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An Exploration of the Relationships between the Quality of the Sport, Social, and
Academic Experiences of College Student-Athletes and Their Adjustment to
College: A Qualitative Analysis

By

Susan L. Freeman

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Higher Education, Administration
Department of Adult, Career and Higher Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Keywords: football, soccer, coaches, intercollegiate athletics, transitions
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family; in loving memory of my grandmother, Grace Thompson who always provided abundant love and support; my mother Nina Freeman for understanding the importance and the value of higher education and being sure that I had the resources to achieve my academic dreams; my father Henry Freeman for his quiet inspiration; my sister Judith Freeman for being on-call during this entire process and providing much needed encouragement and stability; and my dearest friend Debbie Smith for having faith in me, for knowing when to infuse humor in the process, when to provide support and when to remind me to relax. Without these very important influences in my life this dissertation would not have been possible.

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An Exploration of the Relationships between the Quality of the Sport, Social, and Academic Experiences of College Student-Athletes and Their Adjustment to College: A Qualitative Analysis

Susan L. Freeman

ABSTRACT

Intercollegiate athletics at major universities provide a variety of opportunities and challenges for student-athletes who choose to participate. This qualitative project studies the quality of interactions in the sport, the social, and the academic experiences for freshman football and male soccer student-athletes and their adjustment to college.

The five research questions under review were as follows:

- Is there a relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
- Is there a relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
- Is there a relationship between the quality of the academic experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

- Are there relationships between any two of the three experiences (sport, social, and academic) that affect adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
- Does the adjustment to college relate to interactions among all three experiences in any comprehensive way as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

The purpose of the study was to hear in the student-athletes' authentic voices their descriptions of the quality of the sport, the social and the academic endeavors and how those interactions impacted their adjustment to college. The results imply that the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes, while enduring some challenges, find ways to adjust to college as both students and as athletes. Several themes were ascertained in relation to each of the three areas under review. While the student-athletes expressed feelings indicating that their collegiate experiences were different from the experiences of students not participating in intercollegiate athletics, the majority of them revealed a high level of comfort in their college environment. They all felt attached to the university, and they all planned to return for their sophomore year.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Student-athletes comprise a unique population among students in higher education. These individuals enter colleges and universities with a wide range of athletic, social and academic expectations. Pendergrass, Hansen, Neuman, & Nutter (2003) noted that many student-athletes, especially those in sports such as basketball and football, expect to play professionally after completing their eligibility at a college or university. Indeed, regardless of the competitive level, student-athletes competing in revenue-producing sports often seem to attend college to satisfy their interests in athletic competition and to prepare for athletic careers rather than take advantage of the other educational opportunities that college offers (Martinelli, 2000). With such a varied selection of goals and expectations, this population often presents special challenges. These challenges will become apparent through the following examination of what relationship, if any, exists between the quality of the sport experience, the social experience and the academic experience to the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes who play football or men's soccer.

Student-athletes must make complex adjustments when they enter colleges which are members of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) at the Division I-A level. These student-athletes experience not only a shift from high school to college in their athletic environment, but also must navigate the same transition issues facing the

general first-year student population. Competing at a Division I-A NCAA member institution will likely be much different from the high school programs to which the student-athletes were accustomed. They must meet new and more rigorous athletic and academic challenges, identify career paths, and develop new social networks.

One might propose that because student-athletes have such high profiles on campus, the opportunity for them to feel lonely will be lessened, but in fact developing new social networks is one of the most difficult tasks these first-year participants may face. First, student-athletes often find themselves challenged to discover the time for relationships outside their respective teams because there is limited time for socializing or participating in other college activities (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001). Additionally, it has been suggested that student-athletes develop their own sub-culture that flourishes, isolated and insulated from the larger campus culture, and that colleges and universities allow this to happen (Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Finally, Gerdes and Mallinckrodt's (1994) findings reported that emotional and social adjustments predict attrition more accurately than academic adjustments which support the contention that students often drop out of college due to feelings of personal isolation. Conversely, students provided with more opportunities to develop personal relationships tended to be less lonely and more likely to be successful as they adjust to the social dimension of college.

In view of the fact that male student-athletes often do not engage in activities outside of their teams and sports, they are potentially at a greater risk of leaving their institutions related to these feelings of isolation, whereas freshman female students

tended to feel secure and maintain new social connections much more successfully than freshman male students (Cutrona, 1982; Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985).

If a student-athlete drops out of college or transfers to another school, there might be little or no recorded follow-up on why the individual left the institution. Although there are data documenting student-athletes who leave for academic eligibility reasons, what is unclear is why these participants leave if they are in good academic standing. Furthermore, if there is an academic issue, is the issue entirely curriculum based? Oftentimes, there are a variety of reasons why a student-athlete becomes academically ineligible and why this person might leave a college or university while in good academic standing. Many of these factors may be non-academic in nature. While there are well established academic checks for this population, the evidence is less developed and structured as to the rationale for dropping out due to non-academic issues.

For purposes of the research presented here, the focus is on the NCAA Division I-A category. While there are several NCAA categories, this classification requires that member institutions have an average of 15,000 people in actual or paid attendance at football games, and field at least seven sports for men and seven sports for women or six sports for men and eight sports for women (NCAA web A). Division I-A athletic departments have significantly improved their strategies and support for assisting student-athletes with academic issues.

Currently, many of those athletic departments have a well-designed student services unit. Most of these units have a number of academic advisors with some designated to serve specific sports. This assignment of academic advisors allows student-

athletes to have a specific contact in case of academic difficulty or if academic guidance is needed. Having a designated academic contact not only provides a sense of security for the student-athlete, but also provides an opportunity for the academic advisor to become familiar with each participant's needs and challenges. Astin (1977) and Tinto (1993) both discovered that students who are able to access academic and social support systems are generally successful at a college or university. These athletic department based student services divisions provide such an academic support piece.

In concert with the NCAA guidelines and the services available through the department of athletics another monitoring component is eligibility standards. Initial eligibility requirements, coupled with specific program requirements and continuing academic eligibility rules, further enhance the academic tracking process. Student-athletes who entered colleges and universities on or after August 1, 2003 are required to complete 40% of specific degree program requirements before entering the third academic year, 60% of specific degree requirements prior to enrolling in the fourth academic year, and 80% of specific degree requirements before the fifth year of collegiate enrollment (Kulics, 2006). This information allows one to efficiently locate a student-athlete's grade point average (G.P.A.) and the number of attempted and completed student credit hours. It is more difficult, however, to determine if academic struggles are a result of the course work studied or if there are other unrecorded factors. One assessment tool that has been developed to identify these non-cognitive factors is the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) used by Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston in their research. When the NCQ was administered to a group of incoming freshman student-

athletes, the NCQ showed that non-cognitive variables were stronger indicators of first semester grades than the more academic measure of SAT scores (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992).

Although the 2003 NCAA academic reform package in its entirety does not have a significant non-academic development variable, one component of it may promote more comprehensive discussions between academic advisors and student-athletes. The progress toward degree requirement insists that student-athletes declare a major at the certifying institution by the beginning of their third year of enrollment (fifth semester or seventh quarter) and make progress toward that degree each semester. It may be critical for student-athletes to determine their academic major area of interest prior to the mandated third year (NCAA Manual, 2007-2008, p. 363). If the chosen major is housed in a limited access college and/or has prescribed prerequisites for admission, these specific courses should be a part of the academic plan prior to the start of the third year.

While there are some concerns regarding the shift toward degree mandates, the NCAA academic reform package at the very least draws attention to the monitoring of academic progress prior to graduation. While this approach may be somewhat limiting, it does permit academic advisors to focus on more long-range academic planning while still assessing semester to semester eligibility. Having discussions with student-athletes related to the selection of an academic major, early in the matriculation process, and thus their progress toward successful completion of the degree, may encourage more focus on the individual's multidimensional identity and assist in eliminating the singular focus of

being an athlete. Choosing an academic major early in the college experience will require the student-athlete to think beyond the sport experience.

Regardless of the chosen major, it is helpful for the student-athletes to have positive relationships with their professors. Perhaps this would enhance the perception that they are truly student-athletes not athletic students. Student-athletes must feel confident communicating with their professors about not only their class assignments and materials, but also about developing procedures for missing a class as a result of a scheduled athletic competition (Kulics, 2006; Pendergrass et al. 2003).

Given that the focus tends to remain primarily on the academic success of the student-athlete, the NCAA also promotes a program to spotlight the more comprehensive improvement of the person. The CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) Life Skills program, initiated in 1991 by the NCAA Foundation, was first marketed to the NCAA membership in 1994 and initially signed on 46 NCAA member institutions to participate in the program. Additionally, in 2007, 128 Division I-A schools are sponsoring this program (NCAA web B). This program marks the first organized effort by the NCAA and its member institutions, to address the student-athletes' total development. The six categories of the program are equity, healthy choices, positive life skills, community leadership, safe environment and academic success.

As stated, there are strong NCAA programs in place which address the academic side of the equation but fewer that concentrate on the area of non-academic development. Non-academic circumstances may exist that prompt student-athletes to drop out of their degree programs. Bloland (1987) writes that freshman student-athletes move from high

school where they were adulated as stars to college where they compete with other stars as good as or better than they are. This can create great psychological pressures. Thus, student-athletes entering as freshmen are in a most critical position as it relates to successful adjustment to college. Lang, Dunham, & Alpert (1988) discovered that many student-athletes attend college primarily to extend their athletic careers, rather than to earn a college degree. Other studies support this conclusion that student-athletes are unprepared and come to college to advance their athletic interest (Edwards, 1984; Nyquist, 1979).

This rationale is not supported by data collected by the NCAA. In 2007, the NCAA acknowledges that only 1.2% of collegiate men's basketball players go on to play professionally, while only 1.8% of collegiate football players, 1.7% of men's soccer players and 1% of women's collegiate basketball players advance to the professional sports ranks (NCAA web C). Even as student-athletes advance through their collegiate careers and experience little playing time, the goal of playing professional sports remains strong. In many of these cases the person identifies themselves as more of an athlete and not so much as a student. Making the leap to being paid for playing a sport is the only path to a higher socioeconomic position with which many of these student-athletes can identify. It is asserted that many African-American student-athletes view sport proficiency and success as one of the few roads to upward mobility (Sellars & Kuperminc 1997). This is further collaborated by the Center for the Study of Athletes in that 44% of African-American and 20% of non-African-American football players at predominantly white colleges and universities expected to become professional athletes. As mentioned

earlier, the reality is that only a very small percentage of collegiate student-athletes move on to the professional sport ranks.

Meggyesy (2000) reports that revenue from the sports of football and men's basketball financially supports not only these two programs but also the non-revenue sports and ultimately the entire athletic department. Acknowledging the growth and popularity of highly competitive collegiate revenue producing sports, he also finds that there has been an 8000% increase in NCAA revenues moving from \$6.6 million in 1977-78 to \$267 million in 1997-98. With that in mind, others question whether the student-athletes participating in these sports that produce such revenue are truly students and athletes or if, in fact, they are unpaid professional athletes. Critics argue that these extraordinarily high profits in football and basketball tend to blur the mission of the NCAA member institutions athletic departments as it relates to the success of the student-athlete.

Statement of the Problem

Evidence appears to substantiate that an extraordinary amount of attention is paid to the graduation rates of student-athletes at NCAA member institutions. However, this type of measurement only tracks the student-athlete in his or her first semester of attendance and then again at the conclusion of the fourth, fifth or sixth year when graduation from an undergraduate program is anticipated. Only modest attention is given specifically to the first-year student-athletes beyond the semester to semester eligibility checks. It is no secret that the first year of any college student's life is critical. Yet there is very little literature available that focuses on the adjustment to college of freshman

student-athletes. Without this information, little can be undertaken to decrease the attrition and increase the successful adjustment to college of freshman student-athletes.

Upon arrival at a Division I-A NCAA member institution, many aspects of life will be different for the freshman student-athletes. The teams' practices will be more difficult, the academic challenges will be more intense, and the student-athletes will be transitioning from being high school seniors back down to the bottom of the rank-order as freshmen. Hyatt (2003) reported that a student-athlete moves from being "big man on campus" where he is recognized and given positive feedback by his peers, faculty, and high school community to existing as more of an ambiguous figure. She goes on to write that some students, from the general population at colleges and universities, may be resentful of the special attention it is presumed student-athletes receive. Engstrom and Sedlacek (1989) suggested that institutions should create social programs to encourage interaction between athletes and non-athletes. Additionally, they advised faculty to provide opportunities for student-athletes to display their academic achievements in the company of their non-athlete classmates. It is hoped that these staged interactions can curb these undeserved stereotypical judgments.

Student-athletes participating at a Division I-A institution may also feel a sense of isolation from the general student population. This isolation is challenging as these young people attempt to develop social networks. Unfortunately, Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling (1996) posited that athletic-related time demands on football and basketball players eliminates much of the time they have available to devote to studies and

socializing within the general student population. Although there is a 20 hour weekly limit and a 4 hour per day limit imposed by the NCAA related to the amount of mandatory time any student-athlete can be required to participate in structured athletic activity, most student-athletes dedicate many more than the allowable 20 hours per week (NCAA manual, 2007-2008, p. 220; Phillips, 2004). Participating in practices and games, analyzing game film, attending team meetings, working out on their own and traveling to away games are just a few of the additional demands student-athletes have on their time.

Freshman student-athletes must also adjust to new coaches with motivational styles that may be different from those used by their high school coaches. Developing positive relationships among coaches and these student-athletes is paramount in creating a cohesive unit. Hollembeak and Amarose (2005) cited that a democratic coaching style has a positive impact on autonomy and thus boosts student-athletes' intrinsic motivation. Conversely, they find that autocratic behavior has a negative affect on intrinsic motivation. These freshmen all respond slightly different to leadership styles and reward processes. While they may have a few encounters with the coaches at the colleges or universities of their choice prior to signing to participate, it is likely they are not yet aware of the true leadership styles of the coach or coaches with whom they will interact.

The student-athletes' ability to successfully adjust to the rigors of a Division I-A program will depend on many factors. Athletic departments allocate large sums of money to recruit these student-athletes and pay for their tuition, books, and fees. If these freshmen student-athletes leave the college prior to or at the completion of their freshman year, both the institutions and the student-athletes have much to lose. Currently, there are

few statistics that provide a comprehensive estimation of how many student-athletes are dropping out of their degree programs and why they might leave. Thus, without such information, it is difficult to determine the most prevalent reasons for their attrition.

Additionally, student-athletes may struggle athletically, socially, academically or in all of these areas. If any one of the aforementioned areas breaks down, this puts the participants in a psychological place they probably never previously experienced. Therefore, freshman student-athletes need to be monitored frequently in their athletic, social, and academic progress. Also, records of the freshman student-athletes who drop out of their degree programs need to be uniformly kept at each institution. These records should include both academic and non-academic reasons why the student-athlete drops out. This information will definitely help in developing, designing, and implementing comprehensive programs to promote successful adjustment to college with specific attention to the freshman student-athletes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a relationship between the quality of interactions and the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes whose initial matriculation began in either the summer semester or the fall semester of 2007. The specific segment of the student-athlete population that was examined in this research study was freshman football players and male soccer players attending a Division I-A institution. Intercollegiate football at major Division I-A colleges and universities is commonly referred to as a “revenue producing sport.” Although not considered a “revenue producing sport,” men’s soccer has many things in common with the football

program. Both sports have their competitive seasons during the fall semesters, both provide opportunities to play professionally, and both require similar time commitments for practice and other game preparation.

