and energy working to engage in leisure activities.

Women attending American colleges in the late 1800s participated fully in recreation and in physical activity programs. According to Sojka (1985), women at schools such as Vassar, Radcliffe, and Smith swam, played tennis and golf, rode horses, and supplemented their academic endeavors with physical exercise. Women's collegiate sports, unlike men's athletics, were governed by women physical educators with little interference from alumni and administrators and with participation more important than outcome. "A game for every girl and every girl in a game" was the motto of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation in 1923 (Sojka, 1985). Not only were the rates of participation for college women increasing, but for older women as well.

During the 1930s through the 1960s, opportunities in school-sponsored sports at coeducational institutions were extremely limited for those females who wished to participate (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983). Where skilled male athletes had a wide range of opportunities to participate at both the secondary and collegiate levels, the females had few. Women's teams were often denied access to practice facilities because the practice sessions for males were considered more important. Women's sports were usually funded with what monies (if any) were left over from the men's programs and women did not receive scholarships. Female athletes were often required to provide their own uniforms and equipment, as well as pay their own travel expenses to athletic events (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983). Snyder and Spreitzer (1983) seemed to summarize this situation best:

> The primary problem and source of conflict in most schools is money, but the whole approach to female sports reflected remnants of the Victorian ideal of women (p. 171).

That being the case it was little wonder so few women were involved in sport during that period.

During the 1970s there were dramatic increases in the number of girls and women participating in organized sport programs (Coakley, 1986). There was a 600% increase in female participation from 1970 to 1984 at the high school level. College level participation increased by more than 900% in varsity intercollegiate sport programs, while club sport participation escalated by approximately 100%. Community and club programs for women evolved nation-wide as did youth sport programs for girls.

The primary factor behind the growth in women's athletic participation was the increase in opportunities mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex at any educational institution receiving federal financial assistance.

Consequently, sport programs sponsored by educational institutions receiving federal funds were required to show proof of equal opportunities for men and women. Afraid of penalties for noncompliance, many colleges and universities began to increase their women's athletic programs soon after the passage of Title IX in 1972 (Hogan, 1979; Nixon, 1984). The University of California at Berkeley, for example, budgeted $5,000 for women's athletics in 1972, $50,000 in 1973, and $448,000 in 1978. Similarly, only 2% of the money budgeted by colleges and universities for athletics in 1974 was for women, while 4 to 8% of athletic budgets were used for women in 1977. While Title IX required equal opportunity, it did not require an institution to provide such things as identical rooms and coaching staffs. In contrast, Title IX was very specific about scholarships; an educational institution had to offer the same proportion of scholarships to men and women. Women began taking advantage of these new opportunities, as demonstrated by the increase in female sport participation.

Title IX therefore may have facilitated the upward mobility of female athletes by allowing them to receive college educations funded through athletics via the athletic scholarship. The implementation of Title IX has increased the percentage of the athletic budget allocated to women. These budget expansions have helped to increase both the amount and number

of athletic scholarships awarded to females. According to Nixon (1984), in 1974 approximately 60 colleges gave athletic scholarships to women while in 1977 460 colleges awarded athletic scholarships to women. Today almost all Division I institutions award athletic scholarships to women. Athletic scholarships allowed talented young women who might otherwise not be able to afford college to get an education while participating in an activity that they enjoy. Not all changes in women's sport programs were positive however.

> In spite of the gains in participation and in societal interest in women's sports, Title IX has had far-reaching negative effects on the design, autonomy and governance structure of women's intercollegiate athletics (Carpenter & Acosta, 1985, p. 318).

Athletes and Academic Achievement

Although athletic scholarships allowed women to attend college it is not known whether these scholarships enhanced their ability to achieve academically. The relationship between intercollegiate athletic participation and academic achievement--typically defined in terms of graduation rate and/or grade point average--has been the focus of a substantial amount of research in the past decade. Does participation in athletics help or hinder a student? The majority of the researchers in this area have concentrated on comparing the graduation rates and/or grade point averages of athletes (usually males) with those of the general student population. Males have generally been used as subjects because they were the participants in the "big-time," revenue producing sports which seem to receive more publicity and to take more of the student-athlete's time than did nonrevenue sports (Snyder & Spreitzer,

1983). Although findings in the area of academic achievement have been inconsistent and incomplete, research on graduation rates and grade point averages should be closely examined.

Grade Point Averages. One method generally used to assess academic achievement has been the computation of grade point averages (GPA). The majority of the researchers who have used this method have shown that athletes tend to have lower GPAs than nonathletes (Edwards, 1984; Purdy, Eitzen, & Hufnagel, 1982; Raney, Knapp, & Small, 1986). The overall GPA of athletes at Colorado State University, for example, was 2.56 while the overall GPA of the general student population was 2.74 (Purdy et al., 1982). Variations have existed, however, among the GPA of athletes. In the study at Colorado State University, Purdy et al. (1982) found that female nonathletes had higher grade point averages than male nonathletes, male athletes had lower GPAs than nonathletes, and female athletes had slightly higher GPAs than their nonathletic counterparts.

Racial disparities also seemed to exist. It has been suggested that minorities tend to enter the university less well prepared academically compared to whites, and that these achievement discrepancies continue through college (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986). Purdy et al. (1982) reported that black athletes had a 2.11 grade point average compared to 2.61 for white athletes at Colorado State University.

Researchers have also compared GPA across sport. For example, Raney et al. (1986) reported that the mean GPA of male students at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas was 2.41, while the grade point averages for male basketball, football, and baseball players were 1.96, 2.18, and

2.48 respectively. Also, male football players had the lowest grade point averages (2.30) while female volleyball players had the highest grade point averages (2.95). Athletes in individual sports had a higher mean GPA than those athletes who participated in team sports (Purdy et al, 1982).

The evidence presented on the relationship between athletic participation and GPA suggested that athletes may in fact have performed less well than nonathletes. However, like the research on graduation rates, this research had weaknesses. It has been difficult to compare the academic achievements of athletes and nonathletes since the athletes differed by sport, by socioeconomic backgrounds, and by difficulty of major (Coakley, 1986). Grade point averages also may have been calculated differently at each university and even various departments within the school may have used different criteria to award a particular grade.

Several reasons may have existed for the discrepancies in the grade point averages among athletes. Racial discrepancies may have been attributed to differences in academic preparation and socioeconomic background. Whites may have academically outperformed blacks because the whites entered college more prepared than their black cohorts. Lower socioeconomic status and overcrowded, underfunded high schools may have been common in black communities (Shapiro, 1984). Finally, as compared to team sport athletes, individual athletes tended to come from more affluent backgrounds in which a college education was highly valued and affordable. Female athletes may have had higher GPAs because they may

have been recruited for both their academic and athletic abilities, unlike males who may have been recruited for athletic talents alone (Purdy et al., 1982). In addition, females tended to be involved in nonrevenue sports with a less time-demanding schedule and with less financial pressure for women's teams to win with respect to generating gate receipts, alumni donations, and television revenues. Perhaps the women were aware that their future occupations depended on a college education rather than on professional athletic careers.

Graduation Rates. The other method generally used to assess academic achievement has been the examination of graduation rates. Adler and Adler (1985) found that the majority of male athletes entering a university "feel idealistic about their impending academic experience and optimistic about their likelihood of graduating" (p. 243). They reported that 92% of the individuals in their sample entered college with hopes of getting a degree (Adler & Adler, 1985). Such optimism is delightful, but we should take a closer look to see what reality holds. Edwards (1984) asserted that athletes are uninterested in and unprepared for academics, resulting in, among other things, lower graduation rates than nonathletes. A study based on 1970-1980 data at Colorado State University found that the graduation rate of 34.2% for athletes was lower than the 46.8% rate of graduation for the general student population (Purdy et al., 1982).

In contrast, several studies have shown positive relationships between participating in intercollegiate athletics and graduation rates. A nine-year study at the University of Utah found that 49% of the

athletes graduated compared to 45% of the total student body (Henschen & Fry,. 1984). Similarly, during the 1950s athletes at Michigan State University graduated at much higher rates than nonathletes, 80% and 45% respectively (Shapiro, 1984). The results, therefore, appeared to be contradictory concerning the graduation rates of college athletes.

Research has also indicated variations in the graduation rates of athletes within the same university. The study conducted at the University of Utah showed that male and female athletes had similar rates of graduation, 48.76% and 48.89% respectively (Henschen & Fry, 1984). Conversely, Purdy et al.(1982) at Colorado State University reported that the graduation rates for female athletes was 41% while that of their male counterparts was 38%. No comparative data were available on the graduation rates of nonathletes at Colorado State University.

Several reasons may account for the discrepancies in the graduation rates among athletes. Women's athletic programs have characteristically taken a back seat to men's programs which may decrease pressure from the media, fans, and boosters. These fewer demands off the court or playing field may have allowed women more time to concentrate on academics. Perhaps women realized that few if any sport-related career opportunities awaited them and that their only career opportunities become realized through their college diplomas.

When researchers have examined graduation rates across race, they have consistently found that whites graduated at higher rates than blacks (Purdy et al., 1982; Shapiro, 1984). One reason for these lower rates among blacks may be that they may have received different high school

educations and thus arrived at college less prepared than their white counterparts (Shapiro, 1984). Possibly also, black athletes were recruited primarily for their athletic ability and once on campus they were shunted into non-degree courses for the sole purpose of keeping them eligible. It must be pointed out that most of the research accomplished in the area of race and graduation rates has been done using only black males. The extent to which race affects the graduation rates of black women has not been explored.

An important variable that must be examined when evaluating graduation rates is the sport in which the athlete participates. Henschen and Fry (1984) found that among males, football players had the highest graduation rate with basketball players having the lowest rate. Among females, basketball players had the highest rates and gymnasts the lowest (Henschen & Fry, 1984). In contrast, Purdy et al. (1982) reported football players as having the lowest graduation rate when compared to other sports participants. Purdy et al. (1982) also found that athletes involved in individual sports, such as tennis and golf, were more likely to graduate than those who participated in team sports like basketball and football. Such a finding could be the result of the socioeconomic status of the participant. Golf and tennis are traditionally thought of as sports of the affluent; intuitively it would seem that these participants would have greater access to superior pre-college educations and would place greater value on a college degree.

Research on the graduation rates of college athletes and nonathletes has been saturated with weaknesses. These imperfections may have led to confusing and ultimately inconclusive findings. Graduation rates have been computed using a number of different methods, perhaps using as many methods as there are colleges and universities (Coakley, 1986). For example, some institutions' graduation rates may have only included students who earned their degree four years after entering while other universities may have used a time period anywhere from five to twenty years. Similarly, some graduation rate calculations may have ignored drop outs or transfers who later graduated from another university.

Another weakness in this research has been the inconsistency in graduation requirements across institutions. No two universities have had exactly the same graduation requirements, nor were their classes of equal difficulty. Such differences could conceivably have meant the difference between graduating and not graduating. The time periods and degree of work required may have varied across majors within a university and across different universities. Similarly, discrepancies across institutions may have arisen in the definition of an athlete. Is an athlete anyone who tried out for a team? Someone who played at least one year? Or did that individual have to compete for four years to be considered an athlete? Such inconsistencies have allowed the data on graduation rates to be confounded. In addition, the range of time commitment and available counseling and tutoring services of athletes have made comparisons with nonathletes difficult. Researchers have failed to differentiate among nonathletes on such factors as job

involvement, full- or part-time status and time spent on extracurricular activities. Such factors would have influenced graduation rates of nonathletes.

Not only have there been inconsistencies in the available research but such research has primarily focused on the graduation rates of male athletes. Only two of the available studies included women in their calculation of graduation rates; one study showed that female athletes graduated at higher rates than their male counterparts while the other study showed that male and female athletes had similar graduation rates. Whether this invisibility of women was due to the lack of cooperation on the part of university officials in releasing the data on women, the gender of investigators, or the view that the data about achievements of and by women were less important than those of men is not the issue at this point. The fact is that women athletes have been neglected in the research even though they comprise one third of the college athletes (Coakley, 1986).

Explanations for Variations in Academic Achievement

The two previous sections above discussed in specific terms why variations may exist in academic achievement among college athletes yet did not explore why athletes might graduate at lower rates or have lower grade point averages than nonathletes. Several researchers (Coakley, 1986; Nixon, 1984; Snyder, 1985; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983) have cited role conflict as one reason why athletes may have performed less well academically than nonathletes. The excessive time, energy, and mental preparation along with the pressure to win and to attract spectators has

required a commitment on the part of the athletes that could have seriously interfered with the commitment necessary to be a good student (Coakley, 1986). According to Nixon (1984), the physical and psychic demands of big-time college sport could have forced athletes to take academic shortcuts, which may explain their graduation rates and grade point averages. As Leonard (1986) put it

> ...the demands on student-athletes make it virtually impossible to be, simultaneously, a serious student and a serious athlete, and the former role is often short-changed (p. 37).

Coakley (1986) has pointed out that there are four ways to deal with role conflict: 1) merging two or more different roles into one, consistent single role; 2) compartmentalizing relationships and activities so that conflicting expectations do not have to be met simultaneously; 3) modifying the expectations associated with either or both of these roles; or 4) neglecting or de-emphasizing one of the roles. According to Purdy et al. (1982) the latter seems to be the one chosen by most student-athletes.

There are many reasons why athletes in these studies would have given priority to sport and de-emphasized their student roles when they faced conflict. Intuitively it would seem that although all college students encountered role conflict at one point or another, that experienced by nonathletes was not as constant and consuming as the role conflict of the student-athlete. "Student-athletes are not likely to experience success [in academics] if their educational identity is based

primarily on an inflated role as athlete" (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983, p. 137). Athletes may have graduated at lower rates and had lower grade point averages because they were exploited by the university in ways that the nonathlete was not.

As suggested by Coakley (1986) student-athletes may deal with role conflict by choosing to neglect or de-emphasize one of their roles, usually academics. This choice may be forced upon athletes and interpreted as exploitation by some sociologists (Coakley, 1986). Has the student-athlete really been a "victim" in big-time college sports? Discrepancies have existed between the actual and perceived exploitation of college athletes (Coakley, 1986; Leonard, 1986). College athletes on full scholarships receive tuition, room, board, and fees for their service. While many people may feel that this award is sufficient, few realize that most college athletes train and condition for their sport year-round. On some teams these student-athletes worked almost as hard and as long as professional athletes but received only a small fraction of the rewards received by professionals (Coakley, 1986). It has been estimated that the average hourly wage of basketball and football players at a certain Division I school to be $3.75 and $4.70 respectively (Leonard, 1986). Similarly, few people realize that these athletes help to generate enormous revenues for their schools and college communities, as well as performing public relations functions for their schools; all of this is done without receiving additional compensation (Coakley, 1986; Leonard, 1986). Along with performing these duties, the student-athlete is expected to perform in the classroom as well. Or are they?

According to many, these athletes are expected to "eat, sleep, and drink" their particular sports. As stated by Leonard (1986):

> When this all-encompassing mental centering is compounded by the typical physical fatigue factor, studying becomes tedious and burdensome, if not virtually impossible, in fact, so problematic that some would prefer not attending class at all. Hence, all one's time, energy, and effort could be concentrated on sport (p. 38).

A coach's promise of an education could quickly be replaced by mere attempts to keep the athlete eligible to enable the coach to continue to win and thus keep his/her job (Nixon, 1984). Providing answers to exams and assigning athletes to irrelevant classes are only a few ways in which student-athletes could have been cheated out of an education. Still, how did the athletes themselves perceive the situation; did they feel pampered or exploited? Coakley (1986) and Leonard (1986) reported that few athletes perceived themselves as victims of exploitation. Most felt it was a privilege to be a college athlete regardless of the rewards or sacrifices involved. For many athletes in pursuit of professional athletic careers, the only choice was to participate in big-time college programs (Sack, 1977). Other athletes have been taught to value their athletic accomplishments above all else and thus may have been blind to the exploitation (Sack, 1977). Leonard (1986) reported that on the whole, his sample of male basketball players did not feel "categorically and universally abused and exploited" (p. 45), with a greater number of blacks feeling exploited than whites. Eighty-six percent of the blacks in his study felt that athletes in their sport made greater sacrifices than nonathletes to get their education. Nearly 54% agreed that their

education was by no means "free." Overall, research in this area seemed to indicate that college athletes were exploited and taken advantage of by their coaches, the university, and the surrounding communities. But the athletes themselves did not feel used; it is possible that many saw exploitation as a necessary evil, where the end justified the means.

