

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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in Psychology presented on June 26, 1996

Title: Do Athletes Have Higher Self-Esteem Than
Non-Athletes?

Abstract approved: Cooper B. Holmes

The following study was developed to assess the possibility that high school students involved in athletics have higher self-esteem than students not participating in athletics. The study also compared the self-esteem scores between boys and girls.

The sample was derived from high school students located in Kansas. The sample consisted of 30 boys and 30 girls. The selection process began by gathering a list of all students involved in athletics. From this list, 10 boys were randomly selected and 10 girls were randomly selected to constitute the first group of students. The second group of students were those not participating in athletics but who were involved in other extracurricular activities. These students were put on a list and 10 boys and 10 girls were randomly selected to make up the second group. The third group consisted of those students not participating in athletics and not involved in any other extracurricular activities. These students were put on a list and again 10 boys and 10 girls were randomly selected to comprise the third group.

The students involved in this study were given the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI). The SEI is a self-report instrument intended to measure the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself or herself.

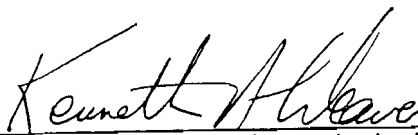
The statistical analysis used for this study examined the relationship of self-esteem scores between the boys and girls and the three groups. The results indicated significant differences between those students involved in athletics as compared with those students not participating in athletics. The boys participating in athletics had significantly higher self-esteem scores than the other groups. The boys overall had significantly higher self-esteem scores than the girls.

DO ATHLETES HAVE HIGHER SELF-ESTEEM
THAN NON-ATHLETES?

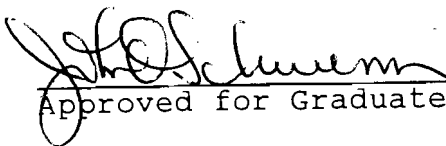
A Thesis
Presented to
the Division of Psychology and Special Education
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Shane Mullen
August, 1996



Approved for the Division of
Psychology and Special Education



Approved for Graduate Council

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

High school athletics is one of the influential activities in society. Some individuals and communities revolve around the athletic potential and success that these high schools have. Community sponsored events, church activities, social functions, parental support groups, and individually developed peer groups are often in support of and helpful to have successful athletic programs. These programs, when successful, may help give structure and stability to the economic, social, and functional aspects of the community and community members. But, if these programs do not produce the success anticipated, the community members may struggle with identity, purpose, and constructive economic motivation. While interviewing and associating with a number of community members located in Texas, Bissinger (1990) found that high school athletics can influence the well being of those community members involved in the athletic programs. For example, Bob Rutherford, a realtor in a small Texas town, stated, "life really wouldn't be worth living if you didn't have a high school football team to support" (Bissinger 1990, p. 17).

One aspect of high school athletics is that it may contribute to parts of the community, directly or indirectly. The experience of negatively perceived events is the primary contributor to decreasing an individual's

self-esteem (Youngs, Rathge, Mullis, & Mullis, 1990). The negative influence of high school athletics results when an individual who is providing time and energy for the success of a school program is disappointed by the defeat of the team. This event is perceived negatively by the individual, and as Youngs et al. (1990) suggested, will decrease the athlete's self-esteem. They also suggest that positive self-esteem is related to good mental health, good social relations, and a productive lifestyle. Considering all of this, one might hypothesize a disappointing athletic event or season might decrease the self-esteem of individuals and cause problems with their effectiveness in developing a productive lifestyle.

The indirect influence of athletics could also become a problem within the community. As stated above, when individuals are experiencing adverse events they may be effected emotionally, which could cause a ripple effect of problems within their families or other areas of life. For instance, Lewko (1987) found parents who experience job stress brought on by social and economical problems communicate that stress to their children. This stress could extend to create problems with the developmental functioning of the child or the entire family. People experiencing stress may develop negative emotions. These individuals have a tendency to displace or transfer those feelings and emotions onto others around them. If this

occurs, it could effect the stability and attitude of the family, leading to lack of trust and a decrease in communication. Considering this, athletics could indirectly affect those community members involved in the athletic programs by creating problems within their families.

