A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF DIVISION I STUDENT-ATHLETES' ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

by

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ABSTRACT

DARYL LEWIS. A Qualitative study of Division I Student-Athletes' Academic and Social Experiences. (Under the direction of Dr. Mark D'Amico)

This study looks at the experience's student-athletes believe to have contributed to their academic success. The researcher used the four areas of Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure as a framework to determine the role that formal and informal academic experiences, as well as formal and informal social experiences, play in the academic success of this student population.

This study was conducted with data from a single, public NCAA Division I university. The institution fields eight men's and eight women's sports. There were nine participants in this study eight women and one man from four sports: golf, basketball, and men and women's track and field. A qualitative, interview-based research design was used to gain a better understanding of the experiences and activities associated with being a student-athlete at the research institution (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Each interview was transcribed and coded for common themes.

The findings in this study were organized by themes found in the interviews and associated with the students' formal and informal academic and social experiences. The study found that there are several experiences that contribute and act as barriers to the academic success of student-athletes. The results show that there were several contributors to the academic success of student-athletes. Interactions with academic advisors, faculty, coaches, and non-athletic peers proved to be important in helping students navigate their educational experiences. Time management and stress were two additional themes that emerged that were determined to be barriers to student-athletes'

success. Additional research is suggested to determine how to help student-athletes better

connect with experiences that have been identified to enhance their academic

experiences.

DEDICATION

To Janaka, Justus and Delany Lewis--thank you for all your help in this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) currently consists of 460,000 students competing in 26 different sports and representing 1,000 colleges and universities (NCAA.org). The NCAA is the governing body of college athletics and regulates student initial eligibility, student progress towards degree, and student graduation rates.

The NCAA wants to make sure that its member institutions are also focusing on the educational experience of its student-athletes beyond the enforcement of eligibility regulations (Gayles & Hu, 2009). The NCAA has worked to bridge the academic gap over the past 20 years by putting programming in place to ensure consistency in the expectations of student-athletes, but it is important to explore what is being done to continue the positive strides that have been made to ensure that college athletes are graduating from their member institutions.

The NCAA developed specific metrics as an indicator of a school's ability not only to retain their students but to also ensure that they are making adequate progress toward graduation. The Academic Progress Rate (APR) metric is used to provide semester by semester feedback on student-athletes' retention, eligibility, and graduation (LaForge & Hodge, 2011). The institution uses this as a measure of success but does not necessarily assess what interventions intended to promote student success actually have the greatest effect on a student's feeling of belonging and overall success.

Currently, the NCAA places the responsibility of making sure that student-athletes have a quality educational experience at each member institution, which would include providing resources to help students select quality educational programs and

fulfill their academic dreams while ultimately working with student-athletes to make sure they are having the same experiences as their non-athletic counterparts (Fountain & Finley, 2011). This study used terms specific to the field of college athletics to discuss the students and their experiences. Student-athlete and APR are defined as stated in the 2019 NCAA Rule Book. This manual outlines all the rules and procedures that NCAA member institutions must follow to remain compliant.

Academic Progress Rate is a score that must be maintained by each NCAA member for each sport at an institution. A high score of 1,000 indicated that the sport has retained all students for the year, and they are eligible to compete. There is variance in the scores that institutions report because some students are either not retained at the institution or do not meet the minimum academic requirements to be academically eligible to compete in their sport.

LaForge and Hodge (2011) describe APR as a metric used to provide a real-time semester by semester feedback on the academic progress of student-athletes toward graduation by awarding one point for retention and one point for eligibility each semester. Thus, a student-athlete can earn two APR points each semester they meet the requirements set forth by the NCAA (LaForge & Hodge, 2011).

The NCAA defines student-athlete as "a student who chooses to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a part of their educational experience and in accordance with NCAA bylaws, thus maintaining a line between student-athletes who participate in the collegiate model and athletes competing in the professional model" (NCAA, 2019, p. 397). Comeaux and Harrison (2011) note that student-athletes are a nontraditional student group with a stressful and demanding schedule that is a byproduct of the current

standards set forth by the athletic department expectations, which often hinders their academic success and can affect the quality of student-athletes' college experiences. There is less discussion on what experiences contribute to the academic success of student-athletes. In fact, Milton, Freeman, and Williamson (2012) describe that many factors contribute to the academic success of a student-athlete. However, there have been many instances where student-athletes have been singled out for being more athlete than student.

Sharp and Sheilley (2008) note that the stereotype of the "dumb jock" is often reinforced by comments made by professors and students, which ends up pushing student-athletes further away from campus interactions. Student-athletes, who buy into this negative stereotype, may need special resources to ensure they are able to succeed academically. Person, Benson-Quaziena, and Rogers (2001) indicate that continued negative portrayal can lead people in those groups to begin to internalize the negative feelings held against them; members may begin to feel the stress of being associated and identified in a negative light because of the constant negative images and stereotypes held against them.

Rishe (2003) describes how student-athletes spend a lot of time preparing for competition because there is a lot of stress for them to succeed athletically, which causes them to have little to no time to prepare for their academic obligations. University officials work hard to bridge the gap between the responsibility of being an athlete and the educational requirements of being a student. Understanding student-athlete experiences and finding out what resources play a role in their success would allow

university officials to refute the stereotype of a "dumb jock" and put resources in place to promote student-athlete success.

Statement of the Problem

NCAA regulations and guidelines combined with the special needs of student-athletes can be complex for university officials to recognize and manage. To best provide resources for this population of students, it is important for university officials to understand the needs of student-athletes and ask questions of athletic department personnel to ensure that resources are available to promote academic success of student-athletes (Watt & Moore III, 2001).

According to Comeaux, Speer, Taustine, and Harrison (2011), the NCAA has increased its efforts to enhance the college experience of student-athletes by working on the balance between athletic and university educational roles. Fountain and Finley (2011) note that the pressure to bridge this gap is often placed on athletic department personnel. Coaches and academic services personnel are tasked with making sure that student-athletes can stay academically eligible, which sometimes means that they choose the easiest path towards their degree attainment.

Previous literature looks at the issues facing college athletics and student-athletes from a broad perspective. However, there has been little to no research to discuss student-athletes' reactions to their environments, how they deal with experiences they face every day, and how their experiences may affect their academic progress. Student-athletes have great stress to perform athletically, which can directly affect their academic success.

This study addresses four areas of Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure by looking at the role of formal and informal academic

experiences, as well as the influence of formal and informal social experiences on the academic success of student-athletes. One element of Tinto's model looks at the formal academic experiences that make up a student's day-to-day academic experience. Tinto (1993) defined formal academic experiences as academic interactions that are within the formal education of the student; these activities happen in the classroom and involve university personnel whose main responsibility is the education of the students.

Unlike formal academic experiences that exist in academic spaces, informal academic experiences consist of wide-ranging contact outside of formal academic spaces that lead students to a heightened connection with the university. This informal experience consists of interactions that occur outside of atypical educational spaces such as the classroom or laboratory. Tinto (1993) explains that students can have rewarding interactions with faculty, staff, and their fellow students outside of the classroom. As such, interactions in these informal academic spaces lead to students having better academic experience. A lack of enhanced academic experiences can cause students to feel isolated from the educational institution.

In addition to the formal educational experiences that exist on campus, students have opportunities to be a part of formal social experiences which contribute to a student's overall university experience. Tinto (1993) described that extracurricular activities such as band, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and other organized activities such as intercollegiate athletics offer students formal spaces to meet other like-minded students, which often leads to better relationships.

Tinto (1993) described informal social experiences as activities that arise from the day-to-day activities between different members of an institution in areas not formally

addressed. Tinto (1993) noted that experiences such as working in student run organizations or having a job on campus provide students with informal social experiences with the university, while also explaining that informal social systems assist students in accessing formal positions in informal campus experiences. Tinto (1993) offered that "the greater the contact among students the more likely individuals are to establish social communities in college making it likely that they will stay at the institution" (p. 117).

Experiences in each area are important to help students navigate their educational career and integrate into the college environment. Tucker (2004) noted that there is a greater likelihood of overall student retention when student-athletes have a clear connection to campus. Tucker (2004) indicated that it is possible that a successful athletic program may positively or possibly affect the overall graduation rates of students at the university negatively, concluding that there is a connection to social experiences and connections to campus. Tinto (1990) stated that the formal and informal world of academic and social systems are linked, and it is important to have a balance between the academic and social life of college in order to be successful.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to use Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure as a framework to capture the perspectives of student-athletes on their formal and informal social and academic experiences while attending a large Division I institution with more than 20,000 undergraduate students. Additionally, student-athletes were asked to share which of these experiences serve as barriers and facilitators of their academic success while in college. The NCAA has increased its

efforts to provide better experiences to its student-athletes by establishing expectations between athletic departments and the university's educational roles (Comeaux et al., 2011). There has been a history of underperformance from many revenue generating sports at Division I institutions. This lack of academic achievement highlights a problem facing college athletics, which contributes to the conflicting roles that develop in student-athletes' educational trajectories and showcases the importance of promoting policies and procedures that promote student success (Comeaux et al., 2011).

Sharp and Sheilley (2008) went on to say that the goal should not only be to keep student-athletes eligible to compete but also to provide an environment that promotes the ability for them to receive a quality education. It is important to understand what experiences student-athletes believe to play a role in their success. This understanding can be used to identify best practices that university personnel can use to better engage student-athletes.

Theoretical Framework

Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure was used as a theoretical framework for this study. Milton et al. (2012) stated that it is obvious that several factors contribute to the academic success of student-athletes. Tinto's model can be used as a framework to outline the experiences that contribute to the success of student-athletes.

Tinto's model consists of formal and informal experiences broken down into academic and social systems (Tinto, 1993). These experiences can contribute to a student's decision to stay at an institution. Academic systems consist of formal experiences, such as academic performance, and informal experiences, such as faculty interactions. Social systems can consist of formal experiences, like mentoring and

CHAMPS life skills, or informal experiences, such as coach and peer interactions (Tinto, 1993).

Research Questions

This study explored the following research questions:

1. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal academic experiences?

2. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal academic experiences?

3. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal social experiences?

4. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal social experiences?

Significance

This study looks to contribute to the literature on student athletic experiences by addressing the issues that face student-athletes at a large Division I institution. Gayles and Hu (2009) discussed how the public is no longer confident in the academic benefits of participating in sports, as there have been many issues that have plagued college athletics. Students participating in football and men's basketball not graduating at the same rate as other student-athletes, academic cheating scandals and student-athletes having to leave universities due to poor academic standing have been issues that many athletic departments have faced. Lanning (1982) noted that student-athletes often have every aspect of their lives structured for them, which is done to meet the time constraints

associated with being an athlete. Managing the responsibility of being a student and an athlete can be tough, and most often academics suffer the most.

Gayles and Hu (2009) went on to say that finding a balance between athletics and academics has been a barrier in college athletics and it has been difficult to manage positive gains in learning and personal development in higher education. Understanding what experiences student-athletes attribute to their academic success, as well as those experiences that have hindered their progress, would give institutions an opportunity to address issues not just for the sake of the NCAA's policies and procedure, but also to meet the needs of the student-athlete based on their wants and needs. Broughton and Neyer (2001) noted that student-athlete athletic department academic advising focuses on academic eligibility and graduation rates but does not always include resources to support student-athlete academic and social development. Broughton and Neyer (2001) went on to say that student-athletes are unique populations and they need additional support services to deal with the issues they encounter. Other college students do not face all of the demands that student-athletes must deal with, as they have a set of complex demands and stress that challenge them daily.

The NCAA does not provide guidance as to what mix of academic resources best serves the needs of student-athletes. This lack of direction causes a gap in services provided if an institution does not take advantage of non-athletic resources, or they do not have the means to provide individual resources for their student-athletes. The results from this study provides institutions with an understanding of what academic and non-academic experiences student-athletes feel provide the greatest benefit to their academic success.

According to Melendez (2009), finding resources that contribute to student success should be the primary focus of NCAA member institutions. Melendez (2009) went on to say that student development and athletic administrators must work together to create policies and resources for student-athletes that help them have a well-rounded college experience. The ultimate goal is that the resources don't just focus on their athletic requirements but also contribute to their academic success.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, interview-based methodology. The purpose of this research design is to better understand the lived experiences of the research participants. The sample for this study consisted of NCAA student-athletes at a large Division I institution consisting of roughly 25,000 undergraduate students. The athletic department currently fields 18 men's and women's sports. The study used interviews administered to student-athletes at the NCAA Division I institution to determine what experiences through Tinto's (1993) framework can be used to better understand the perceptions of student-athletes regarding their social and academic experiences since enrolling in college.

The goal was to target students from a variety of sports at the institution to include men and women, as well as revenue-producing and non-revenue producing sports at the university. Student-athletes were to be interviewed for approximately 60 to 90 minutes, one-on-one, in a non-athletic facility on campus. A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) based on the four components of the theoretical framework was used to guide the interviews. Follow up interviews and member-checks were utilized as necessary.

All interviews were transcribed, and the data analysis consisted of thematic analysis to determine what key categories are determined to have the greatest contribution. The analysis placed the student answers into the framework of the study.

Delimitations

This study was conducted with data from a single, public NCAA Division I university. The institution fields a number of men and women's sports. Men's sports include: Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer, Tennis, and Track & Field. Women's sports include: Basketball, Cross Country, Golf, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, and Track & Field. These sports represent all sports offered at the institution and represent a diverse level of athletic obligation and educational interest.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 consists of the introduction and a brief statement of the problem. This chapter also introduces the theoretical framework, research questions, and limitations associated with the study.

Chapter 2 includes the literature review. This chapter focused on literature through the framework of Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Departure. Sections address formal and informal academic factors as well as formal and informal social experiences that contribute to the academic and social success of student-athletes.

Chapter 3 discusses the methods employed for this study.

Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 offers the conclusion and discuss how the findings are positioned within other research on student-athlete academic performance. By outlining what factors contribute to increased student success based on APR data, this chapter also

discusses areas of further study in this research area.

Summary

This study focused on a NCAA Division I institution that has a variety of men's and women's sports, from revenue and non-revenue generating sports. These student-athletes participate in multiple sports and have a wide variety of experiences that are important to understanding the student-athletes' experiences.

Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure was used as a theoretical framework to understand student-athletes' academic and social experiences. This framework provided a guide to breaking down the research participants experiences into formal, and informal academic and social experiences.

This study used the experiences discussed by the research participants to address academic and social issues that face student athletes. This perspective helped to identify the factors that contribute to the student athletes' formal and informal academic and social experience at the research institution.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction and Background on Student-Athlete Success

There are roughly 460,000 student-athletes participating in the NCAA representing 26 different sports every year; the member schools provide tools and resources such as computers, tutoring, and academic advising to support their student-athletes' academic success (NCAA.org). A high number of student-athletes earn bachelor's degrees, and many earn postgraduate degrees (NCAA, 2019). NCAA.org indicated that the most recent graduation rate for student-athletes is 88 percent, which was a record high. Gaston-Gayles (2003) found that many institutions consider student-athletes a special population of students. This chapter provides an overview of the literature that discusses both athletic and nonathletic factors that contribute to a student-athlete's ability to be academically successful. Most academic support services that are supported by the NCAA offer similar services geared at providing academic resources to promote student-athlete success; however, this does not mean they have the same level of success in meeting the academic success metrics required by the NCAA (Gaston-Gayles, 2003).

In addition to the NCAA and its member institutions, there are informal organizations that play a role in shaping policy to support the educational needs of student-athletes. The Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics is a nonprofit organization that advocates for resources to support student-athlete academic success. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) note that the Knight Commission's concern is that the possibility of having high achieving student-athletes in the classroom is reduced because the goal of athletic support centers to maintain eligibility creates an athletic

culture that focuses on the importance of athletics and creates low academic expectations. Huml, Hancock, and Bergman (2014) supported this claim, noting athletic academic support services spend much of their time keeping student-athletes eligible and not focusing on degree completion.

Knorr's (2004) research looked at the efforts of the Knight Commission to support the academic needs of student-athletes, noting The Knight Commission proposed the creation of a Coalition of Presidents that would bring together leaders from the most visible conferences and trustees to provide an impetus for change. In an effort to ensure athletic departments are pushing students to be successful academically, the Knight Commission now recommends that institutions have at least an APR of 925 which predicts a 50 percent graduation rate and that they check for championship eligibility at the beginning of each term (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010).

The Knight Commission's contribution to research on athletics is supporting the need for reform and promoting student academic success. Its proposed changes affect athletics by imposing policies that directly tie into students' abilities to compete based on their academic standing, which forces institutions to think about resources that promote student success and mitigate the competition between academic and athletic resources. The Knight Commission goes on to recommend an increased focus of academics--first, an institution must decide how their athletic budget will affect the academic values of the department and the institution. Spending on educational activities should not be compromised to boost sports funding (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2010). The focus should be to fund resources that promote academic success. This

process was started by the NCAA's move to implement a number of reform agendas

geared at increasing student retention and overall graduation rates.

Graduation Success Rate (GSR)

In an effort to create structure and promote academic success in athletics the

NCAA created APR and GSR as a means to measure the real-time and long-term success

of student-athletes. Academic Progress Rate (APR) and Graduation Success Rate (GSR)

were created in 2003 by the NCAA as a portion of their academic reform program

(LaForge & Hodge, 2011). These systems were not universally adopted for fear of

student outcomes. GSR is a factor that the NCAA looks at to determine a student's

graduation rate. The NCAA (2019) notes that all institutions that offer athletic aid are

required by NCAA legislation and federal law to report student graduation rates.

