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**ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONAL PROFILES OF  
VARSITY STUDENT-ATHLETES**

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ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONAL  
PROFILES OF VARSITY STUDENT-ATHLETES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

to the faculty and

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Meghan Parenteau

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Dr. Stephen Kotok

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONAL PROFILES OF VARSITY STUDENT-ATHLETES**

Meghan Parenteau

Athletic success sometimes may involve participants to work hard, be self-disciplined, exhibit perseverance and determination, and be able to concentrate. If such qualities are transferred into the academic domain, students may also experience academic motivation and success. Many varsity student-athletes are lacking motivation and hard work in the classroom but excel in these categories on the athletic fields. This study of the student-athlete and their motivational levels both in and out of the classroom will provide educators, coaches, and administrators with the knowledge about how to create a positive academic learning environment for its student athletes. The self-expectancy theory by Atkinson, Wigfield, and Eccles (2000) relates motivational levels to expectancies set by individuals. Motivational levels determine the tasks that we choose, persistence during those tasks, how much effort is exerted, and potentially levels of performance.

This study examines how athletics influences academic motivation of high school varsity athletes. This phenomenological study analyzes the experiences of five high school varsity student-athletes in the classroom and on the athletic field. The sample was randomly selected participants who were currently participating in competitive varsity athletics at Corbin High School. Qualitative data was triangulated through interviews,

observation, and artifact collection. The findings from this study can guide teachers, coaches, and administrators to know how to best motivate students in suburban schools where there is a high priority placed on athletics. Increased levels of motivation can in turn lead to higher levels of academic achievement increasing student performance.

*Keywords:* academic motivation, athletic identity, athletic motivation, student-athlete

## **DEDICATION**

*For my three sons Connor, Landon, & Baby Boy  
due in December.*

*May you always find your inner champion  
with clear eyes and full heart.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge everyone who played a role in my academic accomplishments. First of all, my family, who supported me with love and understanding. Without you, I could never have reached this current level of success. For the countless hours of babysitting my boys while I completed all phases of this program, I thank you.

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For all the teachers I have had the opportunity of knowing and learning from throughout this program. Thank you for your knowledge and skills that have taught me great lessons in the importance of research, literature, and data collection. The lessons I have learned will forever impact the professional that I continue to aspire to be.

Lastly, to my fellow classmates, teachers, and friends in education together we have proven to be unstoppable. Our ability to motivate one another and all the students that we work with is sure to make a difference in the world.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

Student motivation is defined as a process where the learners' attention is focused on meeting objectives and their energies are geared towards achieving their academic potential (Christophel, 1990). Motivation can be defined as the process when a student engages toward a goal both mentally and physically (Hollembek & Amrose, 2005; Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). The purpose of this research will be to describe and analyze the experiences of five varsity student-athletes at Corbin High School. The areas of focus of the study are to describe the experiences of student athletes regarding athletic and academic motivation and external support systems (peers, family, counselors, teachers, etc.) for student athletes. Academic motivation has been shown to increase academic achievement (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Motivation provides an important foundation for planning, organizing, decision-making, and learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Multiple studies have reported how participation in extracurricular activities including athletics contributes positively for student-athletes in the areas of educational aspirations (Chandler & Goldberg, 1990), peer popularity (Marsh, 1993), school-related self-esteem (Melnick, 1988), and academic achievement (Vanfossen, 1993). Other studies have reported the positive relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic outcomes may not be applicable across all activities (Farb & Matjaskop, 2012). Fredericks and Eccles (2008) discovered that higher academic achievement was visible for students who were involved in school clubs; whereas,

participation in sports was related to lower priorities in academics. Lleras (2008) found long term goals of student athletes were associated with higher educational attainment and job earnings. Several authors have contended that sport participation facilitates children's academic achievement, largely due to the behavioral characteristics developed within that participation (Geron, 1996; Griffen, 1998). Sports have also been associated with opportunities to develop strong leadership skills and how to take initiative when completing tasks (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).

While research has taken a look at both sides of how athletics impacts academic motivation and achievement, this research will dig deeper into the experiences of high school varsity athletes in a large suburban school district on Long Island. Although athletic competition may not directly improve a students' academic skills, there are many lessons learned through athletics that may contribute to academics. The investigation of motivation and its relationship between athletic and academic environments will provide greater insight into the transfer of motivation from athletics to academics.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research is to analyze how the area of athletics connects to academic motivation and engagement. The study investigated the relationship between motivation towards athletics and motivation towards academics. The sample population was five high school student athletes who were active participants in one or more sports for a minimum of five years. These student-athletes had a minimum of two years' experience on one or more varsity athletic teams. This element provides the student athlete with multiple athletic experiences and seasons to reflect upon when reporting about motivational experiences. This research will examine and present the

experiences of student-athletes in regard to motivation, with a focus on how athletic motivation influences academic motivation and engagement. The purpose of the present study is to extend the work of Ames (1992), Duda and Nicholls (1992), and Ryska and Vestal (2004) by examining the transfer of motivation across athletics and academics. Examining the experiences of student-athletes submerged in a competitive athletic environment will provide teachers, coaches, and administrators with a deeper understanding of how to best motivate such individuals. The priorities of academics and athletics for student-athletes will paint a picture of how students perceive their current educational environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Student athlete motivation has been researched and explored by many to determine how participation in athletics impacts motivation. The Achievement Goal Theory by Nicholls (1989) is a useful framework through which motivational factors in athletics can be analyzed. This framework is particularly useful in settings in which perceptions of competence are relevant to achievement striving (Nicholls, 1989). The theory is broken into two categories including task involvement and ego involvement. Research done by Corvello (2007) has shown that ego involvement had a high correlation with dropout in youth sports whereas task involvement had a link to her levels of enjoyment and success by participants. Understanding the theory can allow coaches and educators to positively alter motivational climates and influence student-athletes.

In combination of the types of involvement discussed in the Achievement Goal Theory the research also used Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997). Self-

efficacy is a person's set of beliefs that determine how well they can execute a plan or set of goals (Badura, 1977). The self-efficacy theory takes a look at four different categories including performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological feedback. The performance outcomes are determined as a result of an individual's previous experiences. This is different from the vicarious experiences explain how an individual observes others being successful at a task; role models are able to influence the self-efficacy of others by modeling perseverance through continued practice. Verbal persuasion is how an individual receives positive feedback convincing the individual to believe they have the skills and capabilities to succeed. Physiological feedback is a personal experience of how mood can determine success or failure; for example, a negative mood influences failure and a positive mood influences success. These categories together have a strong influence on motivation. Since motivation is based on an individual's desire to achieve a goal while self-efficacy is based on one's capacity to attain that goal, they go hand in hand (Lopez, 2020). These theoretical frameworks were used to guide the data collection and analysis. When observing and interviewing student-athletes they were categorized as either a task or ego-oriented personality type. Banduras' Self-Efficacy Theory encouraged the researcher to take a look at the various categories that influence student motivation.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model to be utilized for the purpose of this study will take a closer look at the following factors that influence varsity student athletes: academic motivation, athletic motivation, sports participation, educational experiences, family background, and faculty interactions [Figure 1]. The framework was inspired by work done by Jones and McEwen (2000) in the areas of motivation which analyzed the components that influence student athlete motivation. The idea is to better understand what athletes endure throughout their lives while incorporating the elements of external factors. (Jones & McEwen, 2000). This conceptual model considers the experiences, values, and cultural orientations of student-athletes that may influence the motivation.

*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*



The Scholar-Baller Program, established in 1995, is a program used for collegiate athletes directly addressing the challenges of balancing athletics and academics. This conceptual framework was used as an inspiration of the factors that influence varsity student athletes. To help with student engagement this program incorporates basic principles which include identity, competitive spirit, purpose, vision, mission, and goal setting (NCAA, 2019). The levels of motivation for student-athletes will vary not just from athletics to academics but also from task to task. For example, in the area of sport participation some student athletes may experience high levels of motivation on game day when compared to practice days. Some student athletes may be motivated academically just to maintain their sport eligibility whereas others, may be just as motivated to obtain a high-grade point average as they are to win the big game. This study used the conceptual framework as a guideline for the categories that the researcher will collect data within.

Analyzing why a student engages in achievement related behaviors is the focus of analyzing motivational levels on and off the athletic field. These levels of engagement can be categorized using the Achievement Goal Theory into task-oriented goals versus ego-oriented goals. Ego oriented individuals set goals based on a “strong social comparison element” and the goal of “appearing more able than others or not appearing less able than others” (Nicholls, 1989). Typically, these individuals would be categorized as extrinsically motivated as they base their success on doing better than others. Task oriented goal setting suggests that the individual is interested in mastering a skill or a task (Ames, 1992). The conceptual and theoretical frameworks together will take a look at whether the participants are more task or ego oriented in both the classroom and on the

athletic field. External influences including teachers, coaches, and family can influence the type of goals these individuals may be setting. Perhaps from a young age coaches and or parents emphasized cooperation, growth, and doing your best while having a good time playing the sport that you enjoy. On the other hand, the culture could be more ego oriented where rivalry between players, comparison of teammates, and low tolerance for mistakes was taught. These environments play a major role in how the athlete views themselves and can influence motivation for both the good and bad. Adolescents report greater intrinsic motivation to play their sport when their coaches promote a task-oriented setting (Duda, 2007).

The researcher analyzed current levels of motivation through interviews and observations of student athletes. External influences on motivation will be collected and analyzed through the interview process through story telling. Observations provided the researcher with participant experiences in the areas of academics and athletics as well as interactions with teachers, coaches, and peers.

### **Significance of the Study**

Participation in high school athletics has continued to rise across the nation to all time almost 8 million athletes in 2016-17, according to the annual High School Athletics Participation Survey. The National Center for Education Statistics states that “it is clear that participation (in extra curriculars) and success are strongly associated as evidenced by participants’ better attendance, higher levels of achievement, and aspirations of higher levels of education” (Finn, 1993). The National Survey of Student Engagement (2005) suggests purposeful engagement activities within the academic and social systems of school systems and claims they are associated with desirable college outcomes (Astin,

1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Supporting research tells us that the amount of time and energy students devote to learning the more engaged they will be with their academic environment leading to higher levels of achievement and personal satisfaction (Astin, 1996, Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The sense of belonging to a school community contributes to the overall experience of the student athlete. The research will investigate the role that athletics plays on the motivational levels of Varsity student-athletes.

### **Research Questions**

**Question 1:** How does the relationship between athletics and academics contribute to the motivational experiences of varsity student athletes?

**Question 2:** What are the different types of support that contribute to the athletic and academic motivation of varsity student athletes?

## **Design and Methods**

### **Research Design and Data Analysis**

This phenomenological qualitative study explored the experiences of five varsity student athletes involved in competitive athletics. The purpose is to explore their experiences both academically and athletically to see if there is a motivational transfer from athletics to academics. The data collection was a combination of interviews and observations to study an individual's lived experiences within the athletic world. The data was then read and organized into themes using different types of coding including emotion, value, and pattern coding. Emotion coding placed different emotions onto phrases of participants and value coding organized information using categories of importance based off of frequency. Together the value and emotion coding organized itself into emergent themes.

## **Sample**

The sample size used was five varsity student-athletes who were currently participating in fall athletics. The participants were randomly selected after asking fall sports coaches to advertise the need for volunteers for a research study. The participants include two females and three males. The male participants had personal goals of being college athletes with one stating to have a verbal commitment to a Division 1 college. The participants are to be viewed as highly competitive athletes participating on both school and travel teams with participation in athletics ranging from 5-12 years. Follow up interviews with their current coaches and teachers were used to validate the data collected during interviews and observations. Therefore, a total of ten faculty interviews were held – five athletic and five academic. Similarly, the participants were all observed in both an academic and athletic setting totaling ten observations two per participant. The participants were interviewed a total of three times: semi structured through google forms, face-to face individually, and a group panel discussion.

## **Definition of Terms**

*Academic Motivation:* A student's desire (as reflected in approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subjects when the student's competence is judged against a standard of performance or excellence (McClelland, et al., 1953).

*Athletic Identity:* Identity developed through acquired skills, confidence, and social interactions when part of a team.

*Athletic Motivation:* Desire, determination, and persistence to improve sport performance.

*Student-athlete:* Any high school student who is academically eligible (as per local and school policies) to participate in extra-curricular athletics and is currently an active member on a Varsity level athletic team.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Related Research**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The achievement goal theory will be used as a theoretical lens to guide this research study. Achievement goal theory (Nicolls, 1984; 1989) states that goals are developed through the motivational climate created by parents, coaches, and peers. To best understand the influences of the different motivational climates it is necessary to research the ability perceptions of the individual (Duda, 2001; Nicholls, 1984). Research supports the theory that motivation can determine the students' perception of ability, effort, success, and failure (Ames, 1984; Duda, 1989, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Maehr, 1984; Nicholls, 1989). Educational research reports that task-oriented athletes tend to sustain their effort in difficult tasks (Duda, 1988, 1989), choose challenging tasks (Duda, Smart, & Tappe, 1989), report relatively low competitive anxiety (Voight, Callaghan, & Ryska, 2000), and demonstrate high levels of commitment (Weitzer, 1989), self-esteem (Ryska, 2002), perceived competence (Hall, 1989), and intrinsic interest in activities (Newton & Duda, 1992; White & Duda, 1991). These skills and personality traits could facilitate academic achievement and motivation.

Student-athletes must clarify for themselves the behaviors that influence performance in both athletics and academics. Understanding the interrelated factors that impact motivation can provide educators with better strategies for engaging student-athletes academically. Eckert (1989) showed how participation in activities, such as athletics, categorizes student-athletes to be placed in a high achieving group. Schunk,

Pintrich, & Meece (2008) take into account how an individual reacts to their environment, which in return may influence their behavior. Since an individual's actions are influenced by their environment and beliefs, student-athletes are anticipated to have increased levels of academic motivation because of their participation in athletics.

