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Examining Academic Role-Set Influence on the Student- Athlete Experience

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Informed by the words and experiences of 41 Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) student-athletes, this qualitative study reveals the complexities of the student-athlete academic experience as shaped by their relationships with academic role-set members. Using role-identity as a theoretical framework, the study identifies coaches, athletic academic advisors, fellow athletes, nonathlete peers, faculty and parents as the key actors in the academic role-set. A discussion around the various influences such relationships can have on the academic experience depending on their strength is provided, and future areas of inquiry are proposed.

High-profile student-athletes are not persisting in higher education at the same rate as student-athletes involved in other intercollegiate sports. As the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (2008a) reports, 78% of all Division I athletes graduate from college within six years, however football and men's basketball have the lowest graduation rates of any teams, graduating 67% and 62% respectively. African American athletes, who make up a majority of those on high profile teams, face an even lower graduate rate, only 58% of Division I African American college football players graduate within six years as compared to 80% of their White teammates (NCAA, 2008a). While a variety of frameworks have been used to examine this situation, many scholars have linked these graduation rates to a team culture with role-set members who emphasize excelling solely in athletic endeavors (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991; Benson, 2000; Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1999; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

The influence a student-athlete's role-set—the group of individuals with whom a person associates his roles in various situations, who help him define and influence his actions in that role (Merton, 1957)—can have on how he shapes his identity as a student and an athlete has been an area of continued research. As Benson (2000) and Alder and Adler (1987, 1991) have shown, these role-set members often play dramatic roles in determining the salience of a student-athlete's academic and athletic identity. In this study, the impact of student-athletes' academic role-set members on academics is specifically explored.

Literature Review

Many studies have recognized that cultural factors specific to high profile, revenue generating athletics often lead to low academic expectations and results, and are perpetuated by coaches and other players. Simons et al. (1999) noted that although NCAA rules stipulate that coaches must excuse practices missed for academic reasons, players are far more likely to skip academic events that conflict with practice schedules; electing to do make-up work rather than miss a practice or team meeting. “Coaches possess the power to decide which athletes will play or start in the games, [and] many students believe, correctly or incorrectly, that they will be penalized by their coaches for choosing academic commitments over athletic ones” (p. 158). Often the most powerful members of a student-athlete’s athletic role-set, coaches play a prominent role in shaping a student-athlete’s role salience in both athletic and academic domains, thus locating themselves in both role-sets.

In 1991, the NCAA adopted bylaw 16.3.1.1, which mandated that institutions “make general academic counseling and tutoring services available to all student-athletes” (NCAA, 2008b, p. 197). As a result, many Division I campuses responded by creating an academic support services center within the athletic department to address these needs. Despite the intent to support academic pursuits, athletes’ academic advisors have been consistently considered part of the culture that deemphasizes academic success amongst student-athletes. As one of Benson’s (2000) interviewees noted, his academic advisor consistently stressed the minimum that needed to be achieved to remain eligible, giving the student the perception that the advisor expected no more of the student than meeting that baseline. Studies conducted by Benson (2000), Finch (2007), and Simons et al. (1999) highlight the negative effects that occur when advisors focus on minimum academic requirements. Because the NCAA mandates that all student-athletes maintain a 2.0 to remain eligible, studies have found the focus is often on achieving that 2.0, not exceeding it. Since the advisor is the one consistent member of all student-athletes’ academic role-set, their relationship with the student must be taken into consideration.

Student development research has often considered the role peers play in the college experience. Studies have shown positive peer support plays an important role in academic adjustment in college (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Tinto, 1993), particularly amongst students of color. In a longitudinal study of 100 first generation, ethnic minority students, Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) found peer support to be the most influential form of social support for students coping with academic issues and to be a stronger predictor of academic outcomes than family support. Crosnoe, Cavanagh, and Elder’s (2003) study of adolescents found that students who had academically successful friends, or friends who liked school, had more academic success than students with non-academically-oriented peers. However, much of the student-athlete literature describes teammates as non-academically oriented peers, and points to their role in valuing athletic pursuits over academic (Adler & Adler, 1991; Benson, 2000; Martin & Harris, 2006; Simons et al., 1999).

Because high profile student-athletes spend an average of 20 to 30 hours per week with their teammates, and in many cases live with one another, their primary peers, and closest friends, are fellow members of the team (Watt & Moore, 2001). This is especially salient for African Americans, who elect to live with athletes more often than their White teammates (Snyder, 1985). Student-athletes who choose to miss practice because of a field trip or review session, may feel that they are not just letting the team down, they are letting down their friends who were counting on them (Simons et al., 1999). Simons et al. (1999) explained, “As the team

often represents the central peer group for the student-athlete, peer pressure to favor athletic demands over academic ones plays a strong role” (p. 159). This absorption into team culture and peer influence begins from the moment student-athletes set foot on campus. As one of Benson’s (2000) interviewees noted, “I remember when I was being recruited, there was a couple of players, ... and they said, ‘You don’t have to go to school, because the teachers are going to take care of you” (p. 229). Such an anti-academic stance has been shown to persist throughout the college experience. In a qualitative study of academically driven Division I African American student-athletes Martin and Harris (2006) noted that the 27 academically high achieving participants often felt they approached their academics in a way not valued by their teammates. One participant stated, “A large majority of my teammates say, ‘We’re here to play football; we won’t get additional respect by being nerds in the classroom.’ A lot of them think that it’s cool not to go to class” (p. 370). These academically driven students also claimed that their college experience had been enriched by cultivating relationships outside their teammates and becoming involved with other aspects of campus life. The impact of expanding one’s peer group to include nonathletic students is an area that has received little attention. While studies have examined the consequences of isolating one’s self amongst athletic role-set members, which is often at the expense of relationships with family and nonathlete peers (Adler & Adler, 1991; Horton & Mack, 2000), few have delved into examining nonathletic members of the student-athlete’s role-set.

The degree of faculty-student interaction has been positively correlated with a student’s “intellectual orientation” (Wilson, 1975, p. 180). Additionally, Tinto (1993) found that faculty-involvement was one of the greatest predictors that a student would graduate within six years. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of student persistence, Stoecker, Pascarella, and Wolfe (1988) found that faculty interaction was a strong predictor of persistence for African American students. However, when examining the role of faculty in the experience of student-athletes, studies have tended to focus on the negative perceptions that faculty have towards the academic potential of student-athletes (Simons et al., 1999; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Suggs, 2003), and not the positive role faculty can play in a student-athlete’s intellectual development. Studies by Comeaux (2005), Comeaux and Harrison (2001), Harrison, Comeaux, and Pletcha (2006) and Jolly (2008) have begun to address such a gap in the literature. As Harrison, Comeaux and Pletcha (2006) demonstrated, faculty serving as “‘intellectual’ coaches” (p. 277), are able to play a positive role in student-athletes’ commitment to academic pursuits.

