

**NCAA DIVISION I STUDENT-ATHLETE AND ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATOR
PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
AT ONE UNIVERSITY IN THE NORTHWESTERN UNITED STATES**

A Dissertation

by

AMI LYNN ROTHBERG

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies at
Texas A & M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: Kinesiology

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ABSTRACT

NCAA Division I Student-Athlete and Athletic Administrator Perceptions of Social Support in the Athletic Department at One University in the Northwestern United States.

(May 2011)

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Student-athletes' and athletic administrators' perceptions of available and accessible social support in the athletic department are explored. Interviews were conducted with three athletic administrators whose job responsibilities are most focused on student-athlete welfare and 13 student-athletes from a NCAA Division I University from the Pacific Ten Conference in the Northwestern United States chosen from a purposive sample based on demographic characteristics and nominations. Interviews were conducted with participants until informational redundancy was achieved. The university was chosen based on diversity of student-athletes, proximity to researcher, and access granted to student-athletes for interviews. Interview questions were based on the psychosocial model of development. Data from interviews were analyzed thematically using five dimensions of social support to examine the differences and similarities between the types of support identified as available and accessible by student-athletes and athletic administrators. From the 13 student-athletes and three

athletic administrators that were interviewed, 38 categories were identified in the themes of emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, appraisal support, and lack of support. Student-athletes identified 29 categories in the five themes and athletic administrators identified 19 categories in the five themes. Similarities between student-athletes and athletic administrators were found in 14 categories. Student-athletes identified 13 categories that athletic administrators did not and athletic administrators identified six categories that student-athletes did not. Implications of the results for student-athletes and athletic administrators are discussed.

DEDICATION

This project would not be possible without the love and support of my friends and family. To my fellow health education students at Texas A&M University, thank you for being there for me, for helping me work through the rough times and for inspiring me to be a better student, teacher, and researcher.

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Finally, to Chris, thank you for being my best friend and for loving me unconditionally through the good times and the bad. It was hard being apart for so long but you understood the importance of this degree and were patient. When I decided to

complete my degree in Idaho to be with you, we knew it would be hard and very stressful. Thank you for dealing with the bad days and for always having a shoulder for me to lean on. Without you I would be less complete. This is for you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student-athletes have been found to not only experience the same stressors as their non-student-athlete peers but to also have additional stressors that require specialized social support (Donohue, Miller, Crammer, Cross, & Covassin, 2007; Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991; Giaccobi et al., 2004; Hinkle, 1994, Parham, 1993; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989; Richards & Aries, 1999; Tracey & Corlett, 1995). Similarly, student-athletes have been shown to have the same developmental needs as non-student-athletes but due to the consuming nature of athletics may be lacking in specific developmental skills (Parham, 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Athletic departments at universities and colleges are in a position to be responsible for the support and developmental needs of the student-athletes that are brought to the institution and should play an active role in maintaining their well-being.

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

The purpose of this research was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social network compared to the forms of social support described as available and accessible to the student-athlete by administrative personnel in the institution's athletic department. Using House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model the research aimed to categorize the perceived forms of social support described by the student-athletes and administrators to explore possible similarities and disconnects between the types of social support identified by each group.

Social support is defined as "an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient" (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p. 13). Bianco and Eklund (2001) define social support as activities that individuals engage in with the intention of helping one another, which includes examination of support activities that both fail and succeed. Social support includes listening without judging or giving advice, emotional support, emotional challenge to overcome obstacles, technical appreciation of work well-done, technical challenge to achieve more, and shared social reality with people who have similar values and verification of perception (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981).

The perception that support is available to help redefines the threat of a stressor and alters self-efficacy to cope, which leads to belief of control and prevents a stressor from becoming appraised as harmful (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Although perceived support buffers the effect of stress to a point, if a stressor is left unresolved the student-

athlete may need to receive support, which must be available and accessible (Rees & Freeman, 2007). Through received social support, individuals develop a sense of availability of support. Perceived and received social support should be increased regardless of the student-athletes' level of stress because both perception of support and reception of support are important in reduction of stress (Rees & Freeman, 2007).

Student-athletes are a special population with unique concerns that non-student-athletes may not experience including but not limited to time management, social isolation, performance success, injury, complex relationships, values, personal competence (Parham, 1993), identity conflicts, substance use/abuse, career choice (Pinkerton, et al., 1989), and training intensity (Giaccobi etl al., 2004). Valentine and Taub (1999) suggested, due to these additional stressors, 'normal' identity development for student-athletes is more difficult than non-student-athletes and counselors working with student-athletes should be aware of extra stressors.

Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model, re-evaluated in 1993 by Chickering and Reisser (1993), helps describe the developmental needs of student-athletes. The psychosocial model's central developmental task of identity formation is broken down in to seven components, which Chickering (1969) called vectors to signify the importance of directionality and magnitude of the tasks (Valentine & Taub, 1999). The seven vectors consist of competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The model is of the "most well-known, widely used, and comprehensive model[s] available for

understanding and describing the psychosocial development of college students” (Valentine & Taub, 1999). Student-athletes master Chickering’s (1969) developmental tasks as well as student-athlete specific tasks such as maintaining eligibility, managing injury, coping with training and competition demands, retirement, substance abuse, and dealing with eating disorders, self-esteem problems, and career development (Broughton, 2001).

College and university athletic departments and their social network support services have changed over time from being concerned solely with academics to a more holistic focus. In the 1970s advising and counseling was based on class scheduling, academic tutoring, and time management (Shriberg & Brodzinski, 1984). During this time athletic departments began to view student-athletes as a unique population with special concerns and issues (Broughton, 2001). In 1975 the National Association of Advisors for Athletes (N4A) was established to address academic and personal issues. N4A suggested advisors work to maintain eligibility and achieve higher graduation rates as well as continue working with class scheduling, tutoring, and time management (Petitpas, Buntrock, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 1995). Since then sport psychology and mental health counseling for student-athletes have also been developed and included in the social support network at many athletic institutions (Petitpas et al., 1995). Hinkle (1994) suggested advisors should offer educational, developmental, and remedial programs; and professionals should be involved in performance enhancement, developmental and clinical counseling. Also in 1994, the NCAA implemented the Challenging Athletes’ Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS) life skills program, an

elective program, which focuses on student-athlete development in academics, athletics, personal development, career development and community service (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.).

Not only do student-athletes have unique stressors, they have shown higher levels of clinical psychological problems alongside strong reluctance to seek help for these problems (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991; Maniar, Chamberlain, & Moore, 2005; Pinkerton, et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Student-athletes need available and accessible support in all four of House's (1981) dimensions of social support in order to develop Chickering's (1969) seven task skills necessary for identity establishment. Some forms of social support can come from lay people, however particular forms of support (technical challenge, technical appreciation, emotional counseling) require expertise. Authors have suggested support requiring content expertise come from a professionally trained practitioner (Storch, Storch, & Killiany, 2005; Valentine & Taub, 1999).

Common forms of support provided by athletic departments include psychoeducational life skills, academic advising, performance enhancement, and clinical counseling (Broughton, 2001). Psychoeducational skills are addressed using the CHAMPS life skills program at member institutions, or through special courses or seminars. Academic advising is focused not only on course scheduling and graduation success, but also on career planning. Performance enhancement includes coaches, strength trainers and sport psychologists whose goal is to improve the student-athletes' performance on the field of play. Clinical counseling for psychological problems is dealt

with in house (if a trained counselor is employed by the athletic department), or outsourced to a private practitioner or the university's mental health clinic. Other forms of support come from athletic trainers and team doctors who aid student-athletes in avoiding injury and rehabilitating injured student-athletes, and nutritionists who ensure that the student-athlete is eating proper foods in the right amounts to prepare for the requirements of sport participation.

Objective and rationale

With so many forms of support to address the social and developmental needs of student-athletes, it would seem that they are well taken care of and should have no problems. However, as mentioned previously, student-athletes are shown to have more psychological problems than non-student-athletes despite the forms of support available (Maniar, et al., 2005; Pinkerton, et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Both the high levels of life stress and perceptions of support may play a role in the psychological wellness of the student-athlete. If a student-athlete does not perceive that support is available or accessible from the athletic department, he or she may not seek out professional help, thus leaving the student-athlete to depend on family, friends, and teammates for support who (in the case of teammates especially) may have similar problems or are not trained to diagnose and deal with the psychological problem. What is perceived to be available corresponds to what is, in fact, available in the athletic social network. It is important to understand the relationship between what social support a student-athlete perceives as available and accessible from the athletic department and the

types of social support the athletic department is providing. An understanding of this relationship may help explain the barriers to utilization of support services thus result in provision of more effective forms of social support, which may in turn help to improve the development and wellness of the student-athletes.

The use of both House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969) model of psychosocial development allowed me to focus on who provides what types of support and why support is provided in the athletic social network. Currently, literature on student-athlete support is focused either on one dimension of well being (such as depression or life stress), or one group (athletic directors or student-athletes). An exploration of similarities and differences in perceptions of available and accessible support between athletic administrators and student-athletes is beneficial in that it explores multiple dimensions of well being and both the recipients and providers of support. This multifaceted approach adds to existing literature by being multidimensional and multi-focused.

Research questions

1. What types of social support do student-athletes perceive to be available and accessible in their athletic social network?
2. What types of social support do athletic administrators perceive to be available and accessible to the student-athletes in the athletic social network?
3. How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network similar?

4. How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network different?

Methodology

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with student-athletes at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northwestern United States using purposive sampling to recruit participants. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with the Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator, Director of Academic Services for Student-Athletes, and Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills at the same institution. Interview questions aimed to explore student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of available and accessible social support in the athletic network were based on House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model. Thematic analysis of interview responses was used to compare student-athletes' and athletic administrators' perceptions.

Definition of terms

1. Student-athlete: undergraduate college student who is a member of a varsity athletic team at the institution
2. Athletic administrator: administrative staff member in the varsity athletic department at the institution.

3. Social support: “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p. 13).
4. Emotional support: provision of empathy, love, trust, and understanding (House, 1981).
5. Instrumental support: provision of tangible aid and services (House, 1981).
6. Informational support: provision of advice, suggestions, and information (House, 1981).
7. Appraisal support: provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes (House, 1981).
8. Lack of support: areas of concern that are not addressed.
9. Athletic social network: includes staff, personnel, administrators and fellow student-athletes employed within or related to the varsity athletic programs at the institution.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social network compared to the forms of social support described as available and accessible to the student-athlete by administrative personnel in the institution’s athletic department. Using House’s (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering’s (1969)

psychosocial model the research aimed to categorize the perceived forms of social support described by the student-athletes and administrators to explore possible similarities and disconnects between the types of social support identified by each group. Following chapters include: (a) literature review, (b) methodology, (c) findings, and (d) conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Support Theory is a wholly undefined metaconstruct, or “a higher-order theoretical construct comprised of several legitimate and distinguishable theoretical constructs” (Vaux, 1988, p. 28), including support network resources, supportive behavior, and subjective appraisals of support (Vaux, 1988). Hupcey (1998) explains there are multiple definitions of social support and as a metaconstruct, one definition has not been (and arguably should not be) used. Most literature includes Shumaker and Brownell’s (1984) definition of social support as being “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient” (p. 13).

The metaconstruct can be traced back to Emile Durkheim, often referred to as the father of sociology, and his study of social facts (House, 1987). Durkheim laid the groundwork for highly influential social support theorists, Barnes, Cobb, Cassell, and Caplan and Killilea. Barnes (1954), for instance, coined the term ‘social network’ in 1954 when he wrote of his immersion in a Norwegian island parish. He explained social networks by stating, “the image I have is of a set of points some of which are joined by lines. The points of the image are people, or sometimes groups, and the lines indicate which people interact with each other” (p. 43). Networks of this kind have no boundary or clear-cut internal divisions, for each person sees himself at the center of a collection of friends (Barnes, 1954). Identification of the term initiated an interest in defining the form and function of social networks and the interaction of social support and well

being. Most historical accounts of social support research began with the work of Cobb, Cassell, and Caplan and Killilea.

From 1974 to 1976 Cobb, Cassell, and Caplan and Killilea researched how social support acts to buffer the adverse effects of stress. Cassel's (1976) "inquiries [were] devoted to analyzing how people's interactions with the social environment conspire to augment their vulnerability to illness and disease, and how social forces can be mobilized in these situations for the sake of health protection" (Vaux, 1988, p. 8). His view was support provided by groups most important to an individual served a protective function, cushioning the individual from negative or stressful experiences (Vaux, 1988). Caplan and Killilea (1974) elaborated on

"the kind of help the support system might provide, suggesting three main sets of activities: helping one mobilize psychological resources to manage emotional problems; sharing demanding tasks; and providing materials, money, skills, and guidance to help in dealing with specific stressors" (Vaux, 1988, p. 6).

Vaux (1988) did not expand or suggest how the structure of social support systems are maintained but noted the importance of "reciprocity and durability of relationships" (p. 6). Later, Cobb regarded the "importance of social support in relation to stress and well-being" (Vaux, 1988, p. 7). Cobb (1976) believed social support functioned to fulfill social needs and protect individuals from adverse consequences resulting from negative events and stressors. Cobb's (1976) research showed "social support [should] be viewed as information: specifically, information leading the person to believe that he or she is

cared for and loved, is valued and esteemed, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation” (Vaux, 1988, p. 7).

From the working definition of what social support is and does in the 1970s, research on the construct moved to classifying types of support related to function in the 1980s. Weiss (1974) claimed individuals’ needs are met through social relationships, and relationships are specialized for what they provide. Multiple researchers developed classification models of these specialized relationships for social support, so numerous that explanation of all of the models is beyond the scope of this chapter. House’s (1980) classification into four categories, instrumental, informational, appraisal, and emotional, is used by Glanz, Reimer, and Viswanath (2008) in their explanation of Social Support Theory. House’s (1981) classification into four categories is often cited in the literature and will serve as the theoretical model for this research on perceptions of social support in athletic social networks. The four types of support include:

- (1) emotional support: provision of empathy, love, trust, and understanding,
- (2) instrumental support: provision of tangible aid and services,
- (3) informational support: provision of advice, suggestions, and information,
- (4) appraisal support: provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes (House, 1981).

The remainder of this review of the literature will focus on social support in the collegiate athletic social network. It will discuss (a) buffering and main effects of social support, (b) contextual implications of social support, (c) factors that influence provision of social support, (d) the life-stress-injury relationship, (e) stressors unique to student-

athletes and support required, (e) the psychosocial model and student-athlete identity development, (f) discussion of the six functions of social support and seven vectors of the psychosocial model as they relate to collegiate student-athletes, and (g) summary statements.

Buffering vs main effect of social support

While early work on type of support viewed support as a unitary factor, later the concept was approached as complex and multidimensional (Jacobsen, 1986). Support is meant to gratify basic needs, form identity (through interactions with others), enhance self-esteem, reduce stress (through cognitive appraisal), and function as a coping strategy (by providing resources)(Shumaker & Brownell, 1984).

Social support researchers discuss two ways social support works to alleviate the negative effects of stressful life events: the buffering effect, or the main/direct effect model. Udry (2006) explains in the main/direct-effect model that social support is beneficial regardless of stress level. In this model, as the effectiveness of social support increases, mental and physical functioning increase and as the effectiveness of social support decreases, mental and physical functioning decrease (Udry, 2006). The buffering model is only apparent in those experiencing high stress. Increased social support makes the relationship between stress and well being negligible, low levels of social support strengthens the relationship between health and stress (Udry, 1996). Measures of social support often buffer the impact of stress on mental health and may sometimes have main

effects on health as well (House, 1987). Which model is best has not been decided conclusively and there is support for the importance of both models.

The main effect model is supported when social support is used in response to needs elicited by stressful events. The buffering model is supported when social supports are in place and in effect prior to and during a stressful event, allowing the person to perceive support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The buffering effect requires changing the person's perceptions of support through continuous availability and accessibility, and receipt of support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Availability of support does not constitute social support; support must be perceived as intended to enhance well being (Udry, 1996). Perception or belief that emotional support is available appears to be a much stronger influence on mental health than the actual receipt of social support (Dunkel-Schetter & Bennet, 1990), however received social support promotes perceptions of availability (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Perceived support is primarily associated with the main effect model and received support fits within stress-buffering model (Bianco & Eklund, 2001; Rees & Freeman, 2007; Freeman & Rees, 2010).

When individuals are exposed to stressful events, social support acts as a buffer by attenuating the cognitive appraisal of events as stressful or by functioning as a coping mechanism (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Situations where provider and recipient perceive an exchange as supportive represent the optimal form of perceived support (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). Perceived emotional and informational support was found to predict self-confidence in student-athletes (Freeman & Rees, 2010). Perceptions of support reduce fears of failure and anticipations of danger because of the availability of caring

providers, which frees the individual to attend to the realities of situations, explore alternative approaches to them, take reasonable risks, and deal with the task at hand (Sarason & Sarason, 2009).

Context

Whether the support is perceived to be available or actually provided, it must be seen as helpful by the recipient and provided at the right time in order to be considered the right type (House, 1981). According to Hardy et al. (1991), “social support is beneficial to the extent that there is correspondence between the type of stressor and the type of social support available” (p. 137). When providers and recipients of social support differ in their ideas about how and when support should be provided, recipients are unlikely to feel they received what they needed (Udry, 1996). Without provision of the correct type of social support at the right time, the recipient may perceive less social support will be available in the future, which may affect his or her help-seeking behavior and well being.

Not only is the time and type of received support important, social support is context dependent and should be analyzed based on the situation, time, culture, social structure (network), and personal characteristics of the recipient and provider (Jacobsen, 1986). A variety of situations—coaches, teammates, social inequality, gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinity, lack of a sense of competence—were contexts found to influence athletes to perceive their sport experience as stressful (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). Multiple authors suggest we need to understand the ecology of the

particular system within which a stressor is occurring to understand how interpersonal relationships will function (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1990, Thoits, 1995, Rosenfeld, Richman, & Hardy, 1989).

Factors that influence provision of social support

Whether a network member provides specific dimensions of support may depend on various factors, including the provider's relationship with the recipient and whether network members possess the specific knowledge and expertise required by that particular support dimension (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). The relationship between recipient and provider may be informal; if the provider does not feel it is appropriate to provide the type of support then the recipient will go without. The provider must also realize that support is needed. While physically injured athletes have outward manifestation of their condition (for example, crutches), which are visible and may enhance mobilization of resources. This may not occur with psychosocial problems (Udry 1997). Rosenfeld and Richman (1997) explain

“If the recipient is unwilling to seek or accept support, or does not know how or from whom to seek it, or if providers in the environment do not perceive that they are being asked to provide social support, or are unable or unwilling to provide support, the process does not result in an exchange of resources” (p. 138).

