A study to determine student-athletes' motivational climate influencing their athletic and academic performance at a Midwestern university

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A study to determine student-athletes' motivational climate influencing their athletic and academic performance at a Midwestern university

by

Percy Lee Caldwell

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Table 1. Respondents by classification and sport

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The purpose of this research was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of six selected student athletes at a Midwestern university. The general research objects of the study were to describe and analyze the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of student athletes regarding: a) school climate; b) personal attitude; c) teachers’ interaction; d) coaches’ interaction; and e) parental impact.

The emerging themes elicited from the primary data were summarized for each of the five constructs. Two themes for school climate were: a) some students adapt to the conditions of their school environment with differential behaviors and attitudes of teachers, peers and coaches rather than yield to them; and b) discriminatory attitudes and racist treatment of athletes in classes contribute to an uncomfortable environment for them. For attitude, the themes were: a) attitudes toward school assumes a negative approach around the ninth grade; and b) attitudes toward academics could be as important as intellectual ability. The themes under teachers were: a) an unsupportive relationship with athletes causes some athletes to feel unwelcome; and b) insufficient formal and informal interaction with teachers adds to an unsupported learning environment for students athletes. The emerging themes for coaches were: a) they are viewed as “significant others”; and b) they are instrumental in the athletes’ development of self esteem directly affecting motivation for academic and athletic performance. For the final construct, parents, the themes were: a) when parents give their student athlete a positive sense of competence the athlete is more likely to adopt an intrinsic
orientation; and b) when student achievement is not a parental priority, the athletes senses this and expresses frustration.

This research could provide faculty, parents, students, coaches, and administrators at elementary, middle, high school, and college levels with a richer understanding of the different perceptions and experiences of student athletes who are involved in their programs. Further qualitative and quantitative research could focus on a) the quality and satisfaction of the experiences of student athletes in colleges and universities; b) the factors which cause student athletes to make decisions to drop out or persist in school; c) the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minority athletes and factors that affect their retention in their academic disciplines; d) perceptions and experiences of student athletes about their elementary and secondary educational experiences compared to those of non student athletes; and e) the effects of incorporating principles of athletic development theory into classroom instruction.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The tradition in the United States that: “Any boy can grow up to be President” is characteristically American. It reflects, most directly, faith in the democratic ideal and the optimistic belief that the humbleness of humankind’s origins is no barrier to his success (Spence. 1983). In the style of Horatio Alger, with perseverance, determination and hard work, anyone can make of himself what he will. Americans have preferred to interpret literally the philosophical principle, enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal.” The expression is significant in revealing the value that society has traditionally placed on individual achievement, and, specifically, athletic and academic achievement.

The question of the relationship between an athlete’s motivational level and achievement in sports and education is very important. It is inherent in the description of the concept of motivation that, in a situation where there is little motivation, low achievement levels will result (Bakker, Whiting, & Brug, 1990). The central issue is whether or not there is a particular level of motivation, in the sense that by not reaching that level it will lead to a deterioration in performance; or is it possible that by increasing motivation it will produce increasing gains in performance.

Closely related to the question of optimality are related problems such as: (1) What determines the level of one’s motivation? (2) What factors have an influence on the relationship between motivation and achievement? and (3) In what ways is it possible to influence a person’s motivation? Hewstone (1983) suggested that individual ability, ability
level of opponents, team and individual effort, performance outcome, achievement motivation, and social motives influence an athlete's attitude toward competition. Harter (1986) asserted that perception of competence, affective reactions, and motivational orientation toward classroom learning are all intimately linked.

How athletes perceive (a) their learning environment; (b) the relationship of their personal and professional goals, expectations and actual experiences; and (c) their relationship with faculty and peers and parents, are important concerns to examine if one is to address issues of athletic and academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

It is assumed that lessons learned in athletics can be transferred to master other challenges in life, also interscholastic athletics are supposed to provide another path of upward mobility via a college education (Miracle & Rees 1994). The logic of the idea is that participation in interscholastic athletics helps motivate athletes academically, especially the ones who are on the scholastic borderline because a specific grade point average is required to maintain eligibility for participation (Miracle & Rees).

A review of the literature has not revealed conclusively how motivational climate influences academic and athletic performance among student athletes in high school and college (Miracle & Rees, 1994). According to the research statistics of the 1995-96 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), NCAA Division-I schools served 18,305 student athletes in the two major sports, football and basketball, during the 1995-96 school year. A total of 14,666 were football participants and 3,639 were basketball. However, 6,746 student
athletes involved in football did not graduate and 2,037 student athletes involved in basketball did not graduate. These numbers do not include walk-ons, transfers or dropouts (NCAA Division-I Graduation Report, 1996).

A major shortcoming in these studies is that they do not respond to questions about the influence, i.e., home environment, community, instruction, relationships with faculty and peers, academic support, coaches, etc., of the learning experiences of student athletes. For example, the studies do not ascertain what aspects of the students' experiences were favorable or unfavorable to cause some athletes to view athletic performance with a greater appeal than academic performance (Rees, 1994).

While the literature has been filled with enrollment data, demographic data, and information on programs for athletic recruitment, and retention for general students, there has been an insufficient examination of the quality of the educational experience for athletes, from the athletes' perspective. A closer look at a student-athlete's expectations, perceptions and experiences through research could provide more insights into the climate that shapes the motivational attitudes of athletes in both athletic and academic performance. Perhaps additional explanatory theories will help researchers to better understand why many student athletes' motivation in the classroom has not reached expectation by the NCAA Academic Eligibility Standards.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1992), traditional and publicly accepted indicators of college “quality” such as admissions, selectivity, prestige and reputational measures, educational resources, library size, educational expenditures per FTE student, and faculty research productivity, tell us little about the impact or effectiveness of the
undergraduate education a student receives. Once students' pre-college characteristics are taken into account such traditional indicators of college quality have only small, and perhaps in any administrative or educational sense, unimportant net effects on learning, cognitive development, moral reasoning and various dimensions of personal maturation and development. Pascarella and Terenzini's book, *How college affects students*, focused on the affects of college on students. However, the effect of college on student athletes, was not an issue of discussion in their book.

Bakker, Whiting, and Brug (1994) suggested that, to offer theories that are basic to the student-athletes' actual experiences, researchers must explore the problems athletes face in their personal accounts of those experiences. The evidence Pascarella and Terenzini reviewed clearly establishes that: (1) students change in a wide variety of ways during the college years, and (2) that those gains are attributable at least in part to the college experience above and beyond the personal and intellectual baggage students bring with them to college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1992). Since the problems student athletes face seem to be more intensified at the university level (Bissinger, 1990), this research study described and examined the perceptions and experiences of student athletes as seen through their eyes.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of six selected student athletes (3 white-3 black) at a Midwestern university. The sample population addressed was limited to those who have completed at least two years or four semesters of college. This research examined and presented the perceptions of the
student athletes regarding the motivational climate, with particular attention given to how that motivational climate influences athletic and academic performance.

**Research Objectives**

The general research objectives of this study were to describe and analyze the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of student athletes regarding:

a) school climate;

b) attitude personal;

c) teachers interaction;

d) coaches interaction; and

e) parental impact.

There are perhaps many other constructs that can impact the motivational climate of student athletes’ athletic and academic performance. The researcher selected these five constructs. In light of previous research studies which dealt more with athletic performance, the present research focused on describing and analyzing the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes’ motivational climate that are consistent with athletic and academic performance.

**Research Questions**

Based on the review of literature, the researcher proposed the following questions for the purpose of focusing the study: (1) What main factors within the educational environment influence the motivational climate of the student athlete in school? (2) In what ways do these factors influence the success of student athletes while pursuing their educational goals? and
(3) How do student athletes view their educational experiences in light of the eligibility requirements to participate in athletes?

**Definition of Terms**

Several terms are used numerous times during the course of this study. For the purpose of the study, they are defined as follows:

*Attitude* - A person's feelings or emotions toward a particular fact or situation. (Brookover, 1979)

*Belief* - A personal conviction that a person holds regarding truth. (Rutters, 1979)

*Climate* - The product of shared attitudes, beliefs, and values as understood by the people in the school, integral parts of which include areas such as pride, spirit, and cooperation (Brookover, 1979; Rutters, 1979). For the purpose of this study, climate refers to the perceptions held by the people in the lives of the athletes in this study.

*Internal Support Systems* - The nature and extent of formal and informal academic and personal activities from which student athletes derive encouragement, skill enhancement, etc. through interpersonal relationships with parents, faculty, peers, coaches, mentors, etc.

*Motivation* - That which incites action, the motivating force, stimulus or influence that causes one to act. (Keeves, 1972)

*Perception* - One's awareness and comprehension of an environment or situation. (Bloom, 1976)

*Respondent* - Any person who answered the queries presented by the researcher. In this study, the terms respondent, athlete, subject, and interviewee are synonymous.

*Value* - The favorable circumstances which one thinks ought to be. (Rutters, 1979)
Limitations of the Study

This research study describes and analyzes the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes from the men's basketball and football teams who were available during summer school through the use of a case study approach. The researcher assumed that the participants in the study responded honestly and completely to the interview and group questions. It is further assumed that the participants understood and interpreted the questions as intended by researcher. Since the perceptions and experiences of student athletes were different and the sample size was limited to six key research participants, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all athletes at the same Midwestern university or at other institutions.

The research utilized a one-on-one interview format for data collection, which allowed the investigator to ascertain attitudes and perceptions of the motivational climate. The use of this format enhanced the ability of the researcher to capture a "thick and rich description" of the participants in their natural setting. "Thick description" is the ability of an inquiry to provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry was carried out so that anyone interested in transferability would have a base of information appropriate for judgment making. This appropriate base of information is in the form of a "thick description." The description must specify everything a reader may need to know in order to understand the finding. (Note, however, that findings are not part of the thick description, although they must be interpreted in the terms of the factors thickly described). The researcher validated these findings through the use of interviews and focus groups as data collection methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Significance of the Study

The findings of this research study could provide faculty, parents, students, coaches and administrators at elementary, high school, and college with a richer understanding of the different perceptions and experiences of student athletes who are involved in their programs. The data may provide a basis from which new theories may be generated, yielding a deeper understanding of the motivational climate that shapes an athlete's attitude and motivation for academic and athletic performance. Furthermore, the study may improve understanding of the complex, interrelated factors that appear to impact the motivational climate of student athletes.

The study could also benefit the key participants by creating a greater awareness of their perceptions about their academic and athletic experiences. Participation in the research could assist the participants to clarify for themselves their career goals and choices through a heightened awareness and understanding of the factors that influence their decision making.

Student athletes often assume additional challenges apart from the curriculum demands of their majors. They must negotiate an academic and athletic culture which they have had little or no part in creating. Many times their educational needs and interests are assumed to fit within the existing academic and athletic culture. As a result, there is no systematic recognition of the need for changes in the way a student-athlete is viewed and educated by institutions of higher learning. The student-athlete brings to the classroom, differing developmental or educational needs which are often neglected. Furthermore, there are often no incentives for faculty to consider how they might adjust their teaching styles or the way they relate to the student athlete in order to better meet his needs. Therefore, it is
this researcher’s hope that parents, teachers, coaches, key administrators and faculty will become actively involved in a review and analysis of the motivational climate created and the educational needs of the student athlete under their supervision.

**Organization of the Study**

This research study is organized as follows: Chapter 1 gives the introduction which contains the statement of the problem, purpose of study, research objective, research questions, definition of terms, limitations of study, significance of study, and the organization of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of related literature relevant to motivational climate. The review encompasses a discussion of related developmental theories about student athlete’s motivation and achievement development, parental influence on motivational achievement, community, school, peers and coaching influence on the motivational climate.

Chapter 3 includes a discussion of qualitative research methods and procedures used in this study along with a rationale statement. Chapter 3 also includes a description of the case study design, research participant selection, and data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter 4 provides the results of the data collection and analysis. Finally, in Chapter 5, the researcher provides a summary of the study, conclusions, put forth by the researcher and recommendations for future research studies.
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature relating to theories and factors that influence student athletes. First, attribution theory is discussed. Then, the influences on the perceptions and motivation of student athletes: (a) school climate; (b) attitudes; (c) teachers; coaches; and (d) parents. Finally, a summary is given which includes a restatement of the purpose of the research.

Attribution Theory

For the developmentalist, it is axiomatic that "... unless we understand the source, we will misunderstand the outcome" (Nelson, 1981, p. 98). Human beings seek constantly to explain events taking place in the world around them. This is such a common process that persons often engage in it automatically, inferring a cause for an event without really "thinking" about it. For example, if a student receives exam results that are worse than expected, the student might ask himself what went wrong. Similarly, if an apple fell upon your head, you might invent a theory of gravity, or just wonder who threw it.

In explaining events, people attribute outcomes to particular causes. Some of the explanations people generate for events are virtually automatic while others may be more deliberated. The point for the moment is that all persons engage in causal analysis very frequently—indeed, it is hard to resist doing so. In making attributions, or causal explanations, a person is applying his own lay theories of how things work. Attribution theory is the label for the causal explanation of the lay person. Attribution theory has been
the focus of an explosion of research attention and experimental social psychology during the past two decades or so (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hewstone, 1989; Hewstone & Macrae, 1996).

One well-established finding that has emerged from prior research is that self-perception of low ability versus lack of effort (attribution theory) has far reaching and disparate consequences (Weiner, 1986). However, the influence of parents, teachers, coaches, peer groups, and media on the motivational climate of the athlete cannot be taken lightly. Graham (1990) suggested that failure because of perceived low ability reflects on the failing individual and, therefore, has implication for self-esteem. In addition, as a chronic cause of failure, a self ascription to low ability also tends to lower one's expectations for future success.

In one influential early model, Kelly (1967, 1972) likened attributional reasoning to the application of an analysis of variance (ANOVA). According to this approach, when striving to explain a social event, such as someone who is shouting aggressively at another person, the lay theorist considers the distinctiveness of the action: (Does she shout at everyone, or just this individual?); the consistency of the action (Does she shout at him frequently?); and the consensus (Does everyone shout at him?). Different explanations of why she is shouting at him in a particular instance are arrived at according to the answers to each question (or, in ANOVA terminology, the level of each factor). Exactly how and when attribution occurs among adults are subjects of continuing controversy among investigators of adult social cognition. For the developmentalists, interest turns naturally to the origins of these processes (Fincham, 1981; Harris, 1981; Kassin & Pryor, 1985).
Some sense of causality appears to emerge quite early in infancy (Frye, 1991, Premack, 1991). Using visual attention measures, Leslie (1982) found that 4-8 month old infants discriminated between simple spatial events that appeared to be causally related. There is a lot of evidence that infants cannot only learn to control aspects of their environment, but seem to take pleasure in the discovery of cause-effect relations and find them highly motivating (Jennings, 1991, 1993; Messer, 1986, Sullivan & Lewis, 1988; Watson, 1972). Around the age of 3-4 years, children are able to differentiate between outcomes that they have caused and outcomes that occur randomly.

One of the major applications of accounts of attributional processes in the young concerns achievement-related behavior, especially in educational contexts. When a person approaches an educational task, she or he has an expectancy about the outcome, and in due course that person may well receive feedback about his performance that will either confirm or challenge our expectation. If one were to consider how a person might react to a disappointing negative examination result, one possibility is to attribute causality to some other party, such as an examiner, or a poor teacher; another is to feed the bad news into one’s self-concept, and conclude that one is not as smart as she or he thought. In other words, in the face of success on failure information, a person is likely to invoke attribution theories to help explain that outcome.