Self-concept affects academic achievement and goal attainment. Understanding what motivates a student to learn and how their self-concept plays a role in their motivation was analyzed in this study. Bandura (1997) found that encouragement can improve an individual's self-concept. The encouragement provided by teachers and coaches of student-athletes could in turn influence their behavior in the classroom. Multiple studies report how students who adopt a largely task-oriented goal perspective have higher levels of academic satisfaction and enjoyment (Fry & Coe, 1980), greater willingness to pursue challenging tasks (Elliot & Dweck, 1988), positive performance attributions (Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985), and greater personal responsibility and commitment to their schoolwork (Nicholls et al., 1985; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986).

Motivation can be defined as the process a student engages toward a goal both mentally and physically (Hollembek & Amrose, 2005; Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Research tells us that "a student's motivational level is found to be significantly linked to students' final performance" (Wang, Morin, et al., 2016). Students who display a self-determined attitude of motivation have been seen to perform at higher levels when compared to their peers. Research continues to link students' motivational profiles and the level of effort they exert. The motivational levels of student-athletes vary from the classroom to the playing field. This research describes the experiences of a sample of student-athletes to help explore if there is any connection between academic and athletic

motivation. The level of self-determination of the student athletes is one of the most integral components as this will provide educators and coaches with insight into what really gets student-athletes working at their optimal performance level.

Atkinson (1964) discusses that motivation is explained by factors that affect how individuals approach success or failure. Student-athletes experience levels of success and failure repeatedly on the athletic field. This research will analyze if the lessons in persistence and hard work are transferred into the classroom. Expectancies and values are assumed to influence performance, effort, and persistence. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) tell us how motivational levels determine the tasks that we choose, persistence during those tasks, how much effort is exerted and levels of performance. They outlined four subcomponents of motivation including attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost.

Academic self-efficacy and resiliency directly relate to strong motivation and achievement according to studies done by Schunk and Miller (1995). Positive correlations have been obtained between students' self-efficacy for learning and subsequent motivation during learning. Individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs, in contrast, approach difficult tasks and activities with feelings of conviction and serenity, whereas low personal self-efficacy leads to a restricted vision of how to persevere (Pajares, 1996). Deci & Ryan (1985) categorize motivation into three categories: intrinsic motivation (engaging in activities for inherent satisfaction); extrinsic motivation (engaging in activities for instrumental reasons); or unexpected motivation (engaging in activities unintentionally). Student-athletes may be motivated differently on the athletic field and in the classroom. Self-determined motivation has been linked to higher levels of

self-reported effort in sports (Pelletier et al., 1995). The level of effort that student-athletes exert can vary in different environments. The participants of this study may not even be aware of the motivational influences that exist in their life which influence their decision making. Awareness of perceptions about academic and athletic experiences may assist participants in identifying what motivators work well for them.

The social interaction between individuals is identified as the six-stage model called Expectancy Confirmation (Darley & Fazio, 1980). This model includes the following stages which relate to the student-athlete relationship:(1) a coach forms an expectancy about an athlete; (2) the coach behaves in manner congruent to his/her expectancy; (3) the athlete interprets the coaches behavior; (4) the athlete responds to the coaches behavior; (5) the coach interprets the athletes response; and (6) finally, the athlete interprets his/her personal response to the coaches behavior. This six-step model is an important process because the attitudes and perceptions of coaches will influence future expectations for performance (Biddle, Hanrahan, & Sellars, 2001). Athletes tend to experience higher satisfaction levels with their coach and team involvement when they receive praise, encouragement, and constructive information (Allen & Howe, 1998).

### **Related Research**

The review of related research covers the athletic and academic motivation, attitudes as a mediating factor, and external influences-specifically supports and the influence of the coach. Marsh and Kleitman (2003) found that participation in high school sports had beneficial effects on school grades, coursework selection, homework, educational and occupational aspirations, self-esteem, university applications, subsequent college enrollment, and eventual educational attainment. In addition, varsity

team sports appeared to have more benefits than intramural and individual sports; this tells us that participation in high school sports does have some positive effects on academic achievement.

In addition to general academic benefits, participation has been shown to have other advantages and to benefit certain subgroups. Yeung (2013) also took a look at leadership in sports and saw that leadership in sports has a social and academic benefits over simply athletic participation. He states that students were able to learn valuable lessons in teamwork, time management, and organization which assisted with achievement in the classroom. Moreover, scholars suggest participation in sports has especially beneficial effects in suburban schools. Schafer and Armer (1968) found participation in sports had the effect of increasing attendance rates and grade point averages for high school students. Several studies found positive effects of sports participation in high school even after introducing controls for measures as GPA, cognitive development, and educational attainment.

#### *Athletic and Academic Motivation*

Research done by Ryska and Vestal (2004) tells us that different types of athletic motivation demonstrated by high school student-athletes have a significant impact on their behavior and attitudes within academic settings. Specifically, competitive experiences appear to have influenced learning strategies for both male and female student-athletes. Skills and characteristics such as information processing, time management, educational goals, and higher levels of self-efficacy were visible for male and female student athletes (Ryska & Vestal, 2004).

Educational research has found that task-oriented students characteristically define personal competence in terms of self-referenced standards of performance such as task mastery, fulfillment of personal potential, and skill improvement (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nicholls, 1992). Such students are typically goal setters and are able to achieve goals through positive prior experiences and the satisfaction of personal growth. Findings reported by Yueng (2013) state that classroom climate is likely to impact student engagement more than participation in athletics, regardless of the student's perceptions of success.

#### *Attitudes as a Mediating Factor*

A student-athlete's perception of themselves has a direct impact on the success they have on the athletic field and in the classroom. Steele (1997) suggests, "to sustain school success one must be identified with school achievement in the sense of its being a part of one's self-definition, a personal identity to which is held accountable. This accountability—that good self-feelings depend in some part on good achievement — translates into sustained achievement motivation" (p. 615). When taking a closer look at the identity of high school varsity athletes, research tells us that peer groups and participation in specific activities influence identity (Eckert, 1989).

Team sports relates to increased levels of academic achievement and social behavior (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Long (1991) reports that at the collegiate level popularity of student athletes at big name universities can have a negative impact on academic achievement. Many competitive athletes are engulfed in their sport identity which can at times conflict with goals relating to academics. School culture and/or society may place more value on their athletic identity contributing to the development of

poor academic habits. The social cognitive theory discusses how these perceptions influence student athletes' behaviors on and off the field. McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) identified three main challenges for student athletes: prioritizing their roles as students and as athletes, managing their relationship with academia, and obtaining support and understanding. Contrary to research by Long (1991) and Lewis (2004), Yeung (2013) collected research that student-athletes themselves report experiencing academic benefits from their sport performance. Other researchers have found elite athletes endorsing the view that sports benefit their academic careers (Aquilina, 2013; Douglas & Carless, 2006), and the belief that sports and academics can be mutually beneficial appears to be broadly accepted within modern sport psychology (Miller, 2002). Students with a positive self-concept may have more confidence in their abilities and persevere through obstacles in balancing academics and athletics. A better understanding of the perceived norms regarding academics among student-athletes could potentially yield significant improvements in student achievement.

### *Support*

Student-athletes receive constant support in the form of feedback from teammates, coaches, parents, and fans. Fransen, Boen, Vinsteenkiste, Mertens, and Broek (2018) define competence support to be a broad construct that encompasses different facets. Such facets include the positive informational and motivational feedback and encouragement, the provision of optimal challenges, the offer of help and guidance during task execution, and the creation of a structured environment by providing clear guidelines and expectations (Curran, 2013). Tracey and Sedlacek (1989) found that a strong support system or support person was positively correlated with high grade point

averages of college athletes. Student-athlete motivation can be enhanced by the presence of an important role model who has experienced success in similar academic endeavors (Bandura, 1997). Bandura also noted that encouragement and persuasion can assist in building strong self-efficacy beliefs. Wigfield and Eccles (2000) found that when a student had a strong support foundation it facilitated the student's ability to understand how working hard toward a goal, as well as the attainment and utilization of that goal contribute to self-worth. Researchers Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992) asserted that when a student has support systems available it is positively correlated with student-athletes grade point average.

The research collected provides coaches, teachers, and administrators with practices and techniques for supporting its student-athletes. These influences are identified by the presence of life skills learned in the sports context that are characterized by components of discipline, responsibility, motivation, work ethic, communication, relationship building, values, sportsmanship, problem solving, prioritization, planning, organization, competition, and goal setting (Goudas et al., 2006; Gould et al., 2006; Gould et al., 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008, 2010; Jones & Lavallee, 2009; Jowett, 2003; Petitpas, 2002).

### *Influence of the Coach*

Wigfield and Eccles (1992, 2000) found that strong foundations guide students to understand the sacrifices and benefits of working hard toward a goal, as well as the attainment and utility of achieving those goals. Coaches provide athletes with advice on how to set and attain goals. Wilson and Stephens (2007) examined student-athletes and their persistence levels; they concluded that athletes with coaches who had great

expectations and gave minor criticism, were more inclined to persevere. Supporting research by Jowett & Cramer (2010) assert that a coach can be more influential than an athlete's parent when making personal decisions. Data was collected at an East Texas high school through narrative inquiry and interviews which were analyzed through thematic analysis to determine the long-term influences of coaches on the personal and professional lives of their athletes. The lessons taught by the coach were reported to have influenced student-athletes while making academic and personal decisions.

When a coach supports an athlete in reaching a specific goal, those athletes may feel extrinsically motivated. Stephens & Wilson (2007) examined the differences between high and low expectancy athletes on perceived coaching treatment. According to Simons, Derek, and Covington (1999), students who are the most highly desired by coaches receive more extrinsic rewards, recognition, and social support in the area of athletics. This can lead to a stronger commitment to athletics over academics, making them a high risk for academic failure. Simons (1999) suggests counteracting these pressures we must provide support to our athletes in the precollege years. Based upon observations and interviews done by DeMeulenaere (2010) in an urban school in Northern California, he found student involvement in sports promoted student success by structuring schedules, creating incentives, building confidence, developing positive adult and peer role models, and getting students to develop future aspirations. The self-fulfilling foresight in athletics is based on the perceptions and expectations that coaches have for their players. A coach's expectations may influence athletes' cognitions and behaviors (Wilson & Stephens, 2007). Findings concluded that the coach athlete relationship has significant influence on athletes and their personal and professional

futures. These influences relate to building positive relationships and the development of long-term life skills. Although the participants felt that coaches did not purposefully teach life skills, they felt that life skills were taught in the context of the experience.

#### *Costs and Benefits of Being a Student-Athlete*

The popularity of athletics in America has many asking the question “Does participation in athletics come at a cost?”. Bishop (2008) found that families are abandoning core values in a quest to achieve athletic goals in hopes of becoming a college bound athlete who will receive a scholarship. Sitkowski (2008) explored the effects on athletic participation and found both positive and negative aspects to athletic participation. Supporters conclude that high school athletics positively impacts the school culture, students, and the community – academically, personally, and socially (Yancey, 2007). Cook (2003) concluded that parents are spending exorbitant amounts of money on private coaches and all the extra time spent training pulls students away from academics. Hoff (2006) supports such a claim by stating “an overemphasis on sports can undermine a high school’s academic mission.” Researchers have argued that sports teach self-discipline, teamwork, cooperation, hard work, self-confidence, pride in accomplishment, competitive spirit, and how to deal with failure (Lapchick, 1987). The question remains if these characteristics transfer into the classroom as they become personality characteristics of the student athlete.

The demands of athletics are more apparent than ever before in the lives of our student athletes as they now have no “off” season. For example, if you play lacrosse you play lacrosse all year long between both school and club teams. The demands of being a multi-sport athlete with no off season may come at a cost for some student athletes. If

time and energy are limited perhaps investing more time and energy into athletics takes away from one's role as a student (Coser, 1974; Goode, 1960). If time and energy are abundant, expandable, and available for several roles (Marks, 1977) than maybe the balance is easier than many may think. Richards and Aries (1999) found that college athletes (a) make more than double the time commitment to extracurricular activities, (b) graduate with GPAs that do not differ from non-athletes, (c) are as involved in most campus life as non-athletes, and (d) experience levels of growth and satisfaction comparable to non-athletes. Richards and Aries were able to support that abundant energy approach which holds that student athletes will find time and energy for the activities they are committed to.

### *Summary*

There are many different factors that influence motivation levels for student athletes. A majority of the research reviewed discussed attributes that will prepare students with strong skills in the areas of goal setting, winning, success, hard-work, planning, cooperation, and organization (Hanson & Kraus, 1998). Some studies have even gone as far to declare that interscholastic athletics can impact student achievement. Supporting statistics about attendance, discipline, and graduation rate also show that athletic involvement directly impacts student academic achievement. Student-athletes become more engaged and interested in school as they develop an increased sense of self-worth. Contradicting research does argue that athletics can divert attention from academics if student priorities aren't in order. A lack of support for student athletes has also been found to decrease academic motivation and achievement. Participation in

athletics is at an all-time high and research tells us that with the proper support and guidance the benefits of participating in high school athletics are long lasting.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods and Procedures

#### Research Questions

This chapter provides comprehensive information on the methodology of this study and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data. As outlined in Chapter 1, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the impact that athletics may have on academic motivation. Additionally, this research examined the goal setting and supports that student athletes at Corbin High School are experiencing and using. To address the purpose of this research, this chapter includes the following information: research design, site description, participants, data collection, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

The following research questions were examined in this study:

**Question 1:** How does the relationship between athletics and academics contribute to the motivational experiences of varsity student athletes?

**Question 2:** What are the different types of support that contribute to the athletic and academic motivation of varsity student athletes?