More directly, athletics may have an effect on the athletes themselves. Individuals participating in athletics find themselves caught between the extreme pressures of being successful and idolized throughout the community or failing and possibly being overlooked and feeling unimportant.

Individuals participating in athletics typically possess characteristics such as being achievement-oriented and self-disciplined (Pace & Allison, 1990; Rees, Howell, & Miracle, 1990), assertive, competitive, focused, confident, and determined (Spreitzer, 1994). These characteristics develop students as role models. This status is mostly associated with positive behaviors. These behaviors include a transference of success and achievement from the sport to the classroom, an increasing amount of internal pressure to succeed (Renberg, 1969; Schumaker, Small, & Wood, 1986), development of social skills, school and community loyalty, and most of all, the building of character (Steitz & Owen, 1992). Spreitzer (1994) suggested that athletic participation is conducive to the overall development of adolescents and to subsequent levels of

achievement as an adult. This is commonly referred to as socialization via sport, but social scientific literature provides little support for this idea. Sports can develop characters as well as character (Spreitzer, 1994).

Concerning the variables and aspects associated with athletics, athletics exhibits a uniqueness experienced by those participating. This consists of being part of a group, maintaining good health and being physically fit, developing time management skills between school work and time contributed toward the athletic program, succeeding in the classroom and with the athletic program, living up to being a role model, and behaving in the appropriate manner associated with that identity. These unique characteristics may be consistent with higher levels of self-esteem. Increased levels of self-esteem have been associated with the participation in school athletics (Spreitzer, 1994; Steitz & Owen 1992), and because of this, more research is needed in this area to completely understand this relationship.

The idea that athletics can affect levels of self-esteem is the basis for this thesis. If this hypothesis is found to be true, athletics may provide a method to develop identity and structure to those individuals searching for direction, purpose, and acceptance. These qualities have potential to provide comfort and assurance when making difficult decisions and

the ability to adapt and respond positively to setbacks or problems. Athletics can provide positive developmental qualities during participation, but will these qualities continue after athletics subside? This question needs to be thoroughly explored because most individuals will not be involved in athletics their entire life, and there may be some other aspect or area from which individuals can get this stability.

Literature Review

A tremendous amount of research on self-esteem and related variables exists. However, this research does not provide successful techniques and methods for measuring it. Self-esteem correlates with numerous factors; separating the relationships and influences from each other is very difficult.

This review concentrates on the major factors influencing self-esteem and how these factors combine to create the overall level of self-esteem. Factors that contribute to an individual's self-esteem include parental involvement, peer interaction, community expectations, social stresses, and personal attitudes (Higgins, Klien, & Straumon, 1985; Klein, 1992; Kroger, 1980; Rosenberg, 1979; Youngs et al., 1990).

This review also investigates the influential factors associated with athletics and self-esteem. Much research has been conducted with results suggesting there is a

relationship between athletics and self-esteem, but whether the results are actually credited to or influenced by athletics is still questionable.

Self-esteem is an important concept needing investigation because of its developmental role during adolescence. Adolescence, ranging from ages 12 to 18, is a stage in life that can become extremely complicated. These individuals are constantly dealing with the pressures of life, puberty, and the crucial development of identity. Cantor et al. (1987) believe the ideal self guides and directs activities and behaviors to deal with such pressures. If this ideal self is dysfunctional or inadequately developed, the behaviors resulting from these pressures may be inappropriate. A discrepancy between a person's actual self and ideal self is an example of a dysfunctional ideal self, and is positively related to feelings of depression and dejection (Higgins et al., 1985).

Life tasks are a set of problems people see themselves working on and devoting energy to solve. These problems are viewed either as "threatening" or "comforting", and how these tasks are interpreted will create a sense of worthlessness or inspiration (Cantor et al., 1987). Problems from peer pressure to a career choice are related to adolescence. The strength of self-esteem will determine how positively adolescents manage and relate to these problems. Individuals with strong resources cope with

events successfully and experience little distress, whereas those with weak resources cope less well and experience greater distress (Murrell, Meeks, & Walker, 1991). Murrell et al. also stated that the stronger a person's resources, the less the person's distress over time, independent of the degree of life-event stress.

