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The Lived Experiences of Academic Advisors with Counseling Degrees in Addressing Wellness with College Student-Athletes

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The Lived Experiences of Academic Advisors with Counseling Degrees in Addressing Wellness
with College Student-Athletes

A dissertation submitted in partial requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Education with a concentration in Counselor Education and Supervision at Virginia
Commonwealth University.

By

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS WITH COUNSELING DEGREES IN ADDRESSING WELLNESS WITH COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES

By Jennifer M. Gerlach, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education and Supervision at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of academic advisors who have master's degrees in counseling in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. Of particular note was to explore if they addressed wellness and, if so, how they addressed wellness. Extant literature is replete with evidence documenting the numerous challenges and stressors student-athletes experience due to their athlete status. Prior to this study, the role of the academic advisor in addressing wellness has not been represented in the literature. This study examined the lived experiences of 10 academic advisors with counseling degrees, or currently enrolled in graduate level counselor education programs, in addressing wellness with college student-athletes through semi-structured individual interviews. Results from the data analysis yielded four themes and seven sub-themes: Academic Skills and Planning, Counselor Practice and Knowledge (emphasis on fostering relationships, counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy), Barriers to Seeking Support Services, and Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes (career and life skill development, psychological support, coach-advisor relationship, and case management). The

findings suggest that academic advisors are addressing wellness with their college student-athletes. Moreover, the results provide specific insights as to how academic advisors utilize their counseling skills when providing wellness services. These results provide several implications for counseling programs, academic advising, and athletic departments. Suggestions for future research are also included.

Chapter One

Introduction

College student-athletes, while often perceived as a privileged population when compared to non-athlete students (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Osborne, 2014; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007), endure many more stressors than the average college student. They encounter many academic obstacles (Ayers Pazmino-Cervallos, & Dobose, 2012; Case, Greer, & Brown, 1987; Cosh & Tully, 2013; Eckhard, 2010; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Kulics, Kornspan, & Kretovics, 2015; Parsons, 2013; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Southall, Eckard, Nagel, & Randall, 2015) and can often have career adjustment issues (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Tyrance, Harris, & Post, 2013). Additionally, student-athletes are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors that jeopardize both their academic and athletic careers (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Greenleaf, Petrie, Carter, & Reel, 2009; Martens, Dams-O'Conor, & Beck, 2006; Parham, 1993; Shriver, Wollenberg, & Gates, 2016; Yusko, Buckman, White, & Pandina 2008). Further, injury and psychological response to injury can negatively impact the student-athlete experience (Parham, 1993; Petitpas & Danish, 1995; Putukian, 2016; Tunick, Etzel, Leard, & Lerner, 1996). While the perception of student-athletes is privilege due to scholarship money, academic support, and other benefits (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Osborne, 2014; Simons et al., 2007), they are actually more likely to experience discrimination, stereotyping, and bias than their non-athlete peers (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013; Parsons, 2013; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Sailes, 1993; Simons et al., 2007; Southall et al, 2015; Staurowsky, 1995). With all of these unique circumstances and difficulties due to their participation in sport, it is not a surprise that student-athletes exhibit lower levels of overall

wellness when compared to the rest of the collegiate population (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Overall wellness, or holistic wellness, refers to the maximum functioning of an individual that integrates the mind, body, and spirit as opposed to measuring individual components of functioning (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). To further compound the student-athlete experience, they are less likely to seek support than their non-athletes peers (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Wahto, Swift, & Whipple, 2016; Watson, 2006).

While student-athletes have difficulty seeking professional support for reasons like lack of time and stigma (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Wahto et al., 2016; Watson, 2006), they may open up to their academic advisors. This is particularly true if meeting with academic advisors is mandatory, as is the case with many colleges and universities who employ an intrusive advising method (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016; Glennen, 1976; Earl, 1988; Schwebel, Walburn, Klyce, & Jerrolds, 2012). Because of the mandatory sessions in intrusive advising, academic advisors are in the unique position to provide consistent support to student-athletes. These required meetings, combined with an astute academic advisor who has a degree in counseling, may open the door for student-athletes to explore their negative experiences. Thus, academic advising sessions can also be utilized as a preventative measure to hinder potential crisis situations (Glennen, 1976).

The academic advising field is a profession that is currently evolving and struggling for recognition in higher education (Cook, 2009; Habley, 2009; Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010). This struggle is partly due to the lack of a common curriculum in educational background and training of advisors (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Habley, 2009; Lynch, 2002; Preece et al., 2007; Taylor, 2011). Academic advising can look different from session to session and be

conducted differently between advisors in the same department and certainly between various colleges and universities (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). In addition to lacking a common skill set among advisors, colleges and universities have various advising models that make for further differentiation in how they work with students (Dedmon, 2012; Howell, 2010; Shaffer, 2009; Weir, Dickman, & Fuqua, 2005). For instance, the models vary in structure (i.e., faculty advising versus professional advising) and theoretical approach (i.e., prescriptive advising versus developmental advising). All of these issues with academic advising are present even though they are governed by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), a professional organization that governs academic advising and provides recommendations, for instance, on policies, procedures, and professional development. Despite NACADA's guidance, they have yet to agree upon any solution to provide more continuity to this desperately needed profession in higher education.

Though the profession is in flux, academic advisors with counseling degrees do have more uniformed training than those who do not. Further, academic advisors with counseling backgrounds are in a unique position to address the stressors and wellness deficits that student-athletes experience. Though wellness has various definitions and constructs, it is agreed upon by scholars that wellness is not simply the absence of illness, and it focuses on more than just physical and emotional health (Barden, Conley, & Young, 2015; Hettler, 1984; Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Myers et al., 2000; Reese & Myers, 2012; Roscoe, 2009). In the counseling profession, the holistic wellness model encompasses all dimensions of a person's livelihood and has evidence-based constructs (Hattie, Myers, & Sweeney, 2004; Myers, Luecht, & Sweeney, 2004; Myers & Sweeney, 2004). This study adopts the Myers et al. (2000) definition of wellness as "a way life oriented toward optimal health and well-being in which body, mind, and spirit are

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integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community…[and] is the optimum state of health and well-being that each individual is capable of achieving" (p. 252). Further, this definition of wellness along with the holistic wellness model are congruent with NACADA's recommendation of the developmental model of academic advising as well as their emphasis on taking a holistic approach with advising students (Grites, 2013; McGill, 2016; NACADA, 2005).

Using both developmental advising and holistic wellness models as a framework, this study hopes to investigate how academic advisors with counseling degrees address wellness with their college student-athletes as they are a population that is in great need of support. Colleges and universities recruit student-athletes to represent them in athletic competition. The benefits of playing in college sports should not be outweighed by the challenges, stressors, and injustices that are occurring. It is the collective responsibility of all parties and departments in the college setting to provide proper care and support for student-athletes as they are de facto ambassadors of their schools. This research study hopes to reveal some information about the care and support student-athletes receive and to provide recommendations about how to expand that support.

Need for the Study

The student-athlete experience is rife with stressors, struggles, and injustices. It is not all privilege and glory as some mistake it to be. Academic concerns for student-athletes include missing class for competition (Ayers et al., 2012; Cosh & Tully, 2013; Simons et al., 2007), lower graduation rates (Eckhard, 2010; Southall et al., 2015), and encouragement to major in a limited number of fields to maintain academic eligibility to play sport (Ayers et al., 2012; Case et al., 1987; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Kulics et al., 2015; Parsons, 2013). Additionally, they are

more likely to have difficulty adjusting to their career in their post-sports life (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Murphy et al., 1996; Tyrance, et al., 2013). Due to participation in sports, student-athletes have a much higher rate of injury than non-athletes (Parham, 1993; Tunick et al., 1996). Further, they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol consumption (Martens, Dams-O'Conor, & Beck, 2006; Parham, 1993; Yusko et al., 2008), drug use (Yusko et al., 2008), and disordered eating (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Greenleaf et al., 2009; Parham, 1993; Shriver, Wollenberg, & Gates, 2016). Lastly, student-athletes are more likely to experience discrimination, stereotyping, and bias from faculty and their non-athlete peers because of their athlete status (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Harper et al., 2013; Parsons, 2013; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Sailes, 1993; Simons et al., 2007; Southall et al, 2015; Staurowsky, 1995).

Considering the challenges and obstacles student-athletes regularly encounter, it should be no surprise that student-athletes exhibit lower levels of overall wellness compared to their non-athlete peers (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). More specifically, 10-15% of the student-athlete population experiences psychological affliction that merits professional mental health intervention and support compared to 8-9% of the traditional college population. Though the results are mixed, some literature posits that prevalence of depression can be as high as 21-23.7% (Wolanin, Hong, Marks, Panchoo, & Gross, 2016; Yang et al., 2007). Additionally, close to 98% of Division-I athletic trainers reported seeing anxiety in their student-athletes and 70% have seen symptoms of suicidality (Sudano & Miles, 2017). To further compound the student-athlete experience, they are less likely to seek support than non-athletes due to stigma, time constraints, or negative perceptions of help-seeking behaviors (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Wahto et al., 2016; Watson, 2006).

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Despite the obvious need for wellness support and interventions, there is limited literature available on addressing wellness with college student-athletes. More specifically, the existing literature pertains to various dimensions of wellness as opposed to total wellness. Further, there is currently no literature documenting if and how academic advisors meet the wellness needs of their student-athlete caseload.

Statement of the Problem

Even with the extensive recognition and need for interventions to mitigate stressors with college student-athletes, there is a paucity of literature addressing student-athlete wellness. Additionally, most of the documented studies on student-athlete wellness address very specific constructs of wellness or different wellness components as opposed to addressing total wellness (Beauchemin, 2014; Dubuc-Charbonneau & Durand-Bush, 2015; Harris, Altekruse, & Engels, 2003; Van Raalte, Cornelius, Andrews, Diehl, & Brewer, 2015). Currently, there is no literature on investigating student-athlete wellness from an academic advising perspective. Academic advisors were selected as the population because it is likely that student-athletes are required to meet with academic advisors if they implement an intrusive advising structure. Many universities employ intrusive advising which mandates students meet with academic advisors (Donaldson et al., 2016; Glennen, 1976; Earl, 1988; Schwebel et al., 2012). Advisors with counseling degrees were specifically chosen as the population for this particular inquiry due to their knowledge and skills in working with clients to overcome a variety of life stressors, many of which student-athletes encounter as documented in the literature. Additionally, it was imperative for them to have a counseling background as wellness is central to the profession (Myers, 1992) and they may have had an introduction to the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study is to investigate the gap in the existing literature in addressing student-athlete wellness. The primary research question is: "What are the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes?" The goal is to examine if and how academic advisors with counseling degrees address wellness with this special population. Additionally, the results of the research aim to highlight these experiences so that recommendations are formulated for future direction and support for both academic advisors and student-athletes.