Specifically, the research focused on how the football and male soccer student-athletes described the sport, the social, and the academic challenges of college and how they felt the quality of their experiences in each of these respective areas impacted their adjustment to college. The results of this study may encourage the NCAA member institutions to become more sensitive to the factors that could undermine the football and male soccer student-athletes' ability or willingness to successfully adjust to a Division I-A college or university.

Compiling data in the spring and the summer 2008 terms permitted the collection of feedback data following the completion of one competitive athletic season and at least one full academic semester. This allowed coaches and appropriate athletic and college or university staff to intervene in a timely manner if there appeared to be adjustment struggles for the football and male soccer players. It also provided information on those strategies geared to assist in successful college adjustment that are already in place and that are viewed as successful.

Design of the Study

This study was qualitative in nature and focused on freshman student athletes, at a selected NCAA Division I-A institution, participating in the sports of football and men's soccer and the relationship that might exist between their adjustment to college and the quality of their encounters in the areas of their sport experience, their social interactions,

and their academic challenges. Following the initial introduction to the study, the communication consisted of two in person interviews for some and one in person session for others not to exceed two hours during the 2008 spring or summer terms and occurring in an interval of at least one week. The discussions occurred as private and group semi-structured interviews.

Research Questions

The study focused on these five questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
2. Is there a relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
3. Is there a relationship between the quality of the academic experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
4. Are there relationships between the sport, social, and academic experiences that affect adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
5. Does the adjustment to college relate to interactions among all three experiences in any comprehensive way as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

Key Terms

- Academic experience – includes the student-athletes relationships with faculty, the accomplishments he has made in his classes, the level to which he feels challenged or overwhelmed and his perceptions of the grades he may receive.
- Social Experience – includes the student-athlete’s evaluation of his ability to interact both within his respective sport team and among the general student population, his participation in on-campus events and/or activities sponsored outside the athletic department, and the participant’s evaluation of his level of accomplishment in assimilating into this new environment.
- Sport Experience – includes the student-athlete’s evaluation of his relationship with his coach or coaches, the competitiveness of the team, the individual’s level of participation in games and practices, the participant’s evaluation of his accomplishments as a team member and his ability to meet the physical challenges required to contribute on game day, and the impact of any physical injury.
- Adjustment to college – includes the student-athlete’s evaluation of his level of comfort in the collegiate environment, if he feels attached to the institution, and if he plans to persist.

Other Definitions

- Division I – colleges and universities in this classification must have an average of 15,000 people in actual or paid attendance at football games and among other

things they must field at least seven sports for men and seven sport for women or six sports for men and eight sports for women. The NCAA is currently modifying the name of this classification to the Football Bowl Subdivision. (NCAA Web A).

- Freshman student-athlete – is any student who participates in intercollegiate athletics and has not yet attended the fall semester of the second year of college.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association – is an organization of members which include colleges, universities, and conferences with the purpose of governing competition in a fair, safe, equitable, and sportsmanlike manner and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount. (NCAA web D).
- NCAA member - a college, university or conference that has voluntarily joined the National Collegiate Athletic Association. (NCAA web D)
- Student-Athlete – a student who also participates in an intercollegiate sport.

Limitations

- The research design provided for a sample which was from one university so generalizing to a larger population might not be possible.
- The research design required participants to provide the researcher with blocks of time not to exceed two hours which might have reduced their commitment to the study given that it might have infringed on their time for other activities.
- The research design included student-athletes who had participated heavily and those with no game experience thus these two populations had different experiences.

- The research design required the student-athlete to reflect on their experiences following an extended break from the environment in question which challenged the accurate recall of their experiences.
- The research design included only freshman football and male soccer student-athletes therefore the results may not apply to the upper level participants in these sports.
- The research design was limited in the amount of interview time available with each participant which limited the research categories that developed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

For many years, administrators at colleges and universities have examined ways to best integrate intercollegiate athletics program goals into the institutions' educational mission. As major college athletic programs continue to grow and generate more revenue, integrating the goals of collegiate athletic departments into the educational missions of colleges and universities becomes more complex. At the center of this contradiction are the student-athletes; specifically, those who participate in the revenue-producing sport of football and also the similarly intense sport of men's soccer. These freshman male student-athletes bring with them a diverse set of athletic, social and academic skills. Creating an environment which allows these football and men's soccer players to most effectively develop and adjust to college in all three of these areas is a complex task.

History

One of the most noted pieces of history in intercollegiate athletics is the first recorded game of football in the United States played on November 6, 1869 between Rutgers and Princeton (Crowley, 2006; Lumpkin, 1998). The teams consisted of 25 men each and the ball was similar to a soccer ball. "The National Soccer Hall of Fame asserted that what happened that afternoon was the first American intercollegiate soccer game (though there were also some rugby features in the rules of play that day)"

(Crowley, 2006, p. 2). Crowley also noted that those participating in the game called it football. Thus the sports of football and soccer have long been associated.

Other popular sports played in the late 1800's included boat racing and baseball (Crowley, 2006; Lumpkin, 1998). However, football was the sport gaining the most interest with its mass plays and physical brutality. College presidents, faculty, and students began to call for reform in this savage game. "The Intercollegiate Football Association (IFA), formed in 1873, changed some rules in 1876, moving away from soccer toward rugby, but was largely ineffectual in stemming the violence that was so characteristic of the game in 1880s and 90s" (Crowley, 2006, p. 3). Crowley went on to note that due to low membership and member disagreements, the IFA was soon disbanded. After several additional unsuccessful attempts to reform intercollegiate football, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States was formed in 1906, and in 1910 the name was changed to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Lumpkin, 1998).

Mission and Core Values of the NCAA

The NCAA members include colleges, universities and conferences that make up its membership. The collegiate members appoint volunteer representatives that serve on committees which introduce and vote on rules called bylaws. They also establish programs to govern promote and further the purposes and goals of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA web E).

The NCAA currently defines its core purpose as governing competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount.

The core values are listed as follows:

The Association - through its member institutions, conferences and national office staff – shares a belief in and commitment to:

- The collegiate model of athletics in which students participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social and athletics experiences.
- The highest levels of integrity and sportsmanship.
- The pursuit of excellence in both academics and athletics.
- The supporting role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the higher education mission and in enhancing the sense of community and strengthening the identity of member institutions.
- An inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds.
- Respect for institutional autonomy and philosophical differences.
- Presidential leadership of intercollegiate athletics at the campus, conference and national levels. (NCAA web F).

In order to uphold its mission and core values, the NCAA must develop and implement a myriad of athletic, social, and academic guidelines and programs. One example of how the NCAA attempts to create an athletic, social and academic balance in the lives of the student-athletes is with the rule which limits to 20 hours the total amount of time student-athletes can be required to participate in structured athletic activity

(NCAA manual, 2007-2008, p. 220). However, most student-athletes voluntarily dedicate much more time than allowable by the NCAA (Phillips, 2004). By limiting the amount of allowable time for preparation and competition, the NCAA rule encourages student-athletes to pursue not only their athletic interests but also academic and social options that more closely mirror those of their non-athlete classmates.

A second example of how the NCAA is working to better balance the lives of student-athletes is through the 2003 “Academic Reform Package” which mandates that student-athletes identify an academic major by the beginning of their third year of enrollment (fifth semester or seventh quarter) and make academic progress toward that degree (Kulics, 2006; NCAA manual, 2007-2008, p. 363). This directive stimulates more academic-related discussions between academic advisors and the freshman football and men’s soccer participants. These conversations shift a portion of the focus away from athletics and instead highlight both the academic major and career interests of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes. This shift in concentration from athletic to academic should be helpful in emphasizing the importance of the intellectual mission of the colleges and universities.

Academic Advisors

Employing academic advisors who are knowledgeable about NCAA eligibility requirements and understand the culture and sub-cultures that exists in the world of major college athletics is essential to best guide student-athletes through the academic process. Critics feel that housing a student services unit within the athletic department shields student-athletes from experiencing the challenges of selecting courses, completing the

registration process, and being aware of their academic records (Pendergrass et al. 2003). This protection from participating in a part of the regular college process not only allows the student-athletes to direct more focus toward their sport but also has the potential to create a learned sense of helplessness. “It is interesting to note that the success of student-athletes’ performance in the classroom has in fact coincided with the dramatic development of athletic support programs” (Kulics, 2006, p. 78).

As early as 1975 there was a grassroots effort to establish a national association for professionals working in the area of academic advising for student-athletes (N4A Web A). This organization is now titled the N4A. While only 15 members attended the inaugural national convention in 1975, more than 400 collegiate academic advising professionals were present at the most recent national gathering (N4A Web A). On Friday, September 28, 2007, the NCAA announced publicly its partnership with the N4A to better educate these academic advising professionals on the intent, goals and improvement strategies of the NCAA’s Academic Progress Rate (N4A Web B). This collaboration should assist administrators with the on-going project of better meshing the dual roles the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes manage, which is being both a student and an athlete, with the educational missions of colleges and universities.

Career Maturity

Career development has been defined as having mature, realistic career plans grounded in assessing one’s career goals, interests, and abilities, as well as having an awareness of vocational opportunities and requirements (Crites, 1978). The Career Pattern Study, which investigated the career development of men, (Super, Crites,

Hummel, Moser, Overstreet & Warnath, 1957) powered the discovery that career maturity was a combination of physical, psychological, and social dynamics. Super (1990) identified five stages of career development and implied that image norms play a role in career decisions. A student-athlete through sources such as the media, family influence and peer association may have determined that his image aligns well with a specific career such as a professional athlete. Consequently, the level of career maturity a football or men's soccer player has achieved may determine how quickly the academic major and the career aspirations and can successfully be matched.

Studies on career maturity specific to participants in intercollegiate, revenue-producing sports have been conducted and have asserted that many from this population lack adequate wisdom in this area (Kennedy & Dimick, 1987; Smallman & Sowa, 1996). This lack of career maturation may be a result of the desire of many of these athletes to ultimately enter the professional ranks in their respective sports.

Weatherspoon (2007) suggested that for African-American athletes, "The dream of playing professional sports starts as early as elementary school" (p. 31). Similarly, Smallman and Sowa (1996) discovered in their study, in which 41% of the subjects were from revenue producing sports, and that included the use of the Career Development Inventory (CDI) tool, 66% of the black student-athletes and 39% of the white student-athletes expected to play professional sports. This positioned these male athletes in the 25th percentile of norms as it relates to career maturity.

The NCAA, in published research, declared that only 1.8% of collegiate football players and 1.7% of collegiate soccer players will have an opportunity to compete in the professional ranks (NCAA web C). An even smaller number of these athletes will actually establish successful careers as professional athletes. This disconnect between the desired career in professional sports and the actual chance that it will happen is an ongoing challenge that the athletic staff and the college or university career specialists must collaborate to better educate the student-athletes on their potential for achieving their desired jobs.

Additionally, the remarkable salaries being paid to professional athletes make it difficult to persuade many of these student-athletes to explore other career options. Many devote their entire missions to being drafted into the professional ranks as they view this leap as their only way to reach higher socioeconomic status (Adler & Adler, 1991; Sellars & Kuperminc, 1997). Moreover Martinelli (2000) implied that student-athletes from revenue producing sports, no matter at which NCAA division level, may enroll in an institution of higher education specifically to develop their athletic careers rather than to devoting time toward educational opportunities.

Weatherspoon (2007) likened this drive to focus more on the athletic identity while forfeiting important educational opportunities to “the plague”. He reported: “Black male athletes often state that they seek to escape a life of economic despair and to buy “mama” a new home or a Cadillac Escalade. But listen to “grandma” who normally understands that obtaining a college degree is more valuable than playing sports” (p. 31). To support his strong feelings for the importance of education, Weatherspoon identified

once-successful Black collegiate athletes who encountered a variety of issues that shortened their professional athletic careers and left them without the ability to cope with everyday life.

In contrast to these beliefs that student-athletes should be encouraged to concentrate more on their academic endeavors and explore and fully develop their academic identity, some feel that they should be allowed to focus on their athletic identities and be paid for their contribution to the intercollegiate game. By way of NCAA rules, compensation that the student-athletes are allowed to receive is well defined and clearly prohibits payment in the form of a salary for participation in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletics. Differing opinions point to different payment options.

Malveaux (1995) advised beginning with something as small as spending money as compensation but then offered up the option of providing a salary and benefits similar to those received by the faculty. While Zimbalist (1999) pointed to the monetary value of tuition, meals, and housing that student-athletes receive, he also acknowledged that compared to the amount of money institutions earn from major sports programs student-athletes participating in these revenue producing sports are being exploited. He went on to communicate that many variables make this an unaffordable venture. To name a few of the hurdles, there would be the cost of the salaries, that due to Title IX rules would need to be paid in some proportion to all student-athletes, the market values that would dictate the amount paid for play, the worker's compensation insurance, and the tax shelter enjoyed by the institutions and the NCAA would be lost as a result of these payments.

As described here, these student-athletes are faced with balancing the important components of academics and athletics as they relate to career choice and academic major selection. As populations of male freshman football and soccer players enter these colleges and universities they must be provided with skilled leadership in order to make quality decisions and ultimately achieve successful adjustment as they experience this new college environment.

CHAMPS Life Skills

While selecting an appropriate academic major that aligns with the career choices of our freshman football and male soccer participants, which is highly important to the successful adjustment to college, so are the other aspects of these people's lives. Accordingly, the NCAA participation rules along with other NCAA programs such as the CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success) Life Skills program, which provides education outreach services in the areas of equity, healthy choices, positive life skills, safe environments, academic success and community leadership (NCAA web B) are all diligent efforts in assisting the football and male soccer student-athletes in experiencing a successful well-rounded collegiate career. Because the individuals enter college with a wide range of pre-college characteristics these plans require further tailoring to effectively assist in the successful adjustment to college of the freshman football and men's soccer student-athletes.

Even with all of these efforts, there may remain a peculiar challenge in motivating freshman student-athletes participating in football and men's soccer to utilize rules and services created to protect and assist them. Watson (2006) found that a majority of

student-athletes indicate they do not have time to use counseling services and even if they did they would not feel comfortable doing so. The very population for which these parameters and programs are created may feel that using them will show a sign of either physical or emotional weakness.

Identity

In the process of working their way through this host of programs and services and constantly adjusting to the new rigors of being a college student and a college athlete, the identity of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes may become blurred and generate athletic, social and academic challenges. As a member of a sports team at a college or university, these freshman football and men's soccer players assume two identities; that of being both a student and an athlete. Because of pre-college experiences many of these individuals view themselves more as athletes than as students (Sellars & Kuperminc, 1997). After all, they are acknowledged publicly through the media, for scoring the winning touchdown in football or blocking the winning goal in soccer or on the other hand failing to do so (Thelin, 1996) but not much is printed in the headlines when football players or men's soccer players receive a top grade on an academic test or project.