Stress is an influence on a person's self-esteem. Stress develops from both positive and negative events. The key to understanding this is that changing daily experiences and interactions creates stress, not necessarily negative consequences. As stressful events increase, the level of self-esteem decreases. Positive or negative events have different degrees of influence, but because of the overlapping, determining the degree is difficult (Youngs et al., 1990). Youngs et al. indicated negative events decreased self-esteem, while positive events seemed to have little influence. Adolescent stress is a major concern because it is related to a number of negative consequences such as delinquent conduct, school related performance, and classroom burnout. The importance of stress is related to every factor concerning self-esteem and, therefore, must be addressed.

Social factors can influence self-esteem. Social stress is brought on by excessive demands and pressures arising from the many roles and identities the people maintain (Burke, 1991). Stress is a disruption of the

identity process; distress is the internal response that occurs from the disruptions (Burke, 1991).

Social factors are contributed by the environment in which a person is interacting. These factors are either positive or negative. For example, getting a new job is a positive interaction, whereas losing a job is negative interaction. They both have some effect on an individual's self-esteem (Youngs et al., 1990). Besides the factors of negative and positive interaction is perceiving of events as either threatening or comfortable. How people interpret the events they experience is the major cause of stress and changing self-esteem levels (Cantor et al., 1987). Concerning interpretation, individuals' self-esteem declines in adolescents who reported and interpreted moving as a social stress (Kroger, 1980).

Adolescents experience more growth and maturational change than at any other time during the life cycle (Vealey & Campbell, 1988). Adolescents also experience many additional social factors, and how these events are interpreted will determine their self-esteem. But, as Youngs et al. (1990) stated, "as life events increase, the level of self-esteem will decrease" (p. 333).

Adolescents experience both positive and negative events as well as many changes emotionally and physically. Adolescents are also having to make many important decisions and because of this are susceptible to developing problems

with their self-esteem. Adolescence is extremely important for developing future behaviors and attitudes, and because of this, it is such a stressful stage of life. Besides the ordinary life crises and stress, adolescents contribute their own unique circumstances. Adolescence involves internalizing sets of personal standards and acquiring a set of values as a guide to behavior (Vealey & Campbell, 1988). If these situations are not dealt with depending on appropriate levels of self-esteem, behavioral problems could develop.

Family situations also influence an individual's self-esteem. Lewko (1987) believes parents who experience job stress will transfer that stress to their children. Adolescents observe and experience stress in families but have few resources to manage or control it. They are sensitive because of all the changes developing in their own lives (Youngs et al., 1990). Adolescence is a time of life when stress is increased through peer relationships (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991); all the stress added by their parents makes the total stress difficult to handle.

A more important factor influencing self-esteem is the relationship between individuals and their peers. At this age, the main crisis is to develop identity. Identity is a set of "meanings" applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what is meant to be who one is (Burke, 1991). Burke stated that mastery of

a specific identity results in an increase of individuals' self-esteem, and without this mastery or certainty, a decrease in self-esteem and feelings of depression are evident. This identity is the major factor in developing a positive self-esteem. If the identity is well developed and structured, the individual will be capable of managing stressful situations.

The interest in peer evaluation of one's self is heightened in adolescence as one begins to turn from parents to peers as primary source of appraisals and social comparison (Rosenberg, 1979). During adolescence, individuals develop strong needs to separate from their parents as being the primary source of appraisal. That is, they want and search for other forms of approval.

One of the hallmarks of adolescent peer relations is the set of large, relatively amorphous groups or "crowds" that appear at the beginning of the teen-age years (Brown & Lohr, 1987). For many adolescents, interactions with peers occupy more time than interactions with family members or time alone (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991). This is why identity and a sense of belonging are so crucial. Individuals at this stage are spending the majority of their time interacting with peers, and if they are uncertain about what group they want to associate with or what type of behaviors and goals they will strive for, they will find themselves alone. This isolation can result in poor

social and psychological adjustment (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991). This can also result from the uncertainty of specific groups. If the group is unsure whether or not it wants an individual to associate with it, it can express feelings of rejection toward the individual. Moran & Eckenrode (1991) also stated that an adolescent neglected or rejected by peers can be linked to serious problems such as delinquency, drug abuse, and depression. If adolescents do not establish a balanced sense of identity or belonging toward a specific group, significant developmental problems may arise.