The NCAA GSR is different than the federal graduation calculation; GSR holds

institutions accountable for incoming transfer students by counting them in their graduate

metric, and there is no penalty if a student-athletes transfer in good academic standing

("NCAA, Graduation rate"). This change impacts the percentage of students that are

counted towards this student success metric ("NCAA, Graduation rate").

GSR is a measure that can be used to better understand the graduation trends of

student athletes. Brown (2018) noted that in 2002, GSR was introduced as the

methodology for Division I institutions to better monitor student-athletes' graduation

statistics. Brown (2018) went on to say that the GSR analysis implemented by the NCAA

has resulted in student-athletes having higher graduation rates than the federal method of

calculating graduation rates. GSR more accurately reflects the graduation success of

student-athletes because it reflects the differences in the student-athlete population compared to the general student body.

This method of reform represents a long-term measurement of student success (LaForge & Hodge, 2011). GSR that shows an institution's academic success over time is measured due to the number of student-athletes that are completing their degree. Unlike GSR, APR is a semester-by-semester metric of success that can change based on the available resources at an institution.

GSR is a viable tool to measure the success of student-athletes. NCAA (2017) indicates that there has been an increase in GSR to the point that student-athlete GSR was 87% in 2017. This rate represents an overall success in student-athletes being able to complete their degrees. GSR is a long-term metric, contrasted with APR, which is a semester-by-semester tool that shows potential issues in student-athletes' success. Ferris, Finster, and McDonald (2004) noted that even with GSR in place, little is known about the actual educational benefits associated with this reform and it does not address some of the issues that have arisen when educating student-athletes.

Academic Progress Rate (APR)

In contrast to GSR, APR is a real time statistic that institutions use to gauge the academic success and retention of their student athletes on a semester by semester basis. The NCAA (2019) notes that it began to implement an academic reform program effort in Division I athletics in 2003. The reform program was the Academic Progress Rate (APR) and it was designed to hold institutions responsible for the academic success of their student-athletes (NCAA.org). APR uses a team-based metric that measures eligibility and retention of student-athletes for each academic semester. The NCAA

implemented the APR rule as an effort to help its member institution better track the academic progress of their student-athletes to keep them in good academic standing, but more information is needed to understand the experiences that student-athletes have on campus and how they affect their academic and personal development (Gayles & Hu, 2009).

The NCAA uses the APR metric to promote student development and retention by creating a semester-by-semester tool to track student-athlete academic progress. LaForge and Hodge (2011) stated that the APR metric is used to provide real-time feedback on the academic progress of student-athletes and tracks the academic progress of student-athletes twice a year. Fountain and Finley (2011) went on to say that APR is a real-time time measurement of a student-athletes academic success as it awards points for students who stay in good standing and are retained at the end of each term. APR tracks a student's academic success each semester by monitoring retention and eligibility for each student-athlete on an athletic scholarship (Christy, Seifried, & Pastore, 2008).

Fountain and Finley (2011) stated that the academic reforms put in place by the NCAA may have unintended consequences. Sharp and Sheilley (2008) noted that one of the outcomes of APR was an increase in academic standards for student-athletes; the unintended side effect was that athletic department personnel began to put students in majors deemed easier to complete. Paskus (2012) indicated that institutions have seen success since APR was adopted, as there has been a lower number of student-athletes not returning due to academic issues. Additionally, teams have seen an increase in student success overall, which leads to a decrease in institutions being subject to APR penalties.

High APR scores translate to increased GSR. Paskus (2012) described that while implementation of APR leads to immediate graduation success that still holds true today, APR has also shown to be a good predictor of a school's Graduation Success Rate. Paskus (2012) went on to note that a minimum APR score of 930 was chosen because it predicts on average about a 50% GSR, which is in line with the expectation that teams remain on track to graduate at least half their student-athletes.

APR improvement has not been universal; there have been issues with implementation in some sports. Some institutions realized their deficiencies and quickly worked to make changes to their admissions criteria and support services to increase the preparedness of their incoming students. APR is not a perfect system, but member institutions overwhelmingly see the benefit in the tool, as APR has had a positive impact on intercollegiate athletics (Christy et al., 2008; Paskus, 2012).

The NCAA's efforts to create programming to lay the groundwork for the creation of on-campus resources, to help athletic departments meet the needs of their students, and ultimately to fulfill the APR and GSR requirements set forth by the NCAA have been documented. This study examined the on-campus experiences that contribute to student-athlete academic success and explore some of the challenge's student-athletes face.

Social and Academic Integration of Student-Athletes

Prior research notes that there has not been an effort to fully understand the special needs of student-athletes playing college sports, which can impact the understanding of the specific needs that must be addressed on the campus level. This understanding is necessary to ensure that policy formation considers the needs of student-

athletes (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Using Tinto's (1993) model, though constructed for a general higher education audience, serves as a model that can guide what aspects of a student-athlete's experience have an influence on the academic experience.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) created a variation of Tinto's model called *Model for College Student-Athlete Academic Success.* This model focused on the factors that contributed to student-athlete retention. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) stated that Tinto's model assumes that a student–athlete's academic success is tied to their individual skills, which affects how the student-athlete interacts with the social and academic system. This next section looks at the literature associated with student-athlete success through Tinto's model while looking at formal and informal academic and social experiences that contribute to student-athlete success.

In an effort to understand the contributors to student-athlete success, Tinto's (1993) model of student departure was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Tinto's model was used as part of Kamusoko and Pemberton's (2013) framework to show what efforts can be made to better retain student-athletes, while specifically looking at how student-athletes' feelings of wellbeing, athletic department policies and practices, educational experiences, and university services help to understand what factors contribute to student-athlete success (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). They used Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure to help frame questions within the study. The study found that while interactions with faculty and quality of instruction were important, nothing more could be done to improve the relationship between faculty and student-athletes.

Large universities often have a student-athlete subculture that flourishes outside of the campus culture. This subculture is most often male student-athletes who already spend a lot of time together due to the in season and out of season time constraints (Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006). This focus on athletics can be seen as a negative environment, but it is a byproduct of the athletic and academic expectations placed on this student group. Umbach et al. (2006) discussed the factors that have the greatest contributions to student-athletes' academic success and integration into the greater campus community. Their research indicated that student-athletes are as engaged as their non-athletic peers when interacting with faculty and often participated in educationally purposeful campus activities.

The amount of student-athlete integration into the campus environment varies based on the individual. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) look at Tinto's model through the lens of college athletics to better portray their experiences. Specifically, the authors modify Tinto's conceptual model to consider academic and social factors that student-athletes experience. Overall, the level of social and academic integration is important to the student's college experience.

The following sections provide a synthesis on student-athlete success research through the lens of Tinto's (1993) four components of integration and are consistent with the research questions for the present study: formal academic, informal academic, formal social, informal social. Table 1 offers an outline of the sections that follow.

Table 1
Key Themes in the Literature Relevant to Student-Athlete Success

Formal Academic Experiences	
Faculty	● Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, and Banaji (2004) ● Comeaux (2011)

	● Comeaux and Harrison (2011) ● Engstrom, Sedlacek, and McEwen (1995) ● Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) ● Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) ● Jolly (2008) ● Kissinger, Newman, Miller, and Nadler (2011) ● Kuh and Hu (2001) ● Mangold, Bean, and Adams (2003) ● Sailes (1993) ● Sharp and Sheilley (2008) ● Valentine and Taub (1999)
Academic Advisors	● Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001) ● Engstrom, Sedlacek, and McEwen (1995) ● Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) ● Huml, Hancock, and Bergman (2014) ● Jolly (2008) ● Jordan and Denson (1990) ● Kamusoko and Pemberton (2013) ● Kissinger, Newman, Miller, and Nadler (2011) ● Lanning (1982) ● Paskus (2012) ● Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992) ● Valentine and Taub (1999)
Informal Academic Experiences	
Faculty	● Comeaux, Speer, Taustine, and Harrison (2011) ● Gayles and Hu (2009) ● Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) ● Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) ● Jolly (2008) ● Kissinger, Newman, Miller, and Nadler (2011)
Student Support	● Hill, Burch-Ragan, and Yates (2001) ● Huml, Hancock, and Bergman (2014) ● Jordan and Denson (1990) ● Mangold, Bean, and Adams (2003) ● Person, Benson-Quaziena, and Rogers (2001) ● Watt and Moore III (2001)
Formal Social Experiences	
Coaches	● Adler and Adler (1991) ● Aghazadeh and Kyei (2009) ● Comeaux and Harrison (2011) ● Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) ● Jordan and Denson (1990) ● Sharp and Sheilley (2008)
Champs Life Skills	● Person, Benson-Quaziena, and Rogers (2001) ● Watt and Moore III (2001)
Informal Social Experiences	

Peer Interactions	• Gayles and Hu (2009) • Lubker and Etzel (2007) • Storch and Ohlson (2009)

Formal Academic Experiences

Faculty

Faculty play an important role in the academic and social development of student-athletes in the university setting. Athletics serve as an extension of the university mission, and the athletics department acts as a tool to provide resources to support the academic and athletic goals of their student-athlete population (Mangold, Bean, & Adams, 2003). The university attempts to balance the needs of both students and athletics by evenly balancing financial commitment and considering the needs of athletics when implementing policies geared towards the athletic and academic growth of their student-athletes.

As Harrison et al. (2006) discussed, the "intellectual" as a mentor is the basic part of a faculty member's position on campus. The faculty member performs the role of "intellectual coach" and provides a resource to help develop the student-athletes and assist with their educational development. The university must provide a meaningful education experience, but it is the responsibility of the students to acquire an education (Sharp & Sheilley, 2008). These obligations include providing resources to help university officials understand the roles they play in the development of student-athletes, not judging them based on preconceived ideas of who and what a student-athlete is, and not making generalizations of their ability in the classroom. When faculty work to gain a better understanding of the needs of student-athletes, they are able to provide better academic support services to this population of students (Jolly, 2008).

Understanding the importance of student faculty interaction, Kuh and Hu (2001) have suggested that colleges and universities need to find ways to increase interactions between faculty and students through faculty-supervised professional and academic experiences such as internships or capstone experiences in an effort to improve the rate and quality of faculty interactions with students (Comeaux, 2011).

Having support of faculty member's helps students develop competence that can lead to further academic success. Jolly (2008) found that faculty who developed a greater understanding of the student-athlete world have a greater understanding of their needs and are able to provide more effective academic support. Jolly (2008) went on to say that opening new lines of communication outside of the classroom is an important aspect in creating meaningful relationships with student-athletes.

Faculty play a role in student-athletes' academic success. They must work to reach out to this population of students and help them work through challenges they may face at the institution (Jolly, 2008). The importance of faculty outreach can be seen in Tinto's model. Student-athlete retention can be an issue and finding ways to help students feel welcomed on campus can be difficult. Tinto's (1993) work on institutional departure is an excellent reorientation of the type of integration that student-athletes must incur by finding ways to promote formal and informal experiences and to promote student integration and retention.

Faculty interactions outside of the class are important to help student-athletes create a connection beyond the academic space. Jolly (2008) described how informal social interactions with faculty and peers contribute to students seeking to have more academically oriented interaction. This foundation helps promote a feeling of belonging

and makes student-athletes more likely to be retained. Faculty play an important role in assisting with the recruitment and retention efforts of the athletic department. Tinto (1993) noted that faculty interaction outside of academic spaces was an important factor in decreasing student departure.

Comeaux and Harrison (2011) developed a conceptual model similar to Tinto's model. They look at the effects of Precollege, Initial Commitment, Social Systems, and Commitments and how they relate to student-athletes' academic success. Important factors to student success like retention include meaningful social interactions with faculty and peers. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) noted that student-athlete academic success is associated with how they integrate into the academic and social environment. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) discussed how student-athletes participating in football and basketball often have more trouble in school than other student-athlete populations, indicating that football and baseball often had lower academic success because they require the most time and energy while they are in season. Tinto's model, or variations of this model, can be applied to help university personnel understand the importance of reaching out and involving student-athletes in campus life other than athletic events in an effort to promote academic and social engagement.

Valentine and Taub (1999) went on to say that having support from faculty helps promote an environment of success. This power is not always realized, and personal biases and stereotypes lead faculty to act in ways that stifle the development of student-athletes. Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) discussed the effect faculty have on student development, noting that faculty and administrators could mentor student-athletes, which would reduce bias through direct contact and interactions with each other. These

relationships help bridge the gap between faculty and student-athletes, allowing both sides to go outside of their comfort zone and make meaningful relationships that can assist in the student identity development.

Academic Advisors

Academic advisors play an important role in helping student-athletes navigate academic requirements to maintain athletic eligibility to participate in their sport. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) indicated in their research that student affairs personnel such as academic advisors will benefit greatly by having a conceptual model to help them in developing resources for student student-athletes regardless of who they are and where they came from. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) noted that student-athletes are not the same as other students, as they have varied experiences before college that may affect their interaction patterns during college.

Kamusoko and Pemberton (2013) noted that the support services provided by the athletic department met the need of the participants in their study, their findings still highlighted concerns about access to academic advising and the academic services that student-athletes received. Kamusoko and Pemberton (2013) went on to state that to meet the needs of student-athletes, athletic departments need to hire more qualified athletic academic advisors, which will help spread out the number of resources available to students, and relieve the overwhelming demand that comes with working with student-athletes.

Valentine and Taub (1999) stated that due to negative opinions held by the campus community (faculty and peers), student-athletes often have little to no social interaction across campus. Athletic academic advisors become the university officials

that are there to promote student success. They have similar influence as a faculty may have on student engagement and success. Tinto (1993) stated that it is important for institutions to stress the importance of integrating students into the environment of the campus to promote engagement in the social and intellectual life of the institution. Academic advisors play a key role in connecting student-athletes to the rest of the university by providing a lifeline to promote social and intellectual integration into campus life.

Carodine, Almond, and Gratto (2001) indicated that athletic department academic staff need to work closely with college academic advisors to make sure the students are making adequate progress towards their degree by ensuring that student-athletes are enrolling in courses needed to complete their intended degrees. Carodine et al. (2001) argued that in addition to providing guidance to possible outlets, academic advisors play key roles in helping students become self-sufficient and learning how to deal with the academic requirements of the university while monitoring athletic academic requirements.

Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992) discussed the importance of helping student-athletes understand how they fit into the educational system and how they are viewed by the campus community. This greater understanding will help them navigate and negotiate a system that was not designed for them (para. 21). Carodine et al. (2001) noted that athletic support staff will need to guide department advisers because they have not received training in NCAA regulations; this guidance helps promote resources outside of the athletics department to promote academic success. Academic advisors can help students build the confidence needed to go outside of their comfort zone. As student-

athletes often struggle to manage the time constraints of athletics, athletic departments must put effort into developing programs to help student-athletes manage time for their academic responsibilities (Lanning, 1982).

Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992) noted that student-athletes must learn to depend on themselves and other resources on campus to help them be academically successful. This developmental milestone can be fostered by the assistance that academic advisors provide in student development. Student-athlete academic support services rely heavily on other campus partners such as tutoring centers, academic advisors, and faculty (Jolly, 2008).

Academic personnel struggle with identifying what factors have the greatest effects on student-athlete success. They can enhance academic support systems by working to better understand the needs of student-athletes on an individual level, as many students enter college with deficiencies that need to be addressed on a case by case basis (Paskus, 2012). Paskus (2012) and Lanning (1982) both described that a number of athletic departments understand the need to hire academic support specialists to serve the specific needs of student-athletes, but these individuals are not always trained to handle the special needs of athletes. The informal nature of their interaction with student-athletes increases the need to collaborate with on-campus resources to help provide the best possible resources for student-athletes.

<div align="center">**Informal Academic Experiences**</div>

Academic Support

Faculty and other support personnel play a significant role in helping student-athletes integrate into the overall campus culture. This interaction goes beyond the

confines of the classroom and athletic department and plays a huge role in student-athletes' academic and social development. Howard–Hamilton and Sina (2001) described the importance of student affairs and athletic personnel positively contributing to the learning development of student-athletes by structuring experiences with non-athletic peers.

There has been much research done on the importance of faculty interaction in supporting the needs of student-athletes. Harrison et al. (2006) noted that there has been little research to explore the relationship that faculty have with male student-athletes. Faculty guidance outside of the classroom can be a major factor in determining the academic success of student-athletes. Harrison et al. (2006) stated that faculty contribute to student-athletes' positive college experiences by introducing them to intellectual challenges beyond athletics.

Comeaux et al. (2011) examined factors that contributed to first-year student-athlete development. Their research indicates that students who engage in educationally purposeful activities influence leadership and general academic self-concept. Comeaux et al. (2011) went on to note that revenue and non-revenue generating sports differ in their academic experiences, as educational development and role identities were affected by the sports that they played. Gayles and Hu (2009) indicated that an important factor that contributes to building self-esteem and communication skills is student-athlete engagement in educationally relevant activities, which significantly influences the creation of meaningful campus experience while in college.

Faculty are able to play a significant role in student-athlete academic success; however, faculty must work with student-athletes to help them deal with their academic

challenges (Jolly, 2008). One common theme discussed in the literature deals with student-athlete engagement and suggests that student-athletes engage with the university in different ways than traditional students. This engagement, however, helps connect them to the university and shows them the importance of being a student.

