

Journal of Issues in **Intercollegiate Athletics**

The Perceptions and Effects of Community Service Participation among Intercollegiate Men's Basketball Players

Brittney D. Jarvie

Bradley University

Amanda L. Paule-Koba

Bowling Green State University

Due to the varied community service opportunities offered to intercollegiate student-athletes at many institutions in the United States (NCAA, 2011), it is important to understand the effects and perceptions of these experiences on these student-athletes. Yet, despite the vast opportunities for student-athletes, there is a lack of research on the results and impact of student-athlete participation in community service. This case study presents data that highlights the outcomes of community service participation as specified by the participants, which are categorized in eight themes: Coach Support, Enjoyment, Helping Hand, Leadership, Lessons Learned, Motivation, Staying Connected, and Togetherness. These themes were generated as a result of analysis of the responses taken directly from transcription. Using a grounded theory approach, data collected from this study was analyzed using open and axial coding. Results indicate that community service participation evokes benefits to both the individual student-athlete and the team as a whole, with administrative support (i.e. coaches) playing a key role in experiences of these athletes. In addition, responses from the participants revealed student-athletes should provide input (i.e. selection) on community service projects, community service should occur regularly within the athletic program, require student-athletes to work together, and elicit a meaningful experience.

Introduction

Community service is one component of the American collegiate athlete experience strongly encouraged by most campuses where a Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) is present. Aside from being a collective representation of student-athletes, a primary function of SAAC is to organize service projects for collegiate athletes (NCAA, 2011). Although the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) does not mandate community service participation, select student-athletes are annually recognized in part for their service contributions with awards from their respective conferences, such as the Missouri Valley Conference Good Neighbor award, formerly the State Farm Good Neighbor Award (Missouri

Valley Conference, 2012). Each year awards such as these recognize student-athletes largely in part for the service to their communities.

Theoretically, the benefits of volunteerism and community service are evident and include overall wellbeing and enhanced self-esteem (Wheeler, et al., 1998). In a recent study, there was a statistical relationship between academic class standing, as well as gender, and the development of servant behaviors of the student-athletes at certain institutions as a result of community service participation (Westfield, 2010). It was also found that overall there was a statistical relationship between academic class standing, as well as gender, and the development of servant behaviors of the student-athletes at certain institutions as a result of community service participation (Westfield, 2010).

This study presents data, which highlight the perceptions of community service among male basketball players, and ultimately how they are affected by their participation in community service. Also, this study identified how the team dynamics of this particular sample was affected by participation in community service. Due to the lack of research conducted in this particular area, the goal of this study was to add to the literature by supplying readers with information pertaining to the perceptions and effects of community service participation among male basketball players. Through the findings, one can gain insight on the short-term and perhaps potential long-term effects of volunteering and community service projects on student-athletes.

Currently, there is a lack of research on the overall effects of community service on student-athletes. Previous research has examined topics such as the positive benefits and effects of community service (Billings, 2004; Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Clary, Snyder, Ridge, et al., 1998; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas 1998; Hall, McKeown, & Roberts, 2001; Pancer & Pratt, 1999; Pancer & Taylor, 2007; Primavera, 1999; Scales, Roehlkepartian, Neal, et al., 2006) and community service in athletics (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Blocker, 2011; Brunel & Nelson, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 1999; NCAA, 2011; Potuto & O' Hanlon, 2006; Westfield, 2010; Wolf-Wendel, Toman, & Mophew, 2001). Due to the prevalence of community service opportunities made available to student-athletes at each level of intercollegiate competition (i.e. Division I, II, and III) there needs to be research conducted on this topic so administrators are aware of its impact on it student-athletes. Further, because of this prevalence one could argue community service participation is indeed an element of the student-athlete experience and should be researched more to understand its impact on their experiences.

The advantages of student-athlete participation in community service are clear, yet according to Westfield (2010), "one of the most important benefits of student-athletes' voluntary experience is that they will likely continue their voluntary work in the future" (p. 41). When integrated within athletic programs, the benefits of community service can have an astounding impact on student-athletes, both as students and as athletes. Wolf-Wendel, Toman, and Mophew (2001) expressed their sentiments that community building through service is the best way to enhance quality of life on campus. They also determined that intercollegiate athletics is the best method within higher education that creates a sense of community among students and others who may differ from one another (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001).

From an administrative perspective, gaining the insight into the impact community service has on athletes is invaluable in the process of determining how to effectively implement community service within an intercollegiate athletic team. Further, this insight can lead to the deeper understanding and appreciation of the volunteer work student-athletes participate in while at their respective institutions, as well as the foresight to provide quality, meaningful community service opportunities to student-athletes. Westfield (2010) contended that, ultimately, community

service participation does impact the student-athlete, which leads the researcher to the overall focus of this study, guided by research questions which were twofold.

1. What are the individual effects of community service participation on student-athletes?
2. What is the impact on the dynamics of the team as a result of involvement in community service?