Absent from much of the student-athlete literature is a discussion about parental involvement. While parents are frequently included in college access and enrollment research (Lang, Dunham, & Alpert, 1988; Paulsen & St. John, 2002), parental level of education, and not their relationship with their children, is typically the focus of such discussions. While Martin and Harris (2006) credited fathers with playing the primary role in shaping a productive masculine conception amongst high achieving student-athletes, few others have furthered the discussion about which types of parental engagement foster academic achievement.

In summary, student-athlete literature often focuses on the impact those within the team and athletic department culture have on the academic experiences of student-athletes. Studies have explored the role coaches, teammates, and athletic academic advisors play in shaping messages about the importance of academics, and in defining the academic experience. However, other groups of actors, often found in student-development literature in discussions about persistence and academic outcomes, are frequently absent in student-athlete literature.

This study was concerned with the groups of individuals in student-athletes' academic role-sets, and attempted to further investigate spheres of academic influence beyond team culture.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of identity, as understood in sociological terms, links the individual to society, and defines the roles a person takes on in his life. The term identity and role are frequently used together, often interchangeably (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991; Killeya-Jones, 2005; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Turner, 1978; Watt & Moore, 2001). McCall and Simmons (1978) link the two terms as they defined the concept of role-identity in their book, *Identity and Interactions*. They explained that a person's various role-identities provide a lens for how he interprets his experiences in the past, present and future. London, Downey, Bolger, and Velilla (2005) also note the multiplicity of roles that constitute a person's identity, calling these roles the "core features of the self" (p. 46). These authors note that such roles not only provide a lens for interpretation, but also reflect how people believe others view them. For male student-athletes such roles might include son, brother, student, friend, member of a religious institution, and athlete.

McCall and Simmons (1978) note that not all roles are of equal prominence in a person's life at a given time. This hierarchical ranking of a person's role-identities, known as identity salience, determines the chance that this identity or role will be performed in a given situation (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). The salience of an identity is not static; depending on context and circumstance one aspect of a person's identity may gain and lose salience over time (Chatman, Eccles, & Malanchuk, 2005). For example, a quarterback who has become a campus hero after a leading the university to a Bowl Championship, may see "athlete" as his most salient identity at the close of the season. However, after suffering three concussions early the next fall, and being forced to sit out for the rest of the season, this quarterback's hero status, and salience of his athletic role, may shift.

Because self and social support for one's role-identity are essential, it is important to understand the influence of the role-set. A person's role-set is the group of individuals with whom a person associates his roles in various situations (Merton, 1957), who help him define that role, and influence his actions in that role. The power of the role-set was demonstrated in Stevenson's (1999) qualitative study of international athletes, who found that their commitment to their sport developed and deepened as their identity as an athlete became more solidified. For these athletes, it was the actions and perceptions of others that shaped the saliency of their athletic role.

A student-athlete's athletic identity is the level at which he identifies with his role as an athlete (Brewer, 1991). Those highly absorbed in their athletic role allow this lens to influence their experiences—decisions they make, friendships they form, how they interpret interactions with others and the emphasis placed on other roles they are expected to play (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991). Additionally, those committed to their athletic role may spend a high proportion of their time with coaches, teammates, and others in the athletic realm—their athletic role-set—further enhancing their commitment to such a role (Horton & Mack, 2000; Watt & Moore, 2001). Additionally, as Stryker and Serpe (1982) note, if those within a person's role-set also see this given identity as particularly salient, this will only increase the salience of that role for the individual. For student-athletes on teams where their teammates place high levels of salience

on their athletic roles, the more salient this role will be for the student-athlete. This is the power that team culture can have in athletic identity development.

Those who identify themselves as students, or who see “student” as a role they perform in their daily lives, have an academic identity. As Mehan, Hubbard and Villanueva (1994) and Flores-Gonzalez (1999), note this role-identity is not oppositional to other identities held by a person, but simply as one of the many identity groups to which a person might ascribe. However, for student-athletes there might be a tension between their roles as students and athletes, as other scholars (Adler & Adler, 1987, 1991; Pascarella, Bohn, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Watt & Moore, 2001) have noted.

The sociological construct of identity and role-set theory inform this study, allowing for the examination of how those in the student-athlete’s academic role-set shape their academic experiences. Understanding a student-athlete’s academic role-set, and the influence such role-set members have over the student-athlete’s college experience is a crucial component when examining academic identity development and role maintenance. As studies have shown, coaches, peers, faculty, and academic advisors play major roles in a student-athlete’s daily experience, and can often set or influence the direction and/or choices a student-athlete makes about his college experience. However, while much research has been conducted on the athletic role-set, gaps remain in the literature in terms of examining academic role-set members and their influence on the student-athlete.

Methodology

This article is derived from a larger study in which the high school and college athletic and academic experiences of Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) football student-athletes were examined. Guided by the literature and role-set theory, this qualitative study investigated how the student-athletes negotiated their academic role expectations while immersed in the athletic culture on campus. The data shared in this paper stem from a subquestion that explored the impact of the participants’ academic role-set members on their post-secondary educational experiences. The findings are drawn from semi-structured interviews of 41 student-athletes at five Division I-FBS institutions. This study relied upon in-depth interviewing because this methodology is best used when asking participants to make meaning around a shared experience, in this case, being a Division I football student-athlete (Seidman, 2006). During the interview, each student-athlete was asked a series of open-ended questions about his athletic and academic experiences both in high school and at the university, and also asked him to reflect upon his athletic and academic role-sets and the nature of those relationships in relation to their academic and athletic performance and aspirations.

Sites

Participants selected for this study were football student-athletes at five public, doctoral granting research universities with Division I-FBS football programs. Universities with Division I-FBS football teams were selected because this is the most athletically competitive and selective division, and thus recruits the most promising athletic talent. All universities were also classified as “selective” or “more selective” research universities using the Carnegie Classification system (Carnegie Foundation, 2009), in order to maintain consistency (see Appendix A for additional site information).