Weiner et al. (1986) developed an influential model of social cognitive processes thought to be engaged in achievement-related attributions. This model has stimulated a great deal of empirical research, particularly in educational settings (Bar-Tel, 1978, 1979, Frieze, 1981). The model is based on the assumption that beliefs about the causes of success and
failure mediate the relationship between feedback and subsequent performance. According to Weiner, when a person tries to explain a success or failure, she or he is likely to attribute it to one or more of four causes: ability, effort, task difficulty or luck. These causes can be categorized in relation to three dimensions. The first dimension is that of internality-externality: *Was the outcome due to my performance (internal) or to unusually difficult circumstances (external)?* The second dimension is that of stability: *Was the outcome what I typically achieve (stable) or was it a fluke (unstable)?* The third dimension is control ability: *Could I have worked any harder (controllable) or was I ill at the time of the exam (uncontrollable)?*

Any achievement-related outcome, such as a particular success or failure, could be explained by different options within this attributional framework, and the choice of options has both cognitive and affective consequences. For example, the student imagines she or he attributes an unhappy examination outcome to an internal factor—effort. The cognitive consequence is that the student has identified a variable that needs attention if she or he is to improve performance next time. The affective consequence is that the student feels some shame or self-disappointment. Fortunately, in this instance the student has pinpointed a causal factor which is both unstable and controllable; the student could raise effort and expect to do better next semester. The dent to the student’s self-esteem is not irremediable, because the student reasons: “*I am as smart as the best of them; I just need to get my act together.*”

Suppose instead that the student had attributed a failure to an ability (such as an innately low level of intelligence). In this case, there is a bigger problem, since the student has self-diagnosed as lacking a vital quality, and a rather stable one which it is difficult to
control (the student cannot opt to become cleverer next semester). Following this ability attribution, the student is likely to have lowered cognitive expectations. After all, the student surmises the lack of ability to succeed. In this case, the student’s affective reaction is likely to be one of reduced self-esteem, at least in respect of this area of achievement.

The study of attributional processes has been a major area of research activity in developmental social psychology and for the purposes of this research. When addressing important questions about how developing individuals understand causal relations in the social world, it also has wide ranging practical applications in educational and clinical-developmental contexts. There are several models of attribution theory in the adult literature, two of which are Kelly’s ANOVA model and Weiner’s model—both have proven especially fruitful sources of developmental research (Frieze, 1981). In each case, research has pointed increasingly to social influences on the ways in which individuals formulate attributions. The social context influences whether and when children make personal or situational attributions, and it also influences the kind of attributional style (mastery or helpless) that a child develops in particular domains.

Attribution theory, with respect to achievement in sports, has been driven by Weiner’s (1985) attribution model of achievement motivation and emotion. Weiner (1986) asserts that a motivational sequence is initiated by an outcome that an individual interprets as positive (goal attainment) or negative (non attainment). The property distinguishing ability from effort is “casual ability” (Graham, 1990). Stability refers to the consistency of a cause over time.
Hewstone (1983) studied attribution theory as it relates to how and why ordinary people explain events and how people understand the causes of behavior. An individual's world can be understood as the interaction of events and people. In a classroom context, the information provided by others, such as a teacher, is likely to be an important source of attributional information. Graham and Folks (1990) describe research that explore the relationship of explanatory style to one's performance in the classroom, and second to one's performance on the playing field. Explanatory style is a cognitive personality variable reflecting individual differences in how someone explains the cause of bad events (Peterson & Seligman, 1984). Graham and Folks (1990) point to lines of research investigating what Peterson (1984) termed "learned helplessness in people."

Many human studies have shown that uncontrollable events did indeed disrupt their subsequent performance. The theory suggests that when a person encounters bad events that elude control, the person asks himself "why". The answer affects subsequent reactions, not only whether helplessness ensues, but also the nature of any helplessness that is produced. First, a considerable debt must be acknowledged to earlier investigators for showing that consideration of casual attributions shed light on academic and athletic performance. According to the learned helplessness theory, people act passively, following a bad event, to the degree that they explain the bad event in a pessimistic fashion with internal, stable and global causes.
Achievement Motivation

Research has provided some insight into factors influencing the values on the scale of subjective probability. A main factor which determines the subjective probability of future success and failure is the past experience of the individual in regards to his ability to reach certain objectives (Jucknal, 1937). There is experimental evidence to indicate that the last or most recent success or failure has an especially great influence on the individual’s expectation of his future level of achievement.

Atkinson (1957, 1964) developed a theory of achievement motivation. This theory attempts to account for the determinants of the direction, magnitudes, and persistence of achievement-motivated performance. Achievement motivation is conceived to be the resultant of two opposed tendencies: (a) the tendency to achieve success; and (b) the tendency to avoid failure. The tendency to achieve success is assumed to be a multiplicative function of the motive to achieve success which the individual carries about with him from situation to situation, the subjective probability of success, and the incentive values of success at a particular activity. Similarly, the tendency to avoid failure is assumed to be a multiplicative function of the motive to avoid failure, the subjective probability of failure, and the negative incentive value of failure. Atkinson’s theory details more unequivocally the relationship between the perceived level of difficulty and the incentive values of success and failure.

Mastery of motivation is learned at a very young age. Mastery motivation is viewed as a multifaceted, intrinsic, psychological force that stimulates an individual to attempt to master a skill or task that is at least somewhat challenging for him (Morgan, Herman, &
Mastery of motivation is categorized in two major types: instrumental and expressive. Some important instrumental aspects of mastery motivation include: (a) a tendency to persist at tasks that are somewhat difficult; (b) an inclination/preference for one’s own physical and/or cognition control over environmental events (vs. passive observation of them); and (c) preference for at least some degree of challenge and/or novelty. Some important expressive aspects of mastery expressive motivation include facial, vocal, postural, and behavioral communication of: (a) pleasure, (b) interest, (c) pride, (d) frustration/anger, (e) sadness, and (f) shame.

Guiding the discussion is the following nominal definition of achievement (modified by Smith, 1969): “Achievement is a task-oriented behavior that allows the individual’s performance to be evaluated according to some internally or externally imposed criterion that involves the individual in competing with others, or that otherwise involves some standard of excellence” (p. 12). Alderman (1974) defined achievement motivation as a need for competition with a standard of excellence and the realization of the consequences of the involvement. An individual may be thought of as a high-need achiever or a low-need achiever. A high-need achiever can be defined as an individual whose motivation to achieve is stronger than his motivation to avoid failure. On the other hand, a low-need achiever is an individual whose motivation to avoid failure is stronger than his motivation to achieve.

Deci (1975) emphasized the importance of learning experience to the development of human motives. Intrinsically motivational behavior manifests itself in the desire to feel competent. As a child interacts with his or environment, the undifferentiated need for competence and self-determination begins to differentiate into specific motives. Therefore,
adults may be high-need achievers, or self-actualizers, or intellectuals. These needs (for achievement, for cognizance, etc.) are all specific intrinsic motives which develop out of the basic intrinsic need as a result of the person's interaction with his environment (Deci, 1975).

Influences on the Perceptions and Motivation of Student Athletes

School climate

The concept of school climate has been examined and defined in numerous studies in areas related to educational effectiveness and school environment. Several studies on school climate (Brookover, 1979; Edmonds, 1982; Sarason, 1981) defined climate as the atmosphere of the school. Rutters (1979) explained school climate as the product of the beliefs and values as expressed by people in a school. It is the impressions, moods, and feelings one experiences when walking the corridors, sitting in the classroom, or standing on the school grounds.

School climate (1) has a direct bearing on student achievement (Brookover, 1978); (2) effective schools share a climate that is instructionally effective for all their students (Edmonds, 1979); and (3) effective schools appear to be characterized by a positive climate which is conducive to learning (NSPRA, 1981). Research by Rutters (1979) indicates that focusing on the improvement of climate is the first step toward more effective schools and that a "good" school climate is associated with high productivity and job satisfaction. On the other hand, it appears that a "poor" school climate leads to student alienation, job dissatisfaction, complacency, frustration, and lack of creativity (Rutters, 1979). Studies that have dealt with school climate sometimes use the terms "environment" or "culture";
however, for purposes of this study, they should be understood as having the same general meaning.

Defining climate is a difficult task. Renato and Litwin (1968) defined climate as: “A relatively enduring quality of internal environment of an organization that: (a) experienced by its members; (b) influences their behaviors; and (c) can be described in terms of values of a particular set of characteristics (attributes) of an organization” (p. 27). Brookover (1979) conducted a now well-known study of school effectiveness arguing that a schools’ social system affects achievement, academic self-concepts, and self-reliance. The study by Brookover of 68 Michigan elementary schools isolated 14 climate variables which significantly “accounted for variance in achievement beyond that accounted for by the composition variables, race, and socio-economic status.”

Brookover (1979) stated:

Perhaps the most important finding is the majority of the staff members in the higher achieving schools within each pair studied seemed to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors which were conducive to higher achievement, and the majority of the staff members in the lower achieving schools did not. Simply put, we believe that the more the teachers and administrators believe their students, regardless of race and family background, are capable of higher achievement, and the more this belief is translated into real and observable classroom behavior, the higher the resulting mean achievement is likely to be. (p. 12)

The Brookover study explained that the more teachers and administrators believe in their students’ ability to achieve, regardless of race, family background or athletic ability, the more this belief is translated into observable results in classroom achievement.

If college instructors are to work effectively with college student athletes, they must be aware and sensitive to the environment of the student athletes. A study by Sparenti (1988)
indicated that the student-athletes’ environment exerts a strong influence on learning.

Sparenti stated:

The college athlete has a very unique and different environment from the non-student athlete. If the college instructors are to work effectively with college student-athletes, they must be aware of the career goals, identify an athlete’s lifestyle, educational attitudes of athletes and develop appropriate strategies for facilitating their growth, and maximize their learning experiences. (p. 16)

The college athletic environment is marked by rigid schedules, lack of opportunity for expanded social interaction, strong authority figures, and a directive approach to leadership that encourages student athletes to see the world in two parts—right and wrong. The academic world presents difficulties since student athletes spend much of their time in a world that overlooks or even consciously discourages ethical and intellectual development.

It is important that teachers make an effort to encourage student athletes to see the connection between disciplines (academics/athletics), to look at materials from a number of different perspectives, to develop self-awareness, to accept and value others, and to understand the teachers’ role and preferences regarding testing and other class requirements. According to Sparenti (1988), “... to work effectively in the academic environment, athletes must learn to transfer their existing skills for planning and goal setting into the classroom, and seek the links between the academic and the athletic world” (p. 17). Teachers appear to understand the complexity of the role of the student-athlete, yet they have little opportunity to observe their daily performance. Teachers’ perceptions of the athlete are formed primarily through a few personal encounters and traditional attitudes.
Attitude - personal

In a study on student athletes’ motivation for success, Roueche (1983) found that sports experts offer the following keys for those interested in developing sports success: (1) relation; (2) anxiety reduction; (3) use of imagery and oriented rehearsal; (4) establishment of a goal self image; (5) concentration; (6) motivation and a positive attitude; (7) rhythm development; (8) acceptance of failures; (8) persistence; and (10) anticipation. Roueche also noted that each individual seems to have the potential of being a natural athlete within limits of size and strength. Attitude may well be more important than ability. The elements in Roueche’s research on sports success are elements to consider throughout the interviews with athletes, to attempt to determine if the same elements are consistent in promoting excellence academically.

Teachers’ interaction

Sometimes the information from a teacher may be quite direct, as when a teacher tells a pupil: “You didn’t work hard enough on that math exam,” or “You belong in the low reading group.” This unintended communication of attributional information appears to be particularly likely when a teacher wishes to protect the self-esteem of a failure-prone student (Graham, 1990). Graham argued that three prevalent and seemingly positive teacher behaviors can be conceptualized in this manner and can therefore unintentionally function as low-ability cues: (1) communicated pity following failure; (2) the offering or praise following success; particularly at easy tasks; and (3) unsolicited offers of help.
The evidence Pascarella and Terenzini (1992) reviewed strongly suggests that real quality in higher education for undergraduate education resides more in what we do programmatically than in what resources we have. Pascarella and Terenzini (1992) suggest we look at such factors: (1) curricular experiences and effective general education; (2) course work patterns; (3) quality of teaching; (4) frequency and focus of student faculty non-classroom interaction; (5) the nature of peer group interactions; and (6) the extent to which institutional structures and policies facilitate a high degree of student academic and social involvement. The relevance of the characteristics we conventionally use to differentiate non-student athletes with student athletes under the current structure in higher education, leads us to ask more about what our colleges do with student athletes that can make a difference.

Minorities are often targets of low-ability cues. There is some indirect evidence that this is the case. For example, it is known that teachers have lower expectations for African-Americans than for white students (Graham & Folkes, 1990). Expectations in the classroom are even lower for African-American athletes. To whom or to what a person attributes the results of their actions is one of the factors that might have an effect on the strength of their motivation (Biddle, 1984).

Coaches' interaction

Another factor in the motivational climate of the athlete is the coach. It can be argued that the coach, like the athlete, is a victim of societal paternalistic expectations. Regardless, a healthy democratic motivational climate affects all three roles within the “athletic triangle” (parent, child, and coach). The coaches’ behaviors reflect winning achievement. Research
shows that, first, coaches are viewed as "significant others" by athletes (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1986); second, these "significant others" are instrumental to an athlete’s development of self-esteem (Greenspan, 1983); and, third, the quality of the coach-player relationship affects individual and team performance, interest, and enjoyment (Dubois, 1981). McPherson (1983) contended that there is enough empirical evidence to conclude that coaches are direct social agents and they can deeply affect social and emotional development on their athletes.

Parental impact

It is well established that a sense of competence has a powerful impact on achievement-related behavior and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Several studies, for example, have suggested that parents who give children a positive sense of competence are more likely to adopt an intrinsic orientation toward achievement. The sense of competence will demonstrate an interest in challenge, mastery, and curiosity relative to children with a negative perception of competence (Boggiano & Pittman, 1992). Other research has shown that, even among the most academically competent, some children are vulnerable to the negative effects of low perceived competence due to their parents having lower expectancies of success and less persistence (Phillips, 1984).

It is inherent in the description of the concept of motivation that, in a situation where there is little motivation, low achievement levels will result (Bakker, Whiting & Brug, 1990). Consistent with numerous models in the literature, researchers know that individual differences in perceived competence would predict individual differences in affective reactions to school performance, which in turn would impact a student motivational
orientation (Alderman, 1974; Harter & Guzman, 1990). Thus, parents are key factors influencing student athletes.

Summary

A multiplicity of historical and contemporaneous factors, some external and some internal to the student athlete, determine both the particular achievement-oriented activities in which student athletes engage, and, in any given activity, the nature of their performance. A significant body of research indicates that a positive view of one’s level of competence has various beneficial consequences for achievement, including positive effect, greater effort, and persistence (Phillips, 1984). Attribution theory with respect to sports driven achievement (Weiner, 1986), asserts that a motivational sequence is initiated by an outcome that individuals interpret as positive or negative. Alderman (1974) studied the individual from the perspective of a high-need achiever or a low-need achiever, the high-need achiever being an individual whose motivation to achieve is stronger than his motivation to avoid failure. On the other hand, a low-need achiever is an individual whose motivation to avoid failure is stronger than his motivation to achieve.