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant in that it is filling a gap in the extant literature. To date, there are no studies about if and how academic advisors address wellness with college student-athletes. This will provide insight as to how advisors with counseling degrees confront the deficits in wellness with student-athletes. Specifically, it will detail information as to the degree of deficits of student-athlete wellness and how those needs are being met or can be met by academic advisors. Information gathered from this study can be used to inform practice with academic advisors, counselors, and athletic departments.

In the academic advising realm, information gleaned from this study can help reinforce NACADA's recommendation of using the developmental advising approach with students. It can also reinforce the recommendation to use the intrusive advising structure with student-athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Specifically, findings can provide insight as to how academic advisors can mitigate stressors for student-athletes and augment wellness. This study will explore the experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees. Because of this unique vantage, it can further reinforce the need to have standardized training for academic advisors.

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An argument can be made to increase the number of advisors with counseling degrees employed by universities not only for student-athletes, but perhaps also for the traditional college population.

For the counseling field, this study will highlight another at-risk population and investigate how wellness is implemented. Wellness is central to the identity of the counseling profession and is considered as the paradigm from which counselors operate (Myers, 1991, 1992). This study will help investigate how the wellness model is integrated into academic advising sessions. It will also help to understand the experiences of academic advisors and may help inform counseling curriculum. Further, it may reveal the degree to which advisors still hold onto their counselor identity even though they have a job title that may not have the word "counselor" in it.

Results from this study can be invaluable to athletic departments. Information revealed can shed light on the experiences of student-athletes, what they identify to their academic advisors as significant stressors, and the relationship between advisor and student-athletes. Most importantly, this study will examine how academic advisors play a role in meeting the needs of student-athletes to include more than academics as is suggested by the advising literature. Further, this study can help reinforce existing literature about the overall student-athlete experience and the need for counseling and prevention services.

Definition of Terms

Academic Advisor – For this study, an academic advisor is someone who works with student-athletes in academic advising capacity, but excludes tutors, career services advisors, or any other academic role other than advising. The academic advisors recruited for this particular study must have a master's degree in counseling or be a current student in a master's level counselor

education program in order to participate. This degree can come from a CACREP or non-CACREP accredited institution. NACADA's definition of academic advising comes from Kuhn (2008) who stated that advising is "an institutional representative [who] gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach" (p. 3).

Student-Athlete – In this study, student-athletes are identified as those who are both enrolled as full-time students at the college or university and engage in athletic competition as a representative of the college or university. Club teams and intramural sports participants are excluded. Student-athletes are those who must meet National Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations or regulations by any other collegiate sport governing body.

Wellness – This is a term that encompasses many different constructs. For the purpose of this study, wellness is defined as "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and wellbeing, in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully…[and] is the optimum state of health and well-being that each individual is capable of achieving" (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000, p. 252).

NACADA – The National Academic Advising Association; This is the governing organization of academic advisors and was established in 1979. NACADA has more than 12,000 members representing each state in the United States and multiple countries (Cook, 2009; NACADA, 2016)

NCAA – The National Athletic Association; This is the largest organization of collegiate sports in the United States (Fletcher, Benshoff, & Richburg, 2003; Huffman, 2013; Shaul, 2001). There are currently more than 480,000 student-athletes playing in NCAA-sponsored sports with more than 1,100 colleges or universities (NCAA, 2016a).

Developmental advising – This term was first used in the early 1970s and described advising as not focusing solely on academics, but rather "facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (Crookston, 1972, p. 12). It is a collaborative, strengths-based process between advisor and advisee which is meant to address the educational, personal, and career goals of each student (Grites, 2013; McGill, 2016). For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that developmental advising is what takes place in the individual advising session and is not to be confused with intrusive advising.

Intrusive advising – This term describes an organizational method of the advising structure and was created by Glennen (1976). Intrusive advising occurs when advisors play a much more active role in getting students to participate in the advising process as opposed to waiting for students to initiate contact with questions or concerns. Some institutions require students to participate in academic advising as a provision of continued enrollment or may even implement academic punishments for failure to meet advising obligations (Donaldson et al., 2016; Schwebel et al., 2012). It is recommended that this advising structure is implemented with student-athletes (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). To note, this type of advising is more about the organizational structure of the advising unit or department and is not to be confused with developmental advising, which is a type of model used by individual advisors during their advising sessions.

Organization of the Study

This chapter presents the background, purpose, and need for this study to investigate the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling backgrounds in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. Chapter Two will provide an in-depth exploration into the existing literature on student-athletes, academic advising, and wellness. Chapter Three will provide

details of the methodology and procedures for conducting this study. Chapter Four will provide

the data analysis and salient themes from the data set. Chapter Five will provide a discussion

about findings of the study and future implications.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Collegiate student-athletes are often considered a privileged population (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Simons et al., 2007) that reap the benefits of free education, unlimited academic support, clothing, elite coaching and training facilities, strength and conditioning, sport nutrition and medicine, and travel expenses (Osborne, 2014). However, student-athletes endure many stressors that non-athletes do not experience and are found to exhibit lower levels of overall wellness when compared to non-athletes (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Further, research indicates that 10-15% of student-athletes experience psychological distress that merits counseling compared to the 8-9% of their non-athlete peers (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). They can also experience greater prevalence of symptoms of depression than non-athletes (Wolanin et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2007). The American Counseling Association (ACA) adopted a definition of counseling in its 20/20 statement as "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (ACA, 2016). This holistic perspective is meant to assist clients with a variety of issues in their lives. Because student-athletes deal with additional stressors and obstacles, they may benefit from this holistic perspective, as opposed to simply terminal academic interventions or career services, because it treats the whole person, not just the athlete. Academic advisors who are trained as counselors can provide this holistic perspective to ensure student-athlete wellness outside of the physical dimension of wellness. Moreover, if advisors with counseling degrees employ an intrusive advising method, they can serve as the first line of defense in assuaging some of these stressors and prevent these stressors reaching crisis level (Glennen, 1976). Thus,

this chapter reviews the literature of three main components of which this study is based: college student-athletes, wellness, and academic advising.

Student-Athletes

There are various national organizations that govern athletics at both two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The four primary organizations for four-year institutions are: National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA), and the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA) (Huffman, 2013). Of all of these associations, the NCAA is the largest organization of collegiate athletics (Fletcher, Benshoff, & Richburg, 2003; Huffman, 2013; Shaul, 2001).

According to the NCAA (2016a), there are more than 480,000 current student-athletes participating in varsity, or school-sponsored, athletics. Student-athletes who compete in the NCAA are considered amateur athletes, which mean they are not compensated for their sport participation. However, they can receive scholarships to pay for their postsecondary education in exchange for their athletic participation. According to the NCAA website (2016b), more than $2.7 billion in athletic scholarships are available to 150,000 student-athletes along with elite athletic training, medical services, academic support services, lodging, and meals. The NCAA is divided into three divisions and approximately 1,100 colleges and universities are members of the NCAA. The following is a breakdown of percentage of student body population participating in sport by division: Division-I: 4% sport participation, Division-II: 10% sport participation, and Division-III: 21% sport participation (NCAA, 2016c). Though student-athletes are supposed to practice no more than 20-hours per week (*NCAA Publications*, n.d), they can often devote 30 hours or more to practice and competitions in addition to their class work

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(Ayers et al., 2012; Simons et al., 2007). Student-athletes typically have a very strict academic

schedule with limited flexibility to accommodate multiple practices per day (Jordan & Denson,

1990). Additionally, some may have required study hall hours to maintain academic eligibility

(Osborne, 2014) and with what little time they have left, many athletic departments require

community service (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007). Time demands are so great for student-athletes

that it is often the main factor cited in dropping out of sports to focus on academics (Perrelli,

2004). While they are concerned with academic eligibility and have strict time demands, being a

student-athlete encompasses many more divergent experiences when compared to the non-athlete

population.

Student-Athlete Experience

Student-athletes have a unique experience that differs from that of the typical, non-athlete

college student. Student-athletes are considered a special population due to their atypical college

experience (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Osborne, 2014; Rubin, 2016; Simons et al., 2007).

Balancing their academic coursework along with athletic practices and competitions creates an

environment that exposes student-athletes to a variety of stressors that require extra attention to

successfully navigate. Time constraints, academic concerns, career exploration issues, injury, at-

risk behaviors, bias, and exploitation are all factors that contribute to the overall student-athlete

experience.

Time constraints. Student-athletes commit much of their time to multiple practices per

day as well as competitions. Though the NCAA imposed a 20-hour time limit in 1991 with

NCAA Bylaw 17.1.7 (*NCAA Publications*, n.d.), student-athletes often devote 30 hours or more

per week to their sport including missing classes for competitions (Ayers et al., 2012; Simons et

al., 2007). Specifically, 86% of student-athletes missed classes due to athletic conflicts while in-

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season, yet the number of athletic practices missed due to academic obligations averaged less than one per semester (Ayers et al., 2012). While student-athletes are confident in their abilities to achieve academically, missing class time prohibits them from succeeding academically (Cosh & Tully, 2013). Further, time constraints interfere with student-athlete's occupational exploration (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; McPherson, 2013). Lastly, the lack of time is one of the main barriers to student-athletes seeking mental health or counseling services (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2006) and prohibits them from achieving their own wellness goals (van Rensburg, Surujlal, & Dhurup, 2011).