Theoretical Framework

This study draws from Pancer and Pratt's (1999) Volunteer Process Model, which focused primarily on the experiences of volunteering and also on how these experiences translate into a sustained commitment to volunteer work. The Volunteer Process Model identified the differences among the factors that initiate the act of volunteering and the factors that sustain volunteer efforts once the volunteer work has begun (Pancer & Taylor, 2007).

Pancer and Pratt (1999) suggested two classes of sustaining factors. First, is a supportive social milieu (e.g., the support individuals receive from family, friends, and organizations for doing their volunteer work). Second, is the positive outcomes volunteers experience in doing the work (e.g., the feelings of satisfaction they derive from "making a difference" in people's lives, the extent to which they learn new skills in the course of doing their volunteer work) (Pancer & Taylor, 2007). According to their distinctions, it is probable that a volunteer will continue his/her voluntary work if he/she reports positive experiences within a supportive social milieu. Alternatively, if one is subjected to a negative volunteer experience and lacks a supportive social milieu they will be more likely to discontinue their volunteer work.

When applied to the specifications of the current study, Pancer and Pratt's (1999) model identifies key factors (i.e. values) that contribute to an individual's initial desire to volunteer as well as the components (i.e. supportive milieu), which must be present, to sustain a continued volunteer experience. Determining the perceptions and effects of these experiences collegiate athletes takes this original model to the next step in the process to identify how athletic administrators can provide quality community service opportunities to their athletes; experiences they can learn and appreciate beyond their intercollegiate athletic years.

Method

Participants

The three participants used in this case study were senior members of a Division III intercollegiate men's basketball program in the Midwest. Two of the participants were accounting majors at their institution and the other was a health and physical education major. The coach suggested these participants because he believed they would provide insightful, more detailed information as seniors and due to the timing of data collection, they were the most accessible on his team. The researcher agreed with the coach and believed that using the data collected from senior student-athletes would provide more information on a variety of experiences and how they were impacted over a longer period of time while a member of their team.

Daniel is a 23-year-old African-American male and described himself as the *middle man* of his basketball team. As one of the three captains, he believed he had a *different* relationship with the head coach and that he could relay information from his teammates to their coach.

Kevin is a 23-year-old Caucasian male and described his role from more of a leadership perspective. Also a captain, he assumed the role of a *leader* for his younger teammates. Kevin wanted to *lead by example* both on and off the court (e.g. in the classroom).

Alex is a 23-year-old Caucasian male and, similar to Kevin, he felt his role on his team was to lead. As the point guard of his basketball team, Alex believed his leadership role was the biggest among the three captains because he often had to communicate with his teammates to make sure they were *at the right spot at the right time* on and off the basketball court.

Research Design

A qualitative research method was taken by the researcher in the effort to give an account of the feelings of the participants in regards to their community service experiences. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested this approach to allow the researcher to present the data through the participant's voice and in doing so the researcher relied heavily on the interview process. Some researchers have found qualitative interviewing is shaped by grounded theory methods, in regards to personal narratives and how these methods help guide the analysis of interview data (Charmaz, 2000). Originally developed by Glasser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory methods often consists of guidelines that assist the researcher in the study of social and social psychological processes, to direct the data collection, to manage the data analysis, and in the process to develop an abstract theoretical framework that explains the studied process (Charmaz, 2000) As in similar cases, which a grounded theory method is present, the researcher in the present study analyzed data from *top to bottom*, but did not initially know which results or themes would be most significant. In using this grounded theory method during the data analysis process this allowed the researcher to have a more direct, guided role and subsequently have the ability to analyze data collected, revisit the transcription, and continue the analysis process by identifying responses with their appropriate themes.

This case study consisted solely of the interview process, as it was the only source of data collection. The researcher conducted a group interview, which according to Fontana and Frey (2005), the group interview "relies on the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in a formal or informal setting" (p. 703). Interviews typically consist of open-ended questions that allow for the participant to voice his/her thoughts on the question being asked. Also, during the interview process, the interviewer uses *probing* questions to encourage the interviewee to elaborate more on a particular element of his/her response (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Fontana and Frey (2005) also explained that during the group interview process, the researcher "directs the inquiry and the interaction among respondents in a very structured fashion or in a very unstructured manner, depending on the interviewer's purpose" (p. 703).

This study exemplified the characteristics of a case study because it was strictly an analysis of one particular team and more specifically, an analysis of the data provided by three seniors on that team. Patton (2002) expressed "the logic and power of purposeful sampling...leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research" (p. 46).

The case in this study is defined as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). As cited by Baxter and Jack (2008), “according to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when the follow occurs: the focus of the study is to answer *how* and *why* questions, the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study, the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because he/she believes they are relevant to the phenomenon under study, or the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context” (p. 595).