While it is not impossible to balance the two roles, it has been found that when there are limited resources, in this case the limitations of time and energy, the chance for conflict is greater (Adler & Adler, 1985; Sack & Thiel, 1985). This conflict may eventually have a negative impact on the adjustment to college for the freshman football and male soccer players. At times the student-athletes are just too tired from practicing

their sport, participating in conditioning drills, and studying game film to successfully manage their role as a student (Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001; Pascarella, Truckenmiller, Nora, Terenzini, Edison & Hagedorn, 1999).

As previously pointed out, another distraction for many of these freshman football and men's soccer student-athletes is the desire to play professional sports. As identified by the Center for the Study of Athletics a staggering 44% of African-American and 20% of non-African-American football players expect to play their sports professionally. This career goal further complicates the management of the dual identities.

Killeya-Jones (2005) reported that when there is less discrepancy between the role of student and athlete, the level of both life satisfaction and academic satisfaction are higher. A variety of current and pre-college factors assists freshman football and male soccer student-athletes in either being able to manage the dual identity role harmoniously or to struggle to achieve the balance of being productive as a student and as an athlete. Student services units both within the athletic department and within the institution must be aware of this identity issue and form ways to assess the student-athletes' coping and adjustment potential.

Relationship with Faculty

One collegiate environmental factor that can have a major impact on how the dual identity role is managed is the attitude of the faculty toward the student-athletes. Adler & Adler (1985, 1991) found that many student-athletes felt that faculty viewed them as jocks first and as students second. This is further supported by the findings of Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) who discovered that 49.2% of student-athletes, surveyed at 18 NCAA

Division I institutions, believed a faculty member had discriminated against them because of their membership on an intercollegiate athletic team. Faculty, who show respect for the student-athletes, have a positive affect on the students' abilities to handle their dual roles (Comeaux, 2005). Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt (2005) posited that students and faculty must experience worthwhile interactions in order for high level scholarly work to occur. Not all student faculty communications affect identity, learning, and satisfaction outcomes equally. Research suggested that faculty who share guidance in a way that assists student-athletes in reaching their career goals are received very positively by the student-athletes and in some cases this show of understanding motivates the individuals to achieve a higher grade point average (Comeaux, 2005).

Further, not all football and men's soccer participants benefit equally from interactions with the faculty. Students entering colleges and universities with lower grade point averages and those who are from families with little or no college education tended to benefit most highly from engaging with faculty beyond the allotted classroom time (Astin, 1984; Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Comeaux, 2005). Providing special attention to appropriately matching the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes with faculty who have an understanding of the demands these young people are facing both in and out of the classroom is one of many retention tools that can be exercised by academic support professionals in assisting the student-athletes in successfully adjusting to college.

Social

First-year football and men's soccer players must also navigate their way through new social territory. Developing social networks on campus may be the most difficult

task these freshman student-athletes encounter. In high school these freshman football and men's soccer student-athletes are likely treated like the "big man on campus" however upon arrival on the college or university campus they may find the reception a bit less welcoming (Hyatt, 2003).

Astin (1993) found that the student's peer group is the single most important form of support during the pursuit of the bachelor's degree. Tinto (1975) supported this by adding that the more students are engaged socially the more likely they are to succeed. Thus, it is paramount that these individuals are successful in locating and developing a positive network of friends.

The academic and athletic requirements these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes face make it difficult for them to find time to participate in social events with the general student population. This challenge can lead to the creation of sub-cultures within the student-athlete population and more specifically in the groups that are established within the individual sport teams. It has been suggested that athletic departments in collaboration with others on campus should work to dissolve this sub-culture and craft social programs to facilitate on-campus interactions between athletes and non-athletes (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1989; Pascarella et al. 1995). When surveyed by Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) only 36% of the NCAA Division I-A participants indicated they were involved in any non-athletic campus organization.

This reduction of the sub-cultures will require a great amount of time, planning, and maintenance. Many factors will make it difficult to eliminate or lessen the formation of these sub-cultures. These freshman football and men's soccer players spend many

hours with their respective teams each day preparing to reach a common goal thus limiting the time available for establishing new friendships (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Jordon & Denson, 1990; Pascarella et al. 1999; Phillips, 2004; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). In support of this concept, it is also reported that the athletes may simply be too fatigued or may be experiencing physical injuries from their participation in their sport which may prohibit them from pursuing non-athletic related activities on campus (Adler & Adler, 1991; Carodine et al. 2001; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001).

It might be assumed that these high-profile freshman football and men's soccer players will take on a celebrity type status around campus and never experience a sense of loneliness or difficulty developing relationships. As previously mentioned, the constraints these participants encounter create a real challenge as these freshman football and male soccer players attempt to sculpt out time to establish new friendships with students who are not athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Carodine et al. 2001; Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2001). This issue may, in fact, create a sense of isolation from the general student population. This separation coupled with living away from home for the first time may generate a true sense of loneliness.

Ponzetti, J. J. (1990) explained that, "Loneliness reflects an interpersonal deficit that exists as a result of fewer or less satisfying personal relationships than a person desires" (p. 336). This feeling of loneliness has been found to be a problem among college students (Cutrona, 1982; Shaver et al. 1985). It might boost the possibility of successful adjustment to college if the athletic department staff would work together with their college's or university's student affairs department to develop programs that target

this issue and to work to bring the student-athletes together with the general student body to foster opportunities for new friendships. If the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes find social fulfillment they are likely to perform at a higher level both academically and athletically.

As a method to provide the student-athletes with more non-athletic time, the NCAA has implemented a 20 hour rule (NCAA manual, 2007-2008, p. 220) which should assist the freshman members of the football team and the men's soccer team with having more time available for pursuits similar to those of their non-athlete peers. However, freshman football and male soccer student-athletes volunteer much more of their time to watching game films, conditioning, and any other activities that will better promote their success in football or soccer (Phillips, 2004) which significantly reduces their opportunities to connect with new non-athletic peers.

Coaches

As these freshman football and male soccer players attempt to construct new social relationships they must also build successful bonds with their coaches. Beyond a few personal meetings these rookie football and men's soccer players know little about the philosophy and style of their respective coaching staff. The initial type of relationships established between the coaches and the student-athletes will likely play a powerful role in the overall successful adjustment to college of each team member.

The leadership these coaches provide is a key factor in the overall success of the participants. Chelladurai (1984) acknowledged the importance of this leadership by stressing that leadership is, "The behavioral process of influencing individuals and groups

toward set goals, is interpersonal in nature, entails a high degree of direct interaction with athletes and bears directly on the motivation of the team” (p. 329).

Just as there are athletes with different levels of expectancy from their coaches so are there varying levels of expectancy of the coach for their team members. The differences between high and low expectancy athletes’ perception of their treatment by the coach was examined by Wilson and Stephens (2007). They hypothesized that a coach can establish a social reality for the student-athletes. If the participants perceived that the coach had high expectations of them and they received less negative feedback than their peers this person was more likely to persist. On the other hand, those who felt that the coach had lower expectations, and thus provided less instruction and less positive feedback were more likely to struggle to adjust to the athletic demands of college athletics.

Wilson and Stephens (2007) using the six-stage Expectancy Confirmation Model (Darley & Fazio, 1980), paid specific attention to the first three steps, as a way to analyze the information collected from the athletes. They also found that all student-athletes tended to be aware of the differential coaching conduct and consequently suggested that coaches must make a conscious effort to lessen the ability of the student-athletes to determine the coaches’ level of expectations and create an environment filled with balanced reinforcement and education. Magill (2001) supported this notion by pointing out that feedback assists the athletes in working toward a specific goal.

Jowett & Clark-Carter (2006) reported on the three Cs of a relationship between the coach and the student-athlete: closeness, commitment and complementarity. These

three words resemble the information delivered by Wilson & Stephens (2007) in that the student-athlete interprets how the coach feels about him which may ultimately determine his level of satisfaction and performance and his desire to persist.

Along with making every individual member of the team feel equal, the coaches also have the task of motivating their teams to perform at the highest possible levels. Creating cohesion among the team members and between the coaches and team members will play a dominate role in the success of the team and ultimately the individuals participating. Turman (2003) asserted, “Because the team’s cohesion level affects individual group member behavior, it is important to establish a level of cohesion that builds a climate for team success” (p.87).

Coaching styles may be defined in a number of ways. Turman (2001) noted autocratic, democratic, social support and training and instruction as leadership styles. Freshman football and male soccer players will bring with them an expectation of how they anticipate the coach to lead the team and much of this preconceived notion may be a result of a coach or coaches who they encountered in high school. Hersey & Blanchard (1969) advised that effective leaders are flexible and adjust their style of leading to best fit their audience. Regardless of the style, the relationship that the freshman football player or male soccer player has with their coach or coaches also may be one of the better predictors of overall satisfaction with the sport experience. Because, each participant enters a college or university with unique experiences and abilities, effectively creating satisfying relationships will require a varied skill set which includes flexibility and understanding.

The challenge to successfully integrate the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes into the general student population at colleges and universities is a complex task. At many institutions with major NCAA sponsored football and men's soccer programs the educational missions do not always align well with the goals of the athletic departments and more specifically with the ambitions of the individual student-athletes. The research to date implied that the successful adjustment of these freshman football and men's soccer student-athletes may be dependent on their ability to map a balanced and successful course athletically, socially, and academically. It is also noted that colleges and universities should continue to strive, through a variety of programs, to produce well-rounded experiences for these freshman football and men's soccer student-athletes.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction

This study was qualitative in nature and was designed to investigate whether there is a relationship between the quality of aspects of student-athletes' experiences and the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes participating in the intercollegiate sports of football and men's soccer. Specifically, the research focused on the quality of the sport experience, the quality of the social experience, and the quality of the academic experience and whether those respective experiences impacted adjustment to college as described by the participants. In an attempt to explore how this population explains their navigation through this college experience the method of phenomenology was exercised.

Dialogue was established with freshman football and male soccer players using the semi-structured and open-ended interview technique. The information was collected via digital voice recorder and through written notes. The recordings and notes were managed via the Atlas/ti software program and reviewed by both the researcher and a second party to establish the development of themes. The establishment of themes or lack there of guided the assessment of the results.

The following five research questions guided this investigation:

1. Is there a relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer

- student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
2. Is there a relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
 3. Is there a relationship between the quality of the academic experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
 4. Are there relationships between the sport, social, and academic experiences that affect adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
 5. Does the adjustment to college relate to interactions among all three experiences in any comprehensive way as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

College administrators, athletic administrators and coaches are all keenly aware that the ability of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes to successfully adjust to their new lives on campus is a critical component of their desire and ability to succeed and remain at the institution. Learning about the participants' experiences in their own words may assist in developing new or improving upon current practices to provide support with successful adjustment to college.

Adler and Adler (1985; 1991) are the most well noted for their qualitative research related to intercollegiate athletics. They immersed themselves, over a 4-year period, in the environment of a major collegiate basketball program and completed

interviews with almost 40 participants. This was considered one of the first times that non-athletic staff persons were allowed to explore the otherwise private world of intercollegiate athletics. They were granted access to this population because the head coach was interested in providing assistance for his players as they adjusted to college life and athletics (Adler & Adler, 1985). Following the same dynamic, the Director of Athletics and the Associate Director of Athletics/Academics at the enrolling institution were interested in learning more about the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes and thus consented to provide access to this population.

Miller & Kerr (2002) following the Adler & Adler qualitative foundation of inquiry completed a study more closely related to the current investigation in number of participants and time of engagement. Their study investigated, with a qualitative design, the athletic, academic, and social experiences of intercollegiate student-athletes in Canada. This study included eight student-athletes and initial questioning lasted approximately 15- 30 minutes with some follow up clarification probes and a total time of 90 – 150 minutes.

It is common that most new students entering college experience a period of adjustment. In fact, for the general new student population two of the primary areas of adjustment are in the academic and social environments they experience as they begin life on a college campus (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). In addition to the new challenges of a more rigorous curriculum and a more diverse social community, freshman football and male soccer student-athletes must also adapt to an advanced level of athletic competition.

Many ways of adjusting to college life have been studied but few writers commit to the development of a definition. Baker & Siryk (1984a, 1984b, & 1989 in H. Gerdes & B. Mallinckrodt, 1994) defined academic adjustment as, “Along with scholarly potential, motivation to learn, taking action to meet academic demands, a clear sense of purpose, and general satisfaction with the academic environment” (p. 281). Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) determined that social adjustment, “Includes becoming integrated into the social life of college, forming a support network, and managing new social freedoms” (p. 281).

For purposes of this research the definition for the sport experience focused on how the freshman football and male soccer student-athlete felt about a number of things including his relationships with his coaches, the competitiveness of his team, his level of participation in games and practices, his evaluation of his accomplishments as a team member, his ability to meet the physical challenges required to contribute on game day, and the impact of any physical injuries. Other components were addressed as they related to the social experience. Factors that were evaluated included the student-athlete’s evaluation of his ability to interact both within his sport team and among the general college student population, his participation in on-campus events and/or activities sponsored outside the athletic department, and his evaluation of his ability to assimilate into his new environment. Further, the quality of the academic environment emphasized the student-athlete’s relationships with faculty, the accomplishments he has made in his classes, the level to which he felt challenged or overwhelmed, and his perceptions of the grades he received and may receive. For this study, adjustment to college was defined as

the student-athlete's evaluation of his level of comfort in the collegiate environment, if he felt attached to the institution, and if he planned to persist.

Design

In an effort to gain critical insight into the lives of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes the researcher chose to use a qualitative form of inquiry. Moreover, the goal of the study was to learn more than could be gained by using a quantitative method in which responses are more restricted. Allowing the opportunity for unrestricted descriptions allowed the participants to communicate their own thoughts and feelings in their own language and with genuine emotion.

This study was grounded in Mezirow's theory of the transformation of adult learning. Cranton (1994) and Mezirow (1991) described this theory as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Mezirow also posited that it is through transformative learning that independent thinking is developed.

Each freshman football and male soccer student-athlete brings with him preconceived ideas about how he will experience the sport, social, and academic worlds of college life. It is through this frame of reference that he will make judgments related to his adjustment to college.

One piece of the frame of reference is established by the habits of mind which is generally developed to mirror those of the primary care giver. A second element is the point of view which is more flexible and easier to alter than the habits of the mind (Mezirow, 1997). In fact, experimenting with and discussing another person's point of view carries little associated risks.

Given that each of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes brings with him a frame of reference which includes being one of the most talented and most recognized figures at his high school a change in reference is probable. This change is likely to happen quickly as a result of him now being one of many talented athletes and being essentially unrecognized across campus. This transformational process may affect how these participants evaluate the quality of their sport, social, and academic experience and these interactions might impact his assessment of his adjustment to college.

There are a variety of approaches to qualitative research. Phenomenological research was the form of qualitative design employed in this study. O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) described that the use of phenomenology began in Europe as part of Edward Husserl's philosophy. This style of research has continued to develop and includes three branches that include transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic.

Existential Phenomenology

This research was concerned with a person's existence and because the researcher agrees with the philosophy that the world already exists and that individuals interact in this pre-existing world, existential phenomenology was the guiding tool. Sartre, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Marcel are three of the most well-recognized twentieth century writers who used existential phenomenology (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003; Patton, 2002; Sherman & Webb, 1988). This existential model differs from Husserl's transcendental method that posited that the world is not already in existence and is developed through one's consciousness and also seeks to determine one's essence.