Academic concerns. With time as a major barrier to academic success (Cosh & Tully, 2013), student-athletes often find themselves struggling to manage their academic and athletic roles, particularly when their sport is in-season (Parham, 1993). Additionally, student-athletes find themselves driven into specific majors in order to maintain academic eligibility as opposed to freely exploring their own personal interests (Ayers et al., 2012; Case et al., 1987; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Kulics et al., 2015; Parsons, 2013). In a study by Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007), more than 60% of student-athletes surveyed identified more as an athlete than as a student. This is not surprising considering the major emphasis on athletics. Another academic concern for student-athletes is graduation rates. While the NCAA boasts graduation rates for student-athletes as higher than non-athletes (NCAA.org), evidence shows these results are misleading (Eckhard, 2010; Southall et al., 2015) as the NCAA manipulates numbers and includes part-time students in their calculations. Further, these numbers are even more misleading when graduation rates are broken down by race, sport, gender, and division (Southall et al., 2015).

Graduation rates. The NCAA boasts an 83% graduation rate for Division I athletes and an overall 67% graduation rate for all divisions, which they claim is higher than the 65%

graduation rate for non-athletes (NCAA, 2016b; NCAA.org). Division III maintains the highest

graduation rate among all divisions at 87 percent (NCAA, 2016b). However, some research has

shown that these rates are not accurate as athletes must be full-time students, but part-time

student rates are factored into the NCAA calculations (Eckard, 2010). Further, Southall et al.

(2015) found that student-athletes who play for the most competitive and successful Football

Bowl Series (FBS) football and Division-I men's basketball teams graduate at lower rates than

full-time non-athlete males with a larger gap for Black males. Harper, Collins, and Blackman

(2013) found that across four cohorts from years 2007 to 2010, Black males had a six-year

graduation rate of 50.2% compared with 66.9% of student-athletes overall, and 55% of Black

undergraduate men. Further, 96.1% of Division-I universities graduated Black male student-

athletes at lower rates than student-athletes overall. Additionally, Rubin and Rosser (2014)

conducted a descriptive discriminant analysis and found that while non-scholarship student-

athletes had higher GPAs, scholarship student-athletes typically graduated in fewer semesters.

This inverse relationship may lend itself to the notion posited by Southall et al. (2015) and others

(Harper et al., 2013; Hawkins, 2010) that athletic departments, particularly those in the most

competitive Division-I sports, are only concerned with maintaining student-athlete academic

eligibility for sport purposes as opposed to providing a quality education.

    Academic Clustering. In addition to concerns about graduation rates, student-athletes are

susceptible to taking different classes or majoring in a different field than desired due to their

athlete status. Parsons (2013) found that student-athletes were advised to take less rigorous or

"athlete-friendly" (p. 413) classes in order to remain academically eligible. This practice can

lead to a concept called academic clustering that occurs when 25% or more of an athletic team

has the same major (Case et al., 1987). While the participants in Parsons' (2013) study were

mostly advised to take these classes by friends and family, these recommendations can come from athletic departments and advisors and be indicative of a systemic issue (Ayers et al., 2012; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Schneider, Ross, & Fisher, 2010). Ayers et al. (2012) found that approximately 22% of student-athletes were advised *not* to major in certain fields because of athletic involvement by academic or athletic personnel. This number is consistent with Kulics et al. (2015) who found that 84% of student-athletes did not select a major based on maintaining academic eligibility. While the large majority of student-athletes in both studies did not have advisor interference when selecting a major, this is still concerning because student-athletes would have chosen a different major if they were not involved in collegiate sports. More alarming is that a study by Fountain and Finley (2009) found that 11 of 12 universities in the Atlantic Coast Conference clustered their Division-I football players into one major. These clustering rates ranged from 25-73% with one university clustering 24 out of 33 (73%) of their upperclassmen into Business Management. Further, minority players were clustered at higher rates than White players at nine schools. The higher rate of clustering minorities is consistent with other researchers who similarly found that minorities experienced academic clustering at higher rates (Fountain & Finley, 2010; Sanders & Hildenbrand, 2010).

Career issues. Student-athletes are also more susceptible to having career adjustment issues (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Tyrance, Harris, & Post, 2013). While more than 480,000 student-athletes compete in 23 varsity sports, typically less than 2% of student-athletes, depending on the sport, become professional athletes (NCAA, 2015). Regardless of professional athletic career aspirations, these student-athletes encounter various obstacles that impede career exploration (Mahoney, 2011).

With time divided between academics and athletics, student-athletes are typically less prepared to make career decisions than non-athletes (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Smallman & Sowa, 1996) and may have to abandon all work experience or delay career exploration (Mahoney, 2011) until after their athletic career is over. Non-athletes exhibit higher occupational identity than student-athletes (McPherson, 2013). Occupational identity can be described as engaging in behaviors that promote career exploration. Promisingly, student-athletes have high vocational identity, or clearer and more realistic career goals based on interests, personality, and talents.

Athletic identity, or the degree to which an athlete commits to the athlete role (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013), can negatively impact career development. Student-athletes who have a higher athletic identity also have a more difficult time making career decisions (Murphy et al., 1996), have lower career maturity (Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000), and have lower career optimism regarding career planning and tasks (Tyrance, Harris, & Post, 2013). Career indecision and strong identification with the athlete role could lead to identity foreclosure which is "the degree to which an individual commits prematurely and exclusively with a role without meaningful exploration" (Lally & Kerr, 2005, p. 276). There is conflicting data regarding whether or not there is an inverse relationship between athletic identity and identity foreclosure (Adler & Adler, 1989; Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; Brown & Gladstetter-Fender, 2000; Murphy et al., 1996). Some studies found that student-athletes are more likely to have a foreclosed identity (Adler & Adler, 1989; Murphy et al., 1996), yet others found there is no relationship (Brown & Gladstetter-Fender, 2000) or that the relationship diminishes over time (Brewer et al., 1993).

Injury. On average, one out of two Division I student-athletes experience an injury as a result of athletic competition with overall rates of injury much higher among student-athletes than non-athletes (Parham, 1993; Tunick, Etzel, Leard, & Lerner, 1996). Injury to student-athletes is cited as the second most prevalent reason that student-athletes stop playing sports (Perelli, 2004). Men are also more likely to play through the pain which can cause further damage than just the initial injury (Curry & Strauss, 1994; Nixon, 1996). Hootman, Dick, and Agel (2007) reviewed 16 years of NCAA data on student-athlete injuries. They found that injury rates were higher for games (13.8 injuries per 1,000 games) than in practices (4.0 injuries per 1,000 practices) with football players having the highest rates of injuries in both. More than half of the injuries reported were in the lower extremity with ankle injuries as the most common. Hootman et al. (2007) also found that rates of concussions increased slightly during the sample period, but attributed that to improved identification of concussion symptoms. Overall, the authors asserted that playing sports in college is safe. However, they are only speaking to the physical aspects of injury and not the emotional or psychological impact of injury.

Injury can have a devastating psychological and emotional impact on student-athletes (Petitpas & Danish, 1995; Tunick et al., 1996). They can experience grief reactions, identity loss, and loss of social status in addition to feelings of shock, isolation, loneliness, anxiety, fear, guilt, decreased confidence in performance and returning to play (Etzel & Ferrante, 1999; Petitpas & Danish, 1995; Tunick et al., 1996). For injured student-athletes who have strong athletic identities, answering the question "Who am I if I'm not an athlete?" becomes difficult to answer (Etzel & Ferrante, 1999, p. 273) and can adjust poorly to their injury. One study found that depression symptoms increased after student-athletes experienced a concussion (Vargas, Rabinowitz, Meyer, & Arnett, 2015). Putukian (2016) noted that poor psychological adjustment

to injury can trigger and/or uncover already preexisting mental health issues. Warning signs of poor adjustment include rapid mood swings, depression, denial, withdrawal, feelings of helplessness, substance abuse, disordered eating and suicidal ideation (Petitpas & Danish, 1995; Putukian, 2016). Poor psychological adjustment to injury can be exacerbated by poor coping skills which can include serious at-risk behaviors (Brook & Willoughby, 2016; Norberg, Norton, Olivier, Zvolensky, 2010).

At-risk behaviors. Student-athletes are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors that affect their health and sport performance, such as alcohol consumption (Martens et al., 2006; Parham, 1993; Yusko et al., 2008), drug use (Yusko et al., 2008), and disordered eating patterns (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Greenleaf et al., 2009; Parham, 1993; Shriver et al., 2016). While prevalence rates may be similar between athletes and non-athletes, student-athletes consume more alcoholic drinks per week, are more likely to engage in heavy episodes of drinking, and experience various negative consequences more often than non-athletes (Martens et al., 2006; Parham, 1993; Yusko et al., 2008). While the prevalence of social drug use (marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens) was higher in non-athletes, male student-athletes reported a higher prevalence of performance-enhancing drug use (Yusko et al., 2008). Also, female student-athletes, while having lower incidences of alcohol and drug use, were found to have significantly increased alcohol use and quadrupled social drug use when their sport was not in season.

Female student-athletes, particularly those in weight-sensitive sports, can be more inclined to combat disordered eating (Parham, 1993). There are studies that show a wide prevalence of disordered eating patterns in female student athletes (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Greenleaf et al., 2009; Shriver et al., 2016). For example, in their study on female gymnasts, swimmers, and divers, Anderson & Petrie (2012) found that 6.3% of their population was

currently experiencing a clinical eating disorder while 26% were experiencing subclinical disordered eating patterns. Shriver et al. (2016) found that regardless of weight-sensitive sport, 70% of their female student-athlete sample desired to have a lower body weight. Similarly, in the Greenleaf et al. (2009) study, over half of participants were dissatisfied with their current weight and almost 90% believed themselves to be overweight with a desire to lose an average of 13.5 pounds. In studies comparing athletes and non-athletes, some report that female student-athletes have lower incidences of disordered eating and higher body satisfaction than non-athletes (Gaines & Burnett, 2014; McLester, Hardin, & Hoppe, 2014; Reinking & Alexander, 2005). However, this pressure is not just reserved for females. Male student-athletes feel these pressures as well, but their focus is less on thinness and more on leanness and muscularity (DisPasquale & Petrie, 2013).

Bias and exploitation. In addition to individual stressors such as academic concerns, injury, and at-risk behaviors, student-athletes are more likely to experience stereotyping, racial discrimination, and gender bias than non-athletes (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Cooper & Cooper, 2009; Harper et al., 2013; Parsons, 2013; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Sailes, 1993; Simons et al., 2007; Southall et al, 2015; Staurowsky, 1995). These experiences have been found to be a systemic issue (Harper et al., 2013; Southall et al., 2015) and occur with both the non-athlete students as well as the faculty (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Parsons, 2013; Simons et al., 2007). Additionally, gender bias is not only reserved for the female population (Parham, 1993; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014), but also includes student-athletes who identify as LGBTQ (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Menke, McGill, & Fletcher, 2015).

