

THE EXISTENCE AND EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPING  
BY EDUCATORS OF ATHLETES

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education  
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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Teaching

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The perception of stereotype that athletes are not extremely intelligent or are "dumb-jocks" can be found just about anywhere. At most colleges and many high schools, there are probably many stories about how certain athletes don't perform well in the classroom, yet there is little or no evidence that shows athletes are any different from other students. It is understandable that stereotypes about groups such as athletes continue to grow because there must certainly be some individuals who do fit the stereotypes. What is difficult to understand, however, is how teachers or professors, those people who are supposedly educated, can believe in stereotypes to the point where they would treat individuals differently simply because they are members of a group which has been labeled. The following is just one example this author, a former college football player, experienced.

It was the first day of an English literature class. While calling names from the class roster, the professor, a woman with a doctorate in English came to the name of a young man who was a friend of the author and happened to be about six foot four inches tall and weighed around 300 pounds. The professor walked up to the student's desk and asked loudly if he was a football player. The student said he was and the professor screamed at him and told him he

would not receive any special treatment in class.

The behavior of the professor was certainly unexpected and the author made it a point to keep the fact from the professor that he, too, was a football player. The other student dropped the class from his schedule the next day believing he wouldn't be treated fairly by the professor. The author stayed in the class for about two weeks, but finally decided to withdraw, fearing the professor would indeed find out he was a football player.

In the six to seven years following that incident, the author concluded his playing career and became a football coach and academic coordinator for football players, spoke to numerous athletes and to academic advisors for athletes and heard many more stories about teachers stereotyping athletes and how the athletes were affected by the treatment they received.

Based on experiences, informal interviews, and written material about athletes, academics, and stereotypes, the author decided to study the existence of educators who stereotype athletes on a regular basis and how this affects these athletes.

The main goal of this study was to determine if educators have preconceived attitudes about athletes. Also, this study was designed to find out from the athletes' points-of-view, if stereotyping does occur against them and how they are affected.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Educators, knowingly or not, harbor stereotypes against athletes which affect the way athletes are treated in the classroom. Athletes, therefore, receive unfair treatment which affects their academic success.

LIMITATIONS

The scope of this project includes interviews with individual student-athletes at the the University of Dayton who have had experiences in which they were affected due to stereotyping by a teacher or professor. The study is also limited to surveys sent to professors at the University of Dayton. Other athletes' views were obtained from schools across the nation on a variety of athletic levels ranging from Division I to Division III schools in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Athletes surveyed at locations other than the University of Dayton were from universities and colleges where the author has access to personnel in the respective football programs. Those institutions include Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York; The University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut; Cheyney University in Cheyney, Pennsylvania; and Occidental College in Los Angeles, California.

## HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis, before beginning the study was that it would be found that some educators do harbor stereotypes against athletes. The author's belief was that the study would show incidents of stereotyping occurring at various levels and locations and there would be a similarity to the incidents regardless of location or level.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Self-fulfilling Prophecy is an erroneous expectation that leads to behavior that causes the expectation to come true (Hamachek, 1990, p. 329).

Stereotype, according to The American Heritage Dictionary (1983) is "a conventional and usually oversimplified conception or belief" (p. 668).

Student-Athlete is a person enrolled in a high school or college who is also a member of a varsity team.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

An abundance of literature dealing with academic success of athletes on various levels presently exists. The majority of this information shows that athletes, as a group, do better than non-athletes when grade point averages and test scores are compared. A second area of literature dealing with stereotyping in general, explains the negative influence stereotyping has on individuals. Although much of this material deals with sex and race stereotyping, it is the author's belief this information can be applied to the current study because the general concept of and effects of stereotyping are similar, regardless of the group being stereotyped against. By combining both areas, it can be shown not only that stereotyping exists, but that it has a negative effect on individual student athletes. Also, it becomes apparent that the most commonly held stereotypes do not necessarily apply to the majority of athletes.

#### Academic Success of Athletes

To many, athletics represents a business venture by colleges designed to make money in order to finance many aspects of the colleges. This has led to the conclusion that athletes are only brought to the university to help its athletic teams succeed. Therefore, many student-athletes

are perceived as athletes only, and not as students, by the faculty, the student body and administrators at the institution, as well as by society. This, then, has led to the selling of athletes "to the highest bidders among collegiate athletic recruiters" (Edwards, 1984, p. 13).