Participants

Criterion-based selection was used to identify participants for this study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Those in the sample were student-athletes who had been recipients of full athletic scholarships since their freshmen year. These students were of particular interest because as Adler and Adler (1991) found, these heavily recruited students often begin college overemphasizing their roles as athletes. The sample was further restricted to eight students from each university's football program, four from the sophomore (2006 National Letter of Intent [NLI]) and senior classes (2004 NLI) as determined by the year they signed their NLI. Sophomores were selected because they had had over a year to make meaning of the college experience, and to become familiar with both in-season and off-season academic and athletic norms. Seniors were selected because these participants were typically in their last year of college, and it was hoped that they would provide a retrospective interpretation of their college experience.

Because Human Subjects prohibited contacting these student-athletes directly, athletic departments had to be contacted in order to gain permission to use their campus as a research site and to gather participants. Each participating institution's athletic department was sent a list of those students in the recruiting classes of 2004 and 2006 who had signed their National Letter of Intent and still remained on the Fall 2007 roster. While most of the students interviewed came directly from those lists, six participants in the sample signed NLIs in years other than 2004 and 2006. This included four participants in the class of 2005, one in the class of 2003 and one in the class of 2007. However, each of these participants met all other criteria of study participation (see Appendix B for additional participant information).

Data Collection & Analysis Procedures

When site permission was received, and a primary campus contact was identified, the contact was sent a letter outlining the requirements for participation and a list of eligible participants. During the two to three day campus visit, each participant signed up for an hour-long research time slot. In that hour the consent form was explained and signed and the semi-structured interview was conducted. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and uploaded to NVivo8. Analytic induction was used to code the interview transcripts for emerging themes based on an initial read of the transcripts, which were then refined and modified upon reading subsequent transcripts and the rethinking of the data (Bogden & Bilken, 2003; Goetz & LeCompt, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Additional statistical data gathered included information about the participants (high school GPA, parents' level of education), institutional data gathered from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (institutional graduation rates, percent of applicants admitted, and the racial demographics of the student body) and data gathered from the NCAA (academic progress rate (APR) and graduation success rates (GSR)). These data were used as descriptive statistics in order to contextualize the qualitative data.

Limitations

Because participants could not be contacted directly, the athletic department was relied upon to line up participants. Originally there was concern that the departments would select their most academically promising student-athletes for this study, or those who had the most positive opinion about their experiences. However, after examining the demographic data from the participants and reviewing the interview transcripts this did not appear to be the case. Self-reported college GPAs of the sample ranged from 1.9 to 3.1, and averaged 2.59. Additionally, these student-athletes spanned the depth chart¹, with 19 participants amongst the first string, 12 in the second string, three in the third string, one in the fourth string, and six who were on the practice squad. These statistics alone led to confidence that the athletic department made participation in this study available to a wide range of students who fit the criteria. While a lack of a random sample may impact the results, criterion-based selection yielded a sample from which definitive themes were successfully identified and extracted.

Another limitation to this study was the author's positionality as an outsider, and the concern that outsider status might lead to inauthentic responses. While it is impossible to ascertain the truth behind every statement, various methods were used to confirm the validity of portions of the interviews. In describing their high school and college football experiences and accolades, such data were verifiable through the college football media guide published annually by each campus, which recount these students' athletic achievements in both high school and college. Additionally, when reviewing qualitative data from each interview, findings were compared against data from the other interviews, and the experiences that these student-athletes had in many cases mirrored those had by other athletes within the same campus, and across the Division I-FBS campuses in the sample, instilling confidence in the authenticity of their responses.

Results

The data indicated that members traditionally associated with the athletic role-set were credited for playing a dual role in the participants' collegiate academic role-set. The athletic role-set members included head coaches and fellow student-athletes. Those academic role-set members not consistently found within the academic role-set who motivated or assisted the participants academically included nonathlete peers, faculty, and parents. In the following section the influence of each category of role-set members will be revealed and discussed.

The Coach

A central member of a student-athlete's athletic role-set, coaches are expected to deliver academic messages as well. Although a coach's primary job is to develop his athletes, academic eligibility requirements, APR and GSR tracked and enforced by the NCAA require a coach to be concerned with academics as well. Thirty-one of the participants discussed the active role their head coach took in keeping track of their academics and academic eligibility. Specifically, 13 of

¹ The depth chart determines in which order athletes rotate on and off the field. Those in the first string are typically the most promising athletes who start the game. Those on the second string serve as substitutes for first string players. Third string players do not always see playing time, but are on hand in case of injury. Finally, those on the practice squad play an important role in practice, but almost never see action during competition.

the participants noted that their coaches were very direct with the student-athletes about their chances of playing in the NFL, and emphasized focusing on graduation, rather than putting energy into dreams of playing professionally. When asked about the message his coach gave about the importance of academics at Big 12 South University, Kevin explained:

He says grades are important. He says he can care less about what you do sports-wise when you leave here just as long as you get your degree and graduate...He pretty much stays on you—if you miss class he'll run you, if you're late he runs you. He just wants you to handle your business like a man.

Kevin was not alone in his interpretation of his coach's message. His teammate Chris's response depicted a similar stance, but Chris also noted that the coach tried to impress upon the team why a college degree was important:

[He says] that you need to get your degree, and not only for you, but for your future family, cuz degrees do help you earn higher income. That's kind of a statistic proven. He says over and over again that it would really bother him if we don't get a degree from here. So it's really good when you have a coach that actually cares about your degree. All the coaches here know that you're here to get your education first. If we have a test during practice, we're gonna go to that test.

This demonstrated the consistency of the message given by the head coach at Big 12 South University about the importance of graduation. Not only did he express how important it was to him that his student-athletes graduate, but he also gave them messages about the long-term importance of the degree.

At USA University, the head coach, who had been hired less than a year before, used the statistical probability of his players making it into the NFL as motivation for earning a degree, much like his predecessor. Additionally, because USA University's football program had one of the highest graduation rates in the nation over the past decade, and one that was almost double the general student population (see Appendix A), graduation rates have become a useful recruiting tool for the coach. Trip explained:

He [the former coach] knew the reality of the real world because everybody comes in thinking they're gonna play at the next level and that's not true. I mean you might have one or two a year from the team get drafted or have a free agent shot – and he knew that so he would tell you from when you were a freshman, “All of you aren't gonna make it, but all of you can get an education,” and he would push it and push it, and if you were falling behind in school he would make it where you had more time to do the school, or make it necessary for you. If you weren't doing good in school he wouldn't be – I mean it wouldn't be anything for him to give you 10 hours study hall a week just to make it where you had to study...[The new coach] wants to uphold that graduation rate because that's kind of a recruiting tool that you can – you can kind of put to the parents –to push the kid to come here.