Stereotyping. Student-athletes are susceptible to being stereotyped based on their athlete status (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Fletcher et al., 2003; Parsons, 2013; Sailes, 1993; Simons et al., 2007). Simons et al. (2007) explored the negative stereotypes (i.e., dumb jock, preferential treatment, only interested in school because of sports) that student-athletes experience and found that one-third of student-athletes reported negative interactions with professors and teaching assistants with almost 60% of the student-athletes reporting negative interactions (Parsons, 2013). Also, faculty viewed academic abilities of male student-athletes less positively than traditional students and were suspicious they earned an "A" in a class (Engstrom et al., 1995). In a study by Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007), approximately 50% of student-athletes believed their professors discriminated against them because of their athlete status. Regarding the traditional student population, approximately 60% of non-athletes were reported to hold negative perceptions of student-athletes (Engstrom et al., 1995)

Racial discrimination. Student-athletes are susceptible to experience various types of discrimination that are systemic issues (Harper et al., 2013; Southall et al, 2015). Many minority student-athletes experience racial bias (Fletcher et al., 2003; Parham, 1993; Rubin, 2016) and feelings of victimization or exploitation (Van Rheenan, 2011). Much attention is given to the African-American student-athlete experience with racial bias, discrimination, and stereotypes, but other minorities report similar feelings and experiences (Fletcher et al., 2003). It was noted that revenue-generating sports (i.e., football and basketball) report higher victimization than non-revenue sports while minority athletes and males also reported significantly higher feelings of exploitation (Van Rheenan, 2011).

African-American student-athletes comprise a large majority of Division I athletes and are an overrepresented population when compared to the racial makeup of the general student

population (Sellers & Damas, 1996). For example, Harper et al. (2013) found that 2.8% of full-time, undergraduate student population was comprised of African-American males, yet they account for 57% and 63% of football and basketball teams, respectively. This lends itself to the assertion that black athletes are recruited for the sole purpose of their athletic sport production (Harper et al., 2013; Hawkins, 2010; Southall et al., 2015). There have been several metaphors for this type of exploitation including comparing athletic departments at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) to plantation owners with the African-American student-athletes, particularly males in revenue-generating sports, as slaves (Hawkins, 2010). Southall et al. (2015) compares the African-American student-athletes to migrant workers who are often plucked from lower socioeconomic homes and "are forced to migrate to PWI work sites for the primary purpose of exchanging their athletic labor for short-lived 'pre-professional' sport opportunities" (Southall et al., 2015, p. 397). While PWIs reap the benefits of their athletic prowess, African-American student-athletes are often culturally isolated, geographically distant, and often graduate at lower rates compared to other college athletes and other full-time students (Southall et al., 2015).

Gender bias. While Title IX was implemented in 1972 to prevent discrimination based on sex, gender bias is another systemic issue in collegiate sports. Women are more likely to experience bias based on their participation in sports, play on teams with fewer scholarships, and receive less media coverage than male student-athletes (Cooper & Cooper, 2009; NCAA News, 2008; Parham, 1993; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Staurowsky, 1995). In a discriminant analysis examining scholarship versus non-scholarship athletes, Rubin and Rosser (2014) accounted for several variables such as race, sport, sport type, and gender. They found that the predominant characteristics of scholarship athletes are black males involved in a team sport. The most common sports were football and basketball. While women's basketball athletes were

more likely to receive scholarships, the characteristics of non-scholarship athletes were white and Asian females in individual sports. Women's outdoor track and field were the group least likely to receive scholarships (Rubin & Rosser, 2014). Additionally, females are also more likely to experience sexism because college sports are historically male-dominated (Parham, 1993; Pelak, 2008; Rubin & Rosser, 2014).

While there is systemic sexism in college sports, discrimination is not exclusive to female athletes. Because college sports have a heterosexist and homonegative culture, student-athletes who identify as LGBTQ may feel discriminated, silenced, and oppressed (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Menke, McGill, & Fletcher, 2015). Further, sexual minority student-athletes, particularly male student-athletes, are extremely likely to experience negative mental health issues including increased substance abuse (Kroshus & Davoren, 2016; Veliz, Epstein-Ngo, Zdroik, Boyd, & McCabe, 2016). While all sexual minority students, regardless of athlete status, experience more frequent negative mental health outcomes, it is possible that athlete status has a comorbid effect that merits increased mental health attention (NCAA, 2014). Though student-athletes have many individual experiences, it is important to know that they are also affected and managed by systems larger than their own team or university.

Systems

Colleges and universities vary in policies and operations when it comes to student-athletes. However, there are several systems that uniformly impact the lives of student-athletes: the NCAA, colleges and universities, athletic departments, and the individual sport teams including the coach-athlete relationship (Fletcher et al., 2003; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). By understanding the interplay of these four systems, counselors can better help student-athletes navigate these stressors.

Many of the four-year colleges or universities that have athletic teams are governed by the NCAA, which mandates that schools follow certain policies and procedures regarding student-athletes (NCAA, 2016a). Some of those policies and procedures are dependent upon the classification level of the sport. According to their website www.ncaa.org, the NCAA is divided into three divisions: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Division I athletic programs have to have seven sports for men and seven sports for women with two team sports per gender. Further, each sports season must be represented by both genders. Division I member schools have certain regulations about who they play and minimum requirements for how many opponents must come from other Division I schools. Additionally, if a Division I school has a football team, they are further divided up into two subdivisions: Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS; formerly Division I-A) and Football Championship Subdivision (FCS: formerly Division I-AA). FBS schools are larger programs that have to meet minimum attendance requirements at home football games. FCS schools do not have attendance requirements. Division II and Division III member universities are required to sponsor fewer sports teams than Division I universities.

While the majority of the divisions are governed by the same policies, there are some differences. For example, the Division I and Division II student-athletes are eligible to receive scholarships for athletics, while Division III athletes receive academic scholarships and needs-based grants (NCAA, 2016a). Typically, Division I student-athletes are considered the most elite and competitive of the divisions because they manage larger operating budgets, larger student enrollments, and are provided the most athletic department support. Division II student-athletes achieve more balance between high level athletics and a traditional college experience while

Division III student-athletes focus primarily on academics and participate in shorter sport seasons (NCAA, 2016a).

In addition to following the NCAA policies, each academic institution has its own policies and procedures that help create a unique culture for the student-athlete population. While student-athletes often have to miss class for competitions, some schools do not have policies in place to protect student-athletes from required absences (Fletcher et al., 2003). NCAA policy mandates that student-athletes maintain a certain grade point average to be academically eligible for sport participation (NCAA, 2016a). Thus, the lack of clear policies or protections in the case of missed classes can cause confusion and frustration to the student-athletes about their dual roles of student and athlete.

To further compound the role confusion, there are several well-publicized instances of academic misconduct (Mahoney & Piasecki, 2016). Academic misconduct can occur when falsifying academic records, allowing student-athletes to compete when ineligible, or giving impermissible academic assistance. For example, at Auburn University "18 members of the 2004 undefeated football team took a total of 97 hours of courses from a sociology professor who required no attendance and little work" (Clotfelter, 2011, p. 184). Another prominent example is at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill where investigators found 18 years of academic fraud regarding student-athletes (Ganim & Sayers, 2014). Student-athletes from both revenue-generating and non-revenue-generating sports took fake "paper classes" in which little to no work was required. Academic advisers routed several student-athletes, a low estimate of 3,100, through these classes so that they could maintain academic eligibility to continue playing sports. The incidents of academic misconduct at the Division I level have been so egregious that the NCAA revised its academic integrity policy for the first time in almost 35 years (Mahoney &

Piasecki, 2016). The NCAA puts specific protocols in place to help minimize academic fraud as well as clarify their role in academic fraud investigations. For example, the NCAA stated that each university will be responsible for handling academic misconduct and the NCAA will only get involved in limited investigations. Further, schools must develop their own academic misconduct regulations and rules, if they have not already done so, and these rules must apply equally to student-athletes as they would to the rest of the student body. Lastly, it more clearly defines instances that merit a NCAA violation for academic misconduct.

In addition to the NCAA and the university systems, the athletic departments often operate as a separate entity from the school and can receive significant external funding for their sports (Fletcher et al., 2003). For example, Division I-A schools have an average operating budget of $62.2 million (NCAA.org). Further, these budgets can vastly differ among sports in the same institution. Title IX, which prevents any type of discrimination based on sex in any educational setting that receives federal funding, was approved in 1972 and impacted collegiate sports. With the implementation of Title IX, athletic departments may feel the pressure to update facilities or add or drop teams to be in compliance, which may impact the campus climate (Gruber, 2003). Additionally, athletic department administrators can also contribute to role confusion for student-athletes.

The last of these systems that impact the lives of student-athletes is the individual sports team (Fletcher et al., 2003). The team, much like other groups, operates with its own identity and can function as a family unit. As teammates enter and leave the sport each year, the team chemistry changes (Aghazadeh & Kyei, 2009). Moreover, teams are comprised of formal and informal athlete leaders, which contribute to team cohesion, team processes, and improved performance (Crozier, Loughead, & Munroe-Chandler, 2013). Additionally, coaches and their

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coaching style exert the most influence on team unity and cohesion (Aghazadeh & Kyei, 2009; Gardner, Shields, Bredemeier, & Bostrom, 1996).

However, coaches impact athletes on an individual level as opposed to solely from a team perspective. The coach-athlete relationship is defined as a "situation in which coaches' and athletes' emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are mutually and causally interconnected" (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004, p. 245). Many studies have been conducted on the coach-athlete relationship. For example, the perceived quality of the coach-athlete relationship has been linked to impact athlete performance (Rhind & Jowett, 2010), motivation and goal-setting (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Riley & Smith, 2011), and burnout (Isoard-Gautheur, Trouilloud, Gustafsson, & Guillet-Descas, 2017). Athlete burnout is described as a three-dimensional construct consisting of emotional and physical exhaustion, reduced feeling of accomplishment along with negative views of oneself in sport performance, and sport devaluation including an apathetic view of sport performance (Raedeke & Smith, 2001). Coaches who were perceived as controlling (Barcza-Renner, Eklund, Morin, Habeeb, & Morin, 2016; Raedke, 1997), providing low social support (Lu et al., 2016; (Raedeke & Smith, 2001), or if the coach-athlete relationship was viewed as low quality (Cresswell & Eklund, 2007; Gustafsson, Hassmen, Kentt, & Johansson, 2008) were more closely associated with athlete burnout.