Claims have been made that the average Black student-athlete is only admitted to college because of athletics. At least one study argues against the idea that these individuals do not belong in "institutions of higher academics." The study recommends that instead of eliminating individuals based on low academic achievement backgrounds, colleges and universities should "provide those same individuals with the best opportunity to succeed" (Sellers, et al., 1991, p. 34).

The NCAA has recognized these problems and initiated a series of rules to assist in enforcing that high schools and colleges, as well as individual student-athletes take the issue of education more seriously. The first, and most highly recognized of these is Article 14.3.1 of the NCAA Manual more commonly called Proposition 48 which was originally passed in 1983 and has been revised annually. Presently the rule requires incoming freshmen to possess a minimum cumulative grade-point average ranging between 2.00 and 2.50 (based on a maximum of 4.00) in a successfully completed core curriculum of at least 13 academic courses and a minimum combined score ranging between 700 and 900 on the SAT verbal and math sections or a minimum composite

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score ranging between 17 and 21 on the ACT. (Bollig, 1992, pp. 130-131).

NCAA Research Report 92-01 shows that the overall rate of graduation for student-athletes increased "from 48.1 percent for student-athletes who entered colleges in 1984 or 1985, to 56.6 percent for those student-athletes who entered in the fall of 1986" (Study, 1992, p.1) which is the year Proposition 18 was initiated. This indicates a definite rise in graduation rates following implementation of the Proposition.

In addition, there are numerous studies available now that show athletes perform as well as or better than non-athletes on the college level and that athletes perform as well academically during their playing season as they do when they are not competing. Gurney and Stuart (1987) found no evidence of adverse affects on academic performance for college athletes during varsity competition. Brown and Brown (1992) found that high school student-athletes actually "performed better academically during the grading periods when they were involved in a varsity sport than during the grading periods when they were not involved in a sport" (pp. 25-26). Also, a study done at the University of Michigan found that student athletes actually graduate from that University at a rate nearly 10 percent higher than that of non-athletes (Walter and Others, 1987, p. 278).

What often happens is that professors assume because a student is lacking in basic skills, such as reading or

writing, then that student most likely is an athlete. What is rarely, if ever, publicized, however, is the fact that many students who are not athletes are admitted into colleges and universities with test scores and grade point averages that indicate they are academically at risk. One study found that between 30 percent and 40 percent of all entering freshmen read below the seventh grade level (DeVenzio, 1985, p. 193).

Graduation rate figures released by the NCAA in July 1992 indicate that of the 26,589 Division I scholarship student-athletes who enrolled in the 1984-85 academic year, 51 percent graduated within six years. The overall figures for the 1,069,683 students who enrolled at these same institutions was a 52 percent graduation rate, indicating there is virtually no difference in graduation rates of student-athletes and all students (Athletes, 1992, p. 1).

Adler and Adler (1985) believe athletes need to be integrated into the general population of the university and not identified as athletes by coaches or any other university personnel. To do this, they suggest abolishing athletic dorms completely and by banning freshman eligibility. In their study, which deals with the negative experiences of athletes at universities with large athletic programs, they explain how athletes are originally optimistic about succeeding academically, but eventually change their expectations due to events that occur at the institution. "Athletes believed that many professors

labeled them as jocks because they looked different from most of the other students...they perceived, then, that professors treated them differently from the general student body" (p. 216).

### Stereotyping

Good and Brophy detail signs and effects of teacher expectations of students, both positive and negative. They discuss how teacher expectations often lead to self-fulfilling prophecy and offer the following model that explains how this process could work:

1. Early in the year, the teacher forms differential expectations for student behavior and achievement.
2. Consistent with these differential expectations, the teacher behaves differently toward different students.
3. This treatment tells students something about how they are expected to behave in the classroom and perform on academic tasks.
4. If the teacher's treatment is consistent over time, and if students do not actively resist or change it, it will likely affect their self-concepts, achievement motivation, levels of aspiration, classroom conduct, and interactions with the teacher.
5. These effects generally will complement and reinforce the teacher's expectations, so that students will come to conform to these expectations more than they might have otherwise.
6. Ultimately, this will affect student achievement and other outcome measures. High-expectation students will not gain as much as they could have gained if taught differently.