Faculty play an important role in helping student-athletes bridge the gap between athletic and university integration. Harrison et al. (2006) indicated that faculty interaction often influences student-athletes' educational success in positive or negative ways (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Sailes, 1993). Gayles and Hu (2009) also indicated that engagement is significant to the development of student-athletes. Kissinger, Newman, Miller, and Nadler (2011) noted that the athletic environment places a premium on athletic success above the academic success of student-athletes. Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, and Banaji (2004) describe that highly committed student-athletes often find it difficult to be considered being a part of the group compared to members of non-athletic extracurricular groups (p. 596). Group membership sometimes serves as a barrier because professors do not always take students seriously and sometimes question when they get good grades. Having meaningful relationships with faculty contributes to student-athletes' ability to engage academically, as they are able to see firsthand that these students are as capable as their non-athletic peers.

Jolly (2008) mentioned that informal interactions play a key role in helping students feel a sense of belonging and helping them understand their worth. Relationships outside of the classroom plays an important role in helping students become more engaged in the university community. Jolly (2008) stated that seeing their faculty in

athletic spaces gives student-athletes a sense of belonging and makes it easier to approach faculty in academic areas.

Athletic Academic Advisors

The number of full-time NCAA Division I athletic advisors has increased significantly over the past 20 years (Huml et al., 2014). Student-athletes are a unique subgroup of the overall student population. Engstrom et al. (1995) noted that student-athletes are a special population--since student-athletes often live in separate suites and apartments from other students, they have their own advising services and thus have limited opportunities to engage with faculty, students, or staff in co-curricular activities. Students need personalized resources to promote academic, athletic and personal success. Athletic departments have employed the use of academic advisors, academic coaches, and other support staff to help student-athletes navigate the stress associated with being a student-athlete. Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) recommended that student affairs and athletic personnel work to provide formal experience with nonathletic peers to help student-athletes better integrate into the campus community and therefore increase the positive effects associated with these types of relationships.

Broughton and Neyer (2001) noted that although housed in the athletic department, athletic academic advisors play an important role in promoting student-athlete academic success. The more established programs understand the needs of their student population and accepted responsibility for providing academic resources for their student-athletes. Athletic academic advisors bridge the academic gap between the athletic department and the university as they assist student-athletes with navigating athletic and academic responsibilities.

Harrison et al. (2006) noted that some student-athletes often enter college performing at lower levels than their non-athletic peers; academic personnel such as faculty, academic advisors and university administrators must be advised on this difference so they can understand the situation and work with these students to understand what areas may keep them from being academically successful. Athletic academic advisors serve as mediators to assist with the navigation of university resources and expectations. This role serves as a liaison to other academic resources on campus. Student-athletes spend a lot of time focusing on athletic requirements, and it is important that coaches and athletic administrators recognize the factors that contribute to their academic and personal development (Broughton & Neyer, 2001)

Athletic academic advisors serve as a resource to help students integrate into campus communities. Valentine and Taub (1999) indicated that counselors can encourage student-athletes to develop friendships in their class and residence halls or select a nonathletic student as a roommate to counteract feelings of isolation. This would help students in forming an identity outside of being student-athletes and providing them with resources beyond the day in and day out routine of being around their team. Academic advisors can give students an idea of what outlets exist. They also have the ability to put students in a position to see that others are dealing with similar issues. This can help students deal with concerns and the ways they navigate their identities by realizing that they are not the only ones dealing with certain issues.

Athletic academic advisors play a significant role in the campus integration of student-athletes and the selection of their majors. Foster and Huml (2017) found that while many individuals and university and athletic factors contribute to a student-

athlete's selection of an academic major, the most common are coaches, academic

advisors, major interests, and the rigor of academic program and faculty. Athletic

academic advisors help navigate the university expectations while attempting to find an

academic program that will allow the student to be successful. This informal academic

experience is key to helping student-athletes trust that they are receiving the best possible

information for their academic career.

Athletic academic advisors play a role of student advocate, in many cases helping

students find a major and navigating their academic careers in tandem with the students'

university advisors. There have been a number of institutional figures that support the

needs of student-athletes, with many being advocates for student-athlete academic

success. Rosner and Shropshire (2011) discussed student-athlete reform by looking at the

Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, a non-profit organization that focuses on

the needs of student-athletes. Rosner and Shropshire (2011) stated that athletic academic

centers are designed to keep student-athletes eligible to continue athletic participation,

which often means that less focus is placed on guiding them toward a degree (Rosner &

Shropshire, 2011). Fountain and Finley (2011) also found that in many cases the notion

of providing a quality educational experience becomes moot, as athletic academic advisor

relationships with student-athletes put them in the position to direct their academic

pursuits. Much research has been done to show how the influence of advisors affects

students feeling connected on college campuses.

Huml et al. (2014) explained that active student involvement with campus often

starts with student-athletes meeting with their on-campus academic advisor. This

interaction gives the student-athlete an opportunity to interact with a member of the

campus community, which can increase student connection with academic resources and promote personal development. Student-athletes often state that the athletic facilities keep them from connecting with the greater campus community, as they spend most of their time in athletic tutoring and advising spaces which causes them to miss out on connecting with faculty members and participating in on-campus organizations (Huml et al., (2014).

Broughton and Neyer (2001) noted that university officials such as faculty and student affairs professionals need to do a better job of understanding the needs of student-athletes. Athletic academic advisors work as a bridge to better connect the formal academic expectations to the informal relationships needed to provide a support service to student-athletes. University officials benefit by having knowledge of a specific sport; this can be used to enhance the relationship with student-athletes, but in cases where there is no prior knowledge this does not hinder the ability to learn more about the demands of be a student-athlete (Broughton & Neyer, 2001)

Student Support

Student affairs professionals play an important role in helping student-athletes learn how to take responsibility for their educational experience by highlighting the positive experiences available to them in the campus community (Hill, Burch-Ragan, & Yates, 2001). Student affairs personnel need to be included in the conversation regarding the needs of student-athletes, as they provide insight into programming that can be used to create student-centered spaces on campus and facilitate policies and programs that contribute to the ultimate academic success of student-athletes (Hill et al., 2001). Having a historical context of the academic culture of a university makes student affairs professionals a valuable resource. They are better equipped to help student-athletes

navigate the campus so they can make the most out of their academic experience (Watt & Moore III, 2001).

Kissinger et al. (2011) highlighted that it is important for professionals that support student-athletes remain sensitive to the stress of playing sports at a collegiate level. Jordan and Denson (1990) discussed the fact that student-athletes often have difficulty taking advantage of workshops and student services because these resources often conflict with their busy practice and travel schedules.

Hill et al. (2001) noted that it is important to teach student-athletes how to take responsibility for their actions, adding that student affairs professionals help teach them to value the many opportunities available to them and reduce the need for interventions by higher education officials. Person et al. (2001) examined the role student affairs professionals play in the development of women student-athletes and indicate that it is important for officials in these roles to support the needs and overall development of these student-athletes; student affairs professionals must work to stay involved in supporting these athletes despite the barriers found in higher education and athletics.

Watt and Moore III (2001) discussed the importance of providing academic services to meet the needs of student-athletes, academic affairs personnel need to understand the factors that contribute to creating positive student-athlete experiences and find ways to help them balance their academic and athletic obligations. Having strong working relationships with athletic department personnel is an important factor in providing effective student support services for athletics. One of the most critical factors to promote student-athlete success has been student service personnel working to build relationships with coaches and athletic administration (Jordan & Denson, 1990).

Mangold et al. (2003) defined academic integration as strong affiliation to the school, both in and outside of the classroom, academic integration is seen when students have education related interactions with their faculty or are involved in study groups, or peer mentoring; these connections prove to be important in creating an academic community. Huml et al. (2014) concluded that student-athletes must seek educational experience outside of athletic spaces. Athletic academic centers can stop them from creating connections across campus because they are not able to connect with faculty and participate in campus sponsored organizations and events.

Formal Social Experiences

Coaches

Coaches play an important part in all aspects of the student-athletes lives which extend well beyond their sport (Sharp & Sheilley, 2008). Coaches often consult the academic services to understand the needs of their student-athletes and what can be done to better assist them (Jordan & Denson, 1990). Coaches are one of the most influential figures for student-athletes because their relationship begins prior to the student enrollment at the university.

Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) stated that development can be affected positively and negatively. Feelings of not belonging and inadequate social development can cause student-athletes to not be successful and hinder that academic progress. Aghazadeh and Kyei (2009) note that the coaching staff is most important because they have the most power and the most influence over the athletes.

Coaches typically focus on athletics and students may not receive the confidence building that they need to be successful in their academic endeavors. Howard-Hamilton

and Sina (2001) noted that student-athletes should take steps related to all of their strengths, not just their athleticism. Coaches, faculty members, and athletic academic advisors need to be aware of this and find ways to offset feelings of inferiority and promote athletic as well as academic success.

Adler and Adler (1991) revealed that many student-athletes reported a lack of engagement in their academic goals due to minimum reinforcement from the athletic department. This reduced reinforcement led students to have lower academic expectations so they can focus more on their athletic goals. Adler and Adler (1991) found that coaches' intervention in student-athletes' academic lives play a key role in their academic performance; assistant coaches also play a role in the student academic success-- they often help them with academic concerns associated with deciding on a major, registering them for courses, and contacting their instructors to monitor their class attendance.

Coaches can assist student-athletes by helping them understand that at this point in their life they should begin to know who they are and what it will take for them to accomplish their goals. This may mean distancing themselves from other athletes to focus on the student aspect of being a student-athlete. Sharp and Sheilley (2008) noted that at this point strategy can be sufficiently implemented to foster an environment in which core values and meaningful educational experiences for student-athletes are truly desired.

Coaches typically recruit students to the university to play a specific sport. Other than their parents, a student-athlete's position coach has the greatest ability to enact change and help student-athletes acclimate themselves to the university setting. Sharp and Sheilley (2008) indicated that coaches contribute to all areas of a student-athlete's lives,

their influence extending beyond the sport, and many of their connections to the university start with their coaches' influence.

Sharp and Sheilley (2008) argued that coaches have a level of influence and control that needs to be used not only to support their athletic needs but also to highlight the importance of academics. This influence helps student-athletes realize that there is more to being a student-athlete and that they must take advantage of the resources available to them on campus. Developing a formal and informal relationship helps students see the importance of the relationship with their coaches.

CHAMPS Life Skills

CHAMPS Life Skills, an initiative created by the NCAA, provides programming to help student athlete navigate, life during and after athletics, this resource gives student an opportunity to be exposed to resources to help them develop personal and professional skills. Watt and Moore III (2001) noted that participating in intercollegiate athletics adds an unexpectedly complex layer to student-athletes' campus life. NCAA Life Skills is a program facilitated at every member institution to provide developmental life skills to student-athletes and to prepare them for life during and after college (NCAA.org, 2019).

Person, Benson-Quaziena, and Rogers (2001) defined CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes Minds for Personal Success) as a program that teaches life skills for athletes and provides transition and mentoring programs, in addition to developmental support and assistance. CHAMPS Life skills provides a formal avenue for the NCAA to provide formal resources to help student-athletes address life outside of athletics. Programs such as CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) help give student-athletes the tools they need to not only deal with on campus experiences but also to

navigate their experiences well after they have left the university setting (Person et al., 2001).

Storch and Ohlson (2009) discussed how model programs give their student-athletes tools needed to deal with obstacles and to accept responsibility for their own success. Many outstanding institutions have hired life skills coordinators to coordinate resources to prepare students for life after college (Storch & Ohlson, 2009).

Broughton and Neyer's (2001) research looked at how life skills programming focuses on key resources to promote success during and after college; these programs highlight personal, practical, and emotional issues, communication skills training, time management, and career exploration. Some athletic departments offer life skills as a course or a series of workshops to offer guidance and assistance in navigating issues that will arise during college and life well after college.

Informal Social Experiences

Peer Interactions

Student athletes often have very little peer interaction due to the time constraints of being a student athlete. Gayles and Hu (2009) argued that athletic departments can enhance the services provided to student-athletes by helping them interact with students other than athletes, especially for those student-athletes that spend a lot of time in athletic-related activities. Gayles and Hu (2009) went on to say that it is important to promote relationships with their non-athlete peers to help shape interactions with the greater campus community, which helps create chances for student-athletes to interact with their non-athlete peers.

Student-athletes have many factors that contribute to their success. Much research focuses on outside factors, but they do not take into consideration that intercollegiate athletics is the best example of community that is being created with the greatest student diversity. Gayles and Hu (2009) noted that student-athletes need to have meaningful interactions and relationships with their non-athletic peers in order to keep student-athletes from missing out on educational and social opportunities outside of athletics.

Lubker and Etzel's (2007) research noted a high level of social support was found to be a factor in women student-athletes integration into the campus community; these students felt more attached to the university because they had made relationships with their student peer groups to help them get adjusted to the campus environment. Storch and Ohlson (2009) found that increased academic confidence was achieved when students interact with peer led academic support services. Storch and Ohlson (2009) went on to say that student-athletes that are transitioning from secondary to postsecondary schooling experience a challenge in integrating into the campus community. Interactions with the university community such as faculty and peers help students manage the change in behavior needed to be successful in a university setting.

Informal peer interaction has a positive effect on student-athlete academic and social success. Gayles and Hu (2009) noted that athletic involvement often separates student-athletes from their non-athletic peer groups, which affects their academic involvement that normally accompany college attendance.

Conclusion

The NCAA has placed many accountability measures such as APR and GSR as tools to measure the short term and long-term academic success of student athletes. It is

critical that the institutions understand the contributors to student-athlete academic and personal development, noting that course offerings, academic support services, and major options are just a few factors that can contribute to the student-athletes' educational experiences. This study looked at the academic and social experiences of student-athletes related to their academic success.

Much of the research associated with student-athlete success focuses on the university's efforts to provide resources to meet the student success standards put in place by the NCAA such as APR and GSR. The research then looked at the experiences that contributed to student success and students perceived barriers related to the primary elements of Tinto's (1993) framework: formal and informal academic and formal and informal social. By using Tinto's model as a framework, this study focused on the student-athlete perspectives of how these experiences serve as barriers and facilitators of their academic success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how formal and informal academic and social experiences facilitate or inhibit the academic success of student-athletes. The study looked at the college experience of student-athletes and seek to have a better understanding of what resources student-athletes feel have contributed to their academic success. This chapter describes research questions, research design, sample, instrumentation, definitions, and data collection procedure.

Research Design

Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into a research setting to obtain an in-depth understanding of the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). A qualitative study allows the researcher to tell a story by using the words of the study participants to better understand their experiences. This research design was used by the researcher to understand the participants by creating a deep meaning of a person's experiences and how they articulate their experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2012)

Qualitative research seeks answers to questions in the real world (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This study specifically employs interviews to conduct a qualitative investigation which allowed the researcher to use the life experience of student-athletes to better understand how academic and social experiences in the university setting served as barriers or facilitators of their academic success.

This study looked at the academic and social experiences of student-athletes at a Division I institution. A qualitative, interview-based research design is appropriate

because the purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences and activities associated with being a student-athlete (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), allowing the researcher to use the words of the research participants to understand their collegiate experience. The study triangulates the interview findings with reviews of relevant documents from the university and NCAA data.

Research Questions

Rossman and Rallis (2012) indicated that research questions are seldom simple and sometimes find answers to questions that were unintended. The research questions in this study are connected to the theoretical framework used in this research project. Tinto's (1993) Model of Longitudinal Departure has many sections that contribute to student departure. For the purpose of this study, the researcher only looked at the formal and informal academic and social experiences that contributed to student-athlete academic success.

The researcher designed the questions to better understand what experiences have been barriers to or have facilitated the academic success of student-athletes. The following research questions were examined in this study:

1. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their formal academic experiences?

2. How do student-athletes at Division I Institutions describe their informal academic experiences?

3. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal social experiences?

4. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their informal social experiences?

Setting and Participants

The chosen research institution is a large public 4-year university located in North Carolina. The research institution has 100 possible majors serving 25,000 undergraduate students. This institution serves a high number of transfer students and has a six-year graduation rate of over 50%.

The research institution is in Division I as defined by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The institution fields 16 intercollegiate sports consisting of eight men's sports: Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer, Tennis, Track & Field, and eight women's sports: Basketball, Cross Country, Golf, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, Track & Field, and Volleyball. The participants in this study consisted of students participating in intercollegiate athletics as a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association as a Division I student-athletes.

Rishe (2003) discussed the myth of the "dumb jock" and how the idea came from high profile and visible sports that consistently had students that have very low graduation rates. Paskus (2012) research indicated that academic challenges are sport specific, and some sports have specific academic issues that need to be addressed. The sample consisted of student-athletes from men's and women's sports to better understand what experiences have the greatest contribution to their formal and informal academic and social experiences. Paskus (2012) goes on to note that well-funded academic centers, may still struggle to meet the needs of their student-athletes because some teams recruit students that are at substantial academic risk; colleges must understand the needs of their

student-athlete population and make adjustments to meet the needs of their at-risk students. Hill et al. (2001) indicated that there can be a difficult transition for students in revenue generating sports such as men's basketball and football.

Rosner and Shropshire (2011) went on to say that football and men's basketball are model enterprises that generate enough revenue to cover scholarships for hundreds of athletes. Rosner and Shropshire (2011) also identified women's basketball and baseball as profitable by noting that these sports often break even at major institutions.

There are many revenue and non-revenue generating sports, and this study targeted all student-athletes at the research institution. This decision was based on access to student-athletes due to time constraints and casting a wide enough net to identify enough research participants. Ultimately in order to recruit enough students to reach saturation, the decision was made to open the study up to all student-athletes at the institution.

Data Collection and Analysis

Rossman and Rallis (2012) discusses the process of note that data collection and analysis should not be according to a quantitative or qualitative distinction, but rather according to what the researcher wants to learn and the questions that lead toward those answers.