The influence of school climate, parents, and coaches cannot be overlooked. Deci (1975) emphasized the importance of learning experience to development of human motives. As a child interacts with his environment, the undifferentiated need for competent self-determination begins to differentiate into specific motives. Brookover (1979) argued that a school’s social system affects achievement, academic self-concepts and self-reliance. Brookover believed that the more the teachers and administrators believe that students are
capable of higher achievement, and the more this belief is translated into real and observable
classroom behavior, the higher the resulting achievement will likely be. Sparenti (1988)
described the student athlete as having a very unique and different environment from the non-
student athlete. If college instructors are to work effectively with the college student-athlete,
they must be aware of the career goals, identify a student-athlete's lifestyle, educational
attitudes, and develop appropriate strategies for facilitating their growth, and maximize their
learning experiences.

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences
of student-athletes regarding motivational climate influencing academic and athletic
performance. The researcher explored the interpretive frames of the student-athlete within
the context of the theoretical constructs covered in the review of literature. This study
provided an opportunity for the student athlete to give their perceptions and tell about the
people and events which shaped attitudes and motivation for academic and athletic
performance.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This section of the research study is designed to explain the methodological procedures that were utilized to conduct the study. The research methodology of this study was based on a qualitative approach. The interview process design was used to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes at a major Midwestern university. The chapter is organized into six sections: (1) Purpose of the Study; (2) Qualitative Research; (3) Selection of the Participants; (4) Sample Selection for Interviewing; (5) Data Collection; and (6) Data Analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes regarding the motivational climate influencing academic and athletic performance. The research examined the student athletes regarding motivational climate, paying particular attention to the way motivational climate influences athletic and academic performance. The research methodology employed was based on a qualitative approach and the interview process design.

Anderson (1991) suggested that learning to listen in the interview process is the interactive nature of the interview that allows one to ask for clarification, notice what questions the subject formulates about his/her life, and go beyond conventional, expected answers to a person’s personal construction of their own experiences. Since this research study is concerned with the student athletes motivational climate and how that climate
influences academic and athletic performance, the interview approach elicited additional suggestions for future study.

**Qualitative Research**

In conducting qualitative research inquiry researchers are concerned with developing a sound methodological approach to carry out the study using the inquiry method. This is important because qualitative research has yet to gain the general acceptance that exists when conducting quantitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Therefore, it is important to be able to provide a sound rationale for the use of qualitative inquiry.

The phrase "qualitative research" has been associated with other terms such as field research, naturalistic research, ethnographic research, symbolic inter-activist research, case study, phenomenological research, the Chicago School, and interpretive and descriptive (Bogdon & Biklen, 1982). Bogdon and Biklen outlined a history of social investigation, ethnographic studies, social anthropology and qualitative research in their book, *Qualitative Research in Education* (1982). Vidich and Lyman (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) also outlined the history in sociology and anthropology. Bogden and Biklen described the growth of qualitative literature as it gained prominence in qualitative circles.

Anthropological research in education is a form of qualitative analysis that parallels other forms of qualitative research. By the mid 1960s, the federal government began to encourage anthropological research in American schools (Eddy, 1985). Interest in qualitative analysis in education grew in the 1970s, and researchers realized that qualitative research was not merely a descriptive undertaking.
A qualitative approach offers a unique opportunity for the researcher to create an understanding of a problem or situation (Merriam, 1988) by uncovering the multiple meanings of phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced the events (Wolf & Tymitz, 1989). A characteristic of qualitative research is its use of the researcher as the data gathering instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Use of a human instrument allows greater responsiveness and adaptability to address changing conditions that may affect the phenomena being studied (Marshall & Rossman, 1988).

**Rationale for the Research Design**

This study used the case study approach, interviews, and participant observation to enable the researcher to collect data about the relationship between athletic and academic performance and selected environmental factors or variables and to offer an analysis of the findings. The environmental factors that were the focus of this study include family climate, classroom climate, influence, and internal support systems. Related factors that were examined are career aspirations, learning styles, and community influences of the athlete.

The case study approach, interviews, and participant observation are research instruments that have been used by authors of many scholarly, popular, and highly influential books and articles of the past quarter of a century. In their best-selling book, *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman (1982) used interviews and case studies to describe the attributes which led to the fantastic success stories of some of America’s top performing companies.
A well-known and now classic qualitative and ethnographic study of student resistance in the classroom was conducted by Alpert (1991). This article describes the subtle resistance of students in high school classrooms to work toward achieving school success. This dialectical attitude of resistance and compliance is interpreted as being influenced by a teaching approach that attributes superiority to the acquisition of knowledge. It holds great value for education and how the attitudes of teachers influence the motivational attitudes of students, and, in the case of the present study, student athletes.

Atkinson (1990), the author of The ethnographic imagination, explained that qualitative research lends itself well to using interview as a source of data where questions have been determined, yet allowances are made for copies to be generated during the course of the interview. The purpose of interviewing is to yield a cultural description as perceived by the informants. Spradley (1979) noted, “...people everywhere learn this culture by observing other people, listening to them, and then making inferences. The ethnographer employs this same process of going beyond what is seen and heard to infer what people know” (p. 46). Spadley continued, “An ethnographer seeks out ordinary people with ordinary knowledge and builds on their common experience” (p. 49).

In an analysis of the varieties of qualitative research in education, Firestone and Dawson (1981) commented on the growing acceptance of qualitative methods as witnessed in their increasing appearance in articles, books, and papers. There remains, however, confusion regarding terms such as ethnography, field methods, case studies, and qualitative methods as naturalistic inquiry.
Firestone and Dawson (1981) explained that qualitative inquiry is derived primarily through observation and interviewing. Qualitative researchers use themselves as instruments or observers and interpreters who communicate the data to others “. . . in the form of words rather than numbers” (Firestone & Dawson, p. 6).

In a qualitative study, the researcher is one of the data gathering tools used. Through direct observation, a subjective and personal element is necessarily involved with the study. According to Geertz (1991), “Doing ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherence, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shape and behavior” (p. 97).

The data collected in a qualitative study maybe richly descriptive, addressing the dynamics of the process. Data collected are often analyzed indirectly, meaning that data are first collected and relevant equations and hypotheses are generated afterwards. Hypotheses generated by the study may then be used for further testing, observation, or quantitative research.

A qualitative study often draws on the findings of several research areas. When discussing family and school climate, the organizational family and school climate can promote the purpose of family and school organization and blend sociological and anthropological insights with philosophical concepts of purpose. A qualitative or ethnographic study of family and school may be particularly appropriate. The existing literature tells one more about what family and school should be than what actually goes on.
 Principally, according to Kniker (1990), qualitative research enables the researcher to:

- evaluate events, phenomena and behaviors which cannot be measured quantitatively;
- describe unique situations or events;
- describe the attitudes and behaviors of people from their own point of view; and
- reveal systemic human behaviors.

For example, each of the preceding descriptors confirms the usefulness and compatibility of a qualitative approach to study the perceptions and experiences of student athletes. It is the researcher's assumption that student athletes are better able to explain and evaluate their educational experiences than someone from outside the situation. How their personal goals, career aspirations, academic preparation, and socio-demographic background interact with the structures and cultures of their disciplines, can be most accurately told in their own voices. The present researcher endeavored to complement the narrative process by bringing to it an understanding of the problem or situation to be studied and by utilizing research skills to elicit useful information. Finally, the researcher interpreted the results and attempted to "... reconstruct reality from the frame of reference of the research participants" (Borg, 1989, p. 386).

Data collection for this research study was conducted primarily through the use of interviews and focus group discussions. The data gleaned from the interviews included: relevant academic and athletic experiences, and narrative reports of the athletes' elementary, high school and college experiences.

Prior to conducting this research study, a copy of the research methodology was submitted to the Human Subjects Review Committee at Iowa State University. The purpose
was to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects were adequately protected, confidentiality of data was maintained, and informed consent of participation was obtained from each participant. Copies of the Human Subjects Approval Form and Research Needs Summary appear in Appendix A.

**Participant Selection**

In the fall semester of 1995, the researcher met with the head coaches of the football and basketball teams to discuss the research study. In the meeting, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and received a verbal commitment and approval to have student athletes from their respective teams participate in the study. Then, in the spring semester of 1996, the researcher wrote a letter to the head coaches as a follow-up to the Fall 1996 meeting (Appendix B). The purpose of the study was explained once again along with the procedures that would be used to select the participants.

A short meeting was arranged with the student athletes who were planning to take classes during the summer semester. In this meeting, the researcher explained the research study and learned how many were interested in participating in the study. A list was developed of those interested in participating. Then six students were selected from a availability sample of summer school football and men’s basketball teams (see sampling p.28). Later, a second letter was sent to the coaches, thanking them for allowing the researcher to conduct the study, and further explaining the interviewing procedures (Appendix C and D).
The student athletes who participated in the study were asked open-ended questions spanning their school lives. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were arranged at the convenience of the student athletes.

The primary data sources for this research study were the key research participants who met the following criteria:

1. They were currently enrolled at the university:

   *Rationale:* The researcher was interested in examining the perceptions and experiences of enrolled student athletes since issues related to academic performance standards are currently a subject of wide debate among universities (NCAA News, 1996).

2. They are athletes that had completed at least four semesters at the university.

   *Rationale:* It is this researcher’s assumption that student athletes who have persisted in school for at least four semesters at the college level had opportunities to experience or to observe varied academic and athletic situations. In addition, they would have had significant interactions with faculty, peers, parents, and coaches, and had become aware of or involved in internal support systems for athletics, etc.

**Sampling**

The researcher selected six key participants from a list of eligible student athletes obtained from the football and basketball offices. The eligible participants were those who were identified by the researcher as undergraduate athletes who met the criteria of being currently enrolled and having completed at least four semesters at a Midwestern university.
The men’s basketball program had eleven student athletes available in summer school. The football program had sixty-seven student athletes available. All eleven members of the basketball team expressed interest in participating in the research study. Thirty-seven football team members expressed interest in participating in the study. The names of all of the team members interested in participating in the study were placed on a list. Six student athletes were selected from an availability sample of seventy-eight to participate in the interviews. Sixteen different respondents were selected from the list of participants in two focus group discussions, eight in each focus group. The researcher solicited names of all participants from the list, then personal telephone calls were made to the individuals on the list to request their participation in the study. The researcher limited the sample size to six key participants to allow for greater manageability of the data. It was anticipated that the limited number of participants included in the study would engender an examination of the experiences of the participants. Additional supporting data were collected from two focus groups.

Inasmuch as the nature of qualitative research limits the feasibility of studying large samples, entire processes, or events (Whitt, 1990), purposive or criterion-based sampling procedures were used in this research study. Thus, the sample was selected based on previously established criteria as outlined in the section of the study related to selection of participants. Typical case selection techniques were used to identify the sample. Prospective research participants who met the criteria of an average case could be sought out and included in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This approach supports the researcher’s contention that the selected sample should be representative of undergraduate athletes at a
Midwestern university. Purposive sampling assumes that the researcher wants to acquire the greatest insight and understanding of the problem or situation (Merriam, 1988).

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was one-on-one interviews with student athletes. The researcher was advised by the head coaches of the football and basketball programs that each student athlete would be more accessible if interviews were conducted after the team study hall. Both coaches also informed the researcher that it would be helpful to provide an opportunity to accommodate the student athletes with a convenient time in their personal schedules for conducting one-on-one interviews. Also, the student athletes might feel more comfortable in their own personal space when being interviewed. Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants were informed that the information gathered was strictly confidential and individual names would not be used.

Open-ended questions were used to elicit responses from the student athletes interviewed. Patton (1990) contended that the purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone’s mind but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. The students were not provided with the questions before their interview. A copy of the interview questionnaire appears in Appendix E. After completing the interviews, the researchers contacted each participant to discuss the accuracy of the information provided during the interviews. After the audio-taped interviews had been transcribed, the researcher reviewed the interview transcription with each individual respondent.
Data Analysis

Wiersma (1991) referred to data analysis in qualitative research as "... a process of categorization, description, and synthesis" (p. 88). Wiersma also asserted that data reduction is crucial in providing a description and interpretation of the phenomenon under study.

Borland (1992) referred to the data reduction as the process of summarizing or paraphrasing a mass of words by the research so that the results are more succinct.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher followed three steps proposed by Best and Kahn (1993) in conducting the data analysis. Further rationales by Wiersma (1991) and Borland (1992) are included:

1. **Organizing the Data.** Best and Kahn (1993) asserted that for the purpose of conducting interviews, data may be organized according to individual respondents or by grouping answers together across respondents.

2. **Description.** At the stage in the analysis process, the researcher describes the various pertinent aspects of the study such as the individuals being studied; the purpose of any activities examined; and the viewpoints of the participants (Best & Kahn, 1993). Wiersma (1991) further asserted that the emphasis is on the researcher describing the phenomenon in its context.

3. **Interpretation.** This stage involves the researcher explaining the findings (Best & Kahn, 1993). In other words, the researcher should now be responding to the "why" questions. The researcher should provide an interpretation that other readers can understand. Borland (1992) contended that the researcher must be able to decide what the data means.
Identification of the Research Participants

The researcher employed two means of identifying prospective research participants. The primary strategy was to meet with the head coaches (of the football and men’s basketball teams) who arranged a team meeting with available student athletes in summer school (11 basketball members - 67 football) where the researcher would be introduced. Following the introduction of the researcher, the coach left the room and turned the meeting over to the researcher who explained the purpose of the study to the athletes. Once the purpose of the study had been explained, prospective participants (78 total) were asked to indicate their interest to participate in the study.

From those who indicated a willingness to participate, six athletes were selected from the availability sample from each sport. Of these six, three were selected for interviews and three alternates from the respective sports. Also, sixteen different student athletes were selected for focus group discussions (8 in each group). A second meeting with the prospective participants was held to further clarify the purpose and goals of the research study, explain the process, and schedule times for individual interviews. Research participants were asked to participate in three open-ended, audiotaped interview sessions which took place between the end of May and the first of August, 1996. Individual interviews took between one and two hours each. Participants were advised that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the study.

Prior to conducting the interviews the participants were asked to sign a consent form. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time. A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix F.
Methods of Data Collection

Merriam (1988) prescribed that, in qualitative research, the collection and analysis of the data should occur simultaneously. Data collection for this research study was initiated in May and continued through August, 1996. The primary methods of data collection were individual interviews with the key research participants. Primary data were collected through the use of audiotaped interview transcriptions and field notes from the interviews, and focus group sessions.

Interviews

The researcher conducted three two-hour audiotaped individual interviews sessions with each of six student athletes and the sixteen focus group participants who met the established criteria of: (a) currently at a Midwestern university; and (b) completion of at least four semesters of college. Individual interview tapes were transcribed, coded, unitized, and categorized as described in the section on data analysis.

Reporting the Data

This research study is presented as an interpretive case study. It includes a description and analysis of the experiences and perceptions of student athletes at a Midwestern university. The study focused on the influence of school climate, teachers, coaches, and parents, that shape the motivational climate of the student-athlete. The researcher attempted to propose explanatory theories which might help to explain how the socialization process related to the motivational climate of athletes shapes their attitude toward athletic and academic performance.
Validity and Reliability

All research inquiries must be able to respond to questions such as, "how truthful are the findings of the study? What criteria will be used to evaluate the finding? Are the findings applicable in a different setting? (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Lincoln and Guba (1981) pose several constructs related to qualitative inquiry that are useful in addressing questions about the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These constructs relate to the credibility (i.e., the accuracy of portrayal of participants' words), transferability (i.e., whether the study would be applicable in another situation), dependability (i.e., the researcher responds to changes in the situation being studied), and confirmability (i.e., the data and findings can be substantiated by an external examiner) of the research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Strategies the researcher utilized to meet criteria for trustworthiness are discussed below.