Having the proper knowledge to provide support can be a hindrance. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests athletes are most likely to seek support to

deal with their pain and injuries from others in similar circumstances or with a firsthand understanding of their athletic role (coaches, athletic trainers, teammates). Support from athletic trainers is often seen when dealing with injury. Weiss and Troxel (1986) found athletic trainers admit although physical treatment is their primary responsibility, emotional and psychological assistance are needed as well. Athletic trainers should be skilled enough to recognize psychological reactions and have intervention skills or ability to refer to a professional, but are often lacking these skills and education (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2006; Holt, 2005; Kolt & Anderson, 2004, Taylor & Taylor, 1998). Due to the admitted absence of education about psychological assistance, professionals should be involved in diagnosis and in preventive medicine (Cassel, 1990). Provided they have been adequately educated in recognizing psychological problems, athletic trainers could be instrumental in referring student-athletes to psychological counseling as they satisfy the social support needs of student-athletes (Robbins & Rosenfeld, 2001).

Another factor affecting provision and receipt of social support is the recipient's individual characteristics. Individual characteristics enhancing the willingness and ability to reach out into the environment and obtain support include self-perceived effective interpersonal skills, feelings of self-efficacy, low levels of anxiety, and positive expectations about interactions with others (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). A person who has better social skills is more likely to have a larger network from which to draw support from. When the person knows s/he has good interpersonal skills, s/he may feel more confident in her/his ability to receive help. The ability to seek help has positive health benefits. Seeking social support has been identified as a beneficial contributor to

stress-tolerance and has been shown to function as both a moderator and a mediator of stress-illness relations (Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenwalk, Gurung, & Updegraff, 2000).

Life stress-injury relationship

The life-stress-injury relationship has been a hot topic in social support research among student-athletes (Anderson & Williams, 1988; Bramwell, Masuda, Wagner, & Holmes, 1975; Cryan & Alles 1983; Duda, Smart, & Tappe, 1989; Fisher, Domm, & Wuest, 1988; Hardy & Crace, 1993; Hardy & Riehl, 1988; Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Kerr & Minden, 1988; Nixon, 1994; Passer & Seese, 1983; Petrie, 1992; Smith, Smoll & Ptacek, 1990; Udry, 1996; Williams & Roepke, 1993; Williams, Tonymon, & Wadsworth, 1986). There is a relationship between life stress and athletic injury, but it may be specific to a given sport and situation, thus the life-stress-injury relationship may not be immediately generalizable to all athletic environments and must be viewed in context (Bramwell, et al., 1975; Cryan & Alles, 1983; Kerr & Minden, 1988; Passer & Seese, 1983; Hardy & Riehl, 1988; Williams, et al., 1986). The ‘sport ethic,’ life-stress and daily hassles, personality, and coping resources/social support influence the life-stress-injury relationship of student-athletes.

According to Hughes and Coakley (1991), athletes hear repetitively the need to be dedicated, set goals, persevere until goals are achieved, define adversity as a challenge, and be willing to make sacrifices and subjugate other experiences associated with “growing up” for the sake of their quest to become all they can be in sport. These norms are internalized and used as standards for evaluation of self and others,

encouraging some to over-conform in ways seen as deviant within society, such as being overly thin or overly aggressive. Being an athlete involves accepting risks and playing through the pain. Athletes are expected to display coolness and composure as they willingly confront and overcome fears and challenges (Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Nixon, 1994). When it comes to seeking help, “most athletes do not think outsiders know what it is really like to be an athlete; non-athletes just do not understand,” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 313) thus student-athletes are less likely to seek help and less likely to seek help outside of the athletic social network (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991).

The athletes’ personality has an affect on the life-stress-injury relationships as well. According to Anderson and Williams (1988),

“Individuals with a lot of stress in their lives who have personality traits that tend to exacerbate the stress response and few coping resources will, in a stressful situation, be more likely to appraise the situation as stressful, exhibit greater muscle tension and attentional changes, and thus be at greater risk of injury compared to individuals who have the opposite profile” (p. 298).

If an athlete perceives resources to exceed demands, cognitive appraisal of stress of the situation will be minimal and vice versa. The authors explain “the presence of a supportive social network (family, friends, coach, sports medicine staff, and teammate support) may directly inoculate the athlete against injury or may attenuate the stressfulness of life events and daily hassles as well as the stressfulness of athletic participation” (Anderson & Williams, 1988, p. 302). A history of negative life events

and low social support may have an effect on personality and leave athletes with less than optimal resources to handle stress, and when under stress (such as competition) may induce a pronounced stress response that leaves them open to injury (Anderson & Williams, 1999).

Social support reduces the risk of injury by attenuating the life-stress-injury relationship. In general, high levels of support lead to a competitive situation being appraised as less stressful, thus less attentional and physiological changes are likely to occur, making injury less likely to occur as well. When there is low social support, a student-athlete is less able to cope, perceives the situation as stressful, and appraises the situation as threatening, leading to an increased likelihood of injury (Petrie, 1992).

Social support is a moderator variable in life-stress-injury relationship but the relationship is complex and several variables must be considered in tandem with the relationship (gender, starting position, sport ethic, coping ability)(Udry, 1996). Williams & Roepke (1993), Hardy et al. (1991), and Petrie (1992) found injuries tended to occur two to five times more frequently in athletes with high life stress, which increased in direct proportion to life-stress, increasing in proportion to the amount of stress experienced. Smith et al. (1990) explain social support and coping skills moderate the life stress/injury relationship; athletes low in both social support and coping skills are most likely to suffer an injury.

Unique stressors and required support

Most life stress research focuses on major episodes of negative life stress such as the loss of a loved one or becoming unemployed; however, daily hassles can add up over time to be perceived as stressful. Student-athletes have the same academic, emotional, and personal issues as non-student athletes but face additional stressors that may require serious counseling (Donohue, et al., 2007; Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991; Giaccobi et al., 2004; Hinkle, 1994, Parham, 1993; Pinkerton et al., 1989; Richards & Aries, 1999; Tracey & Corlett, 1995). Parham (1993) lists demands for student-athletes to include balancing athletic and academic endeavors, balancing social activities with isolation, balancing athletic success with lack of success, balancing physical health and injuries, balancing several relationships (coaches, parents, family, friends), and dealing with termination of career. Pinkerton et al. (1989) summarized personal and psychological problems of student-athletes to include identity conflicts, fear of success/failure, social isolation, poor athletic performance, academic problems, drug/alcohol problems, career-related concerns, interpersonal relationships, and injury. Giaccobi et al. (2004) add training intensity, high performance expectations, interpersonal relationships, being away from home and academics to student-athletes' unique list of stressors. Tracey and Corlett (1995) found student-athletes to have feelings of being mentally and physically overwhelmed, experiencing isolation and loneliness, and needing to balance freedom and responsibility as difficult challenges for first year track and field athletes. Personal competence, identity issues, and values are additional stressors identified by Parham (1993).

Reluctance to seek help for these issues has been explained by Etzel, Ferrante, and Pinckney (1991). The high-visibility of student-athletes precludes assurance of confidentiality/privacy, time limitations make seeking outside help more difficult, and student-athletes believe that what they need can only be found in the athletic social network. Other reasons student-athletes avoid seeking help outside the athletic social network include the perception of others that the student-athlete is weak/crazy to seek counseling, and the counselor not being understanding of athletic issues are all reasons that student-athletes avoid seeking help inside or outside the athletic social network.

Student-athletes on average experience more psychological problems than non-student athletes but greatly underutilize school counseling and mental health services compared to non-student-athletes (Maniar, Chamberlain, & Moore, 2005; Pinkerton, et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Although they are less likely than non-student athletes to seek help, student-athletes report needing counseling for time management, stress, burnout, fear of failure, anxiety, depression, and performance related issues (Ferrante & Etzel, 1991; Murray, 1997). Mentink (2002) found coaches had difficulty recognizing signs of depression in players and it has been discussed that athletic trainers do not have adequate education to diagnose or recognize psychological problems (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2006; Holt, 2005; Kolt & Anderson, 2004, Taylor & Taylor, 1998).

Hausenblas & McNally (2004) found high levels of exercise leads to increased risk for developing eating disorders. Individuals with eating disorders are more likely to be passive and dependent and more likely to have the desire to please others, making them more susceptible to external expectations (Graham, 2000). In a study of athletes,

Ryujin, Breaux, and Marks (1999) ascertained eating disorder characteristics, such as excessive amounts of exercise, are more likely to be present in those athletes who had more pressure from external sources. The athletic environment and subsequent amounts of external pressure have been found to be predictive of increased levels of disordered eating patterns, however, it has been shown athletics may serve as a buffer to body image concerns as well (Wilkins & Boland 1991). Turner & Avison (1992) used crisis theory to argue only unresolved negative events have damaging psychological consequences, such as depression and Thoits (1983) explain events that are negative or threatening, major or highly disruptive precipitate psychological distress and more serious forms of psychiatric disorder. This supports the argument that an early and positive therapeutic relationship with a trained professional is essential, as is a firm confrontation of problems in order to counteract denial (Pinkerton, et al., 1989).

Support for psychological problems is not the only form of support needed in the athletic social network. Hildebrand, Johnston, and Bogle (2001) found student-athletes are more likely to engage in risky behaviors and are at greater risk for alcohol use with more extreme styles of consumption, higher binge drinking rates, and get drunk more often. Student-athletes are also more likely to experience negative consequences such as hangovers, academic problems, relationship problems, criminal behavior and victimization, injury, and unplanned/unprotected sex (Leichliter, Meilman, Presley, Casin, 1998). Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdell, Grossman, and Zanakos (1997) blame the dual role of student and athlete, which puts the student-athlete at greater risk for substance use and abuse. Life stress, balancing academic and athletic interests, career

concerns, social isolation, injury, success, and multiple relationships have also been found to be contributors to substance use and abuse by student-athletes (Wechsler, et al., 1997). Social support to deal with these stressors may reduce engagement of risk behaviors in student-athletes.

Female student-athletes and social support

In this chapter it has been discussed how student-athletes have more stressors than non-athletes. Yet female student-athletes indicate more negative and overall life stress than male student-athletes and non-student-athletes making them of special importance. (Petrie, 1992). Storch, et al. (2005) explain female student-athletes may be exposed to a greater number of stressors during their athletic careers than male student-athletes including not being taken seriously by professors and being involved in a greater number of extra-curricular activities. The authors explain female student-athletes internalize negative feedback and stressful situations differently than male student-athletes and non-student-athletes (Storch, et al., 2005). They also find it more difficult than male student-athletes to join peer groups for fear of shunning (due to the dual role they play as both woman and athlete, seen as masculine)(Storch, et al., 2005). No differences between male and female student-athletes were found in levels of depressive symptoms, alcohol problems, social anxiety or deficiencies in social support, but female student-athletes were still found to have clinically significant problems that are suggestive of the need for early detection and intervention (Storch, et al., 2005).

Mentioned previously, eating disorders have been found to be prevalent among student-athletes of both genders. Greenleaf (2002) found empirical evidence that female student-athletes have higher prevalence rates of being at risk for eating disorders, with approximately 14-19% having clinical or subclinical symptoms of eating disorder. The sports environment heightens body and weight-related concerns due to factors such as pressure from coaches, social comparisons with teammates, team weigh-ins, performance demands, physique-revealing uniforms, and judging criteria (Greenleaf, 2002). No association between eating disorders and sport type has been found (Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter & Reel, 2009), suggesting that university and college health professionals should be aware of the disorders and make available and provide assistance to all female student-athletes on all sports teams who are experiencing distress. Comprehensive assistance to female student-athletes including both athletic departments and student health centers would be most beneficial as student-athletes show lower help-seeking behavior than non-student-athletes (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991) and athletic trainers and coaches are not professionally trained to diagnose eating disorders (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2006; Holt, 2005; Kolt & Anderson, 2004; Storch, et al., 2005; Taylor & Taylor, 1998; Weiss and Troxel, 1986).

Psychosocial model and identity development

Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model is based on development of identity in the college years (Valentine & Taub, 1999). As an abstract and diverse concept, identity is broken down into seven vectors (specifying directionality and magnitude) for greater

specificity. The seven vectors include competence, managing emotions, moving from autonomy to independence, developing mature relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Valentine and Taub (1999) describe each vector:

- Competence: mastery of intellectual, physical and manual competence leads to the development of overall competence. The focus is development of skills to accomplish physical and manual tasks effectively and work in a group successfully.
- Managing emotions: “recognition of emotions/impulses and the ability to integrate, express, and control them” (Valentine & Taub, 1999, p. 168).
- Moving from autonomy to independence: includes emotional autonomy (freedom from need for reassurance), instrumental autonomy (being able to function and cope without seeking help and react to own needs and desires), and interdependence (recognition and acceptance of needing others and being needed).
- Developing mature relationships: includes increased tolerance (openness and respect and appreciation for diversity) and a shift toward interdependent relationships that involve stability, trust, and individuality.
- Establishing identity: includes comfort with body, appearance, gender, and sexual orientation, sense of self, clarification of self-concept, personal stability, and self-esteem.

- Developing purpose: involves “developing life plans that balance vocational plans and aspirations, personal interests, and interpersonal and family commitments” (Valentine & Taub, 1999, p. 174).
- Developing integrity: includes developing humanizing values, congruence between values and behavior, and personalizing values.

Valentine and Taub (1999) explain that due to the athletic lifestyle, student-athletes’ development in one or more vector may be stymied. Athletic departments are responsible for the development and maturation of the athletes they bring to the university on scholarship and otherwise.

Not only do student-athletes take on the dual role of both student and athlete they, like most people, have multiple identities including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status influenced by both privilege and oppression. Each dimension of the student-athletes’ identity may affect help-seeking behavior and the types of social support required. By ignoring an aspect of the student-athletes’ identity, an athletic department may not provide social support when needed. Race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender and athletic identity are briefly discussed below with a focus on how each identity affects the student-athlete and his or her development and social support needs.

Race and ethnicity

Chickering’s (1969) psychosocial model is based on identity development in the college years, however racial and ethnic identity are often formed earlier in life. Evans,

Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn (2010) use Helm's (1993) definition of racial identity, "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 254). Evans et al. (2010) discuss race and ethnicity separately, however Ferrante (2009) argues "about one-third of African descendents across ages (i.e. 18-29; 30-49; over 65) support a belief that it is no longer accurate or appropriate to view persons of African descent as a single race" (p. 216). While Ferrante (2010) makes this argument using data from a poll of persons of African descent, the argument can be applied to White, Latino, and American Indian student-athletes as well, as viewing race and ethnicity separately does little to inform us about the student-athlete or their needs (Ferrante, 2009).

Models of Black, White, Asian, Latino, and American Indian identity formation are discussed separately by Evans et al. (2010). The most well known model of Black identity development is Cross's (1991) theory of psychological nigrescence. Cross's four stage model includes the central concepts of personal identity (personal traits and characteristics), reference group orientation (personal values, paradigms, and political and philosophical views), and race salience (importance of race in one's life)(Evans et al., 2010). Cross's theory of psychological nigrescence was updated by Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) to use a life-span approach taking into account racialized experiences during human development. The life-span approach has three patterns including formative socialization experiences, conversion experiences, or recycling experiences (Evans et al., 2010).

Helms' (1992) White identity development model focused on "[raising] the awareness of white people about their role in creating and maintaining a racist society and the need for them to act responsibly by dismantling it" (p. 260). In this early model development was seen to occur in two phases, abandonment of racism and evolution of a nonracist identity. Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson's (1994) white racial consciousness model (WRCM) responded to earlier models with a focus on awareness of what it means to be white and how whiteness affects relationships with non-whites (Evans et al., 2010). The model uses types of attitudes grouped into unachieved or achieved white racial consciousness with no linear sequence. Unachieved white racial consciousness includes avoidant, dependent, and dissonant attitudes. Achieved white racial consciousness includes dominative, conflictive, reactive, and integrative attitudes. The white identity development models are focused on whites' understanding of their privilege.

Ferdman and Gallego's (2001) model of Latino identity development includes three considerations for understanding Latino race and racism experiences (Evans et al., 2010). The first consideration is centered on the idea that race is secondary to ethnicity and culture. The second consideration is Latinos are difficult to place in racial categories due to mixed heritages. Third, racial categorization in the United States results in some Latinos identifying as white, whereas others use Latino as both racial and ethnic identity. Ferdman and Gallegos' (2001) model includes six identity orientations, Latino-integrated, Latino-identified, subgroup-identified, Latino as other, undifferentiated/denial, and white-identified, with the former being the most holistic and inclusive, and the latter as rejecting Latino racial identity (Evans et al., 2010).

Asian identity development is addressed in a model explaining how Asian Americans manage their identities in a white racist society (Evans et al., 2010). The model includes three distinct stages that are sequential and progressive. The first stage is ethnic awareness where individuals learn about their identity through family with the primary factor being discovering ethnic heritage. In the second stage, when the child is in school, white identification occurs and the child attempts to fit in to the white culture. Awakening to social political consciousness marks the third stage where Asian Americans “no longer blame themselves for being treated differently and realize that their negative experiences are the result of a racist social structure” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 266). In the fourth stage, conscious identification and pride occurs as the person moves past oppression. Finally, in the fifth stage incorporation of the Asian identity is established and interaction with other races without insecurity about one’s own race occurs (Evans et al., 2010).

Much of American Indian identity formation is based on colonization and the fight to preserve culture and avoid hegemony (Evans et al., 2010). Horse’s (2001) framework based on consciousness refers to capturing the experiences of American Indian’s language, culture, heritage, traditions and philosophical values, group awareness, and recognition of tribe. These five experiences are the basis of American Indian identity development (Evans et al., 2010).

Ethnic identity formation across ethnic groups was described theoretically by Phinney (1990) in a three-stage model. In the first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, feelings and attitudes toward ethnicity are a nonissue due to disinterest. Ethnic identity

search/moratorium, the second stage, is where students become aware of their ethnicity and begin to explore, recognize, search for information, and have emotionally intense experiences regarding racial and ethnic issues. The final stage, ethnic identity achievement, is where students resolve conflicts, accept membership, and identify with their ethnic group (Evans et al., 2010). This three-stage model has been shown to be common across ethnic groups (Phinney, 1990 in Evans et al., 2010).

Irrespective of race, ethnicity, or identity development, racism is the most significant challenge for minority student-athletes (particularly black student-athletes)(Parham, 2009). Parham (2009) explains the commonality of micro-aggressions in all sports, divisions, and institutional demographic profiles as including stereotyping (dumb-jock, hero), hostile acts of racial aggression, discrimination, and verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, which accumulate and negatively impact the student-athletes' experiences. When working with minority student-athletes, professionals must assess the degree of social, political, and other system forces that influence interactions. Self-reflection should include determination of “awareness, knowledge and skills relative to interactions with [minority] student-athletes” (Parham, 2009, p. 231) and identification of cultural filters that affect questioning, communicating, and help seeking.