A purposeful sampling method was used to best capture the total number of student-athletes for the research study. The goal of the researcher was to identify 7-10 potential student-athletes to participate in the study. Nine research participants were identified and were able to participate in this study. To recruit students for this study, I visited university classes, student events, and reached out to athletic department

personnel to pass out flyers identifying the study and the time commitment. Finally, I emailed all currently enrolled student-athletes to participate in this study.

I used interviews as a tool to help me understand the experiences of the research participants. Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that this type of interviewing method has two purposes, to explore and gather experiential narrative material that may serve to develop a deep understanding of the population being studied, going on to say that interviews can be used as a vehicle to better understand the research participants and the meaning of their experiences. Research participants were asked to sign up for an individual interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes. During the interview, student-athletes were asked questions from the interview protocol (Appendix A) aimed at understanding how their experiences fit within the framework of the study. Interviews in this study lasted from 20 to 30 minutes.

Once data were collected, the data analysis process began. Each interview was transcribed, and thematic coding was conducted. Common themes were classified based on the responses from the interviews and categorized for further analysis. The themes were later compared with Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Departure, in order to better understand student-athletes' experiences relevant to the theoretical framework.

Creswell (2007) indicated that data analysis begins with reading through the written transcript to gain an overall understanding of the material gathered. Once that step is complete, description helps to formulate meanings and clustering common themes for further analysis. Once the analysis was complete a description of the student-athlete experience could be provided based on the context of the theoretical model.

Trustworthiness

Rossman and Rallis (2012) defined trustworthiness as conducting research according to norms for acceptable and responsible research while making sure to be respectful to the research participants and being understanding to the time the participants are taking to divulge their personal experiences. Multiple strategies were used to ensure that the study is trustworthy. I have included a subjectivity statement in an effort to disclose any bias that may exist.

Rossman and Rallis (2012) noted that triangulation is a way to draw from several data sources, to inform the same question or issue by gathering data through other techniques. In an effort to enhance credibility through triangulation, this study included a review of relevant documents that were gathered through a thorough review of the NCAA and institution's websites. An additional step to ensure credibility was the use of member checks, whereby preliminary findings were shared with all of the participants for initial feedback on the emergent ideas in their interviews. Only one research participant responded indicating that they had no issue with how they were represented in their interview and had nothing else that they wanted to contribute.

The study also used the experience of student-athletes to determine how their shared experiences fit into Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Departure. Student-athlete responses were transcribed and coded to break their interviews down into common themes. The research sample consisted of student-athletes at the research institution. The potential small size of the research participants at seven to ten student-athletes limited transferability due to a small sample, but the focus on those involved will enhance the focus on the student-athletes.

A third area of trustworthiness employed in this study is the use of a peer-reviewer to ensure dependability. A fellow doctoral student and qualitative researcher reviewed and conducted preliminary coding on transcripts from the first two interviews. The preliminary themes were compared with the primary researcher's themes to check the dependability of the coding process.

Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that trustworthiness in research must be ethically conducted and aware of the power dynamics associated with the study. To minimize coercion the researcher worked with athletic department staff and directly recruited students for this study instead of working with coaches.

Ethical Considerations

This research project posed low risk to the participants. The purpose of the research was provided to each student in the study and a statement outlining their right at any time to not complete the interview. Furthermore, students were informed that this study was purely voluntary and that their coaches and athletic administration would not have access to their names, personal information, or responses.

The interview questions specifically deal with the students' interaction on campus. All participants' information was confidential and would not be shared with the university or the athletic department. Data were held on campus in a secure locked location, and all digital information was held in Google Drive, which is protected by the university two factor authentication protocol. The study protocol was approved by the IRB.

Subjectivity Statement

I earned a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology from a private school in North Carolina. I am a second-generation college student whose parents put a high premium on education. During middle school, I began playing sports, with my primary sport being football. This high school opportunity allowed me to earn a scholarship to play football at a private Division I institution.

I earned my master's degree in Adult Technical Education at a public institution in West Virginia. During my time there I had the opportunity to work with football and men's and women's basketball players. I also served as academic advisor and Prop Cop. A Prop Cop serves as an individual who works closely with recruited student-athletes that due to their academic status out of high school, have not officially earned a scholarship, and must prove that they can be successful academically before they can be offered a full scholarship. These students focused only on their academic experience and worked to earn their academic eligibility. I also served as an academic advisor for two sports, working to help these students stay on track academically. After working at this institution, I also advised football players at two other public institutions, where my primary job responsibility was to help student-athletes navigate the institution's academic responsibilities and to remain academically eligible.

In this section, I framed my passion for working with student-athletes. Being a former student-athlete, I wanted to make sure that resources were in place that would help other students earn their degree and move into the world. My background gives me a perspective that relates to the participants in this study and may impact how I interact with the study participants.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the methodology used for conducting a qualitative, interview-based study aimed at understanding the experiences of student-athletes at a Division I institution. This study used a formal and informal academic and social experiences to organize and understand the student-athletes responses to the research questions.

Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Departure was used as a framework. This study was based on the interviews of nine student-athletes at the research institution. The athletic department assisted the researcher in finding research participants that met the criteria for the study.

The chapter outlined the research design, data collection, and data analysis for this study. This chapter also discussed the factors that contribute to the trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and finally providing a subjectivity statement to address any bias the researcher may have while conducting the study.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

Introduction – Purpose and Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to use Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of

Institutional Departure as a framework to understand what formal and informal social and

academic experiences served as barriers and/or may facilitate the academic success of

student-athletes. The research participants attend a large Division I institution with more

than 20,000 undergraduate students. The research questions are:

a. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal

academic experiences?

b. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal

academic experiences?

c. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal

social experiences?

d. How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal

social experiences?

This chapter includes a discussion of the researcher's findings in the nine

interviews conducted for this study.

Participant Summary

The participants in this study consisted of student-athletes at a four-year public

institution. The students participate in intercollegiate athletics as a member of the

National Collegiate Athletic Association as a Division 1 student-athletes. Purposeful

sampling was used to recruit student-athletes for the research study. The researcher

worked with the athletic department to identify students that would like to participate in the study in addition to other recruitment methods described in Chapter 3.

There are many revenue and non-revenue generating sports at the research institution. Instead of focusing on one sport the study was opened to all student-athletes to increase the population of available participants. This decision was based on access to student-athletes due to time constraints and availability of research participants.

Pseudonyms were assigned for participant anonymity. Participants in this study consisted of eight women and one man from four sports: women's golf, women's basketball and men's and women's track and field. Specifically, there was one student from the women's golf team, one student from the men's track team, four members of the women's track team and three members of the women's basketball team. The students consisted of five first-time, full-time freshman and four transfer students with a variety of majors across campus. Due to the nature of the participants' schedules, interviews were conducted in person and by phone, Table 2 outlines the participant data and how their interviews were obtained.

Data Collection

The nine student-athletes at the research institution served as the source of the data for this study. Student recruitment began in May 2019 once the IRB was approved. The researcher worked with the athletic department, as well as in-person and email recruitment, to gather participants for this study. The athletic department provided the researcher with the contact information for student athletes to be recruited as research participants. Once students were identified, an interview was scheduled for a day and time that fit the participant's schedule. Interviews were either in person or on the phone,

during the months of August and September. There ended up being more phone that in

person interview due to research participant time constraints. Each interview used the

interview protocol in appendix A. After each interview the recording was transcribed for

analysis and member checking was performed on each participant to check for accuracy.

Table 2

Research participants

Name	Sport	Gender	Racial classification	Interview	Major	Enrollment
Emma	Women's Golf	Female	Caucasian	Phone	Business	Freshman
Kim	Women's Track	Female	African American	In Person	Science	Transfer
Brendon	Men's Track	Male	African American	In Person	Social Science	Transfer
Rachel	Women's Track	Female	Caucasian	Phone	Engineering	Freshman
Ashly	Women's Track	Female	African American	In Person	Health	Freshman
Mary	Women's Track	Female	Caucasian	Phone	Health	Freshman
Jasmine	Women's Basketball	Female	African American	Phone	Social Science	Transfer
Carmen	Women's Basketball	Female	African American	Phone	Engineering	Transfer
Lisa	Women's Basketball	Female	African American	Phone	Social Science	Freshman

Data Analysis

All interviews were coded manually using deductive coding focusing on the

theoretical framework and the research questions. The interviews were analyzed and

transcribed after each interview. This was done to ensure the consistency of the

interviews and to make sure the researcher's interview protocol was effectively gaining

insight into the research questions. It was found that no changes needed to be made to

the interview protocol because after transcribing initial interviews the researcher was

gaining insight into the research participants experience leading to no follow up questions

needing to be asked after the interviews had concluded.

The interview transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 12 to assist the researcher with

coding. Each interview was coded manually and entered into NVivo 12 for further

analysis. The initial coding came from the interview responses and relevant to the theoretical framework and supporting literature. The researcher used a deductive process based on the study's framework.

Using NVivo, the researcher also used word count query and matrix coding as tools to further analyze the research data. As another tool to discover common themes within the interview data the researcher looked at the word frequency and the top 50 occurrences. High frequency words were athlete, academic, experiences, school, help, coach, social, friends, work, hard, time and studying to name a few. Finding that many of the themes found in the literature review were found in high frequency within the interview.

The researcher also used NVivo12 to perform matrix coding. This tool allowed the researcher to see the distribution of codes across the interview participants. This coding method gave the researcher the opportunity to see how key points from the interviews overlapped, reinforcing the initial coding performed by the researcher.

After the first two interviews, the researcher reviewed the anonymized transcripts with a fellow qualitative researcher. The purpose of these meetings was to review the coding the researcher had completed after the first two transcripts were transcribed. We reviewed the codes and discussed what common themes were found. We also discussed the initial coding of the data and reviewed other options to ensure coding was done in a way to cover all relevant themes.

The codes were discussed similar themes found in the first two interviews, the researcher highlighted similar themes, and we discussed the best way to organize the data. This allowed the researcher to better understand how to organize the codes to make

the most out of the research data. These meetings were beneficial because they helped the researcher understand the best coding method to highlight the findings in the interviews.

Document analysis consisted of using the research institution and NCAA websites to see if items discussed in the participant interviews were found in these sources. The analysis began by doing a search on the research institution and NCAA websites to evaluate themes and resources that were discussed in the interviews.

The university website was used as part of the triangulation process to follow up on the student statements about their institution. Some of the students indicated that they were a part of a student-athlete organization designed to give student-athletes a voice in the athletic department and provide on and off-campus opportunities for community involvement. The university website provided a link to the student's discussions about being a part of this group and how it played a role in their relationship to the athletic department and campus. This website also highlighted the participants' diversity in this organization across sports as it gave student-athletes a chance to work with students from other sports and truly be a part of a student run organization.

One participant indicated that she participated in a summer bridge program that provided her an opportunity to come to campus and have social and academic experiences with the university and her non-athletic peers prior to starting full time. This website outlined the many opportunities available to students beyond the summer bridge program, and the research participant indicated that she still uses this resource today to help her connect with campus.

The NCAA had many links that directly tied to the experience discussed by the research participants, the website used in this study, focused on graduation success, and

academic performance information. The researcher used some of the findings in this document analysis to highlight the programs in place to promote student success. The NCAA manual, which is the governing rule book, was used to identify specific rules related to the experience of student-athletes in this study.

Member checks were done after the interviews were completed and had been transcribed. The researcher emailed copies of the interview to all the research participants and shared the common themes found in the culmination of all of the interviews. The researcher gave the participants an opportunity to give feedback and see if there was anything else that they wanted to add.

No participant indicated that they wanted to add any additional information to their interviews. The ones that responded indicated that they thought the interview looked fine and it accurately captured their feeling.

<div align="center">

Findings

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Thematic analysis was used to breakdown the research participants' interviews to determine what contributed to their experience at the research institution. The analysis resulted in primary themes that the research participants discussed that connected with the theoretical framework. This initial analysis found many themes that answer the research questions proposed in this study. The word frequency analysis performed in NVivo 12 reinforces the themes that were found by the researcher by highlighting how often these themes appeared in the interviews.

This section looked at the common themes found in the data and how they apply to the research questions (see Table 3). There is a section that highlights additional findings that are relevant to the student-athletes' experiences. The common themes

associated with question 1 are: academic advisor, faculty, student support, study hall, and

tutoring. The common themes for question 2 are coaches and student groups. The

common theme for question 3 was faculty. The common theme for question 4 was peer

interactions. The final sections look at barriers to success.

Table 3
Common Themes

Framework	Themes
Formal Academic	Academic Advisor
	Faculty
	Student Support
	Study hall
	Tutoring
Informal Academic	Coaches
	Student Groups
Formal Social	Faculty
Informal Social	Athletic peer interactions
	Non-Athletic Peer
	Interactions
Other Themes	Stress
	Time Constraint

Research Question 1: How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe

their formal academic experiences?

This question gave the interview participants an opportunity to discuss their

formal academic experiences at the research institution. Based on the interview data, the

common themes associated with this question were athletic academic advising, faculty

interactions, and student support and services such as study hall and tutoring. Each

section was further broken down, based on the research participants' responses.

Academic advising highlighted the factors the research participants related to their academic success, transfer student experiences, and stakeholders that contributed to their success. Faculty interactions both positive and negative experienced discussed the relationships and interactions the participants had with their faculty. These formal academic experiences directly relate to common support services that the students have received at the research institution.

Academic advisor. The services that academic advisors provide was a common theme that five research participants indicated played a role in their academic success. Academic advisors assist student-athletes in their transition into the college by helping them navigate the athletic and academic requirements necessary to maintain academic and athletic eligibly. Transfer students rely on academic advisors to help them transition to their new schools and navigate the courses needed to meet their requirements. There was one research participant that indicated that she had so many academic advisors that she was unsure who she should contact for assistance. This section looked at the research participants responses to the role academic advisor played in student success and transfer student experiences. This section also looks at other stakeholders that play an important role in the research participants experience at the research institution.

Student success. Academic advisors play an important role in promoting the academic success of student athletes; often they are the first people student athletes meet when they come to campus to discuss their class schedules. This relationship is important because student athletes know that there is someone in the athletic department that they can go to when they have a questions or concern. This connection or at least familiarity can be seen in the research participant responses.

Emma discussed the experience with working with her athletic academic advisor. As an international student, there were additional hurdles that she faced. Emma discussed how "the first year she didn't know anything about college but being able to go and see my academic advisor from the athletic department was really big for me and just going in there and talking to him about classes, about grades [was, too]." This student relied heavily on her advisor to navigate her transition into the research institution. This relationship was more important because she was an international student and she relied on the guidance to help her understand the campus.

Mary's experience with academic advising helped her transition into a new major. She noted that "My advisor really worked with me. She's essentially amazing. Whenever I was switching my major from pre-nursing to pre-kinesiology, she understood all the classes that I had to take." Mary went on to highlight that her academic advisor is available whenever she needs assistance indicating that "I don't see her as often as some of my teammates. But every time that I do get with her, I am not scared to go talk to her and I feel like I can come to her about anything."

Many of the students indicated that the academic support staff contributed to their academic success. Rachel said that her advisor had the greatest effect on her transition into college indicated that:

So last year I asked my academic advisor even the smallest question and she was super helpful. This year I don't have to ask her as many things, but I know she's there for me, if I need her as I get adjusted to college, I don't need her as much, but she's there and helpful.

Lisa talked about the relationship with her athletic academic advisor by saying that:

He's just making sure that we're staying on top of like making sure we know the

courses that we need to take, helping us put our schedules together, getting us

with, the right types of professors, things like that. Making sure we're on course

taking all the classes that I need to take to graduate on time.

Transfer Students. There were four research participants that identified as

transfer students. Three talked about how they relied on their athletic academic advisors

during their transition. Brendon, Carmen, and Jasmine discussed how they heavily relied

on the assistance their academic advisor provided them. They all indicated that their

academic advisors played a key role in helping them get acclimated to campus and

getting them on track academically.

Brendon indicated that "she (his academic advisor) gives us enough attention and

cares about what we actually want to do, she makes sure you stay on track, which is a big

thing." Brendon went on to highlight that "my academic advisor helped a lot with just

helping me stay focused." Brendon's experience mirrored many of the other research

participants. His experience as a transfer student also showed the importance of having

someone in place to help student-athletes transition into life on campus and as a student-

athlete.

Carmen's athletic academic advisor put her in the right direction on which class

she needed to take and instructed her to take classes to get on track. "I check in if I need

him, and we have a good relationship. He told me what I needed to take. He guided me

on my major." There were no issues with the transfer process. She relied heavily on the

service that her advisor provided, which helped her get back on track when she

transferred.

Jasmine also indicated that her advisor played an important role in her transition to the research institution.

So, I felt like my academic advisor he's pretty good, I am a transfer student, so he really helped me. He guides me, told me exactly what I needed for the next few years. He broke it down. He basically told me what I had and didn't have." Jasmine went on to say that "He really, keeps my head level. Even if I did get a bad grade, he tells me encouraging words.

Other Stakeholders. All the research participants highlighted the important role their athletic academic advisors played; this section looks at other stakeholders that contributed to the student-athletes educational experiences. Overwhelmingly, the participants had a good experience with their academic advisors. Ashly was the only participant that had concerns with her athletic academic advisor. She was concerned because she wasn't sure who to go to for questions noting that:

It is so confusing. I have three different advisors and I have to go see all three of them. So, when I see three different people, they're all telling me something different. They're not all ever on one accord. I hear one thing from my major advisor, my athletic advisor and she's telling me I'm good. Then I might come over here (secondary advisor from Bridge Program) and they're like, oh no, you can't take that. I usually come to my secondary advisor to double check.