Since adolescents strive to develop personal identities as well as associations to specific groups, high school athletics can meet these needs. Belonging to a group and having a stable identity is shown to increase self-esteem, producing both productive and socially accepted behaviors (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Burke, 1991; Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Rosenberg, 1979; Vealy & Campbell, 1988).

Athletic teams are special groups that provide such feelings of belonging and identity. Female college athletes produced higher self-concept scores than non-athletes (Vincent, 1976), and self-esteem ratings of junior high school athletes increased over the course of a baseball season (Hawkins & Gruber, 1982). This evidence suggests participation in athletics may relate with self-esteem.

Athletics is considered a social-conferring mechanism

(Hanks, 1979). It may influence the attitudes of those individuals involved in the athletic programs and may help develop strong social structures (Rees et al., 1990). Research from the 1950s and the 1960s concentrated on participation in high school activities as the main variable for sociological status (Steitz & Owen, 1991). This status develops positive social skills, school and community loyalty, and builds character (Steitz & Owen, 1991).

Participating in athletics is positively correlated with academic achievement as measured by grade point average (GPA; Renberg, 1969; Schumaker et al., 1986). Reasons for this suggest athletes transfer achievement from the sport to the classroom, associate with achievement-oriented classmates, increase internal and external pressure to succeed, receive greater amounts of guidance from adults, and increase achievement oriented attitudes (Rees et al., 1990; Renberg, 1969; Schumaker et al., 1986). Although some athletes are given certain grades in order to maintain eligibility, they have to maintain productive academic achievement in order to satisfy eligibility requirements. The requirements vary from school to school, but the average GPA required is around 2.00 on a 4.00 scale. If athletes do not satisfy these requirements, they will be ineligible to participate. Instances arise when student athletes are unable to meet these requirements, and they seek extra support and help from teachers and coaches.

Simon (1991) believed education can be viewed as an obstacle the athletic program must overcome in order to keep their players eligible. He also states some players float through school because they are talented athletes. This insinuates that athletes are either enrolled in easy courses, or their grades are changed to keep them eligible.

These factors associated with athletics can also be very stressful and have tremendous influence on an athlete's self-esteem. For instance, having high expectations of the high school athletes with whom you identify is socially acceptable. Community members interact socially with similar goals of producing successful athletic programs. This pressure is felt by every athlete involved in that community. Klein (1992) suggested self-esteem levels are affected by the ability to meet environmental demands and expectations of parents, peers, and teachers.

If these pressures are managed and handled successfully, the athlete may have significant increases in self-esteem and identity. Positive self-esteem is the key ingredient for developing good mental health, social relations, and productive life styles (Youngs et al., 1990). In support of this, Klein (1992) associates high levels of self-esteem with positive behavioral effectiveness, positive adaptive school and social functioning, and less depression. As noted previously, positive self-esteem is also related to successful academic achievement,

achievement oriented attitudes (Renberg, 1969; Schumaker et al., 1986), positive social skills, school and community loyalty, and appropriate character (Steitz & Owen, 1992). Another characteristic associated with athletics is leadership (Steitz & Owen, 1992), which can in turn produce successful accomplishments and well-motivated decision making.

Self-esteem, which regulates many positive behaviors and attitudes, has a relationship with athletics. Athletics seem to generate these feelings, as one becomes involved and a part of the group. Athletic groups form special bonds and behaviors that separate them from the non-athletes. They experience pressures from the community, their parents, their peers, and their coaches as well as personal pressures to perform at their expected level. These characteristics enhance the pre-existing self-esteem level and this is why athletics is so important at the high school level.