Sartre did not believe that people had an essence, instead he theorized that people shaped their own lives. He felt an individual's essence was revealed upon death (Greene, M. in R. Sherman & R. Webb, 1988). Additionally, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty both dispelled the possibility of essences and also opted for lived experiences. Heidegger's existential phenomenology is also called ontological phenomenology that means, "concerned with being" (Patton, 2002).

In considering these options it seems clear that the existential form of phenomenology as opposed to the transcendental method is an appropriate match. This research after all revolves around the lived experiences of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes as captured through their verbal expressions.

Holistic, Inductive, and Naturalistic Approaches

In remaining consistent with the design of qualitative research and the constructs of the phenomenological method the researcher used a holistic view, an inductive and a naturalistic approach to inquiry. Indeed, the holistic view allowed the researcher to inspect the accumulation of individual responses as it related to the whole group. This review focused on the notion that the combined articulated experiences of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes were more powerful than each individual report. This information may be useful in determining how the single pieces of the whole might help improve the various programs as a unit.

Further Patton (1980) described the inductive approach as, "Attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing preexisting expectations on the research setting" (p. 40). Using the inductive approach, which is consistent with the qualitative collection

of data, allowed for categories to develop as information was gathered from the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes. This process permitted themes to develop which guided the follow-up round of interviews.

Finally, the naturalistic approach was employed, as there was no experimental portion involved in the study. This method allowed the communications to occur in an open and flexible manner.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was chosen in an attempt to collect information-rich data. “Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The sample for this study was freshman football and male soccer student-athletes. These participants represented different sports with both teams practicing and participating at similarly intense levels and functioning under identical NCAA eligibility requirements.

Participants

Participants in this study were freshman student-athletes participating in the sports of football or men’s soccer. Some of these individuals may have participated heavily in game play but others had no game experience. Regardless, all had completed one competitive sport season.

The student-athletes were both students and athletes at a large research university located in the southeastern United States. Their respective teams are considered high level competitors in the Big East Conference and at the national level.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted private and in person interviews which were recorded on a digital voice recorder and through written notes. At the suggestion of the athletic department administration and with the support of the supervisory committee one group interview was also completed. This capture of the interviews allowed the comments to be reviewed numerous times in order to identify themes, if any, as the data collection developed.

Freshman student-athletes participating in football and men's soccer at a NCAA Division I-A institution in the southeastern United States were interviewed individually and some were a part of a group session. Initial contact was made with the administrative staff of the athletic department to assess the possibility of meeting with the student-athletes. These young men have such extreme demands on their time, finding a way to successfully collect information from them without eliminating otherwise "unscheduled" time was a very important part of the process. It was determined that the researcher would be granted meeting time with the participants as an attachment to other scheduled athletic time. It was hoped that this flexibility in scheduling would maximize the student-athletes' commitment to the study.

Two in-person interview sessions occurred with some participants and one in person session was completed with other student-athletes and each were no more than two hours in length. The interval between contacts was at least one week. The researcher met with the participants in an assigned room in the building that houses the athletic department. Clarification probes were used if the intent of the dialogue was not clear.

Additionally, the researcher sought to compare the student-athletes' evaluation of their academic experience with the actual grades they earn. With the assistance of knowledgeable athletic department administration, the grade point averages for the participants were secured. This comparison provided insight into the varying determinations of what a successful academic experience meant to each of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes.

When conducting quantitative research it is quite clear when data collection ends and analysis begins. Conversely, the separation of data collection and analysis in qualitative research is less defined. In using semi-structured interviews the participants' answers drove the researcher to analyze a response or responses and establish a need for further or restructured questioning.

Interviews

Skilled interviewing techniques are very important when conducting phenomenological research. This study used the semi-structured technique and open-ended interview method. By way of these interviews the researcher attempted to have the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes describe the quality of the experiences in their sport, their social interactions, and their academic challenges. And they also described their ability to adjust to college in general. This, in fact, was seeking the participant's analysis of their lived experiences. Spiegelberg (1975) stated, "Essential insight requires that on the basis of such variation we determine what is essential or necessary and what is merely accidental or contingent" (p. 64).

The interview sessions occurred in an environment that was familiar to the participants and this assisted in creating a more secure and trusting setting. This atmosphere resulted in the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes having a sense of security in the location of the talks and thus the focus remained on developing trust in the researcher as opposed to adjusting to new surroundings. As a strategy to establish a relaxed and legitimate rapport with the student-athletes the researcher chose to begin each interview session by discussing the sport experience. Initially displaying some knowledge of the student-athletes' sport seemed to increase the credibility of the researcher for the participants.

While there was one group meeting, all of these conversations occurred in a private setting with only the participants and the researcher in attendance. Given that these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes were possibly still developing relationships and working to feel secure in both their social networks and their surroundings, it was thought that allowing the individuals to communicate confidentially might prompt more open and honest communication.

Coding Procedure

Two layers of coding occurred in this study. Initially, computer software was used to process the data. Specifically, Atlas/ti was the software used as a way to assist in managing the information collected from the interview sessions. Atlas/ti was chosen as a result of its most flexible structure.

This software has the ability to process information from an audio source and was helpful, as all of the communications were recorded. Additionally, this product has unlimited coding possibilities and assists with the management of research data.

Second, a well qualified professional was recruited to serve as an additional code checker. This Professor Emeritus from Loyola University Chicago is well published and holds his Ph.D. in Educational Administration. He currently serves as an external evaluator for a local non-profit organization that receives grant funding from the Department of Education.

The interviews were transcribed from the recordings by a person not involved with the study who routinely transcribes interviews as a part of her job. A second person not involved in the study checked the transcriptions for accuracy. After the researcher had completed the data analysis and the identification of possible themes, the paid assistant analyzed the data managed by Atlas/ti. In a separate review, the hired code checker independently coded the transcribed interviews and identified themes that resulted from the interviews. This secondary review helped to verify the accuracy of the analysis. Further, participants were contacted to confirm the description of their information. Patton (1980, 2002) stressed that thick, rich descriptions are a requirement for exceptional qualitative research.

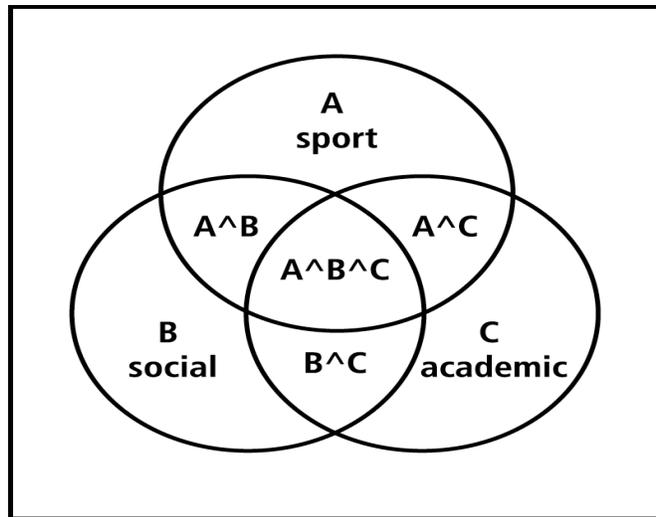
Moreover, the researcher and the paid code checker were able to come to an agreement in determining the emerging themes. If there was discrepancy in this process then clarification probes were employed and consensus was reached.

This analysis of data collected for this study was guided by the suggestions of Berkowitz (1996). They included:

- What patterns and common themes emerge in the responses dealing with specific items? How do these patterns (or lack there of) help illuminate the broader study question(s)?
- Are there any deviations from these patterns? If yes, are there any factors that might explain atypical responses?
- What interesting stories emerge from responses? How can these stories illuminate the broader study question(s)?
- Do any of these patterns or findings suggest additional data may need to be collected? Do any study questions need to be revised?
- Do the patterns that emerge corroborate the findings of any corresponding qualitative analysis that have been conducted? If not, what might explain these discrepancies?

The findings of the study were reported in a written narrative and were further supported by the use of the Venn diagram. Diagrams, although found to have originated earlier, are popularly associated with John Venn. This depiction of intersecting circles represented the three experiences and the potential for interaction between and among them as they related to adjustment to college.

Figure 1. Venn Diagram: Illustrating the three areas under study and their individual and comprehensive relationships to adjustment to college.



Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are critical components of any qualitative or quantitative study. Reliability has been defined as the ability to measure consistently (Black & Champion, 1976). Validity has been described as accurately representing those features of the phenomena this it is meant to describe (Hammersley, 1987). Achievement of each of these varies based on the specific type of inquiry.

Stenbacka (2001) posited that referring to reliability in a qualitative study is misleading and she goes on to inform that because reliability involves measurements it should be deleted from qualitative use. Conversely, Patton (2002) asserted that reliability

and validity must be included in the design of a qualitative study. Some researchers feel that without reliability there can be no validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

While most agree that some type of measure is important, not all qualitative researchers support the use of the term validity as associated with qualitative research. For instance, Creswell and Miller (2000) propose that the researcher's thoughts of validity for a study affect the choice of paradigm assumption. Based on this notion, terms such as quality, rigor, and trustworthiness have emerged (Golafshani, 2003). Often researchers and readers may find these words intermingled.

Choosing an appropriate sample significantly boosted the reliability of the study. For this research, purposeful sampling was used to invite freshman football and male soccer student-athletes at this NCAA Division I-A member institution to participate in this study. The researcher estimated that 20 students would agree to participate fully.

Recording clear and thorough notes as to how the research was conducted allowed for transparency in the research that supports the reliability of the study. Indeed, providing a complete description of the research process should allow for future successful replication of the present study. Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated, "A transparent report allows the reader to assess the thoroughness of the design of the work as well as the conscientiousness, sensitivity, and biases of the researcher" (p. 76). Having voice recordings and written notes of the interactions between the researcher and the participants allowed for verification of content if or when necessary. Golafshani (2003) reported, "Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in the qualitative paradigm" (p. 604).

The researcher places high value on the reliability and validity of the study and employed measures to be sure there was transferability and transparency. Campbell (1996) indicated that consistency in the data can be verified by the raw data, data reduction, and notes. One way this research supported this notion was through the raw data and by providing detailed notes of the interactions along with digital voice recordings. Additionally, the two intervals used to conduct interviews allowed the researcher to employ rigor through the interview process and assisted in reaching saturation with initial statements and with any additional clarification probes.

The use of the software Atlas/ti assisted in providing consistency for managing the data. The use of this product, along with the researcher and the paid assistant independently completing the coding procedure, will allow one to validate if the research has measured what it intended to measure.

In an attempt to avoid researcher biases the researcher followed Patton's (2002) suggestion and minimized the influence of personal values and preconceptions on the data analysis. As an administrator working in higher education the researcher did not have any familiarity with any of the participants or the athletic department staff prior to discussions related to the feasibility of conducting the study. The researcher has experience as a collegiate coach at the community college and Division II levels with female student-athletes.

It was hoped that the information gathered and then analyzed in this research would allow for an increased awareness of a possible relationship between the quality of the sport experience, the social experience, and the academic experience and the

successful adjustment to college for freshman football and male soccer student-athletes at a major NCAA Division I-A member institution. The quotes that were provided assisted in the authentication of the results.

In summation, this research investigated if there was a relationship between the sport, the social, and the athletic experiences of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes, at a NCAA Division I-A institution and the adjustment to college. This study was qualitative in nature and specifically employed existential phenomenology as the form of inquiry. It was hoped that this work would provide some insight into how these participants communicate their thoughts on the quality of aspects of their experiences and if the quality of the experiences affect the adjustment to college.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between the quality of interactions and the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes participating in the sports of football and men's soccer through the use of phenomenological inquiry. The researcher, through in-person communication, discussed with these student-athletes the quality of their sport, social, and academic experiences. As the student-athletes reflected on their experiences of their first year in college as both students and as athletes, they were asked to share their positive and their negative encounters.

The interviewees were all male freshman student-athletes from the football or men's soccer teams. The participants included both United States citizens and international student-athletes. A total of 18 student-athletes were a part of the interview process, with 56% (n=10) being African-American, 33% (n=6) being Caucasian, and 11% (n=2) being Latino students. One African-American participant was excluded from the reporting process after it was revealed that he transferred to the university in January, which would have omitted him from being on the football roster for the competitive season.

Some of these young men were on the active sport roster during their first year and others were designated as non-active roster participants. The majority of 17 the subjects were recruited to participate in their sport as a result of their athletic ability and their potential for academic eligibility. Most were granted athletic scholarships while three of the football participants and one of soccer participants were non-scholarship contributors. All of the subjects were a part of a nationally recognized athletic program at a major research university.

Access to these participants was made possible through the assistance of the athletic department administration. Student involvement in the study was woven into already scheduled athletic time and therefore did not produce any significant additional burden on their heavily scheduled time. Study participants included 18% (n=3) freshman soccer student-athletes and 82% (n=14) freshman football student-athletes. Of the 14 football players, 79% (n=11) were students who were not a part of the active sport roster and 21% (n=3) were members of the active roster. Those student-athletes not on the active roster will have four years of eligibility for athletic participation at the start of their sophomore year of college.

The Atlas/ti software program was used as a way to organize the collected data. The researcher completed a data analysis by following the suggestions of Patton (2002), Berkowitz (1996), and Miles and Huberman (1994). Initially in the inductive process, discoveries were made relative to emergent themes. These themes surfaced as a result of questioning the participants concerning the quality of their sport, social and academic

experiences during their first year at the university. The student-athletes' responses provided rich descriptions of these happenings.

Further, a well qualified paid assistant served as an additional code checker who completed a separate review of the data and confirmed the emergent themes as identified by the researcher. As mentioned earlier, this additional code checker is a Professor Emeritus from Loyola University Chicago where he served as the Associate Dean of the School of Education. He was provided with a copy of the transcripts and independently completed the code checking procedure. Themes were then discussed and agreed upon by the researcher and the code checker.

There were a variety of themes that materialized, each one being associated with a specific area of the sport, the social, and the academic experiences along with the adjustment to college of these young men. In examining the sport area, six themes came to light. They were: (a) well connected to coaches, (b) pleased but not satisfied with the competitiveness of the athletic team, (c) satisfied but eager for more participation in games and practices, (d) confident and growing in accomplishments as a team member, (e) pleased and motivated to meet game day challenges and (f) experiencing unavoidable but minimal impact when describing physical injuries.

The social experiences of these male freshman football and soccer student-athletes provided four themes. One difference in the description of a social experience appeared between the football and male soccer interviewees. The themes were: (a) diversity in mix of friends (soccer), (b) subculture existence (football), (c) fatigue

restricts participation in non-athletic on-campus events and (d) athletic time constraints negatively impact assimilation to on-campus involvement an accepted reality.

In the participants' academic encounters, five themes were noted and one difference between the evaluation of the football and male soccer student-athletes was evident. The themes were: (a) found support from faculty, (b) accomplishments in class were acceptable but improvable, (c) challenged but supported in workload and assignments (soccer), (d) overwhelmed by class size (football) and (e) knowledgeable and interested in the grades they earn. Further, as the participants were questioned relating to their sport, social, and athletic experiences, they were also queried on how experiences in any one of these areas might impact one or more of the other areas.