Establishing trustworthiness

An ongoing criticism of research produced through qualitative methods is that it seldom has any truth value. In an early treatment of the problem, Howard Becker (1988) outlined some reasons that observational methods conform poorly to traditional standards of scientific inquiry. First, qualitative researchers are usually more interested in a thorough understanding of an organization than in narrow relationships between specific, often abstract, variables. The essence of understanding is more enticing to the researcher than post hoc explanations or conclusions. Second, the design of qualitative research typically takes place while the research is already underway. The research site may be insufficiently understood at the beginning of the study to identify relevant data, let alone test a priori
hypotheses. As the study continues, the analysis of data and the selection and definition of problems or foci for investigation proceed interactively, each providing direction for the other. Finally, the qualitative researcher is typically faced at the end of his study with the task of trying to make some sense out of an almost overwhelming complexity of information, to fashion a bit of grounded theory, and to search for a sensible model rather than to test it (Becker, 1970).

Research inquiries must be able to respond to questions such as: “How true are the findings of the study?” “Should the same criteria for quantitative research be applied to qualitative research?” and “Can the findings be applied to different settings?” (Hammersley, 1992). Hammersley summarized qualitative criteria in the following way. Researchers should assess a work in terms of its ability to (a) generate generic/formal theory; (b) be empirically grounded and scientifically credible; (c) produce findings that can be generalized, or transferred to other settings; and (d) be internally reflexive in terms of taking account of the effects of the researcher and the research strategy on the findings that have been produced. Strategies the researcher utilized to meet criteria for trustworthiness are discussed as follows.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) used as a key concept in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry (replacing the traditional notions of being realizable and valid). The term is credibility. Reliability refers, of course, to the capacity of study to be replicated. Because qualitative research occurs in natural settings, changes in design as setting indicates, depends
heavily upon the idiosyncrasies of each researcher, and often involves vague and intuitive insights into the setting and its data, the replicability of a piece of qualitative research is often problematic (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

The data and findings that are produced through naturalistic inquiry will more likely to be credible if they are acquired through (a) prolonged engagement (e.g., with sufficient time spent to learn the culture and to build trust); (b) persistent observation (thereby uncovering that which is most relevant to a developing understanding); and (c) the use of triangulation (using multiple data sources and collection methods).

The researcher used interviews, observations, peer debriefing, member checks, and document analysis to confirm the findings of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This process of using multiple data sources to confirm data is called triangulation (Merriam, 1988). Peer debriefing refers to comments made based on the findings, research processes, etc. The researcher used a peer debriefer to evaluate the interview questions prior to administration to the research participants, to offer suggestions on the steps used in the study and to check out the theoretical assumptions being proposed by the researcher (Whitt, 1990). The use of a peer debriefer encouraged the researcher to keep personal biases and perceptions in check.

Member checks involved sharing with the research participants the researcher's understandings and interpretations of their words to assure accurate representation. Research participants have an opportunity to affirm or refute any constructions of their words and negotiate final representations with the researcher for the report. The researcher provided copies of the final draft to research participants for review.
Transferability

Transferability defined agreement in score-meaning of the same test applied on the same kind of occasion and under the same condition to a different set of people (Good, 1973). While external validity is not the goal, the naturalist does assist the person interested in making a transfer by engaging in a thick description of the setting studied. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarize, it is “not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability; it is his responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (p. 34).

The goal in qualitative research is that of transferability. In this study the researcher provides a “thick description” to furnish the reader with a sufficient base of information from which to determine if the findings are applicable in their particular situation (Merriam, 1989). The use of two primary data sources (interviews and focus groups) also enhances transferability of the findings to other situations.

Dependability and confirmability

Dependability - the state or quality of being so related that what effects one affects all others (Good, 1973).

While conventional reliability (in terms of replicability) is not applicable, the reader of a naturalistic inquiry should be confident that the process of inquiry is consistent, internally coherent, and ethically aboveboard. Furthermore, the reader should be confident that the findings are grounded in the data, logical in terms of the data, and acceptable (e.g.,
negative cases accounted for an an “audit” of the study caried out) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 301-327).

In order to provide sufficient evidence of the objectivity and appropriateness of the decisions and judgments made throughout this research study, the researcher used a combination of strategies proposed by Marshall and Rossman (1989): establish an audit trail consisting of raw data (i.e., interview tapes, and field notes), original transcriptions of audio taped interviews, coded transcriptions of audiotaped interviews for unitizing and categorizing data, observation sheets, drafts of finding, final report of the research study, notes on methodological decisions and notes from meetings with peer debriefers. An audit trail allowed an external examiner to review data collection and analyze procedures and findings to assure that the data stand for themselves.

**Ethical Considerations**

The nature of qualitative research requires the researcher to impose on the private thoughts and personal experiences of the research participants. Thus, an important consideration becomes: “How does the researcher gather ‘thick’ descriptive data necessary to accomplish the goals of the research without doing harm to the research participants?” Confidentiality of the use of the data and anonymity of the participants is of the utmost importance. In this study the researcher followed the procedure outlined as follows to honor the ethical considerations of this research effort.

1. The research participants were informed about the nature of the study, processes utilized, and how the data would be disseminated and used. Each participant was
asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview and was advised that he could withdraw from the study at any time.

2. The researcher assured anonymity by coding all audiotaped interviews, field notes, consent forms, and any identifying information. Interview transcripts were coded so as not to reveal the names of individual participants in any of the research reports. Final copies of the research report were reviewed disseminated to each participant for review and analysis.

3. Approval for the study was sought from the Human Subjects Review Committee to ensure that the rights of the human subjects were adequately protected, risks were outweighed by the potential benefits and expected value of the knowledge sought, confidentiality of data was assured, and that informed consent was obtained by appropriate procedures.
CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes at Midwestern University. Presented in this chapter are the descriptive data collected from the individual interviews and focus group discussions with the research participants. A summary is provided of the goals of the data analysis for the study and the analytical procedures used by the researcher.

The data are analyzed according to the theoretical constructs or themes upon which the general research objective for the study is based. In the preliminary phases of the study, the researcher identified from the literature several theoretical constructs or themes related to motivational climate or environment. These theoretical constructs appear to affect the motivational climate that influences the academic and athletic performance of student athletes. These constructs were identified in Chapter 1. They include: academic preparation and career aspirations, interaction with parents/other relatives, classroom climate, community climate, internal support systems, interaction with faculty and peers, and interaction with coaches. Also discussed are the significant themes that emerged naturally from the interviews.

Through examination of the interview and focus group data, emerging themes are assessed for significance, sorted based on consistency with similar themes, and categorized under the theoretical constructs deemed as most fitting by the researcher.
The chapter begins with a summary of the characteristics of the respondents who participated in individual interviews, followed by brief biographical profiles of each respondent. A pseudonym is used for each respondent so that his anonymity can be maintained. The biographical profiles are provided to give the reader a sense of the context in which the respondents developed their values and aspirations, the influences of family or other role models, and the impact of their life experiences on decisions and choices they have made in pursuing their career interest. Context sensitivity in qualitative research offers the researcher a unique perspective on the social and historical contexts of the phenomenon so that greater understanding of the subject under study is achieved (Patton, 1990).

The focus group participants are characterized as a group by various sports. In an effort to assure the anonymity of each focus group participant, no biographical data were collected.

**Goal of Data Analysis**

"The goal of data analysis for the researcher is to generate reasonable interpretations and conclusions based upon a preponderance of data" (Merrian, 1988, p. 130). Depth and detail in the data collection and analysis process are essential to achieving this goal. Merrian (1988) refers to data analysis in qualitative research as "a process of making sense out of one's data... data are consolidated, reduced, and interpreted" (pp. 129-130). The data are conveyed through the words of the respondents, enabling the researcher to gain an "emic" perspective of the real life experiences. Emic is defined as analysis of behavior phenomena related to internal elements of a system (Costello, 1990).
"Thick, rich" descriptions which provide literal depiction's of the respondents' experiences, and exhaustive data accumulation are prerequisite in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1981, p. 119) In interpretive studies "thick, rich" descriptive data are essential to providing the researcher with as much information as possible about the phenomenon under study so that he or she can arrive at a meaningful level of conceptualization and analysis and reasonable conclusions (Merrian, 1988).

Summary of Analysis Procedures

Merrian (1988) proposed that data collection and analysis in qualitative research should occur simultaneously. "Analysis begins with the first interview" (p. 119) and proceeds as the researcher discovers emerging themes and postulates tentative hypothesis which then cause the researcher to redefine his questions and assumptions (Merrian, 1988).

To provide a methodological framework for the study, the researcher followed the five analytical procedures for data analysis proposed by Marshall and Rossman (1989). These procedures are described in detail in Chapter 3. These procedures assure the reader that methods have been adhered to which depict the data in enough detail to demonstrate that the researcher's conclusions are logical. Merrian (1988) suggests that this validation is necessary in qualitative research, just as it is in quantitative research, to assure the reader that the findings are authentic and reasonable.

Step 1. Organizing the data

Organizing the data involved pulling together and sorting all of the collected interview and focus group data in a way that was understood by the researcher and that made
the data easily retrievable. Interview and focus group transcripts were reviewed and noted with questions, thoughts, themes, and initial hypotheses of the researcher. Through a process of unitizing the data, the researcher identified meaningful bits of information (e.g., words, phrases, and sentences) and compared and contrasted each in order to establish conceptual themes. The unitizing was done in the margins of the transcripts.

**Step 2. Category development**

The researcher chose to use *a priori* (previously established) categories that were presented as theoretical constructs or themes upon which the general research objective for the study is based (i.e., academic preparation and career aspirations, interaction with parents/other relatives, classroom climate, community climate, internal support systems, interaction with faculty and peers, interaction with coaches). In qualitative research, the researcher may choose to allow categories to naturally emerge from the data. The emergence of relevant themes in data-analysis results from the intuitive process of the researcher identifying recurring themes which he or she feels have meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). For example, the researcher may classify a category or theme based on the frequency with which something is mentioned in the data.

**Step 3. Testing emergent hypotheses**

The researcher examined the data and extracted themes which challenged those theoretical assumptions made by the researcher (i.e., that selected educational environment factors negatively affect the motivational climate of student athletes). The testing of emergent hypotheses against the data began with the researcher evaluating the plausibility of
the developing hypotheses by searching through the data for opposing arguments or patterns. Finally, the researcher determined if the data were useful in answering the questions under study or in generating new theories.

**Step 4. Search for alternative hypotheses**

The researcher searched the data seeking alternative explanations and establishing logical interrelationships and conclusions supported by the data.

**Step 5. Writing the report**

Writing the report is a continuation of the analytic process (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The results of the study were presented in a narrative form. The perceptions, experiences, and observations of the respondents were presented according to their “world views.” Descriptive data were then framed within the analysis and linked to the general theoretical constructs.

Actual quotes from individual interviews were provided to more accurately reflect the meanings of the respondents word. Descriptive data from the survey and document analysis were summarized to provide the reader a supplemental perspective on the subject under study.

**Validity and Reliability**

To address the issue of rigor and trustworthiness of the data, the researcher used triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefs. Triangulation, or the use of multiple data sources, is used to corroborate and illuminate the research in question and to enhance its
usefulness for other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Multiple data sources for this study included interviews and focus groups; with the supplementary data from related survey.

A member check with each individual interview respondent assured the researcher of the accuracy of interpreting the meaning of words conveyed by the respondent. Member checks involved the researcher repeating and summarizing comments during the interviews and allowing the respondents to review their transcripts and to make changes in the data. Copies of the transcripts were given to each respondent with a request to provide written comments and suggested changes. Three respondents provided written comments and two respondents provided feedback by telephone. Changes that were suggested did not substantially alter the data.

A peer debriefer was used to get an outside perspective of what the researcher felt he was hearing and learning from the individual interview respondents. The peer debriefer examined the research proposal, interview questions, interview transcripts, the methodology chapter, and the analysis chapter, and made suggestions to the researcher. By doing this, the peer debriefer helped to evaluate the credibility of processes used and conclusions drawn by the researcher.

Characteristics of the Individual Interview Respondents

A total of six student athletes from the basketball and football teams at Midwestern University participated in semi-structured individual interviews with the researcher. The selected respondent participated in the study through its completion. The respondents participating in the study included three football players and three basketball players. The six
student athletes who agreed to participate in the study represented the classifications shown in Table 1.

**Characteristics of Focus Group Participants**

Participants in the focus group included men and women from the women’s and men’s basketball teams, football, track, and wrestling teams. None of the focus group participants were interviewed individually by the researcher. One focus group was facilitated by the researcher. Nine respondents participated in the focus groups.

**Biographical Profile of Individual Respondents**

*Ted:* Ted is a senior majoring in Business. He is from Iowa. His father is a college professor and his mother is an elementary school teacher. Both parents have very strong academic background influences on Ted. Ted was a model student and very successful academically and athletically through middle school and high school. His academic and athletic success continued through college.

*Wayd:* Wayd is a junior majoring in General Studies. He is from California. He never had a father figure in his life. Wayd’s mother is an engineering technician. While in junior college, Wayd did not acquire enough hours or satisfactory grades to receive a degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Freshman: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Freshman: 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He was placed in a Bachelors Liberal Studies (BLS) degree program. Wayd gives the major credit to his mom for providing what he terms a “fun” life. Life was tough but not too rough thanks to his mom. Wayd played sports at Southern Idaho where he was recruited to play for Midwestern University.

Al: Al is a senior who has a degree in Business Management, and is currently working on a Master in Business Administration, with one year of athletic eligibility remaining. Al is from Kansas City, Missouri, and attended high school at Sumner Academy of Arts and Science. He plans to enter law school after completing his master’s degree. Al’s father is an attorney. His mother recently completed law school and is also an attorney. His mother was formerly a physical education teacher who left teaching to work for the state in social service. Then she decided she wanted to be an attorney and has since reached that goal.

Al ended up at Midwestern University, not on an athletic scholarship, but he was awarded the George Washington Carver Minority Academic Scholarship. Al had the option to attend a junior college to improve his athletic skills for Division I sports, but he chose to accept an academic scholarship at a four-year school. Because he still wanted to play his sport, he made the team through team tryouts as a walk-on.

Tim: Tim is a junior majoring in Computer Science. Tim is from Kansas City, Missouri, and a graduate of Rockers High School which is a college preparatory school for boys. Tim’s father is a route salesman for the Taste Bread Company and his mother is a bank supervisor. Both parents have had a great influence on Tim’s life. Tim came to Midwestern
University because, out of all the schools recruiting him, Midwestern U seemed to want him the most. Therefore, he accepted a scholarship to play for Midwestern.

Borlin: Borlin is a junior majoring in Computer Science. Borlin is from Illinois where he attended Morris Community High School. Borlin's dad was a truck driver for seventeen years and is now in sales for a steel supply corporation. His mother was a tavern owner but sold the business three months ago to become a housewife.

Borlin was recruited by a lot of schools including Midwestern University. He was impressed by Midwestern's ranking of their computer science programs and he liked the school's academic reputation, therefore, he accepted an athletic scholarship.