In this single case study, the researcher wants to uncover the experiences of collegiate athletes in the context of their community service to better answer the *how* and *why* of their experiences. As Yin (2003) identified, this study fits the characteristics of an explanatory case study in that the researcher aims to explain how the perceived impact of community service affects the collegiate athletes who engage in voluntary work, which could not have been answered via survey or other experimental strategies.

Procedures

Before the data collection process began, the researcher gained consent to contact the athletes from the Athletic Director at the selected institution. After the research proposal was submitted and received approval from the institutional review board, contact was made with the head coach to inform him of the study and what the researcher wanted to accomplish with members of his team. The men’s basketball head coach agreed to participate in the study and provided the researcher with the names of the individuals who he suggested the researcher interview. The consent form was emailed to the head coach, who was asked to distribute the form to his athletes. All communication regarding the time and date of the interview was made with the head coach.

The interview took place on May 2, 2011 in the team conference room on the campus of the selected institution and lasted approximately 46 minutes. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants about their experiences regarding community service as a member of their basketball team. Upon completion of the oral interview, the participants were instructed to answer a list of predetermined questions in a separate pamphlet. The reasoning for this was to allow the athlete to share personal feelings regarding community service with the researcher and give an individual account of how community service impacted their lives on a personal level without the potential interference of their teammate’s comments. Those questions are as follows:

- I. What feelings do you associate with participation in community service?
- II. How did participating in community service make you feel as a person?
- III. How would you feel about yourself if you had the opportunity to do community service and chose not to?
- IV. How do you feel community service had an impact on your life as a student-athlete?
- V. Are there any other things you would like to share about your experiences?

The interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim upon the conclusion of the focus group. Interview materials produced a total of 25 pages of transcription. An independent party verified the transcript to ensure accuracy. Once this was completed, data analysis began.

Data Analysis

There were three individuals involved in the data analysis of the transcript. Triangulation between the research team was used in order “to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 93). The methodological strategy of triangulating analysts involves “having two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). This strategy was employed in order to reduce bias from the primary researcher.

Open and axial coding was used to analyze the participant’s responses provided in the interview transcription. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified these methods of coding in qualitative research to aid the researcher in the process of identifying commonalities in the transcription. Open coding is the labeling of words or phrases found within the text of the transcript. Axial coding is then the grouping of these labels into identifiable themes. In this study, the researchers labeled quotations as they fit under various themes (i.e. coach support). Quotations taken from the transcript were reviewed and in some cases altered for grammatical purposes, but in no way changed to modify the meaning of the statement. The researcher produced the eight themes after the initial open coding of the participant’s quotations. Once open coding was completed, quotations were pulled directly from the transcript and placed under its corresponding theme to conclude the coding process.

Results

The participants of this study provided responses that were capable of analysis via open and axial coding, which resulted in the emergence of eight themes. These themes, Lessons Learned, Coach Support, Leadership, Togetherness, Enjoyment, Helping Hand, Motivation, and Staying Connected were non-hierarchical in nature as no one theme superseded another in importance or relevance. One theme in particular, Coach Support, had sub-themes, which were identified with further analysis.

Lessons Learned

This theme reflects the participant’s expressions regarding the feeling as if they had learned valuable lessons about themselves, others, and life as a result of their community service involvement. These learned lessons were a testament to the impact community service had on their lives as people and student-athletes. The lessons these athletes learned because of their community service experiences were invaluable and cannot be taught. At times the remarks of the participants were closely similar to the adage *do unto others, as you would have them do unto you*. Kevin said, “One day you could be that person right there and if you were that person you would want someone there like us to help them out.” Kevin went on to say, “You never know what’s going to happen to you. I think if you give back to them someone would give back to you if you were in that situation.” This situation Kevin is referring to is the homeless, helpless state that many of the individuals his team helped were in; a situation some of them voiced they wanted to avoid if at all possible. Alex said, “I need to do something with my life in order to stay out of that situation.”

Alex attributed the opportunity at an education as a chance for him and his teammates to make something of themselves when he said,

I think it made them [his team] work harder not only on the basketball court, but also in the classroom getting their studies done, wanting to go to class, wanting to learn, so that they can have that education and do something with their life later on and not do whatever the people did to become homeless. They didn't want to be in that situation.

Daniel corroborated this perception when he commented, "...It [community service] made me more focused on my studies, to better prepare myself for the real world, and put myself in a position that I would be the helper and not the one being helped." Along with Daniel's statement, Kevin similarly expressed, "I realized that I am so blessed to be the person that is helping out someone rather than being the person that needs help." He also recorded in the written portion of the interview,

I feel that community service had a big impact on my life because it made me want to work harder at school and basketball because I knew that I never wanted to be the person that needed all that help just to live.

While the participants appreciated their service opportunities they also realized how fortunate they were to be in their current predicaments (e.g., en route towards achieving a college degree). Kevin said, "When you go to those events it kind of hits a spot in your heart and makes me realize how happy I am to be where I am at in life right now."

The participants also expressed how their community service involvement impacted their outlook on volunteer work for the future. Alex said, "They were all great experiences and [I] would go back and do them again. The next opportunity I get I will go and do community service. It changed my life that is for sure."