Andre also saw the high graduation rate as a recruiting tool:

Yeah, you can say it's a way of recruiting. Cuz now when people go talk, most of them, your momma gonna make the decision of where you going in the first place. So, most likely, your momma gonna want you to have a real good degree, and know if you playing football, you gonna have the good grades to go along ... They sell it to moms. They told my grandmom. She said naw to half the schools I was talking to.

As Andre explained, often times when student-athletes are on recruiting trips, coaches work on not only recruiting the student-athlete, but recruiting the family as well. In the case of USA

University, the coaches identified that their graduation rate was one of the strongest parental recruiting tools they had.

Finally, the student-athletes at AC University and Big 12 North University also noted that their coaches emphasized graduation. While the discussions of their coaches' sentiments were not as in depth as those participants at Big 12 South and USA University, Antoine at AC, and both Ben and Dan at Big 12 North, indicated an emphasis on degree completion. Antoine said, "They want you to graduate. That's the big thing, cuz they was pushing a lot about us graduating, doing this, and doing that." Ben complimented his coaches' interest in graduation, when he explained, "I feel like coaches here do a good job at, you know, getting us to graduate, pushing the concept on us at, I mean, I'm not walking out of here empty-handed." Dan's comment again related the importance of graduation due to the slim chance of playing professional football, "They're trying to keep people eligible, and they really want people to graduate. They really want people to graduate, because they know in the long run not everybody can go to the NFL."

However, while college coaches stressed the importance of getting a degree, the diplomas the student-athletes were pursuing were often not in areas that matched their career interest. In fact, 33 of the participants hoped to pursue a career in the NFL (regardless of string), and even when they had identified a second career, only 15 participants were in majors directly related to their chosen non-NFL career (seven of whom were majoring in coaching, kinesiology, or sport management and anticipated careers in coaching). Additionally, while five participants had majors indirectly related to their career choice, the majority (N=21) had majors that were not applicable to their chosen profession. Kevin, who anticipated a future in real estate, speculated that he would probably select sports management as his major. When asked why he would choose a major unrelated to his career goal, he explained, "I don't know. I heard you can just, like now a days, I heard you can get a degree in something you're not gonna be a job in or something like that." This quote exemplifies the common belief held by participants about the importance of a degree yet the relative irrelevance of major.

Athletic Academic Support Services

Despite the influential role of coaches, when asked to whom they turned with academic questions and issues, a vast majority (N=37) of the participants looked first to the athletic academic support services center. Because each athletic department in the sample dealt with the NCAA mandated academic support programs internally, student-athletes overwhelmingly relied on those within athletics to assist them in their academic pursuits. As Ben explained, his athletic academic advisor could handle any academic concern:

I actually go to our [athletic] academic counselors we have right over here [down the hallway from the football office]...And if I've got a question about a class, or if I need a tutor, you know, or if I'm going to be late for something with him, or, you know, a lot, like, a lot of the academic stuff, I go through him. And I just ask him. If I have a question about anything, I'll just go through him.

Within the sample, student-athletes relied upon the academic support services department in five key areas, (a) to answer their academic questions, (b) to provide academic motivation, (c) to design their course schedule around football requirements, (d) to enforce time management, and (e) to identify tutors. However, in some cases the students also revealed that they felt they had little autonomy in course selection because of the intense involvement by the athletic academic staff.

A senior at Pac-10 University, Jose explained the way his athletic academic advisor handled his scheduling as a freshman:

My freshman year I got a little sheet, four boxes across for your five years, you know, for the first course, second course, third course and summer. So it's five boxes across and then he fills in what you need and then what majors do you want. So I don't know, so just take these classes and you'll figure it out. So they do it for you basically, and they walk it through you.

Tom said, "[my athletic academic advisor at AC University] was the one ... told me what I needed to do to get here, you know, with my classes and what to sign up for." Kurt's story offered a more extreme perspective:

I was in general studies, and I was just taking classes that my advisor game me. And when it came time to pick a major, cuz you have to have a certain percentage completed, if I would've - I wanted to do like marketing or somethin' like that, but if I woulda chosen that, I woulda lost like 16 or 18 hours, and so that woulda made me below the percentage, so I just been put in that [Agricultural major] with everybody else.

In each of these scenarios, the participants perceived having little autonomy in course selection, and in Kurt's case, he believed both his classes and major were determined by the athletic academic department. However, it is important to note that only four participants spoke of perceiving their academic course schedules to be controlled by the athletic academic department.

The literature review noted that studies of college student academic experiences often credit peer and faculty interaction as playing a large role in academic success. While this was supported in the results and will be discussed later, an interesting finding was the level of credit the participants gave their academic advisors for instilling academic motivation in them. Champ noted that he felt so close to his academic advisors that he wanted to succeed to avoid disappointing them. He said, "I don't want them to think, '[Champ] messed up.'" I don't want to feel like that. I want them [to think], '[Champ] pushed hard and made his grades, and he's a good person.'" As freshmen, both Bart and Jose were motivated by their academic advisors at Pac-10 University. Bart noted, "[My advisor has] helped me a lot. She's the one who kinda kicked me into gear after my redshirt year to get school serious." Jose felt similarly about his advisor:

The times that I struggled, he's the one that was there to lift me up after telling me not to do that... My freshman year I was out one night so I was on [probation], so he's the one that was riding my ass for the first year and he is even now, I thank him for that.

Khalil, a student at AC University also noted how important such support and motivation was during his freshman year:

You actually look back on, you know, what you did your freshman year, you're like, "Wow, I can't believe I wrote that paper or did that." You know, [the advisors] had a big influence. We mighta like not liked them, you know, cuz, you know, you - but that's them doing their job; and when you really put it in perspective, you realize, you know, how thankful you are for them pushing you to that limit of having to do your work.

These findings shed a positive light on the types of influence academic advisors can have on student-athletes' academic experiences, which is often not explored in student-athlete research.