Psychological Health and Wellness of Student-Athletes

Many studies have been published on the breadth of issues and stressors that student-athletes face due to their athlete status (Cosh & Tully, 2013; Etzel & Ferrante, 1999; Fletcher et al., 2003; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Parham, 1993; Pelak, 2008; Petitpas & Danish, 1995; Potuto and O'Hanlon, 2007; Putukian, 2016; Rubin & Rosser, 2014; Southall et al., 2015; Tunick et al., 1996; van Rensburg et al., 2011; Van Rheenan, 2011; Watson, 2006). Additionally, the NCAA

acknowledged the growing need for awareness of student-athlete mental health and produced

two publications directly related to mental health wellness and best practices for mental health

wellness (NCAA, 2014, 2016d). While there is acknowledgement of increased mental health

issues as well as research supporting the need for professional intervention, there are not many

studies that assess the overall wellness of student-athletes or evidence-based interventions that

deal with how to support student-athlete mental health and wellness (Beauchemin, 2014; Dubuc-

Charbonneau & Durand-Bush, 2015; Harris et al., 2003; LaFountaine, 2007; Van Raalte et al.,

2015; Watson & Kissinger, 2007).

The NCAA attempts to address the growing need of mental health and awareness by

publishing *Mind, Body, and Sport: Understanding and Supporting Student Athlete Mental

Wellness* (2014) and *Mental Health Best Practices: Best Practices for Understanding and

Supporting Student-Athlete Mental Wellness* (2016d). One of these publications states that

"mental health professionals and individuals who regularly work with college-level student-

athletes are acknowledging that they may actually be at greater risk for mental health concerns

because they have the same risk factors as non-athletes, while also dealing with the pressures

related to sport participation" (NCAA, 2014, p. 96). However, student-athletes seek mental

health services at a significantly lower rate than non-athletes (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan &

Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; NCAA, 2014; Watson, 2006). These lower

rates of help seeking behaviors can compound the already existing mental health issue.

Regarding depression specifically, there are mixed results about student-athlete

depression particularly when compared to non-athletes. Some studies found that student-athletes

experienced lower rates of depressive symptoms compared to non-athletes (Armstrong and

Oomen-Early, 2009; Proctor & Boan-Lenzo, 2010). However, one of those studies included a

sample of male student-athletes only (Proctor & Boan-Lenzo, 2010). In a comparison between

athletes and non-athletes, a different study found that female student-athletes reported higher

levels of depressive symptoms as well as social anxiety and also perceived lower levels of social

support than male athletes and female non-athletes (Storch, Storch, Killiany, & Roberti, 2005).

Other studies, though not compared to non-athletes, indicated a high prevalence of symptoms of

depression in athletes ranging as high as 21-23.7% (Wolanin et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2007). In a

study on the prevalence of depression, Yang et al. (2007) found that 21% of student-athletes in

their sample reported experiencing symptoms of depression. Further, they found that freshmen,

females, and student-athletes reporting experiencing pain symptoms were more likely to also

display symptoms of depression. Moreover, student-athletes who have been diagnosed with a

concussion are more likely to experience an increase in depression symptoms (Vargas et al.,

2015). The research on gender differences between male and female student-athletes seems a

little clearer than the research comparing student-athletes and non-athletes (Storch et al., 2005;

Wolanin et al, 2016; Yang et al., 2007).

Outside of solely depression, some literature posits 10-15% of student-athletes

experience psychological distress that merits counseling while 8-9% of their non-athlete peers

require counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). While depression is one of the most common

symptoms that athletic trainers see in their student athletes, they also reported several other

mental health issues frequently experienced by student-athletes (Sudano & Miles, 2017). In a

survey of 127 Division-I athletic trainers, approximately 98% reported seeing anxiety. They

reported additional mental health concerns including disordered eating (92.1%), family issues

(90.6%), relationship difficulties (85.6%), suicidality (69.3%), and bipolar disorder (48.4%).

While 98% of athletic trainers reported that athletes had access to counseling services via the

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counseling center or an on-site clinician, just over 40% reported utilizing mental health screening tools (Sudano & Miles, 2017). Adding to the inconsistent use of screening tools, the authors cited variability of provider location (i.e., off-campus, in the training room, etc.) as another challenge in providing comprehensive mental health care to student-athletes.

While student-athletes can experience psychological distress at higher rates than the general student body (Storch et al., 2005; Watson & Kissinger, 2007; Wolanin et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2007), they are also less likely to seek mental health services (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Watson, 2006). To counter these serious concerns, the NCAA (2016d) recommends a collaborative approach of "athletics, campus health, counseling services, disability services, and community agencies…to maximize the support of student-athlete wellness" (p. 5). Though these initiatives are in place, it is imperative to understand how student-athletes view help seeking behaviors as well as identify additional barriers to seeking the much needed support.

Perceptions of help seeking behaviors. Watson (2005) conducted a study comparing the attitudes of counseling and help-seeking behaviors between college student-athletes and non-athletes. Though the sample came from one university, he found significant differences between the two groups, specifically student-athletes typically hold less positive views of counseling and mental health support than their non-athlete peers. He ascertained that this could be because student-athletes are skeptical that counselors are able to understand the needs and special concerns faced by student-athletes, which is also supported by results of a study by Lopez and Levy (2013). Further, Lopez and Levy (2013) found that student-athletes have a strong preference for counselors who have knowledge of sport or experience in college sports. In another study on stigmatization, Martin (2005) found that male student-athletes are more likely

to stigmatize sport psychology consultation than females. Further, athletes in physical contact sports (i.e., basketball, football, wrestling, etc.) stigmatize seeking services more than those in non-contact sports. Perhaps this stigma is an institutional or systemic bias because athletic administrators valued the benefits of performance enhancement services over life-related skill development and services (Wrisberg et al., 2012). Thus, these administrators have reinforced that athletics are more important than academics or personal wellness and development. This mentality is in direct contrast to NCAA recommendations of a collaborative approach to student-athlete wellness (NCAA, 2016d). In addition to their negative perceptions of seeking help, student-athletes face concrete barriers to accessing this support.

Barriers to seeking mental health/wellness support. Though they face many challenges, student-athletes also face difficulties with accessing mental health support or counseling services. The lack of time was a major barrier to student-athletes seeking mental health or counseling services and was reported much more frequently as a barrier by athletes than non-athletes (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2006). Additionally, counseling hours, workshops, and student development activities are held during the day, which is when most student-athletes are in class or practice, so they have limited accessibility to these services that are made to benefit the entire university population (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990). This is consistent with Lopez and Levy (2013) where almost 40% of student-athletes reported that services were not available during their free time.

In a follow-up study to his study in 2005, Watson (2006) examined the differences between athletes and non-athletes when seeking counseling services. He found that while social stigma was a main barrier in student-athletes seeking counseling, it impacted the non-athlete population even more. In the Lopez and Levy (2013) study, they surveyed 165 student-athletes

at various Division I-FBS and Division I-FCS schools with over two-thirds of respondents identifying as female. They found that not only were student-athletes concerned with social stigma, but they were also concerned about their teammates' perceptions of them receiving counseling support (41%) or that they would be perceived as weak (42%). Further, student-athletes indicated that lack of knowledge of services offered (38%), fear of athletic director knowing about utilization of counseling (38%), and fear of coaches knowing about utilization of counseling (32%) were barriers to accessing support. With much research available on the stigma associated with men seeking counseling services (Good & Mintz, 1990; Leong, 1999; Ponterotto et al., 2001), it can be inferred that perhaps these results underestimate barriers over the overall student-athlete population because there are not as many men in the study. These findings of Lopez and Levy (2013) are supported by the results in a study conducted by Wahto et al. (2016), who found that public stigma and self-stigma are major barriers to student-athletes seeking psychological support services. Additionally, they found that student-athletes are more likely to accept a mental health referral from a family member than from a coach or teammate.

While student-athletes have many perceived advantages and are considered privileged compared to non-athletes, their total athlete experience is marked by many disadvantages and stressors. To further compound these issues, accessibility to proper support and stigma associated with seeking support hinder student-athletes' ability to cope with these stressors. However, student-athletes, just like non-athletes, are required to meet with their academic advisors. Thus, an advantage of meeting with academic advisors is that they are in a position to provide consistent support to all students on their caseload.

Academic Advising

Academic advising is a field in higher education that has been through several transitions as it determines how to best serve college students. The history of advising dates back to the first universities in the United States and has evolved to where many universities employ official academic advisors as opposed to relying solely on faculty to advise students (Cook, 2009). Current issues in academic advising include a lack of standardized training of advisors as well as disagreement on advising models. Responsibilities of advisors of athletes, including being a consistent support to the athletes, and the developmental advising model are discussed in this next section.

History

Academic advising has a long history of being an unofficial profession in higher education until the formation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) formed in 1979 (Cook, 2009). Since the founding of Harvard in 1636 until 1841, typically the president of the university and eventually the faculty advised students on "extracurricular activities, moral life, and intellectual habits" (Cook, 2009, p. 18; Gordon, 2004; Kuhn, 2008). In 1841, Kenyon College in Ohio created the first formal advising system where students were paired with faculty members who served in an official student advisor capacity. In 1888, Boston University offered the first freshman orientation course that included a component of group academic advising. Academic advising continued to evolve and take on various forms through the next several decades until post-World War I where there became a major influx of personnel assisting with college students. Various specializations were developed to address the growing complexity in the curriculum including personal (psychological), vocational (career), and academic advising (educational counseling) (Cook, 2009; Savickas, 2011).