For the adjustment to college three major themes were discovered. The themes were: (a) team members were like family, (b) fans and alumni provided a sense of connectedness, and (c) persistence was inevitable. Based on their remarks, these young men, using a diverse set of tools, had all created ways to adjust to college.

As a way to assist the student-athletes to feel comfortable and confident in discussing their personal experiences, the interviews were conducted in person in the athletic department building. The athletic department staff was helpful in granting meeting time for the student-athletes as a part of their already scheduled athletic commitments. This form of scheduling allowed the students to maintain their "unscheduled" time and assured that participating in the interview process did not further tax their ability to meet other responsibilities. The participants were energetic and

expressive during our interactions and were quite willing to share their experiences during their first year at the university.

Their affiliation with this university requires these student-athletes to develop ways of managing all areas of their lives. Most of these young people were living away from home and family for the first time, with some living on campus and others residing in apartments located in close proximity to campus. Indeed, independently organizing appropriate time for the sport, the social, and the academic experiences was a new responsibility. In this chapter, the participants' recollections of these experiences will be reported. As well, adjustment to college for these student-athletes will be based on their level of comfort in the collegiate environment, their level of attachment to the university, and their commitment to persist at the university.

Common themes will be presented in this chapter as they relate to the research questions.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
2. Is there a relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

3. Is there a relationship between the quality of the academic experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
4. Are there relationships between any two of the three experiences (sport, social, and academic) that affect adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?
5. Does the adjustment to college relate to interactions among all three experiences in any comprehensive way as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

As suggested by Patton (2002) literal and related quotes from the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes are inserted as themes are discussed. This way of realistically reporting responses will better allow the student-athletes' expressions to be revealed.

Remaining consistent with Berkowitz (1996) guidelines for data analysis, findings will be reported by identifying common themes to specific items. Individual quotes will be included and presented in a manner as to allow the reader access to the participants' genuine voices. The conversations were conducted in such a way to make the participants feel at ease and to speak in a colloquial fashion as opposed to generating a more formal dialogue to recall their first-year experiences.

Sport Experience

Is there a relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

While each student-athlete was recruited for his individual talents and unique attributes, most were athletic stand-outs at their respective high schools. Transitioning to a large university with nationally recognized sport teams requires some adjustment. Hyatt (2003) and Bloland (1987) both highlight this notion that moving from a position of notoriety to a position of ambiguity may be a factor in the transition process. One football student-athlete recounts his first season on the team and places a positive perspective on this issue:

I think in high school, or at least everyone that comes to play in college, in high school they were ... the star or, you know, or one of the top players and once you get here you're back down on the totem pole and it's like a fresh start.

A second football player adds:

I think it's weird coming from high school, I guess being one of the top guys and they come into college and everyone is at the top, everyone is the best in the state, whatever. Wherever you came from, everyone is good and it's like you're going against the best in the state so it's kind of weird. Competition is that much better. I'm just doing everything that the coaches ask me to do. I've been getting stronger, faster in the weight room and working out all season.

In addition to these accounts, six possible indicators were identified to assist in determining how the student-athletes felt about their first-year sport experience. Those gauges included the student-athletes' evaluation of their relationship with their coaches, the competitiveness of the team, their level of participation in games and practices, their accomplishments as a team member, their ability to contribute on game day and any physical injuries they may have endured.

Relationship with Coaches

Indeed, the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes seemed pleased with the interactions they had with their coaches. For the soccer players, there was more of an inclusive involvement with all of their coaches. Conversely, the football players indicated that they were much more involved with their position coaches but clearly understood why they did not have more exposure to the head coach.

One Latino soccer player explains:

Our coach is very cool because he always looks out for his players both in sports-wise and academically. One reason they go to [this university] is they want the athletes to bond good with coaches; behind that they want the athletes to bond good with academics and soccer, so I think that is good our coach is behind that. I think that make us better athletes.

A second soccer team member acknowledged, "They really nice, pretty nice. The three of them exceptional guys. Yeah they work pretty nice between each other."

From another perspective one football player cited:

I say at first ... my position coach, he's really, he's to me he's like the best position coach. ... he can boost you up when he needs to boost you up and, you know, he can break you down when you need to be broke down and you know he's a good, he can see that really well.

Another football student-athlete surmised about his position coach, "He's a good coach, we get along real well, he's like a player's coach." To further support the camaraderie between the football players and their position coaches, one participant pointed out, "We're very close, he calls ... once a week to see how I'm doing, see how my grades doing, he always tell me to make good choices and stay focused."

Conversely, student-athletes from the football team explain their relationship with the head coach as less personal. One young man concluded, "Kind of with your head coach, you know you kinda straight up forward you know you really won't talk to him unless there's a really, pretty much a big problem or you in trouble." Another supports these remarks by describing, "We don't hardly talk that much. I mean, it doesn't affect me, I'm still going to do what I have to do."

"You really don't do much interacting with him but I mean you go up to his office and stuff" was another description of one freshman football player's relationship with the head coach.

All of the soccer student-athletes expressed quality interactions with each of their coaches and every one of the football players seemed to feel more of a bond with their position coaches than with the head coach, comprehensively, each student-athlete with the exception of one football player described a relationship with a coach who cared

about his well-being and success. Chelladurai (1984) points out that direct contact with a coach is an important factor for success and impacts the motivation of the team.

Closeness, commitment, and complementarity were described by Jowett and Clark-Carter (2006) as important pieces in how the athletes evaluate how the coach feels about them.

Certainly these male football and soccer student-athletes have provided statements that indicate some positive contact with at least one of their coaches and all seem to be motivated to continue to work to elevate their level of skill to provide a maximum contribution to the success of the team.

The Competitiveness of the Team

Each football and male soccer student-athlete arrived at the university with varying levels of expectations for the success of their respective teams. Both the football team and the men's soccer team are nationally recognized as a part of a major athletic program. For the season in question, both teams experienced high levels of success at the national level. This outstanding achievement by both teams allowed for positive thoughts and feelings from participants on both athletic rosters. When asked how he felt about the success of his team, one Latino soccer player explained:

Honestly, I didn't know how the system works up here. I just came to play.

During the semester I was asking questions, ... it got a lot harder... I think it was good reaching the final 16; we ranked 11 in the country in the end. We set a high standard for ourselves, just continue and we can sustain throughout.

Additionally a soccer teammate agreed by sharing:

We made it to the sweet 16 and that was it. We lost the first round to the sweet

16 against, Connecticut. I don't think we were expecting it for us to go pretty far. We didn't make it in to the national tournament. Or we did but we lost.

Because the football team reached athletic heights never before achieved, the excitement displayed by the student-athletes was easy to identify. This success clearly appeared to be a motivator for the student-athletes to continue to improve their athletic skills and generated a sense of excitement in thinking about what the next season might hold. One football player announced:

I think just like everyone else would say that it wasn't expected. When I decided to come here I knew that we would be a good team but I didn't expect to jump up to number two in the country. I don't think anyone did.

His teammate supported his comments by stating, "This past year was pretty awesome, you know, being ranked number two, but I think our ultimate goal is to be, you know, national champions. At the time we were pleased but not satisfied I guess."

Moreover, another participant declared:

I think it's very successful, you know, just a new school it's an upcoming school, I know in the future this school going to be doing big things, and I just want to be a part of it. I know we can do better, but just losing games by a few points and stuff you just, you know, just imagine like we would have won it and just thinking about that is so exciting.

Participation in Games and Practices

As previously mentioned some interviewees had been a part of the active roster and others did not participate during their first year and thus saved a year of sport

eligibility. This combination assured that some players who were interviewed experienced a high level of game and practice participation, others may have received very little or no game or practice time and others fell into the moderate range of inclusion.

Two of the three soccer student-athletes seemed to be pleased with their levels of participation and to understand that they still had much to learn. One of the soccer participants experienced a serious health problem and only gained minimal participation in games and practices as a result of this medical challenge.

From one soccer player it was declared, “Well, playing soccer we reach the final 16 teams and being a freshman I played, like, 18 out of the 22 games.” Another freshman soccer player asserted, “I think that I had a lot of opportunity and it was my freshman year and I played all the minutes I could play so it was really good.”

The football participants included more of a blend of active roster players and non-active roster team members. For this reason, their perceptions of their playing time would be different. An active roster football freshman revealed, “I got enough time, that I wasn’t really expecting to play that much. I mean I know it was exciting just being able to go travel to the away games and all that stuff, and just play I guess.” To complement that feeling, another active roster player revealed, “Well, I was out a half a game and whole game, had a hip pointer but played the rest.”

On the contrary, the football student-athletes who were not on the active roster explained their attitude toward their level of participation in practices and games a bit differently but still seemed to be able to extract positive results from the experience.

In explaining his experience one of the non-active roster participants stated:
At first I [didn't want to] red-shirt because I wanted to play right away, but when I really looked at it I was ..., it was good that I had time to break in to learn and learn my environment and stuff, so I was good.

The next player seemed to be conflicted about his time as a non-active roster team member. He reflected:

As a red-shirt you don't get much practice time, you do a lot of scouting team, so what that is, is you run the plays of the, you know, the opposing team for that up coming week. I mean that's where you get a lot of your reps at. I mean offensively or defensively whatever scout team you're running has to do with our programs so I mean you're getting reps but you're not getting better in what our scheme of things are.

Additionally a non-active roster player noted, "I mean practice time, we practice the same amount of time but being a red-shirt it was kinda real because you want to play, but I mean after awhile I came, I kind of got used to it." Of the active roster football players, all of them were pleased with their participation in games and practices. For the non-active roster football players every one of them reported wanting to play and practice more, while also communicating a sense of understanding related to their status.

Accomplishments as a Team Member

In earlier comments it was revealed that the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes matriculating to a university with a nationally recognized athletic program were most likely athletic stand-outs at their respective high schools. Each

participant was asked to compare his skill level to the talent level of the others on his team as one way to assess how each student-athlete evaluated his accomplishments as a team member. For the football and the male soccer players there was a sense that they were either better than or equal in skill to others on the team or, at the very least, they were equal in talent to the other freshmen on the roster.

One male soccer participant summed up his talent as follows, "I'm working on getting fast. My speed, I think I'm at the same level as them. I want to be the best." When asked his skill level in comparison to his teammate, another player declared, "I'm better." Two of the three soccer players felt they were as good as the other first year players and one felt his skills were better than those of his teammates.

When discussing their contributions to the team, the football players made similar observations. One young man concluded, "For the same players that are my age I think I'm, you know, towards the top but when it comes to the upperclassmen, I know I have a lot of work to do to catch up to where they are at."

A second football respondent disclosed:

I've gotta say that, yeah most guys are the same. There are some things that I'm, kind of better at but that can help me in the future making this team better and winning a championship. My foot work, I'm pretty quick to my side and knowledge of the game I've been playing the position most of my life.

An additional response from a football player acknowledged:

Well compared to when I first got here they were a little, they weren't as

high as theirs, because I mean when you first get here you know, they know what to expect and they're used to being here so they're going to have the upper hand whatever there is you're doing when you first get here but as time went on, ... you start progressing. But, I think my skills are just better, you know, in a group there's going to be some that are better than others. Like, different aspects of what we do, you know, some might be faster and some might be stronger, but as time went on I think my skills, ... you know, came up to par with everybody else's. This year I need to start to compete, you know, to get some playing time so, my skills are progressing I think, it's pretty much an even playing field.

In sum, seven of the football players evaluated their skills as better than the other freshmen on the team, two felt they were better than all of their teammates and five described their talents as being at the same level as the other first year players.

Ability to Meet the Physical Challenges Required to Compete on Game Day

Meeting the physical challenges on game day was a question that was limited to the student-athletes who had been on the active rosters of their respective teams. It was clear that those freshman football and male soccer players who had been selected as active participants were confident in their ability to compete on game day.

As an example of this confidence one soccer player explained, "I started, 11 games so I think that is good for my progress I can move on strength to strength and as the years go by just gradually improve." This level of assurance was also described by an

active roster freshman football player when he contended, “I think I’m stronger, my body’s much more younger, not as beat up as theirs is.”

The Impact of Physical Injuries

Further, each student-athlete was asked if he had experienced any physical injuries. It was undisputed that a collegiate student-athlete participating in the sports of football or men’s soccer would not be able to complete an entire year without some type of physical challenges. While admitting to some injury, most were reluctant to admit they had missed practices or games as a result of physical injuries. As reported by the soccer players, two indicated they missed minimal if any practice or playing time as a result of injury. One soccer player suffered a significant health issue and reported that he would like to have played and practiced at a higher volume. This was supported by one soccer player who described:

Nobody wouldn’t go through a whole season without getting injured. I got some but not major. I am not one to sit out of practice because of injury.

I always try to work on it even if I don’t practice fully. Injury was not really a concern. Sometimes I got rehab three times a day just to get better just to play.

Thirteen of the football players reported that they did not let injury impact their playing or practice time. This notion was supported by a football player who stated, “In football you’re going to have some kind of injuries after everyday, but are they serious? Nah, not really, I had, ...some, you know, some bumps and nagging injuries, ... but nothing real serious.”

In summation it appears that based upon the comments shared, all but one of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes have experienced a quality adjustment to college athletics. The football student-athletes repeatedly praised their position coaches and displayed a sense of being connected to at least one of their coaches. When they discussed the coaches with whom they had the closest relationship, there was noticeable excitement in their voices and smiles on their faces. All of the male soccer student-athletes identified well with all of their coaches and showed the same enthusiasm for the interactions they had encountered with their coaches.

In addition, every one of the student-athletes interviewed shared that he was pleased with the success of their respective teams in the previous competitive season and they were all eager to have a better season the next year. As a bit of a contrast, the freshman football players included young men who were included on the active roster and some who were a part of the non-active roster. While the freshman football participants on the active roster were pleased with their playing time, the non-active roster players presented a desire to play but an understanding of their role on the team and a clear motivation to take the necessary steps to play an active role on game day.

Further, all of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes demonstrated a strong level of confidence in their accomplishments as team members. Although they all acknowledged that the upperclassman members of their respective teams initially had an advantage as a result of “knowing the system” each felt that currently their athletic skills were either superior to or equal to the other freshman athletes who play their same position.

The interviewees who were on the active football and soccer rosters were pleased with their contributions on game day. Each of these participants exhibited delight in knowing that the playing time they had gained in the previous competitive season was going to pay dividends in the following season.

Likewise, the result was unanimous when discussing the impact of any physical injuries obtained during this first-year of participation. Of the interviewees, each and every one of them agreed that it would be impossible to complete one year of participation as a collegiate student-athlete without having some bumps and bruises. Each of these freshman football players with the exception of one and all but one of the male soccer student-athletes affirmed that no physical injury had significantly impacted his playing or practice time.

In reviewing the six areas under investigation, the data collected was rich and intriguing. While some of the participants were more active members of the team than others, all communicated a commitment to improve their individual athletic skills and to use this improvement for the betterment of their respective teams.