Peer Influence: Fellow Athletes

Nine participants credited fellow athletes with playing a positive role in their academics. However, in most cases this role was much less substantial than those played by coaches and

athletic academic advisors. For five of the participants, fellow athletes were consulted in both major and course selection. When Ellis was asked how he made his decision to change his major, he explained, “I talked to one of my upperclassmen, and they told me that Comm[unications] wasn’t a bad major, you know, so I talked to someone who had already taken it and was on their last couple of classes.” For Kevin, fellow student-athletes provided motivation to remain academically eligible. As he noted, “Your teammates push you just because they want you playing and they feel that the team needs you and stuff like that.” These participants noted the role peers played in their academic decision-making, however, the final four participants who credited fellow student-athletes as playing a key role in their academic development shared stories that seemed indicative of far stronger relationships.

Both Davis and Alex credited fellow athletes for their academic development, and discussed the usefulness of having a “study buddy.” As Davis explained,

A [women’s] volleyball player, ... she’s actually helped me out a lot, ‘cause um, we’re taking kind of the same subjects, she’s actually taking a harder schedule than I am, like way harder, so it kind of puts me in perspective, like “well I’ve got it easy,” so. But she helps out a lot like, just going over different stuff for like different tests, for what we think is going on, and what to study and all that stuff, so I think she’s helped me a lot.

For Alex, it was a teammate who helped him academically. He said,

My roommate and I had the same major, and so we started off takin' a lot of the same classes like at the same time, ‘cause we had the schedule. I mean, we were both in football and so we both had the same kinda time schedule. ... And then now that we've picked our field of study and they're different, I think that kinda threw us off cuz I still have two classes with him this semester, and so I think those are classes we're doin' [good] in too, because I have somebody who keeps me on track.

In both cases, these student-athletes received assistance from fellow student-athletes who shared similar coursework, and similar schedules. These relationships also hinted at being reciprocal in nature, and were positive for these two men.

Jose and Ashanti had very different stories from the others in this set. For these two men, both had former athletes play a significant role in their lives. In many ways, these former student-athletes, who graduated a few years before them, served as key mentors with whom they shared their goals and dreams, and from whom they sought significant advice. In Jose’s case, his mentor was a former teammate who graduated just before Jose’s arrival, but remained at Pac-10 University as a graduate student. Jose explained the relationship:

I say “brother” because you’re [teammates] for life and it’s family. So a brother on the team played in 2001, finished in 2003, but he studied abroad in 2001 because he wanted to do something, some big trip. He talked to somebody and they said “Go. We’ll pay for you.” He said “I’m going.” And he had two more years of football. The coaches, ..., [coach]’s like “If you leave,” you know what I’m saying, “you’re quitting the team.” [Coach]’s like “You can’t quit. You’re on the team.” So he kind of broke that. He broke it for us, you know? So he went and then he had a great time. You know, he learned so much...He went over there and it changed his life.

My freshman year he said “I wanna take you to Africa, to the motherland, Africa.” Oh, that’s cool. That’s cool, but I’m not Black, you know? I’m not African American so my history is not there.

Last year [he’s] like “Man, I’m gonna do it, gonna take you guys, man.” He had

like 80 people and he wanted to take 10, 12 first. And when it came down to it, even my best friend ... he dropped out. He said "I can't go. Coach [said] like if you go you're quitting." [...]

It's actually never been done before except for him and now us all. They're trying to do that like not a yearly thing, but [student-athletes] never get that opportunity and they gave us the opportunity and I went and I'm glad that I did. I learned so much from that.

For Jose, this former teammate, with whom he now has a very close relationship, paved the way for him and other student-athletes at Pac-10 University to be able to study abroad. In many ways, this former teammate's willingness to ignore his coach's wishes in order to experience a semester abroad challenged the academic parameters for student-athletes on that campus. Jose talked at length about what he gained from this academic experience, however it is important to also note that the academic quarter system on his campus allowed for the flexibility to make this study abroad trip possible. This exemplified how a former teammate was able to ignite a passion for academic inquiry amongst his fellow "brothers."

In Ashanti's case, his mentor was a former basketball student-athlete, who was a student-athlete when Ashanti first arrived on campus, and worked on campus post-graduation. During his interview Ashanti noted:

I know this guy, he went here, he played basketball I talk to him about – as far as what I wanted to do and he – if I'm looking for a recommendation I know who to go to and all that stuff...So I really – I talk to [him] a lot about everything I wanna do, I tell him what my plans are, what my goals are...He's pretty cool, gives me advice on that stuff.

In this case, Ashanti's mentor played a role in helping him make decisions about his academic future, and served as a sounding board with whom he could share his goals. These two stories underscore the powerful role that can be played by athletic peers in a student-athletes' academic role-set, and perhaps more importantly, the value placed on the opinions and advice of an academically successful upperclassmen.

Peer Influence: Nonathletes

As noted previously, having academically motivated peers has been found to have a significant impact on a student's academic experience (Crosnoe et al., 2003; Dennis et al., 2005; Hurtado et al., 1996; Tinto, 1993). This was demonstrated in the previous discussion about interaction with academically motivated student-athletes. Participants were also asked to discuss relationships they had with nonathletic peers, however, only six credited non-athletic peers for academic motivation and assistance, three of whom were the participants' girlfriends. Bart explained how important his long-time friend had been to him in his academic pursuits at Pac-10 University:

He was part of the deal when I came to [Pac-10] that normally you're put in with another student-athlete in the dorms, but I said, "If I come, I want him to be there." So I stayed with him. He joined a fraternity; but for whatever reason, I don't ever see him, but he still calls me and checks on my school. If I need...most of the classes that I've taken, he's taken...So every once in a while, I've had a couple classes, and I'll go to him for help. Or to just gimme ideas on papers. Like he's one of those guys that doesn't have to work for anything in school. He's just smart. And so I'd say like he's been my biggest

role model, which was – I – it would – it was hard to admit that at first – to have, you know, one of your friends be, you know, the upper hand.

Even though Bart rarely saw this friend on campus this non-athletic peer had played a significant role in his academics.

In discussing the role of their girlfriends, participants either noted the academic assistance provided by these women, or the motivation the girlfriends provided through competition. Trip's girlfriend was helpful to him as a writing tutor. He explained, "She's really good in school, ... school kinda came easy to her. If I had a paper ... to do, she would help me out and if I'd do it or she'd read it and she'd re-do it." Champ's girlfriend provided motivation, "It's a competition between me and her [... we] got a class together, I don't want her to do better than me, even though she still is... Yeah, she does motivate me. I mean, when I'm going through stuff, she's there for me.

While it seems as though Trip's girlfriend might have overstepped the rules of academic integrity to assist him with his studies, Champ revealed the motivation and support given to him by his partner.