(Good and Brophy, 1991, p.115)

Good and Brophy also suggest ways teachers can help eliminate expectations they have towards students. Emphasizing the positive and being flexible and current are some of their suggestions in helping to avoid negative expectations. It is, however, made clear that "expectations cannot be suppressed or avoided" completely but teachers should concentrate on how information obtained about students is used (p. 108).

Stereotypes develop from occasional experiences that are instrumental in the formation of inaccurate beliefs about an entire group of people. This then would lead to inaccurate expectations which could very well then lead to some form of self-fulfilling prophecy. "It is a given fact that all teachers have expectations for their students... teacher expectations become problematic when they are inaccurate, " and, "expectations for academic performance which are based on stereotypes may prevent many students from perceiving themselves as capable of performing well in school" (Weller and Reyes, 1983, p. 3).

### Stereotyping Athletes

One does not have to talk to many people within an athletic setting to discover which professors like athletes and which ones do not. Academic advisors keep lists of which professors athletes should avoid. One book identifies

the existence of these professors while offering the following advice to athletes:

Nearly every college has a few professors who dislike athletics so much that they are unfair to athletes. They group athletes into one or two categories, usually labeled "dumb" and "pampered." These professors are biased, and their minds are usually closed to any evidence to the contrary about athletes. Avoid taking classes from these anti-athletics professors whenever possible...If you can't avoid them, keep a low profile concerning your involvement in athletics. Try not to ask for favors (alternative test dates, delayed assignments, etc.) because of team commitments, avoid responding to questions or commenting on assignments in terms of your experience in sports, and certainly don't wear your practice jersey to class. (Figler and Figler, 1991, pp. 19-20).

Adler and Adler (1991) say some professors "stereotyped all athletes as dumb jocks and assumed that none of them were interested in academic work" (p. 134). They explain the reaction of many athletes to these professors is to "reject" them, using the professors as an excuse to separate themselves from academics. This, then, can lead to Good and Brophy's self-fulfilling prophecy model referred to previously, therefore continuing the cycle and extending the life of the stereotypes.

According to Edwards (1984), The cycle begins at a very young age for some athletes when it is discovered they possess above average athletic ability. Due to society's wide acceptance of sports, the young athlete is encouraged to develop his athletic skills but the same level of encouragement is often missing when it comes to academics. In fact, , "so little has been demanded of them academically that no one any longer even expects anything of them intellectually" (p.9).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

There were three main areas of this study, each designed to show the existence of stereotyping by educators, and how it influenced student-athletes. Part one was a series of interviews with University of Dayton student-athletes as well as input from the University's Academic Coordinator for athletes. Part two consisted of surveys distributed to faculty members at the University designed to identify any preconceived attitudes towards athletes. Part three was a survey sent to student-athletes in the football programs of four different colleges and universities which represented the four divisions within the NCAA.

#### Interviews

Individual student-athletes from the University were interviewed and asked various questions about their experiences as student-athletes in high school and college. The individuals were chosen from recommendations by either coaches or the University's Academic Coordinator for athletes. In addition, the Academic Coordinator was interviewed to both substantiate and expand upon the student-athletes' experiences as well as sharing information regarding experiences she had in dealing with student-athletes and their professors.

All names of student-athletes and professors that were revealed through these interviews have been kept confidential, and pseudonyms used. This was done because it is not the purpose of this study to single out individuals, but, to identify the existence of certain behaviors.

### Survey of Educators

The survey distributed to educators was designed to identify any tendencies they might have to stereotype athletes (see appendix A). The educators were given a list of possible characteristics of students and were asked to rank student-athletes on a five-point scale ranging between the most positive and most negative aspect of that characteristic. In addition, educators were asked to identify three typical characteristics of athletes.

Eighty-six surveys were distributed to various faculty members at the University of Dayton. In all, the surveys were distributed to eight different general education departments within the university. The departments included Communications, English, Sociology & Anthropology, History, Criminal Justice, Mathematics, Psychology, and Physical Education. These departments were selected by the author to cover a relatively even cross section of the courses of study offered at the university.

## Survey of Student-Athletes

The survey distributed to student-athletes was designed to identify whether student-athletes at different institutions had experienced any behavior by educators indicating some type of stereotyping (see appendix B). Student-athletes were asked if they felt teachers or professors treated athletes differently than other students and respondents were asked if they had ever been treated differently by a teacher or professor. Those who answered affirmatively about their own experiences were asked to explain the incident and indicate if it was a positive or negative experience for them.