The importance of athletics on self-esteem has offered the idea that students suffering identity and self-esteem problems may participate with intentions of finding their identity. Considering this, some adolescents use athletics to provide proper coping mechanisms in order to deal effectively with the crises of adolescence. They use the foundations, characteristics, and identity of athletics to develop personal identities and feelings of belonging.

This has been suggested as a means of creating satisfying characteristics within the individual. Therefore, appropriate behaviors and well being are established.

Gender and Self-Esteem

Using athletics or other school activities to improve self-esteem or feelings about oneself can be beneficial to both boys and girls. Girls, however, are more likely to have lower self-esteem than boys, whether being involved in athletics or not (Keltikangas, 1990; Moran & Eckenrode, 1991; Steitz & Owen, 1992). Girls appear to show more depressive symptoms than boys which increases the risk of developing dysthymia or major depression (Russo, Green, & Knight, 1993). Being involved in athletics or school activities may be more critical for girls since their level of self-esteem appears to be less stable during adolescence than boys. Maintaining a stable self-esteem can decrease the probability or risk of developing dysthymia or major depression later in adolescence or life.

Russo et al. (1993) believe a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors create this difference of self-esteem between genders. Boys respond to depressive mood states and events with active coping strategies whereas girls tend to react by ruminating over the problem, thus escalating the mood or problem rather than alleviating it (Russo et al., 1993). During adolescence, both boys and girls are interacting with their

peers more than their families. This involvement with their peers is positively related to social and psychological adjustments or well being (Moran & Eckenrode, 1991). Moran & Eckenrode (1991) suggest girls depend more on others for assessing their abilities, are more self-conscious, are more negatively affected by stressors, and have greater social anxiety than boys. Girls also give a lower evaluation of themselves, have a more negative self-concept (Keltikangas, 1990), and are more likely to feel powerless and perceive events more as uncontrollable than boys (Russo et al., 1993). Self-esteem is more likely to fluctuate during adolescence than any other time in a person's life. Keltikangas (1990) suggests a positive self-esteem is likely to decrease from preadolescence to adolescence, remain at that level during adolescence, and then increase after adolescence. Being involved in athletics or other school related activities may increase the probability of maintaining or developing a positive self-esteem during adolescence.

Problem

The idea that athletics can provide adequate balance and control of an individual's self-esteem is probable. However, when athletics is over, the individual's self-esteem may possibly decrease. Being involved in athletics may allow the individual to better adapt and respond to the problems and stresses of life, however,

once it is over, are these students able to deal with such problems effectively? If this is not a lasting transfer, it might create severe problematic behaviors, which could affect the individual and the entire community. Spreitzer (1994) suggested the lessons of sports socialize the participants to be good citizens, presumably because through sport participation youths are taught the values and norms of conventionality. Schafer (1969) supports this idea by finding a negative relationship between sport participation and delinquent behaviors. But, Spreitzer (1994) found no clear relationship between athletic participation and psychological well-being 6 years later. Because of the little amount of research regarding this assumption, more specific research is needed to better understand this relationship.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the idea that high school athletes have higher self-esteem than non-athletes. Questions regarding the level of self-esteem prior to participating in athletics must be considered. Because of this, more research is needed to understand whether or not participating in athletics increases self-esteem or individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to participate in athletics.

Significance

This study directed its attention on athletics as

a possible foundation for improving self-esteem. Hopefully, this information can provide the techniques necessary for developing an understanding of self-esteem. This information could be applied to individuals with low self-esteem, helping them to develop successful coping skills by incorporating the qualities of athletics. These qualities would consist of skills and techniques that may provide the individual with more effective ways to deal with the pressures of life.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The following question and hypothesis, respectively, were addressed in this study:

1. Do students participating in high school athletics have higher self-esteem than those who do not participate?
2. Boys will have higher self-esteem than girls.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Sample

The sample included high school students from a rural Midwestern community located in Kansas. The school has about 800 students in grades 9 through 12.