After World War II, the number of students enrolling in colleges and universities increased dramatically (Bound & Turner, 2002; Cook, 2009). Many of these enrollments were veterans who, when compared to traditional students, had more individualized and unique needs such as psychological concerns and personal adjustment counseling. Academic advising was first identified by researchers in 1958 as a major issue in higher education due to the lack of formal structure. In 1961, academic advising was distinguished from counseling in that "*advising* was reserved for helping a student with academic planning and *counseling* designated a more extensive endeavor" (Cook, 2009, p. 22). In the 1970s, more diverse populations including students from lower socioeconomic households, first generation college students, students with disabilities, and adult learners caused colleges to reexamine their students and look at increased specialization of advising. Further, the first student developmental theories emerged (i.e., Chickering, 1969; Crookston, 1972) and in 1979, NACADA was established as the first professional organization of academic advisors and had 429 charter members (Cook, 2009; Grites & Gordon, 2009). It now has over 12,000 members representing each state in the U.S. as well as other countries (Cook, 2009; NACADA, 2016). The current NACADA website's definition of academic advising includes a quote from Kuhn (2008) that says academic advising occurs when "an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach" (p. 3). While NACADA has settled on a definition of academic advising, there are still many issues that plague this profession.

Current Issues

Though NACADA was established over 30 years ago and helped with advising structure, academic advising has had difficulty distinguishing itself as a profession (Aiken-Wisniewski,

Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015; Cook, 2009) and is considered an emerging profession from a sociological perspective (Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010). Part of the issue with academic advising is that it "is yet to be recognized as a branch of learning, field of study, a discipline, or profession" (Habley, 2009, p. 80) due to a lack of intensive curriculum and educational preparation as a major barrier to this field. Habley (2009) recommended that in order for this field to move forward, there must be graduate level programs offered in academic advising. However, there are few graduate programs in academic advising which makes it difficult to inform advisors with common skill sets and relevant advising literature (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Habley, 2009; Lynch, 2002). According to Allen Dyer (2007), it is recommended, not required, for academic advisors to have master's degrees in potentially six or more different disciplines. These disciplines include higher education, college student personnel, higher education administration within student affairs, counseling, human services field such as psychology or social work, or any other type of graduate degree related to the specific area of advising (i.e., business). To further compound the inconsistency, not all advisors are professional advisors. Some universities, depending on their advising structure, utilize faculty advisors (Endler, 1994; Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2004; Stickle, 1982). Often faculty are required to advise students as part of their service, but many are untrained in advising (Endler, 1994; Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Stickle, 1982).

In addition to a lack of common standards and training, how each institution structures their advising units and sessions are different (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2004). The NACADA Clearinghouse notes that there are three types of organizational structures to academic advising: centralized, decentralized, and shared (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2004). Centralized structures are where both faculty and professional advisors are located in

one academic or administrative unit (i.e. advising centers). Decentralized advising structures are

where advisors are housed in their own academic departments. The shared academic advising

structure is a combination of centralized and decentralized. Thus, some students meet with

advisors in their academic departments and other students meet with advisors at the centralized

advising center. The shared advising structure is divided into two main models: the

supplementary model and split model. The supplementary model is comprised of a central

administrative unit that has professional support staff who assist the advisors. The advisors in

this model are usually faculty. The split model shares advising duties between both faculty

advisors in various departments and professional advisors at an advising center. Advisors in the

advising center carry caseloads for specific subsets of students like freshmen, undeclared majors,

students on academic probation, or those entering a pre-professional program like pre-medicine.

After students have satisfied certain academic requirements, they are often assigned faculty

advisors in their program (Pardee, 2004).

According to Habley (as cited in Pardee, 2004 and King, 2008), several trends in

organizational structure were noted on the ACT Sixth National Survey on Academic Advising.

First, the decentralized structures more commonly utilized a faculty-only advising model as

opposed to having professional advisors. The faculty-only decentralized structure is declining

and was found to be more common at private institutions (Pardee, 2004). According to the

survey, the faculty-only model is used at 39% of four-year private institutions. The shared

structure of advising is utilized at 44% of institutions. The split model of the shared advising

structure is used at 46% of public colleges and universities (Pardee, 2004).

With such varied advising structures and models combined with the lack of uniform

training, it is obvious to see why the advising profession is having difficulty with their

professional identity. To expound on the absence of training with professional advisors, Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2015) conducted a phenomenological study in which they interviewed academic advisors from various schools. The actual job title of the participants varied (i.e., academic advisor, office manager). Participants reported that this lack of uniformity in job title discredited or undermined any kind of authority that academic advisors had with both faculty and students. Participants also indicated that they see directly how policy impacts student life, yet they are not included in policy-making discussions. In addition to various job titles, participants also reported a wide variety of training and background experience, which is consistent with previous research (Lynch, 2002; Preece et al., 2007; Taylor, 2011). While the participants found positive aspects of varied backgrounds, they acknowledged that a lack of standardization in educational experiences prohibited the advancement of the field and recognition as a profession. Further, participants stated that a lack of uniformity in background and training directly impacts practice as the advising process and outcomes of two advisors on the same campus can be completely different (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015).

In an attempt to compensate for varied educational backgrounds, Robbins (2012) stated that advising training is typically a one-half day or one full day of training at the start of the academic year. Due to the amount of information they must know, these trainings are usually on topics like curricular responsibilities, institutional policies, procedures, and new technology. These trainings neglect the relational components (i.e., interpersonal skills) and conceptual components (i.e., student learning, developmental theories, etc.) that are so important to the advising relationship (Robbins, 2012). Further, in an interview with the *Journal of Developmental Education*, current NACADA President, Charlie Nutt, echoed similar sentiments by stating that professional development is "very institutionally based, meaning that most

training occurs once a year to introduce the newest Banner or People Soft screens and the latest financial aid policies. Many times professional development may be blindly teaching people the latest course registration process" (Harborth, 2015, p. 19). Thus, he called for colleges and universities to be vigilant and intentional with providing professional development to advisors. Again, this highlights one of the main challenges to the advising field establishing itself as a profession—absence of standardized curriculum.

This lack of common standards in training can be quite problematic when academic advisors are meeting students with specific needs. For example, Preece et al. (2007) conducted a survey with 1,500 academic advisors and while 83% of respondents indicated that they worked with students with disabilities, only 44% indicated they had any specialized training on disabilities. Additionally, 48% and 37% of respondents indicated they had students disclose thoughts of suicide or self-harm, respectively. Yet, approximately one-third of respondents indicated that they were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable when working with students with emotional disorders such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia. Another unique population in higher education is international students who often have difficulty transitioning to American colleges (Charles & Stewart, 1991). Despite awareness of transitional difficulties, some academic advisors of international students have been found to still invalidate and be dismissive of the unique experiences of their international students due to a lack of training around multicultural awareness and sensitivity (Zhang, 2016). While NACADA has a clearinghouse of resources on how to work with specific populations (i.e., first generation college students, first year students, undeclared students, etc.), the main problem lies in the lack of uniformity in training of academic advisors.

For issues regarding mental health, the NACADA Clearinghouse article by Harper and Peterson (2005) states that "though most academic advisors are not professional counselors, they are in positions to notice that a student may be experiencing stress, or something more challenging…[and] should use their excellent communication and observation skills to refer to those who can assist students" (para. 13). Due to the varied backgrounds and training of advisors, it is difficult to gauge how many have the necessary observation, listening, and communication skills to pick up on some of the finer nuances of mental health concerns.

The absence of multicultural competencies is not the only problem that advisors face due to varied educational experiences (Preece et al., 2007; Zhang, 2016). Proficiency with interpersonal skills are critical to making the advising process and relationship successful (Barnett, Roach, & Smith, 2006; Hughey, 2011). Barnett et al., (2006) emphasize the importance of basic microskills, which are attending behaviors and listening skills. Attending behaviors are comprised of eye contact, vocal qualities, verbal tracking, and body language. Reflecting feelings and content, asking probing questions, challenging and confronting, and initiating and maintaining change are more advanced interpersonal skills that can help facilitate an optimal advising relationship (Hughey, 2011). Hughey (2011) also cited Carl Rogers' (1967) personal characteristics of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy as foundational in establishing an environment that is conducive to using some of these interpersonal skills. Barnett et al., (2006) also conducted a small-scale study where one group of advisors was trained in microskills and another group of advisors was not. Advisees who interacted with microskills-trained advisors reported that they felt more understood, more comfortable, and felt that advisors did not dominate the conversation. Thus, they were more

satisfied with their advisors compared to the untrained advisor group and more likely to request advising by the same person.

Parallels between advising and counseling. Current research documents the need for advisors to have not only standardized training (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Preece et al., 2007; Robbins, 2012; Taylor, 2011), but also highlights skills that parallel the counseling profession (Hughey, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2006). Kuhn et al. (2006) described the overlapping responsibilities of counseling and advising on a continuum. The authors claim that some of the confusion in the roles comes from "the widespread use of the word *counseling* in secondary schools; it covers the gamut of responsibilities from dispensing information to dealing with students' emotional and behavioral problems" (Kuhn et al., 2006, p 25). Additionally, the authors claim that counselors "usually do not have the extensive knowledge about curricula or academic policies" (Kuhn et al., 2006, p. 24). Some of the issues that can be addressed by either the advisor or a more long-term counselor include death in the family, time management, interpersonal issues, family issues, career goals, personal goals, and academic goals (Kuhn et al., 2006). The authors also asserted that the following issues should be referred to the counseling center or a professional counselor: ADHD, substance abuse, eating disorder, physical/emotional abuse, sexual orientation, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and suicide (Kuhn et al., 2006).

Additionally, Kuhn et al. (2006) stated that advisors must refer students who disclose self-abuse or abuse by others to a counselor for assessment and treatment. Further, the authors stated that "recognizing active and passive symptoms of suicide ideation requires special professional or graduate training, and therefore, an advisor concerned about a student's safety should make a referral to a counselor" (p. 29). However, the authors incorrectly assume that all

students with these types of issues will immediately self-disclose. Often, the nature of self-disclosure is reliant upon the strength of the relationship with the advisor as well as the advisor being astute and skilled enough to ask the appropriate questions to merit such a personal self-disclosure (Farber, Berano, & Capobianco, 2004; Ivey, 2013; Strong & Zeman, 2010). How will untrained or improperly trained advisors be able to discern if a student is in distress if they solely put the responsibility on the student immediately self-disclosing?