The schools chosen to receive these surveys were, a Division I-A school, a Division I-AA school, a Division II school, and a Division III school. These schools were chosen because the author had coaching acquaintances at each institution.

The author believes these schools reflect an accurate sample of the various levels of collegiate athletics, as well as a variety of locations nationally.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Interviews

##### "Steve"

Steve transferred to the University of Dayton from a Division I school in the midwest. He had a 2.90 grade point average in high school college preparatory courses but his athletic ability did not enable him to receive a scholarship. He decided to try-out at the Division I school and stayed for only one year.

In drawing a comparison between the University of Dayton and the Division I school, Steve, who is a minority student, said the main difference is the size of the schools and the fact that at U.D. his professors know who he is.

At the other school, where there are approximately 35,000 students, Steve said he experienced a few incidents that made it clear to him some professors stereotyped athletes. He said one professor stated to the entire class he knew some of the students were recruited as athletes and he believed football players were not as intelligent as other students and did not attend class regularly. This made Steve feel as though the professor believed athletes were dumb jocks. In addition, Steve was alienated by his academic counselor who told him he shouldn't take a specific course because he couldn't handle it.

Although Steve felt there were some professors who unfairly stereotyped athletes, he also admitted that he knew many athletes who did not attend classes at the Division I school. It was those individuals who he said helped to keep stereotypes about athletes alive.

At U.D., where the enrollment is about 8,000, Steve said he does not often face the same types of problems. In fact, he pointed out that it is more often fellow students, not professors, who seem to have preconceived ideas about athletes. Once, a student accused him of receiving a B for a final grade only because he was a football player. However, a sociology professor was surprised that he had received such high grades when Steve informed him he had a 3.30 grade point average for the Fall 1992 semester. Steve, however, has aspirations of making the Dean's list and was not surprised, but disappointed with his final grades for the semester.

"Coming to U.D. has definitely helped me academically," said Steve, "I am motivated to go to class."

### "Tom"

Tom, another minority student, came from a high school in Kentucky where football was important to the school and community. His teachers treated him so nicely, he felt he missed out and wishes they had been more strict.

When he arrived at U.D. he didn't receive the same "nice" treatment from his professors. He specifically

remembered an accounting course, which he never did pass, in which he had trouble because he had difficulty applying information.

Students at U.D., just as Steve had encountered, were more apt to stereotype athletes according to Tom. His most vivid example was the fact that many students referred to a introductory course in physics as "Football Physics."

Tom relates his academic difficulties in college to his high school experiences and feels that if the teachers there had not been as easy on athletes, he would have applied himself more and would have been better able to succeed on the college level. He said he felt the teachers didn't push the athletes because they didn't think the athletes could do well in school and didn't want to jeopardize their athletic opportunities.

### "Pete"

Pete had trouble with college professors before his first official semester as a student. Enrolled in a special program that brought him to campus during the summer, Pete experienced problems with his English composition professor.

Pete said he got the feeling from the first day of class that the professor didn't like him, and because of an in class essay about himself, the professor knew he was an athlete. The Professor would ask Pete questions in class in what Pete thought was an attempt to degrade him. "It was as though he wanted me to feel like an idiot," said Pete.

After a series of D grades on papers, Pete asked his sister, a college graduate who had received A's and B's in composition, to help him with his next paper. Pete, while admitting it was not completely right, turned in a paper written by his sister to test his assumption that the professor would not give him a high grade. When Pete received a failing grade on the paper, he felt the only reason was because the professor didn't like him.

Pete stayed after class to speak with the professor who told him he should at the very least quit football, and should consider leaving college because he "simply wouldn't make it." Pete said he was devastated because it was the first time the teacher had actually spoken to him on a one-to-one basis, and instead of offering help, he told him to quit.

This was not the only English composition professor Pete had a conflict with. He related an experience he had one year later with a female professor who told him to his face he was a below average student and he had a problem.

U.D.'s Academic Coordinator for athletes, admitted that Pete had trouble with this professor from day one. "The professor didn't like the way Pete looked because he is a rather large individual," said the Coordinator, "She also didn't like the way he dressed and told me that during one of our conversations."

She arranged for Pete to receive tutoring in order to improve his writing skills. After that Pete's papers were

showing improvement and the professor seemed to resent the fact that he was actually able to improve. Accordingly, that professor showed clear signs of labeling Pete from the beginning and had a severe dislike for him because he was a football player.