#### Research Design

The study done was a phenomenological qualitative research design. Phenomenology investigates various reactions, or perceptions of, a particular phenomenon; the researcher was able to gain insight into the world of her participants (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Phenomenology generally assumes there is some common ground that participants stand upon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Capturing the “essence of individual experiences and how participants have experienced it” (Moustakas, 1994) is the most important outcome of this research. Phenomenology is specifically important for this research study as it requires a “profound understanding of human experiences

common to a group of people”, which for this study was the five varsity student athletes. The student athletes were all from the same high school and were active current participants in competitive athletic seasons; this is especially important in phenomenology because it allowed the researcher to find the common meanings attributed to the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). It was important for the researcher to understand that the participants brought out both subjective and objective experiences. While analyzing the data the researcher interpreted the data for what was said and what was experienced; this is better known to researchers as the “text” and the “context”. Manen (2016) reminds researchers that phenomenology makes us mindful to be critically and philosophically aware of how our lives are socially, culturally, and existentially fashioned. The researcher aims to dig deep into the lived experiences of its participants to determine why these experiences happen and how they facilitate and extend into other experiences in the participants lives. As it relates to this study this is how the athletic experiences of varsity student-athletes impact academic motivation.

### **Site Description**

This qualitative study was conducted at the Corbin High School a suburban junior-senior high school on Long Island. According to the New York State Education Department’s enrollment data for the 2016-2017 school year the student body makeup was just under 1,700 students with a student to teacher ratio of 16:1. Approximately 70% of the students are white, 15% Hispanic, 10% Asian or Pacific Islander, and less than 5% Black or African American; 1% of the student body are English Language Learners, 15% are students with disabilities and about 20% are economically disadvantaged. The graduation rate is 99% with 60% graduating with an advanced Regents diploma; the

advanced placement enrollment is 57% and approximately 93% of students play on an interscholastic sports team. Niche 2020 Best Schools reports rankings for the Corbin High School to be in the top 10% of schools for athletics in New York State.

According to data collected from the parent organizations the school “strives to create a culture and climate that promotes learning, encourages innovation, and builds a community of life-long learners among staff, students, and community.” The school further states in its belief statement that “extracurricular activities and sports are essential components in developing successful young men and women.” After attending multiple sporting events at the school, the researcher witnessed a strong presence of teachers, coaches, parents, and administrators. The atmosphere was positive in tone and held strong regard for its players with a competitive energy and emphasis on winning.

### **Participants**

Five varsity student athletes were selected for this study using a purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling is widely use in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Creswell (2018) reminds us to identify and select individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest, which for the focus of this study would be experienced varsity athletes. Elements such as availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to effectively communicate one’s experiences were vital to the data collection process (Bernard, 2002).

At the time of this study, all participants were students that were involved in varsity fall sports; sports included boys’ soccer, football, and girls’ volleyball. It was essential to focus on the lived experiences of these students through interviews and

observations. All participants were either juniors or seniors in high school between the ages of 16-17 years old. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants' demographics.

Table 3.1

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Gender	Varsity Sport(s) Played	# of Years in Competitive Athletics	College Bound Athlete
Maria	F	Girls Volleyball Golf	1-5	N
Olga	F	Girls Volleyball	1-5	N
Miles	M	Football	10-15	Y
Noah	M	Boys Lacrosse Football	10-15	Y
Cole	M	Baseball Boys Basketball Boys Soccer	10-15	Y

**Procedures for Data Collection**

Interviews are useful to explore experiences, views, opinions, or beliefs; accounts can be explored and compared to others and develop an understanding of the underlying structure of beliefs (Green & Thorogood, 2010). Through the interview process of the five participants there were three questioning styles used: structured, semi-structured, and open ended. In hopes of maximizing the details of the interviews with student athletes the researcher frequently asked the participants to “Tell a story about a time where...”, this was done to help the participant think back to specific events in their life where events relating to the topics being explored may or may not have occurred. The researcher

would also insert casual questions about the personality traits and background of participants to develop a rapport and make the participants feel valued. The methods of data collection were primarily interviews and observations of five high school student athletes. Consent was retrieved and given by both the participant and the legal guardian of the participant prior to the collection of any data. The consent includes the purpose of the study as well as the components of how data will be collected. The triangulation of data came through artifact collection of letters of recommendation, follow up interviews with teachers and coaches, and observations. Table 1 describes examples of data that were collected over the course of this study.

*Table 3.2*

*Data Collection Methods*

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Documents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured (online responses via google forms) of student participants</li> <li>• Independent 40-minute interviews with each participant</li> <li>• Group panel discussion</li> <li>• Follow-up interviews with classroom teachers and coaches post observations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of participants in a collaborative academic setting</li> <li>• Observation of participants in a competitive athletic setting</li> <li>• Analyzed interactions, leadership skills, behaviors, and attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters of Recommendation</li> <li>• Coded for experiences, motivation, and attitudes</li> </ul>

**Interviews.** As described by Creswell and Poth (2018), the key to a successful interview protocol is developing interview questions that are often “sub-questions in the research study, phased in ways the interviewees can understand” (pg. 164). The

questions are based on the Three Interview Series by Seidman (2006). The interview protocol was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that explored the experiences of student-athletes.

The first phase of interview questions were conducted through digital survey (google form) allowing participants to spend time reflecting about each question. Phase one interview questions (Appendix D) included demographic information as well as general background information as it pertains to this research study. Participants included information about athletic experiences in terms of sports played, how many years they have participated in athletics, athletic and academic values, as well as future aspirations to play sports at the collegiate level.

The second phase interviews with each student-athlete were face-to-face and lasted approximately 40 minutes (Appendix D). This second phase of interviews was to concentrate on the details of student-athletes experiences, motivation, and attitudes. The interviews were recorded using the application Rev Voice Recorder and transcribed. As students described their motivational experiences in both athletics and academics probes regarding attitudes, priorities, and goal setting were explored further. A focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors was used to determine any other influences on the academic and athletic experiences of student-athletes. The interview questions were semi-structured but, the researcher modified and supplemented questions as needed to provide specific information. As qualitative research is an emergent research design, questions will continue to be developed throughout the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additional questions were developed to allow participants to tell stories of their experiences making meaning of the main research questions.

The third and final phase of interviews required the participants to reflect on the purpose of their experiences addressing the “intellectual and emotional connections between the participants’ work and life” (Seidman, 2006). Upon completion of data collection from phase I and II interviews as well as supplemental observations students took part in a group panel discussion on the topic of student athletes and motivation. This group panel discussion was to clarify their experiences and triangulate the data. Bringing together students who stand on common ground can help them to build upon and relate to each other’s experiences. Sharing experiences opened up strong dialogue amongst participants allowing the researcher to gather supplemental data. The Harvard Business Review (2018) suggests forming a strong group panel the researcher should start by stating the objective on the onset and invite panelists to ask each other questions; this can help to gather data about the likeminded individuals sitting before you. The researcher felt this third phase was critical as the participants had the time to reflect on the topic further after phase II and added more detail to their experiences.

**Observational Protocol.** Observations allow the researcher to immerse yourself into a social setting, enabling the researcher to learn actions of participants and patterns of behavior (Glense, 2006). Observations for this study were of student-athletes in two settings: 1) Athletic – competitive games and 2) Academic – collaborative learning in the classroom. Observation research was conducted as a nonparticipant observer where the researcher was an outsider of the group under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were made aware that they were being observed and each observation lasted approximately 40 minutes. The observer collected detailed field notes (Appendix G) that were utilized to record personal reflections that relate to insights, hunches, or broad

themes that may transpire (Creswell, 2008). The observer noted interactions between teachers, coaches, and peers, as well as leadership skills, behaviors, and attitudes. The researcher observed the students in a student-centered lesson predetermined through the lesson planning of the academic teacher. Academic observations were made in a collaborative environment which allowed the researcher to note participation, group work, and leadership skills. Athletic observations were made at competitive athletic events which allowed the researcher to note attitudes and motivational experiences of the student-athletes.

**Teacher and Coach Interviews.** The interviews with academic teachers and coaches of participants helped to describe the participants. After observing students in both an athletic or academic setting an informal interview with teachers and coaches was done. These informal interviews were used to create a motivational profile of the type of student and athlete the participants were perceived to be. These informal interviews allowed the researcher to follow up with what was observed to determine if behaviors were consistent with that of the participant. The types of data collected included leadership skills, attentiveness, participation, attendance, behavior, and attitudes. These informal semi-structured interview questions (Appendix E & Appendix F) were asked during follow up interviews and recorded using Rev Audio Recorder. Teachers and coaches were also asked to fill out a short survey about the participant and provided the researcher with an idea of the relationships coaches and teachers had with the participants.

**Documents.** In qualitative research, documents are used to support the data found in observations and interviews, as they are existing pieces of data not found in earlier data

collection procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documents in this study were used to triangulate the data and enrich the narrative of the data collected. Documents included teacher letters of recommendation written by faculty members of Corbin High School and were coded for themes involving the experiences, motivation, and attitudes of student-athletes. Such documents were analyzed and coded only after consent from both the student and author of the letters were granted.

### **Trustworthiness**

Creswell and Poth (2018) provide researchers with nine ways to validate qualitative studies. They suggest choosing at least two of these strategies to enhance the validity of the researcher being presented. For the purpose of this study the researcher included prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data, rich-thick description, and member checking to ensure a valid and reliable study was implemented.

*Prolonged Engagement.* The researcher facilitated strong relationships with student-athletes through multiple phases of interviews as well as multiple observations. Facilitating an environment of trust with participants allowed the researcher to learn about the culture of student-athletes. Prolonged engagement in the field allowed the researcher to check for misinformation that may be collected through the process.

*Triangulation.* The researcher collected data from multiple sources using multiple research methods including interviews, observations, and artifact collection. The interviews told deep stories about participants experiences as students and athletes while the observations showed the researcher what it looked and felt like to be part of the athletic community of Corbin High School. The letters of recommendation validated what the researcher observed in regard to the student-athlete and their motivational

experiences. The teacher and coach follow up interviews provided more detail about the support provided to the student-athletes as well as the relationships that were built through the classroom and the team.

*Rich-Thick Description.* Creswell (2018) suggests that researchers should provide the reader with detailed descriptions that allow the reader to make decisions regarding the findings reported. The study includes descriptive narratives (including the participants actual words) to describe the experiences of the participants and the setting.

*Member Checking.* The researcher utilized a follow up interview of the participants using a group panel discussion of the themes and findings from the data collected for this research study. Creswell (2018) tells us this validation strategy will establish credibility. When the participants had the opportunity to hear the findings and comment on how accurately they represent the actual experience it increases the validity of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to beginning data collection, the researcher obtained approval from both St. John's University Institutional Review Board and the school district in which the study was conducted. Appendix A includes the official signed form of IRB approval from St. John's University to conduct the current study. Additionally, the researcher obtained consent from all participants, legal parent/guardians of the participants, and building administrators. A letter of consent provided specific details regarding the data collection process and explained to all participants that this was a voluntary experience. The participants were informed that all records would remain confidential and stay password protected. Appendix B contains the letter of consent that was provided to all participants.

*Sample Size.* The researcher in this study has chosen a small sample size; while generalizations across multiple populations will be difficult to achieve with a small sample size a smaller sample allowed for a more in depth analysis of the participants. The selection of participants will be a threat to the internal validity since all student-athletes are from the same high school. The expansion of this study across multiple high schools with more diverse student populations would be beneficial for the researcher in the future.

This is a phenomenological qualitative study and the researcher hopes to convey the overall essence of the experience of the participants. Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) recommend that the researcher keep a copy of concerns, theoretical frameworks, research questions, and goals of the study at the forefront to keep the researcher focused. By providing detailed descriptions of the student-athletes experiences the researcher hopes to provide educators with valuable insight about how we can most effectively motivate our student-athletes on and off the athletic field.

### **Procedures for Data Analysis**

Following data collection, the researcher analyzed the data by name and organized the data into themes through coding. The researcher's main goal was to enter the participants' lives to see it from inside which eventually illuminates the "unobtainable views" (Charmaz, 2006). The triangulation of data collection was through multiple interviews, observations, and coding of college letters of recommendation. To best understand the experiences of varsity student-athletes, the researcher analyzed the data sources for emergent themes. By interviewing and observing students, the researcher was able to determine the experiences of varsity student athletes and how their experiences on the athletic field transfer over to the classroom. Supporting observations of participants

and interviews with both coaches and teachers of the participants shed insight into the motivational profile of the participants involved.

The researcher reviewed the data from the interviews, observations, and letters of recommendation for significant testimonies that paint a picture of the experiences of the participants. The coding of data included statements about student-athletes experiences as varsity student athletes, their feelings on how athletics has impacted academics, and how being a competitor has influenced their motivational levels on the athletic field and in the classroom. Data analysis included descriptive coding done in multiple phases. The first cycle of coding that was done was an Affective Method of Coding (Saldaña, 2012) which investigated the subjective qualities of human experience by directly acknowledging and naming those experiences. Both emotion and value coding were used to identify the emotions experienced by participants and to assess the participant's integrated value, attitude, and belief system. In this first phase of coding code mappings were drawn to help organize emotions and values of participants. In the second phase of coding the researcher was able to condense the details of phase one into themes by using pattern coding. Hatch (2002) states that data can be analyzed through pattern coding by identifying similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation within the data collected. Units of social organization assist when taking on initial coding in phenomenological studies according to Lofland (2006). Such categories included cultural practice, encounters, episodes, roles, social and personal relationships, groups or cliques, and organizations. When such units of social organization are combined with aspects such as cognitive aspects or meanings, emotional aspects or meanings, and

hierarchical aspects or inequalities the essence of the participants are organized into categories.

Code weaving is the integration of key code words into narrative form to see how all of the data fits together (Saldaña, 2012). These narratives were created by the researcher through the final process of coding best known as memoing. These memos were used to write-up the “ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike” the researcher (Saldaña, 2013). From these themes, the researcher then wrote a description that goes deeper than what one can see on the surface to reveal the essence of phenomenon through a multi-stage coding process (Bogdan & Binklen, 2007). The narrative portrayed the experience of student athletes and connected how motivation in athletics and academics influenced one another.