The previous section explored why college athletes might have had lower graduation rates and grade point averages than nonathletes. The following segment will examine some of the overall weaknesses in the study of academic achievement among college athletes. One weakness is that these studies tend to "clump" all athletes together; many researchers ignored individual variation. Nixon (1984), for example, developed a "jock model" that categorizes college athletes into one of four groups: 1) academic incompetents; 2) anti-intellectuals; 3) scholar athletes; and 4) athletes as ordinary students. More commonly, researchers have grouped athletes by sport and/or race. While such categorization may have made data less complicated for the researcher, it is not fair to assume that all athletes (or nonathletes) were exactly the same in each and every respect. The same may have been true for blacks, volleyball players, and so on. Ignoring individual difference may have increased a researchers chances of receiving confounded results.

Another omission has been that the research did not tell us much about athletes' coping behaviors or how they make choices. Coakley (1986) suggested a typology of coping mechanisms for student-athletes dealing with role conflict, but the subject has been largely avoided by other researchers. There is a need to know how athletes cope with their

daily problems and if they do so differently than nonathletes. Similarly, how do athletes deal with choices they encounter as student-athletes? Thus, research that examines the perceptions and/or experiences of student athletes is needed.

Overview of Adler and Adler (1985)

Peter Adler and Patricia Adler (1985), took a different approach from the researchers cited previously, eliminating many of the general and specific weaknesses discussed thus far. Their purpose was to examine the relationship between athletic participation and academic performance among athletes in Division I college sports. The data collected were qualitative in nature and suggested a negative relationship between athletic participation and academic performance. Since the content of that study was similar to the proposed study, a more detailed discussion of this research follows.

The study was conducted at a private university with an enrollment of approximately 6000 students. The institution had "fairly rigorous academic standards" and a successful athletic department. The majority of the students attending this university were white and came from suburban, middle-class backgrounds. Conversely, 70% of the basketball players recruited by the university were black. One of the researchers acquired the position of "team sociologist" which allowed him to conduct a participant-observation study of a major college basketball program over a period of four years. The job consisted of informal counseling of

the players on various matters; this role also helped the researcher to develop a positive rapport with the players, making it easier to collect the necessary data.

The researchers used interviews to explore the academic experiences of athletes. They focused on academic attitudes, goals, and experiences, along with their involvement in athletic, social, and classroom spheres, and the impact of such involvement on academic attitudes and performance, and adjustments that were made by these athletes during the course of their college experience.

The findings of Adler and Adler (1985) are discussed in detail in the following section.

Academic Expectations. The majority of the athletes in the study entered college feeling very optimistic about both their approaching educational experience and their chances of graduating. This attitude appeared to be reinforced not only by the athletes' parents and significant others but by the college coach as well. The athletes also had the idea that simply by attending class they would earn their degrees. Few of the athletes ever anticipated the amount or type of academic work necessary. Many were relying on the belief that as college athletes they would be pampered and taken care of with regard to academics. According to Adler and Adler (1985):

> For most, this period of early idealism lasted until the end of their freshman year. After this time, their naive, early idealism gradually became replaced by disappointment and growing cynicism as they realized how difficult it was to keep up... (p. 244).

Athletic Experiences. The size of the college athletic sphere was probably the biggest shock to these athletes. Many discovered what it was like to "eat, sleep, and drink" basketball. The media, boosters, practice, games, and travelling dominated their lives, leaving the athletes little time to devote to academics. When time was available, most were too tired to utilize it properly or wanted to catch-up on missed socializing. Not only were these athletes uninvolved in the daily labor of academics, they were not allowed to select classes, make up their own degree plans or interact directly with professors, academic counselors, or academic administrators. It is no wonder then that these athletes developed a false sense of security, only to realize too late that they (the athletes) were responsible for earning that degree. As stated in the study:

> Given the paucity of contact with the faculty, the lack of reinforcement within the academic realm, and the omnipresence of the coaches, media, fans, and boosters, who provided both positive and negative feedback on daily athletic performance, it became easier for athletes to turn away from academics and concentrate their efforts on sport (p. 45).

Social Experiences. The academic performance of this sample was also affected by their social experience. These athletes were isolated geographically (housed with other athletes), culturally, economically, and physically (by size, build, and race) from the nonathletic student population. With little outside opinion or influence these athletes developed among themselves a set of norms and values which they used to guide their behavior. One such predominant custom involved discouraging

peers to excel in academics and helping each other to rationalize poor academic performance.

> The athletes' peer subculture subverted academic orientations by discouraging them from exerting effort in academics. In fact, individuals who displayed too much interest, effort, or success in academics were often ridiculed...(p. 246).

This being the case, it is easy to see why these young men sought approval from other athletes--they were their only friends.

Classroom Experiences. The classroom experience that the athletes encountered also affected their academic effort and performance. The athletes were in many cases treated differently from the general student population. Several professors (although fewer than the athletes themselves had expected) were sympathetic toward the athletes, allowing them more time to complete assignments or providing private tutoring. Other professors treated the student-athletes more harshly because they believed athletes had been pampered and sheltered. Regardless of the positive or negative experiences with the faculty, such episodes only served to reinforce the notion that the athletes were different from the other students.

Athletes also lost interest in academics because of the content of their classes. Often the athlete was assigned a major (by an assistant coach or athletic academic counselor) in which he had no interest, simply because it would not be a demand on his time. In the rare instance when the athlete was permitted to pursue a degree in a difficult area, he was often forced to abandon the effort because of an inability to keep up with the workload (due to too much time devoted to his sport) or lack of

adequate background (i.e. prerequisites). As we can see from the above examples, these athletes' experiences were different from what they had expected. For men who were used to success, it is easy to see why they thought it "better not to try than to try and not succeed" (Adler & Adler, 1985, p. 247).

Academic Adjustments. The athletes in this sample changed their perspectives and priorities many times during the course of their college careers. About 25% of the student-athletes who began in pre-professional areas finished there as well. These athletes did not perform as well academically as they would have liked but nonetheless were happy to have done well enough to get by. The remaining 75% of the student-athletes with pre-professional majors lowered their career aspirations and took on more manageable areas of study. Athletes who began college with lower expectations (i.e. majoring in physical education or recreation) went through similar adjustments. Twenty percent graduated in this area and like the pre-professional majors, received lower grades than they had planned. The remaining 80% realized that their chances of graduating were slim and thus shifted their focus to remaining eligible. The members of this group were the ones who dropped out of school following their senior season of sport participation.

Overall then, Adler and Adler (1985) found that:

> As a result of their experiences at the university, athletes grew increasingly cynical about and uninterested in academics. They accepted their marginal status and lowered their academic interest effort and goals (p. 248).

They--the researchers--attributed their findings to the athletic subculture in which the athletes primarily functioned.

Several limitations existed in the study by Adler and Adler (1985). First, this study, like the majority in this area, included only males in the sample. Since research has shown that men and women differ with regard to academic achievement the results cannot be generalized to women athletes (Purdy et al., 1982). A second limitation is that Adler and Adler only focused on basketball players. Many of these basketball players may have attended college merely as a stepping-stone to a professional career. Such is not the case in many other sports. Also, evidence exists to support the notion that academic achievement varies across sport. Thus, the experiences of these basketball players may not have been representative of those athletes in other sports.

Another limiting factor is that the study was conducted prior to the adoption of Proposition 48. Proposition 48 (Bylaw 5-1-[j]) is a 1986 NCAA rule which states that in order for incoming freshman college athletes to be eligible for varsity competition, they must have scored at least 700 on the SAT or 15 on the ACT, and must have accumulated a minimum 2.0 grade point average in a specific number of college preparatory courses (Underwood, 1984). This standard may have helped to exclude from college those athletes with few academic skills. Post-Proposition 48 athletes therefore may be more concerned about academics and have less distorted views concerning the breaks afforded athletes. A final weakness of the study concerned the absence of a control group in the study. Perhaps athletes and nonathletes entered

college with similar misconceptions and experience similar academic adjustments; a control group would have allowed the researchers to explore actual differences rather than merely infer them.

Rationale for the Study and Statement of the Problem

The most common method used to assess academic achievement is to examine the graduation rates and GPAs of those in question. While those figures may be somewhat meaningful at a glance, it takes closer examination to see what factors may have precipitated such results. Adler and Adler (1985) used a participant-observation study to trace athletes' involvement in academics throughout their college careers. It was through these interviews that the researchers learned how their sample of male basketball players viewed the educational and athletic systems and how these athletes made choices to cope with the pressures they faced every day both on and off the court.

An increasing number of females are joining the ranks of the student-athlete, and their perceptions of their experiences as well as their coping behaviors need to be explored. Similarly, basketball players may have certain views and behaviors that are unique from those involved in other sports. As a result, we need to sample athletes involved in various sports and who are women. By replicating, in a sense, the work of Adler and Adler (1985) we can better hope to understand how the student-athlete views and copes with this dual roles as well as prepared future student-athletes for what to expect. The purpose of the present study was to examine and attempt to answer the following general questions:

1. How did the female student-athletes who attended a large midwest university feel about and evaluate their expectations and experiences?
2. How did these student-athletes personally experience academics and athletics in their daily lives?
3. How did these female student-athletes think race and gender affected their experiences and/or perceptions?
4. How did the experiences of these female student-athletes compare with those of female nonathletes in terms of their academic expectations, attitudes of self and others, classroom experiences, and perceptions of race and gender?

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions applied to the present investigation:

1. student-athlete - An individual enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits at the university under study who participated at the varsity level in one of the sports offered.
2. general student or nonathlete - An individual enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits as a pupil at the university under study, who had never participated in intercollegiate athletics.
3. National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) -

> An organization whose objective is the regulation and supervision of collegiate athletics throughout the United States in order that the athletic activites of the colleges and universities of the United States may strive to maintain an ethical plane in keeping with the dignity and high purpose of education (Sage, 1986, p. 45).

4. Proposition 48 (Bylaw 5-1-[j]) - A 1986 NCAA rule which states that in order for incoming freshman college athletes to be eligible for varsity competition, they would have to score at least 700(out of a possible 1600) on the SAT or 15 (of a possible 36) on the ACT, and have accumulated a minimum 2.0 grade point average in a specific number (11) of college preparatory courses (Underwood, 1984, p. 224).
5. full scholarship athlete - Those college athletes receiving the maximum in assistance allowed by the NCAA. This consisted of full room and board, tuition, fees, and books.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

In this study the I interviewed women with full scholarships from two athletic teams who were on full scholarship to determine how they perceived and coped with the college experience. A control group of nonathletes also was interviewed which enabled me to explore similarities and differences in the experiences of the two groups. Since my focus was to explore the academic experiences of athletes, the results and discussion centers on them, not the nonathletes. Responses of the nonathletes were used to determine the extent to which the experiences of female athletes may have differed from those of female nonathletes.

Rationale for Interview Method

The research cited to date (with the exception of Adler and Adler) has been primarily archival in nature, with researchers using such quantitative records as GPAs and graduation rates. This type of research has a place in education and has been necessary in initiating reform. Several problems may arise, however, when the source of data is restricted to historical records (Borg & Gall, 1983). One can never be completely certain about the genuineness and accuracy of historical sources; there is always the possibility that a source has been forged or that the information has been intentionally falsified (Borg & Gall, 1983). Comparisons of graduation rates and GPAs were also made difficult in lieu of the fact that each college and university may have their own method of computing GPAs and graduation rates (Coakley, 1986).

Finally, historical records do not tell us how these student-athletes coped with the pressures they faced nor why their GPAs and/or graduation rates were lower/higher than those of nonathletes.

Such information can be obtained, however, through the use of qualitative methodology. Data of a more qualitative nature, such as semi-structured interviews, can be used to examine athletes' attitudes and subjective feelings about their roles as student-athletes. Use of this method enables the researcher to develop rapport with the subjects which often leads to greater self-disclosure (Backstrom & Hursch-Cesar, 1981). Other strengths of using qualitative methodology related more specifically to the current topic include giving each athlete a voice through which she can explain the meaning of the college experience to her and how she copes with the pressures involved.

Limitations

Weaknesses exist with any method of data collection and the interviews in this study were no exception. First, bias existed within the researcher herself. For example, I could have interpreted similar answers by subjects differently due to race, gender and other characteristics of both subjects and researcher. My use of a tape recorder helped to reduce the bias since the tapes provide an avenue for constant re-checking of the data. Second, the subjects also may have provided biased answers. For example, rather than report true feelings, the respondents may have given responses to please the interviewer or may have responded with a socially desirable answers. By asking the same question in several ways, however, I may have decreased the possibility

of such errors. The researcher should have a "good" understanding of possible errors as a prerequisite for conducting a meaningful and well designed study.

Subjects

In an effort to replicate the study by Adler and Adler (1985), I sampled only athletes from team sports in which all were on scholarship were sampled. The decision to limit the sample to team sport athletes was based on the recognition that team and individual sport athletes migh differ on socioeconomic, recruitment, and psychological variables. These criteria meant that only basketball and volleyball players were interviewed.

In the current study, the sample consisted of 10 members of the women's basketball team (8 current and 2 former members) and 13 members of the women's volleyball team (11 current and 2 former members) at a large midwest Division I university. Overall, there were 8 freshmen, 4 sophomores, 3 juniors, 4 seniors, and 4 former athletes. The former athletes had all been scholarship recipients, had played their respective sports for four years at this midwest university and were either in their fifth year or had recently graduated. In addition, all of the women had been coached by women during their college experience.

Permission to conduct the study was first obtained from the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (Appendix A). Permission to interview the athletes was then obtained from the basketball and volleyball coaches, who were also asked to identify the names of their respective athletes and their year in school. I met briefly with the basketball team to explain the purpose of the study and

ask for their cooperation. A similar meeting with the volleyball team was not possible as their season had already been completed but this appeared to have no effect on their willingness to participate.

Potential subjects were then contacted by phone and again I explained what their participation would entail. If they agreed to participate, an appointment was set up for an interview. Those women who declined to participate were contacted again after several of their teammates had been interviewed to see if they had changed their minds; none had, with lack of free time as the most common reason for their refusal.

Before each interview began the woman was given a written explanation of the study (Appendix B) and was then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix C). Subjects were assured that the results of their interview would be confidential and that this assurance would be rigidly adhered to. I was the only one who had access to the information. The responses of particular subjects were not be made available to their respective coaches nor were reponses linked to the subjects' names in the thesis. The only identifiers used were sport and year in school. These identifiers were not used in situations where their use might identify a subject. It was my hope that an absolute assurance of confidentiality would increase the women's willingness to cooperate in the research as well as their ability to answer all questions honestly and protect their anynomity.

In an effort to understand the experiences of the athletes I interviewed a control group of female nonathletes. These nonathletes were selected in a purposive manner to ensure that their characteristics,

that is their academic major and year in school, were as similar as possible to those of the athletes. The nonathlete sample therefore was proportionately similar to the athletes with respect to academic major and year in school. They were randomly selected from the student telephone book from names that matched the characteristics of an athlete. A two digit number (10) was selected from a table of random numbers; I examined every tenth entry in the directory for characteristics that matched those of a student-athlete. Each nonathlete was contacted by phone and was asked to participate in the study. If the student declined to participate in the study I counted down ten more names. I obtained a sample of ten nonathletes. I assumed that this method of selection would control for extraneous variables and ensure relevant comparisons. The same procedures for consent and confidentiality that were used with the athletes were used with the nonathletes.

Procedure for Data Collection

After obtaining a subject's consent to participate, I set up an appointment to conduct the interview. At the interview, I attempted to develop a positive rapport with each subject by explaining the purpose of the interview, why the woman was chosen as a subject, and by giving further assurance about confidentiality (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). I also tried to identify with each subject by relating my own undergraduate athletic experiences. Each subject was asked if she objected to having her interview tape recorded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). None did. The tape recorder was set outside her line of vision. It was expected that each

interview would take approximately two hours; each subject was notified of this fact before an appointment was made. On the average, interviews with athletes took 90 minutes and with nonathletes 30 minutes.