The sample selected included both boys and girls who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors. There were 20 students in each sample, making a total of 60 students selected. The sample was divided into three different groups. The first group was the athletes. These were students participating in athletics at the varsity level during the 1995-1996 school year. The second group consisted of students who were not participating in athletics but were involved in other extracurricular activities (i.e., band, forensics, debate). The third group was represented by students who were not participating in athletics or any other extracurricular school activity.

All the students participating in athletics were placed on a list. Once this was completed, 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls) were randomly selected to make up the first sample group. This method of selection was done by choosing every other student on the list. After the athletic group was made, all the students who were involved in other extracurricular activities were put on a list. After this was completed, 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls) were

randomly selected, making up the second group. After this group was completed, another list was made consisting of the students not participating in athletics or involved in any extracurricular activities. Twenty students, both boys and girls, were again randomly selected to make up the third and final group.

The freshmen students were omitted due to possible extraneous variables and experimental threats. These students have a higher likelihood of being unstable and unsure of themselves, which could have influenced their self-esteem prior to testing. They are in a new situation and environment, both of which can add extra factors that may have influenced the testing results.

Research Design

The research design was a 2 (gender) by 3 (group) design. The three variables consisted of either students participating in athletics, non-athletes participating in other extracurricular activities, or non-athletes not participating in extracurricular activities. In this study, the independent variables consisted of the different groups and genders, while the dependent variable was the score on the self-esteem rating instrument.

Instrument

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) is a self-report technique intended to measure the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to

himself or herself. The Coopersmith (SEI) Adult Form was developed for individuals who are 15 years or older. The adult form is an adaptation of the School Short Form, and consists of 25 items that reflect attitudes towards self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience. The respondents indicate whether each item describes the way they feel about themselves by providing a "like me" or "unlike me" answer. The School Short Form is scorable on five scales: the general self, social self and peers, home and parents, school and academics, and the total self and lie scale. The adult form is only scorable on the general self-attitude scale.

The Coopersmith (SEI) is one of the best known and most widely used of the self-esteem inventories. It is brief and easy to score, providing the researcher with understandable information.

Procedure

An interview, explaining the procedures and methods involved in this investigation, was conducted between the researcher and the school psychologists, counselors, administration, and faculty within the tested school system. The faculty involved with the sample selection were asked to help with the procedures necessary for the administration of the self-esteem instrument. The data were monitored by the researcher and immediately collected when testing was completed.

The information was collected during the 1995-1996 school year. All students selected for one of the three groups were given the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI). This was given at the beginning of the spring athletic season. The administration of the inventory was conducted during a regular school day. The instructors whose students were involved in the investigation were informed that certain individuals will have to be taken out of class in order to complete the instrument.

The instructors informed their classes that certain students were selected to participate in a research project. Office aides went to each class informing the instructors who was selected and telling the students to what room they needed to go. The students selected for this investigation gathered in a specific room, having appropriate testing conditions. This also allowed several students to be tested at one time. Depending on the instructors and students involved, several testing times had to be given throughout the day. This decreased disruption in the classrooms and allowed previously planned activities to not be interrupted.

When all the students were present, they were given information concerning the investigation. The researcher personally presented to them the information that was needed. They were informed of the reason for this investigation, they got information concerning the

researcher's academic background, they were given information on the instrument being used, and they were given two letters of consent explaining the testing conditions and their options. After this was completed, the students were instructed to bring the consent forms back to school the next day, signed by both themselves and their parents. The next day, the students with signed consent forms met in the same room at the same time and followed the same procedures as the previous day. When this was completed and all questions had been answered, the researcher administered the Coopersmith (SEI). After all the students had been administered the instrument, the results were immediately collected and evaluated by the researcher.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The present study was designed to investigate the idea that high school athletes have higher self-esteem than non-athletes, using the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory (SEI). The study included sophomores, juniors, and seniors from a rural high school in midwestern Kansas with about 800 students between the grades 9 through 12.

Results were analyzed using a 2 (gender) X 3 (group) analysis of variance, on the Coopersmith SEI scores. The variables measured were gender (boys and girls) and group (students participating in athletics, students not participating in athletics but who were involved in other extra-curricular activities, or students not involved in either of the two). The overall descriptive statistics for the Coopersmith SEI scores, including the mean, standard deviation, number of subjects, and range for each variable are located in Table 1.