In addition to athletic academic advisors, Mary indicated that the director of student-athlete development also played a huge role in promoting her success, unlike academic advisors who help navigate a student's academic requirements,

I definitely have to say the director of student-athlete development has really

pushed me not only with like SAC and stuff, but outside of athletics he is always

willing to make sure that not only me but everybody else is doing well putting

academics before their athletics.

Athletic academic advisors play an important role in the academic success of the

research participants. Each participant indicated the importance of their athletic academic

advisor, and the role they played in helping them transition into the university and

promote degree completion and academic success. Many of the participants seemed to

eventually distance themselves from their athletic advisors once they learned their way

around the institution. It is important to note that they also indicated that they knew they

had someone they could always go to if they needed a word of encouragement or needed

assistance.

Faculty. Faculty play an important part in the success of student-athletes. The

students in this study indicated having varying relationships with their faculty which

promotes success in the classroom, as well as helping to validate the student-athlete's

ability to be as successful in the classroom as they are in their sports. This section looked

at the experience that student-athletes have had in informal academic settings involving

faculty. Specifically, this section is broken down into positive and negative experiences

and adjusting to college.

Positive experiences. When asked about the participant's experience with faculty,

they had varying reactions. There were many positive experiences that stood out.

Brendon had the strongest relationship with a faculty member. He notes that as a transfer

student he was looking for an experience similar to what he had at his previous institution

describing, "I wasn't used to the way the teachers here taught because at my previous institution it was a much closer environment with the teachers." Because of this transition, he struggled academically his first semester: "I knew most of my (blinded) professors when I was at my first school we were on a first name basis we were able to actually just talk and it was like 15 and 20 kids in the class. Now, it's 30."

Mentorship. Faculty play an important role in helping students gain confidence and get acclimated to the campus environment. This can be even more important for student athletes as they balance the responsibilities of athletics and academics. This section looks at the role faculty play as mentors and how these interactions benefited the research participants.

Brendon wanted to develop a closer relationship with his faculty as he relied on those relationships at his previous institution. He wanted similar relationships at the research institution, stating that "it was nice to have teachers who knew you personally instead of you just coming to class and they trying to like force feed you information." He went on to say that during his second semester he had an American Studies teacher that he had a good relationship with, noting that "She would stay after class, I would just talk to her for a good second like my relationship with some of my teachers at my previous institution, where we could sit down on campus and just talk, they'll give you advice on academics, on life after academics."

Brendon has been able to build a relationship with a faculty member that helps him better connect with campus. This relationship has proven to be important to his connection to campus and promoting success. He found the campus connection he

needed during a rough academic time. The interaction he describes with his instructors has been important to his feeling of belonging on campus.

Student-athletes often miss a lot of classes due to travel with their sports. Emma stated that "I like my academic experience. I have friendly and open professors that really want to get to know you, not just as a student-athlete but as a person." She appreciates the effort that the professor put into helping student-athletes stay connected to class. Emma went on to say that "the professors are really helpful, they help the student-athletes a lot too, so we don't miss everything." This interaction is different than many discussed by students. Many students have an antagonistic relationship with faculty, with the expectation that their faculty are not understanding of their athletic responsibilities.

Rachel had a similar experience with one of her professors, noting that she doesn't have a relationship with every professor but discussed a connection she has made with one of her engineering professors. "Not every single one, but some you connect more with than others. And, my engineering teacher, I connected with him and I like going and talking to him and, you know, kind of talking about the future and like what the possibilities are for me. It just motivates me and encourages me to work harder in school." This faculty relationship helped Rachel understand the importance of faculty interaction. This type of relationship helps promote resources and connections outside of athletics.

Mary's experience was in line with many of the other interviewees, noting when asked about her academic experience on campus that "the professors are super awesome." She went on to say that "They really want to work with you go to their office

hours and they're super cool with you. They want you to succeed. They really teach you how to apply that information to your major."

Carmen's experience with one of her faculty members contributed to her applying to graduate school. She indicated that "I maintained a really high GPA throughout my career and I actually just got accepted into the master's program; my professors and my academic advisors guided me and helped me the whole way." When asked about why she decided to attend graduate schools, she stated: "she (her professor) was a mentor. We got really close when she was my professor and she helped me get into grad school." This faculty interaction along with the guidance of her advisor helped her with the advancement of her educational experience beyond undergraduate study.

Student support. Beyond the mentorship role, some faculty served as academic support for student athletes, to provide guidance or to let them know that they had the skills to be successful academically. This section reviews the instances where a professor's guidance helps the research participants understand how to perform academically and provide support to help the student achieved greater academic success.

Rachel's experience was slightly different; she indicated that she was struggling in one of her classes and she took advantage of all of the resources the class had to offer, noting "my professor had these supplemental instructions so I'm not too worried about my academics right now." She also discussed the role her TA had in helping her increase her grade in a course, understanding that just like the faculty member for the course, the TA is a valuable resource that can promote success. Rachel recalled the feeling she had when her TA took interest in her:

I got a 64% on a paper and it was not my best grade I had. That part was negative

for me. But I emailed the TA, I wanted to know how to improve, I want to grow

as a writer. So, she sat down and met with me and we just talked about it and she

told me what I did right, what I did wrong. So then after that meeting, I just felt a

lot better because I know what they're looking for and I know how to improve. I

learned that asking for help pays off.

Jasmine indicated that her experience with her faculty members had been out of

necessity. Because of the sport that she plays, she misses a lot of class. She said," I try to

communicate as much as I can to get the work done before it's due becausewe already

know what games are coming. So, I tell them a week before what I'm going to need for

next week. So, I may get it before the other students that way. I'll be ahead of the game.

I'm not missing nothing, you know, that's how I do mine." Jasmine indicated that this

planning has helped her be successful in the classroom.

The participants highlighted the benefit of their faculty interactions. Many of

them indicated that their experiences have contributed to their academic and personal

success. The feeling of faculty support is an important factor in student success. The

participants in this study highlighted these experiences and the positive outcomes

associated with the interactions with faculty.

Negative experiences. The previous section highlighted the positive experiences

that students discusses having. This section looked at some of the negative experiences,

and how this affected their educational experience. When asked about their barriers to

their academic success, some students had issues with how they were treated by their

instructors. Many had feelings of mistrust or hopelessness by the way their instructors approach them as student-athletes.

Ashly discussed the feeling of mistrust coming from her professors because she had an instructor that often followed up with her coaches after she indicated that she would be missing class due to an event. "They don't care if you're an athlete, you still have to do your work on time...when we travel and stuff, some of them will email our coaches and say, is this person on the travel squad for this weekend?" She also said that in spite of those experiences she feels like "they treat us like any other student, they treat us fair."

Brendon's experience as a transfer student was marked with positive and negative experiences. "I had a statistics teacher. I was struggling to learn the material, no doubt he was the best math teacher I ever had, and statistics is such a hard subject. He goes on to discuss how the semester before he had a really negative experience that contributed to his anxiety of being able to do well. He indicated that "I had a teacher say 70% of will fail his class because it just going to get harder," indicating that he believed that proclamation from his instructor and started the class thinking he would not be successful. "You hear the negativity and it's almost like dang I guess he has been teaching for years. He knows no matter how much you try, you will struggle…It's like a losing battle."

Brendon highlighted a difference in experiences when he retook a statistics class with a different instructor. The instructor told the class that "statistics is a hard subject and it's hard to learn. So whatever questions you have, ask them and we're going to literally break them down to understand how to process the question." He continues, "It

made me motivated to go to class when I felt like the teacher wanted us to pass the class." This experience was able to show Brendon that there are some faculty that care about the success of their students.

Kim's faculty experience dealt with managing her competition and practice schedule and turning in missed assignments due to travel for her sport. She noted that instead of giving her another assignment to make up what she missed while she was gone, her professor often exempted her from the missed assignment. Because of this, Kim's total grade was based on fewer assignments causing her to have to be perfect on the few assignments that made up her final grade. Kim notes that "this experience happened like twice as long as most of the time our lab teachers understood that they would exempt it. So, it wouldn't be a pass. It just would be exempt, which would make it harder for me to have to get an "A" in the class because you have less assignments."

Brendon's and Kim's experience as transfer students provides insight into experiences over time. Kim's concern was similar to Ashly's, which proved that faculty do not always understand the needs of student-athletes. She indicated that "Some faculty were understanding, some weren't. The faculty that were understanding had a sports background or they had some type of extracurricular activity. The ones that weren't understanding never really did extracurricular." Ashly continued:

> So, I actually did have a teacher one of my computer classes she just didn't care at all. She did not care if I had practice or if I have anything if it's her class, you were there and that was her priority and all she would say was school comes first, which you can't really argue with that influence on my academics.

The research participants highlighted many of their negative experiences stemming from a feeling of faculty not caring about the success of their students. Specifically, faculty do not always have a context for the specific needs of student-athletes. They should provide an environment that is supportive and understanding, which promotes student engagement and success. Faculty play an important role in the academic success of students and understand the needs of student-athletes, which could lead to a more engaging environment.

Student support. There are many opportunities for students to receive support on campus. The participants in this study indicated that a summer bridge program, a student probation program, tutoring, and study hall were resources used to promote academic success.

Ashly relied on her summer bridge program secondary advisor as a check and balance for her athletic and major advisor, indicating that she sometimes gets confused by the number of people giving her academic advice. "I usually come here (To her bridge program secondary advisor), just to double-check because I just feel like, he may have more of a feel for what I need." Ashly indicated she went to the summer bridge program to meet other people while taking seven credit hours. "You just get a feel for the campus. You take those classes and you have a mentor." This experience helped her get a feeling for campus before the rest of her teammates. It also gave her a campus perspective that was different from her teammates.

Only one participant indicated that they had academic issues while at the research institution. Brendon indicated that he was on academic probation after his first semester at the research institution. He participated in a rebound program, a service that the

research institution offers to help students on academic probation after their first term get back on track academically. Brendon specifically participated in a focus group where a facilitator meets weekly with students to see how they are progressing throughout the semester.

Brendon talked about his experience with the student probation program and the multiple options you could use to get back on track:

> I chose the option just to meet with a person, well counselor in life, a group of 15, like once a week. I like having somebody that actually talks about what happened last semester and talk about how you trying to react to it and where you want to go after it was actually something very valuable and kept me on track that could keep my grades up that second semester.

Brendon found this experience valuable in helping him get back on track academically.

No other participants indicated that they experienced an on-campus student support program outside of tutoring or study hall. Ashly and Brendon's experiences showed the importance of getting student-athletes involved on campus resources. It helps the student understand that there are resources available to them outside of athletics, and they make a difference in their college experience.

Study hall. Study hall is an important tool to promote student-athlete success. This space gives student-athletes a structured place and time to prepare for their classes. Not every participant discusses study hall, but it was a resource that came up in the study.

Brendon's experience with study hall was required when transferred to the research institution: "when I first got here, I was required to get six hours a week of study hall." This was dedicated time to make sure he could prepare for weekly assignments.

Emma valued the time she spends in study hall. She uses it as a space to dedicate time to work. "I'm probably the student-athlete that has the most hours spent in study hall, just because I studied so much better in study hall compared to studying at home. I can actually go to a place where I feel secure, it can be pretty relaxing where you can have a study room for yourself and just grind it out and instead of going home." Emma's experience highlighted the effectiveness of study hall. With the hectic schedule of being a student-athlete, understanding and dedicating time to study is important for academic success.

Mary also valued the time she spent in study hall; it gave her a space and time to focus on her academic success.

I really liked having that strict study hall at the very beginning of my freshman year. It definitely kept me on my time management, I used that time and it honestly helped me and kept me from having all-nighters in the library, making sure that I was getting it done.

Lisa was the only student to discuss having study hall on the road. As a women's basketball player, she spent a lot of time traveling with her team. She stated that on the road they have "required study hall hours that we have to do, you know, I'm not in study hall anymore, but those types of things that we had to do that's required I guess has helped me that time set aside that I had to be in the computer lab doing something productive." Lisa went on to specify:

It depends how long the trip is or sometimes we might be gone for like four days, five days in a row. We might have study hall one-hour mandatory for the entire trip, another hour mandatory for people who are actually in study hall as well.

Like I'm not in study hall right now on the road. I might have to do an hour

mandatory, just because you're on the road.

Tutoring.   Tutoring is a resource that helps students when they do not understand

concepts in class. Earlier participants indicated that they went to faculty or teaching

assistants when they needed help in a class. The participants that responded to the use of

resources indicated that they know that tutoring exists, and they have heard good things

about the people who work with student-athletes, but none of them have actually used the

tutoring services provided for them.

When asked about tutoring, Ashly responded saying "I probably should, but I

don't. And I get free tutoring, so I honestly should use it, but don't just because I don't

want to come out of the house. I'm lazy like that." She didn't indicate that she was having

any trouble in school, but she knows she could be doing better if she took advantage of

this resource. Emma had a similar experience indicating that:

It's really good apparently. You can hand in papers and they help you make it

really good. Those writing centers in the tutoring center also had like one

professor or we have a lot of like call it teacher assistants and they can help you a

lot. They are usually very nice and, you can send over papers to them enough--

your ridiculous questions you don't want to ask the professor about.

Mary's response to tutoring was," I have not had tutoring services so far," but she

goes on to say that she relies more on her peers for assistance than the tutoring available

to her. "Usually I like to send a snippet of my paper or a paragraph or a sentence or two

or something like that to a friend who's an English major." Students in this study

indicated a number of formal academic experiences that have contributed to their success.

They did indicate some setbacks, but no one seemed to really use the tutoring available to them, overall this was an underutilized resource that could be used to promote success.

Research Question 2: How do student-athletes at a Division I Institutions describe their informal academic experiences?

 The primary informal academic experiences, found in the interviews, had to deal with faculty experiences beyond the classroom. Two participants could describe an informal academic relationship that they had with their faculty. These relationships highlighted the student feeling of belonging and academic achievement.

Faculty. Brendon indicated that he had a difficult time adjusting at the research institution. As noted previously, he participated in a reform program to help students on academic probation. Brendon was used to small classes, so it was a shock when he transferred. He also wanted to build relationships with his professors at the new institution like the relationships he had developed at his previous institution.

Brendon indicated that he was able to develop a relationship with his American Studies professors. He highlighted the relationship he developed with his professor saying that "I would literally just talk, and she would just give you some confident advice or just paying attention to what you're doing." Brendon has been able to build a relationship with a faculty member, which helps him better connect with campus. This relationship has proven to be important to his connection to campus and promoting success.

Mary's experience had to deal with a faculty member giving her the confidence she needed to understand her ability as a student. Mary discussed feelings of inadequacy when turning in some of her work. This caused her to think she was not capable.

Mary indicated that this changed when one of her professors reached out to her about a report she had submitted: "I was not feeling too confident about the lab report that I wrote in just because it was the very first one. I was a little nervous about turning it in. I was worried that I had forgotten something. Actually, he emailed me a few days after I turned it in, and he told me that it was one of the best reports that he ever graded and that he would be posting it onto our class webpage as kind of an example." This experience showed her that she was able to do good work, and the professor's correspondence helped her understand she was as capable as any other student.

Mary goes on to note that: "So that was something that kind of made me feel really good because writing is definitely not something that I've been strong at and just hearing that was kind of like, okay, so maybe I do have like that writing level." This interaction gave Mary the confidence to help her understand that she is as capable as any other student. Similar to Brendon having a faculty member show interest in their personal and academic experiences, outreach promoted an environment of success by knowing that there are people on campus that truly care about their success.

Research Question 3: How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their formal social experiences?

Coaches and student groups are the two primary themes found in question 3. Coaches played a significant role in helping student-athletes get acclimated to campus. Coaches did not play a direct role in a student's academic development, but they provide an outlet and support system to promote academic success. Coaches played an important role in recruiting student- athletes, providing mentorship and academic support. Because

of this relationship, coaches seemed to be the student-athletes' go to people when the student had an issue.

Coaches. The role coaches play in student-athlete interactions on campus seems to be important, as each interviewee had a memory or a story about why they chose to come to the research institution based on their relationship with their coach. The two Women's Basketball transfer students especially discussed how their relationship with their coaches during the initial recruiting process played a huge role in helping them decide to transfer to the research institution after attending another institution. This was also true for their experience once they arrived at the university, as many students indicated that their coaches played a role in their academic success. This section looks at the role coaches play as academic support, mentors, and recruiters.

Academic support. Brendon indicated that coaches were understanding when he was having academic trouble. His coaches become a huge support. Brendon's experience as a transfer student was difficult and he struggled academically. He indicated that "I had the worst finals I ever had, and my grades dropped, I became ineligible as an athlete. But I had the team support the coaches supported." Brendon also spoke highly of his coaches because they were a key support group "It's more just like, they check up on you, and make sure everything is okay. If something is wrong, they telling you go to the counselors and or go to the tutoring center." This additional support helped him get past a rough spot and promote his academic and athletic success.

Rachel's experience dealt with her coach being understanding of her academic needs, noting "coach was understanding when she had a big project due." She goes on to say my coach is very flexible: "I'd say he would work around my track schedule because

he wants me to be successful academically. I was just talking to him the other day about my practice times and how my teacher wanted to have an extra study session and, there was a conflict with the weightlifting time, and he was like it's okay. Like you can go to weights after I want to make sure you go to the study session. My coach has definitely been very helpful and encouraging and flexible with my schedule and wanting me to succeed academically."