I attempted to conduct each interview session in the same, but flexible, manner (i.e. discussing the areas under study in the same order). Inconsistencies inevitably arose as some subjects offered answers more freely than others. Similarly, some got off-track and answered questions from a later area. The variation in interview format should not have affected the results however since it was the information, not the order in which it was obtained, that was most important. Although not necessary, I was prepared to conduct follow-up interviews with the same subjects if necessary to collect additional data.

Design and Instrumentation

The questions asked during each interview focused on five areas (three of which were based on those used by Adler and Adler) in an attempt to permit the interviewer to understand the college experience of each subject. I was able to incorporate all of Adler and Adler's questions into three areas (academic expectations, classroom and academic experiences, and athletic experiences), which allowed me the time to examine additional topics. Since I used no set interview schedule, the questions asked varied from interview to interview. I attempted to ask questions which would help illicit the perceptions of each athlete. Below are the five areas of interest and a sample question from each.

1. Academic Expectations. Prior to entering college how did you feel about your upcoming academic experience?
2. Classroom and Academic Experiences. How do nonathletes, such as those in your classes treat you when they discover you are an athlete?
3. Attitudes of Self and Others. How did you learn to cope with the transition from high school to college athletics?
4. Athletic Experiences. Prior to entering college how did you feel about playing your sport?
5. Role of Gender and Role of Race. What does being a female athlete mean to you?

Analysis

I transcribed the interviews and omitted any of the material that did not address concerns of the study. Following transcription I classified the data into the five categories discussed earlier. I then examined the data in each category to look for common themes or assertions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). After establishing these assertions, I examined the data for evidence which supported and which failed to support each assertion. Each theme or assertion was then refined and again an examination for corroborating evidence followed. This process continued until the assertions fit the data. The results collected from the female athletes were compared, where appropriate, to those from the female nonathletes and to those from the male athletes as reported in Adler and Adler's study.

CHAPTER III

Results and Discussion

Academic Expectations

What goes through the mind of the future collegiate student-athletes between the time they receive that scholarship offer and the time they step on campus at the beginning of their freshman year? Do they foresee their college experience primarily in terms of athletics, academics, or both? I found that the majority of the athletes had considered academics prior to actually stepping in the classroom. They realized that aligning scholastic and athletic goals would be more difficult than it was in high school, but as one freshman stated:

> I knew it would be harder than high school. I'd always done well in high school; I had good study habits so I really didn't think it was going to be that much of a change for me.

Although this statement was representative of most of the athletes' comments, a different theme seemed to emerge among some of the basketball players. Several of these student-athletes claimed that they thought primarily about their sport and thought little about college or academics prior to arriving on campus. One player expressed the following sentiments:

> Academics scared me more than basketball scared me, but even the week before school started I was thinking more about basketball than academics. I felt that academics would just fall in and basketball would take forever.

Another player admitted to thinking about both sport and school. She explained:

> I thought about the academics I would say only 20% compared to the 80% that I thought about basketball. When it came time to choose a school, I figured that all the schools I was choosing between were good academic schools, and so I didn't give it much thought.

In this respect the athletes were similar to the majority of the nonathletes who had also thought about their impending academic experiences prior to arriving for classes. Most nonathletes were worried about their classes and thought they would be difficult. One female, however, reported that she was more interested in college life than in academics, while another nonathlete explained:

> I knew it was going to be harder than high school, but if anything I was thinking more of adjusting to living away from home and living out of state, and the social aspects. It [the academics] wasn't bothering me all that much.

Although most of the student-athletes reported thinking about college and academics prior to their actual arrival, I received mixed reactions when examining the athletes' feelings of preparedness for the university classroom. The size and academic orientation of the high school appeared to be the major factors in explaining the preparedness of these athletes for college. Those from large or private schools thought that they had been very prepared for college; many had been enrolled in college preparatory classes in high school and had considered some of their first college classes to be review. As one senior stated:

> My high school was very highly academic; the counselors led me to a point where I was ready for college. I wasn't scared at all because I felt I was ready, coming from one of the best high schools in the state. I really thought I was ready.

On the other hand, one athlete from a small high school said that she had not had the opportunities that her teammates from larger high schools had experienced. She said of a class she had with these teammates:

> They just blew me away in that class. They had so much more background--they actually knew what the professor was talking about. I had to read the chapters over and over so that I could get it.

Several of the basketball and volleyball players mentioned that they had not been very well prepared for college. The answers given by these women indicated that they though they should have studied more, pushed themselves harder, and taken relevant rather than merely interesting or easy classes in high school. The following comment by a senior best summed up the sentiments of this group:

> In a broad view I don't think I came out of high school very smart. I didn't learn very many things.

The athletes were also asked about the impact Proposition 48 had on their preparedness for college. The majority of the women said that the Proposition 48 requirements had not made a difference or would not have better prepared them for college. Several athletes mentioned that they had attained good grades in high school, thus they had not been concerned about the grade point specifications. One former athlete explained:

> In high school I was getting "A"s and "B"s, so I was never worried about having a good GPA. I think for some athletes, that may really push them. I think sometimes the male athletes need to know that they have to have a certain grade point average to go on to college.

Several athletes said that the requirements had helped to motivate them to study hard and to try to obtain good grades, while another athlete appeared apathetic toward the whole idea:

> I knew all that Proposition 48 stuff was going on, but I never concerned myself with it.

The lack of interest in Proposition 48 by these women may have been due to the fact that few high schools stressed meeting the requirements. Only two athletes--both volleyball players--mentioned that the meeting of certain academic requirements had been stressed by school faculty involved with athletes. One freshman described:

> You had to pass around a note every week to your teachers to make sure you were doing O.K. in your classes.

Of those who attended high schools where little mention was made of meeting minimum academic requirements as stipulated by Proposition 48, several reported that academics had been stressed anyway, and not just with the athletes. Two others implied that since they were the only ones from their respective high school to ever play college sports, no one--coaches or administrators--had experience in handling such matters. One athlete revealed that she was unaware of the academic standards required by Proposition 48 until her current college coach had explained them during a recruiting visit. A volleyball player made the following comments when asked if her high school had stressed meeting Proposition 48 requirements:

> Not that I know of, and that kind of angered me. Maybe they did it with people who were more in trouble with their grades, but not that I ever recognized. I think that's pretty sad.

The majority of the nonathletes agreed with the athletes that their high school educations had prepared them for college. One junior said:

> I took the college prep classes and a lot of kids didn't; they probably weren't ready for college when they got here.

The comments of several nonathletes, and athletes as well, echoed the thoughts of the above junior; they wished they would have taken more college preparatory classes in high school.

General Educational Attitude. Now that they were at college, the majority of the subjects acknowledged that being an athlete had helped them to get an education. Several females mentioned the "free education." As one junior explained:

> I wouldn't be going to a major university if I weren't an athlete. I would never have been able to pay for college.

Others said that their scholarship had alleviated many of the financial pressures faced by their nonathletic friends. As this volleyball player put it:

> I'm getting an education by being an athlete. It [the scholarship] takes a lot of the pressure off. I hear all these people who are under financial pressures; that makes it easier on me. That way I think it helps me get an education.

Advantages cited included mandatory study halls, available tutors, early class scheduling, and guaranteed enrollment in needed classes. The most common benefit reported by athletes was that being in athletics had forced them to be more disciplined. One volleyball player offered the following explanation:

> I'm more disciplined to study and I know I have to study more because I don't have the time that most people do. When I do have time to study, I do study; I don't just blow it off. I have not other time, so I have to do it. It really helps.

A former basketball player provided this example:

> This term I wasn't playing basketball and my grades went down a little bit because I wasn't budgeting my time. All my life I played a sport and I had to budget my time. Now, I'm having too much fun and I'll say I'll do it later but I didn't. I think sports helped me budget my time and get into academics.

Although most of the subjects felt athletic involvement had helped them to secure an education, several mentioned they would have achieved the same level of education if they had not been involved in athletics.

The tone of the interviews indicated the athletes were concerned about getting an education and wanted to be thought of as legitimate students. These sentiments were echoed in their desire to get an education and a degree, rather than to just perform well enough in the classroom to remain eligible. This conviction was expressed by a sophomore volleyball player who said:

> I want to get out of here with a real good grade point average and start out in a real good job. If I was ever not eligible, that would be the shock of my life.

The feelings of a basketball player paralleled those of her fellow athlete, as she announced:

> I want to get a degree. There is not doubt in my mind that I came to school to graduate and to hopefully go on to bigger and better things.

While most of the athletes had been determined to get good educations, the possibility of ineligibility as a result of low grades had been considered by 30% of the women at one point during their college careers. For most of the females, such academic limbo came during their

freshmen year when they had not known what to expect scholastically. A junior described:

> When I was a freshman it scared me to death. I was scared I was gonna be embarrassed; if my hometown got hold of that, I was gonna be embarrassed. That motivated me to keep up, to keep solid.

Reasons given by those who reported never having worried about unacceptable grades included always doing well in high school and having no experience with doing poorly. The remarks of a volleyball player follow:

> They have them so low [the eligibility requirements]. I think when I entered you had to get a 1.5. You have to be trying pretty hard to be failing those classes.

It is not surprising then, that all of the players said that they would continue to attend college if their eligibility ended before they were ready to graduate; the most common reasons included the free education, the time invested, and the need for an education to get a good job. As one senior reported.

> Yes, I still want to graduate, who wouldn't want to?

The free education was mentioned by a basketball player who said:

> Yes, especially since they pay for it. They are doing everything possible for you to get it. You have to take advantage of it.

Finally, a volleyball player expressed amazement as she thought about people who would quit school when their eligibility was over. She admitted:

> I don't understand people who go to college and have one class left or one credit and they don't finish it. I don't understand that at all.

As one may have expected from reading the comments above, the student-athletes were all optimistic about their likelihood of graduating. One senior said:

> It was a definite; there was no way I was going to be one of these statistics saying she went through but she never got her diploma.

Words by a volleyball player best summarized the attitudes of all the athletes:

> I planned on coming here and graduating.

Perhaps the athletes' commitment to acquiring a college degree was related to the fact that they had all believed a college education would enhance their abilities to become successful members of society. All the athletes' cited positive relationships between a college education and success; two major themes that emphasized the association between college and success emerged. One general concept was that it was the degree rather than the education alone that was important. As a freshman explained:

> Sometimes it doesn't matter how smart you are, if you haven't been to college people won't give you a second look. Sometimes its [the degree] for other people more so than for yourself.

Another athlete, a sophomore proposed:

> My opinion is that employers are just looking to see if you really made it through college, not necessarily what books you read.

The other argument used by the women to explain the correlation between a college education and success was that the experiences, growth, and

independence gained in college were as important as the books and classroom learning. In the words of one volleyball player:

> I definitely think my education in college will help me out a lot. Just the fact of being here and going out on your own and meeting new people and stuff, that helps you grow up a lot.

The sentiments of this senior best expressed the athletes' ideas about their education:

> I think that college is really going to help me in society, probably 50% what I learn in the classroom and 50% what I learn outside the classroom. I've grown up and learned so many things that are going to help me--tons of things.

Like the student-athletes, all the nonathletes admitted that they had been optimistic, before arriving at college, about their likelihood of graduating. Again like the athletes, all of the nonathletes thought that a college education would help them to become successful members of our society. As one freshman stated:

> If you have a college degree there are a lot of different things you can do with it. You don't have to do exactly what you majored in; you can go into a lot of different things.

It was evident by examination of the entire samples' remarks that the importance of a college education in today's society was common knowledge and that these students came with high expectations.

The nonathletes, however, appeared to to have been more concerned with a social life than the athletes. As one sophomore explained when asked about the importance of an education:

> It's very important. I know I need the education to graduate and get a job and all that, but I want a

> social education also. I have to go out and live in the real world. It's an education all around. There is social and there is academic.

Perhaps the student-athletes viewed their travelling and interacting with different types of people as a social education, or perhaps the athletes' hectic schedules had not allowed them the time for the social life mentioned by the nonathletes. Possibly also, a social life may not have been part of the athletes goal; they may have come to college for athletics and academics while the nonathletes may have come for the social life and academics.

Another topic that was discussed centered on expectations for differential academic treatment, based on athletic status. Of all the athletes who responded to this question, only one person expected to get special breaks. This was due, she said, to her experiences in high school, where other family members were also good athletes and received attention state-wide for their athletic abilities. The remainder of the student-athletes had not expected to receive any special treatment as a result of their athletic status. As one volleyball player commented:

> I kind of hoped I wouldn't be treated differently as an athlete. I was kind of hoping that not everybody would know that I was an athlete, and just get along the same as everyone else.

In summary then, athletic orientation had little impact on the academic expectations of the sample. The majority of the women entered college feeling idealistic about their impending academic experiences, wanting more out of their education than just a degree, and thinking a college education would help them to be successful in society. In addition, most of the women wanted to graduate and were

optimistic about their chances of doing so. More specifically, the female athletes had not expected to be pampered, knowing college would require hard work and sacrifices. The athletes thought an education was important and the importance of academics increased as they became older; they began with an idealistic view of education and were strengthened in that view.

The idealistic expectation of these female athletes has been echoed in other studies. The men comprising Adler and Adler's (1985) sample entered college feeling idealistic about their imminent academic experiences and thought a college education would help them to be successful in society. They also wanted to graduate and were optimistic about their chances.

There are several factors that may have accounted for the idealistic expectations of both groups of athletes about academic experiences. First, several researchers (for a summary of research see Coakley, 1986; Spreitzer & Pugh, 1973) have found that high school athletes had higher academic aspirations than nonathletes. These college aspirations were attributed to prestige, increased academic support, encouragement and preferential treatment (Coakley, 1986). The idealistic expectations of the present sample and Adler and Adler's samples may have been, in part, a result of these high aspirations which may have led to idealistic expectations by the athletes for the collegiate experience. Second, while the athletes were in the recruiting process, coaches and others may have emphasized getting an education and stressed the availability of an

academic support staff such as tutors and study halls which served the athletes. Thus these athletes may have assumed that graduation was inevitable.

The hard work by athletes to actualize these academic expectations and the showing of an increasing interest in their education has been substantiated only by Blinde (1987). Blinde studied female athletes from the Big Ten conference and found that as these athletes became older, their interest in sport decreased while their desire to obtain an education increased. The results of the current study echoed her results.

In contrast, Adler and Adler (1985) found that their sample of male athletes expected to receive special attention, believed that simply by attending classes they would "earn" their degrees, and lost interest in school after their first year. Adler and Adler (1985) described this as progressing from "an early phase of idealism about their impending academic experiences to an eventual stage of pragmatic detachment" (p. 248). Coakley (1986) has suggested that pressure to win and to make money often led athletes to focus on eligibility rather than on an education or academics while Edwards (1984) asserted that athletes were uninterested in and unprepared for academics. Perhaps both Coakley and Edwards were referring to the participants in men's revenue sports. It seems possible then that the differences in results of the current study and of Blinde with those of Adler and Adler, Coakley, and Edwards were a function of gender.

Gender differences in the actualization of academic expectations may have occurred for several reasons. First, since 45% of the men in Adler and Adler's sample were extremely talented players with opportunities to play professionally, they may not have cared about academics. Second, perhaps the male athletes to whom Coakley referred thought they could get by in life with sports rather than with education, while the women in the sample knew they would need a college degree to earn decent salaries. An increased awareness of the lack of sport-related career opportunities open to them may have encouraged the women in these studies to devote more of their time and energy to a realistic means of support than to a "leisure activity." Third, possibly the male athletes may have seen themselves increasingly more as athletes only, rather than student-athletes due in part to the attention they received as athletes and in part due to their isolation. These three reasons may have operated together to yield gender differences which have helped to explain why the female athletes were able to actualize their academic expectations while the male athletes were not.

Classroom and Academic Experiences

A second area investigated was how the female student-athletes perceived classroom and academic experiences. The topic will be discussed in terms of three subareas: general information about the subjects, general educational attitude, and the student-athlete in the academic arena.