### **Researcher Role**

The researcher in this study is a teacher in the school building of the student participants. While she never taught nor coached any of the research participants, they may have been be more resistant to opening up given the researchers relationships with other teachers and coaches in the building. The researcher ensured confidentiality to all participants and promised that all data will be destroyed upon completion of the research. The researcher guaranteed that all student information used for the purpose of this research will remain unknown.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Introduction

The study explored the experiences of five varsity student athletes as they relate to both their athletic and academic motivational experiences. Specifically, the study was designed to answer the following questions:

**Question 1:** How does the relationship between athletics and academics contribute to the motivational experiences of varsity student athletes?

**Question 2:** What are the different types of support that contribute to the athletic and academic motivation of varsity student athletes?

The data to answer these research questions was primarily gathered through interviews of five student-athletes, coaches, and teachers. To triangulate the data, the researcher also conducted classroom and athletic observations of the athletes and coded letters of recommendation from current teachers. An analysis of the data identified many themes within each research question that relate to the motivational relationship of athletics and academics for student-athletes.

The results of research question 1 have been organized into the following themes:

- Emotional outlets and support: the importance of athletics as a social emotional support.
- Confidence leads to competence: athletics provides students with structure to be more competent on and off the athletic field.
- Athletic mindset: creating competitive attitudes in the classroom.

The results of research question 2 have been organized into the types of support provided to student-athletes using the following themes:

- Parents as a motivator and support: teaching responsibility and accountability.
- Persistence, patience, and practice: skills taught and supported by coaches.
- Teamwork and cooperation: a success mindset supported by peer mentors.
- School Engagement: support given by teachers as an academic and life lesson.
- Time management and confidence: valuable lessons learned through athletics.

### **Description of Participants**

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study included five varsity student-athletes at a senior high school on Long Island. The following section provides in-depth descriptions of the participants.

Maria, a Hispanic 16-year-old female, has been involved in competitive athletics for five years in her favorite sport of Volleyball. She is involved in athletics for both the high school and other club teams and does not plan on playing collegiate athletics. In addition to volleyball she is an active participant in her class board, student government, Model United Nations, and French Club. The participant described herself as an athlete who “strives for greatness” and “wants to improve every single year in my sport”. Volleyball is something that she is “very passionate about and really brings happiness and joy to my life. It’s one of my escapes, especially from school.”

Olga, a Caucasian 16-year-old female, has also been involved in competitive athletics for 5 years in her only sport of volleyball. She is involved in the school volleyball team as well as a travel team. She does not plan on playing sports at the collegiate level. In addition to volleyball she is involved in a school club called Think Pink to raise awareness and funds for Breast Cancer Research. Outside of school, she volunteers at a Polish School and works with disabled children. The participant described

athletics for her to be “a way to get your exercise in and just be with friends, to laugh, to have fun, and just do well at something other than just hitting the books.” The participant includes her early experiences in primary education not knowing the language of English as she was born in the United States but relocated to Poland during her early childhood years. She says her parents “always motivated me” to work hard at learning English and she is now grateful to be bilingual in English and Polish.

Miles, a Caucasian 15-year-old male, has been involved in competitive athletics for 10 years. He plays both varsity football and lacrosse and is planning on playing Division 1 lacrosse at the collegiate level. He has already made a verbal commitment at the Air Force for Division 1 lacrosse. When he can find free time, he helps teacher younger kids the game of lacrosse coaching a team with his father. The participant described himself as an “85-90 average student athlete on the road to play Division 1 lacrosse”. He also stated that he was “brought up [by his family] surrounded by sports” and that “sports kind of teaches you to go above and beyond”. Sports have been a part of his life “as long as I can remember”.

Noah, a Caucasian 17-year-old male, has been involved in competitive athletics for 10-15 years. He currently plays football, basketball, and baseball making him a three-sport athlete with no off season; he also is an active member of the Future Business Leaders of America club. He plans on playing collegiate athletics, but it is secondary to finding a good academic school with a strong engineering program. The participant describes himself as being a multi-sport athlete as long as he can remember with baseball leading as his favorite and strongest sport. He states that “I set myself to a standard. I have high expectations for myself on and off the field.” He says he is the type of student

that “doesn’t study too much at home just uses the time in school to pay close attention” an example of this is the fact that he was able to score a “1370 on my SAT without even studying for it.”

Cole, a Caucasian 17-year-old male, has been playing competitive soccer for 12 years both in and outside of school. Cole has goals of playing soccer at the collegiate level minimum of division 2 and keeps busy training younger athletes. He is also a soccer referee and a caddy at a country club. He feels that athletics keeps him “more focused with an increased need to prioritize his time.” He feels that “education can get you far in life and I want to succeed” and that sports have taught him “to handle stress way better...I’m a captain so being a confident leader is important when others look up to you.”

The five participants in this study varied in years of athletic experience and expressed different opinions about the impact of athletics on them as a student. These experiences and opinions are further documented in the following sections of this chapter.

**Research Question 1: How does the relationship between athletics and academics contribute to the motivational experiences of varsity student athletes?**

This study collected evidence of how student athletes feel about their experiences of athletics and if participation has increased their motivational levels in the area of academics. Through interviews, observations, and analysis of letters of recommendation, a number of themes emerged from the data, including athletics in the area of emotional outlets and supports, confidence and competence, competitive attitudes, and the positive influence of parents and coaches on student academic motivation. The themes were

coded through emotion coding in the areas of elation, ambition, pride, goals, joy, confidence, sadness, complacency, optimism, and motivation.

***Emotional outlets and support: the importance of athletics as a social emotional support.*** The data supports that a major benefit of athletics for students is a way to relieve stress and enjoy a social atmosphere with friends surrounded with similar priorities and goals. As Olga explained, "...if it weren't for athletics I definitely wouldn't have as many friends. I definitely wouldn't go to as many places or experience new things." The data suggests that athletics acts as an emotional outlet and support for student-athletes. The researcher noted in each observation, student athletes appeared connected to their environment and had strong relationships with the teacher, coach, and peers. In all interviews a common theme was that that student athletes felt that athletics was a vital part of how they developed friendships with others of similar interest which in turn motivated them both athletically and academically.

The emotional outlet of socialization that the researcher noted during observations of athletic events was seen to be positive for the athletes. They enjoyed the concept of being focused on the similar goals and had many verbal and non-verbal communications before, during, and after athletic competition and practice. This was followed up with during the interviews when the athletes mentioned that athletics are an escape. Maria stated that athletics are "...something that I'm very, very, passionate about and it's something that really brings happiness and joy to my life. It's one of my escapes, especially from school". As witnessed by the researcher at multiple athletic practice's students would go into practice complaining of being tired or stressed about school; some even appeared a little sluggish during warmups and stretching. Once competition ensued

between both team members and opposing teams the researcher witnessed a change in the mood and energy. Olga reflected on a team huddle where "...anybody just says anything motivational...even if your down, your teammate pats you on the back and gives you a boost".

Emotional outlets and supports extend themselves outside of the classroom and outside of athletic experiences for the student athletes. As Miles stated, "Not even talking about athletically, [sports] makes you build so many relationships with people. I feel like the friends I have from playing are so valuable." Cole stated that "seeing my teammates in school brings me happiness because in the summer I don't see them as much as I do when school's in session." Maria supports this when she says, "I love the interaction that athletics gives me every day...I love being around people and getting to know them." She goes on to show pride in her support system when she states "...we're all like one big family, on and off the court...our connections are stronger." On the field Cole tells a story about a time that "I missed that penalty in the championship game and then we had another tournament. I didn't want to take the shot, but my teammates were telling me to keep going. They saw me at practice and told me just keep going...I scored...we won...I owe it to them." When the participants spoke of a challenging time when their teammates were able to boost them up emotionally, they were appreciative and proud. It was evident these experiences helped them to persevere through challenges on the athletic field. The participants placed high value on the peer relationships they were able to build through participation of athletics.

***Confidence leads to competence: athletics provides students with structure to be more competent on and off the athletic field.*** Student-athletes dedicate count 14-20

hours per week to become more skilled in their sport. In the case of these students the work that goes into athletics appears to build confidence in oneself and their ability to learn through practice and continued hard work. Noah states, “I feel like I have a really good work ethic...I’ve always wanted to complete everything. Try as hard as I can. I never quit at anything.” This need for developing skills and never quitting was a theme heard from all participants. Olga states, “I do have a strong work ethic” and athletics has really “taught me to be more independent”; similarly Maria states that athletics “really does motivate me because I feel like being a student athlete, you have to maintain this sort of grade level in my academic work.” Similarly, Miles stated, “It’s going to the gym. Training for a specific sport. Going to practice every day. It’s definitely a lot, but it’s a grind that is worth it.” Cole states that he enjoys “getting rewarded for all the work that I’ve done”.

Confidence were words frequently used by the coaches when describing the participants. While they were not able to speak of the confidence in the classroom, they were able to see explain how increased confidence on the athletic field led to growth of skills in their sport. The football coach spoke of Miles and stated, “He is a confident coachable athlete. He takes what we tell him and makes adjustments. Even after a bad game he wants to come in and discuss how he can improve.” When coaches discussed academic accountability the attendance and multiple failure policy implemented by the district were mentioned. One coach stated that “for most students the policy is an added motivator to come to school every day” and that “the culture of the building is that you will be removed from the team if you fail 2 or more subjects – no exceptions”. Multiple coaches reflected and told stories about times where a game plan needed to be revamped

due to suspension of athletes. While this can be challenging for the coach one stated that “the entire team learns from one participant’s mistakes”.

When the athletes were asked about how they find a successful balance to academics and athletics, Olga went on to state that “being a student athlete does not allow a lot of time to study so you must learn time management.” This time management contributed to the academic success of the student-athletes. Miles talked about being the best in his sport and stated “Even if you’re at the top you never are...you always got things to improve on. I think that’s my main thing. Nothing’s ever good enough for me. I’m always trying to get better.” Having sufficient knowledge required dedication to learning and growing and student athletes must use appropriate time management to be successful on and off the field. Noah spoke of “...setting myself to a high standard” when asked about how he finds a balance between academics and athletics he continued by saying “I have high expectations for myself on the field and off the field. I don’t expect myself to do bad in any class. I try to do as well as I can to keep my average up.” When asked if athletics negatively impacts academics Noah stated that, “If anything it makes me a better student. If I’m tired at night, I’ll get up and work in the morning at 5 or 6 whatever it takes to get it done.” Miles commented on time management by saying, “...because I played three sports, I’ve managed my time well. It’s interesting that a lot of very successful people have once been athletes so sports must teach you about success.”

The participants all exhibited high levels of confidence when they spoke of overcoming challenges. This perseverance was evident in many of the stories that they participants told through the interview process. Cole recalls a time that he didn’t play his best in a game and the next day he “would hit up the local turf field and practice for

hours”. Similarly, Miles stated after losing in the semifinals of football that “I was upset for a few days but then I realized and thought to myself – What can I do to fix it? What can I do to help the team on the next one?” The reflective practice of student-athletes can allow them set standards for personal growth. Miles also reflected about his earlier years as a varsity lacrosse player when “we reversed on a tough team. We were down a couple of goals early in the game. The captains pulled us aside as a team...gave us one of those motivational speeches about believing in each other...we ended up winning...it was really cool; now I hope to be that for the younger players.” Cole told a story of the biggest challenge at soccer games being the ability to zone out the parents in the stands. He said I called a team meeting about it because I saw it impacting other kids on the field and that it is most important to “focus on our skills and the game...the ability to focus on team and ignore distractions can be challenging. Just do what you need to do, and we’ll get it done. Don’t focus on anyone else.” The ability to work together as a team for a shared goal allowed the team to work together to block out distractions.

The artifact collection of college of letters of recommendation reported that four out of five letters referred to the student-athletes as “confident” in either athletics, academics, or both. During observations the researcher noted that participants were not afraid to participate or to make a mistake. They were actively engaged in class discussions and showed high levels of motivation when completing classwork assignments. Multiple teacher interviews reported that students were motivated by grades and the opportunity to earn points. High levels of student confidence were evident through the interview process when statements such as “I always want to be that best at what I’m doing” and “I like to win at the end when everyone’s tired...shows I have better

stamina”. In the classroom the participants were focused and engaged in class activities. They were noted by the observer to show higher levels of engagement when compared to their classmates. This was evident in the frequency of verbal participation and active notetaking. Follow up interviews with teachers stated that this behavior was typical of the participants and that the students “...really enjoy coming to school” and “have a strong desire to learn”. It is important to note the confidence level of the student-athletes being observed allowing them without hesitation to participate in the classroom.

Through interviews participants reported that they enjoyed helping others and that sports “teaches you to go above and beyond...just makes you want to be one of the best students in the classroom” said Miles. Cole stated that “I don’t need to prove that I am better than others. I just want to use my skills to help others” and similarly he stated that he “...likes helping people it gives me a lot of satisfaction.” Noah spoke of his commitment to learning by stating that “I’m someone who likes to gain knowledge at whatever it is; I think it just makes you smarter in general.” While Miles appears to be more competitive with his peers over grades and Cole more complacent about his status in the academic environment both appeared and reported to be highly motivated through observations and interviews. Noah has more of a laid-back approach to learning where he enjoys the challenging of beating out a classmate on a test but is more focused on learning and growing as a person. The levels of confidence for all three males appeared to be equally confident in both the athletic and academic climates that they were observed in. They reported that this confidence has led to an increase in their skills athletically and academically.

*Athletic mindset: creating competitive attitudes in the classroom.* Being competitive means having a strong desire to win or be the best at something. The participants varied in opinion as they reflected upon their competitive spirit in both the classroom and on the athletic field. Noah stated "...it's not that I don't want people to do well on tests but, when I see that someone gets a better score than me, I want to do better the next time." When asked if Miles felt that athletics has impacted academics if at all he stated, "It makes me more competitive than anything." Both Olga and Noah stated that "earning an A gives me more satisfaction than winning". Noah went on to elaborate that "winning a big game is huge but, you play more games than you have quarters or semesters."