Ashly's experience with her coach was casual, noting that "me and my coach we're really cool", contributing to her feeling of belonging at the university. She goes on to say that her coach frequently tells her to "keep your grades up, but I also expect you to be able to perform," adding, "you know, he's there, he's pushing you to try our hardest. He gets on us if we're not, you know, he just keeps us up during track." Ashly's experience indicated that her coach has an informal relationship that focuses not only on the athletic but also on the academic responsibilities of being a student-athlete.

Mentorship. Two of the research participants discussed the friendship and important of their relationship with their coach. Kim had the strongest feeling for her coach. She indicated that he was the one who recruited her to play her sport, "coach comes up to me and just say, you have potential, he just recruited me, and he was like, you know, offer me some money. who turned down money, you know?" Kim went on to describe how important her coach was when she was having hard times:

My coach is like my best friend, I got injured, my coach came to my room to make sure I was okay. The coach is really an important factor in the student-athlete experience because you want somebody that believes in you and if you don't have somebody that believes in you, then it's like you don't have a purpose.

So, I feel like the coach has a huge responsibility because it's like the father or the mother figure of your athlete experience.

Kim's experience with her coach was highlighted by the fact that she saw her coach as a role model and a support system beyond athletics but for life noting that her coach is "an adult figure who's coaching your life, not just coaching your sport, coaching your life. That adult figure is important to a lot of athletes because sometimes that's all you have is that coach, and I have that adult figure. So, I do think a coach is very important and my coach was great."

Mary still maintained a relationship with her high school coach. She noted that he is still a big part of making sure that she is still enjoying track. "Even now in college, he still keeps in touch every year he comes to some off our home meets, he's done a really great job of making sure that what he got me into is something that I'm still really enjoying." Mary also indicated that her coaches at the research institution have made sure that she not only works hard in her sport but also she is working to better herself and her teammates: "we better our team as a whole and relationships with other people on other teams." This was the only instance when a student indicated that the coach wanted to make sure they were integrating into the campus community.

Emma relied on the support of her coaches because she was an international student. She reached out all around the state while she was being recruited. She noted that "one of the coaches that I started talking to was a coach at another institution, one and a half years into the recruiting process, he came to the research institution to start a new program." Emma was one of the first students in her sport to come to the institution. She

worked with her coach over an extended amount of time to decide to come to the institution.

      Being recruited. Carmen and Jasmine had similar stories, as the coaching staff at the research institution where so memorable in their initial recruiting that when these students decided to transfer, they both remembered the way the coaches treated them. Carmen noted that "I chose to come here because of the coach and staff. They were like really thoughtful and caring and they were there with me through my whole entire process, even though I didn't choose them first, they still were there talking to me and guided me through my entire process." When asked why she decided to transfer, she goes on to say that "I was just going through a new coaching staff and, you know, I just didn't fit the program and, I just wanted another right place."

      Jasmine also talked about how important the initial connection to the coaches during her recurring process was in her decision to transfer. "She kept that relationship we had during the recruitment process. She was just incredible all around. I felt like I was at home. So that's really what made me want to come to the transfer institution." Jasmine went on to say that "The transition was a breeze. The coaches welcomed me with open arms, the players welcomed me with open arms ready for me to learn their system." Her relationship with the coach and team helped her transition into the research institution. This experience helped reinforced her earlier feeling of belonging.

      Lisa shared a similar connection to her coaches as Carmen and Jasmine. The coach and the team were welcoming which made it easier for her to transition into the team and the university. Lisa described, "I felt like I developed a good connection with all of the coaches and I also felt that teammates were pretty cool people and that could

blend well with them as well." This feeling of connection was shared by her other teammates and provides a picture of the team culture, which promotes student educational and athletic development.

Brendon transferred to the research institution because of how he saw the coach interacting with his athletes noting that, "I saw the coach and I saw the way he coached his athletes at meets, I looked at other schools and I was like they have a winning mentality. They actually want their athletes to get better where it looked like." Brendon went on to say that "I feel like the coaches here, they actually care and listen to you." After his first semester, he was on academic probation, which affected his eligibility, and the response he got from his coach was unexpected.

Coaches play a key role in making sure students get acclimated to campus and are successful academically. The support of the coaches is important, as student-athletes have such huge time constraints that in order for them to be successful their coach needs to support them in all areas. The participants all indicated varying relationships with their coaches, but they all highlighted the support they received, and the importance of having that support to be successful academically.

Student Groups. The students in this study did not have much experience with student groups. There were two student organizations identified in the interviews, a summer bridge program and a student-athlete committee. These programs at the research institutions provide resources for the students involved.

Student Bridge Program. The summer bridge program is a six-week summer program that helps underrepresented students transition into college. This program gave students an opportunity to learn their way around campus and meeting their peers prior to

the start of their first term. This bridge program was a wonderful opportunity for incoming freshman students to begin their college experience the summer before they enroll full time, they take seven credit hours and earn a GPA towards their degree, get acclimated to campus early and begin to understand the social and academic resources available to them as new students (University Transition Opportunities Program, 2019)

Ashly relied heavily on the bridge program as part of her formal social groups, indicating that she still relies heavily on their services, and many of her friends outside of athletics come from this experience. Ashly described the experience as you earn "seven credit hours and basically, you just get a feel for the campus. You take those classes and you usually have two mentors." Ashly went on to note that the majority of her friend group comes from her team, and friends she met during the summer program.

S*tudent-athlete committee* is a student run organization for student athletes, the research institution describes the program as an opportunity to create lines of communication through which student-athletes talk about issues relating to the management, operations, and rules governing them. The student-athlete committee represents the diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, interests, and concerns of student-athletes to university as well as to the Conference and the NCAA. Emma, Rachel, and Mary all indicated that they were a part of a student-athlete committee, an advocacy group led by student-athletes, committees promote positive relationships between student-athletes, teams, students, faculty, staff and all constituents of the university and the surrounding areas.

Emma described her experience as an opportunity to get involved with other student-athletes. She notes that within athletics "there's also like a lot of things you can

do to get involved and I just got onto the student-athlete committee 'executive board.'"

Mary went onto say that she made sure to get involved with student-athlete committee-backed events.

Rachel did not have a formal role, but she described it as an outlet to help her get connected to campus.

One of my friends on the track team influenced me to be on the committee and go to community service events and kind of make me feel more at home. So honestly, I feel like the people here have helped encourage me to do positive things and to kind of engage more with the community and other students on campus.

The summer bridge program and student-athlete committee have both provided resources for students to get involved on campus. The summer bridge program was a space for students from diverse backgrounds to get acclimated to campus and meet friends outside of athletics. student-athlete committee gives student-athletes a space to contribute to the overall campus community and get involved with other teams and other student groups.

Research Question 4: How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal social experiences?

Informal social experiences were broken down into two main categories, non-athletic and athletic peer experiences. The following sections on non-athletic and athletic peers describe the roles of those relationships in promoting engagement.

Peers. Student-athletes' social experiences extend beyond the field and their sports. Many of the students in this study relied heavily on their teammates, other

athletes, and their peers to help them stay up to date academically. Ashly felt like the social experience of being at the research institution is "actually, for the most part, it's been nothing but positive." Many research participants relied on other student-athletes and their peers to help them get caught up on work that they may have missed due to their travel schedule.

Brendon's experience was mirrored by many of the participants stating, "You do miss out on the social experiences that the school offers," saying "I don't feel like part of the community, I know being an athlete, sometimes you don't even get a chance to look at your phone as often as other people. So, you miss out on what's going on campus." The students were split on their efforts to make friends outside of their sport. Many of them indicated that they do not have time to make friends outside of athletics due to the demands of their sport. This section will discuss the student's non-athletic and athletic peer interactions.

Non-athletic peers. Brendon referred to his non-athletic friends as regular people because they do not have the same experiences as he does. Brendon felt as if he did not have as much time as he would like to meet with non-athletes; on campus he feels as if he is kept away from them because of the time constraints of his sport. He states that "You really are kept away from most of the students on campus just because of your schedule."

He did talk about how he feels about nonstudent athletes that "I feel like I'm more in touch with how you say a regular student on campus. I was in a fraternity at my other institution, but the Black population was way smaller. But here like I know plenty of regular Black students but also like I can hang out with them while I go hang out with the team or I can just hang out with even regular folks in the city that I already know here."

Jasmine highlighted that she likes being social. The confidence of being a student-athlete helps her stand out in class. She noted that "When we have group work and stuff, being the one that can take leadership and, you know, just do my role. So, they really helped me in the classroom. When I found a correlation between being an athlete. It does help me academically." Jasmine also highlights, "I haven't been exposed to a lot of people that do not do basketball so I definitely would like to have friends outside of basketball. Sometimes I got regular students. I don't want to say regular students as it's primarily on campus. I have friends like that too because I want to expand my relationship. I don't want to just be friends with athletes."

Emma loves meeting new people and she actively seeks non student-athletes to befriend. This helps her build a network of peers to promote her academic success. "I love to meet people and I love to meet other students that are not athletes too and just making friends. So, it is important to make friends outside of our team to get that help from other people." Emma goes on to say that class size also helps, "Having a smaller classroom creates an environment to meet other students. It's easier when it's a small class and you talked more than like a big class where everyone is just focusing on themselves but yeah, I have, I've definitely made some friends, but it's not a huge amount of people."

Academic support. Kim relied heavily on her relationship with her peers. She indicated that she relies on the support that her classmates provide to help when she has questions outside of class. This was due to her pursuing a STEM related major. She stated:

> I think I work more with students than I've ever worked with professors or an adult in college. I feel like your ultimatum in college is to create networks with

the students because they're the best support, honestly. Like you have more time

with them after hours. There's no faculty on campus after hours, you're stuck with

a junior or you're stuck with a freshman. But they might be super intelligent and

super smart and know that subject and then you might be stuck with yourself and

stuck with Google sometimes.

Kim's experience highlighted that her reason for seeking friends outside of her team is

directly tied to her need to work with the student within her major. She added:

But I think that everything kind of plays its part in college life, student-athlete

life. I think that it's really cool to have some teammates. Most of the time I was

with my teammates on the long trips around the state anyway, but not all the time

were they in my major so they couldn't help me much. So sometimes it did end up

relying on other kids, making group chats and stuff like that.

Kim continued, "Academically I had a great social experience. I was able to find and

connect to people. I'm doing that at my new institution, I'm doing that here." She

highlighted that it was important for her to find friends outside of athletics, saying that

"being a student-athlete you're on both sides of the spectrum and being a smart student-

athlete at that." This indicated the understanding of being a student and an athlete and the

importance of having peer interactions to promote success.

Social experience. Once Mary got acclimated to campus, she found that it was

important to make friends outside of her established peer group. Like Kim, she connected

with students within her major. This allowed her to grow her peer group and make

connections with people in classes. Mary went on to note that she tries hard to find

friends outside of athletics because she doesn't want to buy into the stigma of being a student-athlete. Mary highlights her efforts to seek nonathletic peers, noting that:

> I did meet some really great people in my classes and we're still close, even though they're still in nursing. But I've switched majors, we still do make it a point that we hang out a lot. So, I did make it a point to make friends with non-athletes as well, just simply because I don't want that stigma of being a student-athlete that thinks that they're better than everybody else to go around.

Mary went on to discuss her life after college, as she knows that her athletic career will eventually end, and she wants to have peers that are students in her classes and in athletics. "So, I know that once college is over, there's not a lot of us that are still going to be athletes. So, you're still going to want those non-athletic friends." Mary also indicated that being a student-athlete makes it difficult to make and maintain relationships with non-student-athletes. She noted that "It's just definitely a challenge to get with those friends who aren't student-athletes simply because they don't have the schedule that I do. They're not practicing at odd hours of the day. They don't have other events that they have to do or that they have to go to."

Rachel had the smallest connection to her peers, noting, "I guess I could kind of diversify my friend groups." She went on to say that she has been working to make friends with students in her major. "I do have friends in like my major groups, so like in engineering, like I have my engineering friends and then I like my track friends. But I would say that my, my social life does, um, revolve a lot around the people who I hang out with in track." She notes that being a student-athlete has "kind of influenced and shaped who I hang out with in college."

Carmen indicated that the "majority of my friends are non-student-athletes. I definitely actually associated a lot with non-student-athletes because they bring a different perspective on my life. I'm always around athletes and I don't really like being around athletes." Carmen sought relationships outside of her athletic circle. Carmen had the most diverse peer group, as she actively looked for relationships with students outside of athletics as an outlet.

The participants in this study had limited interaction with non-student-athletes. Many of the participants indicated that even though they had few nonathletic friends, they actively worked to expand their peer group. Two participants specifically talked about wanting to shed the label of being a student-athlete by actively seeking out nonathletic peers.

Athletic peers. Overall, the participants had more experience with their athletic peers. This can be expected because they spend most of their time with other student-athletes. This section looked at their experiences, working with their athletic peers, and how this helps promote their academic success.

Ashly's reflection on her athletic peer group was that it gave her an opportunity to see what good academic habits look like. She noted that: "They're always studying, always doing some sort of homework and their homework is like really hard because they're like deep in their majors… oh I need to get like them. Like I need to stay focused too. . . like, be on my game." This mindset helped her understand the importance of being prepared and understanding that it takes work to be successful academically.

Brendon's experience highlighted the importance of teammates. As a transfer student, he didn't know anyone and is joining a new team. He noted that "the athletes

here were welcoming from the day I moved to my apartment. It was like hey, like we just hung out after that. I see the majority of them outside of practice, I see them throughout the week." Brendon went on to discuss the importance of the social life the surrounding area provides. "So, you were like, man, I can put this work on hold for a second. I'm going to go hang out, not realizing like I need to sit down and grind down my homework before I go head out." This experience helped Brendon realize that he needed to find balance. He wanted to hang out with his teammates, but he also needed to focus on his academics. The outcome was that he was on academic probation at the end of his first term. This time enjoying the social life contributed to the lack of academic success he had during his first term.

Emma discussed the academic culture of her team, and how her peers help promote an environment of academic success. She noted that "We have a very good culture about academics and going to class. She went on to say, "it's like a trigger that you want to do well for your team because we have goals together to reach, that definitely helps you to easily have someone to get notes or just catch up and, and help you with studying and having older people, or people that are getting higher grades that can help you if you don't understand something." Emma's experience with her teammates highlights the team culture of academic success; because she sees her peers working hard, she wants to not only contribute to the team athletically but also academically.

Emma was the only student to reference CHAMPS Life Skills. This program helps students get more connected to the program designed to help student-athletes work on their life skills. Emma talked about the importance of "getting more connected with other student-athletes and doing community service and we have something called life

skills that we do together and just meeting other students. I make friends on other teams because of that and it's, that's an easy way because I don't just want to remember my four years of playing my sport." She wanted to "meet other student-athletes," which she said also involves "doing a lot of events with them. So, going to games with teammates and other teams and um, yeah, just do a lot with others and also like I'm, I'm studying a lot in study hall, of course. And that's where I meet a lot of my friends that are student-athletes."

Mary highlighted that she has a relationship with peers from other teams. Many of the other students indicated that the majority of their athletic peers were on their team:

I do have a lot of relationships with different people on different sports, actually, one of my roommates is on the softball team. Last year I lived with another girl that was on a softball team. I'll get some guys that are on the football team as well as some of the women's soccer, And then, as well as some volleyball, it's definitely been making sure that I'm getting involved in things with like SAAC backed stuff like that.

Rachel said that her friend group comes from peers on her team, noting "I would say that being an athlete, a lot of my friends probably come from being on my team." She went on to say that "I believe that if I wasn't a student-athlete, I wouldn't make the connections that I did being on the team that I'm on I would have kind of been forced I guess, or I would have been friends with more engineers."

Rachel had a similar experience to other participants where the culture of the team promoted academic success. Because many of her teammates were upperclassmen, she was able to see how hard they worked, and she relied on them for guidance:

A lot of them are upperclassmen, so I don't technically have classes with them, but I definitely have three people actually who have talked to me about their experience with engineering and how they switched from one discipline to another, telling me about this class and that class and giving me a heads up and tips and advice on how to get through engineering. So yeah, that's definitely been helpful.

This information from peers has helped her navigate her academic experience at the research institution.

The interviewees had a diverse experience with peers on their team. Overwhelmingly, they all relied on their teammates for guidance and assistance in navigating academic expectations and major requirements. These perspectives helped outline the importance of both nonathletic and athletic peer groups. The research participants discussed that seeing their teammates focusing on their academics helped promote a culture of student success.

Other Experiences

The previous sections highlighted the common themes from the interview that aligned with literature review and Tinto's model. After analysis of the interviews, there were a few more themes that came to light. These themes are barriers to the student-athletes' academic success.

Barriers to Success. After analyzing the interview for this study, the researcher noticed that there were two main barriers that stood out that could affect the participant's academic success. The barriers identified from the study were time and stress of athletics.

Time. Time seemed to be a common theme that showed up in each participant interview--there was not enough time for class, not enough time to make friends, not enough time to take the classes they need in their major and not enough time to interact with the campus. Many of the participants had some relationship to time which was a barrier to their experiences at the institution.

Ashly highlighted the fact that due to the sport that she plays, her competition schedule affects when she can take classes and when she is able to attend classes. She travels a lot because of her sport:

> We just take our hard classes in the fall and then in the spring we kind of have to adjust a little bit cause we are usually not here … I usually leave on Fridays or Saturdays. But honestly, we have to still do our work in the same amount of time. If there's a test or a quiz we have to take, we still have to take it by like let's say 1159 so sometimes we travel out of state and we're in a whole different time zone when we still have to get it done.