General Information. The academic majors of the women could not be reported in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents and

nonrespondents. Approximately six of the women were no preference majors. The major colleges of those athletes who had declared majors, however, ranged from communications to business to education. The proportion of athletes and nonathletes in each reported major was similar. Twice as many athletes than nonathletes had changed their majors since they first enrolled in college; seventy-five percent of the nonfreshmen athletes reported that they had changed their major areas of study since they had first enrolled in college (only two women switched from no preference to their current major). The women offered no common explanations which explained such occurrences. Perhaps some of the athletes had to revert to less demanding areas of study due to excessive sport-related obligations. Others may have thought so much about their sport that they did not have time to consider post-athletic careers, thus they may have jumped from one major to the next. Possibly also, since the athletes were expected to show progress toward a degree as a part of NCAA eligibility by their junior year, some may have chosen the first one that came to mind. The majority of both athletes and nonathletes said that they enjoyed their classes and their current majors, and believed the information they had learned would help them after graduation.

The reported grade point averages for the basketball players ranged from 2.2 to 3.3 with a mean of 2.8, while the grade point averages for the volleyball players ranged from 2.6 to 3.5 with a mean of 3.1. Thus, the student-athletes studied had a grand mean grade point average of 2.9. Most women admitted they would have liked to or could have done better

academically but also pointed out that they were currently getting higher grades than when they first started college.

Several female athletes reported they had not pushed themselves enough scholastically, as one freshman confessed:

> It's my own fault. It's not because it's hard necessarily, it's because I don't apply myself. The big joke on my floor is that I actually studied for finals; people came down to share the moment with me.

A former athlete wished her priorities would have been different when she was in college. She recounted:

> In choosing _____ [university] I was more concentrated on the athletics than the academics. If I could do it all over again I would have studied harder; I would have really pushed myself, and I didn't. I was too much into the athletic aspect. I wish I would do the first two years over.

One student-athlete conveyed that she was satisfied with her grades, particularly when she figured how much time she devoted to her sport. Similarly, about half of the nonathletes had not achieved the grades they felt they could have, but several mentioned they had done as well as they thought they could. Even of those who had performed up to their expectations, a few said they could have done better. The social dimension seemed to play a role. One sophomore said:

> I know I could do better if I tried harder, but that is a lot of stress on my shoulders. I'm here to have fun in addition to going to school.

Overall, however, the responses of the athletes and the nonathletes were quite similar.

In contrast, the academic achievements of the athletes, as measured by self-reported grade point averages, appeared to have been slightly

higher than those reported by the nonathletes. The mean grade point average for the athletes was 2.9 with a range of 1.3 points, while the mean for the nonathletes was 2.6 with a range of 1.5 points. This difference may be a function of sampling error. If not, it is possible that the athletes may have exerted more effort academically because they knew dropping grade points removed them from competition. Nonathletes, however, may not have had such incentives. Another possible explanation of the higher grade point averages of the athletes was that the time constraints imposed on them may have influenced them to approach academics in a more diligent manner and to use the time they had more wisely. Or perhaps only athletes with good high school GPAs had been recruited to play college athletics.

It was difficult to determine if the subjects thought their classes were easier or harder than they had anticipated. Many of the student-athletes reported that their classes were easier than they had expected, perhaps because they had thought the academics would be incredibly demanding. As one sophomore offered:

> They [the classes] were pretty easy when I came here, from what I expected. I just expected ungodly exams and essays, and all this terrible stuff I'd heard about college. It was just your basic "you get the material, you study it, and you take a multiple choice exam."

Another volleyball player shared a similar perspective:

> Some [classes] are more difficult and some are easier. In general the academics is easier than I thought it was gonna be. I go to them if they're harder and I learn more if they're harder. I don't pay attention as much if the classes are easier.

Conversely, a junior made the following comment:

> I guess it's been more difficult. They throw all this stuff on you that you have to know in two days. It's ridiculous.

Like one of the athletes above, several subjects mentioned that some of their classes were more difficult or others were easier than they had expected. Some found general education classes harder than those in their respective majors, while classes they had liked or were interested in were less difficult. A number of women thought their classes had been more demanding than they had anticipated, citing difficult tests as well as excessive amounts of homework and reading as detrimental factors.

While several athletes reported that the content of their classes was more difficult than they had expected, only one nonathlete felt this was true. Most of the nonathletes said their classes were easier than they had anticipated. Perhaps the sport-related time demands placed on the athletes had affected such opinions. Possibly, the athletes may have thought their classes were more difficult because they had heard stories about athletes flunking out of college; perhaps they thought of going to college only for athletics rather than for athletics and academics.

Since the athletes were equally divided responses on questions pertaining to the ease or difficulty of their classes, I asked how much effort--on a scale from 1 (little effort) to 10 (great effort)--the subjects had put into acquiring good grades. For basketball players the scores ranged from 5 to 5.7, indicating a positive correlation between year, school and effort; as the athletes became older they had exerted more effort academically. Two seniors confirmed this idea by reporting that they had tried harder now than they had used to. One former athlete revealed:

> As I got older I got wiser. I was smart on what I needed to study, how much I needed to, and the right material.

One subject mentioned her effort decreased throughout each term, while another stated that she tried harder after her eligibility was over. All of the volleyball players reported levels between 7 and 8. The freshmen tried harder when they had first arrived at college because they had not known what to expect academically. The remainder of the players said that they took their classes more seriously and tried harder than they used to.

The nonathletes on the other hand appeared to have tried harder, on average, to obtain superior grades than the athletes, reporting an average level of 7.7. One possible explanation for the difference may have been that the nonathletes may have had more free time to spend studying. Most of the athletes and nonathletes, however, reported trying harder now than they had in the past, indicating the importance of a college education increased for the sample as they aged.

Many of the athletes--primarily basketball players--confessed that if they had more time to devote to their studies (and thus spending less time in the gym), it would have increased their interest in academics and improved their grades and study habits. One former athlete said:

> More time definitely would have helped. You finish practice and you're tired, and it's hard to study when you're tired; it's hard to remember things when you're tired.

Several athletes thought they would have had greater intensity where academics were concerned if they would have had more interesting classes

or more classes in their major. The remainder of the responses varied, and included the following idea proposed by a senior basketball player:

> I think incentives would [help increase interest in academics]. Maybe give an extra sweatshirt at the end of the year for somebody who does above a 3.0. I know some of my teammates think, "If I'm eligible, what else is there"?

Improving grades and study habits had to have been something the individual desired, according to another basketball player:

> I would just have to start putting more emphasis on it, and I don't. It all comes from me. I don't put as much emphasis on it as I should. Especially now, I'm more into having a good time. My friends are more important to me than getting the best grade possible. I'll take the average grade and have a little bit of fun.

When the nonathletes discussed what could have been done to increase their interest in academics and improve their study habits or grades, like the student-athletes, several of their responses also revolved around better time management and greater discipline. For the nonathletes this appeared more related to motivation than it did for the athletes, who had to deal with sport-imposed time constraints. A number of athletes and nonathletes alike reported that their study habits and grades would have improved if their classes had been more enjoyable and interesting. Finally, one junior mentioned not having to work would have helped her academically. If one considered an athletic scholarship analogous to a job, as some of the athletes did, the nonathlete's response could have been similar to that of the athletes who reported that their grades/study habits would have increased if they did not have to devote so much time to their respective sports.

The last area examined in this section on general educational information were the subjects' attitudes toward academics and if they had changed since their arrival at college. The majority of the athletes on both teams indicated their perspectives had indeed changed. Many were more motivated and took their studies more seriously than they had previously. As this basketball player revealed:

> I put more emphasis on it the older I get. First of all I realize how lucky I am to get a free education, and I better start taking advantage of it. And I want to be as smart as I can be, I don't want to be a dumb shit, so I can get a good job and people will say, "That girl has her stuff together, she knows what she's doing."

Those who felt that their attitudes toward school had not necessarily changed for the better said they felt like they had wasted their money, since many of their classes had been taught by foreign teaching assistants. Some subject whose academic disposition had not changed since she had been at college made the following comment:

> I've always looked at school as helping me eventually. I've always liked school; I like learning.

As was the case with their athletic counterparts, the majority of the nonathletes indicated their attitudes toward school had changed since their arrival at college. Many said that academics had become more important, as one junior explained:

> I've become more study-oriented. I've learned that if you don't go to classes, you lose out. If you don't study, you lose out. No one is going to do anything for you, you have to do it for yourself.

In general, the nonathletes' comments illustrated that attitudes toward academics had changed in a positive direction. However, two students

stated that they were putting less emphasis on school than had been the case in the past. As one sophomore put it:

> I'm burned out a little bit. Trying a little less than I used to.

Thus overall, athletes and nonathletes were quite similar in that both groups said that they enjoyed their classes and majors, indicated that their attitudes toward academics had changed in a positive direction since their arrival at college, and thought that better time management and greater discipline would have improved their grades/study habits.

General Educational Attitude. When asked about the variability of academic achievement among athletes, several women mentioned the importance of background and high school education. As one former basketball player reported:

> I think a lot of it has to do with high school. I know a couple of people on the team that come from a high school where the counselors never stressed taking the college prep classes, and it didn't matter what kind of grades you got in that high school. In mine it did; they stressed it a lot. It had a great impact on me.

Other subjects suggested that athletes who were good students were those who wanted an education and applied themselves. This senior asserted:

> I think it's application, the desire to do it. You have to want to do it. You come home at night and you're tired--you have to push yourself to do some homework.

Yet another explanation involved the carry-over effect from excellence on the court to excellence in the classroom, as a former volleyball player suggested:

> I think all athletes have something in them about perseverance; working with it until you get your way or you win a point. Points might be the grading system. In that way they see four points that they can achieve; they're going for broke. It might be correlated with winning.

When the same question was posed to the nonathletes--why nonathletes were good students--their responses proved quite similar to those of the athletes. The most common replies included effort, motivation, discipline, and intelligence.

The Student-Athlete in the Academic Arena. It has been reported (Adler & Adler, 1985) that some athletes would rather not try academically than to try and fail. When this scenerio was presented to the athletes in the current study, the majority disagreed with it, and said that they would always try. As one freshman explained:

> You can't say that you're never going to try again. You've got to keep trying. It's just like the sport that you play; you lose and you can't give up, otherwise you'll never get anywhere. You've got to keep trying.

Other athletes likened trying in the classroom to never giving up on the court. As a volleyball player observed:

> If you're in athletics I think you'd try anyway, just because if you're a serious athlete you've been geared to try even if you fail.

Although most of the athletes stated that they would always try to do their best in the classroom or in the gym, several disagreed with the above depiction. A basketball player reasoned:

> If you gave me the two choices and I was gonna fail, I'd say not try and fail.

A junior also empathized with Adler and Adler's finding, as she described:

> I've felt that way sometimes. When I've done poorly on mid-terms, knowing I could bring the grade up, I've said "Why should I even try, I know I'm gonna fail"?

Fortunately, the pessimism expressed above appeared to have been the exception rather than the rule, as such an attitude may facilitate overall laziness.

Another topic I explored was whether or not the athletes thought they had to work harder than nonathletes to get an education. A majority of the athletes thought they had to work harder, indicating that too much time devoted to their respective sports was the main reason for neglect of their academic responsibilities. One senior revealed:

> You have to force yourself to study. You have to actually sit yourself down and apply yourself. I think it's harder, even though you get the tutors and stuff like that. They make it very possible for you to get it, but you still have to have the motivation to get it. Regular students are here because they want to be here, they don't have any other incentive. Student-athletes are here first and foremost because they were recruited for their athletic skills; I think it's harder for them to get motivated.

Although one basketball player said that athletes did not have to work harder than nonathletes, she contradicted her original answer by saying that she did have to work harder. She stated:

> I just think it's real easy for people to go though college when they don't play athletics. I still don't think it's as hard, even having a jog and going to college, as it is playing sports and going to college. I think of all the time that I would have to do whatever I wanted--sleep during the day and schedule classes at noon.

In addition, these athletes felt that they had to work more at budgeting their time and to maintain a certain GPA, and that it took them more than four years to graduate. In contrast, other athletes mentioned not having to work as hard as nonathletes. They did so with one qualification: they worked harder than non-job holding students and less than job-holding students.

The notion of missing classes due to athletic commitments was also discussed with the student-athletes. The majority of the subjects had expected to miss many classes because of their sport; fortunately, they reported having to miss very few classes. To accomplish this the athletes scheduled their classes around sports; they avoided scheduling classes that met on Fridays when their sports were in season. When they had to be absent, however, most of the athletes reported that their instructors were either supportive or indifferent toward their absenteeism. As one senior mentioned:

> I've only had one class that I've had to miss, and I handed my work in early. Afterwards he asked me how my volleyball went. I think that the professors are probably really supportive.... all the ones I've come in contact with.

The following positive situation was shared by another senior:

> When I went for Nationals I had to leave halfway through spring term, and I had to take incompletes and come back at the end of the summer and complete everything. They were completely supportive in my field. They were really helpful.

The other most common response was mirrored in the words of a basketball player. She explained:

> They just tell me to get the notes. They don't make it hard, they are more indifferent. They know I can't do anyting about it.

Some professors appeared more suspicious than others when students were absent for their classes as the comments of one volleyball player illustrated:

> A couple have been difficult. One didn't believe me and made me bring a signed letter from my coach.

Similarly, another volleyball player experienced difficulties from one of her professors:

> I had a French teacher who didn't appreciate the fact that I was missing class. I think maybe it's because he's from France and there is a totally different thing with athletics there; it's not as important. It was kind of a pain to say that I wasn't going to be there.

The sentiments of a senior appeared to summarize the situation rather well--having to miss class due to previous athletic commitments--almost pleading for compassion as she explained:

> Some people understand the situation. I don't think they are being more lenient on us, they're being understanding.

Through discussions with the athletes concerning classroom and academic experiences, I learned that all were concerned about receiving a good education at college; all believed discipline and motivation were the keys to academic success. Throughout these discussions it was apparent that the perceptions and experiences of both the athletes and nonathletes were more similar than different. Whatever their grade point averages, almost the entire sample mentioned they could have and would like to have done better academically. In addition, most of the subjects

agreed that their attitudes toward academics had changed since they first arrived at college; they now exerted more effort and took academics more seriously than in their younger years. Finally, athletes and nonathletes alike felt that student-athletes had worked harder than nonathletes to get a college education.

In many ways the literature related to classroom and academic experiences of athletes was contradictory to the results obtained in the present study. First, the male athletes sampled by Adler and Adler (1985) were uninterested in academics. They felt their classes lacked "academic or practical merit, and were either comical, demeaning, or both" (Adler & Adler, 1985, p. 246). Conversely, the females in the current study were interested in obtaining an education and liked both their classes and their majors. The males' disinterest may have stemmed from an underdeveloped academic mind-set as a result of too much time spent on basketball, or perhaps they had begun to see themselves as athletes not scholars.

The second way in which the results of the previous research differed from the current study concerned the idea of "clustering." According to Case, Greer, and Brown (1987), clustering is the "grouping of a disproportionate percentage of athletes into selected majors when compared to overall university percentage in the same major" (p. 48). Perhaps clustering is more commonplace among male athletes. Case et al. (1987) reported that 71% of male athletes and 26% of female athletes were

clustered in the same majors. Similarly, other researchers (Raney et al., 1986) reported that physical education courses accounted for the largest single source of credits among male basketball, football, and basketball players. In the current study which included 23 athletes, 12 different major areas were represented, which indicated that there was little if any academic clustering. In addition, there were only two physical education majors. Perhaps the female athletes realized that there were few sport-related careers open to them and thus majored in more lucrative areas. Possibly also, the women's coaches may not have been as involved in the academic lives of their players as may have been the case with the men's coaches (i.e. men's coaches may have made degree plans and may have chosen athletes classes whereas women's coaches may have allowed their athletes to make academic decisions). Similarly, pressure to win and make money may have motivated the coach in Adler and Adler's (1985) study to encourage their male athletes to choose less demanding majors or take classes taught by sympathetic faculty.

While many researchers reported that athletes have had higher grade point averages than nonathletes (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Purdy et al., 1982), others believed the reverse was true (Edwards, 1984; Raney et al., 1986). The results of the current study--where the mean GPA for athletes was 2.9 and for nonathletes was 2.6--were in agreement with the former group of researchers, indicating a positive relationship between sport participation and university GPA (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986). Such an assertion could have been misleading for several reasons. First, the GPAs were obtained from the subjects via self-report. In an effort to

appear more intelligent, all or some of the women may have lied about their grade point averages. Second, the small sample size of both athletes and and nonathletes may not have been large enough to generalize to the entire population of female athletes and nonathletes. Finally, only one group of researchers--Purdy et al. (1982)--broke the GPAs down by gender, which made the comparison of academic achievement across research studies difficult.