Carl: Carl is a junior majoring in Social Studies. Carl is from a large family (ten brothers and three sisters). He grew up in a housing project in New Jersey. According to Carl, it wasn't and still isn't a positive environment. His mom never finished school, but she was his main motivator and his best friend throughout his life. Carl said his father was never around much and did very little to help his mom. She practically raised thirteen children on her own. Carl is very proud of his mother. He said it wasn't easy for her, but she did the best she could. He regrets to say that his New Jersey high school was easy. "If you were good at sports, you could do what you wanted; not go to class if you did not want to, that sort of thing." In junior college it was about the same. Carl feels that it was a shocking transition coming to Midwestern U., and he feels he is now paying for his past experiences in high school and junior college.
Analysis of Data

School climate

The different treatment of student athletes in an academic environment in various studies is a continuing problem despite the increasing signs of academic improvement by athletes (NCAA News, 1995). Attitudes and behaviors, which have reportedly discouraged some student athletes have included: (a) less and less attention given by faculty and administrators to student athletes (Miracle & Rees, 1994); (b) discriminatory behavior directed toward student athletes (Sparenti, 1988); (c) attitudes that attribute the success of student athletes to luck or being a minority (Graham & Folkes, 1990); (d) subtle messages from teachers that they consider student athletes less intelligent than other students, and therefore expect less from them; and (e) perceptions that student athletes take unfair advantage by using their athleticism to get their way in the classroom (Graham, 1990).

According to Biddle (1984) the disparaging attitudes and behaviors experienced by some student athletes affect their academic performance and sometimes their will to remain in school.

To create a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of student athletes at Midwestern University as it relates to classroom climate, the following individual interview questions were explored with the respondents:

1. How would you describe a typical class period?
   a. Who does and does not participate?
   b. Why do you think things are this way?
2. How does it feel to be in your classes?

3. Have there been instances where you experienced a negative or positive school climate, as it relates to faculty and peer interaction?

4. How are student athletes treated in comparison to non athletes in your academic program?

**Classroom participation**

An initial theme that emerged from the data related to classroom climate is that student athletes participate less than other students in class discussions and are less likely to raise questions in large classes or in classes where they do not know the other students and the professor. The following analysis explores some of the reasons for this phenomena.

All of the respondents describe large classes with large numbers of students in them, with little or no interaction between the professors and students. Most of the respondents describe feelings of discomfort and intimidation in large lecture classes, and difficulty establishing relationships with other students and teachers.

Most of the respondents indicated that they very seldom ask questions in class. One respondent stated that if he has questions about the lecture, he will ask other students in the class for help rather than talk to teachers after class. Many students, male and female, seem reluctant to raise questions in class. However, the data indicates that student athletes may be even more reluctant than other students to raise questions in class. The following quotes from individual interview respondents illuminate this theme.

Tim, a junior in Computer Science, responded: “the professors view other students as more competent than athletes, they relate better with the other
students so they get better grades. I feel I have to do extra stuff to show the teachers that I care about my grades too.”

Al, a senior in Business Management, stated: “I try to ask questions in class, making sure the questions are good, because I am very aware of the stereotype teachers have about athletes, and I want them to know I am a student too.”

Carl, a junior in Social Sciences, responded: “Sometimes I feel the teacher will pick me out of the class because he knows I am an athlete. I try not to ask questions, and not be seen so I won’t have to answer a question.”

**Gap in learning experience**

Another theme that emerges from the data is that most respondents felt there existed a gap in their learning compared to other students. This perceived learning gap affect their self-confidence and interaction in the classroom. Overwhelmingly what emerge from the responses of all but two of the respondents is a feeling of the lack of preparation, or having a gap in their learning compared to other students. There seems to be an uneasy acceptance by some of the respondents of the view that other students are more knowledgeable and they (athletes) can only expect to be less capable in the classroom. As a result, some student athletes are usually silent in the classroom even though they may have some things to say.

A recurring comment from the respondents is that other students typically come into classes somehow with more practical knowledge or experience, therefore they are better prepared than student athletes. The data indicate that the silence of some student athletes in the classroom is reinforced when teachers intentionally do not call on student athletes in class or direct the more difficult questions to other students and not to an athlete, assuming he doesn’t know. For example, one respondent described a situation involving a teacher seeking a response from the class on a particular question. He knew the answer, was prepared, and
raised his hands vigorously; nevertheless, the teacher recognized the hand, but looked past him. He felt the teacher had no respect for the answer he had to give. Sarenti's (1988) findings bear out; some athletes who experience low expectations by faculty may be losing the academic advantage and confidence they need as they enter college.

While the data from this researcher's study do not demonstrate that many teachers openly discourage student athletes in their classes, neither do they indicate that many teachers challenge, encourage and support active participation and learning for student athletes in their classes. One respondent's perception is that, "athletes don't really talk about how they feel in their classes ... teachers won't understand because they view what we say (as athletes) as only word ... I'm not perceived as equal, so how can I be equal?"

According to Miracle and Rees (1994), athletes are taught at an early age to value athletic accomplishment over academic achievement. The data suggest that raising questions in class was regarded by some athletes as an admission of a lack of knowledge about the subject being discussed. Also, for some respondents, asking a question which might be perceived as "dumb" could consequently create doubts on the part of others about their competence. So, they continue their silence rather than risk creating the perception that they are incompetent.

**Focus group responses on school climate**

The focus group questions which explored school climate issues included the following:

1. How would you describe your relationship with teachers and peers?
2. How would you describe the way athletes and non-athletes are treated respectively in your classes?

3. What have been sources of encouragement and discouragement for you?

Comments related to classroom climate from focus group participants represented attitudes and behaviors that ranged from racist humor and subtle put downs to harassment by teachers and peers. A focus group participant reported: “They’ll (teachers) really support you or they have the power to change things and make things difficult for you . . . on the other hand, I have had some very good teachers who were understanding and supportive.”

Peer relationship with other athletes is a problem for some focus group participants. One participant reported being teased and made to feel less of a person because he tried hard to do well in classes, and was told: “Well, you know all he’s going to do is study all evening, that’s why he’s not a starter on the team.” The respondent said that he sometimes will challenge such comments, but other athletes look at it as behavior exhibited by a person not interested in graduation:

One respondent remarked almost apologetically: “They don’t really drastically talk down to you, but they do just enough so you can notice.”

Another participant commented: “I m aware the good student athletes are treated differently, but it doesn’t bother me. I know that’s just something I have to deal with.”

A fourth participant shared: “I am the only athlete in my class . . . They (students and teacher) are not friendly at all, and I don’t like that class . . . so, I’m getting a poor grade.”

The perception of being viewed as unintelligent and not able to do anything about it was apparent among several of the participants.
Sources of encouragement

By asking the question: "What have been sources of encouragement and discouragement for you academically?" the researcher was attempting to find out if there are factors related to school climate that encourage and support student athletes or discourage and neglect them. A major theme that emerged is that most of the interview respondents identified their inner strength and self-reliance learned in athletics as the greatest sources of encouragement for them. Other respondents identified encouragement as continuous parental interest and support. Some respondents stated that achieving a little success in a class as encouragement.

Sources of encouragement identified by focus group participants included: self-determination, parental support, friendly, positive attitudes of teachers, trust by teachers in their abilities, having a network of people to show you the ropes, and tutorial support. For the most part, encouragement for many of the respondents and focus group participants is related to their own interpersonal characteristics, such as their sense of self-worth (self-reliance, inner strength, self-determination) and relationships with others (parents, teachers, coaches and peers).

Miracle and Rees (1994) found that by the time a young athlete arrives at college, his sense of self-worth is often extrinsic. The athlete has been singled out by well-meaning teachers, parents, coaches and the media as a promising athlete and provided lots of attention. In turn, he performs and tries to do his best to please those who have promoted him. In other words, he has become dependent on the approval of other people to validate his achievement.
and strengthen his motivation. Unfortunately, the interview respondents' perceptions were that the same climate does not exist academically.

Another finding that is reinforced by the data from this researcher’s study is that most of the respondents had nurturing, supportive relationships with grade school and high school teachers, and coaches or counselors who they credit with encouraging them to keep off the streets and to use their athletic ability in positive ways to help their future. Thus, it becomes clearer how important it is for student athletes to develop perpetual supportive relationships with teachers and coaches so that their adjustment from high school to college is enhanced. Graham and Folkes (1990) stated that peer support is ineffective when it is the only source of support for a student who is facing academic or other problems.

Sources of discouragement

Among sources of discouragement respondents shared are: lack of teacher/faculty support, the difficulty of getting decent grades like in elementary and high school, teachers who are negative toward athletes. Sources of discouragement for focus group participants included: a lack of familiarity with the university, lack of encouraging faculty, intense studying that is required, assumptions by teachers about what students know.

Receiving below average grades placing their athletic eligibility at risk was a major concern of many of the respondents. Three of the respondents expressed disappointment that they have not been able to maintain good grades, and some admitted that they are just now learning how to study for the first time.
Summary of data on school climate

According to Graham and Folkes (1990) athletes who enroll in college are more vulnerable than non-athletes when it comes to successful negotiating their way through the competitive academic and athletic culture and responding to the pressures of doing both. Brookover (1979) explained that the more teachers and administrators believe in their students ability to achieve, regardless of race, family background, or athletic ability, the more this belief is translated in observable behavior, results will show in classroom achievement. Added to the lack of affective orientation in the classroom are the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by some teachers and peers which discourage student athletes. Messages conveyed, subtly and overtly, question student athletes' intellectual abilities or their seriousness about pursuing a college degree.

Following an examination of effective school climate, it was found that climate with its inherent ambiguity is an important factor in determining an athletes effectiveness in school. Climate is formed by the attitudes, beliefs, and values shared by the people in a school (Rutter & Brookover, 1979). The data in this study indicate that the perception a student athlete has of the people in the school related to those beliefs and values about them as athletes can be negative or positive and will dictate their motivation to succeed academically and athletically.

Teachers

Several respondents expressed feelings that teachers don't care about athletes. Carl, a junior in Social Studies, states: "A lot of them (teachers) just assume because you are an
athlete that it is automatic that you won’t be a good student.” Faculty who just come to class and lecture and show no interest in interacting with the students, are perceived as uncaring and unsupportive by respondents. On the other hand, teachers who ask student questions during class or do interactive activities in class are viewed as more caring, even if they spend little time interacting with students outside class.

Overall, the data indicate that respondents view the “best teachers” as those with whom they have personal relationships. Teachers who are characterized as “good teachers” are those who are supportive and caring, friendly and open to being asked questions, those who will help athletes when they have a problem, who are receptive to students coming in to visit them during office hours. This finding is consistent with that of Deci’s (1975) study which found that as a child interacts with his environment, the undifferentiated need for competence and self-determination begins to differentiate into specific motives.

**Differential treatment of athletes**

In response to the question: “How are student athletes treated in your academic program?” all but one of the respondents reported that they have not experienced discriminatory behaviors by their teachers. It was apparent that the interpretation of this question by most of the respondents was narrowed to mean discrimination, rather than differential treatment. The researcher was attempting to generate a discussion about a range of subtle and overt attitudes and behaviors that describe how student athletes are treated, however, the responses on this question indicated some confusion about the difference between discrimination and differential treatment based on being an athlete.
Two of the respondents remarked that they have never felt or perceived any differences in the way athletes are treated by teachers. In their perceptions, students in general are treated equally as well or badly by some teachers. One of the respondents who expressed that he had not experienced or perceived differential treatment of students in general, stated his belief that black athletes will always be treated differently because they are minorities.

Alderman (1974) provided a unique perspective that further highlights this particular perspective. Alderman asserted that individuals may be thought of as a high-need achiever or a low-need achiever. The school climate in many schools view blacks, and particularly black athletes, as low-need achievers. Brookover’s (1979) study of school effectiveness might contribute to an understanding of how some perceptions may be perceived as being treated differently. Some student athletes who perceived a difference in treatment which they believed to be discrimination, but they could not clearly label the behavior as discriminatory.

Several respondents reported second-hand accounts from teammates and friends of biased treatment from teachers or condescending attitudes of teachers which made student athletes who ask questions in class feel stupid. Al, a very talented student athlete, shared his feeling discouraged by a teacher who showed bias toward athletes in grading practices. To prove his point, he explained that throughout the semester he helped a student (non-athlete) in one of his classes. Based on that students grades up until finals, the student thought he was going to fail the course. Al was averaging a “C” in the class. After finals, that student received a “B” in the class whereas Al received a “B-” in the class. Al’s perception is that the teacher gave him a lesser grade because he was an athlete and also black.
Attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate stereotypical views about student athletes were described by some respondents, but not labeled by them as racist or discriminatory.

**Attitude**

One observation from the data is that most of the student athletes who were interviewed do not view themselves as "typical students." For example, "Borlin" commented: "You can't be a typical student and be an athlete." To further examine this perception, it is necessary to consider the sequence of influences and experiences that the respondents described as helping to shape this attitude. The data show that most of the respondents have usually (a) excelled in one sport or more in school; (b) had been promoted by the schools, media, parents, some teachers and coaches; (c) were told that they are special and gifted athletically; (d) had been selected and featured in many college recruiting guides; (e) had survived the many roster cuts in their sports; and (f) had gotten by academically throughout school in many cases. Therefore, there seems to be a consistent belief on the part of the respondents, that they will succeed due to their athletic ability and determination.

A study by Roueche (1983) found that attitude may well be more important than ability in developing sports success. According to Sparenti (1988): "... to work effectively in the academic environment, athletes must learn to transfer their existing skills for planning and goal setting into the classroom, and seek the link between the academic and the athletic world" (p. 11). Again, attitude may well be more important than ability (Roueche, 1983).

Numerous veteran teachers lament the decline in student motivation. The researcher had an opportunity to speak to one teacher who summed up the view of many:
The attitudes of the kids have changed tremendously. I don't know if it is because of exposure to TV and so on. Kids are really hard to motivate nowadays. A lot of athletes are taking classes because it's required for eligibility. All they care about is getting through and playing their sport. For kids, it doesn't seem to be fun to come to school. They would rather do anything else but come here. It's really discouraging.

American colleges and universities have traditionally been concerned with shaping students attitudes, values, and beliefs (Rudolph, 1963). Although a substantial amount of research exists concerning the importance of higher education on students' political and religious attitudes, the same can not be said about research on the impact of school, climate, teachers, coaches, and parents on the student-athlete's attitude toward academic and athletic performance.

According to social psychologists, most attitudes are anchored in group membership and student attitudes are likely to be directly influenced by peer group membership. Astin (1993) asserts that a student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on the development of undergraduates and that student attitudes tend to change in the direction of the dominant attitudes of peer groups. In the case of athletes, the dominant peer groups are teammates.

Coaches

Research shows that, first, coaches are viewed as “significant others” by athletes (Snyder & Speitzer, 1986); second, these “significant others” are instrumental to an athlete’s development of self-esteem (Greenspan, 1983); and third, the quality of the coach-player relationship affects individual and team performance, interest, and enjoyment (Dubois, 1981). A major theme that emerged is that other than the respondent’s inner strength and self-
reliance, the coach provided the most encouraging motivational climate. One respondent summed up this way:

"I think the coach impacts on the climate of the team and my attitude towards school. I think that whether a coach teaches a class or not, he is the most important person in the school."

Perhaps the theme which best captures what student athletes look for in a coach, is leadership. Four characteristics or qualities associated with leadership were: (1) support, (2) caring, (3) recognition, and (4) pride.