The statistical analysis indicated a significant difference for gender, $F(1, 54) = 5.06, p < .05$ (see Table 2), and group, $F(2, 54) = 8.30, p < .05$ (see Table 2), respectively. There was no significant interaction between gender and group.

Boys ($M = 72.57, SD = 21.68$) had significantly higher self-esteem scores than girls ($M = 61.73, SD = 19.78$; see Table 1). A Tukey post hoc procedure set at the $p < .05$

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory

Variables	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	Range
Boys				
Athletic Activity	90.00	8.27	10	76-100
Other Activity	65.70	20.30	10	24-92
No Activity	62.00	22.80	10	28-92
Total	72.57	21.68	30	24-100
Girls				
Athletic Activity	71.60	18.61	10	36-92
Other Activity	59.20	18.07	10	32-92
No Activity	54.40	20.33	10	24-84
Total	61.73	19.78	30	24-92
Boys and Girls				
Athletic Activity	80.80	16.90	20	36-100
Other Activity	62.45	19.00	20	24-92
No Activity	58.20	21.38	20	24-92
Total	67.10	21.29	60	24-100

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for the Coopersmith Self-Esteem
Inventory by Gender and Group

<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender	1760.42	1	1760.42	5.06*
Group	5770.30	2	2885.15	8.30**
Gender by Group	432.43	2	216.22	.62
Within Cells	18778.50	54	347.75	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

level of significance was performed on the three group means. The athletic activity group ($\underline{M} = 80.80$, $\underline{SD} = 16.90$) had significantly higher self-esteem scores than either the other activity group ($\underline{M} = 62.45$, $\underline{SD} = 19.00$) or the no activity group ($\underline{M} = 58.20$, $\underline{SD} = 21.38$), which did not differ (see Table 1).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the idea that high school athletes had higher self-esteem than non-athletes. The study also examined the idea that boys had higher self-esteem than girls.

The significance of this study was to develop ideas and possibilities for future research concerning self-esteem and adolescence. This study directed attention on athletics as a possible foundation for improving and maintaining high self-esteem. The structure and characteristics of athletics may provide individuals with low self-esteem a positive attitude, skills, and techniques necessary to successfully manage adolescent pressures.

The findings from the present study indicate a significant difference in self-esteem scores between the three groups. Through the statistical analysis, it appeared boys involved in athletics demonstrated significantly higher self-esteem scores than boys in the other two groups. In concurrence with this, it appears both boys and girls participating in athletics do have higher self-esteem than boys and girls not participating in athletics. Although significance was not achieved, it was demonstrated that girls participating in athletics had the second highest self-esteem scores compared with both boys and girls in the other two groups.

It was also found that boys involved in athletics scored significantly higher than girls involved in athletics. The results did not demonstrate a significant difference between boys and girls involved in other extra-curricular activities. There was also no significant difference between boys and girls not involved in athletics or other extra-curricular activities.

The findings also indicate a significant difference in self-esteem scores between genders. Through the statistical analysis, it was found that overall boys demonstrated higher self-esteem scores than girls.

To summarize, the results of this study clearly indicate boys and girls involved in athletics did have higher self-esteem scores than students not involved in athletics. More specifically, boys involved in athletics had substantially higher self-esteem scores than all the other groups, including the girls.

Some element of caution should be used when reviewing this study. It is apparent the data collected might not be representative of the entire population. In order to gain a better understanding of the relationships found in this study, more research is needed. A longitudinal study might help determine what effect, if any, athletics have on self-esteem. Also, a larger number of subjects would improve the probability of having a more representative sample.

The level of self-esteem an adolescent has plays an important roll in the decision making process, both long-term and short-term. And because adolescence is such a difficult time, requiring many decisions to be made, more research on self-esteem is needed to better understand what roll self-esteem actually has.

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7-31-96
Date

Do Athletes Have Higher Self-Esteem
Than Non-Athletes?
Title of Thesis

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August 1, 1996
Date Received