Leonard (1986), examined the classroom and academic experiences of male basketball players. These athletes thought they had made greater sacrifices than nonathletes to get an education. The female athletes in the current study concurred. Perhaps the time demands on both male and female athletes made it difficult for them to get the education they desired. By the time the athletes had gotten around to studying, their nonathletic counterparts may have finished and were ready to socialize or engage in other leisure activities. Similarly, classes with labs may have been off limits to athletes because of their need to schedule classes around athletics. Athletes involved in other sports and athletic divisions may need to be sampled, however, before broader generalizations can be made.

Athletic Experiences

In this section the athletes' athletic experiences are discussed in an academic context. On average, the basketball players reported that they spent 3.9 hours and 2.7 hours per day on basketball in and out of

season respectively. Similarly, the volleyball players allocated 4.2 hours per day and 2 hours per day for volleyball in and out of season, respectively.

To the average nonathlete, three to four hours per day may seem like an excessive amount of time to devote to a physical activity; however, the majority of the athletes expected, and were expected, to put a great deal of time into their respective sports. Even though the athletes had anticipated college athletics to be demanding, many members of both teams believed their practices were too long and that their sport ruled their lives. As one freshman said:

> You can't do very much because you always have to do something for basketball.

Another freshman had this to say about the off-season when they only practiced 2 hours per day:

> It's just incredible how much time I have. I have so much time to do everything. I like it.

It was not only the freshmen who felt pressure due to athletic-related time demands as was evident by the comments of an older athlete:

> At times it made me pull my hair out. You'd go to classes, than right away you'd go to practice, then you'd go home. It would be at least an hour 'til you ate. A lot of times I didn't get into the swing of books or household commitments until 8:00 or 9:00. It pushes you to a later time to get everything else done.

Not all the athletes thought their sports were overly demanding on their time. A few mentioned that they did not mind the time commitment, primarily because it was a fair trade for a free education. As this basketball player explained:

> They were giving me a scholarship and I wanted to give them something in return. I didn't want to cheat them out. I felt like I gave them just as much as they gave me.

Another basketball player gave this reason when asked why she had not thought the time commitment was excessively demanding:

> Most of the other people I know around here just sleep half of the time, so I figure that I'm doing something.

Similarly, one sophomore said:

> You're getting your workouts in there, you're spending time with friends; it includes a lot of things that other people aren't putting aside four hours for.

From the responses cited above it was clear that these athletes used many different arguments to justify their willingness to spend four to five hours each day in the gym. Only one athlete, however, gave the following motive:

> I would play more if people wanted to stick around, but we have to get out of there for the guys. I'm doing this because I love basketball, not because I want a free education.

Since the nonathletes did not have athletic experience that could be compared to the athletes', they were asked if they had a job or extracurricular activity that demanded quite a bit of time, perhaps interfering with academics. Four of the females did not have jobs, while the remaining subjects reported belonging to clubs or working at jobs that required between 5 and 30 hours of their time each week. Those females who worked more than 20 hours each week felt that their jobs had indeed interfered with their academic performance, as one senior described:

> I know it does [interfere with school]. I have a tendency to come home and watch T. V.; too tired. I do most of my studying on the weekends or right before the tests.

These comments appeared quite similar to those of some athletes in their description of the effect their sports participation had on their scholastic performance. Several athletes also mentioned that their athletic commitments forced them to use their time wisely, and that occasionally they performed better in the classroom when their sports were in season. The same appeared to be true of nonathletes and their jobs, as one senior explained:

> The more busy I am, the more I get done. I think it just kind of pushed me more. When I didn't work I didn't do as well in school because I had more leisure time.

Conversely, a few of the nonathletes thought their jobs did not interfere with their scholastic performance. Overall, the effects of sport and work on academics appeared to be quite similar for the athletes and nonathletes alike.

In the previous section, it was established that the athletes had various motives for spending 30 plus hours per week on their respective sports, including travel time and special medical therapy due to injuries. Since none of the athletes mentioned fun as a motive, I focused on this by asking if they were having fun in college athletics and if they had more fun in high school. The responses were equally divided, and no distinctions with respect to type of sport and academic class appeared. Those who had more fun in high school cited three main reasons for this: 1) participating in sports was much more difficult in

college; 2) losing occured much more in college (this was mentioned quite often by the volleyball players), and 3) feeling more pressure in college. As one basketball player explained:

> [In high school] you did it because you were interested and you enjoyed it. They weren't paying you so there was no pressure to perform the right way or you'd be on the bench.

Those who mentioned having more fun playing in college said this was due to the higher level of competition, the equal level of teammate ability, and the opportunity to travel extensively.

While the responses were equally divided betweeen those athletes who had more fun playing their sport in college and those who had more fun in high school, the majority of the subjects had been more concerned about winning in high school than the were in college. Most of those who were more concerned in high school mentioned that their high school teams were undefeated; as a result they felt more pressure to stay on top and to remain undefeated. As one basketball player said:

> In high school I definitely had to win; I couldn't stand losing. When I came here I got adjusted to losing. We lost a lot and I couldn't handle it the first year; it was really hard for me to take because I never lost before, really.

As mentioned by the athlete above and many others, collegiate sport was a difficult adjustment because it meant having to adapt to losing. Several of the females mentioned shifting their foci from winning to playing well. One former volleyball player had this to say in retrospect:

> In college, just to be playing at a higher level is more important than winning.

Not all the athletes were more committed to winning in high school than they were in college. One woman who was more concerned in college mentioned being expected to win in college, and there being more pressure to win at that level. As one senior explained:

> In high school it was a lot more laid back. I like the way it is here, but you don't let up for a second, not a second. Unless you're totally alive for basketball, forget it.

In contrast, a few of the athletes were equally concerned about winning in college and in high school. One female said that she loved to win no matter where she played.

Since many of the athletes mentioned that they thought of athletics as a job, they were asked if they felt like they owed it to their employers--coaches and administrators--to perform well athletically. All of the volleyball players responded affirmatively to the question. As one sophomore described:

> Sure I feel like I owe it to _____ [the coach] because she did give me the chance to play here on a scholarship. So, I always feel like I have to work my butt off 'cuz she gave me a chance.

Similarly, a freshman responded:

> That's a lot of money that they could have gave to another person; if you're gonna screw off they're gonna be mad. They've invested that money in you so you owe it to them to try your hardest. She [the coach] says that for us to keep getting more money and funds we're going to have to improve, or we might lose our money.

Other responses to the question included that of a senior who said that being on scholarship motivated her when she got sick of her sport, and another felt that she owed it to her teammates who were also on

scholarship. Like the volleyball players, most of the basketball players also indicated they felt they owed it to their coaches to perform well athletically. As one senior explained:

> You always feel that way. I do. I always feel underneath that they're paying you to do this so you better do it right; you always have that feeling. One coach, you can see the dollars and cents adding up in her head every time we go out to dinner or do something wrong; you just see that a lot.

Another basketball player, a freshman compared receiving a scholarship to having a job:

> It's almost like we are paid, to the coaches especially. They expect you to be there. You don't want to get ineligible or anything like that. You don't even want to get hurt because you feel badly. You almost owe it to them because they are the ones that recruited you, they made the decision to bring you here.

On the other hand, several basketball players reported having never felt like they owed it to anyone to do their best. A junior mentioned her coaches believed that the players owed them, but she--the athlete--chose not to internalize it. She stated:

> I've never felt that way. Our coaches have said in the past, "You are $10,000 sitting her... you guys don't know how rich you are sitting here. If we throw all your money in the middle of the locker room how much there would be." I think they were trying to pin-point how much we were costing the university, and we weren't worth it. They were really on us about something. I've never felt that [I owed them]. i don't know how much I'm worth; it doesn't bother me.

Similarly, a freshman basketball player reported she didn't feel an obligation to anyone but herself to play well. In her words:

> As of yet I haven't been doing it because I owe it, I've been doing it because I want to.

Another aspect of the athletic experience I explored was that of media attention and how it affected the athletes. When discussing their respective sports (i.e. basketball and volleyball), the majority of the females thought their sports received more media attention in college. The school newspaper was cited as a major source of information. One of the athletes commented that a sports media person from the university travelled with their team, who helped to dispatch the appropriate information to news sources. Finally, several athletes mentioned coming from small towns with a weekly newspaper, or from areas with so many high schools where it was difficult to get adequate coverage. Conversely, a few of the subjects felt that their sports received less media attention at college. They attributed this to exceptional high school teams and to a losing record in college for volleyball players.

While most of the athletes thought their sports received more media attention in college, only two of the females--both volleyball players--felt that they personally received more attention in college than they had in high school. One athlete mentioned that college coaches pushed news coverage more, while the other athlete said that she was a starter and was highlighted in every article.

Although a couple of the athletes indicated that they received an equal amount of attention in college and in high school, the majority thought they personally received less coverage than they had in high school. The freshmen expected to be noticed less, but thought that would

change with age and experience. Several of the athletes cited the media as a motivator. As one senior put it:

> It's something to strive for. Everybody likes seeing their name in print and it's sort of an incentive for me. If I have a good game I get to see my name in print.

Others found the attention embarrassing and did not know how to react when people mentioned seeing their--the athletes'--picture in the paper or on television. On the other hand, one athlete implied that she became angry when she did not receive enough attention. As she said:

> I don't really care that I don't get any attention until I do something really well and I don't get it. The team knowing it and having it put in the paper so everyone else knows it is different. There are sometimes when I wish I did get more.

Finally, a former basketball player had this to say after dealing with the media for four years:

> I learned really early in college what the press really means. It doesn't mean anything to me really. It's nice to get press and it hurts your feelings when they don't say what you want. You can't let that stuff bother you. Who gets in the paper all the time isn't necessarily the best. I don't judge myself by how much I was in the paper.

Overall, it appeared that the women received less individual and more team media attention in college than they had in high school.

The results of this study differed from those obtained by Adler and Adler (1985) from their sample of male basketball players. Overall, the male and female athletes were in agreement that their respective sports occupied more of their time in college than it had in high school. The male and female athletes disagreed on the following issues: 1) few women

thought their respective sports interfered with academics, whereas the men felt that basketball dominated all facets of their lives; 2) half of the women had more fun playing their sport in high school while all the men agreed with this assertion, and 3) most of the women were more concerned about winning in high school, where the men were more concerned about winning in college.

Several possible explanations existed for the differences that appeared in the athletic experiences of the male and female athletes. The men may have had less fun playing their sport and been more concerned than women about winning in college because they may have felt more pressure from their coach, whose job may have been contingent upon won-loss record due to the revenue producing ability of their sport (Coakley, 1986). A few of the men could also have felt pressure from themselves to excell in order to impress professional scouts.

Several researchers (Blinde, 1987; Greendorfer & Blinde, in press; Lanning, 1982; Snyder, 1985) have suggested that the athletic-related demands placed on collegiate athletes may have forced them to abandon their academic goals. On the contrary, while the female student-athletes in the current study spent more than 30 hours per week on sport, the majority mentioned that their athletic commitments forced them to use their time wisely. Similarly, several subjects reported that occasionally they performed better in the classroom when their sports were in season. Several possible reasons may have existed for the differences in the literature and the current findings. The contradictory findings may have been best be explained by Snyder &

Spreitzer (1983) who said, "sport and academic roles might have little effect on each other, or they might be mutually supporting... one role might enhance the other through the additive effect" (p. 124). One possible explanation may have been that some of the previous research examined male athletes. The women in the present study may have had fewer sport-related demands than the men in Adler and Adler's (1985) sample, which may account for their--the men's--lack of time and/or motivation available for academics. Such an explanation loses some power, however, when one considers that half of the researchers mentioned above used female subjects. The eligibility requirements may have been more demanding at the midwest university in question, which may have motivated the female student-athletes to perform at a higher academic level than those athletes studied by other researchers (Snyder, 1985). Possibly also, athletic participation may have provided the women with qualities related to academic performance (i.e. motivation, increased self-worth) that were generalizable to their academic achievement (Hanks, 1979; Snyder, 1985).

Attitudes of Self and Others

The athletes' attitudes of themselves and others were also examined in the interviews. More specifically, I examined how the student-athlete perceived themselves, how they perceived college from a social perspective, and how the various support people (i.e. friends, parents, coaches, tutors) influenced them.

Most of the student-athletes felt being an athlete helped them to get an education. Only one subject said she felt like a student first

and an athlete second. The majority of the women asserted they felt like athletes, then like students, or they viewed themselves as athletes when their sports were in season and students when their sports were out of season. Such opinions contradicted the responses given when the subjects were asked if they prefer to be referred to as "student-athletes" or "athlete-students." Since most of the females felt like athletes first and students second, one might have expected they would have preferred to have been called "athlete-students." On the contrary, the majority said their title should remain "student-athlete" because their main prioity was to get a degree. A volleyball player justified:

> The main thing is to get your education. If I didn't play volleyball I'd still be going to college, so it's just an added thing.

Subjects who were advocates of the term "student-athlete" justified their decision by implying that they must be eligible in the classroom in order to compete in sports. One such proponent observed:

> I think "student-athlete" is the best because that's why you're here anyway, to go to school. At times it becomes "athlete-student," but that's only temporary. Most of the year it should be "student-athlete." There might be one or two weeks that it will be "athlete-student."

Those who thought they should be referred to as "athlete-students" indicated that they devoted most of their time to sports, as one basketball player reported:

> I feel that I am more of an athlete. When you think about it we are "athlete-students." I think athletics is always gonna be a major part of a university. I think a lot of kids out there think we are "athlete-students."

Family. The family, more specifically the parents, were very important components in the student-athletes' support system. How parents perceived their daughter and her role as a student-athlete may have helped to explain how the expectations of the parents influenced the child in both academics and athletics. The majority of the subjects thought that their parents considered them to be students first and athletes second, while few females reported that their families saw them as equal participants in both roles. It was not surprising then, that all the student-athletes felt that their families were supportive and encouraging in their academic careers. As one freshman illustrated:

> That's really what they are concerned with the most. They might ask me how basketball is going first because they realize that takes up most of my time. Academically is what they are concerned with.

The parents of a senior basketball player appeared to take a much more direct approach, as she explained:

> It was stressed that you're a woman and you can't go very far in sport, so always have an education.

Other athletes mentioned that their parents did not have to emphasize or promote academic achievement because they performed well enough on their own and were self-motivated. However, one senior said that her parents did push her to study--more now than when she was younger.

Although most of the subjects reported being viewed as students by their parents and receiving encouragement in their academic endeavours, only three athletes felt that they received greater reinforcement for their achievements in the classroom. One such subject, a senior basketball player shared the following:

> It used to be the big joke; everybody was worried about the coaches getting the grades at the end of the term. I was like, "Forget the coaches, if I brought home a bad grade my mother would..." She's always stressed, "Just because you're an athlete.... you have to study."

Several women mentioned receiving greater reinforcement for their athletic achievments. As one freshman explained:

> They [parents] want me to get good grades, but basketball is more tangible to them, something they can participate in; they can't do much about my academics.

The majority of the student-athletes, however, reported receiving equal praise for classroom and athletic achievements. Several mentioned that when their sports were in season they were reinforced more for athletics, while out of season they were rewarded more for academics. One subject even reported that her individual parents applauded her for different areas; her mother was more concerned with performance in school, whereas her father worried about performance on the court.

Like the athletes, the majority of the nonathletes reported that their families were supportive where academics were concerned. Several women said that it was not necessary for their parents to pressure them because they pushed themselves.

Friends. The majority of the female athletes felt that being involved in sports helped them socially at college; most cited the opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds as well as gaining a "head start" on making friends their freshman year. One freshman said:

> I think it [being an athlete] gives you a head start on everything because you come up here a month early and you meet your own team and then you meet other people and players on different teams.

Similarly, a sophomore had the following reasons for feeling that being an athlete helped her socially:

> I think if you weren't in athletics you'd just be close to the guys and girls on your floor. This way I can be close with the people on my floor and people from different areas and backgrounds. I think I've gotten to meet a lot of diverse people.