Social Experience

Is there a relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

In analyzing the quality of the social experience, three indicators were identified: (a) the student-athlete's evaluation of his ability to interact within his respective sport team and the general student population, (b) his participation in on-campus events and/or

activities sponsored outside the athletic department and (c) his evaluation of his level of accomplishment in assimilating into this new environment. Indeed, assimilating into a new environment with a multitude of challenges may be an overwhelming task for most.

To further complicate this process for the freshman student-athletes, they are making this transition while gaining independence from their parents or other adult figures to whom they are accustomed to being accountable. For some, this move proved to be more of a test than for others, and for the football participants having their teammates' support seemed to be the equalizer they needed to feel secure. On the other hand, the male soccer student-athletes shared that their social supports included teammates but they also identified their social circles to include many friends from the general student population.

It was clear that these student-athletes were willing to make whatever sacrifices were necessary to find success and acceptance on the respective sport teams. These sacrifices created unique time commitments for these student-athletes, because of their freshman status. This could have meant spending extended hours working out to improve physical skills, allotting more time to study hall to achieve academic eligibility, or a variety of other means to gain attention and fit in to this new environment.

Interaction Within the Respective Team and Among the General Student Population

When asked to describe his friends, one international soccer player specified: I have, ... friends from, ... the place I stay... I make friends easily. The first thing they say, 'Where are you from?' I have my iPod, I sing and people stop me and be, like, 'Where you from?' That's how you make friends.

Another soccer participant agreed, “I have some friends outside the team and friends on the team. I share with them with both of them. They treat me excellent with respect and I think they like me and I like them.”

Conversely, the football student-athletes disclosed a different scenario when asked about their social experiences. Of the football freshman student-athletes, 13 of them pointed out that the majority, if not all, of their friends were other football players or other athletes. This information aligns well with the research findings of Shulman and Bowen (2001) and Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, and Terenzini (1995) that describes sub-cultures that are established within the athletic department. These sub-cultures are thought to be established because these student-athletes spend such a large amount of time together and in many cases these participants view themselves as athletes more than they see themselves as students. In support of these notions, when one football player was asked to describe his friends he proclaimed:

There’s a bit more athletes than regular students, you know, because we’re around each other 24 hours a day pretty much, some of us live together, have the same classes, have the same workout schedule, all that, so we’re around each other all the time.

When asked the same question, another football player explained:

Well my football teammates, they’re kind of like family really, but I mean, well you have to like them, we see each other every day, ... all the time. We’re coming up on two-a-days now and we’re definitely going to see each other every day all the time.

A third football participant declared, “I really don’t get there really I don’t get out that much to meet new people around campus, besides being busy with football, I’m used to, ... being around just the people in athletics and that’s it.”

Participation in On-Campus Non-Athletic Events

To gain further insight into how the student-athletes were interacting on campus, each participant was asked about the time he spent participating with organizations or attending events on campus that were not related to athletics. As indicated by the majority of the freshman football and male soccer players’ comments, none of those interviewed were members of any organization outside athletics. Moreover, all of the male soccer student-athletes attended two or fewer non-athletic activities, two of the football players could recall attending more than one function not related to athletics and one attended an on-campus non-athletic related event as a way to earn extra credit for a class.

As explained by a soccer player, “If I had time I would have. If I would have time I don’t mind doing other things. My time is kind of stacked up.” When asked about his experience with non-athletic groups or activities another soccer participant shared, “No, none, no interest.”

The stories were much the same from the football players. Lack of free time and fatigue seemed to be the primary factors that prohibited these young men from assimilating more successfully into the general student population. One football student-athlete reported, “I don’t think we have much time in the day to do any extracurricular

stuff...so I don't think there's much time in the day, you know, to do all that other extra stuff." When discussing how fatigue from practice affected him, one football player described:

It kind of plays a part in your decisions on, ...say, if you want to go out. I mean there's been times where, ...I've been hurt so bad that I wanted to go but my body kind of won't let me so I had to make a decision.

Certainly the demand from athletics on these student-athletes' time and energy seemed to emerge as primary reasons that they were not more involved in on-campus non-athletic events. This information appears to support findings by Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) and Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996) who reported that athletic demands eliminate much of the time student-athletes have to socialize or study, which would include participating in other college activities.

Based on the information these young men were willing to share, the lack of time for other activities did not have a negative impact on their assimilation to this new environment. From their perspective, there was a clear acceptance that the sport was more important than developing networks outside of athletics. Of those interviewed, every one of them was planning to return to this institution to participate as a student and as an athlete for his sophomore year.

Academic Experience

Is there a relationship between the quality of the academic experience and adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

In considering these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes' adjustment to college, their academic experiences were examined. The four indicators that were used to assess the quality of their academic experiences and adjustment to college were: (a) the student-athlete's evaluation of his relationship with faculty, (b) his accomplishments in the classroom, (c) the level to which he felt challenged or overwhelmed and (d) the perception of the grades he may receive. Each participant was asked a number of questions related to the quality of their academic adjustment.

Relationship with Faculty

To describe his thoughts about his interaction with faculty, one soccer player asserted:

I never really had any trouble with them. Now and then I might just have some difficulties in grading. I might send an e-mail saying that my assignment was not graded and they would grade it right away. The professors here are here to help you, not to bring you down, so if you need help you e-mail them and they will get it.

In reinforcing this sentiment another soccer participant reported, "I like the way they treat us and they help us out with whatever we need."

Indeed, the football student-athletes seemed to share the same sentiments as the male soccer student-athletes did when discussing their interactions with their professors. One football player disclosed, “Athletics finds us, ... good professors or whatever. Most of them be like laid back and give us a little extra time to help or whatever because they know we have busy schedules.” Additionally, another football participant when discussing his relationship with faculty described:

They’re easy to go to if you have a problem I guess, you know, yeah, if you need to talk to them just go up to them and usually they’ll listen and maybe not do what you want, but you can always go up to them and talk to them.

Further, a football player supported this concept and indicated:

I think they have an understanding that, you know, football takes a lot of time, and, you know, daily in our lives, and there’s some times they have, you know, I guess, ... extensions you could say on certain projects. You know, when we need a little extra time... you could have class on Thursday but, you know, we leave on a Thursday, ... to travel, so I mean, you couldn’t get your work done so, you know, they give you until the next class which would be the next week. So, I mean that’s always a good thing that they, the professors do.

Accomplishments in Class

Besides having high expectations for themselves on the playing field, these interviewees also had aspirations of success in the classroom. When asked to evaluate

their own academic performance, most were satisfied with their grades for the moment but had plans to improve their grade point averages. Indeed, at the time these interviews were conducted, all of these student-athletes had already successfully completed at least one academic semester and had been able to maintain their eligibility for NCAA competition.

Each participant was asked to share his opinion of his academic performance. The first soccer player declared, “I have been doing good so far. Right now in my freshman year there is, ... writing in all of the classes and my writing ability has improved.”

Another soccer player continued this positive reflection on his academic accomplishments by asserting, “I’m in love with the math and I was so confident for the first test that I didn’t even study and I got a 70. So, I decided to keep going with the class and I got an A.”

Moreover, the football student-athletes displayed a similar confidence with their academic feats. One football player revealed, “One day I had a project due, a four page paper. I waited until the last minute, stayed up all night on it and ended up getting a 92.”

As a way of showing further commitment to the academic cause, another football participant submitted, “I think I’m doing pretty good. I’m staying on top of my grades and I like going to class and getting good grades.” Additionally one football player added:

I think really, I so far can do better, but, you know, I can get focused up a little more and get down to business, but like I said so far I’ve done pretty good I’m pretty satisfied where I’m at.

At times during the interview process and prior to asking specific questions related to their academic achievements, it appeared that non-athletic time might have been at such a premium that academic performance would be revealed as marginal. This assumption was clearly not correct and the academic success we learned about might be attributable to the strong academic support systems provided by the athletic department for these student-athletes. All of the interviewees acknowledged that they were aware of the academic support programs and all shared that they had participated in mandatory study hall during their first fall semester. Tinto (1993) and Astin (1977) suggested that students who were able to access academic support systems were likely to be successful and this pattern of positive outcomes and optimistic attitudes toward their personal academic achievement tend to support this finding.

Challenged or Overwhelmed

As another way to gain insight into the academic lives of these freshman football and male soccer student-athletes, a series of open-ended questions were asked related to their evaluation of their level of preparedness for the academic rigors at a large research university. Additionally, their feelings about being challenged and/or overwhelmed in their classes were investigated. In this area, there was a differing of responses between the soccer players and the football players.

The soccer participants while feeling challenged by the class assignments, clearly identified the academic assistance provided by the tutors and indicated their complete confidence in receiving guidance with their coursework. One soccer student-athlete said:

In high school I thought the work was harder. I sometimes didn't understand

what was going on. Up here the work is not easy but it is challenging. It's a lot more; ... you have assignments every week like two essays. The good thing about this school is it provides tutors. They are here to help you, not to do the work for you. That is also a good thing.

To further support this feeling another soccer player shared, "A tutor they are helping me with all my classes. Without them I don't know what I would, where I would be without them."

For the freshman football student-athletes, the obvious challenge was the large number of students enrolled in most of their classes. In some cases, their responses showed complete astonishment that a class roster could be so sizeable. To describe his experience in his classes, one football player noted, "I mean, I come from a small high school, it's, ..., 2A and it's probably maybe 18, 12, 10 people in the classroom, so and here it's like 100 to 70 people in a classroom..." In confirmation of this feeling, another football player responded:

It was, ... 200, 300 people, or 250 people something like that, that was the biggest change, but other than that it's not really much different from high school. I mean, it's different from having, ... you know, ... a normal size class. You don't really get that one-on-one from the teacher because there's so many people, you know. I personally never really even tried. I just paid attention to what the teacher was saying and kind of taught myself a little bit. You don't get the one-on-one like you want and teachers aren't as patient with, ... that many people because there's so many students that they can't

just focus on you and it's understandable.

To strengthen this description, a football teammate pointed out, "... when we first got here in the summer when we had a class and there was, like, 300 people in it, it was like, wow, class size, and that's not even all the class..."

Perception of Grades

Finally, as another measure of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes' academic experiences, they were asked to share their thoughts about the grades they had already received and their perceptions about grades they were anticipating receiving at the end of the term. These participants seemed to have a firm grasp on their current level of academic standing and their goals for future achievement. This appeared to be a component of their college life in which each of them was very concerned.

To substantiate this observation one soccer participant noted, "Last semester I got a 3.3. This semester I have two A's, a B, and a C, the C might get changed to a B or it might just stay; I'm not sure about that. I've been doing good."

An additional soccer student-athlete stated, "I got a 3.7 or a 3.6 this semester. So I'm trying to get higher... I like to know all my stuff."

Having the same confidence and understanding, one football player expressed, "I have ... a 3.5. I think I'm doing pretty good. I'm staying on top of my grades and I like going to class and getting good grades." Moreover, another football player indicated, "I feel pretty good, I mean, there's a lot of stuff that everybody can say they should do better, but, and there's stuff I should do better too, but it's pretty good for now. I have ... a 2.7."

Finally in an expression of success a football participant concluded:

I was surprised, you know, to be doing as good as I am doing right now.

You know that kind of surprised me the most. At first I was nervous, you know, when I first got here I wasn't doing so good in my classes, ... for the first couple days and the first couple weeks I wasn't doing so good, then after while, you know, I got with the program and it just kicked off. My G.P.A is probably like 3.4.

As a way of comparing the self-reported grade point averages to the actual grades earned, a check of this information was conducted and it revealed that these young men were all within a few tenths of a percentage point of accurately sharing their academic triumphs. Reported grade point averages ranged from a low of a 2.0 to a high of 3.7. Regardless of the variation in actual academic performance, all of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes who were interviewed reported that they were pleased with their individual effort.

Adjustment to College

Adapting to a new environment with differing expectations for the sport, the social, and the academic experiences can bring feelings of stress, anxiousness, and excitement to those living this process. The subjects interviewed indicated a variety of levels of these emotions and most displayed a level of confidence in their ability to transition to college life at a large research university with a nationally recognized athletic program. In this study, as a way to assess their adjustment to this new atmosphere

three measures were employed: (a) the student-athlete's level of comfort in college, (b) his feeling of attachment to the university and (c) his intent to persist at the university.

Level of Comfort in College

For a wide range of reasons, every one of the interviewees now felt some level of comfort in college. Many suggested that initially they were concerned about making the transition to a large university and now they have all found some point of support at the university. This connection might be associated with the sport, the social, or the academic experience or a combination in these areas.

As previously mentioned, all of the student-athletes interviewed indicated that they had made a positive connection with a coach and could all identify social supports at the university. According to the responses, these connections translated into an acceptable level of comfort in college. In support of this notion one soccer player cited, "The thing about it is ... my team is like family ... everybody is friendly ... and is so good to you."

The football players echoed the same sentiments when thinking about their level of comfort at the university. One player stated, "The best thing for me was coming in last summer before everyone. I got to get the feel for not only the campus, the classes and football at once and that helped me because I knew the area." A second football participant responded, "I mean everyone is nice and being on the team you know you have so many friends and we're like family and it's just...a good place for me."

Feeling of Attachment to the University

Each of the freshman football and male soccer players did exude a sense of pride in his association with the university. When asked about their attachment to the university, the primary answer related to the support these student-athletes received at the respective games. The fan and alumni support tended to create an environment that generated pride and a sense of being connected among the participants.

Among the soccer participants, two identified the large number of spectators at the game as a source of support that linked the student-athletes to the university. One of them reported, “I found myself liking the crowd more now than in high school so it inspired me to play better. Hearing the cheers made me proud of my skills and so happy to be at this school.”

As well, nine of the football players identified the large crowds and fan support as very important to their sense of attachment. To the point one football participant remarked, “The crowds and excitement are... great. Seeing all of these fans and alumni come out to watch us play let’s me know I made the right decision to come here, I’m in the right place.”

Intent to Persist at the University

The goals and aspirations of this distinctive population are as varied as their backgrounds and levels of preparedness. At the time our communications, every one of the participants were planning to return for their sophomore year at the university. In looking beyond the next year, the responses related to persistence were not as uniform.

When asked if they plan to graduate two of the soccer interviewees indicated that they were planning to graduate from the current university. One soccer player explained:

I am here on a soccer scholarship so I have to fulfill that duty and I am fulfilling it for me because I want to improve. I know I want to graduate with degree so I know I have to do my school work so it is not like somebody is forcing me to do anything cause I want to do it.

For the football student-athletes, seven planned to graduate from the current university, two did not plan to graduate, three intended to graduate early and pursue a graduate degree from the current university, one indicated he might graduate, and one did not provide an answer. In describing his plan for graduation, one football player declared, “Yes, it’s kind of an easy degree I guess... I have a 3.5 G.P.A. I want to make good grades and graduate.”

The young men who did not plan to graduate were planning to leave early as a result of being drafted into the National Football League (NFL). In all, nine of the football participants planned to eventually play for a team in the NFL. On the contrary, the NCAA website reports that only 1.8% of collegiate football players will be drafted by a NFL team.