Faculty

When prompted, 27 of the participants believed that in their time at the university they had managed to cultivate a relationship with at least one faculty member. The inclusion of faculty in their academic role-set was significant, because as Harrison et al. (2006) found, cultivating a relationship with faculty members played a positive role in student-athletes' commitment to academic pursuits. However, as Harrison et al. (2006) also noted, the quantity of faculty interaction was not nearly as predictive as the quality of faculty interaction. Fifteen participants spoke of having strong relationships with professors on campus. These relationships were characterized as strong because they involved multiple interactions, contact that extended beyond the classroom, and lasted more than one semester. While eight other participants mentioned having a relationship with faculty that revolved around academic and career discussions, they did not characterize the relationship in a way that could be recognized as being strong. Finally, four of the participants' relationships with faculty mainly centered around the faculty members' interest in football, and involved lenient policies that benefited the student-athletes, and were therefore not considered academically positive.

Dan was one of the students who had a strong relationship with a History professor at Pac-10 University. In describing this relationship, Dan noted that this professor had influenced his academic focus,

I took him actually, just like, last spring, in Latin American History. And I've always been kind of emphasized in like American Twentieth Century, that's just kind of what I liked, cuz it's where I came from. And I took Latin American History just cuz we have to have like world areas, and I was like, okay, Latin America. That was pretty close to where I am at. I guess it had more relevance. And he was actually really cool, a really good teacher, and it was really interesting. And now actually I just took History in Mexico in the summer, and I'm kind of even thinking about taking my senior seminar eventually in some sort of Latin American history. So it was really interesting. So he actually had a pretty good influence in my kind of direction.

In this case, Dan's experience highlighted how the relationship with this professor enhanced his academic experience by exposing him to an area that he had not previously considered to be of interest to him. His enthusiasm for the course content was evident.

For Jake, the most influential professor at Big 12 North was a finance professor. While he loved her class and found it personally relevant, even more important was the unofficial advising role she played in his college experience. He explained:

She's a business teacher, she's really, she's helped me ... she's just kind of helped us like, "Here's the teacher you want to have, he's very good. Here's what he can do," stuff. So, she's kind of pointed us in the right direction...I've asked her what's the best class, what can I do to get like my, work my Master's or what not and she's like, "Here's who you have to talk to," and all that type of stuff.

As an unofficial advisor, this professor was someone Jake identified as one to whom he could pose questions about his academic future. This important member of his academic role-set helped shape Jake's future outside of football, and was an excellent example of the strong relationships fifteen participants had with faculty.

For those whose relationships were not coded as strong, many took the form of the relationship Vince described having with a former professor:

There's one professor I had a couple of times; I could go ask her a question.

Author: Would you consider that professor someone you trust, or is that someone you've just had a few times?

Vince: I trust her because she, let me see, she um, she keep us ahead of things. She let us know if something that we need to do, she let us know about it so I think I could pretty much trust her.

Author: Is she a good teacher too? What makes her a good teacher?

Vince: Yeah. Cause if you don't do your work, she's just like my high school teacher, she ain't just gonna give you a grade.

In this example, Vince demonstrated that he believed he knew a professor well enough to seek academic advice. He trusted this woman, and also respected how fairly she treated her students. However, unlike those with strong relationships to faculty members, Vince only suspected that he could go to this professor, if needed. He did not indicate that he had actually sought her council, which was why this relationship was not classified as particularly strong.

As noted previously, four of the students felt that they had strong relationships with faculty, but in characterizing these relationships revealed that such relationships were more tied to their role as athletes, than students. Bart explained:

The one teacher that I do remember, and I did keep in touch with 'til he left, I forget his name; but he was like a sports junkie. So he told me to come after class during his office hours and work on my papers and stuff, but then it would end up just us talking about sports...But he would talk to me about – I had a couple teachers before that I felt like didn't give me a fair shot with my grade 'cause of the athlete thing. And he was one of the teachers that I could kinda vent to about it. And I don't know. He kinda, just kinda washed that out of my mind about thinking about what the teachers think about me. Just kinda putting it out there. You know, bringing my work and having it done well, that kinda thing. Don't give 'em an option.

Although this professor seemed to emphasize academics, his actions prevented academic pursuits from materializing in his office because he wanted to talk about sports. Such a mixed message about the importance of academics prevented this relationship from being characterized as a

quality academic relationship. While such relationships are discouraging, it is important to note that such relationships were only described in four participants' interviews, and that more than three times as many participants had strong faculty relationships.

Parents

While 22 of the participants discussed the significant role their parents played in their high school academic experiences, only 13 participants mentioned their parents when discussing college academics. Perhaps more even more important, only four of those 13 student-athletes discussed relying on their parents for academic support. Examples of such relationships can be found in Khalil's story:

My mom asks a lotta questions about, you know, what's going on, you know, "What class you got here? What class you got there?" And I tell her, you know, and she tells me, "Oh, keep working hard and make sure you get all your work done in time. Cuz she, you know, been – went to college not too long ago, she pretty much knows the ins and outs of what's expected.

Khalil's mom, having recently completed an Associate's degree herself, although not familiar with a four-year institution, was familiar enough with the process of course and major selection to keep tabs on her son and to understand his experience. Jake also used his mother's academic strengths when he emailed his papers to her for editing. Finally, Chris explained how he looked to his father for academic help as well, "[When] I have homework I can just call my dad and he'll connect me with somebody else in that field and just ask them the question. It really helps me out." In each case these students relied on their parents' social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) for academic support; each of these parents had a college degree. While nine students noted only checking in with their parents about grades, seven of these students were first-generation college students.

Discussion

While much of the student-athlete literature has focused on explaining low levels of academic persistence amongst high-profile student-athletes, it was hoped that this study would expand the discussion of the student-athlete experience in a new direction. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence the members of student-athletes' academic role-sets had on their college academic experiences. Six distinct groups of individuals were found to consistently influence academics, two traditionally from the athletic role-set (coaches and teammates), and four from the academic role-set (athletic academic advisors, nonathlete peers, faculty, and parents). While these groups were identified in the findings and their influence contextualized, this discussion provides a summary of the findings, notes their contributions to the literature and suggests areas for further research.

