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Submission Guidelines for the *Academic Athletic Journal*

AUDIENCE

The primary audience of the *Academic Athletic Journal* is the membership of the N4A, that is, professionals providing counseling, life skills, and academic support services to student-athletes.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the journal is to assist its readers in providing the best possible counseling, advising, and life skills services to student-athletes. Toward that end, articles should add new knowledge, challenge existing opinion, and/or explain the implications of research. The arguments should be well-grounded in theory or research and clearly related to practice. Articles should be original and stimulating, written in a clear and concise style. Where applicable, authors should strive for methodological and statistical soundness, while avoiding unnecessary technical excursions.

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EDITOR'S STATEMENT

Carol A. Gruber, Ph.D.
Carlow University

Greetings. As your professional association, the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics continues to strive for excellence in providing its membership with current, relevant research. As such, Volume 18, Number 1 of the *Academic Athletic Journal* brings you four new articles that are both diverse in their scope as well as their approach.

The first article by Douglas Muccio provides a phenomenological approach to looking at how college athletes cope with retiring from sport following their collegiate careers. Muccio identified four major themes as well as several sub-themes, which may be used by student-athletes, advisors, counselors, and coaches, to better understand this important developmental process in the lives of these students. The second article by Jennifer Bruening looks at the academic stereotypes of African-American female collegiate student-athletes at a large Midwestern university. This researcher also used the structured interview approach to identify several important perceived academic stereotypes from the vantage point of the student-athletes themselves. The author's discussion includes implications for athletic-academic counselors, coaches, faculty and administrators, as they attempt to provide a supportive community for this student population. Article three, by Daniel Kissinger and Joshua Watson, provides us with an excellent conceptualization of how the "Working Alliance Model," originally proposed by Bordin (1979), can be used by academic counselors and other professionals working with student athletes. Kissinger and Watson indicate that this very dynamic model may be very compatible for use with collegiate student-athletes as advising and counseling professionals assist them in navigating the developmental challenges they face. Article four by Marilyn Kaff, Adrienne Leslie-Toogood, and Teresa Miller explores support services that can be provided to college student-athletes with diagnosed learning disabilities. These authors provide an excellent foundation of self-advocacy training and strategy instruction as their premise for helping this important student-athlete population to reach its potential.

The authors, editors, and I hope you enjoy and find useful this eighteenth volume of the *Academic Athletic Journal*. I hope you are able to "Create a Balance" for yourselves professionally by taking a moment to read this journal, learn a little something more about the students you work with, and try something innovative in your work.

Retiring from Intercollegiate Athletics: A Phenomenological Investigation

Douglas J. Muccio, M.S.
Mark A. Hector, Ph.D.
 University of Tennessee

ABSTRACT

The major objective of this research was to explore the experience of retiring from sport following a career in college athletics. The phenomenological method was used to interview five retired athletes and gather data. A clearer understanding of the experience of the participant is established by the unstructured interview style inherent within the phenomenological method, allowing the participant to control the interview and be the expert of his or her own experience. Following these interviews, a research group analyzed the transcripts looking for themes that existed for all five participants. Four main themes with sub-themes emerged from this analysis, including **Identity**, with the sub-themes of **Void**, **Emotion**, and **Life Shift/Redirection**; **The Game**, with the sub-themes of **Stories of Past History**, **Difference between Levels of Sport**, **Contentment in Reminiscing**, and **Retirement as a Process**; **Body**, with the sub-themes of **Fitness/Being in Shape**, **Injury**, and **Speed**; and **Others**, with the sub-themes of **The Team (Coaches/Teammates)** and **The Community (Family/Friends)**. It is the hope of the author that this research will provide a clearer understanding of the experience of retiring from sport so that coaches, parents, counselors, and the athletes themselves can take steps toward having a successful and constructive retirement.

INTRODUCTION

Retirement in society today can be considered from several different perspectives, with the most common of these perspectives being the employee who ends his or her work career. This paper will address another type of retirement that affects large numbers of individuals every year: retirement from sport. The distress experienced by athletes retiring and leaving a sport for the first time is a significant issue in sports today (Abbot, Weinmann, Bailey, & Laguna, 1999). Obviously, retirement from sport can take place at any level from elementary school, to college, to the professional ranks. Few athletic careers extend beyond college, with only 1% of all student athletes continuing their sport careers in professional athletics (Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, 2001). This fact implies that 99% of college athletes retire at or before the end of their college careers.

Academic advisement for students participating in intercollegiate athletics is an important and growing area in student personnel services in higher education (Gabbard & Halischak, 1993). Academic performance and athletic performance often have a bi-directional influence for many athletes. It is therefore incumbent on the academic advisors to have an appreciation and understanding of the experience of the

student athlete. All intercollegiate athletes retire at some point, with the overwhelming statistical majority doing so after college. Reasons for retirement include injury, loss of motivation, deselection, graduation, or leaving college. The better the academic advisor understands the individual athlete's reasons for and experience of retirement, the better he or she will be able to help the student athlete get through this potentially difficult period. An overview of the research methodology used in the study as well as a literature review of past research on phenomenology, retirement, and sport-retirement will be provided.

BACKGROUND

Little research has been done to investigate the negative stress experienced by the specific population of ex-athletes (Baillie & Danish, 1992; Stankovich et al., 2001). According to Baillie and Danish (1992), this lack of research is for three reasons. First, studies on career transitions have been generally focused on older adult or geriatric populations. Second, the percentage of individuals from the general population participating in sport may not be significant enough to warrant the effort that a research study demands. And third, there is a lack of applicable models involving athletic retirement to facilitate the research process.

Research Models Used for Sport Retirement

Drahota and Eitzen (1998) took the third factor discussed by Baillie and Danish (1992) into account and attempted to apply Ebaugh's (1988) role exit theory to the retirement process of an athlete. In this study, Drahota and Eitzen (1998) successfully applied the four stages of Ebaugh's (1988) role exit theory—*doubts, seeking alternatives, the turning point, and creating the ex-role*—to the experience of an athlete retiring. They did this by holding 27 face-to-face interviews with ex-athletes from a variety of sports, collecting data qualitatively and relating it to the four stages of role exit (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998).

Along these same lines, Grove, Lavelle, Gordon, and Harvey (1998) attempted to use the account-making model of Harvey, Weber, and Orbach (1990) as an outline for understanding the psychological distress that results from the retirement process of an athlete. In their account-making model, Harvey et al. (1990) describe the account as the formation of a narrative about the traumatic event experienced and saw the ability of the individual to develop this narrative as the essential element in their therapeutic process. In their application of the account-making model, Grove et al. (1998) viewed retiring from sport as a traumatic event in the lives of the retired athletes. They collected data qualitatively through structured interviews over the areas of *Traumatic Event and Outcry, Denial and Intrusion, Working Through, and Completion and Identity Change*. Upon analyzing the interview transcripts, Grove et al. (1998) concluded that the model by Harvey, Weber, and Orbach (1990) was applicable to the retirement process of athletes.

However, these studies were unique due to the fact that the researchers collected data qualitatively, contrasting with the majority of research done in the field that uses quantitative approaches and Likert-type scales. This quantification of data and use of Likert-type scales has left the field of sport psychology with a lack of

qualitative research on the topic of athletic retirement. Examples of recent studies that are quantitative include those done by Blinde and Stratta (1992) and by Abbot, Weinmann, Bailey, and Laguna (1999). Furthermore, Hayslip et al., (1997) used a Likert-type measure to study the traditional form of retirement from work, using the Retirement Anxiety Scale to assess the anxiety that academicians had towards the retirement process.

Nevertheless, to thoroughly study and understand the topic of retirement, and in particular, retirement from sport, knowledge of the actual experience of individuals who have lived through retiring from sport is necessary. Leong and Ponterotto (2003) advocate a research paradigm shift to constructionist methodologies, such as qualitative phenomenology, stating that these are the only methodologies suited to give marginalized and under-studied populations a voice. Hopefully, the broad range of reactions to and causes of the retirement of athletes can be revealed and examined.

Impact of Retirement on the Athlete

Every year, thousands of athletes become ex-athletes, enduring the process and the effects of retirement from sport. As noted by Isaksson and Johansson (2000), retirement brings about a number of stressors in the life of the ex-worker. However, the stress experience is compounded for the athlete during retirement. This transition period holds more stress-related significance to the athlete due to the lifelong process of socialization into sport that athletes experience and grow accustomed to in our culture (Baillie & Danish, 1992). As noted by Baillie and Danish (1992), this socialization begins as early as elementary school, with children being reinforced for participation in sports by family, friends, and teachers. Over the years of development, this socialization, combined with success in sports by the athlete, leads to feelings of prestige and ultimately, an ego-driven creation of self-identity/image centered upon the role of athlete. An unfortunate consequence of this socialization and athlete-centered identity is that many athletes focus on developing their physical skills and undergo what Baillie and Danish (1992) describe as role foreclosure. In this process, athletes focus so much energy on sports that little is left for other aspects of their personal development, causing their education/academics to suffer and their self-esteem to hinge upon their athletic performance (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Given a self-identity concentrated on athleticism that is built up through the socialization process that the athlete experiences, along with the lack of development of other roles by the athlete, the stage is set for a stress reaction in retirement when the role of athlete is no longer available. This issue has been emphasized by Drahota and Eitzen (1998), who point out that retirement is a particularly difficult time for ex-athletes leaving a career in sport because they lose what had been the focus of their being and identity for the majority of their lives. Once they have left sport, the retired athlete is then forced to re-associate his/her personal identity (Stankovich et al., 2001). Other possible losses for the retired athlete include the camaraderie with teammates, physical prowess, adoration of fans and peers, and the intense rush and highs of competition (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998).

Finally, as Drahota and Eitzen (1998) assert, athletes retiring from sport are doing so at a very young age (typically 18 through 23). This young age comes into play when retired athletes have to start a new life and career differing from the sport-role identity that they have had all their lives. As Drahota and Eitzen (1998) report, over-focusing time and effort on this sport-role identity has left college athletes without the

skills of many college students, leaving these young, retired athletes with fewer of the skills needed to survive financially (Drahota & Eitzen, 1998). This skill deprivation found in college athletes is further emphasized by Stankovich et al., (2001), who assert that college athletes risk being deficient in career-related developmental tasks normally accomplished by their peers in the university community. Finally, Blann (1985) described these college athletes as being less capable of forming educational and career goals than other college students. Thus, these young ex-athletes have the majority of their lives ahead of them after sport to attempt to overcome the educational, economic, and self-developmental obstacles that sport has created.

Research by Hayslip et al. (1997) investigated control in making the final decisions regarding if and when to retire from a career in academia as a prediction of psychological stress. In their study, Hayslip et al. (1997) found that those who had control in making the final decision of when to retire were happier and more satisfied in retirement than those who were forced or told when they had to retire. The relevance of this finding to the retirement of an athlete is strengthened by the fact that many athletes end their careers because they are no longer wanted due to injury, lack of ability, or diminishing physical skills. Thus, the majority of athletes leaving sport would fall into the Hayslip et al. (1997) category of being forced out of their job. They would experience less satisfaction in retirement than those who had control over their decision to retire.

Potts (2001) reiterates these numerous stressors faced by athletes leaving sport and describes the phenomenon as post-athlete syndrome, stating that it affects most athletes at the end of their careers. Stankovich et al. (2001) include "loss of appetite, weight fluctuation, skipped menstrual cycles, insomnia, mood changes, a sense of being out of control, sadness about the loss of teammates, decline in motivation, and a lack of trust in others," (p. 82) as common effects of retirement from sport on college male and female athletes.

Further research on the psychological effects during the retirement process of ex-athletes is needed. Such research should improve helping professionals' understanding of the retirement experience and possibly enable them to assist athletes in developing better coping strategies for the retirement experience.

Phenomenology and Sport

A substantial amount of research has been done in the field of athletics using the existential-phenomenological/hermeneutic approach to describe the experiences of athletes in a wide variety of sports. The athletic experiences of playing soccer, playing women's basketball, being coached, and having a peak performance experience have been described.

Hughson and Inglis (2002) phenomenologically described the experience of playing soccer in the three major themes of *Player-Body-Subject*, *Practical knowledge and actions*, and *Form of soccer field space*. Johnson (1998) used the existential-phenomenological method to portray an athlete's experience of being coached, finding the three themes of *There for me/Not there for me*, *Knowing and being known personally*, and *Authority/Power*. D'Anniballe (1996) used the approach to depict elite female college basketball players' experiences, finding the three themes of *Relationships*, *"I" in team*, and *Play*. These three themes took on meaning in the context, or ground, of *Team*. Finally, Privette (1981) used phenomenology to find that the experience of peak

performance has the six themes of *Prior interest*, *Involvement*, *Clear focus*, *Intention*, *Spontaneity*, and *Peak experience*.

While researchers in the four studies above used the phenomenological method to study topics associated with sport, others have discussed the appropriateness of the use of phenomenology to explore sport-related issues. Fahlberg, Fahlberg, and Gates examined the use of the existential-phenomenological method to describe the experience of exercise, concluding that phenomenology's focus on "how...exercise is experienced rather than on variations in how it can be observed" (1992, p. 182) is essential in order to improve research on exercise behavior. Dale (1996) advocated the effectiveness of using phenomenology to describe the athlete's experience in sport psychology. Despite the many phenomenological studies of sport and the appropriateness of phenomenology as a method used to study sport, no research has been done using existential phenomenology/hermeneutics to describe the experience of retirement from intercollegiate athletics.

Phenomenology and Retirement

Research has been carried out using phenomenology to describe retirement but without focusing on sport as the career being terminated, or athletes as the population retiring. Schafner (1996) used the ontological hermeneutic model to obtain an understanding of the retirement experience of senior citizens, focusing on those senior citizens who used computers regularly in their daily lives. Themes identified in this research included the retiree's *Need to be useful*, *Desire for artistic expression*, and *Desire for relationships* (Schafner, 1996). Fudge (1998) used phenomenology to learn about the retirement experience of non-professional men. Her research yielded four themes, in which retirement was viewed as an *Anticipated life stage*, a *Time of freedom*, a *Time of activity, especially as practical support to others*, and a *Time to consolidate relationships*.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experience of retirement from intercollegiate athletics. The descriptions are by former intercollegiate athletes who had the experience of retiring from their sport. Extensive descriptions enabled the researchers to understand the experience from the perspective of the student-athlete.