In order to provide better support for racially and ethnically minority student-athletes, professionals are recommended to participate in education seminars and courses that focus on the challenges faced by these student-athletes (Parham, 2009). Examination of institutional policies that support oppression and violate fairness should be a

continuous process. Life skills courses for student-athletes that address the realities of sports and encouragement to see the ‘big-picture’ may help increase understanding of the services provided and confidence in the provision and effectiveness of these supports (Parham, 2009).

Sexual orientation

Success in athletics is typically the result of being faster, stronger, tougher, and more dominant than an opponent (Loughran, 2009). These characteristics are seen as masculine and can be difficult to reconcile for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (GLBTQ) student-athlete. A gay, male student-athlete may relate to traditional feminine characteristics but may feel he has to outwardly show masculine traits for fear of rejection in the highly conservative, homophobic realm of athletics. A straight, female student-athlete may have to eschew the masculine characteristics outside of the athletic atmosphere in order to avoid being labeled as lesbian, a stereotype commonly applied to female student-athletes (Loughran, 2009). Where all student-athletes have to deal with the dual role of student and athlete, the GLBTQ student-athlete must reconcile a third identity that clashes in an unsupportive environment.

Evans et al. (2010) describe sexual orientation identity as being influenced by “emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle, and self-identification, as well as sexual attraction, fantasy, and behavior” (p. 307). Early models of sexual orientation identity formation focused on psychological perception and behavior on a continuum moving from “awareness and acceptance of a gay or lesbian identity to a final stage in

which gay or lesbian identity is integrated with other aspects of the self” (Evans et al., 2010, pp. 307-308). Later models were based on an individual’s identity development over the lifespan with the idea that sexual orientation identity is a social construction “shaped to varying degrees by social circumstances and environment and changeable throughout life” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 315). Personal actions and subjectivities, interactive intimacies, and socio-historical connections influenced identity development in these models.

Most recent models focus on both psychological processes and social aspects of identity such as privilege and affiliation (Evans et al., 2010). Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, and Venaglia’s (2002) multidimensional model includes heterosexual attitudes, values, and beliefs about GLBTQ individuals and identifies six influential factors (Evans et al., 2010). The factors include biology, microsocial context, gender norms and socialization, culture, religious orientation, and system homonegativity, sexual prejudice, and privilege (Evans et al., 2010). Two interactive processes of identity development are key in Worthington et al.’s (2002) model: an internal process of identity formation based on awareness and acceptance of sexual identity, and an external process of group identification (Evans et al., 2010). Evans et al. (2010) suggest the importance of religion, disability, class, gender, and ethnicity as influencing sexual orientation identity development. Included for student-athletes is the athletic environment that is unsupportive of non-heterosexual gender identity.

Support for GLBTQ student-athletes is essential due to the high level of stress faced by this group (Loughran, 2009). Loughran (2009) argues sport psychologists

should be responsible for understanding GLBTQ culture and challenges, have expertise in counseling GLBTQ student-athletes, evaluate attitudes and values related to sexual orientation, and be willing to assist GLBTQ student-athletes in a trusting relationship where openness and disclosure are promoted. Counseling involves building “strong social and emotional support [systems] by exploring with the client who among his community of family, friends, coaches, teammates, and classmates is supportive and affirming of his [or her] sexual orientation” (Loughran, 2009, p. 250).

Socioeconomic status

No social class identity development model exists, however “social class rules and symbols, the strong influence of cultural familial messages, and the significant role of gender and class in culture” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 240) are important to consider in socioeconomic identity development. Social connections and experiences based on socioeconomic status affect the doors that are opened for all college students. Students from a low socioeconomic bracket are less likely to attend college and graduate (Evans, et al., 2010). Oppressed minority groups in the lower socioeconomic brackets are the least likely to attend college and be successful, especially with the rising cost of tuition. Student-athletes from this group are often on athletic scholarship, which can lead to a stark contrast between their life at home and their life at college. According to Evans et al. (2010) “when a shift in class occurs, identity can change, and felt and attributed social classes can be at odds with each other...Ignoring these inequities and others

saturating our economic and social systems perpetuates class privilege and class oppression” (p. 240).

Being a first-generation college student and student-athlete can have implications on many levels (Stevens & Scholefield, 2009). As parents who have attended college tend to pass down coping-skills to their college-aged student children, first generation college students do not learn these skills. First generation male college student-athletes are often seen as icons to their families and become responsible for the family’s financial future, a substantial pressure for a man of 18 to 22 years of age (Stevens & Sholefield, 2009). These men may also receive less support from family members to deal with the stress of academic and athletic obligations and be unwilling to seek help from university counseling centers (Stevens & Sholefield, 2009).

Not only can socioeconomic status identity be altered due to athletic scholarship, student-athletes may have trouble developing financial skills necessary after graduation. Watt and Moore (2001) explain non-student-athletes manage their own academic lives by choosing what classes to take, when to study, eat, or engage in social activities and take responsibility for these aspects of college life thus preparing to assume adult responsibilities after college. Student-athletes who have fixed schedules and decisions made for them by academic counselors or others are unlikely to develop the skills necessary for success in adulthood, which may result in not being able to function well financially or otherwise.

Counseling and educative courses on career transitions and finance after college may benefit student-athletes who have had little responsibility in college. The NCAA

CHAMPS life skills program aids athletic institutions in supporting student-athletes and developing skills to be successful both in and out of college (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.).

Gender

Before traditionally-aged students begin college gender identity has been established (Evans et al., 2010). Gender identity may be especially challenging for student-athletes, even those who identify with their matching sex. American society reinforces gender norms insisting males be “competitive, aggressive, active, and independent, characteristics that are congruent with the general sport environment” (Cogan & Machin, 2009, p. 145) and females be “nurturing, kind, beautiful, cooperative, and even passive” (Cogan & Machin, 2009, p. 145). Most male sports and some female sports require masculine characteristics making it especially difficult for females to identify with feminine characteristics at all times. Male student-athletes have been shown to over-conform to the masculine characteristics of aggression and competition resulting in possible deviant behavior (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Tending to be task-oriented, focused, and self-disciplined, males are often successful at persevering through challenges however it is when males over-use these coping strategies that can be troublesome (Stevens & Sholenfield, 2009),

Males and females have been shown to seek social support differently. Females are more likely to seek counseling than men (Petrie, 1992). The feminine characteristics of being nurturing and supportive may make it more acceptable for female student-

athletes to seek help. Males attempting to be stoic and restrain emotions out of fear of being seen as weak or vulnerable are less likely to seek help (Stevens & Sholenfield, 2009). Nixon (1994) explained student-athletes of either gender are taught to be strong and not show weakness, masculine traits.

Gender identity development in males and females early in life is based on societal norms. As they become successful in and committed to athletics, masculine traits are reinforced in males or adopted by females. When counseling males, Stevens and Sholenfield, (2009) suggest six guidelines for building a connection with male student-athletes,

1. “Recognize, acknowledge, and affirm gently the difficulty that men have to entering and being in counseling,
2. Help the client save “masculine face,”
3. Educate the male student-athlete up front about the process of therapy,
4. Be patient,
5. Use a therapy language and approach that is congruent with your client’s gender role identity,
6. Be genuine and real” (p. 193).

For female student-athletes, Cogan and Machin (2009) recommend intervention strategies for counselors. Counselors should examine attitudes toward college sports and feelings toward women’s sports and female student athletes, become advocates for female student-athletes and help educate about the damage negatively held beliefs about female student-athletes cause, and offer educational workshops focused on time

management, study skills, women's issues, retirement, and career options (Cogan & Machin, 2009).

Athletic identity

Researchers have suggested the dual identity of athlete and student can cause conflict for the collegiate student-athlete in multiple areas. Career choices and alternative lifestyles are insufficiently considered by student-athletes whose identities are based on being athletes (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). Over-identification with the athlete identity can lead to deviant behavior (Hughes & Coakley, 1991) and myriad other concerns.

Student-athletes whose identity is highly influenced by sport participation are hindered when it comes to career and life transitions (Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). Identification as athlete and being highly committed to athletics may cause a student-athlete to restrict activities and refrain from exploring alternatives, problems that manifest as counseling concerns related to career choices, biased information interpretation, and insufficient consideration of alternatives after retirement (Chartrand & Lent, 1987). The CHAMPS life skills program is focused on developing skills in academics, athletics, personal development, career development and community service through workshops and training (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.), however counselors should be available on a needs basis.

Hughes and Coakley (1991) use the term positive deviance to explain over-conformity to athletic norms that society views as negative and sometimes punishable.

Part of the athletic identity is adoption of masculine traits such as aggression and competitiveness that are required for success on the playing field. These characteristics are internalized and used as standards for evaluation of self and others, encouraging some student-athletes to over-conform leading to deviant behavior (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Examples of deviance include pathogenic weight control (seen to sport outsiders to be simply eating disorders) and substance abuse (performance enhancers). Student-athletes who have low self-esteem or who see athletics as mobility toward material success are at highest risk for over-conformity to the 'sport ethic' (Hughes & Coakley, 1991).

Other concerns of over-identification with the athlete identity are multiple. Placing sport above all else may mean making sacrifices with health and placing other commitments to the side. Hughes and Coakley's (1991) 'sport-ethic' refers to an athlete voluntarily accepting the inherent risks of sport participation and being courageous when physically and morally challenged. Because being an athlete means seeking to improve and get closer to perfection, athletes are validated by distinction in athletic endeavors, which supports over-identification as athlete and under-identification as anything other. Over-identification can lead to disrupted family relationships, disregard for personal comfort, rejection of commonly held societal values and norms, addictive-like behavior, and neglect work and school responsibilities (Hughes & Coakley, 1991).

Reinforcement of the 'sport ethic' and conformity to athletic characteristics by athletic departments, universities, and the media may decrease the student-athlete's chance of success both on and off the field of play and inside and outside the institution.

Counselors, coaches, parents, athletic administrators, and other influential figures in student-athletes' lives need to be supportive of the athletic identity while questioning the 'sport-ethic' norms and helping student-athletes find other outlets and ways to have a more diverse and holistic identity. Valentine and Taub (1999) explain educating about and promoting opportunities to explore diverse activities may help student-athletes have a greater awareness of the world outside athletics and improve their ability to develop mature interpersonal relationships and an identity not based solely on being an athlete (Valentine & Taub, 1999).

General functions of social support and the psychosocial model

People in situations where all support needs are fulfilled are more protected against stress in life and work. Individuals need to learn to discriminate between the types of social support in order to be aware of which functions are being fulfilled and which are lacking. Once a person understands the differences in support type functions he or she can assess who in the network would best fulfill functions that are unsupported (Pines, et al., 1981). In the athletic social network teammates, coaches, athletic trainers, and family members fulfill most of the functions of each type of support. Quality social support does not automatically occur in the student athlete's environment; rather, it is something requiring purposeful development and nurturing. Student athletes need to be encouraged to seek out social support from a wide variety of individuals and to maximize the support available from current providers.

Athletic department social network support services can be classified into four categories: academic advising, psychoeducational life skills, clinical counseling, and performance enhancement (coaching and sports psychology)(Broughton, 2001). Academic advising is the most popular support service and involves course scheduling, degree decisions and maintaining eligibility. Psychoeducational life skills deal with personal, practical and emotional developmental issues such as drug/alcohol education, interpersonal communication skills, time management, career development/selection, and sexual relationships. The NCAA adopted the CHAMPS life skills program in the early 1990's to address pertinent psychoeducational life skills (Broughton, 2001). Sport psychologists are used as clinical counselors and performance enhancers to improve the mental aspects of the game. Broughton (2001) argues "to grow as a profession, the athletic advisor or counselor needs to be trained properly in the field of advising or counseling, and develop capabilities for evaluating their programs" (p. 7). Although most athletic departments cover academic advising, psychoeducational life skills, performance enhancement, and the physical health of the student-athlete sufficiently, clinical counseling may not be offered in house. Athletic departments should have relationships with mental health centers as a resource when needed because coaches and others are usually not sufficiently trained to deal with mental problems (Storch, et al., 2005) and it has been explained student-athletes rarely seek help outside of the athletic social network (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991). Pines, et al. (1981) six functions of social support, as they pertain to the student-athlete, are discussed below. Included is an explanation of how athletic departments are supporting student-athletes in each category

based on Broughton's (2001) four categories of athletic social support and Chickering's (1969) vectors of psychosocial development and recommendations for improving their social support.

Listening support

Pines, et al. (1981) introduce listening support with the idea

“Everyone has occasions when they need one or more people who will *actively* listen to them, without giving advice or making judgments. They need someone with whom they can share the joys of success as well as the pain and frustration of failure. They need someone with whom they can share conflicts as well as trivial everyday incidents” (p. 125, emphasis in original).

Emile Durkheim's famous study on suicide made it clear people should not and cannot live in isolation (House, 1987). Richman, et al. (1989) found student-athletes identify friends and teammates as primary sources of listening support.

Research has also found athletic trainers provide listening support (Robbins & Rosenfeld, 2001). Listening support can be improved in the athletic network by providing communication training for friends, athletic trainers, support personnel, and parents; providing group social events for variety of teams to participate; emphasizing the need for informal contacts; structuring the environment for warmth and acceptance; and encouraging maintenance of past positive relationships (Richman, et al., 1989). This training may help to improve the student-athletes' interpersonal competence. Any

person, inside or outside the athletic department and athletic social network, can provide listening support as long as the listener pays attention, indicates interest, is understanding, and can sympathize without attempting to give advice (Pines, et al., 1981). In the student-athletes life, this person is generally somebody who has a shared social reality (discussed below).

Technical appreciation

Hard work needs to be recognized and appreciated. In order to provide appreciation of work well done and affirmation of competence, Pines, et al. (1981) assert “a person must meet two important criteria: he or she must be an expert in their field and must be someone whose honesty and integrity they trust” (p. 126). These requirements must be met if the support is to be perceived as genuine. Although any person can provide encouragement and appreciation, it “may not be as meaningful as if it came from someone who can appreciate the technical intricacies of the job situation” (Pines, et al., 1981, p. 126). Student-athletes named coaches and friends as providers of technical appreciation (Richman, et al., 1989). Suggestions to improve technical appreciation support include affirmation of effort and mastery of skill; encouraging parental attendance at athletic events; and supporting interaction with the community (Richman, et al., 1989).

Besides coaches and teammates, the athletic department may not be highly involved in technical appreciation; however, opportunities for involvement exist. Most institutions have a Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), a leadership group with

members from each team that acts as a governance organization to provide input and assistance in the management of community service events, provide leadership opportunities, and communicate to administration. SAACs focus on levels of student welfare and provide guidance for proposed legislation at the conference and NCAA level (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). The SAAC and athletic department at Oregon State University (OSU) have developed four effective programs and events to improve the technical appreciation support coming from administration that serve as good examples of how the athletic department can be involved in technical appreciation support.

1. The 'Beaver Cup' challenge awards teams for commitment to community service and attainment of self-ascribed goals. The winning team is given a sum of money to use for things such as locker room improvements.
2. The 'Benny Awards' is similar to ESPN's Espy Awards, a show awarding professional athletes and teams based on season success. Student-athletes and teams are nominated for awards named for former OSU athletes, such as the Glenn Klein Community Service Award. At this banquet and ceremony held each spring, student-athletes who have been awarded PAC-10 or national honors in athletics or academics and teams who have won conference or national championships are recognized.
3. The 'Everyday Champion' program recognizes current and former student-athletes who have made extraordinary accomplishments. The

mission of the program is to “have OSU’s student-athletes leave educated, confident, connected and well prepared for the personal and professional challenges that will face throughout their lives” (Oregon State Official Athletic Site, n.d.).

4. The ‘Senior Gift’ is awarded to seniors who graduate with a graduate point record above 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The award motivates student-athletes to be successful in the classroom and recognizes the hard work and accomplishment of the graduating senior.

These programs offer technical appreciation through recognizing and awarding efforts on and off the field of play.

Technical challenge

When a person is the expert in an environment and is never challenged, he or she runs the risk of boredom and burnout (Pines, et al., 1981). Similar to technical appreciation, technical challenge support requires context expertise; the challenger must be “good enough at the job to be able to identify what could be improved and they must be trustworthy” (Pines, et al., 1981, p. 127). Technical challenge can be seen as constructive criticism, education, information transfer, and specific help to overcome obstacles. For student-athletes, technical challenge support comes from coaches and teammates (Corbillon, Crossman, & Jamieson, 2008; Richman, et al., 1989). Technical challenge support can be improved through video taping practice for student-athlete

viewing; using the sandwich approach to constructive criticism (compliment-criticism-compliment); and implementing a mentor system (Richman, et al., 1989).

Psychoeducational life skills, academic advising, and performance enhancement fall under the technical challenge support category. Coaches and teammates play important roles in performance enhancement on the field of play through instruction and constructive criticism aimed to improve physical competence, and the academic advisor and tutors help improve student-athletes' intellectual competence. The NCAA's CHAMPS Life skills program was launched in 1994 and is aimed at:

- promoting student-athletes' ownership of their academic, athletic, career, personal, and community responsibilities;
- meeting the changing needs of student-athletes;
- promoting respect for diversity and inclusion among student-athletes;
- assisting student-athletes in identifying and applying transferable skills;
- enhancing partnerships between the NCAA, member institutions and their communities for the purpose of education;
- fostering an environment that encourages student-athletes to effectively access campus resources;
- encouraging the development of character, integrity and leadership skills

(National Collegiate Athletics Association, n.d.).

This program serves as a specialized support program for psychoeducational life skills.

Institutions that participate in this program are provided materials and resources to support the student-athlete's development in academics, athletics, personal development,

career development and community service (National Collegiate Athletic Association, n.d.). Not all institutions participate in the CHAMPS Life skills program. The CHAMPS life skills program aids student-athletes through career development and transition support, which Valentine and Taub (1999) cite as important aspects of Chickering's (1969) vector developing purpose. Chickering's (1969) vector of developing integrity is also supported through psychoeducational life skills programs that focus on development of character, identity, and leadership skills.

Emotional support

Pines, et al., (1981) define emotional supporters as people “willing to be on an individual's side in a difficult situation even if they are not in total agreement with what the person is doing” (p. 127). People in high stress environments need at least one person to provide unconditional support regardless of the supporter's ability to empathize, the more the merrier. Emotional support requires genuinely caring about a person (Pines, et al., 1981). Primary sources of emotional support for the student-athletes are friends and parents (Corbillon, et al., 2008; Giacobbi, et al., 2004; Richman, et al., 1989). There are times when emotional support requires content expertise, such as when a student-athlete requires emotional counseling (Storch, et al., 2005).