Coaches and athletic academic advisors were found to be the most powerful and visible members of the student-athletes' academic role-sets. Coaches focused their academic messages around maintaining academic eligibility, downplaying the chances of playing professionally, and stressing the importance of college graduation. The message that a degree was important to their futures was well received, yet some participants expressed a belief that a degree, even if unrelated to the profession to which they aspired, would still yield a long-term benefit. Such a finding is important because recent research has shown that the congruence between major

choice and individual interests is positively correlated with persistence (Allen & Robbins, 2007) and post-college earnings (Neumann, Olitsky, & Robbins, 2009). Although the coaches' messages might have stemmed from a desire to avoid NCAA penalties levied against the team for low graduation rates and maintained eligibility, the manner in which the participants interpreted this message led to behaviors that have been negatively associated with persistence and future salaries. While such ambivalence over major selection might be seen amongst the general student population, this finding nonetheless suggests a need for further examination of career development and major congruence amongst student-athletes.

While coaches played a heavy role in crafting messages about academics, the participants overwhelmingly relied on those within athletic academic support services for tangible academic assistance. Specifically, the student-athletes relied upon the academic support services department in five key areas, (a) to answer their academic questions, (b) to provide academic motivation, (c) to design their course schedule around football requirements, (d) to enforce time management, and (e) to identify tutors. While a few participants indicated feeling as though they had little autonomy in major and course selection, which supports the findings of Finch (2007), the data broaden the scope of influence these individuals can have, and call attention to the key academic motivational support some of these advisors provide for student-athletes.

In discussing the academic influence of fellow student-athletes (seven of which directly referred to a fellow teammate), how such support is able to influence the student-athletes' academic experiences was clearly demonstrated. However, while nine participants mentioned teammates or fellow athletes in discussing contributors to their academic development, it was only in the cases of Jose and Ashanti where a fellow athlete seemed to play a significant and powerful role in enhancing their learning experiences. Conversely, when asked who had contributed to their athletic development since their college arrival, 29 of the participants in the study (71% of the sample), credited their teammates with playing a significant, and in many cases the most salient role, in such development. This demonstrated that while fellow teammates might at times play a role in the academic development of fellow athletes, their influence as a whole remains largely athletic and not academic, which is supported in much of the literature. However, returning to the experiences of Ashanti and Jose, it is apparent that their mentors' shared experience as former college student-athletes served to further the bond between these participants and their mentors. Such results indicate great potential for academically successful student-athletes to mentor recently matriculated student-athletes, and is an area for continued research.

In addition to student-athlete peers, a few participants also credited nonathlete peers for assisting them academically. What might be most important about this finding is not the role played by nonathlete peers in the participants' academic role-sets, but the lack of nonathlete peers mentioned by these student-athletes during this study. While previous research has demonstrated the important role academically motivated peers can play to influence their friends in similar pursuits (Crosnoe et al., 2003, Dennis et al., 2005), the participants noted frequent isolation from the general student-body, which seemed to prevent such relationships from developing.

In exploring student-athletes' relationships with faculty, it was found that the majority of those engaged in strong faculty relationships were in their senior year. Most sophomores in the study did not feel as though they had connected with a faculty member. An area for further study would be to understand how these relationships unfold, and whether such relationships could be fostered earlier in a student-athlete's time on campus. Understand the role faculty can

play as mentors for both academic and career trajectories (as discussed in greater depth by Harrison et al., 2006), it would be ideal if student-athletes could connect earlier on in their campus career. Attracting the right faculty into such programs would need to be a strategic process. The faculty shown to have quality relationships with the participants were primarily interested in them as students; while they might have come to the game to cheer for these students, their mentoring and motivational support was discussed along the lines of major selection, graduate studies, and career decisions. Faculty, like the professor Bart described as a “sports junkie,” who spend time with the student-athletes exclusively reviewing the week’s news in sport do not provide the desired academic mentorship, and would need to be weeded from the pool of faculty mentor candidates.

Parental involvement is not often discussed in college student-athlete literature, however research has demonstrated that students whose parents had college experience themselves report higher levels of adjustment than first-generation college students (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). This finding has been attributed to the students’ ability to tap into their parents’ social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) while navigating college. Toews and Yazedjian (2007) found that while parents who did not attend college were able to offer emotional support (ie. empathy), they were unable to offer academic assistance. Such research lends itself to explain why the first-generation students in the sample who noted academically involved parents reported only discussing grades with their parents, while those whose parents attended college credited parents with editing their papers, providing contacts for research assignments, and assisting them with course selection. For first-generation college students, such findings only add to the existing literature which suggests that forging relationships that provide academic motivation and assistance is especially important for these individuals, because college success skills have not been passed down by family members.

Concluding Thoughts

This examination of the student-athlete academic role-set has in many ways confirmed the findings of others, while the in-depth qualitative interviews have contributed a more nuanced picture of student-athletes’ experiences in balancing their athletic and academic role-identities. This study also has contributed to the body of research on intercollegiate student-athletes in three ways, (a) by exposing concerns regarding the messages student-athletes are receiving about the importance of a college degree and the irrelevance of major choice, (b) highlighting the positive role athletic academic advisors can in the academic experience, and (c) by including the role of parents in the discussion. There is future research to be done to deepen our understanding of the impact of these academic role-set members. However, it is hoped that this study has provided an understanding of the breadth of actors who find themselves in student-athletes’ academic role-sets, and the level of influence these individuals can have depending on the strength and focus of the relationship.

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Appendix A

<i>Site</i>	Carnegie Classification@	% Caucasian enrolled^	% African American enrolled^	% grad w/in 6 years^	% African American grad w/in 6 years^	% Admitted	<i>Conference</i>	Bowls between 2000 & 2008#	Team APR*	Team GSR**
Big 12 North University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4/MS: Full-time four-year, more selective • RU/VH: Research University (very high research activity) 	78%	2%	67%	51%	81.5%	Big 12-North	5\$	929	75
Pac-10 University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4/MS: Full-time four-year, more selective • RU/VH: Research University (very high research activity) 	51% (26% Asian)	3%	75%	68%	64.6%	Pac-10	3\$	948	65
Big 12 South University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4/MS: Full-time four-year, more selective • RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity) 	78%	3%	78%	65%	72.1%	Big 12-South	5\$	932	56
Atlantic Coast University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4/MS: Full-time four-year, more selective • RU/VH: Research University (very high research activity) 	72%	11%	83%	76%	34.1%	ACC	3\$	947	78
USA University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FT4/S: Full-time four-year, selective • RU/H: Research University (high research activity) 	65%	29%	48%	44%	57.6%	Conference USA	7	958	80
National Average	--	--	9% (for Div 1)	56%	40%		--	--		--