Pete said he is the first to admit his skills in English composition are lacking. However, he said he didn't expect or deserve the treatment he received.

To this day, Pete said his size makes it difficult for him to hide the fact that he plays football. Pete states, "I try not to call attention to my self, and I do not wear my varsity jacket to some classes for fear of being humiliated by certain professors."

### "Ron"

Ron, a scholarship basketball player, said he understands fully why some teachers and professors don't like athletes. He said some athletes try to take advantage of their status and that creates a lot of bad publicity for all athletes.

Ron had to overcome the image set by his own cousin while attending U.D. His cousin missed many classes and fell asleep in the class he did attend.

Because they had the same name and the publicity of being scholarship athletes, many professors knew who Ron was before the first day of class. He remembered a history professor who "hated" him from day one because she had his

cousin in class the previous year.

Ron said he had to work hard to prove he was not the same as his cousin or other athletes. Although he doesn't think the professors should have assumed he would sleep in class or conduct himself as others had, Ron actually felt the added pressure to prove himself was actually helpful because it made him work harder to succeed in each class.

Ron did not originally meet the NCAA's requirements to play basketball his freshman year and entered under the Proposition 48 guidelines. Of all athletes who entered under Proposition 48 in its first year, Ron holds the distinction of being the nation's first to graduate from college. "I was never a bad student," said Ron, "I just was not able to score high enough on the tests to meet the requirements."

### Survey of Educators

Forty-Two surveys were returned to the author, with at least two returned from each of the departments. (see Table 1)

Table 2 is data gathered from Part I of the survey. That Table indicates the number of responses in each category and lists the mean response number, as well as the standard deviation for each category. Following the tables are selected responses from Part II of the survey which asked for a list of typical characteristics of athletes.

TABLE 1

## RETURN RATE OF EDUCATORS' SURVEY

<u>Department</u>	<u># Distributed</u>	<u># Returned</u>	<u>% Returned</u>
Communications	20	14	70.00%
English	10	5	50.00%
Sociology & Anthropology	10	5	50.00%
History	10	4	40.00%
Criminal Justice	6	2	33.34%
Mathematics	10	3	30.00%
Psychology	10	4	40.00%
Physical Education.	10	5	50.00%
TOTAL	86	42	48.84%

This table indicates the departmental and total rates and percentages of surveys distributed to and returned from educators at the University of Dayton.

## Part I

TABLE 2

## SURVEY RESULTS

POINT VALUE -	(-)		(0)		( + )	
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
Inattentive	1	7	11	12	2	Attentive
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.21		STANDARD DEVIATION = .96			
Poor Student	2	6	14	9	2	Good Student
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.09		STANDARD DEVIATION = .98			
Poor Behavior	1	4	8	13	7	Good Behavior
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.64		STANDARD DEVIATION = 1.06			
Frequently Absent	4	8	10	5	7	Attends Regularly
TOTAL RESPONSES = 34	MEAN = 3.09		STANDARD DEVIATION = 1.31			
Slow Reader	1	6	19	3	0	Fast Reader
TOTAL RESPONSES = 29	MEAN = 2.83		STANDARD DEVIATION = .67			
Forgets Assignments	3	0	8	12	7	Remembers Assignments
TOTAL RESPONSES = 30	MEAN = 3.67		STANDARD DEVIATION = 1.15			
Rude	2	1	7	9	14	Polite
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.97		STANDARD DEVIATION = 1.16			
Sloppy	0	1	16	11	5	Neat
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.60		STANDARD DEVIATION = .79			
Negative	0	3	13	11	6	Positive
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.61		STANDARD DEVIATION = .90			
Untrustworthy	1	4	11	10	6	Trustworthy
TOTAL RESPONSES = 32	MEAN = 3.50		STANDARD DEVIATION = 1.05			
Low Achiever	2	10	10	10	0	High Achiever
TOTAL RESPONSES = 32	MEAN = 2.88		STANDARD DEVIATION = .94			
Immature	2	4	13	12	2	Mature
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 3.24		STANDARD DEVIATION = .97			
Below average grades	2	9	15	7	0	Above average grades
TOTAL RESPONSES = 33	MEAN = 2.82		STANDARD DEVIATION = .85			

This table shows responses of educators who were asked to rank where they felt athletes belong on the 5-point scale in each category.