METHODOLOGY

This section will illustrate the course taken to investigate the effects of retirement from sport on athletes. Included in this methodology are descriptions of the phenomenological interview style, the bracketing interview used as a validity measure, the retired athletes participating in the study, and the procedure followed, including the interview method.

Phenomenological Interview

As indicated by Polkinghorne (1989) and Romanyshyn and Whalen (1989), expanding psychological research to incorporate a phenomenological method increases the span of understanding available to the psychologist by allowing for the examination of the total human experience from the perspective of the participant. This phenomenological examination enables the researcher to comprehend more fully the experiences of the individual than would be possible using other qualitative or quantitative methods, given the limitations inherent in questionnaires or the standard interview guide.

These methods can restrict the participant's responses (Markson & Gognalons-Caillard, 1971). Phenomenological research is conducted through the phenomenological interview, in which participants are asked an open-ended question and, in responding, have the freedom to explore, be spontaneous, and have total control of their response (e.g. D'Anniballe, 1996, & Johnson, 1998). This freedom enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the participant's experiences than other methodologies such as questionnaires or structured interviews (Markson & Gognalons-Caillard, 1971).

Bracketing Interview

In the bracketing interview, the researcher is interviewed using the same question that he/she will ask the study's participants in order to help the researcher become aware of his/her thoughts, biases, and hypotheses concerning the research question (Rosenbaum, 2000). Pollio, Henley, and Thomspon (1997) suggested that a bracketing interview:

is done to provide the researcher with some feel for what it is like to be interviewed on the present topic and to provide a thematic description of his or her present understanding of the phenomenon...The intention is...to have (the researcher) become more attuned to (his/her) presuppositions about the nature and meaning of the present phenomenon and thereby (sensitize him/her) to any potential demands (he/she) may impose on (the) co-participants either during the interview or in its subsequent interpretation. (p. 48)

Thus, the bracketing interview allows the researcher to gain knowledge of his/her opinions on the research topic before he/she interviews participants in the study. This knowledge makes it possible for the researcher to make a conscious effort to remain unbiased and impartial while conducting the interview process.

Participants

According to Dale (1994), participants in phenomenological research are selected based on their ability to describe their own unique experience with a certain incident, thus providing the researcher with a better understanding of that occurrence. Following this logic, participants in this study were selected based on the following criteria: 1) the participant had retired from a sport following participation at the collegiate level, and 2) was willing to discuss retirement. In phenomenological studies, the primary consideration for including a research participant is whether or not the individual has had the experience. This study is focused on the intercollegiate athlete who has retired from his or her sport. If the research participant has had the experience of interest, then he or she is considered to be an authority on his or her own experience. Factors such as gender, type of sport, and level of sport are not primary considerations.

It is also important to understand that the five research participants in this study do not constitute a sample that is meant to be representative of a population. The goal is to obtain a non-quantitative description of the experience of retiring from intercollegiate athletics.

The participants in the study were three male retired athletes and two female retired athletes, ranging from NCAA Division I to NAIA level competitors. The participants had each played different college sports, listed in the table below (See Table 1). The participants were also assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity throughout the study. Participants chose their own pseudonyms. Some pseudonyms chosen by the participants were changed to better protect their anonymity.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Sport	Level
Julie	Female	25	Softball	NCAA Division II
Kevin	Male	24	Wrestling	NAIA
Jennifer	Female	26	Soccer	NCAA Division I
Bob	Male	52	Football	NCAA Division I
Freddy	Male	28	Basketball	NCAA Division I

Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving approval to conduct the study from the University of Tennessee's Office of Institutional Research, email solicitation via the snowball method was used to find participants for research on retired athletes. The snowball method consists of a two-phase process (Huck, 2000). First, participants are gathered who are easily accessible to the researcher, and who have had the experience being studied. Second, the participants gathered are then asked if they know anyone else who has had the experience being studied if they would like to participate.

Contact was obtained with participants through an email solicitation. Once contact was made, the retired athletes were informed of the specific expectations of the study and requested that they sign the informed consent documents. After receiving the signed consent forms from each participant, a time and place were established to conduct individual interviews with each participant where the researcher began each session by asking the question: "Describe for me in as much detail as possible your experience of retiring from sport."

Each interview session was recorded using an audiocassette. The cassette tape was then listened to by the researchers and transcribed. Each interview transcription was then read and reread by the researcher, with the researcher and a research group of graduate students and professors using phenomenological/hermeneutic analysis to find qualitative themes of the participants' experiences of retiring from sport (Pollio et al., 1997).

Interview Method

The phenomenological interviews were conducted using the approach prescribed by Dale (1996). Steps were taken to ensure that the interviewee was the person in control of the interview and fully able to express expertise on the subject.

The first step used to achieve this interview setting was by beginning each interview by asking the same, open-ended question, which allowed the participant to determine the course taken in the interview. This open-ended approach thus gave the participant control over the interview. The question asked in this study was: Describe for me in as much detail as possible your experience of retiring from sport. Periodically, the interviewer, would ask participants questions, such as, "Could you tell me more about that?" in order to gain more specific details to aid in explaining their answers.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of all the interviews and their transcription, the primary investigator first read and re-read the interview transcripts to ensure that they were accurate. Once the accuracy of the interview transcripts had been confirmed, the primary investigator met with phenomenology and sport psychology research groups to begin identifying common themes and to verify those themes. After thematization had been finalized, participants were asked to read them and verify that the themes were accurate descriptions of their experiences.

RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological investigation was to explore the experience of retiring from sport for individuals who ended their athletic careers following their participation in intercollegiate athletics. In phenomenological research, analysis of "three to five interview transcripts" (Pollio et al., 1997, p. 51) is generally sufficient in obtaining the range of conditions needed to thematize. Thomas and Pollio (2002) also submit that further interviews are not needed once the researcher observes redundancy in the transcripts. The primary investigator in this study followed the model of participant selection outlined by Pollio et al. (1997) and Thomas and Pollio (2002), interviewing participants until a duplicative pattern about the experience of retiring from sport became evident in their narratives. This section reflects the themitization done by analyzing the five phenomenological interviews that were conducted. Each of the five participants involved in the aforementioned interviews will be described using pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes. The following thematic structure was the result of this thematic analysis.

Thematic Structure

Upon analysis of the participants' interview transcripts, four major themes with sub-themes emerged. The first theme was **Identity**, which included the sub-themes of **Void**, **Emotion**, and **Life Shift/Redirection**. Appearing as the second theme of the study was **The Game**, which included the sub-themes of the retiree telling **Stories of Past History**, **Differences between Levels of Sport**, **Contentment in Reminiscing** on one's playing career, and **Retirement as a Process**. The third theme was **Body**, which included the sub-themes of **Fitness/Being in Shape**, **Injury**, and **Speed**. Finally, the fourth theme of the investigation was **Others**, which included the sub-themes of the **Team** consisting of **Coaches** and **Teammates**, and the **Community** consisting of **Family** and **Friends**.

Theme I.	Identity
	A. Void
	B. Emotion
	C. Life Shift/Redirection
Theme II.	The Game
	A. Stories of Past History
	B. Difference between Levels of Sport
	C. Contentment in Reminiscing
	D. Retirement as a Process
Theme III.	Body
	A. Fitness/Being in Shape
	B. Injury
	C. Speed
Theme IV.	Others
	A. The Team
	1. Coaches
	2. Teammates
	B. The Community
	1. Family
	2. Friends

THEME I. IDENTITY

Researchers such as Baillie and Danish (1992), Drahota and Eitzen (1998), and Stankovich et al. (2001) have exhibited the impact that sport and retiring from sport can have on the identity of the individual. This impact of **Identity** was witnessed in the interviews of the participants in this study, as each athlete described sport as being an active piece of their own personal identity construction. The effect of retiring from sport on the identity of the participants is illustrated below in the sub-themes of **Void**, **Emotion**, and **Life Shift/Redirection**. Below are quotes of the participants describing each of the sub-themes. The pseudonym of the participant speaking will follow each quote.

Void

As stated above, each retired athlete participating in this study emphasized sport as the major segment of their identity. Once this sport segment was gone, these athletes experienced a void in their lives, causing them to feel lost and uncertain of their place in the world.

Here, Kevin described the void that retiring from wrestling caused in his life. This description of void included the feelings of emptiness and limbo brought on by not being able to do the thing that he had done and loved for so long.

But just that same feeling that there wasn't practice to go back to on Monday, there wasn't going to be a competition the next week. I mean it was over...that's all she wrote for that. I just really felt like I was out there in limbo because I was the only senior on the team that year, and everybody else that was on the team, we had three national placers that year, and everybody on the team that was at nationals was coming back next year. So just this sinking feeling of emptiness that you know I was there with the team but my match was over, it was almost like I wasn't part of this team anymore. And like I said, it was something that I loved to do for so long that, to lose something that close to you, you can almost compare it to, and I've never lost anybody close to me or anything like that, but when you love something in your life that much, it creates this huge void. You miss it so dearly that to me if I could have fathomed, it was almost like losing a friend or something like that. Kevin

Bob echoed this sentiment of retirement from football as a state of void and limbo described by Kevin, adding to it with the use of the metaphors of being a man without a country and floating through space.

You're like a man without a country or a man without a team now. You don't belong anywhere. It almost...when you walk away from a team sport like that, it's almost like you're an astronaut who's in a space walk and instead of being attached to that space ship, all of a sudden the chord snaps. You know... And you're floating. It isn't that you're dead, I mean your athletic career is dead. Bob

Emotion

The participants experience strong emotions when they retired from their sport.

Jennifer recalled the strong emotion that she felt while making her decision to retire from her sport, and enduring the disappointment and other emotions that came with not reaching her goals. Eight years after her retirement, Jennifer admitted that she still struggles with these emotions today.

It's very emotional...I think it goes back a lot to disappointment. Not having the dream become reality and also seeing, being such a competitive person my whole life, seeing people that I had either been on an equal playing field with or much better than succeed. To have to tell people I failed at something. I don't know that's kind of tough. It's sad. Umm...I don't know, it's painful. I think the biggest word to sum it up would be disappointment. And I've been kind of working through that for the past...I guess eight years. I think the wounds, the emotional wounds have been healed through getting back in a different way...But I think retirement for me was summed up by disappointment and fear, depression. Jennifer

Life Shift/Redirection

The major hurdle revolving around the theme of **Identity** that these athletes had to overcome was the realization that their identity would have to change upon retirement from sport. For the participants in this study, sport had been the focus of their lives for so long that their identity hinged upon their athletic endeavors. Now that sport was gone, these participants had to shift their identity to something other than "athlete." Kevin described his process of finding an identity outside of athletics with goals that weren't in the sport arena.

It was something that I grew up with, it was who I was. And it was just incredibly difficult to know that it was over. If somebody would have asked me in college, or probably even high school, who am I? I would have said "a wrestler, or, "an athlete." I doubt I would have said anything like I'm a citizen, or I'm a human being, or I'm a white person, or I'm a male, or anything like that. I was an athlete. I was a wrestler. It's a life redirection. So although my career was over, I mean it came to a stop after I lost my last match my senior year, but at the same time I guess I see it as a process because you have to find places to like I said, "channel your energy, find other goals to move towards and accomplish." Kevin

The overwhelming emphasis of Freddy's description of his experience of retirement from sport was the importance of starting law school immediately following the end of his collegiate athletic career, giving him an outlet that he could shift his energy toward.

Just like basketball was with all the hours you put in, law school was very similar to that... So retirement wasn't too bad for me like I said I guess because of the law school experience so much... the ease of retiring, it has really been a lot easier with law school. Freddy

THEME II. THE GAME

The Game arose as a theme due to the fact that each college game, or sport, played by the participants in this study was described at one point or another in their interviews. As is illustrated in the section below, the participants described **The Game** through the sub-themes of **Stories of Past History**, **Difference between Levels of Sport**, **Contentment in Reminiscing**, and **Retirement as a Process**.

Stories of Past History

The participants included descriptions of their playing careers, rather than discussing their experiences of retirement, in their answer to the original phenomenological research question. These accounts included the number of years that the participants played their sport, as well as some descriptions of events that took place during their careers of playing the game.

Bob mentioned his age when he stopped playing, and then he described a specific event while playing the game of football.

I was about 19 when I stopped playing. Bob

I keep replaying games in my head. I do it when I'm down, when people are treating me like shit. I think of this ninety-nine yard touchdown run I had against (name of team). Two guys had me pinned in the endzone on the sideline and I thought they were going to tackle me for a safety. I made a quick move and made them both miss me and look really bad. After I got by them nobody could catch me down the sideline. Ninety-nine yards. Touchdown. So when people are treating me like shit I think of that run and put their faces on those guys who missed me. Pretty sick, huh? (ha ha). Bob

Difference between Levels of Sport

The participants discussed the impact that the change of the game and its environment had on them as athletes. Julie emphasized the loss of fun from high school to college, and described how she was not prepared for that difference. This difference in the game between high school and college played a part in the decision to retire from sport.

But, it was just so much different at the collegiate level than playing in high school and it was so forced.... And it (high school) was just so much fun, it was so relaxed and it was just a bunch of girls getting together to play and I guess I knew it wouldn't be like that at the college level but I wasn't prepared for how different it was going to be. Julie

Another role in which the game impacted the experience of retirement from sport for these participants was the structure that intercollegiate athletics demand and impose on its participants. The daily schedule of college athletes is full from morning until night with classes, practice, meeting with coaches, study tables, and weight lifting. There is little time for anything else. This allotment of time was both resented and missed by the retirees participating in this study.

Julie described the time demands and structured environment as main reasons for her final decision to leave the softball team.