While the authors are correct in that these issues should be referred (Kuhn et al., 2006), the inherent problem in this article is the lack of training to recognize some of these issues. Advisor training is typically half-day to full-day workshops held once during the beginning of the academic year (Harborth, 2015; Robbins, 2012)—clearly not sufficient training for recognizing issues stated in the Kuhn et al., (2006) article. Particularly pertinent are recognizing the less overt symptoms of these mental health issues like depression and suicidal ideation (Etzel, Watson, Visek, & Maniar, 2006; Granello, 2010; McGlothlin, 2008; Rudd et al., 2006). Further, it is not simply the recognition of symptoms, but rather the ability to confront and assess these situations accurately, delicately, and with care before making the appropriate referral (Ivey, 2013; Strong & Zeman, 2010).

The NACADA Clearinghouse article by Harper and Peterson (2005) makes it clear that not all advisors are counselors, but encourage them to use fine-tuned observation and communication skills to identify students in distress. Again, the assumption is that advisors innately have these skills and competencies to address these issues. However, extant advising literature says otherwise. Some of the current issues faced in advising sessions include a lack of multicultural competencies (Zhang, 2016), subpar listening and communication skills (Hughey, 2011; Nadler & Simerly, 2006), insufficient interpersonal skills (Hughey, 2011), and discomfort

when dealing with psychological issues (Preece et al., 2007). In a study of advisor preferences, out of nine potential characteristics, students ranked "discussing personal concerns or problems" as the third most important, behind discussing degree requirements and scheduling for the following term (Whitsett, Lynn Suell, & Ratchford, 2014). This emphasizes the importance of having good interpersonal skills. These current problems in advising could be alleviated through proper, standardized training that addresses observation skills, communications skills, and mental health issues like the curriculum provided in a counseling program (Barnett et al., 2006; CACREP, 2016; Hughey, 2011).

To highlight the comparisons between counseling and advising, it is important to note the similarities between the advising field and two prominent professional counseling organizations. The American Counseling Association's definition of counseling is "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (Kaplan et al., 2014). Because school counselors and advisors have similar responsibilities (Kuhn et al., 2006; Thorngren et al., 2013), it is important to note that the main goal of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is to assist school counselors in "help[ing] students focus on academic, career and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives" (ASCA, 2016, para. 1). Both ACA and ASCA are guided by separate, but similar, ethical codes that provide guidelines for ethical practices for counselors and counselors-in-training, promote the wellbeing of clients, and advocate for the profession.

In addition to ACA and ASCA, many graduate counseling programs seek accreditation from Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; CACREP, 2016), which is considered the gold standard of counseling certifications. The

CACREP accrediting standards have been reviewed against various professional standards, ensures that counseling graduate students are receiving the highest quality education, and promotes a unified profession. In addition to doctoral programs, CACREP accredits master's counseling programs and seven specialty programs including: 1) addiction counseling, 2) career counseling, 3) clinical mental health counseling, 4) clinical rehabilitation counseling, 5) marriage, couple, and family counseling, 6) school counseling, and 7) student affairs and college counseling. There are currently 682 accredited master's level programs and an additional 80 that are in the process of seeking accreditation (CACREP, 2016). CACREP-accredited programs all have a standardized counseling curriculum in conjunction with an individualized curriculum that meets the needs of each of the aforementioned counseling specialties. Of the standardized counseling curriculum detailed in Section 2.F of the 2016 CACREP Standards, there are eight common core areas that are required for all master's level and doctoral students, regardless of counseling specialty. The core areas then have multiple sub-criteria that more explicitly state what is to be covered in the curriculum. To earn accreditation, graduate training programs must provide evidence of where each sub-criteria is addressed in the curriculum (CACREP, 2016).

Career development and exploration plus counseling skills in the helping relationship (i.e., interpersonal skills) are two of the eight common core areas of CACREP programs (CACREP, 2016). Furthermore, crisis intervention, trauma-informed strategies, and assessment of suicide and/or harm to self or others are all sub-criteria and required for all entry-level counselors regardless of counseling specialization. To also negate the claims made in Kuhn et al. (2006) that counselors lack training in higher education policies and curriculum, CACREP does require that counselors in the student affairs and college counseling specialty track learn about the policies and culture of higher education. Lastly, both Barnett et al., (2006) and Hughey

(2011) call for advisors to receive training in attending behaviors (i.e., body language, vocal qualities, verbal tracking, and body language), listening skills, and more advanced interpersonal skills of reflecting, probing questions, and confronting. Further, Hughey (2011) discusses the emphasis of Carl Rogers' (1967) personal characteristics of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy as fundamental in helping relationships. Both Barnett et al. (2006) and Hughey (2011) cited prominent counseling textbooks and groundbreaking counseling theorists, respectively, in their recommendations for training for advisors.

These issues continue to shed light on the need for more specialized training for academic advisors. NACADA, however, clearly recognizes that academic advising is not a "one size fits all" and that there are specialized populations that require different approaches or more individualized support than others. Moreover, some literature notes strong parallels between counseling and advising. Because counseling is an already established field, some literature suggests using counseling-inspired training in the advising profession. While the deficits in advisor training remain, it is commended that student-athletes have long been recognized by the advising field as a population requiring increased attention.

Academic Advisors and Student-Athletes

Not only are student-athletes recognized as a special population in need of more support, but academic advisors are also in the unique position to be able to provide that support (Glennen, 1976). NACADA'S *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* notes that student-athletes are a population with special needs and specifically states that the advising process must "guid[e] them based on their academic, personal, and career goals" (Harding, 2008, p. 197). Harding (2008) then states that advisors must use strategies not only to help student-athletes maintain academic eligibility, but they also must assist student-athletes in addressing the obstacles they

face as college athletes and foster "lifelong learning skills" (p. 197). He then acknowledged some of the unique challenges student-athletes encounter such as demanding schedules, stereotyping, and lack of time. Thus, by their own admission and recommendation, NACADA believes academic advisors should be addressing these issues, as opposed to just academics, in their advising sessions. In addition to NACADA providing guidelines for academic advisors working with student-athletes, there is an even more specialized organization called the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletes (N4A) whose primary purpose is to serve the best interest of student-athletes.

The N4A joined as a division of NACADA in 2012, and it is solely dedicated to advisors who work with student-athletes. N4A began in 1975 as a separate organization and was a way for academic advisors of athletes to meet one another, network, and provide support. According to their best practices (N4Aa, n.d.), the N4A "is a group of professionals committed to the holistic development of the collegiate student-athlete with emphasis on academic opportunity, development, and success" (p. 4). They maintain that student-athletes should be given every opportunity to be successful off the field, in the classroom, and after graduation. While N4A formed a partnership with the NCAA in 2003, they were threatened by the NACADA and NCAA partnership that formed in 2006. The NCAA partnership with NACADA formed to support the educational training of advisors of student-athletes. The N4A felt very strongly that training should occur by their own professionals, so they developed their own program certification in 2007 (N4Ab, n.d.). Program, or college and university, certification standards include two main areas which are academic support and life skills support. Academic support services include areas of tutoring, supervised study, monitoring student-athlete academic progress and eligibility. Qualifications of academic support services include that the Director of

Student-Athlete Support Services should have a master's degree and a minimum of five years in working with intercollegiate athletics. Academic counselors should have a minimum of a bachelor's degree with some experience in intercollegiate athletics (N4Ab, n.d.). Currently, there are thirty-one universities who are considered N4A program certified. This is quite a small number compared to the over 1,100 NCAA colleges and universities (NCAA, 2016b). While both NACADA and the N4A provide some guidelines as to the qualifications of individual advisors, it is also important to know how institutions structure their advising units and whether or not advising sessions are required.

To help provide that academic, personal, and career support encouraged by NACADA and N4A, it is recommended that advisors of student-athletes engage in intrusive advising (Gayston-Gayles, 2003). Intrusive advising is a method in which "advisors encourage student involvement in the advising process, and in some cases, the institution requires advising as a condition of continued enrollment" (Donaldson et al., 2016, p. 30) or the institution may implement academic punishments if advising obligations are not met (Schwebel et al., 2012). It was initially developed to improve student retention as Glennen (1976) cautioned that advisors should no longer be passive participants and wait for students to approach them with issues or concerns. The effectiveness of intrusive advising, including helping students deemed high-risk such as those on probation or with disabilities, has been supported in advising literature (Abelman & Molina, 2001, 2002; Earl, 1988; Gayston-Gayles, 2003; Glennen, 1975; Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Vowell & Karst, 1987).

Practitioners of intrusive advising can utilize many methods of outreach to their students including email communication, phone calls, and reminders of advising appointments (Abelman & Molina, 2001, 2002; Steele & Gordon, 2001). However, Abelman and Molina (2001) note

that personal contact "affords students the greatest opportunity to identify problems and generate responsibility for problem solving and decision making" (p. 32). If professional academic advisors are assigned specifically to student-athletes and are mandated to meet with them, they will be able to provide consistent support throughout the student-athletes' collegiate career. Gayston-Gayles (2003) recommends that academic advisors of athletes employ intrusive advising particularly with freshmen and sophomore athletes. Because intrusive advising requires meetings with academic advisors (Donaldson et al., 2016; Gaston-Gayles, 2003; Glennen, 1976; Schwebel et al., 2012), advisors are distinctively situated to be able to meet the needs of the student-athletes without imposing upon their very limited time. Further, Glennen (1976) wrote that "one other noteworthy result of the intrusive counseling program has been a reduction in the number of freshmen needing assistance from the psychological clinic. Many problems are handled intrusively before they become crisis situations" (p. 50). In other words, intrusive advising is a preventative measure as opposed to a reactive response which may require a more in-depth intervention. This is especially important to student-athletes who have such limited time schedules which also impact their ability to seek additional support resources (Ayers et al., 2012; Cosh & Tully, 2013; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Simons et al., 2007; van Rensburg et al., 2011; Watson, 2006). Lastly, there is decreased stigma associated with meeting an advisor than there is meeting with a counselor or walking into the university counseling center. This is another advantage of student-athletes seeking help from their academic advisors, and especially those with counseling degrees.

While student-athletes are able to disclose personal or academic issues to their academic advisors, there can be some confusion with where advisors report their concerns even though academic counselors are prohibited from reporting to the coaching staff (N4Ab, n.d.).