On the other hand, several subjects thought that being an athlete limited them socially. As one freshman explained:

> No [athletics has not helped me socially], absolutely not. I haven't met half as many people as some of my friends have. There are so many limitations; you can't do this, you can't do that, you have to do this and this. It might help you meet other athletes.

This sophomore agreed with her, evidenced by the following comment:

> It doesn't give you as much time for socializing. AS far as going out and socializing, especially during the season, you don't have time for all that.

Since the majority of the women thought their athletic status helped them socially, I wondered if this was the result of preferential treatment by nonathletic students. Most of the subjects did not think they were treated differently--neither positively or negatively--by other students. Several athletes mentioned that others may have found it easier to talk to them because of their specific sports or because athletics in general were a good conversation starter or "ice-breaker." As this freshman said:

> Sometimes they have more of an interest in you. Sometimes in my hall, people I don't even know will walk by and ask about basketball.

However, another freshman cited the following hindrance:

> Sometimes I get tired of being introduced as an athlete.

Several athletes mentioned specific situations where they had felt they were treated negatively by students. One basketball player commented:

> I think some are intimidated by me. I think they think I'm this "Johnny Jock" person.

A former athlete reported receiving positive feedback from men and negative feedback from women. She said:

> Some of the other males think its neat to talk to girl athletes; I think that's why we are such good friends with the guys on the football and basketball teams. But when you go to the bar and you're talking to one of the football players--we're talking about sports or something--and you look to your side and there is a whole row of real petite girls giving you dirty looks. You go to the bar and it's like a big deal that you're athletes. Negative treatment.

The following comment best expressed the sentiments of all the student-athletes, regardless of their perceptions of nonathletic student treatment:

> I want them to like me for me, not because I'm an athlete.

Since several athletes reported being treated differently by students, it was no surprise that the majority of their friends--both in high school and in college--were also athletes. One basketball player felt that perhaps she should not have associated with only athletes. She remarked:

> Every one of my friends is an athlete. I sometimes think I'm limiting myself, but I just have more fun with them. I can relate.

When most of these athletes were with their friends, the first thing they talked about were their respective sports, followed by classes and men. One athlete felt that she and her friends/teammates discussed their

sport too much, confirming the reason why their coach did not like the athletes on the team living together. In her words:

> We do sit around and talk a lot of basketball which is one of the reasons they don't like us all living together. They think one person starts bitching, and as _____ [a coach] puts it, "All of _____ [the apartment complex] is bitching." I think it helps us a lot too; if someone is feeling bad we'll help each other out. We talk a lot of basketball.

In contrast, approximately one-fourth of the women reported that most of their friends were not affiliated in any way with athletics. One senior said:

> I've always had to get away. I play the five hours in the gym, but when I get out I have to talk about something else or I go nuts. I've never been able to hang around with just basketball players. I'm probably the one that segregates myself the most; I cannot constantly talk about basketball.

The relationships of athletes and their friends were quite similar to those of nonathletes and their companions. The conversations between both the athletes/nonathletes and their friends seemed to revolve around a wide variety of topics. Aside from sports--which was the most talked about subject among the athletes--the most popular subjects discussed were males and friends, followed by professors and classes. Concerning her conversations about men, one nonathlete revealed:

> Everyone seems to be having problems with them.

The relationship among athletes and teammates was also explored. The majority of the women revealed that they currently lived with other athletes, continuing a trend begun as underclassmen. Several athletes said that as freshmen they could have indicated if they wanted to room

with someone in particular, while others said they were told that they would have a student-athlete as a roommate. Most of the females liked living with other athletes, citing mutual empathy and consideration as important factors. As one senior put it:

> They understand you better, like if you come home in a crabby mood, they know why; they just help you out a lot more. Last year my roommate [a nonathlete] had no respect for me. I'd have a game the next morning and she'd come home at 3:00 a.m. all drunk and stuff. So if you're living with another student-athlete I think that they respect you a lot more.

Similarly, a volleyball player commented:

> I think it's an advantage because you can feel for each other and you don't have to worry about somebody else in your room who isn't an athlete. Sometimes you come back from practice and you're bitching and stuff; if you're with another athlete they can understand it. It's just compatability.

Not all the subjects agreed with the above remarks, in fact, two of the athletes said that they would rather live with nonathletes. One sophomore had this to say about living with a nonathlete:

> I like living better with my roommmate now because she doesn't ask me constantly about volleyball; she asks me about other things.

As athletes and nonathletes alike can attest, moving from being a high school senior to a college freshman may be a difficult adjustment. Athletes encounter such a situation in tandem--as students and as athletes. One way of surviving is to model after your teammates, as the majority of the subjects acknowledged doing upon arriving at college. As one freshman revealed:

> You have to at first because you don't know what you're doing.

Similarly, a freshman volleyball player admitted the following:

> I tried to do what they did and think how they thought.

Yet another volleyball player revealed:

> When you're a freshman you get on a team and pick one person you know who is really good and try to be like them. I picked a couple of players I wanted to try and live by or take after.

While most of the athletes thought of their teammates as role models, several mentioned that the older players on their respective teams were not people to look up to, nor were they good examples to follow. One sophomore put it this way:

> I hate to say it but they weren't great examples so I tried not to [model them].

Upon examination of the comments above it was apparent that many of the freshmen looked up to and imitated their older teammates in a sense. Did the older athletes consciously mentor younger players to help them adjust to their dual role as a collegiate student-athlete, or " show them the ropes"? The answers to this question were equally divided between "yes" and "no." The older players told the new athletes the quickest ways to get their books at the bookstore, the best professors to take, and the easiest ways to get from place to place on campus. Often older players made fun of and played tricks on the younger ones. Conversely, several volleyball players mentioned that the upperclassmen in their sport did not have very good leadership qualities and therefore they were unable to provide necessary information and knowledge about how best to deal with their dual status.

While the younger athletes learned from their teammates in the athletic sphere, more than half of the subjects thought their teammates influenced them in the academic arena as well; most of the athletes further reported that their teammates were positive influences on their academic development. The volleyball players in particular were very concerned about their academic performance, creating a "domino-effect" or contagious atmosphere, where all the players tried to do their best in addition to helping their teammates achieve. As one freshman offered:

> Our team is really devoted to academics and it helps a lot. Everyone on our team is real interested in academics.

Similarly, a basketball player said now that she is an upperclassman she tried to encourage her younger teammates to study and perform well in the classroom. She further explained:

> Our coach just talked to three of us about the freshmen watching every move we make, so we should watch ourselves. Make sure they are doing it right.

In contrast, several of the athletes described specific instances where teammates or other athletes had negative effects on their academic performance. One female mentioned being pressured to go out--when she needed to study. She confessed:

> Just the other night they said, "Let's go out, we haven't been out in such a long time", and I had to study but I went out. I should have studied, so they did influence me. I can't really think of a good positive one. I can't remember one time when they said, "Let's sit home and study."

On the other side of the issue, one woman admitted that she was a bad influence on her teammates; she did not have to study very much and

thus encouraged her teammates to abandon their studies and socialize with her.

Overall, the majority of the student-athletes did not think there were any anti-academic or anti-intellectual pressures put on them by their peers. As one basketball player observed:

> They [teammates] usually welcome someone being a little intelligent. I think it's good if you're smart because you can help them if they have problems.

Of those who expressed experiencing anti-academic pressure from friends, many said that friends will always try to convince you to abandon your studies, whether you were an athlete or not. A basketball player mentioned the academic All-Americans that were on her team when she was a freshman, and that they were always made fun of (i.e. boring, no common sense, etc.). Similarly, a former basketball player had this to say:

> Even if there was [anti-academic pressure] I wouldn't listen to them. I know what I want and academics are very important to me. I got called "boring " all the time because I wouldn't go out and I wouldn't go out and party. You could call me "straight-laced" and I don't care because it was important for me to study. I was called "boring" for four years and I don't care.

The majority of the student-athletes said they admired and respected athletes who were good students (i.e. academic All-Americans). As one basketball player confessed:

> I would be really proud of them. I'd be glad that they could do both 'cuz I wish that I could do it. I wish that I could be that intelligent and still play.

Although most of the women held the academic achievements of their peers in high regard, many still made derogatory remarks about the same. Several subjects seemed to think that these scholar-athletes had limited

themselves and missed out on many aspects of college life. A former basketball player shared the following observations:

> The ones on my team, that's all they did was study; that's all they did was have their faces crammed in books. All four of the smart ones are so naive; they are clueless. They don't know anything about anything. It's sick. Their senior year they finally started doing things. Common sense is definitely not an issue.

Similarly, a volleyball player had this to say about her experiences with an achievement oriented teammate:

> When I was a freshman this gal on our team was senior and she was an accountant type, a business person, and all she was worried about was her school. She would go to school, go to practice, go home and eat dinner, crack the books, get up, and do the same thing. I just thought that she was really out of it. It is important to get good grades, but I really didn't have anything exciting to talk to her about that was too exciting.

One athlete who was a good student reported that she had been ridiculed by her teammates. She stated:

> I was made fun of a lot because I wasn't going out with them.

Unlike the athletes, the majority of the nonathletes reported feeling anti-academic or anti-intellectual pressures from their friends. As one freshman offered:

> A couple of my friends with really high grade points are always asking me to go out and I tell them that "I can't afford [gradewise] to go out with you all the time."

Coaches. When discussing the support system of the collegiate athlete, one must not ignore the coaches. They may have spent as much time with the athletes as any one other individual. How the coach

perceived the student-athlete and her role may explain many things about their day-to-day interactions. Whether a coach saw the student-athlete as primarily a student or mainly as an athlete may have set the tone for the entire relationship. Most of the subjects in this study felt that their respective coaches considered them to be athletes first and students second. Several of the females thought it was natural for their coaches to look at them as athletes because they saw them most often in athletic situations. In contrast, a few of the subjects mentioned that their coaches would like them--the student-athletes--to think that they were looked upon as students.

The preceding perception did not mean that the coaches showed little or no interest in the academic achievement of the athletes aside from eligibility requirements. The majority of the basketball and volleyball players said that their coaches encouraged their academic pursuits. Many of the players mentioned that the coach did not have to go overboard stressing academics because the team was already motivated. As one former volleyball player remembered:

> They really didn't have to make the push because there were so many people on the team that psyched themselves; it wasn't an issue.

While a junior said:

> She's more relaxed. She doesn't try to butt into your academic career too much. I think she tries to hold back sometimes.

Similarly, several basketball players mentioned that their coach left them alone unless they were experiencing difficulties in academics. One senior expanded on this:

> Just as long as you're doing alright and she [the head coach] knows you're getting the grades she doesn't bother you because she figures you're doing alright. Why bother you or yell at you? When you start getting in trouble she does get very angry.

Conversely, another basketball player felt that her coaches were concerned about academics, as was apparent from these remarks:

> They keep track of all of your grades and they want to know if you're not doing well; they don't want to know just if you're eligible. They want to know if you are doing well.

Likewise, another basketball player responded with the following when asked how she thought her coaches felt about academics:

> Very, very concerned. Very concerned. They know every grade that comes. Every grade that I would get came across their desk. If it was bad they would want to know why; they want to know that it's going to change, and depending on who you are and how much they trust you, they would give you a second chance or they wouldn't give you a second chance. Immediately they were going to start setting up the tutors and making it mandatory. They know every grade. When we're warming up, the assistant will go around looking for people and asking them about their grades. _____ [the coach] is very much concerned that you graduate and are successful.

Several basketball players mentioned their coach stressed scholastic achievement a great deal during recruiting, while another athlete said she had received mixed signals from her coach where school was concerned. She added:

> I was having problems in Natural Science and I asked for help. The said they'd get me a tutor and they never... it never materialized. I really don't know; she knew I was having problems but she didn't seem too concerned about it, so I really don't know. I mean I'm sure that they stress getting an education, but it's not something they keep reinforcing.

Other basketball players intimated that their coaches placed less emphasis on academic performance than they had in the past; the players reported that the coaches had become increasingly concerned about remaining competitive in the sport and keeeping players eligible. As one athlete revealed:

> At first it was a lot harder than it is now [coaches commitment to academics]. Now, I think they have a commitment to it but I think they're really lightening up on it. I think it has a lot to do with being competitive in the sport. They've had academic All-Americans, but they weren't necessarily the best basketball players. They have started going after people who aren't so great in academics.

Another basketball player mentioned that she thought her coach had been putting less emphasis on academic performance than she had in the past. More specifically she said:

> I think she's gotten easier. I think it has to do with keeping her job; she needs to bring in people who can play. She's been here for a long time and nothing has really been done with this program that looks exciting. I think she's worried about being more successful.

Similarly, a freshman volleyball player thought her coach was only concerned about players remaining eligible. She expressed the following opinion:

> She wants us to do good because she doesn't want us to be ineligible, but she's never stressed having an academic priority. I get that point, but she doesn't stress it as much as she should.

Regardless of the student-athletes' opinions on how their coaches felt about academics, most agreeed that their coaches had little if any influence on professors and or administrators. One basketball player reasoned:

> If they did, they would have done something last year because we had a couple of people ineligible.

Another athlete, a volleyball player, stated:

> I don't think they want to play the part where you read in Sports Illustrated, that they are trying to fix your grades.

Those who suspected their coaches might have been able to influence professors or administrators were freshmen. Perhaps they had heard stories to that effect, or were told during recruiting that they would be taken care of.

Advisors. Advisors appeared to have been important support personnel as most of the student-athletes said they made joint decisions with their major advisors rather than with their coaches when deciding which classes to take each term. In addition, the athletes consulted with an advisor in the athletic department on an annual basis to make certain that eligibility requirements were being met. Many of the subjects admitted they would have asked friends for advice on what classes to take; only a few would have considered discussing it with their coaches. As one freshman confessed:

> I wouldn't ask my coach unless I had to because I think they'd rather have you take easier classes, and I'm not going to do that.

Similarly, most of the women reported they would have sought the help of an advisor, not a coach, if they were experiencing difficulty in a class or somewhere in their major. One senior, however, admitted that she would not go to her advisor with a problem. As she elaborated:

> I have a feeling my counselor doesn't really care for athletes; I feel like she looks down on me and I don't like going to see her. I don't think she thinks athletes are very smart people, or something.

Those who asserted that they would go to a coach before an advisor with class or major problems were all freshmen.

Professors. In their discussion about their relationships with professors, the majority of the subjects indicated they attempted to blend in with other students and many did not have any direct contact with their instructors; this lack of contact was attributed to huge, impersonal lecture classes. As one freshman asserted:

> I would probably never raise my hand unless participation was counted in the grade; then I would. I would hate to do it, but just because of the grade I would. Unless it was a really small class they would never get to know my name.

Similarly, a senior added the following:

> If I like them I try to talk to them, especially if I don't understand something. But a lot of times I don't. I might have a question but I'll be too scared to talk to anybody. I've rarely talked to profs since I've been here, only if I have a major problem.

Others mentioned that they had gotten to know the instructors who were interested in sports, and quite a few athletes said they had made it a point to get to know their professors; the student-athletes contributed

in class and stopped by during office hours. One volleyball player discussed student/teacher relationships:

> I try to brown-nose them. I wait for a while and then if I'm stuck or need help, which I usually do, I'll go talk to them for a while and let then know who I am and where I'm coming from so if I need help I can just ask them. I talk to all of them.

Because few of the athletes had direct contact with their professors, one may correctly conclude that the subjects were not treated any different than nonathletes by college instructors. Several athletes specifically mentioned their teachers were probably unaware of their athletic status prior to mid-terms. A freshman singled out by faculty voiced the following opinion:

> I don't think they should [treat athletes differently], I think it should be the same. I don't see why they would treat us harder because sometimes it is already harder. I think it should be equal.

Two athletes admitted they were sometimes favored by professors. One recalled:

> I remember one that liked me because I was a volleyball player. I got a good grade in his class. I guess if they like you ....

A teammate of the above athlete pondered the idea of having "pro-athletic" professors and replied:

> Maybe I wouldn't try as hard because I know that I have professors that like my sport or have season tickets. Maybe I wouldn't try as hard if I knew they would be easier on me. I don't really want to be treated any different that way.

The subject of treating athletes more harshly than nonathletes was also considered. As one former volleyball player said:

> When they do treat 'em negative I think that the athlete has it coming to them. Either they've abused being able to be absent on game day, or they've pulled a fast one, or they are showing up for class and they're really tired, or they are acting like they are Joe Cool. That's the only time I've seen a professor treat an athlete negatively.