I wasn't prepared for lifting weights for two hours every morning and then practicing for two hours every afternoon. (It) was so much extra time. And then on top of that apparently there were people on the team that had trouble keeping their grades up, so they did a mandatory study time four nights a week for two hours and everybody on the team had to get together and that was our team study table. I couldn't handle that. I never had anything like that imposed on me. Julie

Contentment in Reminiscing

In the analysis of the interview transcripts, a common coping strategy that appeared for the athletes to deal with their retiring from sport included looking back at their careers of playing the game with the ability to be satisfied and content with it.

Here, Kevin described his satisfaction in looking back at his career and knowing that he did his best and lived up to his potential.

When I'm fifty years old, when I think about it hard, I'm able to take myself back to those feelings of really being able to understand, ok, I lived and breathed this from the moment I got up in the morning until the moment I went to bed at night. I did the things I needed to be doing in this sport and out of this sport to get the most out of my potential in the sport. So fifty years from now I'll be able to look back on that and have a smile on my face knowing that I did what I could. Kevin

Retirement as a Process

Another way that the athletes were able to cope with retiring from the game was to treat retirement as a process. In this process, the athlete would take steps away from playing the game to make their retirement easier to handle.

Kevin described the steps he took in his process of retirement while also asserting doubt that one can ever truly retire from sport. For Kevin, these steps included continuing to be physically active, playing other sports, wrestling in intramural competitions, and coaching. In the following quote, Kevin described how difficult it would be for him to retire from sport without having a process, while bringing in some of the sport identity and emotion themes as well.

I guess my process of retiring from sport, and I still kind of see it as a continual process because I don't know how I would have ever been able to handle completely retiring from physical activity or sport in general like that. The biggest thing I guess in looking at this as a process is that I never wanted to give up sport completely. Growing up so long in the sport environment, it becomes who you are. You live and think it for so long and for so many years. Especially in season, it consumes you. And to have abrupt stop like that, just rips the soul out from you. So I guess it really gives you a sense of, I wanted to stay focused and stay...close to sport, even if it's not wrestling. Kevin

THEME III. BODY

The third major theme that emerged from the interviews with athletes who had retired from sport was that each participant's dialogue emphasized the role of the "Body" in their experience of retirement. Three sub-themes that surfaced in each participant's description of **Body** in their experience of retirement from sport were **Fitness/Being in Shape, Injury, and Speed**. Below are some segments of the participants' quotes that exemplify these three sub-themes.

Fitness/Being in Shape

Kevin described his feelings of falling from a high level of fitness which he had while he was a wrestler, to a lower level in his retirement.

And I guess that to me is the hardest part of the whole retirement process, is that I really enjoy working hard at anything and everything that I do and that right now I can't work out or do things as far as physical activity that I would really like to do. And I go to the gym, I run, I still try to stay in good shape, but I really miss being in great shape and I don't know if I'll ever get that back. Kevin

Freddy expressed similar feelings to Kevin, describing his weight gain and becoming out of shape following his retirement from sport.

I gained ten to fifteen pounds you know (ha ha)... That was, now that was a little bit different. I could see my body transforming. And ahh, my brother used to laugh at me all the time (ha ha). But I learned with that that ahh my body was so used to that kind of basketball pace with physical exertion every day for at least five or six times a week, now I may take a day off every now and again, but you were usually doing something physical every day and when I was not doing that in the spring I would get tired. Physically tired. And it clicked, "I'm so tired because I'm not exercising like I used to." Freddy

Injury

Within this theme of **Body** is another sub-theme that seemed to be a significant factor in the loss of the sport identity and decision to retire from sport. This critical sub-theme was that of experiencing a sport related injury. Jennifer described how nagging injuries were present for her throughout her athletic career, and ultimately influenced her decision to retire. Jennifer also described how many of these nagging injuries, which many athletes in the sport culture endure, still affect her today.

...and then went into preseason in college and ended up injuring myself and the injuries never healed and it just kind of puts a damper on things... I mean the scary thing is that its ten years later and I still feel the impact of some of those injuries. I have chronic back pain, my ankles are terrible because I've torn my ligaments so many times, I have bad knees. Like I'm just, I'm a lame horse (ha ha). But in the moment for me, I had torn my hamstring twice in the two years that I played. And that was because of my back problems that I was going to the orthopedic to have x-rays taken because they couldn't figure out what was going on and why I had back pain and why I was tearing my hamstrings. So I was, I lived in the training room. I had more treatment than I can even imagine now. So that was a big part of my experience playing, was dealing with pain. And I'm not the only one, that's for sure. We would have little team social hours in the training room because we were all constantly using the heat packs to warm up our muscles before we played and then going in there and sitting in the ice tubs after we played. It was just this constant process of getting prepared and then coming down from it so...for me I never really had that career ending injury so its hard to imagine that now I still have those same problems that I had when I was playing. Jennifer

Speed

Julie depicts how the injury that she suffered changed the way she played the game, causing her to lose her speed and again providing her with another reason to retire from sport. This loss of speed for Julie illustrates the relationship between **Identity** and **Body** for an athlete. Once the body can not perform, the identity is lost.

I was injured practicing in the gym, ball coming off the floor hitting my foot. I couldn't...I could walk on it, I could run on it, but I knew I wasn't going full speed or playing at my full potential, and it was my right foot so batting right handed and pushing off with that right foot, that was always...I fell way behind in my batting practice. But I also lost a lot of my speed. That was kind of my thing. I was a bunter. I was a slap bunter, and I was fast. And I lost that and that was kind of my edge where I excelled above other people. So when I lost that, and then got injured on top of it, it really, it wasn't my game anymore. It wasn't the way that I had always played it. I knew I was never going to be a home run hitter. It just wasn't my thing. And so when I lost my speed, the rest of my game kind of fell apart I guess. Julie

Bob reiterated Julie's comments, describing how injury limited his aggressive play and altered his game.

Like in my mind I always, I kind of told myself, well, I'll rehab that knee and I'll get strong and I'll you know try to get some of that back a little bit. And I was able to play basketball and do some little things. I was never able to do that with that reckless abandon. When you are young and perfectly healthy and an athlete, you play with a reckless abandon physically that, the older you get becomes more and more of a memory. You just, there's really no way to do it. So you alter your game, you play differently. Bob

Bob also took the opposite side of the spectrum from Julie, acknowledging that even though his physical skills were gone, he would always feel in his heart and think in his head that his body is still capable of performing and providing him with his sport identity.

In my mind even though my legs are shot, and my lungs don't have any capacity, in my mind I still think I can walk out onto the football field and be the fastest person. I know, my brain is telling me that it's not possible. But in my heart maybe, I still think I can. Bob

THEME IV. OTHERS

The fourth and final theme to emerge from analysis of the participants' transcripts was **Others**. In this theme, the participants used the sub-themes of **The Team (Coaches/Teammates)**, and **The Community (Family/Friends)** to describe the affect that other people had on them with regards to their retiring from sport. Below are quotes from the participants displaying these sub-themes.

The Team (Coaches)

For many athletes, the relationship between a player and a coach is a crucial ingredient in that athlete's success. Julie describes a conflict in the hierarchal relationship that exists between a player and a coach, with the coach being in power over the athlete. Here, Julie tells us about her coaches judging her performance, a judgment which she felt was incorrect and too much for her to overcome to continue to play her sport.

They knew I wasn't really happy on the team. That was kind of a side issue of the coaches and I. We just weren't clicking. And then I felt after I got into kind of that role of, you know I didn't practice for a few weeks after that happened, you know I had a few bad practices in a row, and I thought everything was judged on those first few bad practices, and although I knew I could do better I felt like I couldn't overcome that. Once their judgment was made of what level player that I was that I couldn't...kind of come out of that. Julie

The Team (Teammates)

In the culture of sport, the team environment is the hegemonic norm. Jennifer described the hardship that she encountered following her retirement when she was no longer part of the team, severing the bond that she once had with her former teammates. This separation between her and her teammates caused Jennifer to feel like she no longer belonged around them.

...it just comes to the point where if I'm not playing, am I supposed to be hanging out with these people? Or do I go to a game because I'm an "ex-player" and I think that's really hard. It's hard to be seen at the scene of the crime almost. And um it took me a while, I don't think I went to a game after I quit. I was in this little kind of sorority/fraternity with these people, and now I wasn't officially a part of it, but I couldn't get away from it. And that was really hard...I just didn't want to face all the parents. You know, "oh how have you been? We haven't seen you." "Well, yeah no crap you haven't seen me." (ha ha). It was even hard to hang out. Like ah go to the soccer parties. You know the guys and the girls always hung out together. It was hard to go to those because again I wasn't officially part of the team. Jennifer

The Community (Family/ Friends)

Finally, the participants described the impact that their communities had on them and their decisions. In the following quote, Julie described her anxiety in not wanting to disappoint her community and her parents with her decision to quit and retire from sport.

And in my town, it's a big thing. It's a small town and when you go off to college you put in the newspaper you know where you're going to school and what you're majoring in and if you're playing a sport at that college and you know that's something that I guess was respected by the town. And so I knew that going back you know they were going to ask me, oh how's softball going, and I'd have to say I wasn't playing anymore, and that was kind of tough...I felt pressure from mom and dad, they loved to watch me play. Even though I didn't play much in college they'd come up and watch the games and were really involved with the team and stuff like that. So that was hard...to let them know that I wasn't happy doing this. They really wanted that for me. Julie

Jennifer explained how her parents played a major role in her decision to retire from sport. At first, Jennifer recalled being worried that her parents would be disappointed in her for leaving the game. But then, Jennifer went to her parents for advice and support on her decision.

That was the biggest thing I kept thinking my parents are going to be upset with me...And of course you don't want to disappoint mom and dad and make them unhappy, not that my parents would care if I didn't score or anything like that, but...It's all or nothing. And...to make that decision I spoke with my family because I'm very close to my parents and they've meant a lot in my career. My mom was my assistant coach all through my traveling years, my club years. So I talked to her a lot. Jennifer

DISCUSSION

Bracketing Interview

In the Bracketing Interview, the researcher is interviewed using the same question that he/she will ask the study's participants in order to help the researcher become aware of his/her thoughts, biases, and hypotheses concerning the research question (Rosenbaum, 2000). Four themes emerged upon completion of the bracketing interview: Identity (with sub-themes of Body, Shift, Passion, and Comparison and Worth), Others (with sub-themes of Community, Family, Team/Coach, and Recognition and Attention), Culture (with sub-themes of Time and History), and Forced Decision. The themes of "Culture," "Forced Decision," "Recognition and Attention," and "Comparison and Worth" which arose in the bracketing interview did not appear in the thematization of the participants' interviews. Themes that were common to both the bracketing interview and the participants' were "Identity," "Body," "Shift," "Passion," "Others," "Community," "Family," "Team/Coach" and "History."

Verification of Themes

In phenomenological research, reliability has to do with the consistency of themes that emerged for all the participants. In the present study, the main themes appeared in the descriptions of each of the five participants. Validity in phenomenological studies is related to how well the described experiences are representative of the actual experiences that were had by the research participants. The best way to verify the results of a phenomenological study is to present the overall thematic structure to the research participants. Participants in this study read and reviewed the thematic outline following its completion to verify its accuracy. Upon this reading, the participants concurred with the thematization performed by the researcher and research group. Below is a formal verification of the accuracy of the thematization in the form of quotes from each participant.

The themes of your research indicate to me that you really understood my experience. I can relate to each theme and they capture the experience I had of retiring from sport. Julie

Overall, I'd say that the four major themes described my experience (of retiring from sport). Those were exactly the topics I talked about in my interview. Kevin

I feel that these themes and sub-themes truly reflect my experience, especially the themes of **Identity**, **The Game**, and **Others**. Jennifer

I think you have all the categories that are appropriate. When you retire from college sport, you do go through a period when you see yourself differently. You realize that others maybe like "the athlete" in you more than "the person." I think you got it. It seems accurate and all-encompassing. Bob

Your themes look good to me. I think you hit all the major aspects of retiring from sport. Freddy

CONCLUSION

The preliminary results of this phenomenological investigation on the experience of retirement from sport following a career in college athletics yielded several results that coincide with the findings presented in the review of previous literature on athletes retiring from sport. The initial similarity comes from Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) application of Ebaugh's (1988) role exit theory to athletes' retirement process. In this work, Drahota and Eitzen (1998) point out that athletes who retire go through a process of seeking alternatives to sport and creating the ex-role, all of which were witnessed in the interviews of participants in the current investigation. First, Drahota and Eitzen (1998) refer to the experience of **Retirement as a Process**, which was found as a sub-theme under the main theme **The Game** in the data collection. Also, the sub-theme of **Life Shift/Redirection** under the main theme of **Identity** reiterates Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) finding that the athlete will seek alternatives to sport while attempting to create a new identity role following his or her retirement. **Life Shift/Redirection** also reiterates the assertion by Grove et al. (1998) that retired athletes re-channel the time and energy formerly spent in their sport by acquiring new interests. Stankovich, Meeker, and Henderson (2001) and Drahota and Eitzen (1998) also mirrored the sub-theme of **Life Shift/Redirection** and the main theme of **Identity** through their conclusion that athletes who retire lose what had been their life-focus for many years, and with this loss, are forced to re-associate their personal identity.

Support for **Identity** as a theme of the experience of retiring from sport continued in Grove, Lavelle, Gordon, and Harvey's (1998) application of Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch's (1990) model on retirement. They concluded that individuals retiring from sport undergo an identity change. Furthermore, the sub-theme of **Emotion** under the theme **Identity** is verified by Grove et al.'s (1998) depiction of retirement from sport as characterizing a traumatic event and outcry.

The sub-theme of the retired athletes' tendency to **Tell Stories of Past History** under the main theme of **The Game** reflected the work of Baillie and Danish (1992), who established that sport provides a life-long socialization for the athlete. In the present study, stories of socialization told by the retired athletes also influenced the identity of the individuals. Baillie and Danish (1992) noted this influence on identity, asserting that sport socialization leads to the individual's self-identity being centered upon the role of athlete. Thus, Baillie and Danish's (1992) work substantiates the themes of **Identity** and **The Game** found in the present study.

Finally, the main theme of **Body**, as well as the main theme **The Others** and its sub-themes of **The Team**, and **The Community**, were confirmed by Drahota and Eitzen's (1998) research that states that athletes who retire lose physical prowess, camaraderie with teammates, and adoration of fans and peers. Further interviews and analysis is required to establish additional links to previous literature.