## Part II

Of the 42 surveys returned from educators, only three made no comment at all regarding typical characteristics of athletes. Upon reviewing the comments and characteristics written by educators, the author found each characteristic would fit in one of four categories. The categories are 1) Positive, 2) Negative, 3) Neutral and 4) Red Flag.

Positive comments are those that the author believes to be complimentary, or used when praising an individual.

Positive comments received include:

- Polite (6 times)
- Goal oriented (5 times)
- Conscientious (3 times)
- Good physical condition (2 times)
- Respectful (2 times)
- Responsible (3 times)
- Active/busy
- Ambitious
- Clean-cut
- Confidence
- Courteous
- Disciplined
- Focused
- Friendly & Positive
- Good appearance
- Good students (interested)
- Hard-working
- Healthy
- Honest
- Interested in learning
- Modest, humble about being an athlete
- Motivated
- Outgoing
- Practical
- Persistent
- Pleasant
- Respectful
- Self esteem/confident
- Serious
- Socially adept
- Trustworthy
- Well behaved
- Willing to Participate in class discussion

Negative responses are those the author interpreted as uncomplimentary or those used to degrade an individual.

Negative comments included:

Over-extended (2 times)

Academically lazy

Academics are not as important as athletics

Academic work is a waste of their time

Cocky

Expect something for nothing

Irresponsible

Lacks enthusiasm to study

No respect for others

Not very studious or intellectually-inclined

Overinflated feeling of importance (self)

Smug

They have the delusion that sports builds character

Neutral comments are those that are neither positive or negative. The author believes all educators should have responded with neutral comments when listing typical characteristics of athletes. Some of the neutral comments received included:

"I don't distinguish between student-athletes and student-non-athletes."

"I don't treat athletes (if indeed I know who they are) any differently than other students. I have taught athletes who are very serious and conscientious about their work and those who are careless and unmotivated. I don't think it is professional to assume behavioral characteristics of any class or student. I try to let each individual's behavior speak for him/her self and let the academic chips fall where they may."

"This survey requires an unacceptable level of generalization about a group of students I find to be as diverse as any other group."

"Athletes mirror the larger student body. Some belong to the bad column, some to the good column and most are in the middle."

"I have real problems with characterizing/generlizing about a large group of very different individuals."

"Although they may be athletes, they are students and individuals and therefore do not fit into these predefined categories."

"Overall, I think student-athletes are similar to most other students. I have had some who are excellent and some who are terrible."

Red Flag comments are those the author believes are based on stereotypes. It is not believed these comments are based on facts, or that they can be substantiated. These comments could indicate the educator has preconceived ideas about all athletes. Some of these comments include:

"It depends upon what sport the individual participates in. For example, football players are frequently brighter etc."

"The women athletes frequently are better students than the male athletes."

"I have never had any of the 'big name' players. Players who are involved so deeply into a sport I would think they would be so tired."

"They tend to be healthy and bigger or taller than most other students. Their regular attendance I attribute to the strict orders of their coaches."

"Some of my best students have been athletes...these are particularly in football and baseball. On the other hand, some of my worst students have also been athletes, particularly in basketball."

"Basketball players focus on 'the game' and football players focus on studies."

Typical characteristic of athletes: "Male"

## Survey of Student-Athletes

Following is information obtained from surveys sent to three schools across the nation (see Table 3). The schools are at the Division I-A level, Division I-AA level and Division III level. Survey results were not returned from the Division II level.

In addition to personal information. Each respondent was asked two questions. The first (designated Q.1 on Table 3) was:

Do you believe teachers and/or professors treat athletes differently than other students in class?

The second question (designated Q.2 on Table 3) was:

Have you (in High School or college been treated differently than other students in class by a teacher or professor because you are an athlete?