Another athlete, a basketball player, related first-hand what it was like to have been treated negatively by a professor. She reported:

> I've never had any easy treatment. I've had a lot of harsh treatment. No matter what I did I couldn't get a good mark just because I was an athlete.

Although there is a great opportunity for both pro- and anti-athletic attitudes to surface in the academic setting, the sentiments of this freshman were shared by all the subjects:

> I don't want to singled out.... I want to be like everyone else for a change.

The relationships between the nonathletes and their professors very closely resembled those of the athletes and their instructors. Most of the nonathletes admitted they blend in with the other students and seldom get to know their professors personally. One freshman explained:

> Most of my classes are really big and the professors don't have a chance to get to know you. In my ATL class, which is smaller, the professor is on a personal basis with all of us.

While most of the student athletes thought that professors did not treat athletes differently than nonathletes, about half of the nonathletes thought athletes received preferential treatment in the classroom. A junior made the following vague observation:

> They let them get away with more.

While a sophomore stated:

> In some ways they have to [treat athletes different], just because of their schedules.

Another nonathlete stated that one of her professors uses the athletes in examples during class, but did not know if that was considered special treatment. The other half of the nonathlete sample reported they had not noticed professors treating athletes differently, though one said she had heard stories to that effect. One sophomore explained:

> I don't notice that because when you're in the big lecture halls I can't tell the athletes from the nonathletes.

Similarly, a freshman replied:

> I don't think a lot of time they [professors] realize who the athletes are because the classes are so big.

Tutors. A final area that must be discussed when examining the support services available to the athletes is that of academic tutors. Tutors were provided free-of-charge to student-athletes, and were available for consultation several times each week. Such assistance was only available to athletes; nonathletes had to find their own tutors, who usually charged a fee for their services. Did many of the student-athletes take advantage of these tutors? I found that most of the athletes in the sample had used the tutors at least once. All of the basketball players attested to using them, particularly when they had math classes. One athlete mentioned that she did not think the tutors were very intelligent since she got only 20% correct on an assignment checked over by a tutor! Aside from the preceding comment, it appeared

that all of the athletes had taken advantage of and had been satisfied with the tutorial services provided to them by the university.

Summary. Overall, the female subjects--athletes and nonathletes alike--had very similar experiences when they discussed attitudes of self and others. All reported their families as very supportive where academics were concerned. In addition, the majority of the subjects consulted a major advisor when selecting classes. The most popular topics of conversation between the women and their friends were males, friends, classes and professors. Few of the athletes or the nonathletes got to know their professors personally. The similarities stopped there, as the student-athletes thought that professors did not treat athletes different than nonathletes while about half of the nonathletes thought athletes received preferential treatment in the classroom. Perhaps the female athletes were referring to their own experiences and not those of athletes in general; males in big time sports may have been more recognizable which may have resulted in lenient treatment. Similarly, the nonathletes may not have been aware of athletes in their classes (i.e. female or male minor sport participants) and thus may not have been able to report that their professors had or had not showed favoritism to the athletes in the class.

The two groups also differed when discussing the influences their friends had on their academic performance. Unlike the athletes, the majority of the nonathletes reported feeling anti-academic or anit-intellectual pressures from their friends. Perhaps the athletes encouraged each other scholastically for athletic reasons; the academic ineligibility of a player may have been perceived as having a detrimental

effect on the team's athletic performance; this perception may have led to mutual academic encouragement. Possibly also, the athletes may have had higher academic aspirations than the nonathletes (Spreitzer & Pugh, 1973). A final explanation for the differences reported in the academic and/or intellectual pressure felt by the subjects was alluded to earlier; perhaps participation in athletics provided the female student-athletes with positive qualities that carried-over into the classroom, something not experienced by the female nonathletes (Hanks, 1979, Snyder, 1985). Similarly, the female athletes may have had higher levels of achievement motivation than the nonathletes which were manifested in their mutual encouragement regarding academic success (Birrell, 1983).

The results obtained by Adler and Adler (1985) in their study of male basketball players disagreed considerably with the findings of the current study. The men's coaches were very involved in academic decision making, while the women rarely consulted their coaches regarding academics. In addition, the men had received greater reinforcement for their athletic accomplishments than their academic achievements, whereas most of the women in this study had received equal reinforcement for athletic and academic achievements. Most of the athletes in both studies had athletes as friends and as roommates which at times led to feelings of isolation from other students. Although the male athletes in Adler and Adler's study lived primarily in an athletic peer culture as did the women in this study, the impact of this varied by gender. The men reported anti-academic feelings and anti-intellectual pressures from

other athletes and teammates while the women felt no such pressures; in fact, they thought that their teammates were positive influences on them scholastically.

The reasons for this difference in peer pressure may have varied by gender. Possibly the anti-intellectual atmosphere and their social status set the athletes apart from other students. This possibility, though feasible, had explanatory power only for the men since the women experienced pro-academic pressures and little, if any social recognition and status. Others (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983) have shown that women athletes, especially those in team sports, have received relatively little campus wide support. This lack of understanding by college students of the experience of being a female athlete may therefore have drawn women athletes together into their own support group. In addition, recognizing the androcentricity of the sports world, female athletes may not have taken their sport participation as seriously as did males for whom often their athletic identity is their self-identity (Messner, 1985). Thus, the women may have thought their academic career was at least as important, if not more important, than their sport career. Similarly, perhaps men's basketball was more of a business than was women's sport. This professionalization may have led to more praise for the athletic than the academic part of the male identity (Messner, 1985).

This difference in peer pressure by gender may have been the result of the recruitment and admission process. The male athletes may have been more likely to have been admitted with less than adequate schooling than were female athletes. Academic ability may have figured more

prominately in the recruiting of the women than of the men, especially since the female athletes had women coaches who may have been aware of the importance of a college education for women's future support.

Finally, the lack of involvement by men in their academic careers may have been due, in part, to the hope that they were going to play professional ball so that they may have seen no need to study nor cared whether the coaches enrolled them in easy--albeit meaningless--courses. In contrast, the women may have realized that they had to rely on their college education for future support and thus wanted and/or needed to be involved in the planning of thier degree programs.

Aside from Adler and Adler (1985), the results of other studies were equally divided between those who concurred with and contrasted with those of my study. Several researchers (Berlage, 1987; Birrell, 1982; Coakley, 1986) have reported that female athletes viewed their athletic life as separate from their social life. In contrast, both Lanning (1982) and I found that the majority of the females' friends as well as roommates were also athletes. Perhaps my sample of female basketball and volleyball players were not threatened by the possible rumors and/or negative stereotypes associated with the companionship of female athletes. Finally, as was stated earlier, the mutual empathy and consideration provided may have drawn the athletes together.

My finding that intercollegiate athletic participation forced females to abandon other aspects of their college experience--friendships and social lives--was consistent with the findings of others (Blinde, 1987; Greendorfer & Blinde, in press). The enormous amount of time

required for athletic commitments may have been the main reason for such results. Spending 30 plus hours per week on sport may have left the women little time for hobbies or social lives; by the time the nonworking nonathletes had finished studying and were ready to socialize, the athletes may have just returned from a game only to begin their studying. Similarly, the athletes may have been too exhausted from athletic and academic commitments to indulge in the "night life." Possibly also, the student-athletes may not have wished to indulge in the "night life" as they may have come to college for academics and athletics. The above reasons may also have been partly responsible for the athletes lack of nonathletic friends; they may have had little time to meet people outside of their team.

The majority of the women in the current study reported receiving equal reinforcement from others for their athletic and academic roles and/or achievements. Such findings appeared consistent with Coakley's (1986) assertion that athletes received support for athletic identities from other people. Such attention may have been partly responsible for the women's continuing participation in sport. Possibly also, it would seem that the athletes may have been rewarded for their achievements on the court by significant others who were experiencing sport vicariously through these women. Reserach may be needed to examine this possibility.

While a majority of the female athletes in this study thought their coaches were concerned about their--the athletes'--academic performance and education, Wittmer, Bostic, Phillips, and Waters (1981) reported that "coaches often feel a college has no responsibility for the academic

success of its student-athletes beyond that assumed for other students" (p. 53). Again this assertion may have been rooted in perceptions of male revenue producing programs.

The topics of tutors will be the last area explored when reviewing the literature related to the athletes' attitudes of self and others. Leonard (1986) reported that most of the male basketball players in his sample had used the tutors provided to them by the university. Similarly, I found that most of the athletes in my sample had used the tutors provided them at least once. The athletes may have been "encouraged" by their coaches or academic advisors to take advantage of the tutorial services, or perhaps the athletes themselves realized what a valuable commodity was available to them. Possibly also, the tutors may have been popular because they were sympathetic to the student-athletes and may have given more than the usual/minimal guidance.

Role of Race and Role of Gender

In the last section of the interviews, I examined various thought-provoking and awareness questions with the athletes. I had initially intended to discuss issues of both race and gender. The sample, however, was predominately white which meant that racial issues could not validly be discussed. Overall, the sample had little knowledge of how race might have affected their experiences. In contrast, the reactions to the gender questions were given in terms of concrete, personal examples.

Role of Gender. The major theme that emerged about how academic expectations and classroom/academic experiences might have differed if the athletes had been male was that male athletes--particularly football, basketball, and hockey players--did not seem to care about academics and concentrated more on athletics as a result of possible professional athletic careers. In the opinion of a former basketball player:

> I don't think most of them are that concerned about their classes, especially not the good ones. Considering my spot on the team--I was considered one of the best ones on my team--someone of equal value to me on their team wouldn't care because he think's he's going to the NBA. A lot of them, I think, bank on that. I can't see any of them that are really driven to get their degree because they want t go out and do a job.

Similarly, a senior offered the following account of her experiences with male athletes in the classroom:

> I've seen a couple athletes, they've been in my class, and they never go to class and then they show up for the exam. You wonder how they can do it; they pass, how?

An explanation to this senior's question was offered by a volleyball player, who said:

> I've heard stories about some male athletes just getting copies of the tests and stuff. I've never seen it happen, so I can't say. You hear stories, but...

Several athletes did not think that gender had any impact on academic experiences. A freshman explained:

> No, not in class; it's equal.

When discussing their attitudes of self and others, the majority of the female student-athletes did not think their experiences would have

been dissimilar had they been male athletes. The women did mention that their male counterparts associated with other athletes more than they themselves did.

Would a change of gender have affected the female student-athletes' athletic experiences? Two freshman volleyball players did not think that their experiences would have differed. However, one difference that was often cited was that men received more media coverage and were in the limelight more often than female athletes. The women realized that more pressure to play well accompanied this attention. Another gender distinction was that men's athletics often took priority over women's athletics. Several of the basketball players mentioned having to schedule gym and practice times around their male counterparts. They also felt that male athletes received many more benefits because their sports brought in the money. As one basketball player stated:

> I think the guys get a lot more than we do. They practice when they want, and we have to practice around them. But they are the ones bringing in the money.

Finally, many of the females felt that since male athletes had a chance to go on to professional careers, they put athletics ahead of academics. Another female divulged:

> If I was a male athlete I'm not sure that I'd be doing as much homework or working as hard on my grades.

Throughout the course of the interviews the female athletes often referred to the opportunities and privileges afforded male athletes. However, the majority of the females said "no" when asked if they would preferred to have been male athletes. The most common reason given was

that there was too much pressure on male athletes, especially from their coaches and the media. The subjects also reported that male athletes were very common, thus it was more special to be a female athlete. As one former athlete elaborated:

> I feel more special being a female athlete. I think being a female athlete gives me more advantages over females than a male athlete has over other males. I think my advantage is greater.

Several subjects mentioned they would have enjoyed being male athletes. One cited greater opportunites physically (i.e. stronger, jump higher, run faster, etc.), while others said they would have liked to have been only if they were good enough to play professionally. While some of the women saw more media attention and fans' attention as a drawback, others viewed this "drawback" as an enticement, causing them to wish they could have been male athletes.

The majority of the subjects were satisfied with their gender; thus what it meant to them to be a female athlete was important. The majority of their responses reflected the positive aspects of being a female athlete. One senior described:

> I think I'm really lucky that I've gotten as far as I have. It's give me a lot of opportunity. I've learned a lot of life lessons through sports. I tend to take a lot of analogies from sport. I just think its been the best opportunity for me to see what I can do.

A former athlete mentioned several benefits, including the fact that being a student-athlete separated her from other student and enabled her to be different from everyone else. She stated:

> I don't know what it's like not to be one. Health-wise I'm always going to be healthy. I'm competitive and that's always going to be to my advantage. I've learned to be out-going. I like it because of the things its brought to me, the things I've learned from it. I like being a student-athlete; I think not being a student-athlete would be boring. I feel special because I got to play in college; I'm proud. I couldn't stand being average.

One freshman said that she liked the positive stereotypes associated with being a female athlete, something few male athletes experienced. She explained:

> I think that there are positive stereotypes. I get the impression that there are somepeople that think of the guys as dumb jocks. But with the females, they don't have anywhere else to go [professional career]. If you are a male athlete you can get by just on your athletic ability, but you can only go so far; eventually it is going to catch up with you.

In contrast, almost one-fourth of the subjects mentioned that they found the negative stereotypes associated with being a female athlete to be bothersome. One subject admitted:

> It's kind of hard to deal with. If all of us go out and people hear we're on the volleyball team, a lot of people associate that with being gay. It's so offending. People learn we play a sport and they take a step backwards.

Similarly, another subject revealed:

> What really frustrates me is the stereotypes--the homosexual--that really bothers me. It really irritates me when I hear someone say, "She looks like she's a homosexual." As soon as you're labelled, you're labelled for life. We have to prove ourselves to be more feminine than the regular students do just because we're athletes, and that's not fair. There are sometimes when you get to the gym , and you don't shower in the morning, you look horrible. You're in shorts and a t-shirt. You're not the most feminine

> thing but you don't want anybody to say that you're a homosexual. My dad was always worried about that too; "Before you go out make sure you look like a lady, you don't want people to get the wrong idea." I'd get mad and say, "Why do they even have to think that way?"

The wish to avoid negative stereotypes may have stemmed from the desire to please others or a simple awareness that not everyone is accepting of female athletes. As Lenskyj (1986) explained, "female participation in traditionally male sport was associated with lower peer acceptance..." (p. 96).

The student-athletes were asked what advice they would have offered to females thinking of attending this particular university on athletic scholarships. Many said they would tell the athletes to get in good physical shape before arriving at college and to be prepared to work hard in the gym. Several subjects would support the decision of others to attend this college because they themselves were happy here, while two basketball players specifically mentioned that they would discourage high school students from attending school here in favor of someplace that had a more successful basketball program. Other athletes implied that they would remind the high school students to choose a school "because you like it or because it has a good reputation in your major, not because of athletics; after all, sport ends after college." Although I believe the suggestions stated above would have been helpful to any incoming student-athlete, I found the statements of one athlete to be both inspirational and encouraging. This athlete offered the following advice:

> If you want to do it you find the time, or you don't think about it and you just do it, and there is time. I had a family and went to practice and went to school; sure I pulled by hair out and said I hated it and all those things you do, but it's really rewarding once you get through. Its only temporary; four years of life it just a small portion, and it goes from season to season--it's not four years straight. A lot of time and commitment but it's only a temporary position. Volleyball isn't a lifetime activity, so you might as well do it now when you are younger and you can.

It appeared that the current student-athletes thought the future student-athletes would need more advice on the athletic rather than the student role.

The Future and the Student-Athlete. In this final thought-provoking section, the subjects discussed what they would take with them from their college experiences to the "real world," how they saw themselves 15 years from now, and what they thought of the interview.

When asked what they would remember most about their experiences at college, the most common replies focused on friends and social experiences, athletics and teammates, and classes. Two basketball players reported that basketball would not be remembered, or if it was, it would be thought of as a negative experience. Athletic status appeared to have little effect on what would be recalled, as most of the nonathletes also mentioned that friends and social experiences would stay with them the longest. Learning to cope and learning not to judge people too quickly were also cited by nonathletes as college lessons that would have long-lasting effects on them.