The lessons these athletes learned due to their community service involvement proved to be lessons they could not have been taught in the classroom. This notion is similar to the findings of Pancer and Taylor (2007) who determined that the learning of new skills is one of the pivotal criteria for a positive outcome in a community service experience. Essentially, the participant must take something away from the community service experience.

In the current study, the athletes realized they wanted to do something and be somebody in life and avoid the perils of poverty and misfortune. Comparable to the increase in skills and knowledge among those who were in active in community service (Hall et al., 2001), the athletes of this study obtained a newfound appreciation for their chance at a college education, which would provide them with the resources and skills they needed to be successful young men beyond intercollegiate athletics.

Coach Support

Some of the lessons learned by these athletes were a direct result of the influence of their head coach. The head coach played a pivotal role in the perceptions and effects of the participant's community service experiences. His involvement proved influential to Kevin who said, "He always taught us just to treat everybody exactly the same, which I mean that's how it should be in life and I thought he did a good job with that."

Under this theme several sub-themes were drawn from the participant responses, the first to be discussed is *Being There*. As a coach, an integral step to providing quality support before,

during, and after the community service experience is simply being present throughout the process. This proved to be of importance for Alex, who stated,

When we went there, he [Coach] was there right with us throughout the whole thing, helping them out as well, and showing us how to help the other people out. I think he was a big part in showing us the right things to do in that situation.

For the participants, the presence of their head coach at the community service events made them appreciate the support they had from their coach. This administrative support of the coach in this study is comparable to the sustaining factors of Pancer and Pratt's (1999) that include a supportive social milieu, which can be from family, friends, or the organization for which they volunteer. In this research, the coach served as the most important supportive element of the social milieu. These sustaining factors contribute in the overall outcome of a positive, successful volunteer experience, which is evident in the result of the findings of this study.

The participants also mentioned the *Opportunities* they had to participate in community service projects as a result of their coach's involvement, which is the second sub-theme. The coach was often the foundation of the student-athlete's community service endeavors. Kevin stated, "He'd [head coach] give us two or three things and we'd just pick what community service we were going to do." Alex also talked about the assortment of options the coach provided for them when he said,

I think he picked a wide variety. I think he did a good job by that cause we saw what types of community service we can do with people, not just helping out one group of people, it's all sorts of different people I guess if you want to say.

There were even times when they would go to the coach for potential community service opportunities. Kevin said, "I asked coach you know if there was anything going on that I could help out with and he gave me this place that was having a *feed the homeless*" Kevin's statement showed how the participants often took charge of their service opportunities.

The final sub-theme was *Demeanor*. The participants alluded that not only was their coach present at their community service projects, but his disposition reflected his interest in being there. As the leader of the team, the coach's demeanor can affect his athletes positively or negatively. Alex said, "He [head coach] was always just smiling and having a good time. I think that brought us closer together because it made us have more time with him outside of basketball and outside of practice."

Daniel recalled a particular event where his coach helped make the activity an enjoyable experience when he said, "He was right there with us smiling and joking around, like we took pictures and we have a video. He was he was happy to do it." He would also go on to say, "Coach would be right there with us like cracking jokes and things like that."

Due to their coach's support, the participants were able to involve themselves in meaningful community service experiences, which required them to learn and develop as student-athletes. Likewise, while engaging in these experiences the participant's enhanced their leadership skills, which in part was a result of their coach allowing them to select certain community service events for their basketball program to attend. These leadership skills are reflected in the participants' relationships with their teammates and their peers; another integral aspect of the community service experience for these student-athletes.

Leadership

While seniors and captains of their basketball team, these athletes had to assume the roles of mentors and leaders for their younger, less-experienced teammates. These athletes stated they were often sought after for advice and direction in various instances. They each made mention to how their involvement in community service allowed them to develop as a leader and be an example for their team. Kevin said, "I just try to let my younger teammates realize how important it is to be a helping hand, and I think next year they're going to carry tradition on."

This athlete's reflection supported the argument that by participating in community service, this directly affected his ability to others on the team both while participating in the service and in other facets of their athletic program. Similar to what Kevin had to say, Alex said, "I think it [community service] made me a better leader cause it made me show them the way to do this cause we've been doing that for three years now."

He would also go on to say, "We had two great leaders on our team and we had to fill that so I think the community service aspect helped us out a lot with that" and that "It made me become more of a leader on the court." It is determined that due to their experiences they felt they had acquired a more pronounced sense of leadership as they were also responsible for selecting some of the community service events their team would participate in. Daniel said, "We're also a part of SAAC, which is the student advisory committee and we picked the events and we attended." At times their coach integrated them in the selection process by "putting the ball in their court," charging them with the responsibility to choose the community service projects they would do.