> Ashly, also talked about how she finds herself missing out on events on campus:
> Sometimes I just kind of miss out on review sessions for a class. Sometimes I can't go to them because I have practice and you can't really miss practice … So sometimes you just missed out and you have to just kind of hope that you understand the material.

When Brendon was asked about the challenges he faced, he indicated that managing his time was one of the hardest things he had to manage or balance. Important factors to him would include time management and balance:

I always thought I was good at time management until I got to my new school …

it is competitive in the class you find a way to actually balance out your social

life, your athletic, and your academic life in a way you can get everything out of

it. That was the biggest challenge for me.

This feeling of competition was a larger issue for him because the challenge may have

contributed to him being on academic probation after his first term.

Emma's experience is highlighted by the amount of time she spends practicing

and participating in her sport. She indicated that "it's a very busy life, you have a lot to do

and the schedule is kind of crazy." She went on to say that she loves the business of her

schedule, but it takes up to twenty hours a week just for practice and they travel five

weeks throughout the regular season each semester, which could also be a total of seven

weeks if they make it to championships.

Emma explained that "time management and you are busy as a student-athlete and

I know, it's hard to manage all the practice and, and activities that we do as good

athletes." This time constraint can make it difficult for a student to stay up to date with

their course requirements. In these cases, students have to rely heavily on teacher and

peer support to make sure they have not missed too much class material. Kim, stated:

Being a student-athlete in college is hard. You're making a commitment; you

have to commit to going to work out. And you're also a student first. So you have

a commitment to practice every day, but you also have to keep your grades up in

order to go to practice. It kind of becomes like a situation where you can't mess up

anything. When you're told that you have to be at practice for three hours and then

you have to be at a team meeting for two more hours. And then you have to go

home, and you have … assignments before 11:59.

Mary describes the hectic life of being a student-athletes as "the rush of it all":

she goes on to indicate that her schedule, "definitely does make me feel like I'm not just a

normal student here." Time becomes a factor when she is trying to balance school and

athletics. She discussed the days when "I have practice immediately before the exams, I

feel like it's kind of hard ... You go through class from eight to three and then you go to

practice from three to five o'clock and then the rest of the time you get to study and then

you get up and do it all over again." This schedule can be taxing and can make it difficult

to be successful in class.

Mary went on to say that her coaches and her peers help her stay on track. "My

teammates and my coaches and my professors really work with me, it's been a lot easier

to manage that time and make sure that they understand, you know, like the

circumstances." This reflection on needed resources to manage your time constraints

gives the student an opportunity to take advantage of her resources to promote academic

success.

Rachel discussed her life as being "very scheduled." "I'd go to class; I go to

practice. Um, and then I go home, I do homework being an athlete, honestly, even though

I am busier because I'm an athlete and I have less time for homework and you know,

talking to my professors." She says that she has to be more efficient because she has less

time to get her work done: "I don't have eight hours to just sit down and study. I know I

have to be on a set schedule, organize, prioritize my time, and get things done. So, I

mean, it's, hard being an athlete …it's time consuming and it can be stressful at times, but it also keeps me motivated."

Carmen noted that she has a hectic schedule, but her professors understand how hard she works. She described that "my professors understood that I was a student-athlete and I also put in the work that I had to do as a student-athlete. Understanding that I don't have a lot of time on my hands to just, you know, relax. Like I leave from practice, I go to the library, I spend hours upon hours at the library I'll eat, and I'll go to sleep that my day to day life."

Carmen described her experience as a student-athlete as "really demanding, tiresome, but I guess you can say is worth it. Is it really demanding? Like everything revolves around basketball, but I mean, you know, you get an opportunity to have a free education and to make a lot of new connections and network and you know, play the game that we love." She goes on to say that she spends "probably like over 20 hours a week" in her sport. I don't have a lot of time on my hands to just, you know, relax. Like I leave from practice, I go to the library, I spend hours upon hours at the library that'll have, you know, I'll eat, and I'll go to sleep that's my day to day life."

Jasmine also talked about the load she has to deal with. "So, I'm just basically balancing your school and work, with basketball. Like it'd be some days you really don't feel like doing this paper, but, but you got a game. You know, sometimes you got to do it way ahead of time. I'm just balancing, I will say that is the hardest transition."

Lisa talked about the difficulty of managing her sport and her workload. She noted that:

Sometimes it gets difficult, especially in season you know … Sometimes we travel for extended periods of time. So, it was difficult trying to finish assignments while you're on the road--sometimes can be a little difficult, you might want a weekend to yourself or you know, your body might be so sore, tired for practicing or some games. But you know, still have a job that we got to get done.

Lisa went on to say:

Like if I have a big assignment coming up and we have practice … and have official visits on the weekends, so our whole weekends fall and we have activities that we've got to do and I'm already tired of classes and I have this assignment due. Sometimes I'm just like, you know what I have to turn it in late, you know, make those kinds of decisions.

Lisa sometimes doesn't have enough time to do everything that she needs to as a student.

Time was a common theme that is a barrier to the student's academic and social success. Each participant indicated how the time constraints of being a student-athlete has affected how they navigate their academic and social requirements.

Stress. Ashly indicated that life can be stressful because of her sport: "So basically it can be stressful just like I just have to remember not to, um, like put too much on my course load in the spring. So that I'm not overwhelmed and stuff. And basically, as far as getting your work done, there's no excuses like they act like there's excuses or something and like we get exceptions, but we really don't." Ashly went on to say "it can be stressful sometimes. Basically, in the fall since I do track the fall is basically when we do like our harder classes because we're not really in season."

She continued: "So this year it's like the week of finals. But um, so basically, you know, we just take our hard classes in the fall and then in the spring we kind of have to adjust a little bit cause we usually not here, I'm starting on like Fridays. Sometimes depending on what you do in track, you might leave on like a Wednesday or Thursday. But I usually leave on Fridays or Saturdays." This type of frontloading in a student's coursework could make their transition into their major more difficult. Instead of having a balanced schedule, student-athletes have to overload their schedule to make sure they can balance their academic and athletic requirements.

The stress that Brendon felt was expressed the most verbally. It has brought on because he was on academic probation, and this caused him to miss out on everything that he moved to take advantage of. He noted that:

It was the worst academic semester … The idea was for me to compete in the indoor season, redshirt outdoor season. But the fact that I couldn't do that at all, I just had to train all year and go to class, completely shocked my world, but now I am missing time from track because of something physical and now there's something academic and literally put me in a space … I felt terrible I literally went through a full anxiety attack I had never had before. So they said that me having an anxiety attack was so bad and me like literally going through suicidal thoughts, in other words, it was the worst feeling I ever had as the lowest point I've ever been in my life because I put so much pressure on myself and for me to feel like I let multiple people down, not just myself it put me in space."

Kim had a similar feeling of stress, noting "It kind of becomes like a situation where you can't mess up anything." This feeling of stress can make it difficult to manage all that comes with being a student-athlete. Kim went on to say:

> I think the hardest part about being a student-athlete is just the grit and determination you have to have. And it's really all a hundred percent mental. And if you don't keep your mental together and your psych of your mind all one, then you're going to mess up … But being a student-athlete is a different kind of mental, and that's what all sports with basketball, football, track, tennis, I can name any sport. Like it's really hard. So, anything that takes your physical ability and your mental ability ever-long day, then you have to go home and study.

The stress of being a student-athlete came out as a theme after looking at the research participants' experiences. The stress and responsibility of being student-athletes contributed to how students interacted with their teammates and other students. The fear of messing up academically directly played a role in if they were able to participate in their sport.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand what formal and informal academic and social experiences contributed to the academic success of student-athletes. This was done by asking the research questions to determine what factors they feel facilitate or are barriers to their academic success. The information in this chapter provided detailed findings from the research participants.

The findings from this study yielded limited data for two of the research questions. Research participants' responses to Questions 2 dealing with informal

academic experiences and Question 3, which focused on formal social experiences were robust, but overall yielded limited data.

The formal academic experiences discussed in this chapter were academic advisors, faculty, student support, study hall, and tutoring. The research participants had varying levels of experience with these resources, but highlighted the relationships they had with their academic advisor, noting that those individuals played an important role in their academic success by helping them integrate in the campus community and providing resources when they were unsure what to do academically. The research participants discussed having fewer interactions with their faculty, but the ones that did discuss those interactions had meaningful experiences that helped promote their feeling of belonging on campus. They discussed lower levels of interaction with faculty, student support services such as study hall and tutoring, and many indicated that they used those resources because they were required to, but rarely sought the assistance on their own.

There were two informal academic interactions discussed by the research participants--coaches and student groups. The research participants specifically discussed the role that their coaches played in recruiting them and serving as a mentor and guide while at the university. Each student had fond things to say about those interactions and remembered the important role their coaches played in helping them navigate their athletic and academic requirements. Student groups were only discussed by a few participants, and they consisted of a summer bridge program and a student-athlete committee. These resources provided an outlet for the students to integrate with the campus community, in the case of the summer bridge programs, and working with other

student-athletes, with the advisory committee. Both instances played an important role in helping these participants gain valuable connections to the university and within athletics.

Students in this study indicated that they had few formal social interactions on campus. There were only two students that highlighted how their social interaction with their faculty members contributed to their experience at the research institution. The students indicated that faculty went above and beyond to provide mentorship and guidance to them, which helped reinforce their ability to be successful academically.

Informal social experiences were highlighted by the research participants' interactions with athletic and non-athletic peer groups. Many of the research participants note that they had little to no interaction with non-student-athletes. This was often due to the time constraints associated with being a student-athlete. The participants that indicated that they had relationships with non-athletic peers indicated that they actively sought out those relationships to diversify their friend groups.

In addition to the primary experiences associated with formal and informal academic and social experiences, two more themes emerged that served as barriers to the academic success of the research participants. The stress and time constraints of being a student-athlete were highlighted by many participants as additional factors that greatly affect the student's ability to be successful.

This chapter was organized by the research questions using the themes found in the interview to provide an analysis that is directly related to the themes discussed in the literature review. Chapter 5 provides a summary and conclusion of the findings introduced in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 also discusses recommendations for further research that can be used to promote the success of student-athletes.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to use Tinto's (1993) Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure as a framework to capture the perspectives of student-athletes about their formal and informal social and academic experiences while attending a large Division I institution with more than 20,000 undergraduate students.

The research allowed the participants to reflect on their experiences as student-athletes and discuss what had the greatest effect on their academic success. The analysis in Chapter 4 outlines the participant's responses in the context of the research questions. This chapter contains a discussion relevant to the following research questions:

1. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their formal academic experiences?

2. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their informal academic experiences?

3. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their formal social experiences?

4. How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their informal social experiences?

This study looked at the experience of nine student-athletes, from Men's and Women's Track and Field, Women's Golf, and Women's Basketball. Chapter 4 focused on the findings from the participants' interviews. This section looks at the findings from the interviews, and their connections to the literature. The next section is organized by the research questions and themes from the literature.

Discussion

Question 1 Discussion: How do student-athletes at a Division I Institution describe their formal academic experiences?

Tinto (1993) defined the formal academic experiences as academic interactions that are within the formal education of the student. Their activities happen in the classroom and educational spaces at the institution that involves faculty, staff and university officials whose primary role is to educate students. These experiences were highlighted by the research participants' responses highlighting the roles that academic advising, faculty interactions, and student support services played in their college experience.

Academic Advisors

The present study found that the assistance academic advisors provided the research participants played a key role in the academic success of student-athletes--eight out of the nine research participants indicated that their academic advisor played a key role in helping them transition into the university. Similarly, Harrison et al. (2006) found that there is a connection to student-athletes' academic interactions on campus and improved academic success of student-athletes. Comeaux and Harrison (2007) noted that student-athletes sometimes enter college not having the skills to perform academically causing them to perform at lower levels than their non-athletic peers; academic personnel must be advised on this difference so they can understand their circumstances and work closely with these students to figure out what areas may keep them from being academically successful, these factors need to be addressed to promote their academic development and/or self-identity (Harrison et al., 2006).

Lanning (1982) noted that athletic academic counselors play an important role in providing support services for student-athletes, they often do all the class scheduling, check eligibility, run study hall, and provide academic support to current and incoming student-athletes. The transfer and international students had the most to say about the assistance their academic advisor provided them. They all indicated that their transition into the research institution was made easier by the assistance their advisor provided them. These viewpoints are similar to the literature associated with the role that athletic academic advisors play in the transition of student-athletes into the institution. Based on the responses from the participants, athletic academic advisors play an important role in the success of student-athletes. Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) noted that there are varying forms of academic advising but high-quality advising is positively related to student-athlete academic success. Many of the participants indicated that they had little time to pursue nonathletic activities. Hendricks and Johnson (2017) described that many student-athletes place an emphasis on athletics in their academic experiences. The athletic academic advisor helps bring balance to the student university experiences.

Athletic advisors are key to promoting the academic success of student-athletes, the research participants described the role of their advisor as a guide and in some cases mentor to help them navigate their college academic experience. Hendricks and Johnson (2017) also found that athletic academic advisors play an important role in student-athletes' engagement, noting that engagement means providing adequate support programs, academic advising, and enhanced on- and off-campus learning opportunities.

Faculty

This study found that faculty played an important part in the academic success of the student-athlete. The participants had varying level of interactions with their faculty, but the responses highlighted both positive and negative experiences, that were discussed by the research participants. Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) analysis of faculty interaction noted that students benefit greatly and have higher levels of academic success when they work closely with faculty doing research and discussing their educational options. There has been a difficult and complex relationship between faculty and student-athletes at Division I institutions (Comeaux, 2011). Similarly, Ashly, Brendon, and Kim all indicated experiences with their faculty that made them feel as if the professor did not care about their academic success. Their complaint came from faculty not being understanding of the time constraints associated with being a student-athlete or feeling singled out by faculty who touted the difficulty of their courses.

Overall, each participant also had positive interactions with their faculty. Many indicated that they worked with their faculty to stay up to date on missed assignments. Each student highlighted the substantial amount of travel associated with their sports, which means they end up missing a lot of class.

Carmen's experience with her faculty member led her to apply to graduate school. Harrison et al. (2006) suggest that student-athletes that have been mentored by their instructors to attend graduate school perform better in college. Carmen experienced this type of support with a faculty member in her current major. This faculty member acted as a mentor and encouraged her to apply to graduate school. This relationship helped Carmen see that she had the ability to be successful as an undergraduate and as a graduate student.

Light (2004) highlighted that students that seek opportunities to interact with their faculty while in college get the most out of the experience and have the greatest amount of growth academically. Faculty interactions have been proven to be an important resource to promote student success. Within this study, the research participants have had varying levels of interaction with their faculty. Overall, the positive faculty experiences discussed by the participants indicated that personal one-on-one relationships with faculty play an important role in promoting academic success.

Student Support

There are many academic support services available to student-athletes. These resources help students navigate their academic expectations. Kuh et al. (2006) noted that there are many support services available to students, they often consist of transition and first-year seminar courses, academic advising, tutoring, bridge programs, mentoring and student support groups to name a few. Student support can take many shapes. Comeaux and Harrison (2011) also noted that authentically responsive strategies are needed to help student affairs leaders better understand the needs of student-athletes across multiple lines of differences. The participants in this study indicated that they participated in study hall, rebound program, tutoring, and a summer bridge program. These support systems are designed to help students succeed academically. But having these programs available does not guarantee that they will contribute to students' academic success (Kuh et al., 2006). This section discusses how students in this study used these resources and the role they played in their academic success.

Mangold et al. (2003) noted that learning-centered activities such as peer tutoring and study groups can help students with academic integration. Study hall is a space where

student-athletes can dedicate time to their schoolwork. Many of the research participants discussed the use of this time to help focus on the work for their classes. The participants indicated that they earned their way out of study hall by doing well in their classes. The women's basketball players spent more time than other students in study hall because of the nature of their sport. Lisa and Carmen spend 1-2 hours a day in study hall while they are on the road. This is in addition to the 15–20 hours they spend training throughout the week.

Ashly indicated that she participated in a summer bridge program. This program was designed to help students transition into college by taking a college course with other students during the summer. Ashly had a strong relationship to this program, and she still relied on its resources for secondary advising. Ashly also indicated that this program provides her an outlet outside of athletics to meet with friends she made in the program.

Brendon stated that he was on academic probation at the end of his first term. The university provides a rebound program to help students on academic probation get back on track. This experience, along with faculty and academic advisor support helped Brendon get back on track academically.

Since 1991, the NCAA has encouraged its member institutions to provide academic resources which resulted in the creation of academic services housed within the athletic department, offering tutoring and athletic academic advising available to all student-athletes above and beyond what the school may already provide. Tutoring services are often provided by the athletic department or through the university's student support services office. The NCAA also encourages other student support services, such as academic coaching, career counseling, or personal development services that helps the

student personally and academically succeed (NCAA, 2019). The NCAA also mandates that student-athletes' athletic obligations should be limited to give students enough time to prepare for academic obligations. There is no mandate that students must take advantage of the many resources available to them to promote academic success.

Tutoring was the least used resource among participants of the present study. Many students indicated that they knew the service existed, and their teammates used the resources but none of the research participants indicated that they regularly used this service. This was a surprise because some students indicated that they may need tutoring but did not actively take advantage of the resources provided to them as student-athletes. Reinheimer and McKenzie (2011) found that students that participate in tutoring increase their likelihood of being retained at their university, providing an academic and educational outlet that not only helps students navigate their academic requirements, but can also increase their connection with campus.