Performance enhancement often includes the coaches and teammates of the student-athlete but may require a sport psychologist as well. Access to a sport psychologist or counselor needs to be available for student-athletes to address the psychological needs of student-athletes (Storch, et al., 2005). Mentink (2002) explains

that coaches are not trained to recognize depression in student-athletes. Athletic trainers are not prepared to deal with the psychological problems that a student-athlete may develop (Fisher & Wrisberg, 2006; Holt, 2005; Kolt & Anderson, 2004, Taylor & Taylor, 1998). Student-athletes have higher levels of psychological problems and seek counseling less often than non-student-athletes (Maniar, et al., 2005; Pinkerton, et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007), supporting the argument that an early and positive therapeutic relationship with a trained professional is essential.

Athletic departments may provide access to a sport psychologist for clinical counseling to aid student-athletes with psychological problems. Broughton (2001) offers the following options for athletic departments to improve psychological counseling for student-athletes: hire a full time mental health counselor to oversee all academic and psychological services, assess needs of student-athletes, provide counseling, and make referrals; outsource psychological services to a private practitioner (university counseling centers may not be able to address unique issues of student-athletes); or the university counseling center could have a counselor trained in student-athlete issues working part time with the athletic department. Richman, et al., (1989) suggest educating student-athletes of the importance of emotional support; arranging opportunities to meet with a sport psychologist, and arranging social and academic activities outside the competitive arena.

Emotional support should include ways to improve self-management of emotions. Chickering and Riesser (1993) observed that athletic participation raises issues related to managing delight, fear, rage, anger, frustration, and fear due to their relation to

performance and success in the athletic arena. Valentine and Taub (1999) support the use of counseling to address emotional issues of student-athletes in order to improve self-management of emotions.

Emotional challenge

Providing emotional challenge means questioning excuses and efforts in goal achievement (Pines, et al., 1981). Unlike technical challenge, emotional challenge does not require content expertise; it is enough for the supporter to ask if his or her friend is doing enough to overcome obstacles. Supporters need to be trustworthy, able to logically help work through challenging situations, and keep their own emotions out of the situation (Pines, et al., 1981). Friends, parents, and coaches were found to be providers of emotional challenge in the Richman, et al., (1989) study on types and levels of social support in student-athletes. In order to improve emotional challenge support, the authors suggest providing workshops to explain specific stressors of student-athletes; encouraging student-athletes to maintain positive past relationships (with former teammates and coaches); and encouraging emotionally challenging verbal exchanges between teammates, friends, and family members (Richman, et al., 1989).

Student-athletes “are accustomed to being coached, and coaches’ authority is perceived as absolute” (Valentine & Taub, 1999, 170) which reduces independent thinking. Part of the mission of the CHAMPS Life skills program is to assist student-athletes in identifying and applying transferable psychoeducational skills in order to

foster autonomy. This is accomplished through bringing in speakers, offering life skills development courses, and group and individual counseling.

Shared social reality

A person who shares another's social reality is trustworthy, able to give sound advice, and has "similar priorities, values, and views" (Pines, et al., 1981, p. 129). Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory supports the need for shared social reality as it suggests that athletes are most likely to seek support to deal with their pain and injuries from others in similar circumstances or with a firsthand understanding of their athletic role (coaches, athletic trainers, teammates)(Nixon, 1994). Nixon (1994) explains the effects of a sympathetic or caring attitude of a trainer was found to be the most important predictor variable in student-athletes help- and information-seeking behavior. Support from those with a shared social reality may give student-athletes a greater sense of control and a feeling they are doing what is right in a situation, such as sitting out due to injury although the athletic subculture promotes playing through the pain (Nixon, 1994). This type of support comes mostly from friends and teammates in the athletic social network (Corbillon, et al., 2008; Richman, et al., 1989; Udry, 1997).

Teammates experience a similar lifestyle and stressors and can empathize with the pressures unique to being a student-athlete. Richman, et al., (1981) suggest creating opportunities to strengthen bonds between teammates and bring conflicts out into the open to be resolved through arranging small group meetings. Friends outside of the athletic realm are important as well; they may share the same classes, be a part of extra-

curricular organizations, be from the same city or part of the country, or share a hobby with the student-athlete. Isolating the student-athlete from friends outside of the athletic department has been shown to increase stress (Pinkerton et al. 1989) and decrease the ability to form mature interpersonal relationships (Valentine & Taub, 1999). One way to promote outside friendships and avoid social isolation is to house student-athletes with non-student-athletes (Valentine & Taub, 1999). This will help make non-student-athlete friends early in their collegiate career, helping provide shared social reality outside of athletics. Educating and promoting opportunities to explore diverse activities may help student-athletes have a greater awareness of the world outside athletics and improve their ability to develop mature interpersonal relationships and an identity not based solely on being an athlete (Valentine & Taub, 1999).

Previous research into the topic supports using Pine et al.'s (1981) six categories of support. While this model has merit in previous research, and has produced excellent results, for the present research model, I chose to use House's (1981) four categories of support (emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support). This decision was based on a pilot study for this research that suggested a more concise (fewer categories) model for support fit the data.

Summary

Berkman (1984), Cohen & Wills (1985), House et al., (1988) and Kessler and McLeod (1985) concluded that measures of social support are directly and positively related to mental and physical health but do not buffer impacts of major stressful life

events. The authors explain perceived emotional support is associated with better health and buffers stress of major life events and chronic strains and the simplest and most powerful measure of social support is whether person has intimate, confiding relationships (Berkman, 1984; Cohen & Wills, 1985; House et al., 1988; Kessler and McLeod, 1985). Teammates, coaches, athletic trainers, and family often fill these roles for student-athletes. If these relationships fulfill the support needs in Pines, et al., (1981) six categories of social support and the developmental needs in Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model, the unique stressors student-athletes face may become negligible and enhance the student-athlete's quality of life. When these support needs are not provided for, the student-athlete may be more susceptible to physical injury, more likely to develop psychological problems, or partake in risky behaviors. Much of the support student-athletes require can be provided informally by teammates, coaches, athletic trainers, and family, however some forms of support (technical challenge and technical appreciation), such as clinical counseling, require content expertise. Student-athletes rarely seek help outside the athletic social network, thus a relationship between university counseling and mental health services and other formal support services and the athletic department should be developed to enhance the social support network of the student-athlete.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain “naturalistic studies are virtually impossible to design in any definitive way before the stuff is actually undertaken” (p. 187). Erlandson, et al. (1993) further add “the naturalistic researcher will need to plan for anticipated circumstances, but decisions as to how one will deal with them must be left until the context of time, place, and human interaction is better understood” (p. 67). Although I have prior experience as a student-athlete, determination of the exact process and results of the research cannot be made prior to immersion in the research setting. Erlandson et al. (1993) explain although no definitive plans can be made in regards to the exact process, certain elements can be planned for to facilitate the emergent process of naturalistic research. These include: (a) negotiating and developing conditions for entry, (b) purposive sample selection, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) quality in the study, (f) dissemination of the study’s findings, (g) logistical plan for the study, and (h) reviewing the tentative design (Erlandson et al., 1993). The methodology of this study is discussed below.

Negotiating and developing conditions for entry (recruitment)

The first step in the research process was to submit an application for research to Texas A & M University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the IRB had permitted the research to take place, the Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills at the institution of interest was contacted to discuss the research methods and determine if the

athletic department was willing to participate and allow student-athletes to participate. Conditions of entry were negotiated with the Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills at the institution of interest. Once the administrator had given consent, a demographic questionnaire was emailed to every current student-athlete at the university. In the questionnaire student-athletes were asked if they were willing to participate, and if so, what the best way to contact them. I then contacted the student-athlete as preferred (email in each case) to set up a meeting time and place. While this procedure initially produced multiple participants, self-selection led to an over abundance of participants from certain sports teams and no participants from other sports teams. One to two members of each sports team that volunteered to participate were interviewed at a time and location of their convenience. Once the volunteer participants pool depleted, the recruitment procedure was changed in order to find participants from sports teams that did not have any representatives.

The Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills was asked to nominate participants on sports teams that no student-athletes had volunteered for participation. The student-athlete was then contacted via email to request participation. If interested and able to participate, an interview was set up. If uninterested or unable, the Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills was asked to nominate other student-athletes until a student-athlete was found to be willing and able to participate.

Purposive sample selection

Two groups of participants were used in this study: student-athletes and athletic administrators. Administrative participants included the Senior Women's Athletic Director, Director of Academics for Student-Athletes, and Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills. These three athletic administrator participants were chosen based on their active roles in support services within the athletic social network. Student-athlete participants were college aged, male and female student-athletes between the ages of 18 and 24 at a NCAA Division I athletic institution in the northwestern United States. Student-athlete participants represented 10 of 17 varsity athletic teams at the institution including cross country, swimming, men's rowing, women's rowing, gymnastics, softball, men's soccer, women's soccer, men's basketball, and football.

Purposive sampling was implemented in this study for the student-athlete participant group. The Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills distributed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) to all student-athletes. Included were questions regarding race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, injury history, and a request for participation in interviews based on perceptions of social support. From the questionnaire, student-athletes who volunteered for participation were identified for interviews with an attempt to have as diverse a sample as available in the population. Erlandson et al. (1993) explain;

“at first, respondents are chosen for the likelihood of their supplying new constructions to the researcher's understanding. Later in the process, respondents are more likely to be chosen for the perceived ability to

elaborate or explicate constructions that have already been introduced”
(p. 91).

As discussed in the literature review, identity development is influenced by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Evans et al., 2010). In order to gain a perspective of how student-athletes with multiple, differing identities perceive social support, a purposive sample was obtained from the demographic questionnaire information and from nominated student-athletes willing to participate.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) discuss “the sample may be large or small, but it is sufficient when the amount of new information provided per unit of added resource expenditure has reach the point of diminishing returns” (p. 232). Three administrators were interviewed, the Senior Women’s Athletic Director, Director of Academics for Student-Athletes, and Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills. Thirteen student-athletes were interviewed. Interviews were conducted until information redundancy was achieved. The total number of participants was 16, as shown in Table 1—Participants.

Table 1—Participants

Administrators	Student-Athlete	
	Male	Female
Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills	Basketball (1)	Rowing (2)
Senior Women’s Athletic Director	Football (1)	Swimming (2)
Associate Athletic Director for Academics	Soccer (1)	Cross Country (1)
	Rowing (1)	Soccer (2)
		Softball (1)
		Gymnastics (1)

Data collection

Data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of availability and accessibility of social support in the student-athlete social network. To understand perceptions of student-athletes and athletic administrators regarding social support, it is necessary to center the analysis on the experience of the individual. When seeking to define the perceptions of social support, semi-structured, in-depth interviews are the most appropriate method due to the ability of participants to explain in detail their thoughts on a subject. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain qualitative interviews allow the researcher to use interpretive practices to “make the [participants’] world visible” (p. 3). As suggested by Goodson (2009), qualitative research should be aimed at understanding a phenomenon in its natural setting and should tell “in-depth stories of a phenomenon with “thick descriptions,” vivid details, and enticing depictions” (p. 164). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews produced “detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements” (Reissman, 2008) that were used to form theoretical explanations regarding student-athletes’ and athletic administrators’ perceptions of social support. These explanations can be used to help recommend programmatic changes to enhance the wellness of student-athletes through increased social support provision. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted on or off campus, depending on the participant’s preference.

Interview questions were based on Social Support/Social Network Theory constructs of emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support

(House, 1981), and the seven development vectors of competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969) (See Appendix A for example interview guide). Previously defined in this proposal, Social Support/Social Network Theory explains how people cope with stressful events and how social relationships impact psychological well being (Glanz, et al., 2008; House, 1981). While qualitative research does not generally start with theory (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Goodson, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), research that is guided by a theoretical framework has greater impact and more applicability (Goodson, 2009; Hochbaum, Sorenson, & Lorig, 1992). The guidance of a theoretical framework aided in the development of interview questions as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data, but as “naturalistic inquiry does not look to theory to provide a *foundation* for solving a problem or even for describing a particular problem,” (Goodson, 2009, p. 165, emphasis in original) theory was used to develop interview questions and guide analysis of responses. The purpose for using Social Support/Social Network theory was to aid in understanding and describing the perceptions of social support in student-athlete social networks.

The interview protocol was a working document. After each interview, transcription, and analysis I made and recorded any changes to the interview questions or order of questions to improve the quality of participant responses in subsequent interviews.

Data analysis

The interviews were voice-recorded while I took hand-written notes. The recordings were transcribed. The notes were used to supplement the transcriptions. The transcriptions were analyzed by themes based on Social Support/Social Network theory constructs and Psychosocial Model vectors. Using these theories as guides allowed for the exploration of support to be focused on where support is coming from in the athletic social network in each theme of support and how the forms of support affect identity development.

According to Goodson (2009), “theory can furnish the categories (based on the constructs and relationships it describes) for coding qualitative themes during a thematic analysis” (p. 169). Data from the interviews were categorized based on House’s (1981) dimensions of social support and Chickering’s (1989) psychosocial model to explore the categories of support perceived in each theme as it pertains to identity development. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis for content. Ellis (2004) describes thematic analysis for content as referring to,

“...treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold within or across stories. The emphasis then is on the abstract analysis rather than the stories themselves. This approach is akin to grounded theory, where researchers work inductively and present their findings in the form of traditional categories and theory” (p.196).

This analysis of the data by themes and categories aided in the discussion of the results as discussed in the section *dissemination of the study's findings* below.

The data was organized into themes using five social support constructs: House's (1981) four categories of support and 'lack of support' as shown in Table 2—Themes of the Study. The theme 'lack of support' does not come from House's (1981) dimensions of support but was included after preliminary study results identified the theme as important.

Transcribed interviews were reviewed for comments regarding social support. The comments were highlighted and then assigned to respective social support theme in a separate document. Comments in each thematic document were numbered as individual units. The units were compiled into categories. The categories were then used to determine and compare what social support structures the student-athletes and athletic administrators found to be available and accessible. Categories are shown in Table 3—Student-Athlete Categories of the Study and Table 4—Athletic Administrator Categories of the Study.

Table 2—Themes of the Study

Theme
THEME 1) Emotional Support
THEME 2) Instrumental Support
THEME 3) Informational Support
THEME 4) Appraisal Support
THEME 5) Lack of Support/Support Needed

Table 3—Student-Athlete Categories of the Study

Theme	Category
Emotional	Community support
	Teacher/professor support
	Relationship with administrators
	Individual attention
	Athlete/Coach relationship
	Athletic trainer support
	Academic counselors
Instrumental	Academic counselors
	Administrators
	Tutors/academic assistance/study hall
	Scholarships/stipend
	Computer lab/free printing
	Facilities/equipment
	Coaches/athletic trainers
Informational	Special programs/classes/events
	Academic counselors
	Administrators
	Networking/connections
	Volunteering/community service/internships
Appraisal	Special programs/classes/events
	Coaches/athletic trainers
Lack of Support	Coach/athletic administrator attention
	Coach communication
	Lack of attention/caring
	Lack of scholarship
	Psychological services
	Nutritional services
	Travel issues
Athletic administrator involvement	

Table 4—Athletic Administrator Categories of the Study

Theme	Category
Emotional	Open door policy Caring Personal involvement/one-on-one interaction
Instrumental	Personnel Special programs/classes/events Tutors/academic assistance/study hall Facilitation of services Scholarships/grants/funds
Information	Special programs/classes/events One-on-one interaction Networking/connections
Appraisal	Special programs/classes/events One-on-one interaction/encouragement
Lack of Support	Coaches Budget/resources Personnel limitations Psychological services Nutritionist Special programs/classes/events

Quality in the study

In positivistic research, internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are both valued and sought. Erlandson et al. (1993) explain in naturalistic research “truth value [is obtained] through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability” (p. 132). In this study I established credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in multiple ways.

In this study I employed assurance of confidentiality, member checking and a reflexive journal to establish truth-value. Confidentiality was assured and an informed consent form was obtained from each participant (see Appendix C for example consent form). Assurance of consent helped the participants feel comfortable in freely expressing honest perceptions of support. For member checking, the participants were asked to check the interpretations or conclusions of the interviews both informally at the end of the interview and formally after the data had been analyzed and prepared. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain member checking to be the most important technique in establishing credibility in naturalistic inquiry. I also wrote in a reflexive journal to record ideas, thoughts, and reactions regarding the interviews, research process, and research progress. “The reflexive journal supports not only the credibility but also the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 143).

To establish transferability, I used my reflexive journal as well as thick description and purposive sampling. Thick description provides a vicarious experience for the reader (Erlandson et al., 1993) by telling the story of the research using the

analyzed data and information from the peer debriefing and reflexive journal. It “[provides] the basis for allowing readers to determine if this study could provide insights for their own [setting]” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 13). Purposive sampling depends on emergent design as opposed to *a priori* design. The decision to stop the sampling process was made when informational redundancy had been met (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When an a priori design is implemented, only certain questions are asked limiting the information that can be obtained. An emergent design allowed me to “fill in the gaps and focus on insights until the point of redundancy of information [are] reached” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 148). Filling in the gaps with pertinent information that is included in a thick description of the findings will allow athletic administrators in other settings to determine the applicability of the findings to their own settings.

Dependability and confirmability was established through meticulous record keeping of methodological changes, data collection and analysis materials. Thick description of the inquiry context and process and use of a reflexive journal were used as well. Files representing the data (raw data, data reduction files, data reconstruction files) and inquiry procedures (process notes, intention and motivation notes, copies of instruments, tools, and resources) were kept. All facts have sources and all assertions are supported by data in order to establish dependability and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Dissemination of the study findings

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to gather data from participants. Although my previous experience and learning through the research process may have influenced the results and discussion of the findings, my experience was not the focal point of the dissertation. Whereas the goal of the research, to determine the perceptions of availability and accessibility of social support in the student-athlete social network, could be studied and disseminated using a positivistic approach, semi-structured, in-depth interviews helped to explain not just the types of social support available and/or lacking, but the storied experience of the student-athlete and the need for certain types of social support.

As discussed previously, generalizability was not the goal of this research. Ellis (2004) explains in qualitative research,

“...generalizability is always being tested—not in the traditional way through random samples of respondents, but by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know. Readers provide theoretical validation by comparing their lives to ours, by thinking about how lives are similar and different and the reason why” (p. 195).

The information gathered and disseminated by this research is intended to aid other athletic departments in evaluation of available and accessible social support for their student-athletes and motivate change toward incorporating social support that improves the holistic health of the student-athlete.