Prioritizing the competition was also a common theme from the participants and placing weight on the attainment of goals based on the likelihood of them happening was mentioned. Noah was honest about competing with those that are of the same ability level stating, "I understand that some people are just smarter than me, I want to do better than those who I consider to be on the same level as myself." Miles reflected about times when he was competitive and said, "you need to know what you're up against to know how competitive to be" for example "when you are in a challenging class you need to work hard to compete with smarter students." Noah stated "...winning isn't everything. It depends on the game, you can only be proud if it's a goal that was viewed to be out of reach"; he continued by saying "I just want to be better than everybody but I'm more proud of myself when the goal was initially seen to be out of reach." Maria said that she "just wants to improve every single year in my sport, like if it's technique in the sports or just getting better at doing a drill, just strive for greatness." She went on to say that "I put

a lot of effort into tasks that I am passionate about because I am a very driven person, so effort and motivation come to me very easily.”

During classroom observations participants weren't seen to be competitive with their peers but more helpful and inquisitive. The researcher noted that while working in groups that multiple participants were strong collaborators and enjoyed the socialization of working in groups. Olga was seen to be the most active participant in class and she said “In the moment I get excited about the competition on the court but it's definitely more important for me to compete in the classroom; I do like the thrill of both but academics is always my priority.” Miles compared the competition on the athletic field to the classroom and said “In the classroom it's like you don't really know what's going on with all the other students. On the field you can see it all, so you know what you're up against.” Cole supports this idea and said “I like to keep to myself in the classroom. I don't care what everyone else gets. I just are about what I get.”

Competitive attitudes were a strong theme throughout all the interviews and while all participants had different academic and athletic goals for themselves the attainment of different tasks had high priority and value to them. Maria stated, “I really want to graduate at least top 50 of my class, or even better top 30” while Olga told a story about “how I really wanted to do well on the AP World Exam and when I got a 5, I cried tears of happiness.” Miles showed pride in his academics when he bragged about being in the “National Honor Society and how it kind of made me realize that I am somewhat of a smart kid” – this honor and recognition built confidence for him in the classroom. He continued to talk of his academic goals of “Getting on the high honor roll and doing his best in the classroom.” Noah also made mention of a values system where “...a higher

value is on a task being more challenging which gives out higher levels of satisfaction.” To support this, he compared beating a low-level team to earning a high score on an advanced placement test where the satisfaction level would be higher on a more challenging task. Cole spoke of success and the importance of education stating, “Education can get you far in life so ninety or higher for all classes combined is the goal I set for myself each academic quarter.” Noah has goals of going to college for engineering and went on to emphasize the importance of scoring high in Calculus, Physics I, and Physics II. He reflected about being a three sport athlete and how athletics has positively influenced his academic goals; “my work ethic in the classroom is strong – sports has taught me about managing my time, I make myself pay attention in class and maximize my time on free periods”.

It was evident that the participants were highly competitive in both the classroom and on the athletic field or court. The confidence that is built through experiences of both success and failure allows them to learn and reflect about themselves as student-athletes. The concept of a team and building memories together with their friends through athletics was mentioned by all participants allowing them to have an emotional outlet after the school day. The participants all had a clear vision of where they would like to go after they graduate and have strong ideas instilled in them about the importance of education.

**Research Question 2: What are the different types of support that contribute to the athletic and academic motivation of varsity student athletes?**

Through the research, themes on the impact of different supports were highly valued by the participants. Such supports were stated and seen to have motivated students on and off the athletic field. Student-athletes were looking to make their parents proud of

them as they felt their parents had been supporting them from the beginning of their athletic and academic experiences. Coaches were a tremendous influence on the participants both on and off the field and for many participants they valued being able to talk to their coaches as a second parent. While teachers were brought up they were seen to be the least influential; however, when teachers were also their coaches the participants told stories about valuing that relationship. Support didn't only present itself in the physical form of a person but also as a mindset that was developed by the student-athlete. This successful mindset included qualities like persistence, patience, time management, confidence, teamwork, and cooperation.

Cole said that he believes his motivation is extrinsic "...coming from the outside...my peers, academics, soccer, everything combined." Similarly, Miles stated that he was motivated by "...my family, my teammates, my mentors, and my coaches." The participants were honest and sometimes unsure of what motivates them; the participants felt it was just "natural" for them to be competitive or just part of their personality. During the interview process it was evident that there was a strong support system for the participants at home. Through many different questions the participants spoke about the importance of friends and the team which provided them with a sense of belonging. Coaches and teachers were mentioned to have positive influence on the players' motivation both on and off the field. Lastly, athletics as a whole supported the players motivational levels as the participants had just as many athletic goals as they did academic. It was clear through the data collected that academics was a strong priority and that athletics provides many supports that contribute to their motivation on and off the field.

***Parents as a motivator and support: teaching responsibility and accountability.***

The impact of parents and the family unit was mentioned by all participants as it relates to athletics, academics, and how to conduct yourself on and off the field. The participants reported that their parents want them to have more opportunity than they did.

Specifically, Noah said that he is highly motivated by his family "...because both my parents didn't really take school seriously, so they embedded in me and my brothers that we have to." Noah continued by saying, "My dad works so hard in construction and he wants more for me" on motivators for working hard academically. Maria stated, "My parents are definitely my biggest motivation. They do a lot for me, just being there for my games and being there to take care of me and everything. So, I definitely really want to do good by them and for them." Maria reflected about the sacrifices her parents have made for her and stated, "I don't like slacking off, especially when it comes to school, because one of my big motivators are my parents, and they really sacrificed a lot."

The participants work hard for both themselves, the team, and their parents. The participants told many stories about times when their parents influenced them to work hard both in the classroom and on the athletic field. Cole made mention of his mom as a support; he stated when he is nervous about tests, she'll help me and say "Come on, don't stop. You have to keep going. You can do this," she really shaped me into the person I am today. Olga works hard for her team and enjoys the recognition from her mom who rarely misses a volleyball game. She reports, "when I'm on the court I try to stay calm and when I'm in an intense situation I look out to the bleachers. If you look at your audience and someone cheers for you, for me it's usually my mom - she smiles you know, that tells me to calm down. That always helps." She went on to tell a story about

how she and her mom recently talked about how some of the girls at the game they get really frustrated and they take it out on the referee and my mom said “No, never do that, just regroup, take a deep breath and talk to your team about what you need to fix”; I agree with her that it’s best not to get angry says Olga. This connection that a parent makes with their child through athletics has influenced the way the participants respond during both practice and games. During observations, the researcher noted that parents would “coach” their children from the sidelines which seemed to influence the decisions made by the athlete.

The influence of parents on the student athlete was found to have added accountability which was seen to increase motivation for the participants. Cole stated that “On the SAT I studied a lot and went down in points. I feel like I let my parents down not that they were mad but disappointed in me” when he told a story of a time he worked hard and didn’t attain a goal. Cole also spoke of how sports have influenced his dad in a positive way stating, “He didn’t want me to play soccer he wanted me to play football or baseball - he hated the game of soccer. Now he has been coaching me for 15 years and loves it.” Cole took great pride in the fact that he was able to influence his dad to love the game that he wanted to play. Miles enjoys the post-game conversations with his dad who has also been his coach, “If he sees I have a bad game right after we make a point to practice or hit the batting cage.” Miles stated that we always talk about the game together, “We have a conversation about what did I see verse what he saw – it really helps me to improve for the next time.” For the participants it wasn’t just about the immediate short term athletic or academic influences their parents had but more about the bigger life lessons. Miles went on to elaborate about his parents being his most influential

support, “They’re always telling me what’s right from wrong and just make sure that I’m on the correct path. Staying out of trouble. Just always doing the right thing. They’re just always there for me.” The support from parents was valued by the participants and was used to motivate them to change behaviors both athletically and academically.

*Persistence, patience, and practice: skills taught and supported by coaches.* The role of the coach was explored through interviews, observations, and coach interviews. All participants were asked about how the coach follows up on academic accountability. Cole said, “We can’t fail classes or else we won’t be able to be on the team. No one on the soccer team is close to failing classes. He’ll look at our averages before the season starts and if needs to talk to us then he does.” Miles stated that the expectation of his coaches is that “You’re not just coming here to play football. You’re also coming here to learn.” At the end of each season you have meeting with the head football coach and the first thing he does is pull up your grades “You want to be proud of what he looks at.” The participants idolized their coaches for their ability to balance academics and athletics. They modeled flexibility and finding a balance which in turn motivated the participants to do the same.

Olga said her coaches are flexible, “...if they know we have a night review for AP they end practice early or move practice around. This is probably because they teach those courses and know it’s important to us.” Olga admired her volleyball coached when she said, “My volleyball coach is also my history teacher and she’s just great at both - works hard for her students and her athletes. She always says the classroom is a priority, but she does care for her athletes just as much as her students. She will help you get better especially when you are doing well, she takes you to the next level” said Olga.

The participants told many stories about how their coaches have influenced a positive mindset which increases motivational levels during competition. During observations the researcher observed participants increase in performance and motivation through positive verbal coaching. Specifically, when Maria was on the court feeling defeated by the opposing teams spike on her set the coach reminded her “Get the next one...pick your head up...” the participant was seen to regroup shortly after. This positive voice acted as a motivator for the participant. Participants spoke about the strong relationships they have with their coaches and told stories about how they motivated them at practice and games. Cole stated, “My old travel coach...he yells but it’s motivation. Like keep going ...he’s not being negative.” Olga told a story of when she was under a lot of pressure during a volleyball game and recalls, “It was in a long game, it was really hot in the gym, everyone on my team was getting frustrated. It was the 5<sup>th</sup> set and I was the last server and all I could hear is my coach telling me I got this...” the confidence she had in me took the pressure off. Noah spoke about the pressure he would put on himself specifically at the plate during a baseball game and how he has matured now as a senior player to “...use failure to do better next time instead of getting mad.” The coaches were able to guide players to make adjustments in both the physical and mental aspects of the game.

The players spoke of the types of communication that coaches had with their players. Olga spoke about how the reaction of the coach influences the team by saying, “The calmer the coach stays the team stays.” Olga goes on about her coach motivating her through both verbal and non-verbal cues during challenging times on the volleyball court for example, “A high five, anything. Just constant communication on the court. It

just helps any time [your struggling] and you're able to regroup, pull yourself together.”

When we talked about coaching styles Olga said for her it's important that “Coach isn't negative towards you because you just made a mistake. Even a compliment or reminder about the game plan is helpful – she isn't mean” this is when I find coaching for me to be most effective. Cole also spoke of the one-on-one attention the school coach would give him, “When your coach talks to you one on one you feel like he just wants to focus on me and doesn't want anyone else to hear.” This made the participant in turn work hard to show the coach he would make adjustments on the field. When thinking back to his experiences at practice as a younger player he recalled how, “My coaches always made it fun for me while still challenging me as a player.” This was important to the participant that he would find enjoyment in practice while leaving with a stronger skill set. Similarly, Noah reported that his coach would remind him to “...just make sure you are having fun with your friends...he taught me a lot about that because I would be too hard on myself when I didn't do well at a game.” Coaches were seen to motivate the players teaching them the importance of hard work, patience, and communication.

In addition to motivating players during competition coaches were seen to influence motivational behaviors of participants. Olga spoke of her volleyball coach and said, “She shaped us as people. She makes us better. She's our role model at games. She tries to keep her cool. She always talks to us no matter where you are both on the bench or on the court, she'll guide you through...she's just great.” She went on to state how her coach would even do check-ins with our teachers and stop by our classes to add make sure we were making her proud. Maria stated, “When your coach is also your teacher you are going to work harder, no doubt, you don't want them be disappointed in you.” Cole

spoke of the academic motivation of coaches when he reflected on his soccer coach as his chemistry teacher; “I wanted to be just as good at science as I was at soccer...well maybe not as good...but work as hard.” Noah spoke about character and how “...my coaches have instilled in us that winning or losing you always do the right thing. If your winning you’re not trash talking and if your losing, you play hard till the end”; they have taught us lots of lessons about how to handle success and failure. The participants took pride in knowing that they have adults other than their parents looking out for them during the academic day and this acted as a motivator for the student-athletes.

Coaches taught their players many lessons both on and off the field especially in the area of citizenship. Many of the coaches reported that participants were comfortable speaking to both adults and their peers and had a strong vision of going to college. Noah stated that at our school the coaches have a strong emphasis on “Character. That’s a big focus.” Olga also talked about how her volleyball coach influences character when she said, “When our coaches see the players getting upset about a tough call on the court, they have instilled in us don’t argue with the officials. Just keep your cool, calm self. She feels that if we get worked up it will impact our game negatively.” The participant has followed the lead from her coach which is also similar to the lessons instilled from her mother to remain calm in stressful situations. Miles spoke of the support of his football and lacrosse coaches by saying, “My coaches have an open door if I have a question about what we are doing, or anything like in life I can always go to them”. He goes on to talk about his travel lacrosse coach who acts “...like my second dad. He would do anything for me. I know if I ever have something wrong, I could go to him if I’m not comfortable talking to my parents about it or whatever.” The open communication

continues to contribute to the increased levels of motivation for the participants. The researcher saw first-hand in both pre and post-game conferences the open lines of communication and expectation of appropriate behavior. Specifically, the soccer coach reminded players to "...walk off the field with pride and your heads up" after a big loss. In addition, the football coaches were heard reminding players after their game that "...if you go out to celebrate this evening...remember what your jersey represents...a student athlete who makes good decisions and represents our team and school in the most positive way." The role of the coach appeared to be valued by the participants and they felt that they were motivated to work harder when they had a coach who they knew had their best interests at heart.