Sites * 2006-07 Team APR from NCAA 5/2/08 <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=329>

**1998-2001 Cohorts GSR (Graduation Success Rate) from NCAA 1/6/09 <http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?ContentID=5652>

^From <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> Accessed 8/16/2008

#From http://www.collegefootballpoll.com/bowl_games.html Accessed 8/16/08

@From <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/index.asp?key=782> Accessed 8/16/08

\$Among the top-30 universities with the most all-time bowl appearances

Downloaded from <http://csri-jiia.org>

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Appendix B

Participants

Pseudonym^	Site	Race%	NLI Class	String *	Father's Edu**	Mother's Edu**	HS GPA	College GPA	Major***	AIMS	AIMI
Shaun	Big 12 North	AA	2004	1st	BA/BS	BA/BS	3.1	2.75	ECON	49	41
James Smith	Big 12 North	AA	2004	1st	Mil	SC	2.4	2.9	Int'l Affairs	46	43
Jontay Williams	Big 12 North	AA	2004	1st	BA/BS	Cos	3.97	2.8	SOC	40	44
Bill	Big 12 North	C	2004	1st	MA/MS	BA/BS	3.2	2.8	ECON	49	49
Jake	Big 12 North	C	2006	1st	BA/BS	SC	3.85	3	Finance	47	34
Dan	Big 12 North	C	2005	1st	SC	SC	3.2	2.2	HIS	54	41
Ben	Big 12 North	API	2006	3rd	SC	HS	3.2	2.6	EDU	36	44
CJ	Big 12 North	AA	2006	4th	SHS	HS	3	2.4	HIS	57	61
Donald	USA	AA & C	2006	1st	N/A	SC	3	2.7	Coaching	47	37
Trip	USA	C	2004	1st	AA/AS	Cos	2.6	2.55	Coaching	54	48
Andre	USA	AA	2006	2nd	SHS	HS	2.9	2.3	Bus Law	53	61
Eddie	USA	AA	2004	2nd	N/A	SC	2.8	2.45	Coaching	56	65
Matt	USA	C	2003	2nd	AA/AS	AA/AS	3.4	2.97	Arch Engr	57	41
Aaron	USA	AA	2006	3rd/PS	BA/BS	MA/MS	3.7	2.5	Coaching	57	32
Vince	USA	AA	2006	PS	SHS	HS	2.3	1.9	Coaching	65	41
Champ	USA	AA	2006	PS	HS	AA/AS	2.7	N/A	Sport Mgmt.	58	41
Donald	USA	AA & C	2006	1st	N/A	SC	3	2.7	Coaching	47	37
Alex	Big 12 South	AA	2006	2nd	HS	SC	3.6	2.4	Kinesiology	58	49
Kevin	Big 12 South	AA	2006	2nd	Mil	BA/BS	3	2.4	Sport Mgmt.	59	48
Ashanti	Big 12 South	African	2004	2nd	BA/BS	HS	2.3	2.4	PSYC	37	44
Kurt	Big 12 South	C	2004	2nd	HS	BA/BS	3.7	1.9	AG	61	40
Rex	Big 12 South	C	2004	2nd	BA/BS	HS	3.2	2.6	AG	53	49
Cal	Big 12 South	C	2006	2nd	BA	BA/BS	3.7	2.6	Sport Mgmt.	53	46
Keondra	Big 12 South	AA	2004	PS	BA/BS	BA/BS	2.5	2.35	AG	47	57
Chris	Big 12 South	C	2006	PS	BA/BS	BA/BS	3.64	2.8	Sport Mgmt.	54	48

Pseudonym [^]	Site	Race	NLI Class	String *	Father's Edu**	Mother's Edu**	HS GPA	College GPA	Major***	AIMS	AIMI
Khalil	AC	AA	2006	1st	HS	AA/AS	2.65	2.73	COM	53	48
Antoine	AC	AA	2006	1st	SHS	HS	3.2	N/A	EDU	67	52
Greg	AC	C	2005	1st	BA/BS	BA/BS	3.4	2.9	COM	62	43
Rob	AC	C	2006	1st	MA/MS	MA/MS	3	2.5	COM, SOC	56	47
Carson	AC	C	2005	1st	HS	BA/BS	3.2	2.5	Kinesiology	59	29
Tom	AC	C	2007	1st	SC	SC	3.8	3.1	PSYC	54	47
Daryl	AC	AA	2006	2nd	N/A	AA/AS	3.5	2.9	MGMT	54	28
Ellis	AC	AA	2006	3rd	HS	SC	3.6	2.9	COM	61	61
Jamel	Pac-10	AA	2006	1st	HS	HS	2.8	2.7	COM	52	47
Derrick	Pac-10	AA	2004	1st	BA/BS	MA/MS	3.6	N/A	SOC	47	37
Bart	Pac-10	AA & C	2004	1st	Mil	SC	2.7	N/A	Interdis	62	43
Davis	Pac-10	C	2006	1st	BA/BS	Unk	3.72	N/A	BIO	50	41
George	Pac-10	C	2006	2nd	BA/BS	BA/BS	N/A	N/A	HIS	48	43
Jose Mendoza	Pac-10	L	2004	2nd	LTHS	SC	2.6	N/A	SOC	32	34
Tyrell	Pac-10	AA	2004	PS	SC	SC	2.58	N/A	Interdis	47	50
David	Pac-10	AA	2006	PS	N/A	MA/MS	2.7	N/A	Interdis	44	43

[^]Pseudonyms were used for each participant, unless otherwise requested. Participants were asked to determine their own pseudonym, and many did, while others left it up to the researcher. Only one participant asked that his name be used, and in this case only his first name was used in the study. Last names were given unless requested by the participants.

% AA=African American, African=Student identified self as an African immigrant, and noted feeling racially distanced from African Americans, API=Asian/Pacific Islander, C=Caucasian, L=Latino

*PS = Practice Squad

**LTHS= Less than high school, SHS = Some high school, HS = High school diploma, Cos = Cosmetology certificate, Mil = Enlisted in military, SC = Some college, AA/AS = Associate's degree, BA/BS = Bachelor's degree, MA/MS = Graduate/professional degree or higher, Unk = Did not know, N/A = father does not play a role in his life

***HRM = Human Resources Mgmt., Arch Engr = Architectural Engineering, AG = Agriculture, Interdis = Interdisciplinary studies