Relationship Between any Two of the Three Experiences and Adjustment to College

Are there relationships between any two of the three experiences (sport, social, and academic) that affect adjustment to college as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

An analysis of the interview data from the 17 student-athletes indicates that all three experiences: (a) quality of the sport experience, (b) quality of the social experience and (c) quality of the academic experience related positively to their perception of their adjustment to college. In only one case did a football interviewee share that the academic experience and the sport experience may have had an overlapping impact. He described these experiences by sharing:

Some days I might have bombed a test. I be stressed out and be thinking about it at practice and can't focus on this, you know. Then the same thing, turn around you have a bad practice, you're in class and can't focus and, you know, just sometimes you've got to block it out and just, you know, keep going and come around and do the best you can.

There seemed to be a relationship between the athletic and the social domains. One of the soccer players indicated that he would be more involved in social activities on campus if the time demands of being an athlete were not so great. Of the freshman football student-athletes, four offered that they would participate in more on-campus activities if athletic time demands were lessened. When queried as to why he didn't attend more non-athletic related social functions, one football player said, "I don't think we have much time in the day to do any extracurricular stuff."

Another four of these football participants submitted that they would be more involved in on-campus social events if they were not so fatigued from football practice and other sport-related responsibilities. One football player, when asked why he didn't interact outside of athletics more, explained, "I'm too tired from working out."

Even with eight of the football student-athletes suggesting that they would be more socially active on campus if they had more available time or were less fatigued, ultimately they were all satisfied with the quality of their social interactions because they had the support and loyalty of their teammates.

Relationship Between All Three Experiences

in Any Comprehensive Way

Does the adjustment to college relate to interactions among all three experiences in any comprehensive way as reported by freshman football and male soccer student-athletes attending a NCAA Division I-A institution?

A review of the interviews indicated that these student-athletes made little or no distinction between the sport, social or academic experiences in terms of their success in acclimating themselves to their freshman year. In fact, when the researcher specifically requested that they consider all three experiences to determine if they felt they intersected in any way, not one of the participants offered any example of such a relationship. Although one might have considered that one or more of these experiences would have had a bearing on the quality of the student-athletes' transition to college life, it appears from their individual and collective reactions that this was not the case.

Quality of Interactions and Adjustment to College

The quality of the sport experience did seem to have an impact on the student-athletes' adjustment to college. The six criteria that were explored to evaluate the sport experience pointed to the majority of the participants describing quality sport interactions that led to the successful adjustment to college.

It was clear that both the football and the male soccer players had established quality relationships with at least one of their coaches. Based on the quotes included this positive relationship was a driver of their desire to remain at the institution and to continue to improve their performances. This quality connection with the coaches seemed to instill a sense of self-confidence for these young men whether they were active or non-active roster team members.

The football team and the men's soccer team completed very successful competitive seasons during the time of this study. Each one of the student-athletes shared that he was pleased with the success of his respective team. The competitiveness of each of the teams appeared to invoke a feeling of pride among the team members. This quality performance allowed the teams to receive national media attention which was very rewarding for these rookie participants. All of these factors indicate that the quality of the teams' performances did have a positive effect on the adjustment to college.

Moreover, the quality of the participation in games and practices was an area that also looked as if it was associated with the adjustment to college. Each one of the active roster players displayed some level of satisfaction with his playing and practice time. For the non-active roster players there was a mix of emotions related to their involvement. Some were frustrated with the hard work they contributed at practice that resulted in no game day action. Other non-active roster players better understood their role as team members. The active roster players and many of the non-active players explained satisfaction with their roles. For those non-active roster players who were initially frustrated, they eventually gained an appreciation for their contributions and expressed

quality interactions that seemed to fuel their desire to work hard to improve their athletic skills. This high level of quality interaction was motivating for them and they planned to be more prepared for the next season.

Physical injuries did not seem to impact the adjustment to college as it related to the sport experience. Every one of the student-athletes expressed an understanding of the physical demands of his respective sport. All of them indicated that they had experienced some type of physical injury and they all had received expert treatment from the athletic training staff and missed little if any playing or practice time.

When assessing the relationship between the quality of the sport experience and adjustment to college, using the gauges identified for this study, it appears clear that the quality of the interactions that all of these student-athletes experienced did have a positive impact on this process. These young men were encouraged by the way they had bonded with their teammates and coaches and all of them felt comfortable in their new athletic environment, all of them felt attached to the institution and all of them planned to persist at their present university.

For the football players, the quality of the social experience did not seem to have an impact on the adjustment to college when examining their interactions outside the athletic realm. However, the quality of their internal social networking did influence the adjustment to college. These participants clearly identified their social network to consist of an overwhelming majority of other student-athletes and more specifically other football players.

The male soccer players revealed a slightly different social scenario. While feeling well attached to their teammates they also described quality connections with students from the general population. They expressed the ease of developing new relationships outside the team and the friendliness of the other students.

Participants from both teams declared no membership or affiliation with any groups outside of athletics. Not one of them expressed a desire to join any other unit. Accordingly, the majority of these student-athletes had not participated in or attended more than two non-athletic on-campus events.

The primary reason provided by the football players for their closed social network was the extraordinary amount of time they spend together. This time was shared between athletic and academic preparations. Many of the descriptions provided referred to their teammates and coaches as family. The devotion and support these young men received from within their sport team satisfied their need for a social network and replaced any need to partner with other groups. This display of loyalty in this athletic sub-culture also substituted for any real need to attend on-campus events unrelated to athletics.

Additionally, the soccer players were satisfied with their social experiences. These young men felt well supported by both their teammates and others from the general student population. Attending non-athletic on-campus events or joining other organizations did not seem to hold a high level of importance.

In evaluating the relationship between the quality of the social experience and adjustment to college, using the indicators established for this study, it appears that there

was a minor difference detected between the student-athletes' perceptions of the quality of the social experience. Even with this difference, players from both teams communicated that they had experienced high quality social interactions. Each group had an obvious understanding for the time demands associated with their participation in intercollegiate athletics at a nationally recognized university.

Because the measures for assessing the quality of the social interactions allowed for the student-athletes' personal evaluations the result is evident. So, while the expectations for what a quality social experience should be differed slightly, the outcome was the same. The perceived quality of the experiences whether through the unwavering support of teammates and coaches for football players or a combination of those factors plus the support from other students for soccer players this quality did have a positive effect on the adjustment to college. This quality in the social interactions was one more feature that influenced the fact that all of them felt comfortable in their new social environment, all of them felt attached to the institution and all of them planned to persist through their sophomore year at the present university.

The quality of the academic experience also seemed to effect the adjustment to college for the student-athletes. Each participant expressed some positive interaction with at least one faculty member. Whether the relations were in-person or via email, there had been some communication between these two parties. This contact appeared to create a sense of confidence among the student-athletes in their academic potential.

Every one of the student-athletes proclaimed acceptance of his current accomplishments in class and all of them planned to improve their grade performance in

future semesters. They credited their achievements in class to a number of different factors but the principle reasons were personal study time, assistance from academic resources provided by the athletic department and support from the university's faculty members.

An area of academic difference surfaced when examining if the football and male soccer student-athletes felt challenged or overwhelmed in their classes. For the football players they were overwhelmed by the large student enrollment in their classes and for the soccer players they were challenged by the academic rigor. But the football players established successful strategies for connecting with the faculty teaching these large sections and the soccer players felt full academic support as a result of the resources providing by the athletic department.

In using the indicators for this study to evaluate the relationship between the quality of the academic experience and the adjustment to college it can be surmised that there was a positive relationship between the two areas. All of these young men displayed some positive interaction with faculty, an understanding of their current level of academic performance and an appreciation for the academic support resources provided. These factors made it possible for these participants to state that they all felt comfortable in their new academic environment, all of them felt attached to the institution and all of them planned to persist at the present university,

The adjustment to college did not relate, in many of the descriptions, to the quality of any two or all three of the experiences in any comprehensive way. In one case a football player shared that a poor academic performance may affect his athletic output.

In a few cases both football and soccer players suggested that if they had more time and were not so fatigued they might participate in more on-campus social functions.

The descriptions related to the sport, the social and the academic experiences and how the quality of these experiences related to the adjustment to college were interesting and thorough. Due to the small sample size that included only freshman football players and freshman male soccer players, the results may not be applicable to student-athletes participating in other intercollegiate sports. Further, as a result of the small sample size of three soccer student-athletes the comparisons may be affected between soccer and football.

In addition, the data did provide excellent information that can be applied to the specific populations under review. The three male soccer participants provided their information during a single interview session that did not last more than two hours. Four of the football student-athletes were involved in one interview session of two hours or less. Eight other football participants were a part of a group interview meeting as well as part of a follow-up individual interview session of which neither exceeded two hours. The remaining two football student-athletes participated as only a part of the group interview session.

Finally, value was found in both the individual and the group sessions. The individual sessions allowed for more direct and intense interaction between the student-athletes and the researcher. The group session seemed to generate more recall of information among the participants. Each student-athlete in the group was given an opportunity to respond to each question and to provide additional information he felt

important. These participants clearly had individual opinions and were confident in sharing unique thoughts and experiences.

Summary

Each of the freshman football and male soccer student-athletes shared a wealth of information related to the quality of his sport, social, and academic experiences during his first year at the university and the relationship to the adjustment to college. The comments provided by the participants supported these encounters and shaped the emergent themes. While accomplishments and challenges were revealed in each of the three areas, all of these participants seemed to be well-adjusted and to have an unmistakable grasp of the tools needed to move forward.

There were several differences in experiences for the freshman football and male soccer players. Indeed, the soccer players felt well-connected to all of their coaches, while the football players were most bonded with their specific position coach. In the social realm, the soccer players described a more diverse group of friends, while the football players emphasized their ties within the team. For the academic realm, the soccer players found the work assignments challenging and found support from tutors, whereas the football players found challenge in the large size of the enrollment in their classes.

Overall, there were many more similarities than differences among the quality of the experiences for these two groups. Each interviewee explained that he felt comfortable in his college environment, that he felt attached to the university and that he planned to persist. The superior quality of his experiences in the sport, social, and academic areas did produce a positive relationship to the adjustment to college.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

As student-athletes graduate from high school and transition to college they must prepare themselves for a higher level of both academic and athletic interaction as well as plan to establish a new social network. Indeed, this period of transition may have an effect on this population's adjustment to college. The purpose of this study was to consider the relationship, if any, between the quality of the sport, social and academic experiences and the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes competing in the sports of football and men's soccer.

Student-athletes must fulfill dual roles when they enter college. In this study a qualitative research methodology used a personal interview approach to ascertain how the student-athletes adjusted to the demands of these roles and how their experiences were evolving. It is this data that permit the assessment of the quality of interactions and the adjustment to college.

Summary of the Study

Data relative to the quality of the interactions and adjustment to college were retrieved via in-person interview. Phenomenology was the guiding method for this study. From the information gleaned in these interviews themes emerged related to each of the research questions and provided insight into the quality of these interactions and adjustment to college.

Access to this population of freshman football and male soccer student-athletes was made possible with the assistance of the athletic department administration. Of the 18 participants, 17 of these interviewees were included in the study. The remaining subject had transferred in for the spring semester, so he had no sport experience to report.

Sport Experience

Each of the interviewees was very enthusiastic about his affiliation with his respective sport team. Six measures were used to assess the quality of the sport experience. These were: (a) his evaluation of his relationship with his coaches, (b) the competitiveness of the team, (c) his level of participation in games and practices, (d) his accomplishments as a team member, (e) his ability to contribute on game day and (f) the effect of any physical injuries he may have endured.

Football and men's soccer teams at nationally recognized universities are similar in several ways: (a) the competitive season is during the fall semester, (b) both provide opportunities to play professionally and (c) both require similar time commitments for practice and other game preparation. Because of these similarities, the information gathered from the student-athlete participants in the respective sports as related to the quality of the sport experience was similar.

In the analysis of the data recurring ideas materialized. The responses were considered significant if they were communicated by a majority of the participants. The replicated ideas were determined to be themes. The emergent themes connected to the sport experience were as follows: (a) well connected to coaches, (b) pleased but not satisfied with the competitiveness of the athletic team, (c) satisfied but eager for more

participation in games and practices, (d) confident and growing in accomplishments as a team member, (e) pleased and motivated to meet game day challenges and (f) experiencing unavoidable but minimal impact when describing physical injuries.

The football and male soccer players revealed only one major difference in the sport experience. The football players confirmed a close relationship with their position coaches and more of a distant association with the head coach while the soccer players described a close relationship with all of their coaches. In the other five areas used to gauge the quality of their sport interactions, the responses from members of both teams were very similar.

Social Experience

Every student-athlete was clear and concise when discussing his social interactions. The indicators associated with the social experience were: (a) the student-athlete's evaluation of his ability to interact socially within his respective sport team and the general student population, (b) his participation in on-campus events and/or activities sponsored outside of the athletic department and (c) his evaluation of his level of accomplishment in assimilating into his new environment. One difference between the descriptions of the social experience appeared between the football and male soccer interviewees. The football players expressed a social system that existed with other athletes and particularly with other football players. Conversely the soccer players described a more diverse group of social contacts.

Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) reported that only 36% of the NCAA Division I participants were involved in any non-athletic campus organizations. In this study not one

of these participants was involved in any non-athletic organizations. The two primary reasons for this circumstance were lack of time and physical fatigue.

The participants were pleased to share their experiences and the themes that developed were: (a) diversity in mix of friends (soccer), (b) subculture existence (football), (c) fatigue restricting participation in non-athletic on-campus events and (d) athletic time constraints negatively impacting assimilation to on-campus involvement, an accepted reality. Even as time constraints and fatigue hampered these student-athletes' ability to be more connected to general campus life, all of them appeared to understand the need for the present commitment and be well adjusted to this athletic culture.

Academic Experience

These young men attributed a high level of importance to academic achievement. Each was confident in sharing his grade point average and each and every one of them did so with a high degree of accuracy. All of them had maintained academic eligibility for their freshman year.

To measure the academic interactions the following four indicators were studied: (a) relationship with faculty, (b) accomplishments in class, (c) challenged or overwhelmed and (d) perception of grades. In each of these areas the football and the male soccer players provided powerfully descriptive experiences of their academic endeavors.

The following themes emerged: (a) found support from faculty, (b) accomplishments in class were acceptable but improvable, (c) challenged but supported in workload and assignments (soccer), (d) overwhelmed by class size (football)

and (e) knowledgeable and interested in the grades they earn. Through the conversations it was discovered that the academic experiences were quite similar between the two sport teams with the exception of being challenged or overwhelmed. The football players were clearly astonished at the size of the enrollment in their classes. On the other hand, the soccer players felt challenged by their class assignments and found the needed academic support in the tutors provided by the athletic department. Ultimately, they all wanted to earn better grades, but for now they were satisfied with their academic progress.

Adjustment to College

Three gauges were employed when assessing the adjustment to college. These measures were: (a) level of comfort in college, (b) feeling of attachment to the university and (c) intent to persist. In discussing these areas with the participants it was evident that at some level all of them had adjusted to college. There was little variation in the responses received related to these topics.

The themes that emerged relative to adjustment to college were: (a) team members were like family, (b) fans and alumni provided a sense of connectedness and (c) persistence was inevitable. It should be noted that both the football and the men's soccer teams experienced highly successful seasons during the year of this study. This athletic success seemed to have generated a high level of enthusiasm and motivation for every one of these student-athletes to return more prepared and committed to be a part of this well-supported environment.