***Teamwork and cooperation: a success mindset supported by peer mentors.***

When the participants spoke of and were seen with teammates there was a strong sense of comradery. Throughout the interviews the participants spoke of the importance of athletics for socialization. Cole said, "Sports has determined my friends because if I didn't play sports, I wouldn't have all these friends in my teammates." He went on to say, "When I let my teammates down, they are still there for me." Olga spoke of her being "...academically hard working for myself, but when it comes to sports, I work because I am part of a team. There's six of us on the volleyball court, but we work together as one whole." She went on to say that "I work hard for my team. Not just to see myself get better as a player but more for my team." Miles said that just "Knowing that I have my teammates around me makes me confident in the fact that I am capable of anything." The student athletes worked hard for themselves and the team exhibiting higher levels of motivation to overcome obstacles on the athletic field. Cole told a story about a time he

didn't succeed and said, "Even after I missed the penalty, they [my teammates] were like it's okay, it doesn't matter. We know that you can do that nine times out of ten and that one of ten happened." He spoke about how this helped him overcome that failure.

Miles said that older players mentored him to make a change, "I used to be the kid that would throw my stick but now I'm more like all right we messed up here let's get after it." Now the participant hopes to pass down those lessons to the younger players with him as the captain of the lacrosse team. Olga states that her team has taught her "So many skills but mostly about the importance of communication." She went on to say that, "It's really not that important to me [on being better than her teammates] probably because it's not something that I'm going to do in life". The concept of a team and teamwork appears to have taught the participants what it means to work together towards a shared vision. For the participants this vision included county championships, Long Island championships, or an undefeated season. The coaches spoke first-hand about observing the participants working hard for the team. When the volleyball coached was asked to tell a story about when Olga or Maria were seen to exhibit high levels of motivation, she said that "...these girls don't work hard for personal recognition; everything they do is for the team." The researcher observed Olga in a team huddle prior to their last regular season game saying, "...there's no finger pointing, no blaming, no excuses...we are going to do this for each other; no-one else – not our parents, not our fans, just for us – we deserve it." The volleyball team went on to complete an undefeated season after that game.

***School Engagement: support given by teachers as an academic and life lesson.***

Through the interview process students would frequently compare how they viewed

athletics verse academics but as the data collection process continued there were many parallels in how students approached both athletic and academic tasks. Participants often brought up times where they worked hard towards academics or were supported by a classroom teacher. Cole spoke of his Physics teacher and said, "...she would sit down with me for 45 minutes before any big test or quiz. She would tell me what I was and wasn't good at it would motivate me to go home and study harder." Cole also reflected about his academics in season and out of season and said, "My grades have always been better when I'm in season; the time management is a lot but when I have less time, I'm more focused and learn to prioritize." Many participants valued the time management and structure that athletics provides them with. "Athletics has definitely helped me with time management and as you get older you need to learn to manage your time really well" Cole stated regarding how athletics has influenced academics.

Olga spoke about the support her teachers provide her with by saying, "When my teachers know that I have practice or games afterschool they are flexible to reach out and find an alternative time for extra help if I need it." Olga reflected back to her early years in education when she was a struggling English as Second Language student, "I always had to work a little harder and I had extra teachers around me so it motivated me to work harder, I guess that has shaped my work ethic. Always having to put in extra work and also having to go to Polish school while in American school I always had to work extra hard" on crediting her teachers to developing her hard work ethic. To be successful in the classroom Olga stated, "It's not just about the material but your connection with your classmates and your teacher."

Miles talked of his math teacher who doubted his success in her class and he “wanted to prove her wrong and studied really hard for the regents and got mastery.” He felt this negative experience with a teacher really motivated him; he stated, “I am competitive and wanted to show her I could do it. I wanted it for myself, but it felt good to show her I am smart and capable.” When discussing the motivational role that teachers play Miles stated, “My teachers were always there offering help if I ever needed it. The teachers here are open and flexible.” Miles stated that teachers at his high school always stress the importance of “...be the best person you could possibly be. It might be something simple like if a kid drops his book, you pick it up for him.”

The researcher noted that teachers interacted on multiple occasions with the participants both formally and informally in the classroom asking about recent competition and appeared to be genuinely interested in connecting with the students. Follow up interviews with classroom teachers validated that these behaviors were typical for these students at that they were motivated by points and grades. “I come to school no matter what” Miles stated regarding his academic goals. The character education that has been instilled from teachers, parents, and coaches creates a climate of caring and mutual respect.

***Time management and confidence: valuable lessons learned through athletics.***

The participants stated that sports have taught them to be more patient, confident, and hard working through the interview process. A major theme was the idea of better time management as stated by Cole, “When I am not in soccer season I have too much free time and I get more distracted when studying.” Noah spoke of maximizing his time in the classroom and at practice; he said, “Sports have taught me a lot, especially being a 3-

sport athlete all through high school, it helps me through certain things.” When asked to elaborate on what that included, he continued by saying, “I am a better listener...in class I just listen and pay close attention, so I don’t have to go home and study extra or relearn what was taught”. In addition, he also spoke of sports being what he has always been surrounded by, “Even when I’m not playing, I’m watching. You can learn just as much watching as you can playing.” Olga spoke about how athletics and academics become part of your routine and you learn that, “It’s going to help you later in life, getting a career and successful job. Go to school, learn, and do your homework it’s a structured life.” As stated by the participants athletics creates a very structured routine for students teaching them the importance of time management. This will contribute to the levels of motivation they exhibit in and out of the classroom to ensure assignments are completed knowing they will have athletic practice and competition filling their time afterschool.

Athletics increases confidence for the participants as Cole stated in his interview, “I feel like soccer’s taught me a lot and feel like I can be a different person now. I feel like I am good enough where I’m confident going into a game knowing I can put my best foot forward.” Athletics has built confidence that players hope to pass on to younger generations through coaching youth programs. Both Cole and Noah coach youth soccer and lacrosse teams. Cole reflects about how it feels when he coaches youth soccer, “I wish I had someone who helped me when I was younger so I want to do that as much as I can. When they’re smiling. They’re laughing. It’s nice.” Noah said that, “When I coach, I try to think about what my coaches and teammates have done for me and try to pass it on.” Miles spoke about how athletics has given him more confidence when he said, “Sports taught me not to be afraid just go out there playing and hope for the best.” Miles

went on to state that "...athletics has taught me hard work; You put hard work into something, there's always going to be a great reward to come out of it. Whether your studying for multiple hours for a test there's always going to be a greater reward when you put the work in verse if you didn't." The participants were confident when they spoke about their experiences in the classroom and on the athletic field. Being varsity athletes, the high level of athletic experiences allows them to confidently pass along their skills to younger players.

Olga says that sports change your mind set for a few hours after school, "It's a way to get your exercise in and just be with your friends, to laugh, to have fun, to just do well at something other than hitting the books." Olga said it's a way to relieve stress by "kind of turning my mind off" when talking of how athletics impacts her academics. She went on to talk about how in volleyball "I might have to work harder than others and I have to prove myself a little bit more than others. Some people have to put in more work just like other teammates don't have to" said Olga about her experiences with hard work. Cole's soccer coach emphasized the importance of encouraging students to use athletics as an outlet for school because this is the way he felt as a high school and college athlete. He felt it is important to use athletics to "build confidence and teach self-worth." Confidence through athletics was seen to motivate the participants to both accelerate their own level of play and facilitate helping teammates and younger players.

Athletics has taught student athletes about perseverance and hard work as mentioned by Cole. When faced with a challenge he said, "I just think of all the work I've done and how I'm not just going to let it go and just keep going." He credits athletics to teaching him lessons about hard work and determination when saying, "Don't give up

ever. Determination is key. Don't judge a book by its cover." The importance of working hard while having fun and creating memories with friends was mentioned by all participants. Noah looked back at his experiences over the past four year as varsity athlete saying, "Growing up now as a senior, I don't have much time left playing, and I just want to have fun with my friends." On maturing as an older athlete Noah reflected back and stated, "When I was younger, I used to get so mad and then as I got older, I learned the balance of having fun and being competitive." He went on to say, "I just naturally want to do good; just because I play with so many different people and played so many different sports and stuff, I just want to be better than everybody." He supports this attitude by saying, "Obviously I've expectations for myself to be a great player and student. Also, I want to do it for my family, the community, and my teammates and coaches. It's a mixture of a lot of things" when asked what motivates him to be a great student athlete. Maria spoke in a spirited fashion about her athletic and academic motivation by saying, "It's something that is really important to me because it's my second home basically. I just want to make it a better, happier place for everyone, including me." The perseverance and confident mindset of student athletes was seen to increase motivation on and off the athletic field.

### *Summary*

Chapter four reported the findings from interviews and observations. The participants were found to be open and honest during the interview process and helped to paint a clear picture for the researcher about their athletic and academic experiences. The participants believed that their motivation was both intrinsic and extrinsic. They all felt that the areas of support in their lives contributed to their success

and motivation. They placed high value on their parents, teammates, and coaches as motivators for them in both the area of athletics and academics. The observer saw similar personality traits in the participants in both the classroom and on the athletic field or court.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of Varsity Student Athletes, to understand the effects of athletic participation as they relate to academic motivation. Data was collected via interviews, observations, and artifact collection of teacher letters of recommendation. The emergent themes that were discussed in Chapter 4 will be connected back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. It is important to remember that lived experiences of the student-athletes was seen to facilitate higher levels of academic motivation. As this relates back to Achievement Goal Theory the varsity student-athletes researched were seen to be task oriented allowing them to personally grow in both sports and academics enhancing self-efficacy. As stated by Bandura (1997) higher levels of self-efficacy will also lead to higher levels of motivation.

#### **Interpretation of Findings**

The data suggests that a major benefit of participation in athletics is that student academic motivation is increased. The participants agreed that athletics supports and motivates them to persevere through challenging tasks and increases the levels of support they receive on an athletic, academic, and personal level. The results support the validity of the achievement goal theory as applied to varsity student athletes. Goals were set by the participants and enriched through the motivational climate set by parents, coaches, and peers as stated in the achievement goal theory by Nicolls (1984). The different levels of self-determination that the participants exhibited was apparent when the participants were observed during challenging tasks. During interviews the participants explained the

different levels of effort that they put forth during academic and athletic tasks. The participants all showed different types of motivation as categorized by Deci & Ryan (1985) in the areas of intrinsic, extrinsic, and unexpected motivation. The participants in certain cases were very in tune and aware of the motivational influences in their lives but in other cases were unsure of what motivates them.

The participants were open and honest about how athletics supports them both emotionally and physically contributing to increased levels of motivation both on and off the athletic field. The conceptual framework used includes sports participation, educational experiences, family background, and faculty interactions to see how if at all they influence student athlete motivation. The data collected supports this framework as seen through the standout themes of support, athletic mindset, and confidence. Finding the balance of academics and athletics was a consistent theme brought up by the participants especially in the area of time management. The participants all reported that athletics facilitates them to develop a structured routine for homework and studying. The participants reported varied levels of motivation from task to task as supported by the theoretical framework. While the participants were observed to be highly motivated in both athletic and academic settings it was evident through interviews that students were motivated based on goal setting and attainment. All participants placed high value on education and going to college with a strong foundation on the importance of achieving high grades in their academic courses. This supports the Achievement Goal Theory specifically the idea of task-oriented goal setting by the participants. The culture and setting of the participants that was studied supports the idea that family, coaches, and peers influence the types of goals the participants would set.

## **Relationship to Prior Research**

*Athletic and Academic Motivation.* Ryska & Vestal (2004) state that male and female student athletes have strong skills in the areas of information processing, time management, educational goals, and higher levels of self-efficacy. The participants in this study did exhibit skills in many of these areas. During interviews the participants spoke about the structure that being a student athlete provides them with. Multiple participants reported have higher grades and better work ethic when in their sports season opposed to off season. This task-oriented type of student athlete finds competence through increased levels of performance in athletics and fulfillment of personal goals in both athletics and academics.

The interviews with coaches, athletes, and teachers supports the research in the fact that goal achievement was possible due to positive prior experiences and satisfaction of personal growth. The participants reported having positive athletic experiences as early as age five where parents and coaches were an encouraging influence on their athletic and academic experiences. The positive experiences of parents and coaches were mentioned to facilitate personal growth by the participants in the area of maturity, handling disappointment, increasing skill set, and building confidence. The research must extend itself to fully understand the impact of the classroom and academic climate on student engagement as compared to athletic participation. Yueng (2013) reports that the classroom will have a stronger impact on engagement as compared to athletics. Participants did place stronger emphasis and value on high academic achievement as compared to athletic achievement.

Student perception of success varied from task to task and even from sport to sport. The male participants were more driven athletically for conference and regional titles but, this could also be attributed to the sport that was studied. Specifically, in the areas of football, lacrosse, and baseball this was made mention of more frequently as compared to volleyball and soccer. The researcher did note that this may be due to the athletic history of the different athletics programs in the building that was researched. Football and baseball were seen to have multiple county and conference championships when compared to the other athletic teams. More sport specific research would need to be done to determine the exact influence on the sport as it relates to the participant.

*Attitudes as Mediating Factor.* The participants all exhibited high levels of school spirit and pride regarding their school building. They held teachers, coaches, teammates, and the culture of the building in high regard. The researcher noted this through interviews when participants mentioned the character that was instilled by teachers and coaches in the building. Students were expected to make good decisions and felt increased pressure to do so because they were athletes. The participants felt that because they were athletes the levels of accountability and responsibility were increased especially by teachers. As mentioned by Steele (1997) a student's personal identity within the school climate translates to sustained achievement motivation.

The attitudes and perceptions that the student athletes had about themselves was of confident disposition. Through the interviews it was noted that participants were enthusiastic to talk about their accomplishments both athletically and academically. Even when they told stories about low achievement or failure, they were always able to find a way to persevere through support from family, peers, coaches, and teammates.

Eckert (1989) states the research tells us that peer groups and participation in activities influence identity. It is important to note that the non-athletic activities that the participants were involved in may also have played a role in their motivational levels. Extra curricula activities of any kind are likely to impact personal identity; these activities may include but not be limited to only athletics. Continued research using a larger sample of students from multiple activities would need to be done to look for differences in motivational levels across various activities.