Developing a logistical plan for the study

One athletic institution was used to draw participants, located in the Northwest United States where I was living. Erlandson et al. (1993) explain “the decision on the number of sites should not be determined by the preconceived notions or pressures from traditional researchers but by the research problem and the purpose of the study. For many purposes one site will be sufficient” (p. 59). The authors explain the ideal site is where entry is possible, continuity of presence is available, and there are people, programs, and interactions present (Erlandson et al., 1993). The choice of institution was one that met all of these criteria while allowing for return trips for purposive sampling, follow-up interviews and member checks. A convenience to interviewing participants at a local institution was that purposive sampling allowed logical and sampling could occur until informational redundancy had been achieved without undue inconvenience (monetary, psychologically and time-wise) to me.

The study began in the summer of 2010. Contact and negotiations for entry occurred early in the summer. Participants were contacted in the mid-summer and interviewed in mid-summer and early fall. Data transcription and analysis as well as note taking, journal recording, and member checking were a continuous process. Once the interviews were completed, I prepared the findings for dissemination.

Research design

As this research was based on naturalistic inquiry, the design was emergent, meaning certain factors could not be planned for and as the research progressed, some plans changed. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985),

“...within the naturalistic paradigm, designs must be emergent rather than preordinate: because meaning is determining by context to such a great extent; because the existence of multiple realities constrains the development of a design based on only one (the investigator’s) construction; because what will be learned at a site is always dependent on the *interaction* between investigator and context, and the interaction is also not fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shapings can not be known until they are witnessed” (p. 208).

The design, being emergent and tentative, was continuously reviewed through the research process. Changes in the interview guide questions and participant recruitment were recorded in the reflexive journal.

Summary

This chapter presented: (a) negotiating and developing conditions for entry, (b) purposive sample selection, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) quality in the study, (f) dissemination of the study’s findings, (g) logistical plan for the study, and (h) reviewing the tentative design (Erlandson et al., 1993). The following chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Participants

An introduction to the institution and participants will help the reader to understand the context. The NCAA division I institution of interest is located in the Northwestern United States. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills provided student-athlete demographic information from 2010. In 2010 there were 520 student-athletes, 303 males and 217 females. There were 212 in-state student-athletes, 275 out-of-state student-athletes and 33 international student-athletes. Of the 397 respondents, 114 were ethnic minorities (123 student-athletes declined to respond). Freshmen comprised 145 of the 520 student-athletes, sophomores 154, juniors 197, senior 109, and post-baccalaureate five student-athletes. There were 10 female sports teams and seven male sports teams in 2010. Interviews were conducted with three athletic administrators and 13 student-athletes.

The athletic administrators interviewed included the Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills, Associate Athletic Director for Academics, and the Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator. All of the administrators interviewed were women who had worked in the athletic department for four or more years. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills runs the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program as well as the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) and has been with the athletic department since 2002. The Associate Athletic Director for Academics joined the athletic department in 2006 as a former English professor and is in charge of academic support

for student-athletes including tutoring, academic counseling, and other special programs. The Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator is the highest ranking female involved with the athletic department Senior Staff. She oversees all student-athlete welfare aspects and manages operations of several men's and women's sports. Her career with the athletic department began in 1992.

Interviews were conducted with 13 student-athletes, four males and eight females. One male and one female student-athlete were non-United States citizens. Student-athletes from 10 of 17 sports teams were interviewed including men's basketball, men's soccer, football, men's rowing, women's rowing, women's swimming, women's soccer, softball, cross country, and gymnastics. The youngest student-athlete interviewed was 20 years old and the oldest 23. Zero student-athletes were freshman, two were sophomores, four were juniors, and seven were seniors. One fifth-year student-athlete was interviewed. None of the student-athlete participants had graduated. The majority of student-athletes interviewed were Caucasian with two self-identifying as Hispanic/Latina and one self-identifying as Asian American/Caucasian. Student-athletes

on full athletic scholarship comprised 54% of participants, 23% on partial athletic scholarship, and 23% had no athletic scholarship. Academic majors included: Education/Early Childhood Development, Education/Health, Exercise and Sport Science, Biochemistry/Biophysics, Merchandise Management, Public Health, Communication, Construction Engineering Management, and Pre-Pharmacy. One student-athlete identified as bisexual, the rest identified as heterosexual. Demographic characteristics of student-athletes are summarized in Table 5.

Interviews with athletic administrators lasted between 35 and 68 minutes and were conducted in the athletic administrators' offices. Student-athlete interviews lasted between 13 and 36 minutes and were held on and off campus in a location of the participant's choosing. Data were collected during twice, once in the summer of 2010 and once during the fall semester of 2010. During the first trip five interviews were conducted, all with student-athletes. The remaining eight student-athlete interviews and three athletic administrator interviews were conducted during the second trip.

Table 5—Student-athlete demographic characteristics

Gender	Sport	Age	Year	Scholarship	Ethnicity	Major	Sexual Orientation
Female	Cross Country	21	Senior	Full	Latina	Education/Early Childhood Development	Heterosexual
Female	Swimming	20	Sophomore	None	Caucasian	Exercise & Sport Science	Heterosexual
Female	Swimming	23	Fifth	Full	Caucasian	Speech Communication	Bisexual
Female	Rowing	22	Senior	Full	Caucasian/Asian American	EXSS	Heterosexual
Female	Rowing	22	Senior	Partial	Caucasian	Biochemistry/Bio physics	Heterosexual
Female	Gymnastics	21	Senior	Full	Caucasian	Merchandise Management	Heterosexual
Female	Softball	22	Senior	Full	Caucasian	Public Health	Heterosexual
Female	Soccer	20	Junior	Full	Caucasian	Communication New Media	Heterosexual
Female	Soccer	20	Junior	Partial	Hispanic	Communication	Heterosexual
Male	Basketball	21	Junior	None	Caucasian	Education/Health Construction	Heterosexual
Male	Rowing	21	Senior	None	Caucasian	Engineering Management	Heterosexual
Male	Soccer	20	Sophomore	Partial	Caucasian	EXSS Fitness & Nutrition	Heterosexual
Male	Football	20	Junior	Full	Caucasian	Pre-Pharmacy	Heterosexual

Research questions

The purpose of this research was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social network compared to the forms of social support described as available and accessible by administrative personnel in the institution's athletic department.

Answers to each research question are provided separately in the remainder of this results chapter. Data from 16 interviews produced 469 minutes of voice recording, resulting in 175 single-spaced, typed pages of transcription. From the transcribed interviews 422 units of social support were found. The units were analyzed for themes (Table 2, p. 63), which were then broken down into categories (Table 3, p. 64). The categories were used to answer to the proposed research questions.

Research question one: What types of social support do student-athletes perceive to be available and accessible in their athletic social network?

As shown in Table 2 (p. 63), student-athletes alluded to the five themes of social support with 29 categories identified. The five themes include House's (1981) four dimensions of support, emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, and an additional theme, lack of support. The categories identified are discussed below.

Emotional support. Student-athletes discussed seven categories in the emotional support theme including community support, teacher/professor support, relationships with administrators, individual attention, athlete/coach relationship, athletic trainer

support, and academic counselor support. Emotional support is characterized by the provision of empathy, love, trust, and understanding (House, 1981). Many of the forms of support identified fall into multiple categories and will be discussed as they pertain to the type of support.

The category community support was identified three times. When talking about community the student-athletes were referring to the athletic community comprised of other student-athletes, coaches, athletic trainers and administration and the community of the city. A female swimmer explained “the athlete community is really close,” while a female softball player mentioned it “kind of felt like more of a family,” suggesting emotional support is perceived in the athletic social network.

Support from teachers/professors was mentioned twice, both times from a female rower. In one instance it was a personal relationship with a particular professor who was a former student-athlete and could relate and connect to the student-athlete. The second mention of emotional support from a teacher/professor refers to the professor as “a resource and a friend and colleague that you would be able to turn to.”

Specific mention of athletic administrator support occurred eleven times. When dealing with a problem with coaches, a female swimmer explained that the athletic administrators “acted like they cared and they were going to help us out and were concerned that we were unhappy and dealing with all this and no one had told them before.” Individual attention from athletic administrators made another student-athlete feel emotionally supported, and a female softball player felt as if “they understand what it’s like because...it’s like hard everyday and...I feel like it could be easy for them to

just say ‘this is what it is’.” Upbeat, positive, friendly attitudes from the athletic administrators made the student-athletes feel as if they were approachable and reliable sources of emotional support. In one specific instance a male soccer player was discussing being far away from home and having an athletic administrator be “like a mom to me when I came here...she really took me into her family and everything.”

Although only mentioned once, individual attention from athletic administration was very important to one student-athlete. When discussing a personal friendship with an athletic director, the female soccer player explained “she has brought me to have those opportunities and brought me along to try and push me and make myself more involved.” The female soccer player felt that the athletic director really cared about student-athletes and “kind of [picked] and [chose] who can actually succeed... kind of doing that one-on-one.”

The relationship with athletic trainers can be viewed as emotionally supportive in three instances. The student-athletes who identified their athletic trainer as being emotionally supportive used very strong wording. A female rower explained that her athletic trainer was “totally there for you, want to help, love to be there because it’s their job.” A gymnast said “I love [her] as our trainer, and I love her. And she’s very supportive and she’s a mom too, so I think she has that caring side to her which is awesome.” In these instances the athletic trainer was seen as a person integral to the student-athlete’s emotional well being.

Four times student-athletes commented on their academic counselor being sources of emotional support. The academic counselor was sought out for more than

academic advice in multiple cases. Student-athletes mentioned discussing personal issues involving athletics and teammates with their academic counselor.

Coaches were found to be emotionally supportive in ten of the 63 comments related to emotional support. When asked whom they sought out for advice regarding emotional problems, student-athletes most often discussed family and or friends, but also highly important was the head or assistant coach. Both male and female participants felt comfortable going to their coach with problems. A female cross country runner explained “everyone in our team goes to him about problems because...he like, really understands you and tries to like help you out. He doesn’t really ignore you about it. Like he goes the distance with that kind of stuff.”

Instrumental support. Student-athletes discussed eight categories in the instrumental support theme including academic counselors, athletic administration, tutors/academic assistance/study hall, scholarship/stipend, computers/free printing, facilities/equipment, coaches/athletic trainers, and special programs/class/events. Instrumental support is characterized by the provision of tangible aid and services (House, 1981). The resources provided to the student-athletes are varied and multiple. A gymnast felt that she was provided “every available resource and even if you don’t know about it, they have it and like anything they’re willing to provide for you.”

Academic counselors were identified eight times as forms of instrumental support. The athletic department provides academic counselors who work with the student-athlete to ensure progress is being made toward earning a degree and the student-athlete remains eligible for competition. Academic counselors also assist with

registration, edit papers (although not required), help with references, and provide day planners to help student-athletes be organized. A sub-category of academic counseling is priority registration, which allows student-athletes to register for classes early due to possible scheduling difficulties.

Administrators are considered forms of instrumental support when they provide specific services. Such was the case when one student-athlete had problems receiving her scholarship funds and sought help from an administrator in the office of compliance who helped to remedy the problem.

The most often cited form of instrumental support in this study was that of tutors/academic assistance/study hall. Student-athletes mentioned tutoring/academic assistance/study hall 22 times and felt the services provided were highly beneficial. A female soccer player explained she “was in some really hard classes and it was really hard and we get tutors here so I take advantage of them. I got a B in the class...and I probably wouldn’t have been able to if I didn’t have a tutor.” In some cases the tutors were used to pass classes, in others to get a better grade than could have been earned without them. Other forms of academic assistance included educational opportunity program courses, teachers being willing to work with the student-athlete’s schedule, day planners, study hall, and summer school.

Many of the participants received some form of athletic scholarship, which was mentioned 16 times in the interviews. The scholarships included full and partial scholarships, book scholarships, summer school scholarships, and stipends.

The athletic department provides a student-athlete computer lab that allows student-athletes to print at no cost. Twice this was mentioned as instrumental support.

Facilities and equipment were mentioned six times. Funding to build facilities, provision of new facilities, athletic equipment, and casual clothing were included.

Coaches and athletic trainers provided instrumental support in the form of service. The female cross country runner explained that if she was “having a dilemma with one of my classes, like I talk to my coach about it and he’s like, ‘we’re going to get this fixed, don’t worry about it.’”

Special programs/classes/events include the mandatory Life Skills events, the summer Bridge Program, and non-mandatory classes/workshops. The summer Bridge program involves freshman student-athletes coming to campus three weeks before the regular fall semester begins and teaches skills to help them be successful in time-management and adjusting to their new surroundings. The football player explained,

“being able to go to Bridge where you have some sort of supervision and you’re not just on your own right away, you have that help and it’s really structured; the class, the setting, also the activities keep you busy. It’s really a good experience. You get to build team camaraderie with your other teammates and get to know them and their personal stories and I think the classes that you take really help you—help set up a successful first year in college.”

Non-mandatory classes/workshops mentioned included resume writing, career decision-making, leadership classes, and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

Informational support. Student-athletes discussed six categories in the informational support theme including academic counselor support, administrator support, volunteering/community service/internship information, special programs/classes/events, coaches/athletic and trainer support. Informational support is characterized by the provision of advice, suggestions, and information (House, 1981).

Academic counselors provided informational support to many of the participants. They were found to be helpful in applying for scholarships, informing about volunteer opportunities, providing registration information, and counseling on what courses to take and when.

Administrators were found to provide information through multiple channels. In some cases information was passed through electronic mail, in others through one-on-one interaction. A female soccer player explained that an athletic administrator had “done a very good job of being able to connect to the whole student body by sending out emails, [providing] the life skills events, and all the mandatory events.” The athletic administrators were said to “be there” for the student-athletes and be focused on making sure the student-athletes know what’s going on within the athletic department. It was felt that there is a good open-door policy in the athletic department where student-athletes are comfortable going in to address questions or problems when needed.

Volunteering, community service, and internships through the athletic department were mentioned by student-athletes as being another way they received information. One student-athlete was interning with an athletic director and felt as if it was helping her to develop a sense of what type of career she was preparing for. Another felt that

volunteering and community service were good opportunities to connect with others and ‘network.’

Coaches and athletic trainers were important forms of information support for student-athletes. In 11 instances student-athletes discussed their coaches as being the person they would go to for information. Said a female rower, “I know that if at any time I need them at any time they will give me any kind of support or names of people I can contact to get help. So having the connection with the coaches and their connections, I think [is] really helpful.” In many cases the coaches are sought out for technical/tactical concerns as related to the sport, however in some cases the student-athlete will consult the coach or athletic trainer for non-sport related problems.

The most often referenced form of informational support came from special programs/classes/events. In 31 instances the student-athlete participants mentioned the special programs/classes/events to be informative. Included were the leadership classes, etiquette dinner, mandatory and non-mandatory Life Skills events, team leadership conference, captains’ dinner with the athletic director, Bridge program, and women’s leadership conference and group. Regarding the mandatory Life Skills events, a male soccer player felt that a particular event really hit home:

“And it...was good...not just for the fact that he was a gangster and all that kind of stuff, but I’m a bit of a gambler as well. So to have someone come in and talk to bluntly about gambling, I mean it was really good to say not just someone that’s come in like someone trying to enforce the law on gambling, but someone that’s actually been on both sides of it,

making me see both sides of it is really good. It's what made it for me. And he actually told a little anecdote about someone he knew. And it was almost an identical situation to what me and my teammate were in. And I remember when he was telling the story, me and my teammate both like bent down and looked down at each other and we just laughed about it."

Appraisal support. Student-athletes discussed one category in the appraisal support theme, which included coach/athletic administrator attention. Appraisal support is characterized by the provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes (House, 1981).

A female rower explained, "the coaches always put little bugs in your ears." What she meant by that was that the coaches ingrain in the student-athletes the need to be self-aware. Others explained it as the coaches checking up on them both on and off the field making them more aware of what they are doing. A female soccer player summarized appraisal support by saying

"I think having that mandatory, okay, someone's telling you to do something, kind of motivates people because it like 'oh hey,' like I'm going to be there but now I have to look good because [the athletic director] is going to be there or your head coach is going to be there and so I think it kind of brings those perspectives together."

Lack of support. Unlike the previous sections of student-athlete support, the section *Lack of support* does not come from House's categories of support. This category was developed to highlight areas of concern where the student-athlete finds

support to be lacking. Student-athletes discussed seven areas of support that could be improved including coach communication, lack of attention/caring, lack of scholarship, lack of psychological support, lack of nutritional support, travel issues, and lack of athletic administrator involvement. One student-athlete admitted that he was not “sure of all the services that are or aren’t available,” suggesting that his concerns, and possibly the concerns of other student-athletes, may or may not be addressed.

Poor communication with coaches was a problem for some of the participants. A female swimmer explained that it placed a burden on the team and became embarrassing to be a part of the team. In her situation, part of the coaching staff was not being professional and it caused a rift on the team. When the participant spoke with the coach regarding the issue she felt “they didn't do a good job of listening to us, but... I also felt like they lied to us.” This affected not only the current student-athletes but possibly future student-athletes as well. Another communication problem presented was a lack of explanation of decisions made by the coaching staff.

Lack of attention/caring included feeling unnoticed due to type of sport and feeling less supported by the community and the athletic department. A complaint regarding funding and resources compared to other teams and the thought that it affects recruitment of talented athletes was expressed.

Having money to pay for classes, rent, and other bills is equally as important to student-athletes as non-student-athletes. Eight times the participants discussed lack of scholarship, with some being more concerned than others. Many of the non-scholarship student-athletes paid for school with academic or other forms of scholarship.

Student-athletes felt that a sports psychologist on the athletic department's staff would be very beneficial. The male soccer player felt that "to have someone there to talk to about performances, it would affect everything."

Similar to sport psychology, nutrition is a concern that the student-athletes interviewed did not feel was being addressed. The athletic department used to have a nutritionist, but no longer staffed one.

Travel issues were another concern for student-athletes. A female soccer player whose team went to post season competitions felt that being on the road longer than planned affected her and her teammates negatively. Her teammates missed a midterm and had to make the final account for both the midterm and final grade. A male basketball player expressed concern about being on the road Wednesday through Sunday every other week during the winter trimester.

When asked what she would offer if she were to take over as the head athletic director, a gymnast felt that the athletic administration should make a better effort to "attend everyone's matches, meets, games. And really get to know [the] student-athletes more on a personal basis. Or like come visit them at their practices and actually introduce [him- or herself]." She felt that the athletic directors could be more involved in the student-athletes' lives.

Research question two: What types of social support do athletic administrators perceive to be available and accessible to the student-athletes in the athletic social network?

Table 3 (p. 64) shows the five categories of social support that were discussed by athletic administrators with 19 categories identified. The five themes include House's (1981) four dimensions of support, emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, and an additional theme, lack of support. The categories identified are discussed below.

Emotional support. Athletic administrators discussed three categories in the emotional support theme including caring, open-door policy, and personal involvement/one-on-one interactions. Emotional support is characterized by the provision of empathy, love, trust, and understanding (House, 1981).