**Support**

Student athletes expect many things from their coach, but perhaps no function is as important as support. Support comes in many packages: nurturing, showing appreciation, and, backing their athletes. Student athletes today really need a lot of help; they need to be told that the job they are doing academically or athletically is important and that it is meaningful. Wayd, a junior in Social Sciences, on the question: "How do coaches influence your motivational climate for academic and athletic performance?" responded:

"I remember back in 9th grade, my coach used to come around us and work with us. If we needed the time to study or something, he would study with us. I wanted to go and hang out with the guys or chase the girls, but my coach would watch over me and make me finish my work. I didn't think this was cool for him to do that, but he motivated me. Sometimes I would just stay at his house to stay out of trouble."

A critical type of support which student athletes expect from their coach is "backup". Backing an athlete comes when an athlete feels attacked by situations and others outside the school or team matters. Failure to stand behind the student athlete could undermine a trusting relationship. Ted, a senior in Business Management, stated:
"A coach may say everybody is doing a good job, but I think when the situation comes up where he has to stand on the line for you, I think that determines how serious and supportive he is. When student athletes feel a lack of support from the coach it has a negative impact on motivational climates."

**Caring**

Caring contributes powerfully to motivational climate. It is a personality often communicated through body language and informal conversation and may take the form of moral support, constructive criticism, or help.

Ted responded: "Coach always smiles, always encouraging. He would just ask if everything was going okay. Do you need any help? Need to talk or anything? The assistant coaches always checked to see how I'm doing in class, etc."

When faced with pressure from school and other outside problems, student athletes look to the coach as one who always cares. Casual conversation and boasting are important.

Care is seen when a coach helps athletes who are going through difficult times. Anyone can have a "bad game." Interview respondents spoke about having a bad game, or a losing season.

"Coach would pat us on the back" stated Tim. My high school coach would even write me a letter, see me in the hall at school and give positive reinforcement. He (coach) did the same thing in his classes. If someone was having a problem in math, he would maybe give them a little assurance that they are doing a good job and pat them on the back. I don't know how other coaches were, but I love my high school coach. He still checks on me and comes to a game when he can."
Recognition

Recognition is a powerful way to boost morale and increase satisfaction. As one respondent explained:

“Our coach uses team meetings a lot of times when he lets us know the good things that are going on. He tries to keep things real upbeat. Last season coach picked several players who had struggles with their grades and praised them for improving even if it was only a grade point. We really needed that boost.”

All the respondents expressed feeling of pride when their academic or athletic achievements were recognized. This is a powerful influence on motivational climate.

Pride

Pride means showing others that the coach had a high opinion of you. It means attending events, classes, and talking to others with admiration and respect. Pride may be seen when a coach is, as Dubois (1981) observed, “quietly everywhere.”

Carl responded: “During lunch periods, he was there, talking to the guys, talking to other teachers, and showing general interest in all of us. He had a lot of pride in the system and what he did. Coach was a leader and that showed all the time.”

Pride can be infectious. The coach who is proud of his school and his team can rally the troops with pep talks. A coach who is proud of his team, staff, and school shows it in many ways. Pride is an important part of motivational climate.

Summary

McPherson (1983) contended that there is enough empirical evidence to conclude that coaches are direct social agents and they can deeply affect social and emotional development
on their athletes. The coach appears to be a driving force in shaping motivational climate. Student athletes react positively to his behavior. When a coach shows support, caring, recognition and pride, it makes a difference. Coaches are instrumental to an athlete’s development of self-esteem (Greenspan, 1983). Coaches set the tone for the team when they back athletes up with support. They are trusted and are seen as genuinely concerned for student athletes’ growth and academic and athletic achievement. It is important for coaches to be aware of the pivotal role they play in shaping the motivational climate and their behavior makes a difference (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1986).

The research data indicate that frequent, informal interacting with coaches and the student athlete has positive outcomes for athletes both athletically and academically. The research shows that first, coaches are viewed as “significant others” by athletes (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1986). Second, these “significant others” are instrumental to an athlete’s development of self-esteem (Green, 1983), and third, the quality of the coach-player relationship affects individual and team performance, interest, and enjoyment (Dubois, 1981). Green (1983) found that a significant predictor of perceived gains in academic and athletic skills was related to the extent to which an athlete had developed a friendly, informal, influential coach-athlete interaction with at least one member of the coaching staff.

Some research data illustrate the importance of having a coach as a male role model to provide the level of interaction and support student athletes find necessary in order to be successful in their academic and athletic pursuits. Candor, somewhat surprisingly, is very important to student athletics. Student athletes look for support, both personal and professional. They want a coach who cares enough to listen patiently, applies rules fairly,
and communicates honestly and candidly with his team, even when communication is critical. The extent to which the coach does the aforementioned is strongly associated with motivational climate for athletically and academically.

Parents

It is well established that a sense of competence has a powerful impact on achievement-related behavior and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Several studies, for example, have suggested that parents who give children a positive sense of competence are more likely to adopt an intrinsic orientation toward achievement. How much support do parents contribute? Parental support was seen by the respondents as an important part of motivational climate. One respondent recalled with pride, how his parents influenced him:

"My dad always stressed education, and when my grades came in, I thought I had good grades, but I remember in 7th grade, I got all A's in 8th grade I got B's and my dad had a fit. My dad put grades first. He was funny sometime. When I was in 8th grade, he told me if I got A's from now on, he would buy me a Porsche. I got A's, but I did not get the Porsche. But, that was the kind of thing he did to motivate me."

Parental expectations are part of the foundation of student achievement. The sense of competence will demonstrate an interest in challenge, mastery, and curiosity relative to children with a negative perception of competence (Boggiano & Pittman, 1992). Several respondents mentioned the link between parental support and their academic performance. When student achievement is not a parental priority, a child will sense it and express frustration. One respondent recalled:

"It was frustrating for me growing up, I didn't have a parent to make me stay home and read or study. My father was never around, and my mother would
actually jerk me out of school to baby-sit my young brother and sister because she had to go shopping.”

Other research has shown that, even among the most academically competent, some children are vulnerable to the negative effects of low perceived competence due to their parents having lower expectations of success and less persistence (Phillips, 1984). Respondents were asked to look back on some times when they experienced a particularly negative family or school climate, that affected motivational climate. Al recalled:

“I remember when my mom and dad divorced. I was younger so I don’t think it hurt me as much, but for my older brother it was hard on him. When he lived with my father, his grades were the best they had ever been. He was doing well in athletics too. But, after the divorce, he started hanging out with the wrong people and mom let him do it. His grades and athletics went down. I guess you can’t expect mom to do as well with disciplining my brother as my dad. My dad is the reason I’m where I am now. He is the reason I have an academic scholarship to college.”

Consistent with numerous models in the literature, researchers know that individual differences in perceived competence would predict individual differences in affective reaction to school performance, which in turn, would impact a student’s motivational orientation (Alderman, 1974, Harter & Guzman, 1990). Thus, parents are key factors in influencing the motivational climate of student athletes.

**General Summary**

It is difficult to quantify the elements which are comprised in motivational climate. Student athletes, however, seem to have a common understanding of what motivational climate is and strong feelings as to what influences it.
The coach appears to have the most powerful influence on motivational climate. Student athletes look for personal as well as professional support from coaches. They want candid communication, fair enforcement of rules, and a sense that the coach cares. When they get that, they say, the motivational climate is more positive.

Parental support for academic needs and student performance are pivotal elements. When parents demonstrate care and concern for education, it has a positive impact on motivational climate. The respondents saw parental care and support for their education demonstrated through supervision and discipline for them after school, seeing to it that homework is done.

Relationship with teachers is important. When teachers develop close supportive relationships with student athletes, a bond forms which strongly impact on motivational climate. The student athlete/teacher relationship has the potential to create an exceptionally positive motivational climate as well as one of mistrust. It is clearly a powerful climate factor.

A number of factors apparently influence the motivational climate for student athletes. Given the importance of school climate in student achievement, it seems that teachers, parents, administrators, coaches and student athletes would benefit greatly from understanding the factors which shape and make a difference in the motivational climate of student athletes. The more information students get, the better chance teachers, parents, administrators, and coaches have to improve motivational climate and enhance the potential for student athletes to develop a positive balance in their academic and athletic performance.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter of this study is organized into three sections. The first section presents the summary and conclusions of the study. The second section focuses on the limitations of the study, while the third section presents recommendations for future study.

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes at a Midwestern university. Based on a review of the related literature, three central questions provided direction for the study: (1) What determines the level of one's motivation? (2) What factors have an influence on the relationship between motivation and achievement? and (3) In what ways is it possible to influence a person's motivation? From these questions, the researcher focused the study on selected educational and parental environment factors that may affect the motivational climate of student athletes. The factors or theoretical constructs which provided the focus for the study included: school climate, attitude, teachers, coaches, parents. Data related to these constructs were examined to determine their impact on the choices and decisions made by student athletes.

Summary and Conclusions

This study focused on the use of qualitative research methods to generate data related to educational and parental environment factors that may affect the motivational climate of student athletes. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with six student athletes. In addition, one semi-structured focus group discussion was held with student athletes from various sports. The interviews and focus group were designed to elicit first
hand information about the respondents' perceptions and experiences related to selected educational and parental environment factors which affect their motivational climate.

The data were categorized and analyzed according to relevant theoretical constructs related to motivational climate. Validity and reliability of the data were established through the use of multiple data sources, a peer debriefer, who commented on the research process and findings, and member checks with the interview respondents to assure their words were being portrayed accurately.

**Emerging themes supported by theoretical assumptions**

The interview and focus group data were reviewed to determine themes from the data that support or refute theoretical assumptions made by the researcher, that selected educational and parental environment factors affect the motivation of student athletes. These themes were then discussed in relationship to related research and the previously established theoretical constructs to which they apply. Themes elicited from the primary data are listed below and discussed more extensively in the section that follows. The themes are grouped according to the constructs previously established by the researcher:

**School climate:** Four general themes emerge from the data related to school climate:

1. Some student athletes adapt to the conditions of their school environment differential behaviors and attitudes of teachers, peers, and coaches, rather than yield to them.

2. Discriminatory attitudes and racist treatment of athletes in classes contribute to an uncomfortable environment for them.

3. Coping skills are adopted by athletes to negotiate the climate in school.
4. Teachers are viewed to have low performance expectations for athletes which exacerbate concerns about diminished self-confidence, self-esteem, and intellectual ability.

**Attitude:** Four general themes emerge from the data related to attitude:

1. Attitude toward school took a negative turn around ninth grade.
2. Attitude about academics could be as important as academic ability.
3. Attitudes were shaped by media, coaches, teachers as soon as athletic ability is realized.
4. Attitudes were shaped by perceptions athletes have about teachers perception of athletes.

**Teachers:** Four general themes emerge from the data related to teachers:

1. Unsupportive relationship with teachers cause some athletes to feel unwelcome.
2. Insufficient formal and informal interaction with teachers add to an uncomfortable and unsupportive learning environment for student athletes.
3. Athlete peer support is primary for the student athlete.
4. Limited mentoring experiences cause student athletes to miss opportunities to establish supportive relationships with faculty which could reinforce their learning and achievement in their classes.

**Coaches:** Four general themes emerge from the data related to coaches:

1. Coaches are viewed as "significant others" and instrumental in athletes development of self-esteem, directly affecting motivation for academic and athletic performance.
2. Coaches are viewed for many as a male role model to provide the level of interaction and support student athletes find necessary in order to be successful academically and athletically.

3. Coaches appear to be the driving force in shaping motivational climate.

4. Coaches are trusted and are seen as genuinely concerned for student athletes growth, academic and athletic achievement.

*Parents:* Five general themes emerge from the data related to parents:

1. Parents who gave their student athlete a positive sense of competence are more likely to adapt an intrinsic orientation.

2. Parents were seen as an important part of motivational climate.

3. Parents expectations are part of the foundation of athletes achievement.

4. When student achievement is not a parental priority, the athlete senses it and expresses frustration.

5. The father directly or indirectly was a positive or negative influence on the student athlete, based on the father’s presence in the home and education

**Significant findings by construct**

*School climate:* The response of interview and focus group respondents to questions related to school climate, substantiate other research reports which indicate that student athletes experience more student-related problems than non-athletes (Sparenri, 1988). A significant finding of this study is that student athletes experienced a range of attitudes and behaviors which created a negative school climate for them. Whether real or perceived, the
respondents reported in their different voices about their frustrations created by biased or discriminatory treatment, a lack of attention and support by teachers, and disparaging remarks made about an athlete’s intellectual abilities or condescending attitudes of faculty toward student athletes.

Another major finding is that many of the respondents adapted their behavior and attitudes to fit in with the athletes’ environment when among peers or teammates. This adaptive behavior, as well as concerns about recrimination, is based on concerns about how others (teammates and coaches) might view them, and the risk that eligibility status might be jeopardized. This contributed to a reluctance on the part of student athletes to report discriminatory or differential treatment.

Most of the reports on school climate from interviews and the focus group were related to subtle comments made by teachers and students, lack of attention and support of athletes, being made to feel inferior, or preferential treatment of non-athletes by teachers, rather than overt discrimination. Only one respondent reported “discrimination” by a teacher. However, some interview respondents reported that while they may not have been victims of discrimination, they were aware that some athletes have experienced discrimination by some teachers and students.

Most interview and focus group respondents discussed their perceptions and experiences related to attitudes, subtle or ambiguous behaviors of teachers rather than using specific examples of overt discrimination or biased treatment that they or other student-athletes had experienced. Most of the comments made by interview respondents related to discrimination were general. What emerged from the data is an apparent reluctance on the
part of respondents to report that they or athletes they know experienced discrimination or biased treatment, especially by teachers.

To begin to address concerns related to school climate, it may be helpful to lift the shroud of secrecy around the topic of discrimination. Perhaps a series of anonymous, facilitated focus group discussions with interested student athletes in all academic programs, might evoke sufficient qualitative data about the experiences of student athletes to begin to identify issues and concerns and generate dialogue among teachers and administrators.

Under protection of anonymity, several interview respondents discussed their experiences and feelings about racist behavior or differential treatment in their academic programs. However, it is difficult to assess the nature or extent of the respondents' experiences from their comments. Also, self-reports do not necessarily result in full disclosure. In addition, most interview and focus group participants comments were generalized. Sufficient documentation of the problem is not possible because of the lack of reporting of instances of discrimination or differential treatment by student athletes. A safe environment in which to share concerns about school climate may generate interest in further discussion of the topic and yield information and a plan of action which could create a more welcoming environment for student athletes.

According to the data from this study, student athletes sometimes feel that teachers have lower expectations for them in the classroom performance than they do for non-student-athletes. This finding is premised on reports from respondents that teachers tend not to call on student athletes in class, especially if the questions are difficult. The perception of one respondent is that teachers do not call on student athletes in order to avoid the appearance
that they are "picking on the athlete". Another respondent commented that athletes often sit in the front of the room to avoid being called on by the teacher.

Overall, active participation by student athletes is not encouraged in class by teachers. This observation is important, particularly in light of research which finds that athletes often enter college with a lack of self-confidence in their intellectual ability and public speaking ability (Sparenti, 1988). Furthermore, student athletes who already experience limited interaction in class, have the added disadvantage of a lack of encouragement and challenge from their teachers.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about the tough academic environment at Midwestern University. Three of the respondents indicated they had experienced problems with the competitive academic environment in comparison to the junior college environment. Two of the respondents indicated that they believe the competitive academic environment at the university contributed to the under-representation of black student graduates. This finding is important because it illustrates the additional stress student athletes endure in order to persist in some classes.