The positive self-concept of the participants made them more capable of balancing athletics and academics. The research refutes the ideas of McKenna and Lewis (2004) who identified challenges for student athletes such as prioritizing their role as students and athletes, managing relationships with academics, and obtaining support. The participants and staff researched reported that managing relationships was a strength of student athletes. The participants were found to seek help, advice, or criticism to facilitate growth within athletics and academics. The task-oriented goal setting by participants prioritized how they would seek support dependent on the value system they had created for themselves. Participants complimented coaches on being flexible so they could attend AP review class which was noted to be a positive support. It is also important to remember that the participant valued the activity they were being supported in, so they placed a higher emphasis on the importance of this support. The researcher also noted that teachers complimented student-athletes on their ability to make time for extra help in the morning or to maximize class time due to the fact that they would have less time after school to relearn concepts that were taught. It was noted that teachers observed the participants exhibiting higher levels of student engagement

during class. One participant supported that observation when he stated that due to the fact that he was a three-sport athlete he became a better student and better listener. He noted that he maximizes his class time because he knows he won't be able to put the time in after school.

**Support.** The strongest and most evident theme across all participants was the influence of the different types of support available and the positive impact they had on student motivation. Curran (2013) states that the creation of a structured environment provides clear guidelines and expectations and offers help and guidance during task execution which will facilitate competence. The participants spoke primarily of the support provided from teammates, coaches, and parents as they related to athletics and academics; teacher support was also mentioned and appeared to facilitate motivation in the area of academics. Research by Bandura (1997) stated that encouragement can assist in building strong self-efficacy beliefs. The participants reported they were encouraged and capable to execute athletic and academic behaviors to attain goals they had set for themselves.

The student athletes all had a clear vision of both long and short-term goals that they would like to attain. These goals were ones that they set for themselves and were supported to attain by parents, coaches, teammates, and teachers. During coach interviews it was asked about what type of goal setting they influence for their players and multiple coaches reported at during preseason and post season meetings discussions about individual and team goals were discussed. Student-athletes valued these meetings with their coaches and were motivated for goal attainment due to the accountability and follow up of goal setting activities. When the student-athlete and the coach together had a

shared vision of how they wanted to complete tasks there were increased levels of goal attainment. Participants mentioned that coaches taught and influenced them to remain calm, maintain a competitive mindset, and keep perspective; participants stated that these were valuable lessons they were able to use both on and off the field.

The types of support provided to the participants allowed them to build confidence and consistency throughout their primary years. The participants had been active in athletics ranging from 5-12 years and even though their skill level varied athletically the lessons in hard work and dedication were consistent. The support provided to them by parents, coaches, teammates, and teachers created a competitive mindset. This mindset is one where the student athlete became invested in their goal setting and were motivated to be successful. Even when their goals were not met, they had the ability to persevere and use that failure to reflect and continue growing. Goudas (2006) included many of the qualities seen by the participants on a long list of life skills that were more attainable for athletes including discipline, responsibility, motivation, work ethic, communication, relationship building, values, sportsmanship, problem solving, prioritization, planning, organization, competition, and goal setting. This was consistent with the coding of the data of the student athletes as athletic mindset, competitive attitudes, emotional outlets, confidence, competence, and communication.

***Costs/Benefits.*** According to Yancey (2007) athletics impacts the school, community, and students in a positive way. It was evident through the data collected that the students at Corbin High School experienced a more positive experience in high school due to their participation in athletics. The positive impact that athletics has on a student-athletes high school experience can be attributed to increased levels of self-worth

and belonging within the school culture. The student-athletes were able to manifest stronger peer relationships, have increased communication with adults, and have increased levels of self-esteem. The life skills that the student athletes are able to take away from participation in athletics allowed for increased levels of motivation on tasks they place high value on. For some this was the academic component where increased levels of motivation allowed participants to be more confident and take on a leadership role.

Research does report that the increase in demands of today's high school athlete can pull them away from their academics placing a stronger emphasis on the importance of athletic (Hoff, 2006). The participants in this study disagreed with this concept refuting the research in stating that athletics has taught them how to be a better listener and how to better manage time both in and out of the classroom. The competitive mindset of the participants appeared to have led to higher levels of success as defined by the participants in the areas of risk taking, time management, strong focus, determination, and responsibility. In the classroom the risk taker was more engaged through participation and was not timid to respond to class discussion with peers and the teacher. The concept of being part of a team was seen to facilitate group work showing that the athletes were able to take initiative and work together toward a shared vision. This supports research by Lapchick (1987) who argues that sports teach important lessons in self-discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence.

The emotional development learned on the athletic field through team sports extends to the classroom not just through increased motivation but shows increased concentration and better mood. Schaefer (2011) report that athletics enhances students'

school engagement and sense of belonging. The endorphins adolescents experience when exercising are proven to increase mood and work performance making the participants exhibit higher levels of engagement in the classroom. An important component of this is when the participants felt that they were engaged in purposeful activities that contributed to desired outcomes. Such outcomes included the long-term goal of getting a college degree which increased levels of academic engagement. Personal self-concept about oneself contributes to the growth and development of adolescents which was improved through participation in athletics. Continuous involvement in sports and initiation of academic activities and persistence to complete such activities was reported by studies done by Bohnert (2013) which was also associated with having more friendships. The emotional development and improved self-concept are some of the benefits of being a student athlete. More research needs to be conducted as to whether this development contributes to higher grade point averages. Athletic programs at Corbin High School provided valuable lessons and skills as seen during this study. The teamwork, hard work, and self-discipline observed by the participants developed invaluable lessons that they used both on and off the athletic field. These skills promoted health and well-being of the participants increasing levels of self-concept and belonging.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. A small sample population was used to understand the impact of athletics on academics. Since only five students participated in the study, it is unclear if the experiences of the students are generalizable to other settings. In addition, the students were only representative in the area of volleyball, soccer, football, basketball, and lacrosse. The participants were enrolled in fall athletics

and perhaps were most reflective on their current sport season and not on all athletic experiences across all seasons. It would have been a stronger sample if more participants were used and if more sports were represented. While a small sample did allow for a rich thick description of the lived experiences of the participants a larger sample would provide more variety or consistency. The culture and climate of the community was seen to be influential especially as observed by the researcher at various competitions. It would be beneficial for the research to extend itself across multiple schools, school districts, or regions.

During this research, one athletic and one academic observation was made for each participant over a two-month period. A greater number of observations over a greater duration would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of student experiences. While all participants were observed in a competitive athletic setting the setting from participant to participant varied due to the culture and climate of spectators and amount of playing time by the participant. The academic observation for each participant varied due to the schedule of the researcher. Each student was observed in a different academic discipline. It would have been more beneficial to observe all participants across all cross their entire schedule to see how motivation would vary from course to course as they may be more highly motivated in one course as compared to another. If the observations were held over a greater duration of time the researcher could have noted the progression of motivation as participants were in and out of different athletic seasons.

Research about the importance of participation in extracurricular activities for students is abundant. Corbin High School offers a multitude of activities for students to

participate in before and after school including but not limited to athletics. It would have been beneficial for the researcher to investigate all the activities that the participants were involved in and not just the athletic ones to see if motivational levels varied from athletic to non-athletic extracurricular activities. The participants shared interest and involvement in non-athletic activities such as Model United Nations, Future Business Leaders of America, and other various clubs and activities. While athletics take up most of their afterschool time when compared to these other extracurricular activities there could be motivational influences found through these various clubs and organizations.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

The takeaways from this research study have strong implications for school leaders, teachers, and coaches. School leaders have the responsibility to facilitate safe nurturing environments that allow students to experience meaningful positive participation in extracurricular activities including athletics. School leaders together with the coaching staff must develop programs that will maximize the motivational transfer from athletics to academics. When coaches and school leaders understand they have the power to help students reach their potential, they can help students set the foundation for a lifetime of success.

Athletics at the collegiate level have been seen to both help and hinder academic success of participants. Universities have put into place many academic supports for their athletes to facilitate a balance of athletics and academics; supports include tutoring centers, academic counselors, and nurturing a study environment. The most important of these resources is the academic counselor to provide frequent check ins which add accountability and monitor academic progress. When students feel that they have

someone looking out for them they are more responsive and inclined to follow up and complete academic tasks. While the coaches at Corbin High School did have academic interventions with their players in the areas of student attendance and academic eligibility there appeared to be a gap in communication between teachers and coaches. Participants valued the coaches that were also their teachers as they were seen to provide extra support and attention to their academic needs in addition to their athletic ones. School leaders may want to consider developing a clear vision of what the student-athlete at Corbin High School exemplifies; this criterion should be used to create a mission statement. This mission should be created by a committee of teachers, coaches, students, and parents. In addition, the athletic directors within the school model should be diligent to ensure that student athletes not just maintain eligibility but are supported through increased opportunities for study hours and/or tutoring; these should be built into the school day since athletes must attend practice and competitive games after school.

Athletics are a huge part of a school's culture and public perception. Often opinions are formed about your school based on your student-athletes especially when they compete in off campus events. It is important for school building leaders to support and commend coaches for the important lessons being taught beyond athletics; these lessons include hard work, perseverance, sportsmanship, and respect. It is important to remember the influence that the coach has on its participants as the average coach spends at least twice as much time interacting daily with student-athletes than any classroom teacher. Good communication with coaches and student-athletes will make both parties aware that high levels of support are in place. For school building leaders this can be as simple as ensuring a strong presence at practice, games, and awards ceremonies.

The collaborative efforts of teachers, coaches, and school building leaders will continue to aid the success of varsity student-athletes. The variety of supports provided by school districts needs to be in place and properly communicated to student-athletes. Together teachers, coaches, and counselors should monitor student-athletes' academic progress through progress reports, communication with teachers, and providing mentors for at risk athletes. While the participants in this study were seen to be highly motivated not all athletes will be of the same caliber. Mentoring by teammates was seen to motivate the participants and can positively influence important skills such as time management, leadership, stress management, and good decision making. The support school systems provide student-athletes will assist them in their success in college and beyond.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study utilized the Achievement Goal Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory to evaluate student-athlete's motivational levels through the use of interviews and observations. A mixed-methods study with both qualitative and quantitative components would provide researchers with additional information about student-athletes academic success and motivational levels. The quantitative results should be collected using a questionnaire similar to the Student Athletes' Motivation toward Sports and Academics Questionnaire (SAMSAQ) created by Gaston-Gayles (2002). A questionnaire like this will collect quantitative data about student-athletes motivation in the areas of academic and athletic motivation. A mixed-methods study would allow the researcher to compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative data to better interpret the experiences of varsity student-athletes. This triangulation design of a mixed-methods study would expand and strengthen the study's conclusion.

The researcher has the intention of creating a similar study with a wider sampling and expanded opportunity for classroom and sport specific observations. A wider sample would include students from multiple school districts across a regional area to determine trends as they relate to the athletic academic climate that our student-athletes exist within. This will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of student-athletes experiences as they relate to motivation. A more comprehensive understanding of their experiences will allow school building leaders, coaches, and teachers to positively influence student-athlete academic motivation.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from this phenomenological study have implications for policy and practice related to student-athletes in the high school setting. High levels of motivation were exhibited by the participants studied from Corbin High School and it should be noted that for this school climate sport participation increased student engagement. Increased levels of engagement had multiple benefits for the participants in the areas of confidence, time management, teamwork, cooperation, perseverance, patience, and a successful task-oriented mindset. These benefits were seen to keep the participants motivated both athletically and academically.

Parents, teachers, and coaches always remind students to “Do your best in school; it is important for your future,” but for the average adolescent this statement has no meaning. When schools are able to model what success looks and feels like for students specifically student-athletes they will learn to experience what it really means to “Do your best.” When a successful mindset is instilled in student-athletes they become invested in their future exhibiting the ability for self-motivation. Ryan & Deci (2000)

state that learning and achievement become self-determined and are self-endorsed by the student-athlete when they have a successful mindset. This can be taught through athletics and transferred to academics for student-athletes. The mission of what they aim to accomplish both athletically and academically must be clearly communicated. School districts must foster a climate where athletic competition is encouraged, and academic success is demanded.

## Appendix A: IRB Approval



### MEMO

Institutional Review Board  
Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Dr. Sandra Reznik  
Acting Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Tel 718-990-2634

Date: May 3, 2019

[rezniks@stjohns.edu](mailto:rezniks@stjohns.edu)

To: Meghan Parenteau

CC: Dr. Stephen Kotok  
Dr. Rene Parmar  
Dr. Mary Beth Schaefer

Dr. Marie Nitopi  
IRB Coordinator  
Tel 718-990-1440  
[nitopim@stjohns.edu](mailto:nitopim@stjohns.edu)

**Protocol # 0419-323**  
**Protocol Title: Athletic and Academic Motivational Profiles of Varsity student-Athletes**

Please be advised that your human subject protocol has been reviewed by the IRB and is considered approved/exempt. You are free to begin your project.

Since the proposal is exempt, no further follow-up by the IRB is required. Please notify the IRB of any deviation from your proposal since any change may require IRB review and approval.

Best wishes for successful pursuit of this research.

**\*\*It is imperative that you keep this on file where it can easily be accessed. You will need to provide copies of this document when involved in further correspondence with the IRB. The IRB will provide you with an additional copy of this document only in the case of an emergency.\*\***

## Appendix B: Parental Permission Form



**ST. JOHN'S  
UNIVERSITY**

### **Parental Permission Form**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

### **St. John's University**

Your child has been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about Motivational Profiles of Varsity Student-Athletes. This study will be conducted by Meghan Parenteau, a current student at St. John's University as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Stephen Kotok, School of Education.

#### *Introduction*

- Your child has volunteered to be in a research study which examines the motivational profiles of varsity student-athletes.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you or your parent may have before agreeing to this study.

#### *Purpose of Study*

- The purpose of this study is to analyze how the area of athletics connects to academic motivation and engagement
- The study will investigate the relationship between motivation towards athletics and motivation towards academics
- Examining the experiences of student-athletes submerged in a competitive athletic environment will provide teachers, coaches, and administrators with a deeper understanding of how to best motivate such individuals.