Themes discovered by this study that were not found in past research on retirement from sport can be used by athletes, advisors, counselors, coaches, and those working in other areas related to sport or helping professions, to better understand the experience of a retired athlete. With this greater understanding, interventions can be designed to support the individual through the difficulties and adjustment of retirement. Future research on retiring from sport should focus on effective measures in teaching coping strategies to athletes dealing with the loss of identity, camaraderie, and physicality that is inherent in retiring from sport. With this and future research, we can help make the experience of retirement more constructive and successful for athletes in the years to come.

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Academic Stereotypes of African American Female Student Athletes: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Greendorfer (1993) described stereotypes as "extremely powerful and potent" forms of discrimination (p. 5). This study examined how stereotypes affected twelve African American female collegiate student-athletes at a large Midwestern university. Data were collected through both focus group and individual interviews during the 1998-1999 academic year. One of the central themes identified by the participants was academic stereotypes and within theme, two sub-themes emerged. The first sub-theme was labeled overlooking and lowered expectations (Perlmutter, 2003) and further defined as "attending college only because of athletics." The second sub-theme was labeled isolation and further defined as "being the only African American in your classes" with additional isolating effects of gender and racial stereotypes also discussed.

N.B. The terms African American and Black were used interchangeably as descriptors for the participants in this study.

INTRODUCTION

A stereotype is a fixed impression, which conforms very little to the fact that it pretends to represent, and results from our defining first and observing second. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 14)

A stereotype is an unfounded view or belief about a person or group of people. When referring to African Americans, stereotypes abound concerning intelligence, academic preparation, physical superiority, and athletic ability that have "little scientific credibility" (Sailes, 1993, p. 90). Many stereotypes have developed in an attempt to explain the participation patterns of African Americans in sport. These stereotypes or myths are, as Greendorfer (1993) said, a powerful form of discrimination. It is not that African Americans are genetically predisposed to be less intelligent and more athletically gifted than Whites (Entine, 2000). It is that "variables affecting the sports socialization and sports participation patterns of African American athletes in American sports emanate from the social constraints placed upon them by the dominant culture" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 196). Those in decision-making have the potential to steer African Americans, African American females in particular, toward the fulfillment of stereotypes. So although beliefs about African American females as athletes are unfounded on racial grounds, they are supported on sociological grounds; "it remains a cultural fact that Africans have a special place in the Western imagination as fantasy objects . . . function [ing] as a potent carrier of pseudo-scientific ideas about racial difference" (Hoberman, 1997, p. 207).

Green, Olgesby, Alexander, and Franke (1981) discuss three "distortions" about African American women that are regularly accepted as truth: 1.) The matriarchy myth, referring to the African American woman in a derogatory nature as evoking fear in others with her strong sense of self-reliance and self-sufficiency; 2.) that African American women are only talented in, and therefore only involved in, basketball and track; 3.) African American women are only competent in those skills necessary for basketball and track (i.e., running and jumping). Additionally, Entine (2000) discusses what he labels "the most familiar prejudice" (p. 298) or intelligence, stating that it has long been suspected that certain sports were "too sophisticated and intellectual" (Entine, 2000, p. 298) for African American women. Although the women in this study experienced all four stereotypes, Entine's conception of the "academic stereotype" serves as the focus of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

African American women student athletes' college life experiences differ in meaningful ways from both White women student-athletes and African American men student-athletes. (Sellars, et al., 1997, p. 715)

Both bell hooks (1984, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2000) and Patricia Hill Collins (1988, 1990, 1998, 2000) address the situation of the African American woman in relation to the rest of American society. "Being on the margin" is bell hooks' descriptor and Patricia Hill Collins identifies the concept of the "outsider within" as a basis for Black Feminist Thought. Both women argue that research and intellectual thought has focused on the women who occupy a place at the center of society and those women's "perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of the women . . . who live on the margin" (hooks, 1984, preface). The "double consciousness" (Collins, 1998) of being both female and Black places African American "collectively at the bottom of the . . . ladder. . . [with an] overall social status . . . lower than that of any other group" (hooks, 1984, p. 14). Being situated at the bottom of the ladder places African American women in a position to be stereotyped for those operate within the margins are not versed in their experiences.

Providing an audience for African American women and encouraging them to share how their "lived experience may shape [their] consciousness in such a way that [their] world view differs from those who have a degree of privilege" (hooks, 1984, p. 15) was the underlying premise on which this study was based. For "Black women are empowered with the right to interpret [their] reality and define [their] objectives" (King, 1988, p. 295) and when others (i.e., White males, White females, Black males, those with higher social economic status) define Black womanhood, isolation follows. Collins states that "if we do not define for ourselves, we will be defined by others . . . to our detriment" (Collins, 2000, p.36).

Neither hooks nor Collins contextualizes Black Feminism in sport. However, applying the doctrines of the theory (concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal responsibility) (Collins, 1990) to sport allows the researcher to recognize the experiences of African American female athletes, empowering them through dialogue,

accepting personal responsibility for change. "Many people believe that sport is the only institution that can cross barriers of gender, race, nationality, political views, and religion to reach all people on a common plane" (Bruening, 2004, in press). Yet, little fact gathering and information solicitation has occurred to determine how to reach African American women athletes and:

since the present and future lives of these athletes may be positively or adversely affected, research which examines the meaning of sport in the lives of female athletes of color is necessary to assist athletic personnel in understanding and communicating with female athletes, and in determining policy or making prudent decisions regarding women's sport. (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4)

The purpose of this study was to gather information on the experiences of African American female student-athletes from the student-athletes themselves in order to share findings with those who are responsible for making the daily decisions affecting these women's lives. The following research questions formed the foundation for the data presented in this paper:

1. How does sport serve to reinforce racial and gender based stereotypes?
2. How can sport serve to dispel those myths?

Academic Stereotypes

Research has shown that "race is the strongest predictor of university academic performance" among student-athletes with gender as a less salient factor (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986, p.160). However, this research treats race and gender as separate constructs. For instance, most "frameworks examining gender in education . . . have been developed and tested on White student populations" (Chavous, 2002, p. 143). Concurrently, "considerable attention has been paid to the special problems of African American males in schools" (Frazier-Koussi, 2002, p. 151). However, research on the combined effect of gender and race on academic achievement is an almost unexplored domain. In the general student population, Cohen & Nee (2000) focused on gender differences in African Americans' level of educational attainment and retention and discovered significant differences between African American men and women. But such studies have not investigated why such differences exist (Chavous, 2002). Furthermore, even less data is available when athletic participation is added as a variable alongside race, gender and academic environment. For example, Lucas & Lovaglia (2002) reported that compared to non student-athletes, athletes do not see the overall benefits of a college education when weighed against the cost and are less motivated to achieve in the classroom. However, the researchers did not account for gender or race in reporting their results. In addition, they did not investigate but only recommended that future research "shed light" (p. 5) on how racial and economic distinctions in the United States contribute to their findings.

In examining differences between African American women and men in the general student population, Fleming (1985) stated that African American women are "anxious about their own competence" but those feelings are out of proportion with some of the objective facts of their competitive abilities (Fleming, 1985, p. 144). Fleming (1985) also found that African American women perform worse in math than

men but do make gains in verbal ability through their college careers. She reported that African American women, when placed "in competition, . . . are inspired with strong needs for achievement" (Fleming, 1985, p. 144). Additional evidence has been published demonstrating that African American women achieve at higher levels than males (Ford, 1996) and understand that educational attainment is the means by which they will become upwardly mobile in American society (Fordham, 1996). Presently, African American women "are making historic strides on campuses and in the workplace" (Close, 2003, p. 47). In fact, 35% of Black women go to college as compared to 25% of Black men (Close, 2003). Additionally, college educated Black women earn more than the median for all Black working men and all other women as well (Close, 2003).

Despite the data that suggests African American women are succeeding in the classroom, they are still considered an at-risk population (Ford, 1996) as they are faced with the perceptions others have of them given their racial and gender status, or lack thereof. In educational settings, White male students possess more social capital than White female students (Chavous, 2002) and Black male students are viewed as possessing lower academic potential (Davis, 1995). As a consequence of their "shared" membership in both gender (women) and racial (African American) groups these students can be perceived as less able to achieve academically. African American women find themselves subject to "the stereotypes regarding gender and academic ability" (Chavous, 2002, p. 144) as well as race and academic ability. However, as Collins (1988, 1990, 1998, 2000) and hooks (1984, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2000) contend, they do not truly fit within either group. The result for African American women is isolation (Hopkins, 1997).

The isolation African American women feel emanates from the perceptions of gendered and racial academic abilities held by educators. On college campuses, Sedlacek (1987) discovered that "White faculty members may give less consistent reinforcement to Black students than they give to White students" (p.486) and, not coincidentally, "academic achievement [is predicted to] be highest for students with . . . better relations with faculty" (Allen, 1985, p. 137). Additional findings support that poor communication with faculty, particularly White faculty, is a problem for Black students as contact with faculty outside of class is a significant predictor in achievement for Black students (Nettles, Thoeny, and Gosman, 1986). Perlmutter (2003) reported that African Americans visit professors in their offices less often than anyone else (p. B8) because they are intimidated by those White professors who "are behaving in ways that keep those students at a distance" (p. B8). Sedlacek found that some White professors stereotype "Black students as less able than Whites" (Sedlacek, 1987, p. 487), and Perlmutter (2003) raised concern that African American students and student-athletes are scared to approach even those White professors who do not hold those stereotypes or who do not believe themselves to be "motivated by malice toward athletes or Black students" (p. B8). Despite intentions to the contrary, these professors might still overlook Black athletes as members of the college community primarily, or even exclusively, due to their role as an athlete and as a result have lowered expectations of those who are Black and athletic. Professors might discount the remarks of Black athletes in class, when they are given the opportunity to respond, by subjecting them to "intensified scrutiny" or "negative comments" (Perlmutter, 2003, p. B8). As a result, a message can be sent to African American student-athletes that they "aren't wanted and they can't achieve" (Beckham, 1988, p. 76) thus adding to a sense of isolation from the university community.

Maintaining the dedication to achieve academically is not an easy road to travel for Black female students given that they do experience alienation and unfairness; whereas "white students adjust well" and "have no complaints about alienation or unfairness in the classroom" (Fleming, 1985, p. 136). African American women also do not choose to withdraw from the challenges facing them in their academic pursuits like their Black male counterparts who struggle at predominantly White institutions to the point where they may "withdraw academically and psychologically" (Fleming, 1985, p. 145). Chavous (2002) contended that African American women do not respond to unfriendly academic environments the way that Black men and even White women do. White women have a more difficult time adjusting to the collegiate academic environment and tend to internalize failures in a manner that diminishes their self-esteem to the point that they become more reserved and uninvolved in the classroom (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) whereas African American women "show up with a sense of purpose" (Close, 2003, p. 49). Black women "develop the assertive capacities that help them hold their own academically" (Fleming, 1985, p. 145). Pescarella & Smart (1991) agreed that the impact of the academic environment for women may "differ in both magnitude and in kind from that found in men" (p. 129). Contrary to male athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991), females who participate in athletics experience a "modest positive effect of college academic achievement" (Pescarella & Smart, 1991, p. 128). In fact, Kiger and Lorentzen (1986) found that "women [student-athletes] will tend to perform well academically, as a group, as long as the women's athletic programs do not heavily recruit athletes who might not otherwise attend the university" (p. 165). African American female student-athletes find themselves differentiated from the communities that would be thought "to sustain and support" (hooks & West, 1991, p. 18) them (i.e., other women and African American men). They are "outsiders within" lacking a significant body of research to assist those who are in roles to support their achievement by understanding their experiences.

METHODS

Initial data collected involved determining participation rates through a document analysis of the NCAA Certification Study for X University. In 1998-1999 the university had a total of 336 female student-athletes making the rate of participation for African American women 3% in track and field 911 women), 1.7% in basketball (6 women), and 1.1 % in all other sports (2 in crew, and 1 each in volleyball and fencing). Twelve of the twenty-one athletes agreed to participate in this study (Bruening, 2004, in press).

Next a series of three focus group interview sessions were conducted with a total of twelve women (groups of three, four and five). Background questionnaires were used at the outset of each focus group session to gather demographic information. The women ranged from first year in school to fifth year senior, aged eighteen to twenty-three (See Table 1). The names used to identify the participants in the remainder of this document were selected by each woman as a part of the completion of the background questionnaire. Focus Group 1 was made up of Dianne, Gabby, and Lolita. Focus Group 2 included Essence, November, Kay, and Princess. Focus Group 3 was the largest with Vanessa, Taz, Chyna, Madison, and Babeahgirl. A semi-structured format was used for the focus groups (see Table 2).

Following the group interviews, a grounded survey was developed (See Table 3) and administered to selected participants to check for interpretive accuracy (See Table 4).

Four interviews were then held with individual women, Gabby, Princess, Taz, and Vanessa, selected based on diversity of focus group participation, their sport, their year in school, and availability participate. Preference was given to the older student-athletes given that they had more experience both in sport and at the university (Bruening, 2004, in press). (See Table 2 for interview guide). Member checks were conducted as all participants also read the focus group transcripts and submitted corrections and comments as an additional method of triangulating the data (Janesick, 1994).

The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building). Stereotyping was a major theme with academic stereotypes as a sub-theme.

Description of the Research Setting

The undergraduate enrollment of X University was 36,252 with a 7.6% African American undergraduate student body of 1,661 African American females. The institution competed at the NCAA Division I level offering more than thirty varsity sports. Due to the size of the institution, the women who participated in the study were raised in varied locations across the United States and abroad as well as being from major cities, suburban locations, and small towns.

The university had successful athletic programs and the Athletic Department worked well in conjunction with a respected academic support program for student-athletes. The Athlete Academic Services office served a point of entry for this study. They provided additional statistics on the diversity of the athletic program, provided contact information for the African American women members of the teams, and allowed the use of their facility for both focus group and individual interviews (Bruening, 2004, in press).