Emotional support in the form of caring was discussed by all three athletic administrators interviewed. The Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator talked about how she went above and beyond her job requirements to be there for the student-athletes because she really cared. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills explained that the athletic department "never took the kids in and used them up and spit them out." The same administrator said that she felt "like a mother a lot of times and that's not a feeling that I dislike. I actually enjoy that."

The second category, open-door policy, was discussed by the Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator who felt that her interaction with student-athletes is rare for an administrator at her level. She explained "most people at my level do not spend that time with student-athletes." The open-door policy makes it so the

athletic administrators do not screen who comes in to talk to them; they want the student-athletes to feel comfortable in their office.

Personal involvement/one-on-one interaction was discussed regarding the detail of information learned and talked about with student-athletes. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills emphasized that these conversations were kept confidential to help student-athletes feel comfortable sharing. This theme included interactions between academic counselors and athletic administrators and the student-athletes.

Instrumental support. Athletic administrators discussed five categories in the instrumental support theme including personnel, special programs/classes/events, tutors/study hall, facilitation of services, and scholarships/grants/funds. Instrumental support is characterized by the provision of tangible aid and services (House, 1981).

The category personnel included coaches, athletic trainers, athletic administrators, academic counselors, study facilitators, and other people on staff. The Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained, “we have coaches who challenge them physically and hopefully we have coaches that are challenging them holistically as well.” It was understood that all of the personnel involved in student-athletes’ lives provide aid and perform some form of service.

Special programs/classes/events discussed were the etiquette dinner, mandatory Life Skills events, Everyday Champions, summer Bridge program, and business partners on campus. Not all student-athletes are required to attend all the events and thus the number of student-athletes in attendance is often very small (eight to 10 student-athletes). Regarding special programs and attendance, the Associate Athletic Director for

Life Skills explained “why deny everybody because I don’t think it’s going to fit many people? I’ll go ahead and put something like that out.”

The athletic administrators explained tutors and study hall to be services provided to student-athletes. Study hall runs Monday through Thursdays in the evenings and tutors can be met at study hall or during the day at a different location. “For the students who are less comfortable academically, we do a lot of work with them. Both our academic counselors...and their study facilitators at night...about how to be confident, what you are expected to know,” said the Associate Athletic Director for Academics.

The Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained that the services rendered are really basic. She explained “we’re not psychologists, we’re not trained therapists, so what we do...we will try to help facilitate them going up there. We will even walk students up to [Counseling and Psychological Services}.” She explained people tend to go to whom they know for help, so student-athletes come to her and she helps them find appropriate help.

Athletic scholarships are one form of funding for student-athletes and can be partial or full scholarships. For student-athletes who are on a full ride scholarship but still struggling the NCAA provides an additional Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund, which is “kind of a pot of money and there’s all these rules and parameters to it that if we have a student that has dental needs because they’ve come from a country that doesn’t have dental care or even from a family who never had dental insurance, we’ll take care of that because that’s the health of the student-athlete,” explained the Associate

Athletic Director for Life Skills. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills also discussed special clothing allowances for those on Pell grant.

Informational support. Athletic administrators discussed four categories in the informational support theme including special programs/classes/events, one-one-one interaction, academic assistance, and encouragement. Informational support is characterized by the provision of advice, suggestions, and information (House, 1981).

Special programs/classes/events that lend informational support to student-athletes included non-mandatory life skills workshops, mandatory Life Skills events, the Future's Forum, women's leadership group, leadership classes, and focus groups. Non-mandatory life skills events include financial/budgeting workshops, graduate school application, interviewing techniques, resume writing, cover letter writing, job search, psychological health, and gender identification seminars. Mandatory Life Skills events discussed were relationships and gender communication, finances, dealing with depression/psychological services, and leadership style.

One way to transfer information that athletic administrators discussed was through one-on-one interactions. The Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator explained it's

“not only that I can help people, but I can really kind of change, give them ideas so they make choices that may change their line of thinking where they started it out from. Not that I could change anybody or make them see differently, but I can definitely have conversations that would put question marks and challenge student-athletes' thoughts.”

The same administrator felt the athletic department was unique compared to similar schools in that individuals can be chosen and helped to be set up for success through “one-on-one [conversations], just about life in general.” A lot of work is done one-on-one with academic counselors to identify and remedy problems.

Informational support in the form of academic assistance is crucial to success for the student-athlete. Although they do not register the student-athletes for classes, academic counselors will teach them how to register and help decide what courses to take. Academic counselors encourage the student-athlete going to main campus to talk to their major degree academic counselor or another faculty member.

Athletic administrators encourage student-athletes to broaden their horizons through providing information about different opportunities on campus and how to be more connected to the campus through involvement in student organizations and community service.

Appraisal support. Athletic administrators discussed two categories in the appraisal support theme including special programs/classes/events and one-on-one interaction/encouragement. Appraisal support is characterized by the provision of information that is useful for self-evaluation purposes (House, 1981).

The Associate Athletic Director for Academics felt that the special programs/classes/events make student-athletes ask questions; “and they do...I think when we start talking about it, it becomes part of them.” This is an on-going process through the student-athlete’s time at the institution: “and we go through that starting in the fall quarter, introducing the most important things and then working into more

sophisticated things so that by the end of two years, they're able to walk away from us and say 'I got it. I can do this.' And that's our goal is that they would feel competent." The specials programs/classes/events are "about teaching the student and not doing something for the student the he or she should do him or herself;" they teach them how to fish, don't fish for them. Included in the special programs/classes/events are the Future's Forum, leadership classes, SAAC, mandatory Life Skills events, and non-mandatory life skills events.

Appraisal support is shown in one-on-one interaction helping student-athletes feel like they have been chosen or invited into a conversation and then challenging them to be leaders. Not only in leadership situations, but also in cases where the student-athlete will become a professional athlete, the administrators try to teach the student-athlete the cost of having a family as a professional athlete, and about other stressors in life. The administrators also try to teach these high-level student-athletes that if they do not play at the professional level for a certain number of years they will not be able to afford the lifestyle they will become accustomed to, which makes them more aware of the importance of education in their future. When they do not have all the answers, the athletic administrator will have them meet with a person that can communicate better, such as somebody trained in career decision making or psychological services.

Lack of support. Athletic administrators identified six categories of support that could be improved including coaching, budget/resources, personal limitations, psychological services, nutritional services, and special programs/classes/events.

Regarding coaches, the Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator felt they are a bit conservative and do not challenge student-athletes off the field of play. Her comment was that she did not "see our coaches deciding, 'hey, we're going to do a little lesson on diversity today,' They don't [see] that as their job and they're very clear about that, it's not their job. They're kind of scared about going there." While diversity training may not be a part of normal coaching education, it maybe important for athletic departments to ensure coaches are competent in this area and able to help student-athletes be more aware and understanding of diversity issues.

Lack of budget/resources limits the support available to student-athletes. One example discussed was that at some schools student-athletes' schedules are built for them, but the resources to do that were not available in the institution in this sample. Multiple comments were made about "being as bare-bones as you can be." The Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained that

"Because we are really on the very small side...we have one person who does life skills. Many schools have a whole life skill staff and they do everything that goes from the education portion of it to psychological well being to career development and it's really well thought out and well mapped out. We just don't have the resources to do it here."

Athletic administrators discussed personal limitations related to academics, such as time management, of student-athletes to be a difficulty. She explained, "a lot of times I worry that students give up on their dreams a little too soon or they say, 'oh, I'll just major in this because it's easy or I think it's easy.'" Another personal limitation is when

student-athletes have to choose practice over class due to scheduling conflicts, which is an NCAA violation, but happens, suggesting the athletic lifestyle is in conflict with the academic lifestyle.

Psychological services in house were something athletic administrators felt would be helpful but explained were not available due to funding. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills felt that some situations with student-athletes could be easily remedied if a sports psychologist was available to consult or work with them.

Like psychological services, the athletic administrators would like to see a nutritionist back on staff, but again explained it was not in the budget.

Special programs/classes/events that could be added or improved upon included professional development and interview skills workshops and dress and etiquette dinners that can only occur twice a year due to budget. Others ideas expressed by the Associate Athletic Director for Academics were “programs that would help the student with the faculty member develop extracurricular interests that [could then be] featured in our alumni magazine,” faculty mentoring, a fully integrated career development program, and a “fully developed and fully integrated graduate school development program and post-graduate award program.”

Research question three: How are student-athletes' and athletic administrators' perceptions of social support in the athletic social network similar?

Student-athletes and athletic administrators identified 14 similar categories in the five themes of social support as shown in italics in Table 6.

In the emotional support theme, student-athletes identified relationships with administrators and individual attention, which are similar to athletic administrators' category of personal involvement/one-on-one interaction with student-athletes.

In the instrumental support category five similar categories were found including: personnel (academic counselors/advisors, administrators, coaches, athletic trainers), special programs/classes/events, tutors/academic assistance/study hall, facilitation of services, and scholarships/grants/funds.

Two similar categories were found in the informational support category: special programs/classes/events and one-on-one interaction (identified by student-athletes as working with academic counselors and administrators).

No similarities were identified in the appraisal support theme.

Both student-athletes and athletic administrators found coaches, psychological services, and nutritional services to be categories in the lack of support theme.

Implications of similarities in social support perceptions between student-athletes and athletic administrators will be addressed in the fifth chapter, *Conclusion*.

Table 6—Student-Athlete/Athletic Administrator Categories

Theme	Student-Athlete Categories	Athletic Administrator Categories
Emotional	Community support	Open door policy
	Teacher/professor support	Caring
	<i>Relationship with administrators</i>	<i>Personal involvement/one-on-one interaction</i>
	<i>Individual attention</i>	
	Athlete/Coach relationship	
	Athletic trainer support	
Instrumental	Academic counselors	<i>Personnel</i>
	<i>Academic counselors</i>	<i>Special programs/classes/events</i>
	<i>Administrators</i>	<i>Tutors/academic assistance/study hall</i>
	<i>Tutors/academic assistance/study hall</i>	<i>Facilitation of services</i>
	<i>Scholarships/stipend</i>	<i>Scholarships/grants/funds</i>
	Computer lab/free printing	
	<i>Facilities/equipment</i>	
Informational	<i>Coaches/athletic trainers</i>	<i>Special programs/classes/events</i>
	<i>Special programs/classes/events</i>	<i>One-on-one interaction</i>
	<i>Academic counselors</i>	
	<i>Administrators</i>	
	Networking/connections	
	Volunteering/community service /internships	
Appraisal	<i>Special programs/classes/events</i>	<i>Special programs/classes/events</i>
	<i>Coaches/athletic trainers</i>	<i>One-on-one interaction</i>
Lack of Support	<i>Coach communication</i>	<i>Coaches</i>
	Lack of attention/caring	Budget/resources
	Lack of scholarship	Personal limitations
	<i>Psychological services</i>	<i>Psychological services</i>
	<i>Nutritional services</i>	<i>Nutritional services</i>
	Travel issues	Special programs/classes/events
	Athletic administrator involvement	

Research question four: How are student-athletes' and athletic administrators' perceptions of social support in the athletic social network different?

Student-athletes did not identify six categories that athletic administrators discussed and athletic administrators did not identify 13 categories that student-athletes discussed in the five themes of social support as shown in regular type font in Table 6 (p. 95).

In the emotional support theme, student-athletes identified five categories that athletic directors did not: community support, athlete/coach relationship, athletic trainer support, and academic counselor support. Athletic administrators found their open door policy and caring attitudes to be emotionally supportive for the student-athletes, who did not identify these themes.

Only one category was identified by student-athletes that athletic administrators did not identify in the instrumental support theme: computer lab/free printing. Student-athletes specified facilities/equipment as a category, which included clothing. Athletic Administrators included clothing as part of the scholarships/grants/funds category. Athletic administrators did not identify additional categories in this category.

Networking/connections and volunteering/community service/internships were categories identified by student-athletes in the informational support theme that athletic administrators did not identify. Athletic administrators did not identify additional categories in this theme.

While both student-athletes and athletic administrators discussed individual interactions with each other, student-athletes focused on how this attention makes them

attend mandatory events while athletic administrators focused on how these interactions encourage student-athletes. Athletic administrators also discussed special programs/classes/events as being supportive in this theme, while student-athletes did not.

In the lack of support theme student-athletes identified a lack of attention/caring from athletic administration, lack of scholarships, travel issues, and lack of athletic administration involvement, which athletic administrators did not mention. Athletic administrators' support concerns that student-athletes did not identify included budget/resources, personal limitations, and special programs/classes/events.

Implications of differences in social support perceptions between student-athletes and athletic administrators will be addressed in the fifth chapter, *Conclusion*.

Summary

From the 13 student-athletes and three athletic administrators that were interviewed, 38 categories were identified in the themes of emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, appraisal support, and lack of support.

Student-athletes identified 29 categories in the five themes and athletic administrators identified 19 categories in the five themes. Similarities between student-athletes and athletic administrators were found in 14 categories. Student-athletes identified 13 categories that athletic administrators did not and athletic administrators identified six categories that student-athletes did not. Implications for the similarities and differences identified are discussed in the next chapter.

Results from the study were reported in this chapter. Outcomes addressing each of the five research questions were stated and summarized. The fifth chapter, *Conclusion* will present research conclusions, implications of results, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social network compared to the forms of social support described as available and accessible to the student-athlete by administrative personnel in the institution's athletic department. Using House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969) psychosocial model I aimed to categorize the perceived forms of social support described by the student-athletes and administrators to explore possible similarities and disconnects between the types of social support identified by each group. This chapter presents (a) a summary of the study, (b) research problem, (c) purpose statement, (d) research questions, (e) review of the research design, (f) summary of the findings, (g) discussion of conclusions, (h) implications of conclusions, (i) limitations and recommendations for further investigation, and (j) final conclusions.

Summary

Student-athletes have been found to not only experience the same stressors as their non-student-athlete peers but to also have additional stressors that require specialized social support (Donohue, Miller, Crammer, Cross, & Covassin, 2007; Etzel, Ferrante, & Pinckney, 1991; Giaccobi et al., 2004; Hinkle, 1994, Parham, 1993; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989; Richards & Aries, 1999; Tracey & Corlett, 1995).

Similarly, student-athletes have been shown to have the same developmental needs as non-student-athletes but due to the consuming nature of athletics may be lacking some developmental skills (Parham, 1993; Valentine & Taub, 1999). Athletic department staff should address developmental needs of their student-athletes through social support and should play an active role in maintaining their well-being. The current study garnered information regarding available and accessible social support from student-athletes and athletic administrators at one NCAA Division I university in the Northwestern United States. Interview responses from student-athletes and athletic administrators were compared to explore differences and similarities in perceptions of available and accessible support in the athletic social network.

Objective and rationale

With so many forms of support to address the social and developmental needs of student-athletes, it would seem that they are well taken care of and should be problem free. However, as mentioned previously, student-athletes are shown to have more psychological problems than non-student-athletes, with 10-20% of student-athletes requiring psychological counseling (Maniar, et al., 2005; Pinkerton, et al., 1989; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Both the high levels of life stress and perceptions of support may play a role in the psychological wellness of the student-athlete. If a student-athlete does not perceive that support is available or accessible from the athletic department, he or she may not seek out professional help, thus leaving the student-athlete to depend on family, friends, and teammates for support who (in the case of teammates especially)

may have similar problems and are not trained to diagnose or deal with the psychological problem. It is important to understand the relationship between what social support a student-athlete perceives as available and accessible from the athletic department and the types of social support the athletic department is providing. An understanding of this relationship may result in provision of more effective forms of social support, which may in turn help to improve the development and wellness of the student-athletes.

The use of both House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969) model of psychosocial development allowed me to be focused on who provides what types of support and why support is provided in the athletic social network. Currently, literature on student-athlete support is focused on either on one dimension of well being (such as depression or life stress), or one group (athletic directors or student-athletes). An exploration of similarities and differences in perceptions of available and accessible support between athletic administrators and student-athletes is beneficial in that it explored multiple dimensions of well being and both the recipients and providers of support. This multifaceted approach adds to existing literature by being multidimensional and multi-focused.

Purpose statement

The purpose of this research was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social

network compared to the forms of social support described to be available and accessible to the student-athlete by administrative personnel in the institution's athletic department.

Research questions

Four research questions were developed to guide the research process:

1. What types of social support do student-athletes perceive to be available and accessible in their athletic social network?
2. What types of social support do athletic administrators perceive to be available and accessible to the student-athletes in the athletic social network?
3. How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network similar?
4. How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network different?

Review of the research design

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 student-athletes using purposive sampling to recruit participants. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with the Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator, Director of Academic Services for Student-Athletes, and Assistant Athletic Director for Life Skills. Interview questions aimed to explore student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of available and accessible social support in the athletic network were based on House's (1981) four dimensions of social support and Chickering's (1969)

psychosocial model. Thematic analysis of transcribed interview responses were used to compare student-athletes' and athletic administrators' perceptions.

Summary of findings

In the current study, the investigator attempted to compare student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of available and accessible social support in the athletic social network. Four research questions formed the framework for the discussion of the findings.

Research question one

What types of social support do student-athletes perceive to be available and accessible in their athletic social network? Student-athletes identified 29 categories in five themes of social support (emotional, instrumental, informational, appraisal, and lack of support)(Table3, p. 64).

Research question two

What types of social support do athletic administrators perceive to be available and accessible to the student-athletes in the athletic social network? Athletic administrators identified 19 categories in the five themes of social support (Table 4, p. 65).

Research question three

How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network similar? Student-athletes and athletic administrators identified 14 similar categories in the five themes of social support (Table 6, p. 95).

Research question four

How are student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions of social support in the athletic social network different? Student-athletes did not identify six categories that athletic administrators discussed and athletic administrators did not identify 13 categories that student-athletes discussed in the five themes of social support (Table 6, p. 95).

Discussion

Included in this section are discussions of the implications of similarities and differences in perceptions of social support between athletic administrators and student-athletes and the relationship between support and development in each vector as it pertains to the findings. The discussion is focused on how athletic administrators at this institution are enhancing the student-athlete experience, addressing student-athlete developmental needs, and caring for the student-athletes' well being. Also included in the following discussion are suggestions for improving the social support in this athletic social network.

Competence

Mastery of intellectual, physical and manual competence leads to the development of overall competence (Valentine & Taub, 1999). The focus is development of skills to accomplish physical and manual tasks effectively and work in a group successfully. Student-athletes must be competent in the classroom like their student peers and on the field of play as well. Successfully accomplishing physical tasks in groups is a daily task for student-athletes that most have been practicing for many years before attending college.

Support for development of competence was discussed in all five themes of support. In the emotional support theme student-athletes identified teacher/professor support, academic counselors, athlete/coach relationships, and individual attention as categories. Regarding individual attention, a female soccer player explained “ [athletic administrators] and just everyone involved...they’re just so positive and upbeat...I feel like they’d pretty much do anything for us if we needed it. So I feel like we have a really good group of people there that want to all help us succeed.” Athletic administrators supported student-athletes to develop competence by offering emotional support because “they care” emphasized the Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women’s Athletic Director.