Formal academic experiences play an important role in the academic success of student-athletes. In relation to the first question, athletic academic advisors and faculty had the greatest overall influence on the academic success of the research participants. Each participant indicated that they had an experience involving their academic advisor or faculty member that contributed to their adjustment to the university, feeling of belonging, or mentorship. Two other contributors to student success were the summer bridge program and the rebound program. These experiences were not shared by all participants, but the two students who participated in these programs indicated that they both contributed to their overall academic success.

Question 2 Discussion: How do student-athletes at a Division I Institutions describe their informal academic experiences?

Tinto (1993) explained that the informal academic system can include experiences in the formal domain, interactions between faculty, staff, and peers outside of the formal academic spaces will lead to enhanced academic experiences. A lack of this experience can cause a student to feel isolated from the educational institution. Research participants in this study had limited informal academic experiences across campus. There were few informal experiences discussed but the research participants did have meaningful interactions with their faculty members highlighting the importance of these relationships.

Faculty

This study found that faculty informal academic interactions with students played an important role in the academic success of student-athletes. Harrison et al. (2006) referred to the faculty's role as a mentor performing the role of intellectual coach. Faculty interaction helps promote a student-athletes feeling of belonging, which contradicts the "dumb jock" stereotype. In the present study, Brendon's relationship with his American Studies faculty member helped him better connect to the university and gave him an outlet to promote his success.

Faculty interaction has the greatest influence on student satisfaction with college, more so than any other institutional resource (Petrie & Russell, 1995). The faculty support Carmen and Mary received had a huge impact on their academic success. Mary recounted that having a professor email her to say she did a good job on an assignment made her feel good. This type of correspondence happened outside of the classroom and

helped the student realize that she could be successful academically. The mentorship that

Carmen's professors provided her led to her applying to graduate school. The informal

experiences that the research participants described greatly affected the students' feeling

of belonging on campus. Faculty interaction outside of the classroom is important in

providing an academic environment of success. The participants in this study that had

meaningful experience with their faculty discussed the benefit of this relationship and the

positive outcomes associated with this experience. Faculty interaction is an important

common trend of student-athlete success.

Question 3 Discussion: How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe

their formal social experiences?

Tinto (1993) stated that extracurricular activities such as band, Fellowship of

Christian athletes, and other organized activities such as intercollegiate athletics offer

students a formal space to meet other like-minded students, which often leads to

relationships. Student-athlete formal social experiences were highlighted by the

relationships with their coaches. Coaches played an important role as mentor, and

academic advocated. Also, the research participants highlighted experiences developed

through interaction with other student athletes, and in one case, non-athletic peers. There

were fewer experiences with non-athletic peers and in those cases the research participant

was intentional in their interaction. Student-athletes' reactions to this question were

highlighted.

Coaches

Coaches play a role in this formal social group by facilitating the extracurricular

experiences of student-athletes. Coaches are an essential part of the academic success of

student-athletes; they do not usually provide tutoring or direct academic advising but they are proficient at assisting students with their individual academic needs (Hendricks & Johnson, 2017). Coaches were the number one connection the research participants had to the university. The coaches recruited them to play their sport and coached them once they arrived on campus. This relationship created a strong connection between the student-athletes and the coaching staff. Two transfer students indicated that the relationship they developed with their coaches during the initial recruiting process made the decision to transfer to the research institution a lot easier.

The student-athletes in this study described having a strong connection with their coaches and their team. For athletics to regain its place in the academic mission of the university, it requires that university officials as well as coaches be held accountable for the student's outcomes; athletic programs have the potential for educational value, but programs must operate within the mission of the institution (Knorr, 2004; Watt & Moore III, 2001). There were only two research participants that indicated that their coaches supported them when they had academic concerns. This was mainly due to the fact that one student was on academic probation and the other needed time to prepare for an assignment. This level of support was not discussed by other participants. The support that the students discussed is important to help the student understand the importance of being a student just as much as an athlete. Ultimately, the research participants supported the idea that coaches play a significant role in the academic success of student-athletes but many of the participants did not indicated that they received that level of support.

Student Groups

The NCAA has contributed a large amount of financial support to help student-athlete academic performance and promote retention and graduation, in an effort to enrich the student-athlete experience (Huml et al., 2014). Many of the experiences focus on providing resources to help students be successful academically from focusing on tutoring, and academic advising to assisting students in academically and socially integrating into the university setting (Reinheimer & McKenzie, 2011). Students participating in this study had limited experience with student groups outside of the athletic space. There were two formal student groups that the students indicated they were a part of a summer bridge program and student-athlete advisory committee.

Kuh et al. (2006) note that a student finds social integration at their school when their social environment fits the needs and preferences of the student. Many of the participants indicated that they had little to no interaction with programs outside of their sport. Ashly indicated that, prior to the start of her freshman year, she participated in a six-week summer program aimed at helping the student academically and socially integrate into the university. Ashly indicated that she relied on this resource even now. The bridge program allowed her to interact with nonathletic peers and form relationships with students at the university prior to her identity as a student-athlete was formed. When asked about her peer groups, she noted that they consist of student-athletes from her team and friends she met during her summer program.

This experience was different than any other research participants. She was put in a position to interact with non-student-athletes in a social setting. She was the only participant to indicate that she participated in a formal social program and developed relationships with people outside of athletics. She also developed lasting relationships

with mentors and program staff that she still takes advantage of today. Kuh et al. (2006) described that dynamic relationships between the students, and individuals across campus help to connect the individual to on campus and home communities.

There were three participants that discussed their participation in a student-athletes committee, which is an advisory committee meant to advocate for issues that affect the success of student-athletes. This group consists of other student-athletes that advocate for the needs of student-athletes, and they also host various volunteering opportunities. This group allows the student to engage with other student-athletes but limited their exposure to relationships with their nonathletic peers.

Formal social groups are important because they allow students to interact with their peers in formal groups organized by their peers. This experience could lead students to more formal opportunities outside of their peer group. There seems to be a lack of student-athlete interaction in these formal social experiences. Based on the responses from many of the participants, lack of free time was the greatest factor that deterred them from participating in on-campus organizations.

Many of the research participants talked about the time spent preparing for their sport and engaging in-class requirements, there is not enough time to pursue traditional extracurricular activities. The creation of a student group composed of athletes gives student-athletes a place to interact with students from other teams but limits their interaction to the campus as a whole. Tinto (1987) noted in order for a student to persist they must align their personal goals with the expectations of the formal social system of college. The demand of the formal academic system requires that the student put effort into the relationships that are being built in the formal system. Storch and Ohlson (2009)

noted that the athletic and academic demand of being a student-athlete is the most difficult barrier facing athletes. The research participants did not engage in many formal social experiences, but the nature of their status as a student-athlete focused heavily on the academic requirement and left little time for formal, as well as informal, social experiences.

Question 4 Discussion: How do student-athletes at a Division I institution describe their informal social experiences?

Tinto (1993) described informal social experiences as activities that arise from the day-to-day activities between different members of an institution in areas not formally addressed. Tinto (1993) noted that experiences such as working for a student organization or holding a job on campus provide students with an informal social connection to the university, these experiences help students better navigate the informal social system assisting them in gaining access to formal positions in the informal university experiences. Tinto (1993) explained that "the greater the contact among students the more likely individuals are to establish social communities in college making it likely that they will stay at the institution" (p. 117).

Peer interactions in this study were broken down into two sections, nonathletic and athletic peer groups. This was done because the research participants referred to their friend groups in those terms. Specifically, many participants referred to their nonathletic peers as regular people or regular students. There was a clear division between the research participants when it comes to interacting with these peer groups.

Kuh et al. (2006) discussed the role that interpersonal relationships both on and off campus play in student success in college, highlighting how the different sets of

values and norms represented by their lives as student-athletes affect their interaction with the campus community. Some of the research participants actively sought informal experiences with non-athletic peers to expand their friend groups.

Emma, Mary, and Carmen indicated that they actively looked for nonathletic peers to extend their friend group. These participants wanted to have friends outside of athletics because they wanted a break from their athletic peers. Carmen was clear that she liked to associate herself with nonstudent-athletes because it adds a different perspective on her life. Mary also indicated that it was important for her to expand her friend group because she would not be a student-athlete forever.

Lubker and Etzel (2007) noted that academically oriented interactions are central to student-athlete success; faculty and peer interactions are important relationships to develop for programs to assist university-level student-athletes in improving their academic performance. Kim and Jasmine relied on peers from their classroom. Kim reflected on the amount of time she spent traveling and relied on her nonathletic peers to help her get caught up on assignments she missed in class. She went on to say that many of her teammates were not in her major, so they did not provide much assistance when she had questions about her schoolwork. Jasmine also indicates that she worked with her classmates mostly during group assignments but had little interaction outside of the classroom.

All of the research participants indicated that the relationships with their peers were important to their success. Brendon, Jasmine, and Carmen indicated that their teammates played an important role in helping them get integrated into a new institution. The other research participants indicated that their athletic peers' relationships were more

than just sports related. Each student highlighted how the relationship with their teammates contributed to their integration into the university and helped create a team culture of academic success. Tinto's (1993) model highlights the importance of the It is rewarding to be a part of the social system on a college campus, he goes on to note that not being part of the social system does not mean that a student is disconnected from the university. Having integration into the campus community does help with the student-athletes feeling of belonging.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that athletic peers influence student-athletes for better or worse; they are a part of a tightly knit groups whose specific goals are often athletic in nature; their goals and values often shift toward their peer group. This can be found in the responses from the research participants. The athletes in this study have indicated that their athletic peer groups have influenced their academic success. Overall, the research participants had little interaction with their nonathletic peers, but their athletic peer interactions went beyond their sport and contributed to their success academically.

Tinto (1993) noted that social integration affects the formation of subsequent commitments to the institution and the goal of college graduation. Having a social connection to the university has the ability to affect a student's level of academic success. Tinto (1993) went on to state that it is possible for a student to academically integrate into the academic system even if they have not socially integrated into the university setting.

Other Experiences

Broughton and Neyer (2001) stated that due to the academic and personal needs of student-athletes, they stand out as a special student population that requires additional

support services. Unlike their nonathletic peers' student-athletes must deal with the demands and stress that come with being a student-athlete. Additionally, stress and time were two concepts that students discussed that served as barriers to their success.

All the research participants indicated that the time they spent participating in their sports took away from their ability to be engaged on campus. The NCAA (2019) indicates that student-athletes are limited to the number of hours they can commit to athletic activity; any week in which a student engages in either practice or competition they must be limited to four hours per day and 20 hours per week, and they must have at least one day off per week with no athletic activity. Student-athletes are challenged to find adequate time to explore academic and social experiences; factoring in 12 to 16 hours of class time and 15 to 20 hours of studying, student-athletes have anywhere from 57 to 66 hours of obligations each week (Griffin, 2007 as cited in Hendricks & Johnson, 2017). Students in this study indicated that by the time they completed their athletic requirements there was little to no time to engage in on-campus student groups or study sessions. This contributed to the lack of student engagement on campus.

Storch and Ohlson (2009) noted that one of the hardest obstacles for student-athletes to face is dealing with the athletic and academic demands of being a student-athlete, this causes high levels of stress that can affect how the student engages with the university, and its academic demands. In addition to the time constraints of being a student-athlete, the stress of managing the responsibility of being a student-athlete also became a common theme in the interviews. Ashly, Brendon, and Kim all had stories that dealt with the stress of being a student-athlete and how it played a role in their academic success. These proved to be barriers to the students' academic success that could be

addressed by athletic personnel actively working to help students reach out to on-campus resources and addressing the stress of dealing with being both a student and athlete and provide students with an effective outlet to navigate both worlds.

Implications for Practice

Mangold et al. (2003) stated that academic integration is the development of affiliations within a student college environment that happen inside and outside of the classroom spaces. They go on to note that academic integration consisted of relationships with faculty, academic staff and peer tutoring and study groups (Mangold et al., 2003). This study was able to capture a snapshot of the academic and social experiences of student-athletes at a large institution.

Student athletes have a unique college experience. Due to the demand of being a student athlete it often means that this population of student is unable to have the exact same experience as their non-athletic counterparts. Ultimately, they end up existing on campus as both a student and athletes, and it is important to help these students find some measure of balance in their experience.

A primary recommendation is that athletic department and university personnel need to help student-athletes integrate into the campus community. The research participants had limited interactions with their faculty members and nonathletic peers. The lack of integration means that student-athletes do not have the same academic experience as their nonathletic peers. In an effort to better prepare students for life during and after athletics, more of an effort needs to be made by the athletic department to help student-athletes understand the importance of academic engagement. This can be done by athletic department personnel, especially coaches giving athletes time to pursue

nonathletic experiences. University personnel also play an important role in helping student-athletes integrate into the campus community by providing an environment geared at understanding their specific needs and working with student athletes and athletic department personnel to promote student engagement and success.

Athletic personnel must increase the role that department academic and tutoring play in the support of student-athletes. Athletic academic advisors hold an important role in the academic success of student-athletes. Each student discussed positive experiences working with their athletic academic advisor, knowing that their assistance helped them navigate academic expectations in the degree programs the students are planning to pursue. Only one student indicated that they had a relationship with their non-athlete advisor, which needs further discussion. In order to promote an integrated support system, athletic academic advisors should work actively with their department counterparts. Department academic advisors can be allies to the athletic department academic advisor to ensure that collectively they are helping the student athletes they work with meet their academic goals. In addition to departmental advisors, there needs to be a focus on available support services for student-athletes. Many participants indicated that they know that these services are available to them, but they only took advantage of study hall because it was required of them. Actively pushing the accessibility of athletic department, and university tutoring resources, gives little barrier of entry to support services, that drastically increase the academic success of student athletes. Pushing these resources can also further help with student-athletes' integration into the campus community.

Athletic personnel need to help student-athletes deal with time management and stress. The time constraints of being student-athletes greatly affect their ability to take advantage of the greater college experience. Because student-athletes spend so much time preparing and participating in their sports, they have little time to participate in campus activities, which can cause them to miss out on the college experience. The time commitments lead student-athletes to become stressed out as they deal with the responsibility of being a student and an athlete. Athletic department personnel need to create programming that helps student-athletes understand the time commitments of being an athlete and understand the need of expanding their on-campus experience to better integrate with the regular students.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Qualitative research methods were an appropriate method to answer the research questions. To better understand the contribution of the formal and informal academic and social factors on the academic success of student-athletes, the research participants need to be expanded beyond the sports found in the current study. Student-athletes' academic experiences change based on the sport that they play.

How students manage time is a theme that came up in the research that requires more research. It will be difficult to understand how to increase student-athletes integrate without understanding the time constraints that affect their ability to be a part of the campus community. Looking at these factors can help stakeholders understand how to better provide resources that can help students create a better connection to the university.

Faculty and peer interactions are lacking in general, as few students indicated meaningful relationships across campus. This study did have the perspective of three

women's basketball players, but only one indicated that she had a relationship with her faculty or actively sought relationships with students outside of her sport. This area needs further research to determine why student-athletes in certain sports have little to no interaction with their faculty and nonathletic peers.

This study consisted of student-athletes from a number of sports with varying educational strengths and weaknesses. Further, sport specific research needs to be done to determine if the issues facing the research participants are specific to their sports, or if it is a holistic issue facing all student-athletes.

Conclusion

Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure was used as a framework to guide the research for this study. This model allowed the researcher to use the elements discussed in his model to outline the research. The key components used from this model were formal and informal academic experiences and formal and informal social experience. This model was used to answer the questions posed to the participants.

The student-athletes described athletic academic advisors, faculty, student support services, study hall, and tutoring as the primary formal academic experiences that they had at the research institution. Academic advising seemed to be the primary formal academic experience that student-athletes relied on for their academic success. Many of the research participants indicated that their athletic academic advisor played an important role in their transition into the university.

Coaches and student groups were the informal academic experience that the research participants highlighted in this study. Specifically, coaches were important in helping these students decide to attend the research institution and served as an athletic

and academic resource.

The research participants had few formal social experiences. They highlighted faculty as the primary resources, and only a few participants indicated that they had informal relationships with their faculty. The three that highlighted their expectations of faculty spoke highly of the relationship and indicated that their interaction played an important role in their feeling of belonging on campus

Athletic and nonathletic peer interaction was discussed as the primary informal academic experience the research participants discussed. Overwhelmingly, each participant indicated that they had many athletic peer interactions with their teammates, or with other teammates. There was a significant deficiency in the number of interactions between their nonathletic peers. Many students indicated that they did not have many relationships with nonathletic students. The ones that indicated they had a relationship primarily focused on the educational experiences they shared with their nonathletic peers, rarely overlapping beyond the classroom.

Beyond the items discussed in Tinto's model of institutional departure, additional themes came to light that are important to discuss. The research participants each discussed the stress and time commitment associated with being a student-athlete. This caused many of the participants to indicate that those factors contributed to their lack of interaction on campus.

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Appendix A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me a story about how you became a student athlete?

2. Can you describe why you chose to attend (Blinded)?

3. What is it like to be a student-athlete at this university?

4. How would you describe your academic experiences at this university?

5. Tell me about a positive or negative experience that you have had on campus or in the classroom.

6. Who has been the greatest influence on your academic success?

7. What has been the greatest influence on your academic success?

8. Was this academic experience helpful or did it serve as a barrier to your academic progress?

9. What college experience has been the hardest adjustment which may have created a barrier to your academic success?

10. Can you tell me how your academic experiences may or may not have been influenced by being a student-athlete?

11. How would you describe your social experiences at this university?

12. Can you describe how some of these social experiences have been helpful or have served as barriers to your academic progress?

13. Would you please describe how these social experiences may or may not have been influenced by being a student-athlete?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience as a student-athlete?