RESULTS

The women in the study shared how they were subject to stereotypes that were coded into four categories: biological features and traits, gender issues, academic/intellectual capacity, and athletic skill. The focus of this paper is the academics stereotype. This central theme has been sub-divided into 1.) overlooking and lowered expectations {or attending college only for athletics} (Perlmutter, 2003) and 2.) isolation {or being the only African American in your classes}.

Overlooking and Lowered Expectations

As a senior in high school, Gabby scored extremely high on the ACT and her guidance counselor, whom she had never had any interaction with previously, offered to help her in exploring her options for continuing her education:

When I got my scores back from the ACT, the counselor had called for my high school. She said we have to congratulate you on your scores. I didn't know. I said thank you very much. She said we're going to go for those Ivy League schools. Well I'm looking at Florida A&M. And she said that's a minority school. And I said yes. She said I was unaware of that . . . (Gabby)

Gabby's experience of stereotyping was firsthand. She learned that people believe that African Americans are not as intelligent as Caucasians. This stereotype did not disappear for Gabby and her counterparts in this study when they went to college. They were exposed to assumptions on the part of their peers and professors that they were enrolled at X University only to play sports and not capable of excelling in the classroom.

The women were acutely aware of what people thought and said about them. As they traveled from their dorms and apartments to classes, the library, the cafeteria, and practice, the women wore clothing that identified them as student-athletes. They stood out on campus and being a student-athlete was a large part of their identity:

I was thinking about how I feel on campus. We got these backpacks for the conference championships. I started wearing mine around. It has your sport on it. So I was thinking about that. I wonder if they're looking at me? Do they look at me differently because they can tell that I am in sports? That made me a little aware of my surroundings and who was looking at me. Are they looking at me because of a black athlete? (Lolita)

Yesterday I was thinking because I always wear my backpack too, not to be racist or anything, but when white people look at me when I have on the backpack, do they think that I'm here just to play sports? Or do they think that I'm here to get my education and to achieve more academically? That is always running across my mind. Okay there's another black girl here she must be an athlete. She must be a track runner. I don't want people to know me just for that. I want them to know me because I have intelligence too. (Dianne)

They wanted to be recognized for their accomplishments both academically and athletically. However they believed there was a common perception, shared by professors on campus, that they were only attending X University because of their athletic talents.

I'm a biology major and there are many athletes, especially female athletes in the sciences. After I graduate I'm going to optometry school. There is a teacher I've encountered in my role as a [Black] female athlete — looking at me as this dumb athlete who just wanted to get by. I don't know how many times I went to his office to try to explain the reason why I was here. I think it's great that I can get an education not just a bogus degree or something. I can get a biology degree in become a doctor and be a track athlete. That teacher would not hear of it. He thought it was absolutely impossible. (Lolita)

Lolita continued speaking about that professor who doubted her abilities in the classroom:

He wrote my coach a letter that I would never become anything because of the person that I am. Because I was a female athlete. No female athlete had ever passed his class. No female athlete would ever pass his class. . . I just looked at that as discrimination. It [was] racist too, no Black person had ever passed my class. No Black person will ever pass my class. . . he's taken a category of people, a group of people, and said that they cannot do this. (Lolita)

Princess had similar experiences in her life where people have judged her capabilities as a student simply by her gender and the color of her skin:

Being an African American female athlete is a totally different story. I realize when I'm in class that a lot of times people just assume that I'm here because I'm an athlete . . . They think I'm not cut out to do it. People automatically assume that if you're African American and you're an athlete then that's the only reason you're in college. That is the one thing that really makes me mad. (Princess)

Madison also experienced the stereotype associated with African American student-athletes and academics. It was one she had not been able to escape no matter how hard she tried:

People always assume that because I'm black and I'm in college I must play some sport that got me here. Usually I don't tell people that I'm an athlete. I let them get to know me and then when they discover that I am afterwards they have more respect for me than if I would come up and say I run track for X. Then it's all about track and they don't want to hear what my major is or anything. They look at me all shocked that I would have goals in my life and that after track I want to go somewhere. (Madison)

Gabby even heard this stereotype coming from her coach:

Gabby—When it's a coach . . . if you don't give me credit for comprehending a one sentence statement then how can you possibly give me credit for constantly thinking about where are my hand heights, am I going with everyone, am I watching the formation, am I listening to my coxswain? You have to think about all of things and at the same time be clear minded. The bow rower is the one who sets the boat. We steady the boat. Then to turn around the next day and act like I have no clue—that's very disturbing.

Interviewer-They wouldn't put you in that position if you weren't capable.

Gabby-If you didn't think I had the talents to the ability to make quick decision then I don't need to be there. I should be somewhere else in the boat.

(Bruening, 2004, in press)

Isolation

The women in the study were majoring in disciplines where they were the only African American woman or one of the few African Americans represented. They were subject to the pressures of being a college athlete and college students. But these pressures paled in comparison to being the sole representative, or one of the few representatives, of their race in a class.

I think it's different especially being in engineering. I'm Black and I'm female and I play basketball. They think I'm just going up to the gym and shooting around. It's a real shocker for people to realize that I'm on the team. They ask well how do you do it? How are you able to juggle all of that around? I guess we're just not supposed to be in this situation . . . (Kay)

Kay has managed "to juggle all of that around" for four years and has achieved on the basketball court and in the classroom.

There are only three females that will graduate and I'm definitely the only Black one. I think there are only four black students in the whole college of engineering now. We all study together, of course. There's like a little Black section right there. But what are you supposed to do? It's kind of disappointing because people do look at you. They accept us now because we've gotten through all of the weed-out courses and we're into our major. We're doing everything that they're doing and we're scoring the scores we need to score.

The other women asked Kay about her classmates' lack of acceptance:

Princess-They compare themselves to you?

Kay-Yeah, I felt that way in the beginning of my first two years. But I started my major in the fall and I've had the same people in all of my classes. I think we're just used to each other now. We're on the same level now, but I didn't feel like that in the beginning. I had to prove myself.

and then shared their own similar experiences:

November-You really do have to prove yourself. I know in my engineering classes I am the only Black female. I guess the way that I am I can adapt to it well. I can count on my hands how many Black students there are in my lecture and they are all dispersed. They don't even sit together.

Princess-I'm the only African American in my classes. And I don't notice it until my teacher pointed it out to me the other day that I was the only Black person in class this year. . . after being the only Black person running cross-country, I know what it feels like and you never know until you walk in someone else's shoes. I know what it feels like to be in a race and people don't think you deserve to be there. Like in a lot of my classes, I've been the only Black person in my classes. People have treated me different.

DISCUSSION

African American women, when given the opportunity, will speak of the stereotypical views they are subject to as African American female athletes. Richard Lapchick commented on the "unsubstantiated race-oriented myths" that have evolved "as people attempt to explain the success . . . of African-American athletes in certain American sports" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 194). Lapchick elaborates that most of these myths are attempts to "rationalize the dominance of African Americans in specific sports" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 195). The African American women in this study have experienced these unfounded views, these misconceptions that make them feel as if their only viable access to a college education is through sports. For them, physical superiority is a given; mental capabilities are questioned.

Coaches, administrators, professors, and advisors (among others) frequently discuss the demands of athletics on student-athletes (Gurney & Stuart, 1987; Lucas & Lovaglia, 2002). Researchers have documented the strains attending college and competing in athletics at this level places on individuals (Adler & Adler, 1991; Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Bruening, 2004; Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Perlmutter, 2003; Pescarella & Smart, 1991; Sailes, 1993; Sellers, 1997; Stone & Strange, 1989; Stratta, 1995a; Stratta, 1995b). The African American female student-athletes in this study illuminated another level of strain. The discrimination they are exposed to in the form of stereotypes adds an additional stressor to their lives. From Lolita's being told she will not pass a class because her professor has prescribed to a stereotype about the academic capabilities of female athletes and African Americans to Gabby's own coach questioning her intellectual ability, these women do have to prove themselves as capable students almost daily. Unfortunately this particular group of women rarely found support from other African Americans, let alone other African American women, in their classes. Those women who did not play basketball or run track were even further removed from contact. With the exception of their interaction with other African American female student-athletes through their Athlete Academic Service program, they were in isolation (Hopkins, 1997) or as bell hooks states "homeless . . . confronting regularly the question: where can I find a home?" (hooks & West, 1991, p. 18). These student-

athletes demonstrated that they were successful, achievement oriented, and for the most part, independent (Frazier-Kouassi, 2002). Their independence allowed them to separate themselves from White women who tended to internalize academic difficulties and Black men who withdrew from others when faced with school-related issues, but their independence also left them alone.

Where the women in this study have found some support and an emerging level of understanding is from their Athlete Academic Services programming and their advisors in that office. Vanessa spoke to how her advisor assisted her as a biracial student-athlete:

It's been really good and they've helped me out a lot. They were especially good when I was going through my tough time of not knowing my [racial] identity or who I was going to hang out with. They introduced me to people and have just been really helpful.

Academic advisors can have a positive impact on African American female student-athletes by realizing that their experiences differ in being exposed to both racial and gender stereotypes, Collins' "axes of power" (Collins, 2000). Advisors form a portion of the "supportive community" (Fleming, 1985) of peers and role models that can assist African American female student-athletes in feeling "some sense of progress and success in their academic pursuits" (Fleming, 1985, p. 152). Support can be offered by advisors who acknowledge the difficulty inherent in these student-athletes challenging professors who appear to lack interest in them by not encouraging them to succeed, discounting their abilities despite empirical evidence to the contrary. As the women in this study revealed, they want to be taken seriously as students and respected for their intelligence, not just their athleticism. They, for the most part, have risen above the discrimination they face in their academic pursuits through "counseling by coaches, advisors, and older peers," although not enough data exists or is publicized to aid in combating the "the perpetrators [professors . . .]" (Permuter, 2003 B8).

Close (2003) found that African American women "show up with a sense of purpose" sending the message that "We're here. It's tough. We're Black. We're alone" (p. 49). Promising, though, are figures showing that in job settings, 62% of African American women had mentors compared to 35% in 1995 (Close, 2003, p. 50). But, on the downside, Black women are less satisfied with their jobs and have a higher propensity to leave those jobs than their Black male and other female counterparts (Close, 2003). Mentors exist, but communities where solidarity can be felt and renewal can take place are lacking (hooks & West, 1991). Research needs to be conducted to determine the perspectives of African American female student-athletes on other campuses both through a broadly administered survey where experiences of other groups can be compared (i.e., White males, Black males, White females) and through interview-based designs such as this one. Additionally data needs to be gathered that speak specifically to what academic advisors can do to assist African American female student-athletes in dealing with stereotypes concerning their academic abilities as well as how to begin to "debunk" those stereotypes (Stratta, 1995b). Building a sense of community for African American female student-athletes requires understanding and "effective policymaking" acknowledging "how the educational experiences of Black students differ" (Allen, 1985, p. 147).

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TABLE 1. Background Questionnaire Information

Pseudonym/ Focus Group/ Age/Year	College Sport/ Other Sports Played Prior To College	Parents' Occupation/ Parents' Sport Background	Sibling & Ages/ Siblings' Sport Backgrounds
*Gabby/1 22/Senior	Crew/ TN, BKB, TR, SW & VB	F-Supervisor/ F-FB, BKB, TR M-Accountant/None	B-15/ SW, SO, TR
Dianne/1 18/Senior	Track/ VB, BKB, TR	F-Bank Customer Service F-BSB, FB, BKB M-Med. Lab Tech./BW, SB	B-13/BSB, FB, SO
Lolita/1 22/Senior	Track/ BV, BKB, TR GYM	F-Nurse/None M-Nurse/None	B-24/None S-21/None
Essence/2 23/Senior	Track/ TR	F-Retired/None M-Retired/None	B-24 & 26/BKB
November/2 19/Freshman	Track/ VB, BKB, TR	F-School Administrator/ F-FB, BKB M-School Administrator/BW	B-25/FB, BKB, TR S-22/BKB, TR
Kay/2 22/Senior	Basketball/ BKB, SB, TR, BW	M-Legal Assistant/ M-VB, TR	S-23/TR, CH
*Princess/2 22/Senior	Cross Country & Tack/ TR, XC, BKB	F-Bus Driver/TR M-Home Health Care/TR	B-25/None, B-26/BX, S-23/TR
Babeahgirl/3 12/Freshman	Fencing/ BKB, FC	SF-Hairdresser/FB M-Hairdresser/SB	B-20&21/ BKB, TN
*Vanessa/3 20/Junior	Volleyball VB, BKB, SO	F-Shipping Manager/BKB M-Admin. Assistant/None	B-15&22/BKB, S-23/SO, S26/So, CH
Madison/3 21/Senior	Track TR	F-Radiologist/TR	B-26/FB, BKB
Chyna/3 20/Junior	Track TR	F-Teacher & Coach/BSB M-Seamstress/GYM, CH	S-26&28/ TR, SO, GYM, CH
*Taz/3 23/Senior	Track FH, SO, TR	F-Auto Dealer/FB, BSB, TR M-Professor/TN, SW	B-15/None, B-17/WR, B-21/TR, B-30/SW B-10/SO, S-17/BSB, BKB, TN, TR

TABLE 2. Interview Guides

Example of a Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Did you play multiple sports while growing up? If so, what led you to specialize in the sport in which you currently participate? If not, why?
2. Who was your role model in sport when you were growing up? How do you perceive your role as an African American female athlete? Do you perceive yourself as a role model? Do you believe you have a responsibility to African American girls interested in sports?
3. What is your perception of the state of participation of African American females in sport? Are there enough women participating?

*Example of an Individual Interview Guide***Gabby**

1. Why did you chose crew? What influenced you to become and stay involved?
2. What has your experience been as a participant in crew?
3. What stereotypes have you ben exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete? Talk about the seating arrangment at the student union.
4. How do you feel about the treatment of women by the athletic department?
5. Culture/Race/Ethnicity. Talk about the intricacies and differences among African Americans.
6. What is the current state of participation of African American women in sport?