When student-athletes were asked what made them feel competent in their academic pursuits answers were related primarily to instrumental support in the form of tutors, academic counselors, and teachers/professors. A female swimmer felt that she would not have gotten as good of grades without instrumental support in the form of

tutors. She explained, “ I was in some really hard classes and it was really hard and we get tutors here so I take advantage of them. I got a B in class I think and I probably wouldn’t have been able to if I didn’t have a tutor.”

Informational support from academic counselors and coaches/athletic trainers also helped student-athletes to feel competent. Tutors in study hall, academic counselors, coaches, and athletic trainers provided information that helped student-athletes to feel competent in the classroom. A male basketball player felt the special programs/classes/events also helped to develop competence in academics and is quoted as saying “ I think those classes have really helped with--helping you figure out how to do it and how to do it well.” Similarly, athletic administrators identified special programs/classes/events as informational support that helps student-athletes develop competence. The special programs/classes/events athletic administrators were focusing on here were the mandatory and non-mandatory CHAMPS Life Skills events.

Regarding appraisal support for competence, student-athletes focused on how individual interactions with athletic administrators makes them attend mandatory life skills events. Athletic administrators felt one-on-one interactions encourage student-athletes to be successful in the classroom and on the field of play. In this case, student-athlete and athletic administrator perceptions differed. Appraisal support in all vectors in this study was lacking.

Developing competence in student-athletes was important to athletic administrators. Regarding instrumental support, athletic administrators identified special programs/classes events, tutors/academic counselors, and study hall. The Associate

Athletic Director for Academics explained, “for the students who are less comfortable academically, we do a lot of work with them both our academic counselors do and their study facilitators at night about how to be confident, what are you expected to know.” The aim is to provide resources to help student-athlete success in the classroom.

Athletic administrators discussed lack of support in the competence vector, while student-athletes did not. They felt that any lack of support in this vector was due to budget/resources and personnel limitations. Though she expressed the wish to implement a fully integrated career planning program, the Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained that it was just not feasible with the small number of people working in academics and lack of funding.

Competence seemed to be an area of little concern to both student-athletes and athletic administrators. One possible explanation for this is the confidence student-athletes often gain from athletics that carries over into other aspects of their life, such as academics. The participants who were less confident in their academic ability found support in the form of tutors and academic counseling to be available and accessible. A female soccer player who admitted to having a difficult time with her academics and a learning disability explained “resources on campus through athletics, through the library and things like that has kind of helped me try and have that confidence again in my academics.”

Another explanation for student-athlete confidence and competence may be the summer Bridge program where student-athletes attend classes and events in the weeks

preceding the beginning of regularly scheduled classes. Those who attend this program find it beneficial. A student-athlete who supported this sentiment explained,

“I feel like every athlete should do that. I felt like you’d be behind if you don’t. Like, how can it hurt? Like, you need those three extra weeks to like, introduce and everything. Like, you don’t know what’s going on. Like, it’d be really difficult to just be thrown into like...oh, my gosh, I’d be so overwhelmed if I did do that!”

Not all sports are required to attend the summer Bridge program. However, all incoming freshman student-athletes have the opportunity to attend. Those participants who attended spoke glowingly about it suggesting it is a program that should be continued if not required of all student-athletes.

Managing emotions

‘Managing emotions’ includes “recognition of emotions/impulses and the ability to integrate, express, and control them” (Valentine & Taub, 1999, p. 168). In this vector, student-athletes and athletic administrators identified categories in four of five themes.

Student-athletes expressed relationships with administrators, individual attention, and academic counselors to be supportive and can be considered as emotional, instrumental and informational support. A female swimmer explained her academic counselor be there “to talk if I needed to talk about anything.” Coaches were also identified as emotionally supportive by multiple student-athletes. A female soccer player said “I could go to any of my assistant coaches if there’s something like superficial,” and

a female cross country runner explained how her coach is emotionally supportive by saying “everyone on our team goes to him about problems because...he really understands you and tries to like help you out. He doesn't really ignore you about it. Like he goes the distance with that kind of stuff.”

A hierarchy of sports teams exists at many NCAA Division I athletic institutions with football and men's basketball producing the most revenue and receiving the most attention and funding. Student-athletes on less recognized and less well-funded sports teams can feel uncared for and unimportant and thus feel a lack of emotional support. Although budget and funding concerns were expressed by athletic administrators at this institution, one student-athlete offered a suggestion to athletic administrators that may help the student-athletes on less attention grabbing sports feel more cared for. She explained that if she were an athletic administrator, “[she] would try to attend everyone's matches, meets, games, and really get to know [her] student-athletes on a personal basis. Or like come visit them at their practices and actually introduce [herself].” Her comment suggests that although scholarships, facilities, and equipment concerns are important to student-athletes, feeling cared for and emotionally supported is also important and can be improved without any financial means.

Athletic administrators felt their open door policy was emotionally supportive for student-athletes, who did not identify this as a category. Improving and advertising the open door policy may help student-athletes feel more comfortable approaching athletic administrators with concerns. Although some of the participants felt the athletic administrators were very caring and approachable, few of them discussed a type of

relationship where it was normal to drop in on an administrator. Most student-athletes interviewed felt at ease with their academic counselor, who is part of the athletic social network, but did not express the same relationship with administrators at higher levels. A male rower suggested that a meeting with the Athletic Director would be difficult to set up and that his concerns might not be addressed even if he were to get a meeting.

Athletic administrators may develop more casual relationships with the student-athletes if the student-athletes are aware that the open door policy is in effect.

Facilitation of services was discussed in both the instrumental and informational support themes by athletic administrators. The athletic administrators felt that facilitation of services helped student-athletes develop in the managing emotions vector. Regarding the instrumental theme, the Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained,

“Our counselors deal with students on all kinds of levels. And so we work with--we’re not psychologists, we’re not trained therapists...we just had two meetings this summer with the CAPS office and we did one training with them. If a student presents with really serious issues of depression, we will try to help facilitate them going up there. We will even walk students up to CAPS.”

The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills explained how she views facilitation of services as helping student-athletes deal with emotion management by saying,

“working with an academic counselor who’s going to help you just realize the source of your depression is procrastination and the source of your procrastination in ADHD and then we can treat that and maybe that

will help us to get you very organized or you can say okay, that's not going to work and maybe we'll work with an adviser on campus or maybe we'll work with somebody at the psychological services, maybe your trainer downstairs will be helpful."

Special programs/classes/events were also thought to help students in this vector. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills explained,

" I am working with student health and counseling the psychological services with an adviser in both of those areas to form a focus group so that they can find out what are the needs of the student athlete so then winter turn, what are the mandatory events for healthy behaviors will be on mental health."

Although the majority of the student-athletes seemed well supported in the managing emotions vector, a female swimmer discussed having difficulty with coach communication when she was having problems with a teammate and also when the team was struggling to deal with an absent assistant coach. She explained that her coach was "not a very good communicator at all." On the other hand the Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women's Administrator, with regards to the football coach, explained the coach as seeing "everything the student can bring back as positive, not taking away" and having high expectations of the student-athletes he coaches. The football player interviewed seemed to agree with this comment when saying, "the coaches pull me in and talk to me quite a bit. They got in my head and just made sure I was working hard." He seemed impressed with his coach's emotional and appraisal support. Improving

communication between coaches and student-athletes and coach understanding of student-athlete needs may reduce stress levels in student-athletes.

A major category in the lack of support theme identified by both athletic administrators and student-athletes was a lack of sport psychology services. The student-athletes interviewed in this research study seemed interested in a sports psychologist for performance enhancement while the athletic administrators viewed the service as a way to help with the psychological well being of student-athletes who struggle with depression and other mental health problems. Addressing both performance and mental health through psychological services could improve student-athlete success both in the classroom and on the field of play while countering the underutilization of mental health services discussed previously. While athletic administrators facilitate student-athletes in dire need of counseling going to the main campus Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) department, a sports psychologist was explained to be unavailable in that department, and as discussed in previous chapters, student-athletes are reluctant to seek help for mental health issues outside of the athletic department making it imperative to have this form of support available and accessible within their athletic social network.

Moving from autonomy to independence

The vector 'moving from autonomy to independence' includes emotional autonomy (freedom from need for reassurance), instrumental autonomy (being able to function and cope without seeking help and react to own needs and desires), and interdependence (recognition and acceptance of needing others and being needed). It is

often argued by people outside of athletics that student-athletes are “given everything,” which would suggest an autonomous relationship between student-athletes and the athletic department. When asked about this, athletic administrators in this study explained the reality of the situation to be that the athletic department does not have the funds available to do everything for the student-athlete. As suggested by the lack of scholarships by some student-athlete participants in this study, the athletic department cannot ‘give everything’ to every student-athlete, thus independence is required to a point. While student-athletes and athletic-administrators identified many forms of support in all four of House’s (1981) dimensions of social support, the Associate Athletic Director for Academics feels the athletic department is “as barebones as [it] can be.” Identification of support that is lacking supports this notion.

Emotionally, student-athletes were not dependent on the athletic department for help developing independence. Most participants relied on family, friends, or themselves to deal with emotional problems. Both a male rower and a female swimmer explained that when s/he needed financial help or advice she would turn to her father.

In the instrumental category, student-athletes who were not on scholarship made the only complaints. A female soccer player admitted to being dependent on her athletic scholarship to attend college but, like all student-athlete participants, was confident that her education would provide for her after college and she would have no problem being independent.

Differences in identification of categories in this theme are small but not insignificant. Six of 13 participants were on partial to zero academic scholarship. Few

expressed financial concerns, however those without any form of athletic scholarship seemed more concerned with finances than those with partial or full athletic scholarships. One student-athlete explained that his teammates who have no athletic scholarship “run out of money at the end of the month and are living off rice and soup for the last part and it’s obviously not helping them athletically.” Also of interest are the comments made about feeling less important due to type of sport and funding. Athletic administrators are aware of limited budgets and resources but did not discuss student-athletes who are not on athletic scholarship or sports teams that have less funding than others.

Student-athlete concerns about lack of scholarships and athletic administrators concerns about lack of budget/funding were discussed differently in regards to what the money was going to, but are related. Student-athletes were not aware they were missing out on programs that athletic administrators would like to have funded, and athletic administrators did not comment on lack of athletic scholarships. If student-athletes do not understand the budget of the athletic department they may not understand why, for instance, some teams have more scholarship dollars than others. Improving that understanding may help student-athletes who are not receiving athletic scholarships feel more supported.

Informational support from the athletic department aids student-athletes in becoming independent. Academic counselors help student-athletes in developing their academic schedules, but do not register for them. Life Skills presentations teach communication, finance, leadership skills, and ways to cope with mental health

problems that help student-athletes deal with a multitude of stressors independently. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills explained that the athletic department mantra is to “teach them how to fish, don’t fish for them,” which also develops independence.

Many participants spoke glowingly about the non-mandatory life skills events that were offered but at the same time made negative sounding comments about the mandatory Life Skills events suggesting room for improvement. The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills mentioned questioning SAAC members about likes and dislikes regarding life skills events and how she knows which events will be popular with the student-athletes and which events will be less so. Budget and funding issues impact the life skills events, limiting the variety and quality of the programs. A possible implication of this is a lack of engagement in the event and absorption of the message from the speaker. Improving the quality of the events and presenting information the student-athletes are curious about may improve information transfer and the development of independence.

Student-athletes interviewed who were members of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) expressed that SAAC members seemed more aware of information, opportunities and happenings within the athletic department. SAAC members interviewed also had a more positive view of the mandatory Life Skills events and attended non-mandatory life skills events more often than non-SAAC members suggesting more engagement within the athletic social network. Increasing involvement within the athletic social network may result in student-athletes having increased

awareness of opportunities and forms of support, which may in turn increase perceptions of available and accessible support.

Both student-athletes and athletic administrators were asked point-blank if they felt there was too much ‘hand-holding’ in the athletic social network. Student-athletes answered no, they could not come up with any examples of such activity. Athletic administrators also answered no and that with budget concerns their reality was that there were many forms of support they wish they could offer. The responses suggest that student-athletes at this institution have no problem becoming independent as it is a necessity.

Developing mature relationships

The vector ‘developing mature relationships’ includes increased tolerance (openness, respect and appreciation for diversity) and a shift toward interdependent relationships that involve stability, trust, and individuality. Two themes were discussed. Student-athletes focused their comments regarding mature relationships on the emotional support theme. Athletic administrators were more focused on informational support.

When asked about significant others, few student-athletes admitted to being in a relationship. Those who were in a romantic relationship found it to be difficult but “doable.” It is common for student-athletes to date fellow student-athletes, but in the participants interviewed, the student-athletes in romantic relationships were not dating other student-athletes. A male basketball player explained,

“It’s finding a boyfriend, or a girlfriend, or a partner, whatever term you want to use, being a student athlete and having to be in a successful working relationship is very hard to find, I think. Because the amount of time a student athlete spends on being a student and being an athlete. Being a full-time student is...it takes a lot of time. Adding an athlete on top of that where you have games and practices, and weights, and conditioning, and traveling. For example, in the winter term, we’re gone Wednesday through Sunday every other week. And finding a partner who will support you and wants to be with you and understands ‘look, I am not going to see you for two weeks because I’m just too busy.’ Finding somebody who will support you and put up with that and just be there whenever there is hard to find, I think.”

Many of the student-athlete participants who were not in romantic relationships explained it was because they did not feel they had the time or had not met a person worth the added stress but had been in relationships before. A female swimmer explained it well by saying,

“I guess I’m semi-dating someone, like a couple, like, not anything serious. But like, it’s difficult to try and fit stuff in and, you know, when-okay, maybe I’m going out with this person, but there’s a lot that I should be doing and like, sometimes you make sacrifices “

A female swimmer who had dated another student-athlete felt these relationships were easier because “you don’t have to explain it, they just get it. You know some of the stresses of being an athlete.”

Athletic administrators who commented on student-athlete relationships felt that time commitments with athletics made relationships more difficult. The Associate Athletic Director/Senior Women’s Administrator felt that waiting to have romantic relationships was a good thing. When asked if she felt student-athletes have quality mature relationships, the Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills said,

“I think they do. It’s such a hard time in a young person’s life that they really should be kind of going through several pretty hot and heavy relationships just to kind of figure out who’s the fit for me. So I see that and I also seem to hear that they gravitate towards other student-athletes because the other student-athlete understands their commitment. And it is that understanding that is hard to explain to somebody who has not been in those shoes.”

Athletic Administrators attempt to help student-athletes develop quality mature relationships through special programs/classes/events focused on healthy relationships and gendered communication. Whether student-athletes cannot or choose not to have romantic relationships was not fully explored, but participants’ responses suggest the latter. Student-athletes interviewed in this study seemed to be capable of quality mature relationships and chose to focus on academics and athletics over romantic relationships.

Establishing identity

Identity establishment includes comfort with body, appearance, gender, and sexual orientation, sense of self, clarification of self-concept, personal stability, and self-esteem. Researchers have suggested the dual identity of athlete and student can cause conflict for the collegiate student-athlete in multiple areas. Career choices and alternative lifestyles are insufficiently considered by student-athletes whose identities are based on being athletes (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Ogilvie & Howe, 1982). Over-identification with the athlete identity can lead to deviant behavior (Hughes & Coakley, 1991) and myriad other concerns.

When asked to describe themselves, none of the participants described themselves as athletes and most were able to identify with other parts of their personality. One student-athlete explained,

“I don't tell people I'm like an athlete because they already put like a label on you if you tell them that. So I think it's easier to get to know people and get to know more about them if you don't tell them you're an athlete. If you tell them you're an athlete they ask you all these questions and you don't really get to know them, I guess because they are trying to know you because of what you do.”

Other student-athletes felt that being an athlete was too much of their identity and that they had no time for other interests. Explains one student-athlete,

“I feel like...a lot of people have like, the time to like, grow other types of interests that they have and I feel like softball has been really my only

like, interest. Like, it's really taking up my entire life and it's giving me a lot back."

A female soccer player felt as if she is

"more of an athlete at [the school] than a student...and I don't mind it because I like the image. It makes me feel like I'm completing school, I'm doing well in school, and on top of that I have athletics as well. It is kind of like a double reward at the end of the day in that way."

Athletic administrators agree that being an athlete influences the student-athlete's identity and work to diversify that identity in what one administrator termed a "natural progression:"

"Most of the students come to a D1 institution happy and a big fish in a very small pond and then they get here by accident. They are in that pond with a lot of big fishes and so unless you're a senior big fish, you're going to get four years or three years of kind of learning how to swim in that pond with a lot of other people, a lot of other good people. And so, they start seeing well, gosh I was the best and now I'm not anymore. And so, I think that natural development takes place at natural progression of okay, I'm going to have to really ramp up my work ethic. I'm going to have to not only be great in the pool but I also have to be great academically because I will not stay around here. And so they start figuring out what are the other interests that I can be involved with and so

that's what I think it starts to diversify by accident because we have so many things that we have to put upon them."

Through informational support in the form of speakers in special programs/classes/events, committee's like SAAC, and non-athletic related student organizations student-athletes are introduced to alternative interests that help diversify their identities. While one student-athlete admitted to not having time for much else but her sport and academics, many of the student-athletes were involved in SAAC or other student organizations suggesting healthy identity development.

Appraisal support was also discussed by athletic administrators as a way for student-athletes to diversify their identity. The administrators explained how the special programs/classes/events are used to help the student-athlete realize that at some point the student-athlete will no longer be an athlete and having other interests is important. The Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained she tells students, "this activity, whether it's football or basketball, it ends at some point. And it's like, 'so what are you outside of that uniform?' And that's what we want you to explore, particularly intellectually."

Athletic administrators did feel that although they do a good job at helping student-athletes diversify their identities, they lack the ability to do as much for the student-athletes as they would like. The Associate Athletic Director for Academics discussed how larger schools have more staff to coordinate services and how this institution has only one life skills coordinator. She said,

“many schools have a whole life skills staff and they do everything that goes from the education portion of it to psychological well being to career development and it’s really well thought out and well mapped out. We just don’t have the resources to do it here.”

Many of the comments made regarding support in the identity development vector are closely related to the developing purpose vector.

Developing purpose

The vector ‘developing purpose’ involves “developing life plans that balance vocational plans and aspirations, personal interests, and interpersonal and family commitments” (Valentine & Taub, 1999, p. 174). For the college student, developing purpose is directly related to career development. The Associate Athletic Director for Academics explained that in academics they are “focused a lot on [the] student’s progress towards their majors,” but wishes she could provide student-athletes with a “fully integrated career development program.” She worries “that students give up on their dreams a little too soon or they say, ‘Oh, I’ll just major in this because it’s easy or I think it’s easy.’” What the athletic department does to help this situation is to be directly involved with the student-athletes through informational, instrumental, and appraisal support to guide student-athletes toward academic success.

The Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women’s Administrator made the point that the athletic department “never took the kids in and used them up and spit them out.” She was referring to the idea that other institution are only interested in the student-

athlete's worth on the athletic field and care little about their future after serving their athletic purpose. This administrator felt the athletic department is emotionally supportive in the developing purpose vector.

Informational support is meant to “give them ideas so they make choices that may change their line of thinking” to a one where they are focused on their careers after athletics explained the Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills. Informational support comes from academic advisors, coaches, and athletic administrators through one-on-one interactions with the student-athletes and special programs/classes/events.

Instrumental support through academic counselors is used to infuse the idea that the student role is important. Similarly athletic administrators discussed how “there is a way to hook them in those directions.” Athletic administrators as instrumental and informational supporters use appraisal support by “actually [looking] at their transcript and [saying] ‘do you know that these types of courses you’re doing very well and these are not your strength field courses?’” (Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills, personal communication).

Student-athlete participants were all decided on their academic majors and when asked, the concern was more about having limited time to work internships in order to prepare for their careers after college. Explained one student-athlete,

“A lot of my friends, like, they all have internships with these companies that they’re figuring out what they’re doing. And that’s, like, so foreign to me because I had nothing on my resume, like, not a thing and I’m really not exactly sure what I want to do with my life. And, like, it’s...I

really felt lately that...especially this last summer because this is kind of a time, like going into our senior year and people are graduating and, like, they're doing, like real, like big boy, girl and girl things, like I can't. I feel like I'm going to graduate and might be behind in that. And that's one thing that is unfortunate.”

Time conflicts and additional commitments compared to non-student-athletes make it difficult to participate in resume building activities. However, many of the participants expressed confidence in being prepared for life after college and athletics and in being able to be successful in the work environment.

This confidence in developing purpose may be due to the forms of support student-athletes discussed. In the emotional support theme, student-athletes discussed teacher/professor support, academic counselor support, athlete/coach relationships, and individual attention. A female soccer player who aspires to be an athletic administrator felt very supported by the athletic administrators and explained that she and the Assistant Athletic Director/Senior Women's Athletic Director “are great friends...she has brought me to have these opportunities and brought me along to try and push me to make myself more involved and things like that.”

Student-athletes identified academic counselors, coaches/athletic trainers, and special programs/classes/events as categories of support in the instrumental support theme. A male basketball player explained, “if I need help, I find it. But I'm comfortable with where I'm at and I know I'm going to get there.” Through her connections in the athletic department, a female soccer player both discussed how “you have connections

everywhere and not just here or around here but wherever [you] are from and wherever [you] end up,” and that these connections would help her reach her career goals in the future. A female rower felt informational support from her coaches would help her in the same way. She said

“I know that if at any time I need them they will give me any kind of support or names of people I can contact to get help. So having the connection with the coaches and their connections, I think it will be really helpful [in getting a job].”

In one isolated case a female soccer player, who previously expressed how supportive the athletic administrators were, felt unsupported in her career goals. She explained the athletic department “took away my athletic administration minor and I really wanted to do that.” Another barrier to developing purpose, discussed previously in the identity development vector, is time limitations and the inability to explore other interests outside of athletics.

Developing integrity

The vector ‘developing integrity’ includes developing humanizing values, congruence between values and behavior, and personalizing values. It is commonly thought that athletic participation develops integrity but arguments are made that this is not always the case and there are ample examples of student-athletes committing crime and behaving in ways that counter that assumption. Student-athletes in this study agreed with the assumption that athletic participation builds character and integrity, although

few discussed times in their life where their integrity was tested. One male student-athlete explained,

“Well...being a student athlete here...I don't want to be too detailed here...has presented me with situations where my own morals and ideas of right and wrong are...it could be in the gray area...have been challenged and I think that them being challenged has made me stronger.”

In another case, a female student-athlete felt that she had gone astray in the beginning of her collegiate athletic career and that her coach helped to set her straight:

“I was not making good choices so then after that I learned my lesson and went on to do better things and be more of a leader for my team. And my coach helped me realize that. He was like ‘you need to settle down and do this, and if not you're not going to go anywhere.’”

The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills was asked if athletic participation influences the student-athlete's morals and values. She responded with,

“I think there's a forcedness to that to begin with because there are rules that have to follow. How you play the game? What's the code of conduct within the game? What are the rules of the game? When is it foul? So they get a sense of fair play and then the NCAA comes on top with them with rules and the [conference] comes up on them with rules, and the department comes on top of them with rules. Those pretty much shape most people and those that decide they want to get away without those rules and they usually get caught.”

In some ways it seems that athletic participation in college may teach more lessons about integrity than would be learned in the classroom alone. Although there are cases where student-athletes are causing trouble, it often seems worse because it is more publicized than it would be if it were a non-student-athlete.

Student-athletes agreed with the idea that they are supported with information through special programs/classes/events to make good choices regarding integrity. A female soccer player discussed the moral message to keep playing was reinforced through “people that will...come in and kind of share their message.” Another female soccer player explained the special programs/classes/events to be a form of appraisal support in that “someone telling you to do something kind of motivates people because it’s like...now I have to look good because [the Athletic Director] is going to be there or your head coach is going to be there.”

The Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills did feel that in some cases the special programs/classes/events and other athletic commitments could be unsupportive if the choice to attend class or attend the mandatory events had to be made. She explained, “although that is a [NCAA] violation, I know it happens. And so rather than having to make those choices, they...dump into anything to be an athlete and get a degree.” She was explaining how some student-athletes’ degree choices are made based on ease of courses and schedules and not on their career aspirations.

A female cross-country runner felt her coach was emotionally and informationally supportive regarding development of integrity. She explained,

“I was not making good choices so then after that I learned my lesson and went on to do better things and be more of a leader for my team. And my coach helped me realize that. He was like ‘you need to settle down and do this, and if not you're not going to go anywhere.’”

Highly publicized occurrences of student-athlete misconduct at the institution of interest led to a mandate from the State Board of Education to implement the CHAMPS Life Skills program, requiring student-athletes to attend the mandatory informational events discussed throughout this paper. While few of the participants felt the mandatory life skills events were necessary, all were supportive of the messages. One student-athlete explained that if the events were not mandatory no student-athletes would attend, while others had attended non-mandatory life skills events.

Conclusion

While the general purpose of this study was to explore, through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athlete perceptions of available and accessible forms of social support in their athletic social network compared to the forms of social support described to be available and accessible to the student-athlete by administrative personnel in the institution’s athletic department, I was motivated by the desire to identify strengths and weaknesses at this institution in order to find a working model for similar institutions to adopt. Additional findings from this study suggest a strong model for student-athlete

development to include a balance of support and independence in the athletic social network.

If all participants were honest and forthright about their perceptions of support in the athletic social network at this institution, which I assume to be true, then the student-athletes were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to questions regarding support from the athletic department. Few had negative experiences with the athletic department and those who explained very isolated cases while at the same time emphasizing support in other areas. As discussed above, multiple categories of support arose in each of House's (1981) four dimensions of support. The provided categories in the lack of support theme were not provided spontaneously in the interviews, the interviewer had to ask the student-athletes what forms of support they would offer if they were in the athletic administrators' position. In some cases the student-athlete could not come up with any recommendations for support suggesting the thought that they were unsupported had not crossed their minds.

Athletic administrators also offered examples of multiple forms of support available in the student-athletes' athletic social network and identified lack of support was attributed to inability to budget or the belief that the student-athlete was better off "learning to fish" for themselves (developing independence). This begs the question, if the athletic department had unlimited funds, would more support be available to the student-athletes? Responses from the Associate Athletic Director for Academics imply that support in the way of a career development program, mentoring program, graduate school development program and post-graduate award program would be available but

the idea to “[teach] the student and not do something for the student that he or she could do himself or herself” would still apply.

As stated previously, the student-athletes in the study seemed well adjusted, confident in their ability to be successful on and off the field of play, and on healthy developmental paths. This suggests this institution to be a good working model for social support in the athletic social network. Improvements that were suggested did not seem to be hindering the student-athlete participants’ success or development but could be implemented to further both.

Student-athletes and athletic administrators were in agreement that a sports psychologist and registered dietician/nutritionist on staff would be highly beneficial. In order for this to happen budget concerns (another lack of support from athletic administrators) would have to be addressed. Student-athletes also struggled with coach communication, which athletic administrators also noticed, suggesting a need for improvement.

Finally, student-athletes, especially those on non-revenue producing sports teams, would feel more supported with more interaction with athletic administrators. One student-athlete recommended athletic administrators attend more sporting events and possibly show up to practices and get to know student-athletes on a more personal basis.

It is important to realize the myriad of support the athletic department already offers student-athletes while considering this comment made by one student-athlete: “I’m not sure of all the services that are or aren’t available.” Availability of support does

not constitute social support; support must be perceived as intended to enhance well being (Udry, 1996). Perception or belief that emotional support is available appears to be a much stronger influence on health than the actual receipt of social support (Dunkel-Schetter & Bennet, 1990), however received social support promotes perceptions of availability (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). A lack of perceived support suggests one of two things: support has not been received, or availability and accessibility of support is not understood. A cost-free way of helping student-athletes feel more supported may be to better advertise support.

The results of this study suggest institutions with similar budgets, structures, and personnel limitations could benefit from adopting similar practices as implemented at the institution of interest. The suggestions for support improvements could further the success and development of student-athletes, but in this case the health and well being of student-athletes did not hinge on the identified lack of support. It is my opinion this institution represents a healthy working model for social support in the athletic social network for student-athletes.

Limitations and recommendations for further investigation

This study explored the perceptions of social support of student-athletes and athletic administrators at one institution. As a single institution study, the results will be applicable only to the institution studied. I recommend a comparison study conducted at a university with a larger budget and more personnel to define differences and similarities between institutions and explore how differences change social support in

the athletic social network. A greater focus on revenue producing sports and differences in support between revenue producing and non-revenue producing sports may be beneficial, however, was not the focus of this study.

Participants from 10 of 17 sports teams were interviewed, thus perceptions of support are not available from student-athletes on sports teams not interviewed. Third through fourth year male and female student-athletes from both revenue producing and non-revenue producing sports teams were interviewed with informational redundancy obtained. First year/freshman student-athlete perceptions are not available. The participant pool was primarily Caucasian and heterosexual limiting the applicability to a more diverse group. Participants were volunteers or nominated by the Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills, thus the sample was limited in diversity due to unwillingness to participate.

Interview questions and analyses were focused on support provided by the athletic department only. Student-athletes identified other forms of support such as family and friends, which could provide replacements for support lacking in the athletic social network. A more broad investigation into the social network of student-athletes may paint a more complex picture but was not the focus of this study. Future researchers may want to focus on the student-athletes' entire social network without the specific focus on the athletic social network.

Student-athletes nominated by the Associate Athletic Director for Life Skills were aware of their nomination by administration. This may have had an affect on their responses in that they may have held back on making negative comments about support

in the athletic social network. However, the student-athletes were informed of the confidential nature of their responses. Similarly, athletic administrators may have chosen not to discuss lack of support in the belief that it would negatively represent the athletic department. Personal relationships with administrator participants lead me to believe that responses were complete, honest and forthright.

A final limitation of the study is researcher bias. The research topic was motivated by my previous experiences as a student-athlete at a NCAA Division I institution. Although her previous experiences brought an unavoidable bias, it may have been more of a benefit than hindrance. It allowed me to connect with the student-athletes and athletic administrators interviewed as she was able to relate to the participant's feelings and exchange stories, thus made the participant more comfortable and able to open up and share experiences. My previous experience helped me develop the research focus and formulate questions that aided her in discovering the perceptions of available and accessible social support of student-athletes and administrators.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Questions for student-athletes

Tell me about your athletic history.

Tell me about your experiences as a student-athlete.

Who has been most instrumental in your success as an athlete?

Questions	Vector
Who makes you feel like you are able to be successful in academics? Who do you go to for help with academic problems? Who makes you feel like you are able to be successful in athletics? Who do you go to for help with athletic problems?	Competence
Have you had to face many challenging times as a student-athlete? Tell me about your challenging experiences. How did you manage your emotions? Did anybody help you? If so, who and how?	Managing Emotions
Do you have financial concerns? Who do you rely on for financial support? What do you plan to do when you graduate? How do you feel about graduating and having to be on your own? How do you expect to support yourself financially? Have you had any classes/workshops in how to prepare for life after college? Please explain.	Autonomy → Independence
Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend? Who do you hang out with outside of practice? How has athletics affected your relationships? Have you had any classes/workshops on healthy relationships and relating to others? Who helps you with relationship problems? How?	Developing Mature Relationships

<p>Tell me what makes you, you. Has athletics influenced your identity? How?</p>	<p>Establishing Identity</p>
<p>Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What do you want to do in life? Do you see athletics playing a part in your future goals? How do you see athletics playing a part in your future goals? Do you think being an athlete has influenced your goals? Please explain. Who do you go to for help in developing and reaching your goals?</p>	<p>Developing Purpose</p>
<p>Has athletics influenced your morals and/or values? How has athletic participation influenced your morals and/or values? If you have an ethical problem, whom do you go to for help? Have you had any classes/workshops in leadership?</p>	<p>Developing Integrity</p>

Do you feel the athletic department supports you? Please explain.

Have you experienced positive forms of support from the athletic department? Please explain.

Have you experienced negative forms of support from the athletic department? Please explain.

If you were the athletic director, what forms of support would you offer to student-athletes?

What would you like to tell me that I have not asked?

Is there anything you would like to know about me?

Questions for athletic administrators

Tell me about your job history.

Tell me about your experiences working with student-athletes.

Questions	Vector
How do you help student-athletes feel competent to be successful in academics? How do you help student-athletes feel competent to be successful in athletics?	Competence
What challenges to you see student-athletes facing? How do you help student-athletes overcome obstacles? How did you help student-athletes manage emotions?	Managing Emotions
Do you think student-athletes have financial concerns? How does the athletic department aid student-athletes financially? What does the athletic department do to increase graduation rates? What does the athletic department do to prepare student-athletes for life after college? How does the athletic department foster independence in student-athletes?	Autonomy → Independence
Do you feel student-athletes are able to have quality mature relationships Do you feel athletics influences student-athletes' relationships? Please explain. Do you offer any classes/workshops on healthy relationships and relating to others?	Developing Mature Relationships
Do you feel athletic participation has an affect on the student-athletes' identity? Has do you feel athletic participation influences student-athletes' identity?	Establishing Identity
Do you see athletics playing a part in student-athletes' future goals? How do you see athletics playing a part in student athletes' future goals? Do you think being an athlete influences	Developing Purpose

<p>student athletes' goals? Please explain. How do you help student-athletes develop purpose?</p>	
<p>Do you think athletic participation influences student-athletes' morals and/or values? How do you see athletic participation influencing student-athletes' morals and/or values? Does the athletic department offer classes/workshops in leadership? Please explain. Does the athletic department work to develop student-athlete integrity? Please explain.</p>	<p>Developing Integrity</p>

Do you feel the athletic department supports student-athletes? Please explain.
Are there forms of support offered by the athletic department that have positively affected student-athletes? Please explain.
Are there forms of support offered by the athletic department that have negatively affected student-athletes? Please explain.
If you could offer more support to student-athletes, what forms of support would you offer?

What would you like to tell me that I have not asked?
Is there anything you would like to know about me?

APPENDIX B
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Date: _____

Sport: _____

Age: _____

Gender:

Male

Female

Primary Language:

English

Spanish

Other: _____

Year in School:

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

5th Year

How would you classify yourself?

Arab

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black

Caucasian/White

Hispanic

Indigenous or Aboriginal

Latino

Multiracial

Would rather not say

Other: _____

Where are you originally from?

What is your parents' average combined income?

Under \$10,000

\$10,000-19,999

\$20,000-29,999

\$30,000-39,000

\$40,000-49,000

\$50,000-74,999

\$75,000-99,999

\$100,000-150,000

Over \$150,000

Don't know

Would rather not say

What is your sexual orientation?

Straight

Gay

Lesbian

Bisexual

Transgendered

Questioning

Would rather not say

Have you had any injuries while attending _____ University that kept you from practicing/competing?

Yes

No

Do you live:

On Campus

Off Campus

Are you on athletic scholarship?

Yes

No

Would you be willing to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences as a student-athlete and your perceptions of support offered by the athletic department?

Yes

No

What is the best way to contact you?

Email: _____

Phone: _____

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

Information sheet: Perceptions of Available and Accessible Social Support in Female NCAA Division I Athletic Social Networks

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study to explore the perceptions of available and accessible social support in NCAA Division I athletic social networks. The purpose of this study was to examine the ways athletic departments support student-athletes. You were selected to be a possible participant because you are a student-athlete or athletic administrator at _____ University.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete one 1-hour interview session to take place during the fall 2010 semester to discuss how the athletic department at _____ University supports student-athletes. In addition, I may contact you 2-3 weeks after you participate in this study to seek clarification or more information regarding your responses.

Your participation will be audio recorded with your permission.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the research questions. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. In addition, you may stop answering questions or discontinue participation at any time. If you experience any distress as a result of your participation in this research, you may contact the investigator for counseling referrals, assistance, and resources.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the information gathered in this study may aid athletic departments in choosing and providing support for student-athletes.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with _____ University or the athletic department being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. The results of your participation will be confidential and will not be released in any identifiable form with your prior consent unless required by law. Your signature on this form authorizes the use of your data in group analyses that may be prepared for public dissemination without breaching your confidentiality. To accomplish this, you will be assigned a four-digit participation number that will be used on all data collected during your participation in this research. A master list with your name and corresponding code number will be kept separate from testing data and locked at all times. The master list will be destroyed following the interviews and data analysis of participants responses. Research records will be stored securely and only Ami Rothberg, Dr. Akilah Carter, Dr. Elsa Gonzalez, Dr. Patricia Goodson, and Dr. B. E. Pruitt will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you may choose to be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Ami Rothberg, Dr. Akilah Carter, Dr. Elsa Gonzalez, Dr. Patricia Goodson, and Dr. B. E. Pruitt will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for one year and then erased.

Is there anything else I should consider?

Neither your coaches, nor the athletic department will know of your participation in this study. Your identity will be kept confidential in any reporting of the data.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study or during the course of the project, you may contact Ami Rothberg, (541) 908-1522, r0thberg@neo.tamu.edu or Dr. Elsa Gonzalez, (979) 845-1561, elsa@tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Participation

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in the study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ I do not want to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participants: _____

Printed: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Printed: _____

Date: _____

VITA

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