According to previous research, a quality community service experience is linked to one's ability to have some level of ownership (i.e. selection of service project) while also being involved in service activities that are meaningful to the volunteer (Arai & Pedlar, 1997). As a student-athlete the opportunity to lead peers both on and off the court is influential in the continued development of leadership skills, which are presumably transferrable in other facets of these student-athlete's lives. Westfield (2010) purported, the development of servant leadership behaviors is impacted by the participation in community services among student-athletes. Likewise, in this study, community service allowed these individuals to engage, inform, and assist their younger teammates in the effort to continue the tradition of serving and giving back at their institution, which allowed them to develop and enhance their ability to lead both on and off the basketball court. Their activities also allowed them to be a factor in the selection of community service projects at their institution.

Togetherness

While each played a role in the community service process, the athletes in this study had ample opportunities to come together as a team to help others in their volunteering activities. Further, while working as a team in various settings off the basketball court, this allowed them to establish relationships with their teammates and strengthen ones that had previously been formed. Each participant expressed his sentiments on how community service impacted the overall dynamics of their basketball team. Daniel said,

I would say volunteer work brought us together. I think the more time you spend with an individual the closer you become with them. I just think all the time we put in together, and all the experiences we had, it just brought everyone closer together.

The participants also alluded to the effect community service had on their abilities to work with one another. Daniel said, “When you’re together, you collaborate and you get things done faster and you get things, more things done.”

Aside from helping others, working together as a team was one of the outcomes of participating in community service. Further, in order to achieve this outcome, these participants expressed how they did the bulk of their volunteer work together. When asked how their community service experiences impacted their team as a whole Daniel responded and said, “It made everyone look to each other for things, like when we volunteered we were always together and so I guess it made everyone feel more of a whole.” As a result of their participation in community service their camaraderie strengthened as well as their reliance on one another.

These participants were afforded the chance to engage in community service with their fellow teammates, which made their experiences more enjoyable. Further, having fun for these athletes was a key factor in the community service experience, which leads into another theme that emerged through data analysis.

Enjoyment

There were several instances where the participants alluded to how happy community service made them feel as individuals and how they had fun voluntary experiences as a team. Daniel stated, “I enjoyed working with my teammates off the basketball court.” Daniel also spoke of a community service event at the local YMCA and said despite the fact it was early in the morning they made the most of their time. Daniel said, “We turn it [community service] into a fun experience and everything we do its just you enjoy it.” Alex corroborated Daniel’s statement when he said, “Our team just always makes the best out of every experience that we do.” Further, not only did these athletes feel their community service involvement was enjoyable they also spoke on how it made them feel as a person. Kevin explained how he felt after serving food to the homeless at a local food shelter when he stated, “I think that just makes people feel good not only does it make them feel good, but it makes you feel good.”

When asked what feelings did they associate with participation in community service, Daniel expressed,

Helping others and putting a smile on someone’s face made me happy. To see someone in need and to be there and say *hey, how are you?* and give them someone to talk to is one of the greatest feelings in the world, so this made me happy.

Alex attributed community service to having a *life changing* effect on him when he expressed,

I feel very happy when I am participating in community service. It brings joy and just a great feeling that I cannot even explain because it is so great. It is a wonderful thing to do to people and it makes me feel like a totally different person when I am done.

Daniel added his final thoughts on their overall experiences by stating, “All and all the experiences were great. This might sound a little self-centered, but helping others helps you. When you put a smile on someone’s face it makes you feel better about yourself.”

These feelings of gratification, experienced by the participants in this study also correlate with findings of Arai and Pedlar (1997) who discovered that people who volunteered reaped certain benefits (i.e. self actualization and enrichment). These feelings of enjoyment are important in the attempt to provide “meaningful” volunteer experiences, which can lead to positive volunteer experiences for athletes.

Helping Hand

For Alex, Daniel, and Kevin community service was all about helping those who needed it most. They were asked what they each perceived community service to be and to share their opinion on what community service meant to them. Daniel led the discussion by saying, “I define community service as being a helping hand. Everyone’s not as fortunate and I feel like you have to just do your part.”

He also added, “The big thing in community service is just doing your part just to help as much as you can.” Although community service was always a team effort, the participants noted the importance of each individual contributing as much as they could. Kevin added a similar perspective when he said, “What you can do to help people that are less fortunate than us is real key in our basketball program, but not only our basketball program like individually.” Alex finished off this portion of the discussion simply saying, “Helping is the key in community service.”

These athletes also mentioned how helping and volunteer serving others impacted their lives as people. Daniel stated, “To help others in need made me feel like I was making a difference,” a finding supported by Pancer and Pratt (1999) that is associated with the positive outcomes of community service. Alex expressed,

It makes me feel like I am more caring when I am done because you are helping out the less fortunate and they need you for certain things. I also feel loving because these people don’t even know, but I went out of my way and took time out of my day and help them out.