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument

Please answer the questions on this survey based on the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	n/a

I. Early Socialization Influences

1. My mother was the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

2. My father was the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

3. My brother (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

4. My sister (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

5. My peers were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

6. My teacher (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

7. My coach (es) was/were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

8. My relatives were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument (cont.)

II. Choice of Sport

1. I chose to play the sport I play in college because I was good at it.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

2. I chose to play the sport I play in college because I enjoyed it.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

3. I chose to play the sport I play in college due to the most significant influence I listed in the previous section.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

4. I chose the sport I play in college due to the availability of a scholarship.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

5. I chose the sport I play in college for the opportunities it will afford me after graduation.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

6. I feel a stereotype exists that African-American women are supposed to play a certain sport or sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

7. I believe this sport is basketball.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

8. I believe this sport is track and field.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument (cont.)

III. Societal Perceptions of Race and Gender

1. As a female athlete, I fight the perception of being a sex symbol.
2. As a female, I am not accepted as a legitimate athlete.
3. Because I am a female athlete, my sexual orientation is questioned.
4. I receive conflicting messages about whether it is acceptable to be an athlete and a woman.
5. People assume I am an athlete because I am African-American.
6. People assume I am a talented athlete because I am African-American.
7. My coach expects more out of me because I am African-American.
8. Women athletes have to prove themselves more so than men athletes.
9. Men's sports are prioritized over women's sports.
10. There is a lack of respect of women's sports.
11. There is a lack of understanding of women's sports.

IV. Media Issues

1. Women athletes receive equal TV coverage to men athletes.
2. Women athletes receive equal newspaper coverage to men athletes.
3. Women athletes receive equal radio coverage to men athletes.
4. Women's sports receive adequate coverage by the media.

V. Additional Comments

Please use the space below for any additional comments you wish to share.

Table 4: Grounded Survey Results

Question	Respondent			
	A	B	C	D
Mother	5	2	1	3
Father	3	5	5	3
Brother	1	1	1	1
Sister	1	1	1	1
Peers	2	2	1	2
Teacher	2	2	2	4
Coach	4	2	3	4
Relatives	1	1	1	1
Good	5	5	5	4
Enjoy	5	5	5	3
Influence	3	5	4	5
Scholarship	1	2	5	5
Post-Grad	3	3	3	4
Stereotype	5	5	5	5
Basketball	5	5	5	5
Track	5	5	5	5
Sex Symbol	3	3	2	2
Legitimate	4	4	3	3
Sexual Orient	5	2	2	5
Conflicting	5	5	5	5
Athlete	5	5	5	5
Talented	5	5	5	5
Coach Expects	2	2	4	3
Prove	5	5	5	5
Prioritized	5	5	4	3
Lack of Respect	5	4	4	3
Lack of Understanding	5	4	4	3
TV Coverage	1	1	1	1
Newspaper	1	1	2	2
Radio	1	1	2	2
Media Coverage	1	1	1	1

Counseling College Student Athletes: A Working Alliance Model Approach

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ABSTRACT

Student-athletes often represent a highly visible, yet decidedly misunderstood population on college and university campuses. In the general student population, the combination of multiple stressors often leads students to seek professional counseling services. Unfortunately, student-athletes, who are often faced with a multitude of psychosocial stressors germane to balancing athletic and academic responsibilities, seldom seek out professional counseling services. However, when they do seek services, the authors posit that an understanding of the construct of the therapeutic working alliance and the application of the working alliance model (Bordin, 1979) offers a useful template for fostering positive counseling outcomes with student-athletes. In this article, the major elements of this construct and model are presented along with a discussion and implications for its application to a college or university student-athlete population.

INTRODUCTION

On many college and university campuses student-athletes are viewed differently than other college students. Revered as heroes by some and chastised as an over-privileged minority by others, student-athletes potentially may experience a great deal of stress and anxiety as a result of the role conflict they experience through their participation in athletics in university and college settings (Chartrand & Lent, 1985). Researchers (Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996) examining the subjective experiences of student-athletes have noted that unlike other college students, student-athletes face unique challenges as a result of their involvement in college athletics. These unique challenges include balancing athletic and academic demands, developing social interests, managing sport-related career transitions, and maintaining peak physical condition (Parham, 1993). For many student-athletes, these challenges affect their cognitive, social, moral, educational, and psychosocial development (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996), rendering them vulnerable to greater levels of psychological pressure and distress than non-athletes (Bergandi & Wittig, 1984; Etzel, 1989; Etzel, Pinkney, & Hinkle, 1994). Fletcher, Benshoff, and Richburg (2003) also recently noted the complex array of entities student-athletes must often negotiate in order to remain on scholarship, including: (a) NCAA policies; (b) college or university policy; (c) team dynamics; and even (d) policies within each athletic department. Navigating such unfamiliar terrain may place undue additional pressure on student-athletes, especially given that athletic scholarships, which must be renewed yearly, are the primary financial

support system for many student-athletes. Subsequently, recognition of student-athletes as a special "at-risk" population with specific needs has generated significant interest in the counseling needs of these students. Researchers (Hinkle, 1994; Murray, 1997) have suggested that approximately 10 percent of student-athletes may warrant the need for clinical attention based on their presenting issues. Unfortunately, student-athletes remain an under-represented population in college and university counseling centers (Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan, & Walsh, 2001).

The absence of student-athletes in college and university counseling centers has been a longstanding trend. As a whole, student-athletes have traditionally shied away from using counseling services because they anticipated their counselor not understanding the special concerns, needs, and pressures they faced (Greenspan & Andersen, 1995). Their preference has been to seek help from family, friends, and coaches before turning to professional help (Selby, Weinstein, & Bird, 1990). Further understanding of the chronic underutilization of established counseling services can be accomplished by examining the perceptions student-athletes hold of counselors and the therapeutic process. Student-athletes often report being unfamiliar with counseling and find it difficult to conceptualize what their participation in a counseling relationship might involve. Thus, perceptions of professional counseling services are often formed based on information from friends, teammates, and the popular media. These perceptions include the belief that seeking professional help is a sign of personal weakness (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991), that counseling is reserved solely for the psychologically disturbed (Ravizza, 1988), and the belief that counseling interventions will be largely ineffective (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). These perceptions leave student-athletes with a negative and often distorted image of the counseling profession that could preclude them from taking advantage of counseling services on campus or in their communities. Given the often uninformed or biased views student-athletes possess of the counseling profession, counselors need to continually evaluate the viability of their approaches when working with a student-athlete population.

CURRENT MODELS

Research in the domain of applied sport psychology is trending toward a more holistic understanding of the issues affecting both service delivery and positive therapeutic outcomes (Simons & Anderson, 1995; Holt & Stream, 2001). As a result, practitioners are beginning to address personal growth and development in addition to their traditional focus of performance enhancement. In the past, however, research exploring the effectiveness of counseling methods with college student-athletes has been limited. More recent studies have examined the factors of the counseling process that could enhance student-athletes' expectations for positive outcomes and contribute to successful outcomes. These studies have found that the relationship established between the counselor and student-athlete is a strong determinant of overall counseling success (Brewer, Van Raalte, Petipas, Bachman, & Weinhold, 1998; Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Martin, 1998; Watson, in press). This research also suggests that counselors who are able to relate to their clients and understand the dynamics of the student-athlete role are more successful. Building upon this research, several others have advocated for counselors to become more familiar with the subjective experiences of

student-athletes, including their developmental needs (Valentine & Taub, 1999) and the impact of institutional systems on their well-being (Fletcher, Benshoff, & Richburg, 2003).

Danish, D'Augelli, and Ginsberg (1984), in response to a perceived need for developing the student-athlete as a person (Danish & Hale, 1981), formulated a model geared toward enhancing the student-athlete's mental health. Their model integrates a human developmental perspective that remains future focused while addressing the development of personal competence. Stier (1992) later formulated the Triad Model, where the goal is to support the student-athlete's academic, athletic, and social development. Lottes' (1991) Service Model addresses academic, athletic, personal and social issues facing student-athletes while also considering the impact of administration and staffing issues. Gunn and Eddy (1989), for example, suggest student-athletes be encouraged to engage in the transitional activities that could help them better acclimate to their new academic and social environment. This could include participating in orientation and registration sessions, engaging in the academic advising process, utilizing peer mentors and tutors, and participating in workshops and study halls. Another model, the CHAMPS/Life Skills Model, focuses on the student-athlete's successful graduation in tandem with the development of life skills that will enhance their lives post graduation (Carodine, Almond, & Grotto, 2001). Researchers have also proposed integrating a number of theoretical models for use with student-athletes. These include a reflective model (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004), the use of psychodynamic concepts (Strean & Strean, 1998), Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (Gutkind, 2004), and a student-athlete as peer counselor model (Whitner, & Sanz, 1988). Consistent in this research is the finding that facilitative conditions (congruence, respect, empathy, positive regard) are related to treatment adherence and positive outcomes (Gould et al., 1991).

THE WORKING ALLIANCE MODEL IN ATHLETICS

Several authors have noted the importance of the relationship between the counselor and student-athlete (Brewer, Van Raalte, Petipas, Bachman, & Weinhold, 1998; Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Martin, 1998; Watson, in press) and the significance for counselors to understand the student-athlete's subjective experiences. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest a model that recognizes the fundamental importance of the emotional bond between participants while maintaining a collaborative effort geared at identifying and accomplishing mutually agreed on counseling goals and tasks. These characteristics are central to the working alliance model (Bordin, 1979). Recent additions to the applied sport psychology literature have supported the use of the working alliance model in sport psychology consultations (Andersen, 2000; Petipas et al., 1999; Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998). However, a review of the sports counseling literature indicates that, to date, the working alliance model has not been proposed as a viable model for use with student-athletes. Therefore, the working alliance model (Bordin, 1979) is suggested here as a useful template for enhancing positive counseling outcomes for counselors and related helping professionals who work with student-athletes.

THE WORKING ALLIANCE MODEL

Grounded in the psychodynamic tradition, the concept of the working alliance blends a number of traditional psychodynamic constructs, including: a) the notion

of the 'therapeutic alliance' (Zetzel, 1956); b) the nature of the alliance between the analyst and the rationale ego of the client (Sterba, 1934); c) the value of a positive therapeutic contract (Menninger, 1958); and d) the importance of the real relationship in psychoanalysis (Greenson, 1967). Bordin (1979) conceptualized the working alliance as a dynamic, pantheoretical model where the power for change is directly linked to the strength of the shared alliance between the counselor-client dyad and the power of the tasks that are integrated into the alliance. In other words, "the working alliance between the person who seeks change and the one who offers to be a change agent is one of the keys, if not the key, to the change process" (Bordin, 1979, p. 252). Moreover, the pantheoretical perspective of the working alliance makes it viable for differing theoretical and professional orientations and allows for the integration of varied clinical interventions (Strauser, et al., 2004).

Operationally, the working alliance has been defined as "a collaboration for change" (Bordin, 1983, p. 35) consisting of three interdependent elements: (a) mutual agreement and understanding of the goals sought in treatment; (b) mutual agreement of the tasks of the principals involved in treatment; and (c) the bond between the principles involved. Goals represent the outcomes of the counseling process both parties hope to achieve (Chan, Shaw, McMahon, Koch, & Strauser, 1997). In addition, the bond between the client and counselor serves as the foundation of the model. Bordin (1979) noted that the amount of therapeutic change occurring "may be a function of the strength of that bond" (p. 35).

Another key feature of the working alliance model (Bordin, 1979) is its dynamic nature. Bordin (1983), for example, suggested that, "...the amount of change (in the working alliance) is based on the building *and repair* of the strong alliances" (p. 36). Establishing positive alliances early in the therapeutic relationship is preferred, but the dynamic nature of the working alliance allows for change to occur throughout the therapeutic process (Bordin, 1979; Gelso & Carter, 1985; Golden & Robbins, 1990; Horvath & Marx, 1990). In essence, the working alliance model (Bordin, 1979) recognizes that conflict is inevitable and conceptualizes threats to the integrity of the alliance as "the basis for therapeutic change" (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998, p. 69).

ELEMENTS OF THE WORKING ALLIANCE MODEL

Goals

The working alliance is based on the use of mutually agreed upon change goals. Change goals are concrete, positive, result-oriented statements of what a client wants to accomplish. According to Bordin (1983), "no change goals can be reached without some basic level of understanding and agreement between the principals involved" (p. 35). Thus, clear and mutually agreed upon goals are instrumental to generating and maintaining a strong working alliance. Prior significant relationships and the theoretical orientation of the practitioner are variables with the potential to influence goal establishment (Bordin, 1979). Change goals that differentiate between cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains, for instance, will all offer unique challenges to the strength, and ultimately the outcome, of the working alliance (Bordin, 1983). Because of the dynamic nature of the model, practitioners should consistently monitor and address the changing needs of the client and work to incorporate mutually agreed upon goals when circumstances warrant. For example, once a student-athlete has attained a set counseling goal, the counselor and student-athlete can work together to address a

new treatment goal if they agree additional treatment is warranted. Overall, collaborating with the student-athlete on change goals provides an ongoing opportunity to enhance the therapeutic relationship through continued engagement in both the relationship and process components (Chen & Bernstein, 2000) of the therapeutic experience.

Bordin (1979) also reasoned that the working alliance could be applied to a variety of other relationships. He stated, for example, that "the concept of the working alliance would seem to be applicable in the relation between teacher and student, between community action group and leader, and with only slight extension, between parent and child" (p. 252). Bordin (1983) later adapted the therapeutic working alliance to clinical supervision and defined it as the supervisory working alliance. As a result, he generated eight supervision goals from the perspective of the supervisee. These included: (a) mastery of specific skills; (b) enlarging one's understanding of clients; (c) enhancing one's awareness of process issues; (d) increasing awareness of one's self and one's impact on the process; (e) overcoming personal and intellectual obstacles toward learning and mastery; (f) deepening one's understanding of concepts and theories; (g) providing a stimulus to research, and (h) maintaining the standards of service. We reason that these goals could be adapted for counseling student-athletes. Applied to a student-athlete population, such goals might include a mixture of academic, social and/or athletic foci, including: (a) mastering of specific athletic, academic, or interpersonal skills; (b) enlarging one's understanding of the coach-athlete or student-athlete roles; (c) enhancing one's understanding of the issues related to athletic and/or academic performance enhancement; (d) increasing one's awareness of their impact on coach-athlete relationships or athletic competitions; (e) overcoming relational conflicts that diminish self-efficacy or related personal or professional gains drawn from athletic competition; (f) strengthening one's role within the framework of a team's single game plan or long term developmental strategy; (g) maintaining one's level of play at the appropriate competitive level; or (h) adhering to an acceptable standard of behavior and academic performance to the team/coaching staff/athletic department/university.