The pressure of "ability groupings" in classes was described by one respondent as unnecessarily stressful. The study indicates that student athletes view the "ability grouping" trend as a systematic means of eliminating all but the best and brightest students from the rest. Therefore, those student athletes who make it through the grouping tend to be regarded by some teachers and peers as more competent than those who do not. Student athletes feel they have to perform well above non-student-athletes in order to be perceived as competent.
Some respondents reported experiencing resentful attitudes from some students when they have received better grades than their non-athletic peers. Some students resort to downplaying the achievements of student athletes by attributing their success to budding up to teachers or using the popularity of sports to their advantage in some way.

Greenspan (1983) found that “the cutthroat competition” to keep athletes eligible for participation in the absence of performance standards adds to lowered morale in academics, because grades simply means eligibility for athletes. The focus changes to earning eligibility rather than learning the material. Evident in the experience of the respondents was the ever present concern about keeping their grades up.

However, the concern had more to do with maintaining eligibility standards and retaining athletic scholarship, rather than to compete with other students academically. It is clear that student athletes are keenly aware of the need to maintain certain grade point averages in order to keep within eligibility standards to participate in their sport. Maintaining eligibility is regarded for some athletes as a necessity for exposure and for making the appropriate connections to be drafted into professional sports.

Some student athletes also experienced resentment from a few students who regard an athletic scholarship as preferential treatment. Despite the fact that athletic scholarships are targeted to special students who give extra time and effort to the university, and earn revenue for the school, the perception of some students and faculty is that they are being denied an opportunity or the money could be better used for other endeavors.

While most respondents have developed coping skills to help them weather the stormy school climate they must sometimes endure, those coping skills tend not to include
coping with the lack of social time like other students, or not having money to do simple things that other students are able to do. Rather, some respondents develop problems, even confrontations when attempting to fit in as just another student. For example, one respondent shared being angry because:

"when you look in the stands at a game or walk across campus it appears everyone likes you. But, you go to a party or something, and you will find some guy who wants to prove he is better than you, or call you names to put you down."

Such behavior, often goes unreported unless it makes the newspaper. Most respondents feel that if you are an athlete, particularly a star, it will reach the newspaper. Unfortunately, many of the respondents do not feel they have an ally within their academic program who they can go to for support or advice. The coach is the only person they can go to for all of their problems, whether academic, athletic, or other. Thus, a perpetual cycle persists of inappropriate behavior or negative treatment of student athletes by teachers and some students, and either a "grin and bear it" attitude exists, or the athlete feels he has to fight to hold on to his pride.

A further finding that is consistent with Greenspan's (1983) study is that the majority of respondents who experience disparaging or differential treatment in their school climate, have developed coping skills that have helped them place these frustrations aside while they remain focused on their academic goals. Most of the respondents credit their persistence with their own inner strength, intellectual abilities, hard work and tenacity. However, it was reported by some respondents that some athletes have transferred out of certain schools because of the way they were treated by faculty and other students.
Attitude: Another concern indicated by this study is that some respondents believe there are discriminatory attitudes toward student athletes on the part of teachers and others which contributes a lot to the lack of academic success. Many of the respondents indicated that they have had problems with discriminatory attitudes by teachers or others in the school. One respondent reported, “one of my teachers was biased against athletes and took every opportunity to undermine my work.” Other reports include: “my instructor would not check my work, but he checked everyone else’s work; he assumed my work wasn’t good,” “teachers are prejudiced toward athletes,” and “some teachers believe athletes are inferior.”

Individual responses revealed that some student athletes have had negative experiences or have perceived a negative environment or lack of support. Respondents primarily alluded to a range of overt attitudes and subtle behaviors rather than overt physical behaviors. Reports were received from two respondents in which they said they were: “insulted by teachers and made to feel dumb.”

Most of the comments were generalized, making it difficult to determine the specific nature and extent of behaviors that made some respondents uncomfortable. However, it is clear that nearly half of the respondents have perceived or experienced negative attitudes or other undesirable treatment, some clearly related or directed to an athlete.

One observation from a tutor is that most of the student athletes who were interviewed do not view themselves as “typical students.” For example, Miracle and Rees (1994) reported that “you can’t be a typical student and be an athlete” (p. 134). To further examine this perception, the data show that most of the respondents have usually: (a) excelled in one sport or more in school; (b) been promoted by the schools, news media,
parents, some teachers and coaches; (c) been told that they are special and gifted athletically; (d) been selected and featured in many college recruiting guides; (e) survived the many roster cuts in their sports; and (f) gotten by academics throughout school in many cases.

Nevertheless, it seems to be a consistent belief of the respondents, that they will succeed due to their athletic ability and determination, not necessarily through academics. A study by Roueche (1983) found that attitude may well be more important than ability in developing success in sports. However, according to Sparenti (1988) "to work effectively in the academic environment, athletes must learn to transfer their existing skills for planning and goal setting into the classroom, and seek the link between the academic and the athletic world" (p. 77).

According to social psychologists most attitudes are anchored in group membership and student attitudes are likely to be directly influenced by peer group membership. Astin (1973) asserts that a student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on the development of undergraduates and that student attitudes tend to change in the direction of the dominant attitudes of the group. In the case of athletes, the dominant peer group are teammates and fellow athletes.

**Teachers:** Some of the respondents expressed the feeling that teachers don't care about athletes. Teachers who just come to class and lecture and show no interest in interacting with students are perceived as uncaring and unsupportive by respondents. Overall, the data indicated that respondents view the "best teachers" as those with whom they have personal relationships. These teachers are characterized supportive and caring, friendly
and open to questions, who will help athletes when they have a problem, and who are receptive to student-athletes' coming in to visit them during office hours.

Some of the respondents stated that they had experienced differential treatment by teachers. However, two respondents remarked that they have neither felt nor perceived any difference in the way athletes are treated by teachers. The respondents, however, indicated some confusion about the difference between discrimination and differential treatment to athletes. One of the respondents who expressed that he had not experienced or perceived differential treatment of students in general, stated his belief that black athletes will always be treated differently because they are minorities. Alderman (1974) provides a unique perspective that further highlights this particular attitude. Alderman asserted that individuals may be thought of as a high need achiever or a low need achiever. The school climate in many schools view blacks and particularly black athletes as low need achievers.

Brookover's (1975) study of school effectiveness contributed to some perceptions about being treated differently. Therefore, some student athletes perceived treatment which they believed to be discrimination, but they could not clearly label the behavior as discriminating.

Some respondents reported second hand accounts from teammates and friends of biased treatment from teachers or condescending attitudes of teachers which made student athletes feel stupid. Attitudes of teachers and behaviors that perpetuate stereotypical views about student athletes were described by some respondents, but not labeled by them as racist or discriminatory.
Coaches: A major theme that emerged is that, other than the respondent’s inner strength and self-reliance, the coach provided the most encouraging motivational climate. Research shows that, coaches are viewed as “significant others” by athletes (Snyder & Speitzer, 1986). Second, these “significant others” are instrumental to an athlete’s development of self-esteem (Greenspan, 1983); and third, the quality of the coach-player relationship affects individual and team performance, interest, and enjoyment (Dubois, 1981).

Perhaps the theme which best captures what student athletes look for in a coach is leadership. Four characteristics or qualities associated with the leadership were: (a) support, (b) caring, (c) recognition and (d) pride. A critical type of support which student athletes expect from their coach is “back up”, or standing behind the athlete. Failure to stand behind the student athlete could undermine a trusting relationship.

Caring is a personal behavior often communicated through body language and informal conversation and it may take the form of moral support, constructive criticism, or help. Recognition is a powerful way to boost morale and increase satisfaction. All respondents expressed feelings of pride when their academic or athletic achievements were recognized. Pride means showing others that the coach has a high opinion of the student-athlete. It means attending events, classes, and talking to others with admiration and respect about the student athlete.

Parents: It is well established that a sense of competence has a powerful impact on achievement-related behavior and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Several studies have suggested that parents who give children a positive sense of competence are more likely to adopt an intrinsic orientation toward achievement. Parental support was seen by the
respondents as an important part of motivational climate. Parental expectations are the foundation of student achievement. The sense of competence will demonstrate an interest in challenge, mastery, and curiosity relative to children with a negative perception of competence (Bogginano & Pittman, 1992). Several respondents mentioned the link between parental support and their academic performance. When student achievement is not a parental priority, a child will sense it and express frustrations.

Other research has shown that, even among the most academically competent, children are vulnerable to the negative effects of low perceived competence due to their parents having lower expectancies of success and less persistence (Phillips, 1984). Consistent with numerous models in the literature, researchers know that individual differences in perceived competence would predict individual differences in affective reaction to school performances, which in turn would impact a student’s motivational orientation (Alderman, 1974, Harter & Guzman, 1990). Parents are key factors influencing the motivational climate of student athletes.

The value of attribution theory to the organization and interpretation of the data

"Unless we understand the source, we will misunderstand the outcome" (Nelson, 1981, p. 98). Thus, unless one understands the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of student athletes related to school climate, personal attitudes, teachers’ interaction, coaches’ interaction, and parental impact as seen through the athletes’ eyes, one can easily misunderstand the impact of these constructs on motivational climate.
Attribution theory is the label for the causal explanations of the lay person (Kelly, 1967, 1972; Weiner et al., 1986). In this research, the lay persons were the student athletes. Like all human beings, student athletes seek constantly to explain events taking place in the world around them. The point is that all persons frequently engage in causal analysis. In making attributions, or causal explanations, the student athletes in this study applied their own theories of how the constructs impacted their motivational climate.

Parental impact is a key construct due to the fact that some sense of causality appears quite early in infancy (Frye, 1991, Premack, 1991); therefore, the influence of parental motivation at very young ages cannot be taken lightly. Children are able to differentiate between outcomes that they have caused and outcomes that occur randomly. One of the major applications of accounts of the attributional processes in the young concerns achievement-related behavior, especially in educational contexts. Like other students, when a student athlete approaches an educational task, he or she has an expectancy about the outcome. If some student-athletes' perceptions are that: (a) less and less attention is given by faculty and administrations to student athletes (Miracle & Rees, 1994); (b) discriminatory behaviors are directed toward some student athletes (Sparenti, 1988); (c) attitudes that attribute the success of student athletes to luck or being a minority (Graham & Folkes, 1990); or (d) subtle messages from teachers imply that they consider student athletes less intelligent than other students, in due course, those student athletes may well receive feedback about their performance that will either confirm or challenge these expectations. In the present study, the majority of the respondents related past as a key factor in their motivation to succeed academically and athletically.
The Weiner et al. (1986) model of social cognitive process is based on the assumption that beliefs about the causes of success and failure mediate the relationship between feedback and subsequent performance. Weiner perceived that when a person tries to explain a success or failure, he or she is likely to attribute it to one or more causes: ability, effort, task difficulty or luck. Weiner categorized the causes in relation to three dimensions: internality-externality, stability, and controllability. In this study, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts and found the three dimensions of the Weiner (1986) model that were apparent. The respondents referred to outcomes due to their performance (internal) or to unusually difficult circumstances (external). The respondents also evaluated the dimension of stability: Was the outcome what they typically achieved (stable) or was it a fluke or luck (unstable)? The respondents likewise made reference to the third dimension, controllability: Could they have worked any harder (controllable) or were they ill at the time of the exam (uncontrollable)? Any achievement-related outcome, such as a particular success or failure, could be explained by different options within attributional framework, and the choice of options has both cognitive and affective consequences.

The second theory in the review of literature supporting this research was achievement motivation. A main factor which determines the subjective probability of future success and failure is the past experience of the individual in regards to his ability to reach objectives (Juncknal, 1937). The respondents in the present study strongly perceived past successes and failure important to their present status as student athletes.

Atkinson’s (1951, 1964) theory of achievement motivation attempts to account for the determinants of the direction, magnitudes, and persistence of achievement-motivated
performance. Atkinson’s theory details the relationship between the perceived level of
difficulty and the incentive values of success and failure. A theme that emerged from the
data of the present study is that most respondents perceived there existed a gap in their
learning compared to other students. This perceived learning gap affected the student-
athletes’ self-confidence and interaction in the classroom.

As stated earlier, causality appears at a very young age. Mastery of motivation is
learned at a very young age and is the force that stimulates an individual to attempt to master
a skill or task that is at least somewhat challenging for the individual. Deci (1975)
emphasized the importance of learning experience to the development of human motives.
Many athletes become dependent on the approval of other people to validate their
achievement and strengthen their motivation. Some interview respondents in the present
study stated that achieving a little success in class was encouragement. Unfortunately, the
respondents’ perceptions were that the same climate—the climate that consistently
strengthens motivation—did not exist as much in their academic environment as it did in
athletics.

Recommendations

When examining the findings of this study, the following recommendations may
seem indicative of further research and practice. Further qualitative and quantitative research
be conducted on:

1) the quality and satisfaction of the experiences of student athletes in colleges and
universities;
2) the factors which cause student athletes to make decisions to drop out or persist in school;

3) the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minority athletes and factors that affect their retention in their academic disciplines;

4) perceptions and experiences of student athletes about their elementary and secondary educational experiences compared to non-student-athletes; and

5) the effects of incorporating principles of athletic development theory into classroom instruction.

This study described and analyzed the perceptions and experiences of selected student athletes about motivational climate. While we know much about climate components and their importance in educational effectiveness, little has been reported concerning how motivational climate develops. The perceptions of student athletes regarding motivational climate formation is a particularly neglected area. Some data were generated relevant to the quality of the educational and satisfaction of the respondents with their academic performance.

However, because of the lack of focus on this question, the study did not produce a comprehensive assessment of quality of experience or satisfaction of the respondent's with their academic programs. A quantitative study related to satisfaction of student athletes in schools could provide more representative data from which transferable data could be drawn to a broader population. This approach could better demonstrate the wide range of attitudes, perceptions and experiences of student athletes in the university.
This qualitative study focused on providing depth of understanding the unique experiences and perceptions of selected student athletes about the climate that motivates them. However, it did not include a study of athletes who quit the team or transferred out of school. Because the respondents in the study were all in school at the time of the study, it is inconclusive as to what specific academic or social-related concerns cause some athletes to quit or transfer out of the university.

A study of transfer student athletes might reveal significant data that were not revealed in this study. For example, a comparative study of student athletes who persist and transfers, including male and female subjects, could provide a significant data base for greater understanding of motivation issues related to all student athletes, as well as all students. This study does provide some insight into what has contributed to the respondent's climate for motivation for academic and athletic performance.

The study did not focus on the perceptions and experiences of ethnic minority student athletes. This specifically left a void in the contribution to research in this area. The respondents in this study were three white American males and three black American males. No women participated in the study. Some research data suggest that the experiences of black American athletes are more severe because of racial differences (Sparenti, 1988), so their accounts of their experiences may be very different from those of white American athletes. However, the design of the research questions in this study did not focus on racial differences.

Since the respondents in this study were all male, comparisons cannot be made between perceptions and experiences of male and female student athletes. Evaluating only
the experiences of male athletes may not take into account the special dynamics that interact and affect both men and women (e.g., competition). Problems related to school climate, attitudes, coaches and parents, for example, may or may not have negative effect on the female student athletes in the same manner. Climate enhancement and improvements in school, home and other support systems may be aided significantly by comparative studies of both groups.

Classroom instruction in higher education typically follows traditional instructional methods and pedagogical practices (e.g., lecture methods) (Saigal & Saigal, 1988). When traditional methodologies are adhered to in teaching styles, the combination precludes the inclusion of instructional methods based on some student-athlete’s learning needs and style preferences. Some developmental theories related to student athletes indicate that athletes have different circumstances, learning needs and style preferences (Weiner, 1986). Research that examines the learning needs and preferences of student athletes in the context of motivational climate, is needed to help faculty and administrators better understand the differing needs of student athletes and respond more appropriately to those differing needs.