Similarly, whether or not the women participated in college athletics appeared to have little influence on how they saw themselves 15 years in the future. The first and most frequent reply by both the athletes and nonathletes was that they would be married with children, and have a good job or own a business, in that order. Possibly these women were atypical and did not think they could be successful in the male dominated work world; yet the sportswomen had already been successful in the male world--athletically. Perhaps then they did not view their sport as a male domain, had internalized the devaluation of womens athletics or had seen it as not being part of the "real" sportsworld. Thus the women may have failed to see their sport experience as training in a male dominated world and ultimately their own abilities to cope in a male dominated world. Perhaps the only job the female athletes thought they could handle with certainty was that of wife and mother.

The desire of these sportswomen to get married and have children could also be viewed as a version of the apologetic; perhaps the females viewed heterosexuality as a way of proving to others that sport participation had not "masculinized" them. As Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983) stated:

> The apologetic implies that women in sport can look feminine, are feminine, and want to be feminine, thus serving to reassure the participants and others that sport does not invalidate their claim to being "real" women (p. 109).

The idea appeared even more plausible when one considered the earlier discussion of homosexuality; 25% of the subjects mentioned that they found the negative stereotypes associated with being a female athlete to be bothersome.

There was very little difference between the athletes and nonathletes with respect to the desire to be wives and mothers which further supports Sabo's (1985) assertions that sport participation appeared not to have been a counterpoint experience to the development of traditional perspectives on gender by these women. In the same vein, Lenskyj (1986) thought that many female athletes overcompensated for their sport participation by "flaunting their heterosexual attractiveness" (p. 103). Perhaps the women's homophobia affected their decisions to adopt a traditional gender role (Lenskyj, 1986). As is apparent, these results were inconclusive when in establishing the effect sport participation had on gender role identitiy.

When discussing future athletic involvement, five of the athletes mentioned wanting to coach their respective sports, and most of the volleyball players indicated that they would like to continue playing their sport at the recreational level. The desire of these women to continue their involvement in athletics seemeds to indicate that the sports experience for them (Birrell, 1983; Blinde, 1987).

Finally, the athletes were asked what they thought about the interviews. I had hoped that the discussions had increased their awareness of the options available to them as student-athletes and had

raised their consciousness about issues and problems faced by student-athletes. The responses were split between those who had thought and not thought before about the issues raised by the questions. Those who had not thought about many of the topics before commented that the questions concerning the experiences of males made them really think. Many athletes also said the interviews were interesting, and had brought up worthwhile issues that they would continue to think about. One freshman revealed:

> It made me think about things I hadn't thought about before. I always thought about how people viewed me as an athlete, but I never really THOUGHT ABOUT IT, thought about it.

Similarly, one athlete made the following comments when asked what she thought about the interview:

> I'll think about it today. There were a lot of things that I never really thought about it, that you brought up. Interesting I think. Are you going to be able to show us the results?

CHAPTER IV

Conclusions

In this section the results of the current study will be summarized. In addition, suggestions for future research will be discussed. It must also be noted that the perceptions and attitudes discussed in this thesis were not intended to represent nor reflect the athletic program or the university in question.

Female Student-Athletes: A Summary of the Findings

One goal of the current study was to examine the academic expectations of female student-athletes who attended a large midwest Division I university. I found that the majority of the women entered college feeling idealistic about their impending academic experiences, wanting more out of their education than just a degree, and thinking a college education would help them to be successful in society. In addition, most of the women wanted to graduate and were optimistic about their chances of doing so. More specifically, the female athletes had not expected to be pampered, knowing a college education would require hard work and sacrifices. The athletes thought an education was important and as they became older they increasingly valued academics; they began with an idealistic view of education and were strengthened in that view as they became older.

The classroom and academic experiences of the female student-athletes were also examined in the study. I learned that all the women were concerned about receiving a good education at college; all believed discipline and motivation were the keys to academic success.

Whatever their grade point averages, almost the entire sample mentioned they could have and would have liked to have done better academically. In addition, most of the subjects agreed that their attitudes toward academics had changed since they first arrived at college; they now exerted more effort and took academics more seriously than in their younger years. Similarly, the tone was very positive when these women discussed athletes who excelled in the classroom; the women both respected and admired other athletes who were also good students. Finally, the student-athletes felt that they had worked harder than nonathletes to get a college education.

How the student-athletes personally experienced academics and athletics in their daily lives was also discussed in the interviews. While the women spent more than 30 hours per week on sport, few thought their respective sports interfered with their academic performance; in fact, the majority of the women indicated their athletic involvement had positive effects on them scholastically. Approximately half of the athletes reported having had more fun in their respective sports during high school, whereas the other half thought collegiate athletics were more fun. When winning was discussed, however, the majority of the women mentioned winning as more important to them in high school than winning in college was. Finally, the majority of the athletes indicated that their interest in academics would not have changed had they been good enough in their respective sports to try out for a professional team.

Another purpose of the study was to examine the student-athletes' attitudes of self and others. All of the women reported their families

as very supportive where academics were concerned. In addition, the majority of the athletes consulted a major advisor rather than someone from the athletic department when selecting classes. Most of the women had athletes as friends and as roommates, and reported receiving neither anti-academic feelings nor anti-intellectual pressures from other athletes; in fact, they thought that their teammates were positive influences on them academically. The most popular topics of conversation between the women and their friends were sports, males, friends, classes, and professors. The women seldom got to know their professors personally, and few thought that professors treated athletes differently than nonathletes.

Another goal of the study was to examine whether the womens' experiences in and/or perceptions of college would have been different if they had been men. In most cases, the female student-athletes thought that their experiences would have been different if they had been men. The major theme that emerged was that male athletes--particularly football, basketball and hockey players--did not seem to care about academics and concentrated more on athletics as a result of possible professional athletic careers. Although the women often referred to the opportunities and privileges afforded men, the majority preferred to to be female rather than male athletes. The most common reason given was that there was too much pressure on male athletes, especially from their coaches and the media.

Male and Female Student-Athletes: A Summary of the Findings

Another purpose of the current study was to compare and contrast my findings with those of Adler and Adler (1985) who sampled male basketball players. When discussing academic expectations, the male and female athletes were in agreement in the two following areas: 1) the majority entered college feeling idealistic about their impending academic experiences, wanting more out of their education than eligibility and thinking a college education would help them to be successful in society, and 2) most wanted to graduate and were optimistic about their chances of doing so. The women, however, did not expect to be pampered, knowing college would require hard work and sacrifices, whereas the males expected to receive special attention and believed that simply by attending class they would "earn" their degrees.

In addition, the women thought an education was important and the importance of academics increased as they became older; they began with an idealistic view of education and were strengthened in that view. In contrast, the majority of the men lost interest in school after their first year. Adler and Adler (1985) described this as progressing from "an early phase of idealism about their impending academic experiences to an eventual state of pragmatic detachment" (p. 248).

Discussing classroom and academic experiences, the majority of the female athletes admitted they enjoyed their majors and their classes. In addition, they believed the knowledge they had acquired would be useful in the workplace. Conversely, the males mentioned they were uninterested

in academics due to the content of their classes; they felt their classes lacked "academic or practical merit, and were either comical, demeaning, or both" (Adler & Adler, 1985, p. 246).

When athletic experiences were examined, the male and female athletes were in agreement that their respective sports occupied more of their time in college than it had in high school. The male and female athletes disagreed on the following issues: 1) few women thought their respective sports interfered with academics, whereas the men felt basketball dominated all facets of their lives including academics; 2) only half of the women reported having had more fun playing their sport in high school, while all of the men agreed with this assertion; 3) most of the women were more concerned about winning in high school, while the men were more concerned about winning in college; 4) the women rarely consulted their coaches regarding academics, while the men were not involved in academic decision-making, and 5) most of the women received equal reinforcement for athletic and academic achievements, whereas the men received greater reinforcement for their athletic accomplishments than their academic achievements.

Finally, the male and female student-athletes were in agreement on the several topics in the area investigating "attitudes of self and others." Most of the men and women had athletes as friends and as roommates which at times led to the feeling of isolation from other students. The men, however, reported anti-academic feelings and

anti-academic pressures from other athletes and teammates while the women felt no such pressure; in fact, they thought that their teammates were positive influences scholastially.

Female Athletes and Nonathletes: A Summary of the Findings

It appeared overall that athletic orientation had little impact on the womens' perceptions of and/or experiences in college. The majority of women in both groups entered college feeling idealistic about their impending academic experiences and thinking a college education would help them to be successful in society. In addition, most of the women wanted to graduate and were idealistic about their chances of doing so.

The classroom and academic experiences of the athletes and nonathletes were also similar. The majority of the females admitted they enjoyed their classes and majors. In addition, they believed the knowledge they acquired would be useful in the workplace. Better time management and greater discipline were both mentioned as methods of improving grades or study habits.

The women also discussed the effects of extracurricular activities on their scholastic achievement. While the female student-athletes spent more than 30 hours per week on sport, few thought their respective sports interfered with their academic performance; in fact, the majority of the women indicated their athletic involvement had positive effects on them scholastically. Many female nonathletes who worked over 20 hours per week thought their jobs interfered with their academic achievement, while

others said that their work commitments served to enhance their scholastic performance. Again, the women's responses were more similar than different.

Overall, the female subjects had very similar experiences when they discussed "attitudes of self and others." All reported their families as very supportive where academics were concerned. In addition, the majority of the subjects consulted a major advisor when selecting classes. The most popular topics of conversation between the women and their friends were males, friends, classes, and professors. Neither the athletes nor the nonathletes got to know their professors personally. These similarities between the athletes and nonathletes may have been the result of comparable backgrounds. Or perhaps the athletes' coaches had not recruited women who might not otherwise have attended the university, again resulting in parallel backgrounds on the part of the athletes and nonathletes (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986).

The two groups differed when discussing the influence their friends had on their academic performance. The majority of the nonathletes reported feeling anti-academic or anti-intellectual pressures from their friends, while the majority of the athletes thought their friends were positive influences on them academically.

Overall Conclusions

Although both the male and female athletes entered college with idealistic views of education, the women's optimism was strengthened over time whereas the men lost interest in school after one year. This change in men was attributed by Adler and Adler to the athletic subculture in

which they primarily functioned. Such an explanation loses some power when one considers that the women also operated in an athletic subculture. The athletes, however, felt little if any anti-academic pressure from their friends while the nonathletes reported feeling anti-academic or anti-intellectual pressures from their friends. Once again, this difference may have been the result of the athletic subculture in which the female athletes primarily functioned.

Obviously peers played a significant role in the attitudes toward academics of the female athletes in this study and the male athletes in Adler and Adler's (1985) study. Both groups lived primarily in an athletic peer subculture. Yet that subculture was supportive of academic work for the women athletes and anti-intellectual for the men athletes. These findings indicated that possibly it was not the athletic status of the peers that impacted the athletes as Adler and Adler suggested but the values of the peers that were important.

However, the female nonathletes also reported feeling anti-academic pressures from their peers yet these subjects seemed to have resisted the pressures since they also increasingly valued academics as they went through school. This seemed to indicate that these women successfully resisted these pressures. Why would one group be influenced by peers and not another? Possibly there were other influential processes operating for the athletes. Perhaps men's basketball was more of a business than women's sport. As a result, men's sport may have been more professionalized which may have led to more praise of the athletic than the academic part of the male identity (Messner, 1985). In contrast,

recognizing the androcentricity of the sports world, female athletes may not have taken their sport participation as seriously as did males for whom often their athletic identity is their self-identity (Messner, 1985). Thus the women may have thought their academic career was at least as important, if not more important, than their sport career.

With respect to the female athletes and nonathletes, the athletes may have encouraged each other scholastically for athletic reasons (i.e. eligibility), or the athletes may have had higher academic aspirations than the nonathletes (Spreitzer & Pugh, 1973). Also, an award is given annually to the women's athletic team with the highest grade point average. Thus, academic achievement by athletes is openly acknowledged. In addition, participation in athletics may have provided the female student-athletes with positive qualities that carried over into the classroom, something not experienced by the female nonathletes (Hanks, 1979; Snyder, 1985).

The results of this study were congruent with the symbolic interactionist perspective as defined by Snyder (1986) in which a system of beliefs and meanings "are created by an individuals' self-perceptions, the social definitions that impinge on the indvididual, as well as the individuals' perceptions, and the interpretational processes that influence opinions and actions" (p. 214).

Assuming the results of the current study were valid, people involved with men's athletics may gain a good deal by studying how women's programs such as those described in this thesis create pro-intellectual environments.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although the current study went beyond the scope of Adler and Adler's study, still more research is necessary in order to adequately summarize the attitudes and subjective feelings of collegiate athletes concerning their roles as student-athletes. Examining the perceptions and experiences of athletes in other sports and in other athletic divisions may provide researchers and practitioners with information on the generalizability of their findings. Similarly, a study of other university scholarship recipients (i.e. academic, art, music, theater) would permit researchers to compare and contrast their perceptions/experiences with those of scholarship athletes. The coping behaviors, perceptions, and experiences of the different groups should be examined in order to better understand how the time demands involved in other scholarships compare to those of athletic scholarships.

Future research should also focus on the support network of athletes; the insight of coaches, athletic directors, advisors, and tutors may assist sport scientists in obtaining the big picture. Their encounters and experiences with the student-athletes can only help us to understand the experiences of the student-athlete more clearly.

The final suggestion I have for additional research would be an examination of the differences/similarities in the perceptions and experiences of female athletes coached by women and female athletes coached by men. In this study the coaches of both teams were women. The extent to which the gender of these coaches influenced these results could not be determined since the focus of the study was on athletes not

coaches. By taking into account the gender of the coach, we may be able to determine the extent to which the perceptions and/or experiences of the female athletes in the current study and those of Adler and Adler's (1985) study were a function of gender of the coaches and of the athletes. Similarly, the influence of the total female athletic climate could be explored in greater depth.

APPENDIX A

UCRIHS Approval

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)
238 ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(517) 355-2186

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1046

December 8, 1987

Ms. Barbara Bedker Meyer
School of Health Education,
Counseling Psychology and
Human Performance

Dear Ms. Meyer:

Subject: Proposal Entitled, "The University Experience: Perceptions of Female Athletes"

UCRIHS' review of the above referenced project has now been completed. I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and the Committee, therefore, approved this project at its meeting on December 7, 1987.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval prior to December 7, 1988.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

Henry E. Bredeck, Ph.D.
Chairman, UCRIHS

HEB/jms

cc: Dr. A. Knoppers

APPENDIX B

Explanation of Study

I am engaged in a research project which I hope will help people understand the experiences of the collegiate student-athlete. I am particularly interested in the perceptions , decision-making processes, and coping behaviors of female student-athletes, and whether their experiences differ from those of a nonathletic control group. I also wish to compare the resutls obtained using female basketball and volleyball players at this university with the results of a 1985 study of male basketball players. The information discovered may ultimately assist those people dealing with student-athletes on a regular basis as well as help to prepare future collegiate student-athletes for what to expect.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer particular questions or discontinue your participation completely without penalty. Should you choose to discontinue your participation the researcher retains the right to use the information you have provided up to that point. Your decisions will not effect your status on your particular athletic team. I assure you that the results of your interview will be confidential. Your responses will not be made available to your coach nor will I indicate to her in any way who participated in the study. The only identifiers used by the researcher will be your sport and year in school. I am the only one who will have access to your name, and such an identifier will only be used when absolutely necessary (i.e. contacting you for follow-up questions).

If you agree to be tape recorded, your tape will be destroyed after it is transcribed by the researcher.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Barabara B. Meyer

Graduate Student (HCP)

APPENDIX C

Subject Consent Form

1. I understand the explanation of the study that has been given and what my participation will involve.
2. I understand that the interview will take approximately two hours to complete.
3. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary.
4. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation in the study or decline to answer specific questions at any time without penalty from the researcher or my athletic coach. Should I choose to discontinue my participation, I understand that the researcher retains the right to use the information I have provided up to that point.
5. I understand that my athletic coach will have no knowledge of who chose to participate in the study and who did not.
6. I understand that, with my permission, the interview will be tape recorded. I also understand that the researcher is the only one who will have access to the tape and that she will destroy it immediately after transcription (approximately one week).
7. I understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that my name will not be revealed. Within these restrictions, results of the study will be made available to me at my request.
8. I understand that, at my request, I can receive additional explanation of the study after my participation is completed.

_____ _____

Signature Date

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