Interactions Between or Among the Experiences

Finally, the study attempted to determine if there were interactions between any of these experiences and if so what they were and how they affected the adjustment to college. While it seemed difficult for most of these young men to identify how all three of these experiences impacted each other, there was one description of an interaction between the sport experience and the academic experience. There were also several reports of how the time constraints of athletics and the physical fatigue from athletic participation eliminated opportunities for social contact with the general student population.

These student-athletes did not provide information that would indicate that adjustment to college was affected between or among the sport, social, and academic experiences in any comprehensive way. Every one of them explained an understanding of his role as an athlete as being his dominate role with a clear knowledge of the importance of his academic responsibilities.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that while these young men have discovered the strategies and resources necessary to adjust to college they are having a collegiate experience that lacks balance between the sport, the social and the academic realms. This lack of balance may also be realized by students who are employed, who participate in other functions related to their academic majors such as theatre and music or those who participate in other organizations. This lack of balance seemed to play a significant role in the development of the identity for these student-athletes. During the discussions, the

role of athlete appeared to have a dominant position when compared to the role as student. This one-dimensional identity may well change as the student-athletes gain more prominence and status on their respective teams and the use of their time becomes more self-regulated.

As reported, most football players developed social networks consisting primarily of other football players or other student-athletes. These young men gave the impression that they were athletes first and seemed to depend on the loyalty of their teammates to provide the necessary supports.

Discovering that a sub-culture exists supports the findings of Phillips (2004), Pascarella et al (1999), Terenzini, Pascarella, and Blimling (1996), Jordon and Denson (1990) and Chartrand and Lent (1987) as it relates to spending large quantities of time together. During this time of closeness these young men are devoting their efforts to achieve a common goal. Further this upholds Howard-Hamilton and Sina (2001) and Adler and Adler (1991) discoveries that athletes may be too tired or they may be suffering with physical injuries and therefore not able to attend social functions outside of athletics. To this end, the athletic department administration might consider collaborating and forming bonds with non-athletic on-campus groups to assure that interactions with the larger campus community become a reality. This recommendation backs similar proposals brought forward by Pascarella et al. (1995) and Engstrom and Sedlacek (1989).

An additional part of the college experience usually includes the selection of an academic major, often based on future career expectations. While many of the

participants had identified an academic major, the overwhelming majority planned to have professional sports be their first career experience. Indeed, nine of the football players and two of the soccer players expressed this plan. In reality, and as reported on the NCAA website, only 1.8% of all collegiate football players and 1.7% of all collegiate soccer players actually secure employment as professional athletes.

Recommendations for Practice

- Athletic recruitment procedures should consider whether the institution is the correct fit for the student-athlete.
- Athletic Department Administration and University Administration should work together to provide more opportunities for student-athletes to interact with the general student population.
- Career Counseling should be an integral part of the student-athlete's scheduled time.
- Athletic Department Administration should facilitate deliberate communication between the faculty and the student-athletes.
- Adjustment to College should be monitored in a more comprehensive way and should not be based exclusively on the grade point average and athletic performance.

Recruitment Process

The overwhelming response from the football players related to their adjustment to their college classes was that the enrollments in the classes were extremely large. Because of the size of the classes these young men felt it was almost impossible to seek

out the professor for individual attention. This challenge created a sense of stress so the student-athletes tried to figure out things for themselves.

For the soccer players the challenge was found more in the class assignments and requirements. The Latino participants pointed to language interpretation challenges and it was clear that without the support of the academic resources provided by the athletic department these young men would struggle to meet academic eligibility requirements.

When choosing prospective student-athletes to pursue as recruits, athletic administrators should consider whether the environment at their institution is the correct fit for the potential recruit. These considerations should include, but are not limited to, the enrollment size of the high school the prospect is attending, the curriculum undertaken at the high school, and the competitiveness of the high school athletic team. If there are questions regarding the potential for the student-athlete to find success at the institution, either the recruitment process should be terminated or a process for appropriate support measures should be established prior to the first day of his attendance.

Sub-Culture Existence

It was evident that a sub-culture exists within the athletic department for football participants and it is further developed within the respective teams. This formation of such a closed culture and limited social network has been identified and discussed by a wide range of writers (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Jordon & Denson, 1990; Pascarella et al.1999; Phillips, 2004; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

Even though the student-athletes seemed to be satisfied with their social network of other student-athletes, this lack of balance could have future implications in their lives. At some point, each of their sport careers will end.

With the loss of this athletic involvement, the participants will then be forced into unfamiliar surroundings. This isolation within the athletic culture may have a negative effect on the development of appropriate social skills as they relate to the comprehensive advancement of their lives. The athletic department administration, in collaboration with other suitable departments on campus, should initiate creative ways for student-athletes to socialize with students who are not on the athletic rosters. Pascarella et al. (1995) and Engstrom and Sedlacek (1989) suggested that athletic departments should communicate with other collegiate departments to construct on-campus opportunities for student-athletes to establish more varied social connections. This collaboration might involve bringing the general student population to the athletic environment as well as having the student-athletes visit other physical locations on campus.

Career Counseling

Smallman & Sowa (1996) and Kennedy & Dimick (1987) found that many participants in intercollegiate athletics lack sufficient knowledge to make mature career decisions. The discoveries in this study seem to support these findings. Two of the soccer participants and nine of the football participants planned to have their first career experience be in the professional sport ranks. As previously mentioned the NCAA reports that only 1.7% of all collegiate soccer athletes and 1.8% of all collegiate football athletes actually secure a career in the professional sports.

As a way to combat the potential disconnect between career belief and the actuality of a career, student-athletes could be connected with community or business leaders for exposure to the availability of actual career paths. Gaining insight into job requirements and the possible related compensation might stimulate thinking about employment opportunities other than professional sports. This mentor program with local community and business leaders could allow the student-athletes to adjust their thoughts related to their own image and move them into Super's (1990) stage of career exploration, while stimulating thoughts of career choices beyond that of a professional athlete.

Furthermore, student-athletes might benefit from more realistic exposure to career paths through the use of the on-campus career center. Creating career education and planning opportunities that are a part of scheduled athletic time might also lead to development of a more well thought out academic major selection. This path of career study could motivate these young men to establish a career plan that would include several options. In many cases, the academic success of these participants is driven by the desire for achieving and maintaining eligibility for participation in their respective sports and not by thoughtful consideration for future career plans or actually learning the course material.

Faculty Interaction

Every one of the student-athletes reported being satisfied with his present grades, but had plans to improve his academic performance in future semesters. As a part of this conversation, it was revealed that there was little or no out-of-class interaction between

the student-athletes and the faculty. The most common form of communication was through the use of email. If each student-athlete was partnered with a faculty member and time was scheduled into his week to establish a relationship with this person, the academic goals of this population might expand and produce more of a sense of connectedness to campus life.

Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) indicated that student and faculty interaction helps bolster higher level academic work. Comeaux (2005) suggested that a positive relationship with a faculty member helps the student-athlete manage his dual roles. While the current email communication model seemed to fill the need of gaining answers to specific questions, there seemed to be no stimulation for any serious academic exploration. It might be beneficial for the athletic department to establish meaningful relationships with faculty and to match the student-athletes with appropriate academicians as a way to generate more interest, understanding and enthusiasm for various academic areas. Ultimately, these connections might assist in creating a balance in the dual roles these student-athletes must manage.

Monitoring Adjustment to College

Adjustment to college should be gauged by more than academic eligibility and athletic performance. The NCAA has attempted to be proactive in this area with the creation of the CHAMPS Life Skills program. The aim of this program is to address the areas of equity, healthy choices, positive life skills, safe environments, academic success and community leadership (NCAA web B). During the discussions with the student-

athletes there was no indication that any of these areas, with the exception of academic success, were a focus of their development.

As the intentions of this program are admirable, not all schools are implementing it and others may not be presenting each component in ways that have a positive impact on the participants. Developing a more individualized approach to the comprehensive evaluation related to the overall adjustment to college for these student-athletes would be helpful. Because each participant arrives from a unique background and with a different level of maturity, distinctive assessment tools and intervention practices would be ideal.

Recommendations for Future Research

Freshman student-athletes who are enrolling at a large nationally recognized university will face a multitude of challenges and changes during their first year in college. Using qualitative research should help to provide strategies for success and insight into the “lived experiences” of this population. The information gained in this study leads to six recommendations for future research:

- Study of the student-athletes who did not complete the freshman year at college.
- Study of the student-athletes longitudinally from their senior year in high school through the completion of college.
- Study of female student-athletes.
- Study of student-athletes attending a small college.
- Study of the academic progress of student-athletes admitted to college as exceptional admits compared to those admitted as regular admits.
- Study of student-athletes on less competitively successful athletic teams.

Dialogue with non-completers

As previously revealed all of the participants in this study had successfully completed at least one semester at the university and most had finished two terms. To speak with the student-athletes who did not complete the first-year of college would allow for insight into their sport, social, and academic experiences. With this information, the NCAA, the athletic department and the university could evaluate current services and procedures and attempt to make positive adjustments to assist those who did not adjust to college and left the team and the institution.

Dialogue while in High School

When the student-athletes initially arrive at the university, they each bring with them a perception of what their lives will be like in this new environment. Many factors may lead to these perceptions and might relate to impressions received from high school coaches, the experiences of peers, and the influences of the family. If this type of information was retrieved prior to the participants arriving on campus, interventions could be put in place to help these young people avoid pitfalls based on preconceived notions.

Follow the Study Group

Each of the student-athletes in this study disclosed a wide range of new experiences and demands in the sport, the social, and the academic realms. When asked about strategies to avoid future difficult challenges most of them had not developed any clear plan to improve their environment. The majority of the student-athletes felt confident about their adjustment to college and suggested they would “work through it.”

By following these student-athletes through their remaining college years, these ways of “working through it” might develop into identifiable initiatives that could be used to assist future student-athletes shape clear and defined strategies.

Female Student-Athletes

By initiating talks with female student-athletes, comparisons between the two populations could be evaluated. There are fewer opportunities for female intercollegiate participants to continue their careers in the ranks of professional sports and thus insight into how this group assesses career options and academic major selection could be determined. This in turn might expose differing ways of balancing the roles of being an athlete and being a student. Differences in other ways of adjusting to college could also be studied, and if applicable, applied to the male student-athlete population.

Conclusion

In our society today, intercollegiate sports at nationally recognized colleges and universities continue to draw the support and attention of millions of people. This spotlight has led college sports to be a huge economic driver in our nation. With the hope of landing multi-million dollar salaries as members of the professional sport ranks, many young men are willing to make sacrifices that are not required of other college students.

In fact, many people question whether the goals of athletic departments at nationally recognized colleges and universities align well with the overall mission of the institutions. In some cases, the student-athletes at these institutions are viewed as unpaid professional athletes, and college athletics is deemed to be a minor league sport training

ground. The pressure to succeed in their sport impacts the way these student-athletes experience and adjust to college.

This study revealed that the NCAA, the athletic departments and the colleges and universities are making efforts to provide necessary resources to assist in the adjustment to college for freshman student-athletes. It was also determined that these efforts are unbalanced and seem to place an overwhelming importance on academic eligibility and athletic performance. This current lack of balance may eventually have a negative impact on the student-athletes' overall development. At some point, the athletic careers of these young men will end and interaction with a more diverse population will be necessary. The strong focus on the athletic identity may pose adjustment issues.

Additionally, this singular identity created a challenge when attempting to recognize whether adjustment to college related to interactions among the experiences. Within the student-athletes' comments there was an indication that perhaps there might be a relationship between two of the experiences, but it was not clear how the three areas were comprehensively involved. This inability to distinguish a connection may be further associated with the lack of emphasis the student-athletes place on their identity as a student.

Even though every one of the student-athletes interviewed disclosed quality interactions in his sport, social and academic experiences and these encounters had a positive impact on his adjustment to college additional balance is needed. With well crafted collaboration between the NCAA, the athletic department, the appropriate university administration and the faculty, these student-athletes would likely encounter a

more complete college experience. Their expressed commitment to their respective institutions and their motivation to succeed makes them deserving of such a united effort.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider prior to taking part in this Research Study

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called: An Exploration of the Relationships between the Quality of the Sport, Social, and Academic Experiences of College Student-Athletes and Their Adjustment to College: A Qualitative Analysis.

The person in charge of the research is Susan Freeman. This person is called the Principal Investigator.

Data will be collected during two in-person private interview sessions. Each session will not last longer than two hours each and occur at an interval of at least one week.

The research will be completed at the University of South Florida – Tampa campus.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine if there is a relationship between the quality of interactions in the sport, social, and academic environments and the adjustment to college for freshman football and male soccer student-athletes.

You are being asked to participate due to your affiliation with the football or men's soccer team. Your participation may have an impact on programs and services offered to freshman football and male soccer student-athletes in the future.

This study is being conducted for a dissertation by a Ph.D. candidate.

“Appendix A (continued)”

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study you will be asked to:

- Answer questions and provide information related to your experiences in your sport, social, and athletic environments and about your adjustment to college.
- Participate in a total of two interview sessions not to last longer than 2 hours each and to be conducted at intervals of at least one week.
- Participate in interview sessions as a part of your weekly schedule.
- Complete these interviews in the Athletic Department building.

Our conversations will be recorded via digital voice recording and will be held in confidence.

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Benefits

The potential benefit to you is an opportunity to impact programs and services offered to freshman football and male soccer student-athletes in the future.

Risks or Discomfort

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Confidentiality

We must keep your study records confidential. The audio tapes will be kept secure and in my personal possession and will be kept for three years. After three years the information will not be destroyed but stored in a secure location.

All information you provide is protected by strict laws regarding confidentiality. Nothing you share will be tracked back to you. The information will be used in completion of a dissertation paper and may be used in future articles for academic purposes.

“Appendix A (Continued)”

Certain people may need to see the study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team including the principal investigator and the supervisory dissertation committee.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety they include:
- the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB.
- Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.
- the Department of Health and Human Services

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in this study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your student or athlete status.

New Information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study call Susan Freeman at 941-408-1504.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the

“Appendix A (Continued)”

research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at 813-974-9343.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true:

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of person taking part in Study

Date

Printed name of person taking part in Study

Appendix B: Initial Conversation Guide

1. How is being a student-athlete at this university different from being a student-athlete at your high school?
2. Please describe your interactions with your coaches.
3. Please describe how you feel about your ability to contribute to the team.
4. Please describe your friends at this university.
5. Please describe your social interactions with people outside of athletics.
6. Please describe your interactions with faculty at this university.
7. Please describe how you feel about the grades you have earned and are anticipating earning.
8. Please describe how you feel about your adjustment to college.

About the Author

Susan L. Freeman earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Georgia Southern College, her Master of Science degree from Georgia Southern College, her Master of Arts degree from the University of Central Florida and her Ph.D. from the University of South Florida. She is currently an administrator in higher education leading the growth and development of a satellite location for the University of South Florida.

Susan's career has been dedicated to the field of education. She has teaching experience at the elementary, community college and university undergraduate levels. Further, she has successful intercollegiate coaching experience at both the community college level and the NCAA Division II level.