Finally, some practical recommendations are useful beyond further research on theoretical development in the area of learning needs and preferences of student athletes in motivational climate. For example, the development of a structured peer support network throughout the undergraduate experience would be helpful to many student athletes. Also, holding workshops for elementary and secondary teachers to point out types of attitudes and stereotypical views of athletes. Intellectual upper-class student athletes can be paired with freshmen and sophomore student athletes to provide orientation and support during their
transition to their major and to the university. In addition, the development of a structured mentoring program for student athletes and faculty could assist those who are not able to establish supportive relationships with faculty on their own. Rewards for effective mentoring partnerships could be provided to both faculty and student athletes to encourage more active, long term participation (e.g., consideration in promotion and salary decisions, faculty/student-athlete luncheons and group discussion series).

Conclusion

Student athletes assume additional challenges apart from curriculum demands of their class requirements. They must negotiate an educational climate which they have had no part in creating. Their educational needs and interest are assumed to fit within the existing culture. As a result, there is no real systematic recognition of the need for change in the way student athletes are viewed and educated by elementary, secondary, and institutions of higher learning.

The differing developmental or educational needs student athletes bring with them to the classroom are often neglected. Furthermore, there are no incentives for teachers/faculty to consider how they might adjust their pedagogical practices or the way they relate to students in order to better meet the needs of student athletes. There are no workshops or courses that develop in teachers better understanding of the differences in the learning styles of athletes. There are no incentives from institutions for coaches who do a good job of setting a positive motivational climate academically for their student athletes.
Therefore, it is the researcher's contention that key school and departmental administrators, faculty and coaches should become actively involved in a review and analysis of the educational and motivational needs of student athletes. As a starting point for improving awareness, secondary teachers, faculty, parents and administrators could perhaps benefit from seminars that present experimental data related to the perceptions and experiences of student athletes in their professional areas.

In addition, anonymous focus group discussions could be held with a cross section of athletes, male and female, in which they could consider how they are affected by academic and athletic issues. This approach could reveal useful insights and provide new directions for change that could benefit all students.

In order to promote a more open and accepting motivational climate for student athletes, we must address the problems they face in the academic and athletic environment within which they are trained. The mere presence of student athletes in educational programs does not translate into an automatic change in attitudes and behaviors about athletes and their expected roles in society. Nor can student athletes be expected to be the primary change agents within their academic and athletic environment. The student athletes must not only be able to compete successfully with other students for acceptable grades in challenging fields, they must also find ways within themselves to negotiate an academic culture that has not been designed for the campus lifestyles of student athletes.

While increasing numbers of student athletes are doing well academically, and graduating, many appear to experience attitudes and behaviors which discourage their presence and minimize their achievements. Yet, despite the environmental obstacles they
face, many student athletes continue to draw upon their inner resources to survive. Many continue to maintain strong academic and athletic standings. Their intrinsic interests in school and personal commitment and drive, encourage them to work around these obstacles and remain focused on their academic and athletic goals. Many of those who persist pay a personal price for doing so, but as indicated by the data, they feel that it will be worthwhile to receive a college degree in their chosen field. What remains to be examined is: What are the personal costs that student athletes pay to receive their degrees?
APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM
AND RESEARCH NEEDS SUMMARY

Last Name of Principal Investigator: Caldwell

Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule

The following are attached (please check):

12. [ ] Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
   a) purpose of the research
   b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #s), how they will be used, and when they will be
      removed (see Item 17)
   c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research and the place
   d) if applicable, location of the research activity
   e) how you will ensure confidentiality
   f) in a longitudinal study, note when and how you will contact subjects later
   g) participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject

13. [ ] Consent form (if applicable)

14. [ ] Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)

15. [ ] Data-gathering instruments

16. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:
   First Contact: July 1, 1996
   Last Contact: Sept 31, 1996

17. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual
    tapes will be erased:
   Oct. 31, 1996

18. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer: [Signature]
   Date: 8/12/96
   Department or Administrative Unit: [Department Name]

19. Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:
   [ ] Project Approved
   [ ] Project Not Approved
   [ ] No Action Required

   Name of Committee Chairperson: Patricia M. Keith
   Date: 8/26/96
   Signature of Committee Chairperson: [Signature]

GC: 8/95
RESEARCH NEEDS SUMMARY

A study to determine a limited number of male basketball and football student athletes’ motivational climate influencing their athletic and academic performance

The dissertation which I have undertaken is a study of how student athletes perceive the role of schools, teachers, coaches and parents as a major influence in shaping the climate for their motivational attitude toward academic and competitive performance. It is widely understood that climate affects virtually every aspect of an athletes’ motivation and attitude related to academics and athletics, including academic achievement, and morale. Motivational climate is to be understood here as the product of shared beliefs, values and meanings as expressed by people in the lives of athletes. Shared beliefs can be understood as areas such as pride, spirit and cooperation.

The purpose of this study will be to assist parents, teachers, schools, and coaches in their efforts to create and maintain a positive motivational climate for student athletes. This study will deepen ones understanding of how the various constituencies, as key people in the motivational attitude equation, affects the athletes in a positive or negative manner. The study will also explore other factors which impact on an athlete’s motivation and attitude toward competition and academic performance. The results of this study should prove valuable for teachers, coaches, and other persons who want to understand how student athletes perceive motivational climate whether it be positive or negative and will assist professionals in their efforts to foster a positive motivational climate.

The perception of student athletes is a complex area and I have decided for a number of reasons that personal interviews would be the best data gathering technique. The adaptability of direct interaction will allow for much greater depth and clarity than one could expect from a written questionnaire. My analysis will describe patterns if they emerge and yield descriptors which should be of value to school personnel and coaches in particular. Summaries of the study will be sent to coaches who agreed to allow their players to participate in the project, or an oral presentation will be made to the coaching staff and team if the group desires.

It is most important to note that the student athletes will be asked general questions which span their entire lives. Athletes must have a minimum of 2 years of college in order to participate in the study.

Subjects (respondents) for the interviews will be volunteers from among the basketball and football teams at a Midwestern university. Coaches will be asked to explain or to allow me to give a brief presentation to the athletes concerning this study and its parameters. Those athletes who wish to be part of the study will let the coaches know. From the remaining portion I will ask the coaches to let me know which student athletes have had less than 2 years in college. These athletes will not be eligible for the study. Random selections will be made from the rest of the athletes.

Six respondents will be needed for the study. Three interviews will last two hours. Each athlete agreeing to participate in the study will indicate when they would like to meet whether it be before classes, during free time (this may require two sittings), or other time not in conflict with the student-athlete’s normal schedule. I will set up the interview times based on information received from the athletes.

All interviewees will be treated according to the professional ethics of an ethnographic type interview. Complete confidentiality will be maintained. The names of the coaches, subjects, parents, and schools will not be disclosed during or after the study. Tapes, when used, will be erased immediately following the completion of the study. Names and other identifying characteristics of respondents will be eliminated from my field notes as well. Tapes will be made only with prior permission of the respondents.

It is my expectation as a coach and administrator that this study will yield important insights and data regarding the motivational climate and the role of the parents, teachers, school climate, and coaches in shaping it. This is a little understood area which needs attention and I’m confident that research will make a useful contribution to this field of study.
APPENDIX B. SAMPLE LETTER TO COACHES

To: Coaches

From: Percy (Chico) Caldwell,
Graduate Student

Re: Research Project

Date: August 1996

I want to thank you all for allowing me to conduct my dissertation research with you. I'm confident that many educators will benefit from the results.

Following is a summary of the project and the procedures. You may wish to use this to explain the research project. I would be happy to come and explain any of this in person as well and I am available at 292-5549 to answer questions.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Research in the areas of competitive and academic achievement has indicated the importance of climate and leadership of parents, teachers, and coaches in determining educational outcomes. Most past research, however, has used surveys and questionnaires as the primary data gathering tools. The researcher is initiating a study of how student athletes perceive the role of parents, teachers, and coaches in affecting motivational climate and attitudes toward competition and academics. However, rather than short answer questionnaires, I will be speaking with the student athlete directly to gain an understanding of this area in a comparatively unique manner. Through one-on-one interviews, I hope to begin to describe and give examples of how motivational climate impacts on academic and competitive performance as viewed from the student athletes' point of view. The study will focus on, but not be limited to, the role of parents, teachers and coaches.

Student athletes who agree to participate in the study will be asked open-ended questions from over the span of their school lives. No questions will focus specifically on anyone's present academic and competitive situation. Interviews will last approximately one hour and will be arranged at the convenience of the athletes, before or after classes, during free time, after workouts or other times.

Complete anonymity will be maintained with no names of athletes, teachers, schools, or coaches to appear in the study and all such records will be destroyed immediately following the study. Interviews will be taped for later referencing but this will be done only with the subject's prior consent.

For the study I will need six athletes from the sports of football and six from basketball. Respondents need only to be a student athlete with a minimum of 2 years in college. From the available population I will make a random selection. For those who do not wish to be candidates for the study the coach will be given a form which states, "Thank you but I prefer not to participate in the study on Academic and Athletics Motivational Climate". These forms will be available in the coach's office. They will be collected in an envelope and given to me. This study will involve your time for the interviews and there is a possibility of one follow-up interview if time runs short. In most cases three one hour interviews and one focus group session will be the extent of your commitment.

The results of this study will be shared with coaches and my committee. It is my assumption that this study will have broad implications for this critical area which affects all student athletes.
APPENDIX C. THANK YOU LETTERS

FOR COACHES

To: Tim Floyd
   Head Basketball Coach

From: Percy (Chico) Caldwell,
   Ph.D Candidate, Professional Studies in Education

Subject: Dissertation Research Project

I have finally reached that stage in the Ph.D. program where I can officially begin to collect my data and write my dissertation. I had spoken with you earlier about having some of your players involved in my research project, unfortunately progress was delayed so that written and oral prelims could be completed first.

The purpose of this study will be to assist parents, teachers, schools, and coaches in their efforts to create and maintain a positive motivational climate for student athletes. This study will deepen one's understanding of how the various constituencies, as key people in the motivational attitude equation, affect the athletes in a positive or negative manner. The study will also explore other factors which impact on an athlete's motivation and attitude toward competition and academic performance. The results of this study should prove valuable for teachers, coaches, and other persons who want to understand how student athletes perceive motivational climate, whether it be positive or negative, and will assist professionals in their efforts to foster a positive motivational climate for athletes.

I would like to arrange a short meeting with the players that are here for the summer. In this meeting I will explain the project and find out how many are interested in participating in this study. The study will also involve members of the football team.

The interviews will in no way interfere with the student-athletes' classes, study times, or workouts. All interviews would be arranged at the convenience of the participants. Please review the enclosed material. It gives you an overview as to the nature of the research.

I would like to arrange a meeting with the players, and hopefully complete interviews before summer school ends. I will call you for feedback after you have had an opportunity to review the research information, or you can reach me at 292-5549.

If you have questions, please call.
APPENDIX D. PROCEDURES

1. Read, explain, or hand out the enclosed summary to your athletes.

2. I am available to answer any questions. 292-5549 is my home number.

3. Enclosed are forms which those who opt out may sign. Please put them in an envelope and I will pick them up or call your secretary to have them sent to me. Put a time limit of one week on filling out these forms although anyone may opt out at any time.

4. I will call you to request a list of athletes with an indication of those who have not reached two years of college. I ask that you cross off the names of those who have less than 2 years in college.

5. After I obtain the list of student athletes and the green slips I will contact the athlete and begin interviews. With your permission, if the most convenient location for the athlete to conduct interviews is at the Coliseum I would like to do so. Please let me know if this is a problem and I will gladly arrange the interviews elsewhere.

6. Upon entering the Athletic Office, I will introduce myself to you if we haven't yet met.
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Definition of “Motivational Climate”: The product of shared attitudes, beliefs and values as understood by the athletes. Areas such as pride, spirit, and cooperation are part of the motivational climate. (check for understanding between me and respondent).

2. Think back on some instances when you experienced a positive, neutral, or negative parental climate. These questions will relate to what parents, teachers, coaches, and school climate, do to affect academic and competitive motivational climate for athletes. Remember, your response may relate to any point in your life.

3. Looking back on some times when you experienced a particularly negative school climate? Describe it. Describe this situation. How did a teacher impact on this? Specific examples.

4. How significant of a role do you feel the teacher plays in shaping your motivation for academic and athletic performance?

5. What other factors have a significant input on motivational attitude?

6. What causes a spirit of cooperation or common sense of purpose for an athlete?

7. How do parents and community affect the shaping of academic and competitive motivational climate? Impact of coaches?

8. Have you ever seen a motivational climate change from positive to negative? Neutral to positive? etc. What caused this transformation?

9. Have you seen a “crisis” in a school or on a team where climate was affected? What was the role of parents, teachers, or coaches in the situation?

10. How do the rules for a school affect the motivational climate.? Role of teachers.

11. How do the rules of the game affect motivational climate? Role of coaches.

12. Have you noticed a change in motivational climate in the past 3-4 years? How? What?

13. How much need is there for individual contact with athletes from the teachers? From coaches?

14. Do key people influence motivational climate? How does the coach, parents, or teachers react to this?

15. Is there ever a team “theme” for the year? Does this impact motivational climate? Does the team work together to solve a problem (drug abuse, cutting classes/games, losses, etc.)?

16. Are there issues of student-student or teammate-teammate relationships or racial/minority issues which affect motivational climate? How are you involved?

17. How do student athletes affect climate through interaction with parents, teachers? Coaches and teammates?


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As my doctoral program approaches completion, there are many to whom I am grateful for their encouragement and support. Although it is not possible to thank all of you individually, I hope you know that I will never forget your kindness, thoughtfulness and assistance.

A special thanks and "I love you" goes to my wife who endured many days and nights without my time and attention, yet never complained. This would have been much more difficult without your love and support, Bertha!

I am truly grateful to Ruthie Wilson, my office assistant, who worked extra hours to lend support and assistance, covering the office as well as typing and keeping up with the paper work. Also, to my editor, Pat Hahn, I am especially grateful for sharing her knowledge and organizational skills, but most of all for her patience and sheer determination to assure the quality of my dissertation.

I am also grateful to my son, Brian, who had to go through four years of high school with his father spending hours studying that could have been shared with him. He never complained. Some day he'll know just how much this support has meant to his father!

To my family, I am eternally indebted for their support and encouragement, especially my mother, Levoria, who always has a positive approach to life. Special thanks to my father, George, who passed away before I completed my studies. I know he's sharing my special moments from his chemistry lab in the sky. Dad, this one's especially for you!

I am grateful to all the athletes, their parents, teachers, and coaches who contributed to this qualitative study. It has been a pleasure to spend so much of my life in the world of athletics and watch young people mature and follow their dreams.

I would like to thank Dr. Dan Robinson, my major professor, for his encouragement, support and guidance throughout my doctoral program. Also, my sincere appreciation is extended to my committee members: Drs. Eric Hoiberg, Marty Miller, Tom Thielen, George
Jackson, and Mr. Bob Barak. Your helpful suggestions contributed greatly to improve the quality of my work and enabled me to complete it in a timely manner.

To the many young people who aspire to follow their dreams and make a difference, my words of wisdom are: Believe in yourself, work hard, and never give up! Remember always that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.