Kevin even advocated community service to others who may not have participated in any volunteer activities before. Kevin said, “I love to help people any chance I can get and I feel like if everybody just tries to help out just one time they will want to do it more because of the feeling they will get.” One of the participants also alluded to the idea of always being ready to help because “you never know” when you will need someone to return the favor to you. Daniel said, “Anything can happen, something catastrophic can happen and I need help. You never know when anything’s going to happen so we would always be open and willing at any moment to help out.”

Similar to Blocker (2011) who found that the majority of her participants felt that *volunteering helps me and others*, being a source of help proved to be an influential component of the entire community service experience for these student-athletes. These participants expressed their perception of what they felt it meant to provide volunteer service to those who needed their assistance, which showed a certain level of satisfaction in their efforts to engage in

justifiable causes. It is important that athletes understand both what it means to give back to their community and that their contributions, great or small, are equally significant to both them and those they help.

Motivation

As previously mentioned, the bulk of the community service activities conducted within this particular team was done as a group, which meant coaches and teammates were present. While some of the participants mentioned occasions they had volunteered on their own in the past, the group collectively agreed their experiences were better as a result of engaging in the community service as a team; better because they could motivate each other during the service activity. During the interview the participants were asked to share their thoughts on the impact of volunteering as a group versus volunteering alone. Daniel said,

I think doing it all together it made it a better experience for everybody on the whole because you could never fall off the wayside or you could never just say *I don't want to be here I'm going to leave*. You had your other teammates there to pass time faster and to have more fun.

Similarly, Kevin expressed how the volunteering was uplifting to everyone involved when he stated, "Volunteering as an [individual] you can tend to get down and get tired, but once we're all at one event we're there to pick each other up if someone's just sitting there like bored."

According to the Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (Vallerand, 1995) individuals can be motivated for varying reasons, which include intrinsic (i.e. internal) and extrinsic (i.e. external) factors. Intrinsic motivation is typically inherent. For example, students who do their homework because they love to learn are considered to be intrinsically motivated (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2004). Although the athletes in this study showed signs of intrinsic motivation to volunteer (e.g. asking their coach for community service), their reliance on one another throughout the duration of the service activity showed they each were sources of extrinsic motivation for one another to continue to enjoy their voluntary experience.

Staying Connected

For the athletes another result of their involvement in community service was the ability to maintain relationships with past alumni of their program and even individuals who were affiliated with their head coach. Although the responses in this theme were not as substantial as some of the others, their responses yielded information that allowed the researcher to identify the significance of this theme. According to Daniel, some of their community service involved individuals who had known their coach prior to their participation. Daniel said,

We did a lot of community service with individuals that he [head coach] went to high school and college with. It just shows the connection that you still can go back and help someone that [you've] known for such a long period.

These student-athletes had the ability to not only give back to their community, but maintain relationships with those who came before them and those who continue to support their athletic program. These relationships that are built and maintained are another practical result of engagement in community service.

Discussion

The initial purpose of this research was to identify if community service participation had any impact on the individual student-athlete, and in addition, if there were any possible effects on team dynamics. Previous research identified those who volunteered were more likely to benefit by having increased self-esteem and overall wellbeing (Primavera, 1999). Similar to Primavera's findings, the student-athletes in this study reported feeling as if they *felt better* about themselves because of their community service participation and even mentioned how they would *feel bad* if they had the opportunity to engage in community service, but chose not to do so. Similar to the findings of Fair, Davis, and Fischer (2011), the feeling of *Enjoyment* and *Sense of Giving to the Community* was noted in the current study, where the participants expressed they took pleasure in their service activities and also felt like they had made a difference as a result of their volunteer work. In addition, these student-athletes were exposed to variety of situations that allowed them to enhance their leadership skills and appreciate their personal circumstances, which gave them a new perspective on life as they knew it. This notion is supported by earlier research, which identified volunteering highlighted new skills and provided volunteers with different perspectives (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, et al., 1998).

Leadership abilities and the sense of oneness were two resulting themes that were direct examples of how community service participation had an effect on the overall dynamics of the team. As senior student-athletes, these basketball players were able to not only bond with their other teammates off the basketball court, but they were also able to refine their leadership roles off the basketball court in a voluntary setting. Contrarily, younger, more inexperienced teammates were able to develop relationships with their older, experienced teammates.

Upon further review of the results of this study we are able to understand the feelings of student-athletes regarding their community service experiences, which can allow administrators the luxury of understanding how collegiate athletes can benefit from volunteer work. Likewise, these findings give administrators a glimpse into the dedication and devotion of the student-athletes who make a valiant effort to pay it forward by giving back to their communities through service while competing in intercollegiate athletics. As a result of this study, we now know that community service can be influential in the lives of student-athletes, individually and to teams as a whole. We also know the experience gained through participation in community service is invaluable and readily transferrable to other areas of these young individuals' lives.