Tasks

Tasks constitute the behaviors and cognitions occurring within the context of the therapeutic dyad (Bordin, 1979). Differing theoretical orientations may influence task development or assignments, but it is essential that a logical connection between the tasks and the change goal(s) remain. In other words, practitioners using the working alliance model should monitor the degree to which student-athletes feel disposed to engage in and accomplish the agreed upon tasks and goals. It is also crucial to monitor their willingness to engage in such activities. Unsurprisingly, disparities relative to the counseling goals or tasks constitute a real threat to the strength of the alliance. Overall, the key for establishing effective goals and tasks includes the need for mutual agreement between the client (i.e., student-athlete) and counselor on the goals and the power of the tasks employed to meet those goals (Bordin, 1979).

Bond

The bond involves "partner compatibility" (Bordin, 1994, p. 16) and is based on the level of mutual liking, caring, and trust that develops from shared activities between the counselor and client (Bordin, 1994; Horvath & Greenberg, 1989). Given that the strength of the working alliance influences positive therapeutic outcomes

(Patton & Kivlighan, 1997), counselors working with student-athletes should remain cognizant of the importance of the bond and consider it throughout the therapeutic process. Supervision researchers (Ladany & Friedlander, 1995), for example, have found that strong emotional bonds reduce the potential negative impact of conflict within the supervisory dyad. It seems logical to reason the same could hold true with student-athletes.

EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR THE WORKING ALLIANCE MODEL

Positive working alliances are increasingly recognized as a strong predictor of successful counseling outcomes (Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Patton & Kivlighan, 1997; Kivlighan & Shaughnessy, 2000; Kokotovic & Tracy, 1990; Goering, Wasylenski, Lindsay, Lemire, & Rhodes, 1997). Allied professions are also increasingly studying the working alliance as a viable construct for use with clients, including the psychiatric profession (Catty, 2004). In the rehabilitation counseling literature, Shaw, McMahon, Chan, and Hannold (2004), suggested the working alliance model was effective for working with individuals "for whom issues of inclusion, empowerment, and promotion of autonomy have become central to the definition of a healthy counseling relationship" (p. 109). Another rehabilitation study found positive relationships between the strength of the working alliance and counseling outcomes for clients diagnosed with mild mental retardation (Strauser, Lustig, & Donnell, 2004). Such issues clearly apply to working with student-athletes, especially given their misconceptions about the counseling profession (see Linder, et al., 1991; Ravizza, 1988; Martin et al., 1997). To date, however, the most extensive illustration of the generalizability of the working alliance model in the counseling literature is the extension of the model to supervision, which Bordin (1983) defined as the supervisory working alliance. In a recent comprehensive review of the working alliance in supervision, for example, Bernard and Goodyear (2004) noted three positive outcomes associated with supervisee perceptions of strong supervisory working alliances, including: (a) more willingness (of the supervisee) to self-disclose to the supervisor (Ladany, Hill, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996; Webb & Wheeler, 1998), (b) better adherence to treatment protocols (Patton and Kivlighan, 1997); and (c) improved perceptions of the therapeutic alliance. Strong working alliances also positively influence a supervisee's perception of their working alliance with their clients (Patton and Kivlighan, 1997). Conversely, weak supervisory alliances were associated with perceived unethical behaviors of supervisors (Ramos-Sanchez et al., 2002; Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, & Wolgast, 1999) and role ambiguity and role conflict (Ladany & Friedlander, 1995). Overall, such a wide degree of positive empirical support offers additional credence to the notion that the working alliance model's view "of shared involvement, power, and commitment" (Shaw et al., 2004, p. 108) can enhance positive outcomes in counseling with student-athlete populations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING PRACTICE

We readily acknowledge the difficulties inherent in increasing student-athlete participation in counseling and do not view the working alliance model as the answer to this complex issue. This is highlighted by literature that notes the following widespread beliefs among student-athletes: (a) counselors will not understand the special concerns, needs, and pressures they face (Greenspan & Andersen, 1995); (b) attending

counseling is a sign of personal weakness (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991); (c) counseling is the domain of only the psychologically troubled (Ravizza, 1988); and (d) that counseling will simply not work for them (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). Once student-athletes present for services, however, the building of a solid working relationship is critical to effecting positive therapeutic change. Because a student-athlete's schedule is often structured to address demanding (and often competing) athletic and academic requirements, the working alliance model provides student-athletes and counselors with the opportunity to work together to shape the treatment goals best suited to the individual concerns and needs of the student-athlete. Importantly, this process provides an opportunity to experience ownership of the therapeutic process (Horvath & Symonds, 1991), which may help reduce resistance to counseling and foster positive therapeutic outcomes. Further, the pantheoretical nature (Bordin, 1979) of the working alliance model allows for its adoption by a multitude of professional orientations. Academic advisors, professional counselors, and other student affairs professionals may benefit from this model. In essence, addressing mutually agreed upon goals and tasks while conceptualizing alliance ruptures as the basis for therapeutic gains offers student-athletes, counselors, and allied professionals a constructive perspective for resolving problems. Evidence of its wide applicability was identified by Horvath and Symonds (1991), who noted the working alliance's ability to enhance counseling outcomes across different counseling approaches (Horvath & Symonds, 1991).

Conflicts between "individual abilities and environmental demands" (Carodine et al., 2001, p. 20) could negatively impact the student-athlete's academic/athletic performance as well as their self-concept. These difficulties include the potential for student-athletes to experience *role conflict* (athlete vs. student), *role strain* (distress related to meeting perceived demands of parents, coaches, professors, etc...), *value alienation* (assimilating personal values vs. athletic department/societal values), and/or *exploitation* (extensive time demands given to athletic endeavors at the expense of academic/personal needs) (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1992). Such conflicts may be the trigger to clients seeking counseling services. However, student-athletes are unlikely to characterize problems as role strain or value exploitation. It seems more realistic to suggest that these and other issues may manifest as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, poor academic achievement, relationship problems, or simply fatigue and adjustment issues. For the practitioner, being able to conceptualize these complex issues clearly is instrumental in fostering trust and credibility with student-athletes. But how is this accomplished?

Strengthening the alliance involves counselors gaining trust, respect, and credibility from the student-athlete (Ravizza, 1988), which ultimately requires the counselor to have an awareness of the challenges facing student-athletes. Expressing warmth, respect, and interest in the client is viewed as the initial step in facilitating the establishment of a strong bond within the therapeutic dyad (Safran & Muran, 1998b). One technique counselors might utilize to strengthen their working alliance with student-athlete clients is to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable of the complexities inherent in the student-athlete role. If the counselor genuinely is able to communicate recognition of at least some of the issues inherent in the student-athlete role, student-athletes may perceive them as more knowledgeable and empathetic to their concerns, thus creating a stronger bond. For example, counselors might illustrate their familiarity with university or college policy regarding student-athlete travel requirements and the subsequent impact on the student-athlete's ability to balance premium athletic performance while maintaining their academic eligibility.

The dynamic nature of the model also provides a foundation for addressing the inevitable conflict that occurs in any interpersonal relationship, especially those marked by the stressors associated with an athletic scholarship. For example, the daily routines of a student-athlete's collegiate experience are often very structured. This structure is regulated as much by NCAA and institutional standards as it is by each individual coach's program. As such, student-athletes may sense not only a loss of their personal identity, but may come to resent their inability to make effective personal decisions absent the approval of their coach or other athletic or academic advisor. Despite its complexity, the therapeutic process offers an excellent environment from which to engage student-athletes in a collaborative process where they are encouraged to participate in all aspects of their treatment. Specifically, involving the student-athlete in the decision making (i.e., goals and tasks) process increases the chances for the formation of a strong working alliance and, ultimately, the achievement of successful counseling outcomes. However, counselors should remember that effective treatment goals should focus on issues that are both realistic and relevant to the current issues impacting the client (Prout & Strohmer, 1994).

Embracing the therapeutic gains of the student-athlete is also crucial as progress in treatment can help them generalize such gains to other relationships in their lives. The working alliance notion of conflict as inevitable in relationships and as a vehicle for growth provides student-athletes with a more constructive template from which to engage fissures in relationships that may arise with peers, coaches, or even family members during their tenure on campus. For example, conflict between teammates may reduce overall team cohesion, ultimately resulting in poorer team or individual performances. Allowing student-athletes to experience the rupture and repair of the alliance within the context of a safe counseling environment provides them with the opportunity to recognize similar breakdowns in alliances with others in their lives. Further, successful resolution (or even unsuccessful events) can provide a constructive perspective for addressing problematic interpersonal and intrapersonal issues once they leave the higher education environment.

As noted, the working alliance model promotes a collaborative effort between the counselor and the student-athlete. The foundation of the alliance, the emotional bond, correlates well with literature noting the critical influence of the relationship between the counselor and student-athlete for effecting positive changes in counseling (Brewer, Van Raalte, Petipas, Bachman, & Weinhold, 1998; Broughton & Neyer, 2001; Martin, 1998; Watson, in press). In addition, the collaborative effort inherent within the working alliance model (and by extension the counseling environment) offers the student-athlete an opportunity to engage in the development of personally relevant goals with counselors who are sensitive to the unique world and stressors of the student-athlete. For student-athletes, this process provides an opportunity to experience ownership of the therapeutic process (Horvath & Symonds, 1991), an experience that may help minimize both current and future resistance to treatment and foster positive therapeutic outcomes. In short, the working alliance's focus on collaboration, combined with the reframing of threats to the integrity of the alliance as an opportunity for change, offers student-athletes and practitioners alike another constructive framework for identifying and resolving problems. This perspective may also equip student-athletes with the knowledge that successful problem resolution is often a collaborative process and the means to stronger overall relationships and personal well-being.

CONCLUSION

The working alliance model (Bordin, 1979) is offered as an adaptable, empirically validated framework for helping practitioners help student-athletes address problematic issues and behaviors. The elements of the working alliance model are presented along with suggestions for its implementation with a student-athlete population. Overall, the authors reason that the working alliance model's (Bordin, 1979) collaborative, dynamic, and pantheoretical framework makes it readily adaptable for counselors and allied professionals working with student-athletes.

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Playing to Win: Improving Support Services for Student Athletes with Learning Disabilities in Institutions of Higher Learning

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ABSTRACT

Although much has been written about the impact of learning disabilities on the performance of students of school age, only recently has the emphasis shifted to students of college age. University services and supports for these students have not kept pace with the dramatic influx of students with special needs, often because instructors and counselors are unfamiliar with their needs and requirements (Lock & Layton, 2001). Student athletes with learning disabilities may experience a multitude of difficulties throughout their academic careers. Academic advisors and faculty need to focus on addressing both the metacognitive and affective needs of student athletes with learning disabilities. The authors propose a combined approach of strategy instruction and self-advocacy which allows student athletes to not only understand their learning needs but to request the supports that will allow them to be more successful learners. This multi-faceted approach can assist students in reaching their potential.

INTRODUCTION

Learning disabilities have an impact on human behavior across the life span. In addition to affecting one's aptitude to learn, learning disabilities often have a negative effect on one's sense of self-respect and can, in certain instances, impair social judgment.

Whereas much has been written about the impact of learning disabilities on the performance of students of school age, only recently has the emphasis shifted to students of college age. This change reflects the increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities entering colleges and universities. Thus, the number of college freshmen with learning disabilities has increased tenfold since 1976, and the estimated prevalence of learning disabilities among students in higher education in general has increased to about 3% of the total higher education population (Henderson, 1999). Indeed, students with learning disabilities are the fastest growing group of college students with disabilities receiving services. Of particular interest in this discussion, according to a recent report, student athletes with learning disabilities comprise approximately 2.7% of the total population of student athletes (National Association of Academic Advisors for athletics Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2004). It should be noted that the percentage of student-athletes with learning disabilities is just less than the percentage of students with learning disabilities among all undergraduate students nationally.

Unfortunately, services and supports for students with learning disabilities have not kept pace with the dramatic influx of students with special needs. For example, students often find university programs lacking in the accommodations they need, often because instructors and counselors are unfamiliar with their needs and requirements (Lock & Layton, 2001). As a result, many students with learning disabilities are unable to successfully compete academically (Mull, Sitlington, & Alper, 2001), or simply leave before completing their planned program of study (Fairweather & Shaver, 1991; Lehmann, Davies, & Laurin, 2000).

The outlook for academic success is uncertain for college students with learning disabilities in general, but the likelihood of success for student athletes with learning disabilities may be even more tenuous. College student athletes are required to meet increasingly stringent eligibility requirements as specified by the NCAA, as well as meet the numerous demands in their chosen sport in order to maintain their scholarship. The NCAA does allow a reduced course load (as opposed to full-time enrollment) for student-athletes with documented learning disabilities. The problem is that these same students will be held responsible for maintaining degree progress despite receiving the ability to have a reduced course load. Furthermore, many athletic advisors have no background in special education, and as a result, are undereducated about the nature of learning disabilities and their effects in the classroom and beyond. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of learning disabilities and the impact this disability can have on the academic performance. In addition, given their unique position on campus, we propose an individualized, integrated approach to providing support services to student athletes who have learning disabilities to help them succeed academically. Not only would it work for student athletes but also it would be a way to improve services for all students with learning disabilities.

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), "Specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term *learning disabilities* includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. However, it does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

In short, individuals with a learning disability have adequate hearing and vision, and possess general intelligence in the near-average, average, or above-average range. Yet they have educational difficulties that do not stem from inadequate educational experiences or cultural factors. That is, such individuals do not acquire and use information efficiently because of impairment in perception, conceptualization, language, memory, attention, or motor control.

HOW DO LEARNING DISABILITIES MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS?