#### *Description of Study Procedures*

- If you give permission for your child's participation in this study, your child will be asked to do the following:
  1. Complete a questionnaire about his/her background (age, gender, education, etc.);
  2. Take part in three interviews concerning motivation; and
  3. Be observed in both athletic and academic settings
- Your child's interviews will be audio-taped. He/she may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed.
- Participation in this study will involve [three hours of your child's time: 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire and approximately 45 minutes for each of the

interviews. The interviews will be held two weeks apart over the course of April 2019. Interviews will take place on site at the high school either during the school day or before or after school

- Observations during academic and athletic settings will allow the researcher the opportunity to see behaviors of participants

#### *Risks*

- There are no known risks associated with your child's participation in this research beyond those of everyday life

#### *Benefits of Being in the Study*

- Although your child will receive no direct benefits, this research may help us better inform [inform students, teachers, coaches, and administrators about experiences of varsity student-athletes

#### *Confidentiality*

- Confidentiality of your child's research records will be strictly maintained by physical research records locked in a secure file cabinet, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. All consent forms will be kept separate from the data to ensure that the participants name and identity will not become knowns or linked with any of the information they have provided.
- Your child's responses will be kept confidential with the following exception: the researcher is required by law to report to the appropriate authorities, suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. I will not include any information in any report that would make it possible to identify you. A pseudo-name has been used for our school and participants will be referred to by a letter such as Participant X, Y, or Z

#### *Right to Refuse or Withdraw*

- Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your child also has the right to skip or not answer any questions he/she prefers not to answer.
- Nonparticipation or withdrawal will not affect your child's grades or academic standing.
- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to your child. He/she may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting his/her relationship with the investigator of this study.
- You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as withdraw from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

#### *Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns*

- If there is anything about the study or your child’s participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Meghan Parenteau at 516-317-3424, [MParenteau@sewanhaskaschools.org](mailto:MParenteau@sewanhaskaschools.org) or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Stephen Kotok at (732)644-5566, [kotoks@stjohns.edu](mailto:kotoks@stjohns.edu)
- For questions about your child’s rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, St. John’s University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chairperson, [digiuser@stjohns.edu](mailto:digiuser@stjohns.edu), 718-990-1955 or 718-990-1440

Permission to Participate

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix C: Letter of Consent



### **Letter of Consent to participate in a phenomenological study on the “Motivational Profiles of Varsity Student Athletes”**

You have been chosen to take part in a research study to learn more about Motivational Profiles of Varsity Student-Athletes. This study will be conducted by Meghan Parenteau, a current student at St. John’s University as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Stephen Kotok, School of Education.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in two informal interviews in the Spring/Summer of 2019. The interviews will consist of a series of short, open-ended questions and should take approximately 20 minutes. The sessions will be audio recorded using a digital device. During each interview, we will be asking you questions about the motivational profiles of the student athletes that I will be observing in both athletic and academic settings.

#### *Purpose of Study*

- The purpose of this study is to analyze how the area of athletics connects to academic motivation and engagement
- The study will investigate the relationship between motivation towards athletics and motivation towards academics
- Examining the experiences of student-athletes submerged in a competitive athletic environment will provide teachers, coaches, and administrators with a deeper understanding of how to best motivate such individuals.

#### *Risks*

There are no perceived risks associated with your participation beyond those of everyday life. While there is no direct benefit for your participation in the study, it is reasonable to expect that a result of your participation will provide researchers and educators with information about the motivation of student-athletes. Your participation in this interview is voluntary, if you prefer not to answer a question, or if you want to end this interview for any reason – just let us know.

*Confidentiality*

- Confidentiality of your responses will be strictly maintained by physical research records locked in a secure file cabinet, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. All data collected will ensure anonymity and ensure confidentiality. All consent forms will be kept separate from the data to ensure that the participants name and identity will not become known or linked with any of the information they have provided.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. I will not include any information in any report that would make it possible to identify you. A pseudo-name has been used for our school and participants will be referred to by a letter such as Participant X, Y, or Z

*Right to Refuse or Withdraw*

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigator of this study.
- You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as withdraw from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

*Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns*

- If there is anything about the study that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Meghan Parenteau at 516-317-3424, MParenteau@sewanhaskaschools.org or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Stephen Kotok at (732)644-5566, kotoks@stjohns.edu
- For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chairperson, [digiuser@stjohns.edu](mailto:digiuser@stjohns.edu), 718-990-1955 or 718-990-1440

Permission to Participate

Your signature acknowledges receipt of a copy of the consent form as well as your willingness to participate in the study: *Motivational Profiles of Varsity Student-Athletes*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Do you consent to us recording our conversation with an audio device?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Meghan Parenteau  
Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

## Appendix D: Student-Athlete Interview Questions

### Phase 1 Interview Questions

#### ⇒ Demographic Collection

- Gender, Age, Ethnicity

#### ⇒ Athletic Participation

- Sport(s) participated, years of involvement, Club/Travel team
- Competitive level
- Other extracurriculars

#### ⇒ Academic Motivation (Likert Scale)

- It is not worth the effort to earn excellent grades in my courses
- I am confident I can achieve a high-grade point average this year (90 or higher)
- It is important for me to learn what is taught in my classes
- I am willing to put in the time to earn excellent grades in my courses
- I will be able to use what is taught in my courses in different aspects of my life outside of school
- I get more satisfaction from earning an “A” in a course than winning a game in my sport
- It is important for me to perform better than other students in my courses
- The amount of work required for my courses interferes with my athletic goals
- Participation in sports interferes with my academics.
- The content of most of my courses is interesting to me.

#### ⇒ Athletic Motivation (Likert Scale)

- The most important reason I am in school is to play my sport.
- Achieving a high level of performance in my sport is an important goal for me this year.
- It is important for me to learn skills and strategies taught by my coaches.
- It is important for me to do better than other athletes in my sport.
- The time I spend engaged in my sport is enjoyable to me.
- It is worth the effort to be an exceptional athlete in my sport.
- I am willing to put in the time to be outstanding in my sport.
- I will be able to use the skills I learn in my sport in other areas of my life outside of sports.
- I get more satisfaction from winning a game in my sport than from getting an "A" in a course.

## **Phase 2 Interview Questions**

### **Student Athlete Interview Questions**

#### ⇒ Experiences/Goals/Priorities

- Describe any goals that you have for yourself both athletically and academically.
- Reflect upon a time where you achieved a goal and describe how that made you feel?
- Describe the positive and negative impacts athletics has had on your academics over the past four years of high school.
- Tell a story about a time you worked hard and didn't succeed. How did this make you feel?
- How do you feel the experiences taught in your courses will be useful outside of school?
- How would you describe the amount of effort you must put forth to be an exceptional athlete?
- Name a few reasons that you wake up and come to school each day.
- How would your life be different if you didn't participate in athletics? Do you feel athletics have shaped you into the person you are today?

#### ⇒ Motivation

- Tell a story about a time you were motivated by your peers.
- Would you categorize yourself to be more intrinsically or extrinsically motivated?
- What motivators do you have in your life that make you want to be a better athlete and student?
- How does athletics impact your academics when you are in season?
- When you are placed in a challenging scenario on the athletic field what helps you to get through it?
- How would you describe your overall work ethic? What experiences have you had in your life that have shaped that?

#### ⇒ Competitive Attitudes

- Would you consider yourself more competitive in the classroom or on the athletic field?
- Tell a story about a time that a teacher or coach influenced your performance for the good or bad.
- Do you experience higher levels of satisfaction from earning an "A" in a course or winning a game in your sport?
- Of what level (1-10) 10 being the most important would you rate the importance of being better than your teammates in your sport?
- Of what level (1-10) 10 being the most important would you rate the importance of achieving higher than your classmates?

#### ⇒ Support

- What types of support have been provided to you as a student athlete?
- What types of academic accountability have been placed on you by your coaches?
- Tell a story about a coach who has impacted you as a person on and off the athletic field.
- What lessons have you been taught from your coaches that you are able to take off the athletic field and apply to everyday life?

## Appendix E: Teacher Interview Questions

### Follow up Teacher Interview Questions (post-observation conference)

- Do you find the student-athlete takes on a leadership role in the in the classroom?
- How would you describe the motivation levels of \_\_\_\_\_?
- When classroom topics become challenging for \_\_\_\_\_ what types of support do they utilize (if any)?
- Has there been any communication this school year between yourself and the athletic coaches in this building?
- What do you feel the priorities of student-athletes in this school building are like?
- Have you ever felt like you have given preferential treatment to student-athletes?
- Was the behavior observed today by the participant typical?
- Tell a story about a time when you observed the participant highly motivated.
- Tell a story about a time when you observed the participant lacking motivation.

## Appendix F: Coach Interview Questions

### Follow up Teacher Coach Interview Questions (post-observation conference)

- How long have you known the participant as a student-athlete?
- What are three words that come to mind that best describe the participant?
- Tell a story about a time where you saw the participant exhibit high levels of motivation.
- Tell a story about a time where you saw the participant exhibit low levels of motivation.
- Likert Scale Survey Questions to triangulate data from participant interviews and observations:
  - How would you describe the amount of effort the athlete puts forth in practice and games?
  - How would you describe the commitment level to the team?
  - It is important for the athlete to be better than his/her peers in their sport.
  - The student athlete is self-motivated.
  - The athlete is a coachable.
  - The athlete is a positive role model for other players on the team.
  - The athlete is willing to put in the time to be outstanding in their sport.
  - The athlete will work hard to attain a goal set by the coaching staff.
  - The athlete places the needs of the team before their own.
  - The athlete acts as a leader.
- If any, please list the ways which you follow up with your student athletes in regard to their academic standing?
- Has there been any communication this school year between yourself and the academic teachers in this building?
- What do you feel the priorities of student-athletes in this school building are like?
- Do you partake in any goal setting activities with your players?
- Do you feel that \_\_\_\_\_ has a higher priority on athletics or academics?
- What supports do you provide for your athletes?
- Would you categorize \_\_\_\_\_ to exemplify high or low levels of motivation in athletics?

## **Appendix G: Observation Protocol**

### **Observation Protocol**

Date:

Coach or Teacher:

Period/Sport Event Attended:

Student athlete observed:

Descriptive Notes

Reflective Notes

## Appendix H: Coding Sample

### Sample of Value Coding

Value Coding									
Name	Athletic Motivation	Academic Motivation	Athletic Effort	Academic Effort	Academic Competitive	Athletic Competitive	Confidence	Athletic Interference	Academic Interference
Participant A	22/25	17/20	5	5	2	4	4	4	3
Participant B	18/25	19/20	4	5	4	3	4	3	3
Participant C	21/25	19/20	5	5	3	5	4	1	1
Participant D	16/25	16/20	4	4	3	4	5	4	3
Participant E	21/25	20/20	5	5	5	2	5	1	2

### Sample of Emotion Coding

Emotion Coding					
	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E
<b>"Elated"</b>			He's like my second dad. He would do anything for me. I know if I ever have something wrong, I could go to him if I'm not comfortable talking to my parents about it or whatever. But yeah, he's definitely been there since day one.		Yeah. I also like seeing my friends and stuff like that. I don't talk to as many people during the summer, but like I see a lot of people now.
		I would say earning an A gives me more satisfaction.		Probably just an A because winning a big game is huge, but you play more games than you have quarters of semesters.	I like helping people. It gives me a satisfaction to help people.
	So it's something that I'm very, very passionate about and it's something that really brings happiness and joy to my life. It's one of my escapes, especially from school.	cause she'll do a lot to help you get better and especially when you were doing really well. She just helped us. She shaped us as people. She makes us better. She's our role model at games. She tries to keep her cool. She always talks to us no matter where you are, if you're on the bench or playing, she'll always guide you through giving you advice and I think she's a great mentor... She is great.	We reversed on a tough team. We were down couple goals early in the game. My peers pull us aside as a team. We're all right now. Gave us one of those motivational speeches. That kind of just helped us build our comeback. We actually ended up winning, which is pretty cool. I was ninth, eighth grade on JV, I think at that time.	Honestly, I've always done it...Even not playing, I watch baseball every night. I watch basketball all the time. I watch football every Sunday.	Zero. I don't have to be better than them. I just got to help them. (on being better than his teammates and classmates)
	I love being around people, so I really enjoy seeing all my friends every day and talking to people and being around them and just interacting with everyone, getting to know people-	I definitely wouldn't have as many friends. And I definitely wouldn't go to as many places or experience new things. Like also independently doing things and... definitely be much more boring.	feel like a bunch of my teachers/coaches always stress if you see... Just be the best person you could possibly be. Whether that's... if a kid drops his book, you pick it up for him where people before-		Since he did that to me, I'm doing it now with the little kids now. I keep pushing them. He always made it fun for me while still progressing as a player. So, I'm doing it the same for the little kids.
	I think it's both. It's a mixture of both because I like to work for myself because I know that I'm doing something and putting myself to good use other than just sitting around and doing nothing.	A high five, anything. Just talks to you when you're on the court. It just helps any time and then you're able to regroup, pull yourself together and even a compliment or something or she tells you where to go, what's going to happen, talks to you, isn't mean to you or doesn't push you, or is not negative towards you because you just made a mistake.	Not even talking about athletically, you just build so many relationships with people. If you weren't involved with that type of sport or whatever it is team, you wouldn't be able to make... I feel like just the friendships that I have from that. The relationships with the parents and coaches I've met along the way is probably one of most valuable things I have.	Like I said, growing up now, I think of it is, you know, I don't have much time left playing, and then I just want to have, I'm just playing with my friends, having fun.	And when I work with the little kids I train them. I wish I had someone that did the same thing for me when I was that age. So, I want to do as much as. When they're smiling, they're laughing. It's nice.
	I really want to graduate at least top 50 of my class, top 30, between that aspect.	It's part of your routine to go to school, to learn, to do your homework. Guys, it's just going to help you later in life, getting a career, successful job.	I'm going to college to play Division 1 lacrosse.		More competitive on the Athletic field. I feel like I keep to myself in the classroom. I don't really care what everyone else gets. I just care about what I get.

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