TABLE 3

Student-Athlete Responses

	<u>Div. I-A(27)</u>	<u>Div. I-AA(22)</u>	<u>Div. III(17)</u>	<u>TOTAL(66)</u>
<u>AGE</u>				
<u>17</u>	0	1	0	1
<u>18</u>	2	8	2	12
<u>19</u>	6	10	3	19
<u>20</u>	10	2	6	18
<u>21</u>	7	1	5	13
<u>22</u>	2	0	0	2
<u>23</u>	0	0	1	1
<u>LEVEL</u>				
<u>FR.</u>	9	21	0	30
<u>SO.</u>	8	1	5	14
<u>JR.</u>	8	0	9	17
<u>SR.</u>	2	0	2	4
<u>OTHER</u>	0	0	1	1
<u>GPA</u>				
<u>Below</u>				
<u>2.00</u>	4	9	0	13
<u>2.00-</u>				
<u>2.49</u>	17	5	3	25
<u>2.50-</u>				
<u>2.99</u>	2	7	3	12
<u>3.00-</u>				
<u>3.49</u>	3	1	9	13
<u>3.50-</u>				
<u>4.00</u>	1	0	2	3
<u>Q.1</u>				
<u>YES</u>	15(56%)	17(77%)	8(47%)	40(61%)
<u>NO</u>	12(44%)	5(23%)	9(53%)	26(39%)
<u>Q.2</u>				
<u>YES</u>	17(63%)	13(59%)	11(65%)	41(62%)
<u>NO</u>	10(37%)	9(41%)	6(35%)	25(38%)

This table shows responses of student-athletes to questions regarding their individual experiences with educators. Level of schools where respondents were enrolled, with total number of responses in parentheses, are located across the top of the table.

The 41 Student-athletes who answered yes to question two were asked to elaborate on their experiences. 18 identified their experience as negative and 23 described positive experiences.

The following are some examples the student-athletes identified as positive:

"Constantly in high school my teachers made examples out of me to my classmates as a fine example of the balance between athletics and academics."

"They seem to talk more to me than other students."

"I was allowed in the graduation ceremony even though I was on suspension from school. The principal was a big football fan and let me participate in the ceremony anyway."

"I was given special review sessions before tests."

"They (teachers) just seem to always give you the benefit of the doubt."

"A teacher gave me a couple of points on an exam one time that I needed to pass."

"Teachers often granted us more time."

"I had a test one time and the professor gave me some extra tips on passing."

"In high school we just had to say we had to go speak to coach and we could go skip class."

"A teacher told me that I didn't have to do the take-home test because I was the Quarterback in the state championship that weekend."

"I was given extra chances on papers and tests."

"Teachers are more understanding if you have a schedule conflict for a test, etc..."

Some of the experiences identified by student-athletes as negative include:

"One professor told me that she intentionally makes it hard for athletes to pass her class."

"Some teachers are pretty blatant about demonstrating their dislike for collegiate athletics. These profs are unwilling to understand the demands put on student-athletes."

Some professors seem much less willing to work with the student who has missed a class because of a game than with the student who has a non-athletic excuse."

"I believe one professor I had was prejudiced against athletes and I believe that my grade suffered."

"A high school American History teacher (and I use the term teacher loosely) referred to student-athletes as 'dumb jocks' and attempted to use a football analogy to illustrate a point about war strategy."

"They always knew I played football, and told the coaches when I missed class. They never told on any other kids."

"Many teachers have given me a hard time by grading me harder because they do not like athletes."

"In high school many of my teachers hate football players so I had two strikes against me before the year started."

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Interviews with individuals were not entirely conclusive one way or the other. Original contact with the individuals' interviewed indicated the possibility of clear-cut stereotyping. However, when pushed for details, most of the individuals were unable to convincingly show their experiences were blatant examples of educators who labeled athletes and treated them unfairly. "Pete" provided what the author considers the best example of possible stereotyping and his experience was confirmed by his academic coordinator. What is important when considering the information provided in the interviews is that it is subjective information and no attempt was made to identify, or to discuss the experiences with, the educators referred to in each case.

Survey results were more conclusive in their findings, but again, exact interpretations of the meaning of each answer is virtually impossible to obtain. Tendencies, however, are clear through the results of both surveys. In Part I of the survey of University of Dayton faculty members, every category contains responses on the negative side of the scale. Some categories contained more negative responses than positive, and in one category, the low

achiever-high achiever category, negative responses outnumbered neutral responses. In all, 20 percent of all responses were on the negative side of the scale, 37 percent were neutral, and 43 percent were positive. Written comments in Part II of the survey reflected similar attitudes.

Although the author's original hypothesis is supported by these responses, it must be noted that the degree to which educators responded in a negative manner was much lower than expected. Overall though, 63 percent of the responses in Part I were either positive or negative, clearly a large majority. The author believes if there were absolutely no preconceived ideas about student-athletes, more neutral responses would have been recorded.