Gottesman (1994) addressed the manifestation of learning disabilities in adolescents and young adults, noting that students exhibit severe deficits in basic skills such as reading, spelling, and math. Students also demonstrate deficits in work-related skills such as listening well in class, taking notes, and studying for and taking exams. Other researchers have classified these learners as passive with a pervasive lack of motivation.

As a result of the deficits listed above, students with learning disabilities usually perform well below average in their academic courses despite average or above average intelligence. To compound their problems, these students may have a hard time advocating for needed resources, exhibit poor self-concept and experience a number of social and emotional difficulties, including being less accepted by peers, interacting awkwardly and inappropriately in social situations and being socially imperceptive.

To succeed, the majority of students with learning disabilities require ongoing support services that offer accommodations such as an overall emphasis on learning strategies and remediation, and more individualized accommodations such as note takers, real-time captioning, and readers/scribes for examinations.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?

All civil rights laws that relate to persons with disabilities apply to students who have learning disabilities, from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (especially Section 504) to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Coverage under the ADA is particularly relevant to the college education of students with learning disabilities.

Under the ADA, the term disability means a physical or mental impairment that limits a person in a major life activity. Thus, students with learning disabilities are covered under ADA if a major life activity (e.g., learning) is substantially limited or impaired. One negative aspect of the law is the fact that in an educational setting students with learning disabilities must meet the standards of the program of study they are entering. That is, the law states that a qualified individual with a disability is one, who, with or without reasonable accommodations, can meet the entry criteria for the educational program. Once students are admitted, the institution must provide "reasonable accommodations" for their disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are adaptations that allow students to reach their goals, such as extended time on tests, use of note-takers, assistive technology, and so on.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES?

Traditionally, success in higher education is measured by a demonstration of mastery of course content rather than developing an understanding of the complex principles and concepts that underpin the content. (Gardner & Singh, 1991). Lock and Layton (2001) suggest that instructors often attribute student failure to an inability to master the core content without considering the impact of the learning disability. Thus, college students with learning disabilities often have difficulty processing information and lack efficient strategies for learning both content and the underlying principles. In addition,

many are unable to advocate for the accommodations that would make them more successful academically and that are offered more automatically in high school programs. This is particularly unfortunate, as evidence suggests that students who access these services are more successful both academically and socially (Hartmann-Hall & Haaga, 2002).

Further, in a summit to determine what college students with learning disabilities say about barriers to success in higher education, Lehmann et al. (2000) found that these students with learning disabilities often encounter a lack of acceptance and understanding both in students and faculty. An even bigger barrier was the lack of adequate services to assist them in tackling academic as well as nonacademic challenges. As a result, many of the participants in the summit perceived that college educators and college-services staffs need information, training, and ongoing support to effectively teach students with disabilities.

This conclusion was echoed in a recent synthesis of the literature on postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities (Mull et al., 2001). Mull and his colleagues found that little information is available to guide postsecondary program planners in developing student support services. Therefore, more emphasis needs to be placed on training of staff at the postsecondary level to work with all students with learning disabilities, including student athletes.

STUDENT ATHLETES WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Student athletes who have learning disabilities represent a group of students who face not only the pressures of academic life, but also the added performance expectations on the athletic field. Toogood, Miller, Kaff, and Hill (2004) suggest that student athletes are in a unique situation on campus, where they are perceived as heroes in one arena and less capable in another. This contradiction may be magnified if the athlete has a learning disability. They go on to suggest that unfortunately, these students are often seen as problematic given that they demonstrate poor graduation rates and are often targeted as being unmotivated and unable to complete their academic classes.

Etzel, Ferrante, and Pickney (1996) indicated that student athletes with learning disabilities face a range of unique barriers, which include adjustment to the competing demands of athletic vs. the academic world, response to negative stereotypes, needs for unique support services, and coping with learning disabilities.

Student athletes with learning disabilities may experience a multitude of difficulties throughout their academic careers. For example, Simons and Van Reenen (2000) found that student athletes fail to make the connection between the behaviors necessary for athletic success and those necessary for academic success. This disconnect often results in poor academic preparation and low academic self-worth. Further, like all students with learning disabilities, student athletes with learning disabilities often experience limitations in strategic knowledge and self-monitoring that can negatively impact academic performance (Borkowski, 1992).

There is great diversity among student athletes with learning disabilities. An individual can have a specific problem or a constellation of learning problems. Primary characteristics of student athletes with learning disabilities can include problems in academic areas such as math and reading, writing, and other language-based domains. Secondary characteristics may include social and emotional issues such as low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and poor self-concept (Barton & Fuhrmann, 1994).

Student athletes with learning disabilities who are successful in their chosen sport understand the expectations of their chosen sport, believe in themselves, have a high level of self-esteem, and are often highly motivated to do well in the playing field. Through effective coaching, physical training, and years of success, these students excel on the playing field but many do not succeed in the academic realm. Many report being unaware of their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of their academic functioning. In addition, they often report encountering a complete lack of understanding and acceptance of their disabilities by fellow students, faculty, and staff.

INCREASING NEED FOR POSTSECONDARY ACCOMMODATIONS: PROMOTING SUCCESS FOR STUDENT ATHLETES WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Many postsecondary educators and academic advisors have little if any training in working with students with disabilities. Indeed, only 31% of faculty and 6% of academic advisers in college and university settings have received any preparation in special education (Yocum & Coll, 1995). As a result, many students with learning disabilities, including student athletes, receive merely typical accommodations to help them cope, including use of a tape recorder, tutoring services, and extra time for test taking, rather than individualized plans to meet their unique needs (Thomas, 2000).

Academic advisors and faculty need to incorporate more in-depth programming options to help all students with disabilities, including student athletes. These options should focus on addressing both the metacognitive and affective needs of student athletes with learning disabilities as outlined below.

Integrated Model

Borkowski and his colleagues (Borkowski, 1992; Borkowski, Carr, Rellinger, & Pressley, 1990) developed an integrated model of achievement focusing on two dimensions: metacognition and affective factors. Metacognition refers to an individual's knowledge of how he or she learns. Effective learners understand the demands of various kinds of academic tasks, employ useful strategies to learn and complete the tasks, and understand their strengths and weaknesses (Butler, Elashuk, & Poole, 2000). Additionally, effective learners are confident of their ability to control and direct their learning (Bandura, 1993).

Students with learning disabilities often have strong beliefs about their learning. Many think they are cannot learn. They believe that school tasks are too hard. Many times, they attribute any academic success they experience to getting lucky. Students with learning disabilities do not see a connection between what they do, the efforts they make, and the likelihood of academic success. These beliefs tend to become stronger as the students progress through school. As a result, students with learning disabilities often are overwhelmed, disorganized, and frustrated when trying to learn.

The affective component focuses on feelings of self-efficacy, including motivation and personal attributions. A bidirectional relationship exists between these factors, and a low perception of self-efficacy and negative attributions frequently undermine academics (Butler et al., 2000). The combined approach of strategy instruction and self-advocacy allows student athletes to not only understand their learning needs but to request the supports that will allow them to be more successful learners.

Case Study

To illustrate the application of an integrated metacognitive-affective model, let us look at the case of Marcus, a very articulate and persuasive young man who is also a student athlete. Marcus struggles to maintain a GPA of 2.0 but with considerable effort is able to do so. When he studies, he often wanders from the work, and has to be reminded to get back on track. He has been identified as having a learning disability in written language. He can read and comprehend the material in his classes, but has a great deal of difficulty organizing his work and putting his thoughts on paper. He loves being a student athlete but because academic work is hard for him, he often puts off writing papers and then becomes despondent and skips class. His coach has repeatedly told Marcus to take care of business on the field and off the field. Nevertheless, Marcus is close to losing his eligibility due to poor academic grades.

Marcus would benefit from a multi-faceted approach to address his learning needs. Such an approach would include three elements:

1. An individualized accommodation plan
2. Individualized strategy instruction
3. Training in self-advocacy

Individualized accommodation plan

When Marcus came to campus, a team consisting of the learning disabilities specialist, his athletic advisor, and Marcus developed an individualized accommodation plan. The plan is designed to meet the specific needs of the individual student based on the results of evaluation data and learning preferences expressed by the student. Implementation of such a plan will help to "level the playing field" for the student athlete and thereby increase the likelihood of success in the academic arena by identifying needs and matching them with corresponding accommodations and strategies. Provided with his individualized academic accommodation plan, Marcus' instructors would have a clear idea of what they can do to assist him in improving his academic performance.

Figure 1. Sample individual accommodation plan for Marcus

Test Taking	Assignment Completion	Study/Class Preparation
Provide test proctors to clarify test items	Provide word processing services on transcribers	Provide subject area tutors
Mark answers on test copy rather than answer sheet	Allow student to dictate or audiotape papers rather than write them	Allow preferred seating
Allow extra time	Allow students to give oral presentations rather than turn in written projects	Provide copies of lecture notes
Provide test readers	Arrange for frequent communication w/professors to discuss projects	Provide note taker in class
Provide amplified test directions in written form	Have students submit drafts for feedback before handing in paper	Allow students to audiotape class lectures
Provide training in study strategies	Provide proofreaders to error-monitor written papers	Convert lecture notes to audiotape for studying
Make available objective test items rather than essays	Provide strategy checklists for completing projects	Provide computer interactive study guide for textbooks

Individualized Strategy Instruction

As proposed by Borkowski (1992), Borkowski et al. (1990) and Butler et al. (2000), learning strategies designed with the individual learner in mind increase a person's ability to control and direct his or her learning and therefore lead to enhanced learning. Using this approach, students develop an understanding of their unique learning based on personal experience. This knowledge, in turn, can help instructors shape students' problem-solving approaches to construct better more efficient approaches to learning.

Marcus in our case example would benefit from tailored strategy instruction designed to help him to take a more active role in his learning. An instructor trained in strategy instruction would help Marcus generate strategies to achieve his learning needs. Specifically, the instructor would assist him in analyzing task requirements and evaluating his current approach to learning. Marcus would then be taught to select, adapt or create strategies that meet task demands as well as monitor their effectiveness, modifying strategies as necessary. Over time Marcus would be supported to construct strategies that are expressed in his own words to meet his individual needs.

The plan in action. Marcus enrolls in freshman English. The primary purpose of this class is to read, respond to and engage in expository writing. Marcus has been assigned to an instructor trained in strategy instruction. The instructor begins by asking Marcus to write an essay. As she and Marcus talk about the writing process, it becomes clear that Marcus knows what a good essay should look like but does not understand the demands of particular writing assignments. Further, Marcus often has a hard time analyzing the writing task. Many times, he is unclear about the assignment requirements. The instructor also discovers that Marcus does not understand text structure and has a hard time judging the quality of his writing.

Marcus' instructor helped him to develop knowledge about text structures while working on his initial essay for the class. Together they read several essays by noted authors to learn to identify the elements that make a good essay. Over the next few weeks the instructor also helped Marcus identify how good writers organize their work. For example, he learned to identify how text is organized and the purpose of different types of expository text. He identified text structures that assist readers in determining and understanding the main idea of a work and learned how writers connect ideas through transitions and elaborations.

Based on his newly acquired knowledge, Marcus developed his own strategy for writing an essay. He worked from an outline that involved the use of text structures that signaled the type of article he was to write as well as a section-by-section organizer. He also developed a checklist to help him as he worked through the writing process. Over time, Marcus used his writing strategies to help himself in other subjects, particularly his American history class. By increasing his understanding of text structures, Marcus was able to preview his American history text, thereby increasing his understanding of the material. He was also able to use his writing strategies to help him with homework assignments, preparation for essay exams, and writing his research paper for the class. As Marcus became more confident of his abilities, his grades began to reflect his efforts and he was able to retain his academic eligibility.

Self-advocacy training

Many students with learning disabilities have a hard time asking for the services they need to increase their likelihood of academic and social success. Research indicates that many college students have little understanding of the accommodations or effective ways to advocate for their needs (Carroll & Johnson-Brown, 1996). Simons and Van Reheen (2000) found that student athletes with learning disabilities are also prone to this problem.

Fortunately, studies have shown (e.g., Palmer & Roessler, 2000) that college students with disabilities who completed training in self-advocacy and conflict resolution were able to request needed classroom accommodations and clearly communicate their needs to their professors. As students became more effective advocates, their accommodations were more effectively implemented and their academic achievement increased.

Marcus participated in an eight-week program offered by Counseling and Student Support Services to improve his self-advocacy and conflict resolution skills. This course is offered as a one-hour credit course. In the process, Marcus received information about his learning disability and its impact on his learning. He also learned about his rights as well as his responsibilities in requesting reasonable accommodations. Finally, he received training in how to advocate for himself and learned and practiced situational conflict resolution strategies. In Marcus' case knowledge is power, and in subsequent semesters, Marcus met with his professors early in the semester to inform them of his learning disability and the kind of modifications he would need to be successful.

CONCLUSION

As increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities, including student athletes, enroll in higher education, it is imperative that these institutions are prepared to offer students the accommodations they need to succeed academically and socially and receive their due rights under ADA and other relevant legislation.

Recent studies show that most faculty and academic advisors in postsecondary institutions are not adequately prepared to offer the support many of these students need. To level the playing field for students with learning disabilities, training and campus wide support of services must be offered, including a multi-faceted approach such as the one presented here. Only with such efforts will students be able to reach their potential.

Figure 2. Sample Expository Essay Checklist for Marcus

Steps in Constructing an Expository Essay	Timeline
Is the audience informed or uninformed about the topic	
Decide on the tone of the article	
Title the essay	
Write a formal sentence definition that defines your subject by item, class, and differentiation.	
Define unknown terms related to the subject or process.	
Use a step-by-step process for instructions. Number steps if appropriate	
Use commands as sentences when appropriate.	
Use parallel structure.	
Avoid redundancy	
Use illustrations where appropriate to support directions or explanations, but never substitute an illustration for written text when or if text is necessary or preferable	
Troubleshoot difficult steps in a process; use comparisons to explain difficult concepts or ideas; use helpful hints that ease the completion of a process or task	
Leave plenty of white space on your paper for easier reading comprehension.	

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