Community service can be an integral piece of the athlete experience and its application within intercollegiate athletics should be understood from an administrative perspective in order to provide quality service opportunities to athletes. Further, to provide these opportunities to athletes, athletic administrators should be privy to the advantages of allowing athletes to engage in community service while they compete in intercollegiate athletics. These advantages include: the development of leadership skills applicable on and off the playing surface, the enhancement of coach-to-athlete and athlete-to-athlete relationships, acquiring appreciation for one's opportunities as an athlete, and learning the value of supporting a community. These revelations

alone confirm the importance of providing quality, frequent community service opportunities for student-athletes.

As an organization, one of the core values of the National Collegiate Athletic Association is its commitment to and belief in the role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the mission of higher education, as well as its contribution to enhancing the sense of community, and strengthening the identity of member institutions (NCAA, 2011). Through this research, findings show that participation in community service can fulfill this value specifically by allowing collegiate athletes an opportunity to enhance their communities by teaching them the value of working together for the betterment of the community. Further, this participation can result in fortification of the identities of institutions that support and encourage community service at the intercollegiate level, which often is advantageous for athletic departments. Potutu and O'Hanlon (2006) made this distinction when they predicted the provision of community service is good public relations for athletic departments.

As mentioned previously, "one of the most important benefits of student-athletes' voluntary experience is that they will likely continue their voluntary work in the future" (Westfield, 2010, p. 41). Similarly, because these collegiate athletes provided positive feedback on their community service experiences, a crucial component in the continuity of volunteer work in an individual's life (Pancer and Taylor, 2007), it is more likely that Westfield's belief is valid. The fact that these athletes have clearly expressed they have benefited from their experiences both as a student and athlete, strengthens the argument that community service should be an element of the student-athlete experience at the intercollegiate level.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study it is concluded that several implications can be applied in the field of sport administration: a.) Coaches should play a key role in community service projects (i.e. selection), b.) Athletes should provide input on community service projects, c.) Community service should occur regularly within the athletic program, d.) Community service projects should require athletes to work together, and e.) Community service should be meaningful to the athlete.

Coaches must be engaged in the entire community service process, which includes selection, participation, and completion of service activity to provide the support athletes need to have a positive community service experience. Similarly, coaches should engage their athletes in each phase of the volunteer experience by providing them with the opportunities to determine the types of service activities their program will participate in. By doing this, coaches teach their athletes how to own their decisions in regards to their community service, which also can lead to a positive volunteer experience.

Equally important to coach involvement is the frequency of community service within the athletic program. Community service should occur regularly within the athletic program so that athletes can acquire new skills and continue to work together off the playing surface as often as possible. In this study, the positive experiences reported from the participants were a result of having had multiple exposures to community service. In addition, athletes must also be afforded the opportunity to work with their peers and teammates within these community service activities in the effort to augment their working relationships with one another. These interactions can lead to the development of positive relationship between coaches and players. As a result of the aforementioned implications, it is proposed that community service will be a

meaningful experience to the athletes who engage in it, which should be the objective of administrators who encourage community service in intercollegiate athletics.

Limitations

The researcher believes the study would have yielded generalizable data had the sample of participants been larger. As previously identified, the researcher was only able to speak with three of the men's basketball players on the selected team due to time constraints and accessibility. Each of these student-athletes were seniors at the time of data collection, which may have limited the assortment of responses. In fact, perhaps interviewing other team members of different academic class standings would have given the researcher the opportunity to corroborate the accounts of the seniors on this team with the responses of the others. Also, the head coach played a role in the selection process; which may have produced bias within this study. The sample of participants was derived from a Division III institution in the Midwest, which could have affected the nature of the responses from the participants. Because the institution was smaller, and in a tight-knit community, the expectations of service among their athletic programs may have been greater than if the participants were chosen from a Division I institution. However, this presumption could be argued either way. Due to Division I athletic programs typically having more publicity than Division III programs, there may be an increased expectation of student-athlete participation in community service. Either way, the presence of community service opportunities, or lack thereof, could reflect positively or negatively on program, which could have affected participant responses had the researcher interviewed Division I athletes.

The lack of representation from various sports at the selected institution may also be viewed as a limitation. A more diverse sport population would have likely allowed gender to be discussed as a potential factor in the perceptions of community service experiences. As identified by Westfield (2010) gender was a dynamic of the development of servant leadership behaviors among student-athletes who engaged in community service.

Future research should examine identifying whether the benefits of community service are applicable in other sports teams and also at larger institutions. The findings may offer a different, yet valuable perspective on the experiences of other athletes who participate in sports other than basketball. As previously identified, perhaps building on the connection made by Westfield (2010) between gender and development of servant leadership behaviors, could be another prospective area of study to pursue.

Another potential direction for future research could be an analysis of multiple programs by comparing and contrasting programs that mandate athlete participation in community service versus those who do not. According to Gallant, Smale, and Arai (2010), we know that mandated service programs of high quality generally have a greater effect on attitudes than behaviors, meaning individuals may possess a different outlook on the benefits of volunteering, but their behavior (i.e. continuing to volunteer) may not change. It may be beneficial to understand how mandated community service within athletics operates in comparison to "strongly encouraging" athletes to volunteer by way of providing them with a variety of volunteer opportunities. Research could also examine the affect of community service involvement on student-athletes competing in individual sports since a component of this study focused on how participating in community service affected the student-athlete as an individual.