The student-athlete survey results reveal a definite belief by a large majority (61 percent) that educators do treat athletes differently from other students. Sixty-two percent said they, themselves, had been treated differently by teachers or professors. What makes these figures significant is that they come from student-athletes located in various places of the United States and individual responses identify problems on both the high school and the college level. Also, these figures come from samples of both scholarship and non-scholarship student-athletes. The author concludes, therefore, that the problem of educators stereotyping athletes is not isolated and exists in many locations and at many levels.

The author concludes, based on the results of interviews and the data obtained through surveys that some educators do indeed stereotype athletes. Incidents, however, do not seem as frequent as originally expected, but evidence does show that incidents occur in a variety of locations. It should be noted however a majority (56 percent) of incidents were not interpreted as negative experiences by the student-athletes. Also, 80 percent of responses from educators surveyed were either positive or neutral indicating that most educators probably do not consider athletes to be lower achieving students than non-athletes.

#### Recommendations

Many recommendations can be made to not only study this subject more in-depth, but to study other related topics as well. First, it is quite apparent to the author that in-depth discussions with educators at both the college and high school level could produce more information about the true perceptions educators have about student-athletes and other individuals in the classroom. This study only begins to show possible tendencies by educators and does not come close to uncovering the reasons for educators' responses.

Also, it has become evident through this study that there might be distinct differences in educators' perceptions of athletes in different sports, for example, football players versus basketball players. Although the

educators surveyed were from the University of Dayton where basketball is a scholarship sport and football is a non-scholarship sport, some remarks indicated there is a different perception of the two types of athletes.

Another area worth studying would be the effects of the positive treatment identified in this study. A majority of student-athletes who responded that they were treated differently, identified what they considered positive treatment such as extra help, or extra points on tests. But as "Tom" pointed out, this seemingly preferential treatment by high school teachers eventually caused negative results when he struggled with college courses that required more work than he was used to doing. A case can be made that by treating student-athletes, or any individuals, more leniently the educator is still stereotyping that person as an individual incapable of succeeding without extra help. That would turn the apparent positive action of the present into an eventual negative result.

The primary recommendation the author makes is for all educators to make themselves aware of their preconceived ideas about all students. Some student-athletes do possess the characteristics that have helped to define the stereotypes, however it is unfair to classify all student-athletes as possessing these same characteristics. This study concentrated on stereotyping athletes, however, the conclusions can be used to refer to any group whose members are stereotyped. It is unfair for an educator to treat any

individual based on his/her involvement in a group or organization. By continuing to harbor stereotypes, the educator is contributing to the cycle referred to by Good and Brophy (1991). Teachers must be sensitive to the needs of all students on an individual basis and only when that occurs, will the cycle cease to continue.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX ASURVEY

The following are characteristics that could be found in students in your classes. On the scale, please check where you believe athletes would fall in each category.

Inattentive	—	—	—	—	—	Attentive
Good Student	—	—	—	—	—	Poor Student
Good Behavior	—	—	—	—	—	Poor Behavior
Frequently Absent	—	—	—	—	—	Attends Regularly
Fast Reader	—	—	—	—	—	Slow Reader
Forgets Assignments	—	—	—	—	—	Remembers Assignments
Rude	—	—	—	—	—	Polite
Sloppy	—	—	—	—	—	Neat
Positive	—	—	—	—	—	Negative
Trustworthy	—	—	—	—	—	Untrustworthy
Low Achiever	—	—	—	—	—	High Achiever
Mature	—	—	—	—	—	Immature
Below average grades	—	—	—	—	—	Above average grades

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List below what you believe are three typical characteristics of athletes:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

SPORT \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_

LEVEL: FR. \_\_\_\_\_ SOPH. \_\_\_\_\_ JR. \_\_\_\_\_ SR. \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

GPA: BELOW 2.00 \_\_\_\_\_ 2.00 - 2.49 \_\_\_\_\_ 2.5 - 2.99 \_\_\_\_\_

3.00 - 3.49 \_\_\_\_\_ 3.50 - 4.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe teachers and/or professors treat athletes differently than other students in class?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Have you (in High School or college) been treated differently than other students in class by a teacher or professor because you are an athlete?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered YES to the above question, briefly describe the situation below. Please indicate whether the incident affected you positively or negatively:

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