References

- Arai, S., & Pedlar, A. (1997). *Building communities through leisure: Citizen participation in a healthy communities initiative*. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29, 167-182.
- Barbuto, J. E., Jr., & Wheeler, W. D. (2006). *Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership*. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(3), 300-326.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). *Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers*. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Billings, S. H. (2004). *Heads, hearts, hands: The research on K-12 service-learning*. In *Growing to greatness 2004: The state of service-learning project*. 12-25. St Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council
- Blocker, V. S. (2011) *Volunteerism in the university culture*. Anthropology Theses. Paper 49. Retrieved from http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/anthro_theses/49
- Brunel, F. F., & Nelson, M. R. (2003). *Message order effects and gender differences in advertising persuasion*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43(3), 330-341.
- Charmaz, K. (2000) Grounded Theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Chinman, M. J., & Wandersman, A. (1999). The benefits and costs of volunteering in community organizations: Review and practical implications. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 28, 46-64.
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., & Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., & Haugen, J., et al. (1998). *Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1516-1530.
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., & Stukas, A. A. (1998). Service learning and psychology: Lessons from the psychology of volunteers' motivations. In R. G. Bringle & D. K. Duffy (eds.), *With service in mind*, 35-50. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 10-43.
- Fair, D. C., Davis, A., & Fischer, V. (2011) "*It makes them so happy*": 4th graders' reflections on intergenerational service learning. *Childhood Education* (Report). 87(3). 1-18
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (2005). The interview: from neutral stance to political involvement. In N. Denzin (Ed.) & Y. Lincoln (Ed.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research*, 1-1210. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gallant, K., Smale, B., & Arai, S. *Civic engagement through mandatory community service: Implications of serious leisure*. (2010) *Journal of Leisure Research*. 42(2), 181-201.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
- Hall, M. H., McKeown, L., & Roberts, K. (2001). *Caring Canadians, involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 national survey of giving, volunteering, and participating*. Ottawa, Canada: Ministry of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.nsgvp.org/n-2000hr-ca.htm>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Missouri Valley Conference, (2012) *Awards and Academics*. MVC Good Neighbor Awards, Retrieved from <http://www.mvc-sports.com/awards/goodneighboraward/>
- NCAA, (2011). *Balancing time demands*. Student-Athlete Experience, 1-2) Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Student-Athlete+Experience/Student-Athlete+Well+Being/Life+balance>
- NCAA, (2011). *Core values*. About the NCAA. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/about+the+ncaa/who+we+are/core+values+landing+page>
- NCAA, (2011). *Division III SAAC mission and philosophy*. Division III Mission Statement Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/ncaahome?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/ncaa/NCAA/Academics+and+Athletes/SAAC/Division+III/Mission+and+Philosophy.html
- NCAA, (2011). *NCAA woman of the year*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/NCAA/Resources/Events/Woman+of+the+Year/>
- Pancer, S. M., & Pratt, M. W. (1999). *Social and family determinants of community service involvement in Canadian youth*. In M. Yates & J. Youniss (Eds.), *Roots of civic identity: International perspectives on community service and activism in youth* (pp. 32-55). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pancer, S. M., Taylor, P. T. (2007). *Community service experience and commitment to volunteering*. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 37(2). (pp. 320-345).
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (pp. 1-598). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Potutu R. J., & O'Hanlon, J. (2006) *National study of student-athletes regarding their experiences as college students*. *College Student Journal* (pp. 947-966)
- Primavera, J. (1999). The unintended consequences of volunteerism: Positive outcomes for those who serve. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 18, 125-140
- Rubin, H. & Rubin, I. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scales, P. C., Roehlkepartain, E. C., Neal, M., Kielsmeier, J.C., & Benson, P. L. (2006). *Reducing academic achievement gaps: The role of the community service and service-learning*. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 29(1), 38-60
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (pp. 1-270). London: Sage
- Vallerand, R. J. (1995, June). Toward a hierarchal model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. A Theory/review paper presented at the Canadian Psychological Association annual conference, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada.
- Vallerand, R. J., & Ratelle, C., F. (2004). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: a hierarchal model. In E. Deci (Ed.) & R. Ryan (Ed.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 1-470) Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.
- Westfield, D. (2010). The effects of participation in community service through intercollegiate athletics on servant leadership behaviors. *University of Nebraska*, 1-118.
- Wheeler, J. A., Gorey, K. M., & Greenblatt, B. (1998). The beneficial effects of volunteering for older volunteers and the people they serve: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 47, 69-79

- Wolf-Wendel, E. L., Toma, J.D., & Morpew, C. C. (2001). There's no "I" in "Team": Lessons from athletics on community building. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*(4)
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.