Thompson (2013) found that student-athletes requested academic advisors to not disclose certain personal information to coaches or athletic department personnel. The participants cited issues such as academic concerns, personal transgressions, thoughts of transferring to another school, and injuries. Because academic advisors have obligations to the athletic department, university, and the student-athlete, when to break confidence is ambiguous and can also foster an environment of distrust in the advisor-athlete relationship. Thompson (2013) found that advisors were willing to lose the trust of the student-athlete if the nondisclosure request was not in the interest of well-being for the student-athlete or could potentially damage the reputation of the university. Maintaining trust in a non-confidential relationship can be tricky to navigate. However, the focus should remain on the holistic wellbeing of the student-athlete as in the developmental model of advising.

Developmental Advising and Wellness

While there is ambiguity regarding background and training (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Lynch, 2002), there are some advising models that can help guide academic advisors in their practice (Dedmon, 2012; Howell, 2010; Shaffer, 2009; Weir et al., 2005). Of these models, the developmental advising approach has a long history in academic advising and was inspired by Melvene Hardee's (1970) student personnel point of view philosophy (Grites, 2013). Grites (2013) credits Hardee with introducing terms such as "*teacher-learner environment* as well as *student's educational, vocational,* and *personal concerns*" (p. 5) and to use these terms when speaking of academic advising. Crookston (1972) was the first to apply the developmental approach with academic advising. In the history of academic advising, Cook (2009) noted a distinction between *advising* and *counseling* in the early 1960s. However, Crookston (1972) used the two terms interchangeably when he wrote, "developmental counseling or advising is not

only concerned with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (p. 12). He also wrote about how the advisor/counselor also takes on a teaching role and how developmental advising is the preferred method of advising over the more authoritarian prescriptive advising model. Developmental advising is a collaborative exchange between advisor and student in which the advisor focuses on the student's strengths rather than deficits. It is an approach that addresses the whole person and meets the educational, career, and personal needs of each student (Grites, 2013; McGill, 2016).

Academic advisors must view student-athletes individually and should be well-trained in both developmental and advising techniques (Gordon, 1986; Schubert & Schubert, 1983). Further, in part two of the declaration section of NACADA's Statement of Core Values, the very first line is "effective advising is a holistic approach" (NACADA, 2005, para. 5). While there are separate models in the academic advising world, NACADA maintains that taking a developmental or holistic approach is what is in the best interest of their students.   Not surprisingly, as N4A is a division of NACADA, one of the N4A Strategic Plan (2014) goals is centered on "Student-Athlete Impact and Holistic Development" (p. 5). The holistic nature of developmental advising addresses the same domains that are consistent with the responsibilities of similar professions such as K-12 school counselors (American School Counselor Association, ASCA, 2016). According to ASCA, their aim is to assist school counselors in "help[ing] students focus on academic, career and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives" (ASCA, 2016, para. 1). Not only is the developmental model of academic advising congruent with the school counseling model, it is

also congruent with the counseling wellness model and the main instrument used to assess wellness, 5F-Wel (Myers et al., 2000). While it is agreed upon by NACADA professionals that academic advising should incorporate more than just meeting the academic needs of their students, it is even more imperative that student-athletes receive this holistic attention as they are an at-risk population when compared to non-athletes. As Gordon (1986) wrote, the "importance of serving the academic needs *and* personal needs of student-athletes cannot be overstated" (p. 85).

Academic advisors who are trained in counseling graduate programs are in the best position to address both the academic needs and personal needs of student-athletes. First, if advising programs engage in intrusive advising, then student-athletes, in addition to non-athletes, are required to meet with academic advisors to discuss their academic trajectory. This mandated requirement helps with providing access to support for student-athletes. Secondly, academic advisors with counseling training are more familiar with wellness approaches and able to address specific stressors that student-athletes encounter (CACREP, 2016; Gold, 2016; Leppma & Young, 2016; Meany-Walen, Davis-Gage, & Lindo, 2016). Because counseling programs are often infused with wellness training and intervention, academic advisors with counseling backgrounds are more likely to address the wellness needs of their student-athletes than academic advisors without counseling backgrounds.

Wellness

Wellness is a construct that has many different dimensions outside of being physically and/or mentally healthy (Barden, Conley, & Young, 2015; Hettler, 1984; Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2001; Reese & Myers, 2012; Roscoe, 2009). Further, wellness is an area in which mental health professionals, and specifically counselors, have

training and practical use (CACREP, 2016; Gold, 2016; Leppma & Young, 2016; Meany-Walen et al., 2016). While there have been many wellness interventions with undergraduate students (Alameda, 2009; Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013; Jones, Ahn, & Chan, 2016; Kuruganti, 2014; Mungas & Silverman, 2014; Newton, Kim, & Newton, 2006), very few wellness interventions have been implemented with student-athletes.

Wellness and the Counseling Profession

Wellness can be defined in many different ways (Roscoe, 2009) and has various models that have developed and evolved over time (Ardell, 1977; Hettler, 1984; Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2001; Reese & Myers, 2012). While there is not a universal definition of wellness due to the different dimensions and constructs (Roscoe, 2009), it can be agreed upon by various disciplines that it focuses more on just physical and emotional health (Barden, Conley, & Young, 2015; Hettler, 1984; Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Myers et al., 2001; Reese & Myers, 2012). For example, Ardell (2011) developed a wellness stress test based on his original wellness model from 1977 that has five dimensions including physical, social, professional/job/career, self/personal, and purpose/spiritual wellness. He based his dimensions on various sources of stress. Hettler's model (1984) has six dimensions including social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional. He describes wellness as an "active process through which individuals make choices towards a more successful existence" (Hettler, 1984, p. 13) and emphasizes a more preventative approach to wellness as opposed to reactive. More recent models have evolved to include a biopsychosocial framework because of the interactions of biological, psychological, and social influences (Barden et al., 2015) or even ecological and environmental components have been considered (Reese & Myers, 2012). Barden et al. (2015) view wellness as an intersectionality of biological forces with thoughts,

emotions, and behaviors as well as social and cultural factors. Reese and Myers (2012) added the ecological construct, called EcoWellness, to the holistic model of wellness. They cite a growing body of research that claims the positive psychological, physical, and emotional effects of the environment on human health are indisputable. Their model cites three dimensions which include access to nature, environmental identity, and transcendence in nature.

Regardless of the exact model, it has been agreed upon that wellness is inclusive of optimal human functioning that encompasses "the body, the mind, and the spirit" (Archer, Prober, & Gage, 1987, p. 311) and is not merely the absence of illness (Roscoe, 2009). Wellness is centered on the lifespan development of humans and is a preventative approach or philosophy that is central to the counseling field (Myers, 1991, 1992). According to Myers (1991), wellness is *the* paradigm from which the counseling profession operates.

While the connections between the mind, body, and spirit date back to the 1890s (Hardie, 2015), wellness oriented approaches began in the medical field dating back to the 1970s when doctors and researchers began noticing the link between psychological stress and physical ailments (Barden et al., 2015; Hardie, 2015). Ardell (1977) and Hettler (1984) began the first models of wellness and some of these models focused on the wellness of college aged students (Archer et al., 1987; Hettler, 1984). The idea of wellness took hold in various professions (Barden et al., 2015; Hardie, 2015) including counseling (Myers, 1991, 1992; Myers & Sweeney, 2007). In 1989, the Governing Council of ACA supported the position of professional counselors to be advocates of wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2007). From there it has been a defining characteristic of the counseling profession. The holistic model was chosen as the theoretical basis for wellness because it is the first counseling model of wellness. When considering the participants of this study are academic advisors with counseling degrees, this

model makes the most sense as counseling graduate students have been educated on this model of wellness and its constructs. Most importantly, however, this model is most congruent with student-athletes and their experiences. This model takes a developmental and lifespan approach and better attends to the whole person, not just the student or the athlete. Further, it is applicable because it addresses student-athletes at a critical juncture in their lives (Chickering, 1969) and is congruent with NACADA's developmental approach to advising (Grites, 2013; McGill, 2016; NACADA, 2005).

Holistic wellness model. The holistic wellness model was developed by Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (2000) and began as an update from the earlier Wheel of Wellness model (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The earlier Wheel of Wellness models were "unique in having both a multidisciplinary focus and theoretical grounding in human growth and behavior…[yet] did not illustrate the use of the model as a basis for counseling interventions" (Myers et al., 2000, p. 251). The updated Wheel of Wellness model took a strengths-based, developmental approach and focused on prevention and the whole person (Myers et al., 2000). The most current evolution of the holistic model includes the new evidence-based Indivisible Self model which has stronger psychometric properties than the Wheel of Wellness (Hattie et al., 2004; Myers & Sweeney, 2004). Both models are based on Adler's Individual Psychology (1954/1927) and use those concepts as an organizing framework (Myers et al., 2000; Myers & Sweeney, 2004). Because the holistic wellness model is so prevalent in the counseling literature, a detailed description of the components of the Wheel of Wellness and how it evolved into the Indivisible Self are provided.

Wheel of wellness. The Wheel of Wellness is divided into five main life tasks and then broken down into further subtasks. The five life tasks include spirituality, self-direction, work

and leisure, friendship, and love. Spirituality, different than religion, is at the center of the wheel and is described as a sense of being that transcends all material possessions and provides a deeper connection to the universe. There are no subtasks with this life task. Work and leisure, love, and friendship are incorporated into the rim of the wheel. Work and leisure are described as pleasurable experiences that provide enjoyment or sense of accomplishment. Work is further described as a major function of financial support as well as providing social interaction. Leisure activities also provide social support, reduced stress, and can increase emotional well-being. Friendship, the fourth life task, "incorporates all of one's social relationships that involve a connection with others, either individually or in community, but do not have marital, sexual, or familial commitment" (Myers et al., 2000, p. 256). The love life task is defined as an intimate, mutual, and long-term commitment (Myers et al., 2000). Self-direction is "a sense of mindfulness and intentionality in meeting the major tasks of life" (Myers et al., 2000, p. 253). It is comprised of twelve subtasks including sense of worth, sense of control, realistic beliefs, emotional awareness and coping, problem solving and creativity, sense of humor, nutrition, exercise, self-care, stress management, gender identity, and cultural identity. Each of these subtasks is represented as a spoke in the wheel. Also represented on the wheel are global events like business and industry, media, government, community, family, religion, and education. These represent various events and sociocultural factors that impact wellness and all of the life tasks and subtasks, which work in conjunction with one another to form optimal wellness. See *Figure 1* for a representation of the Wheel of Wellness.
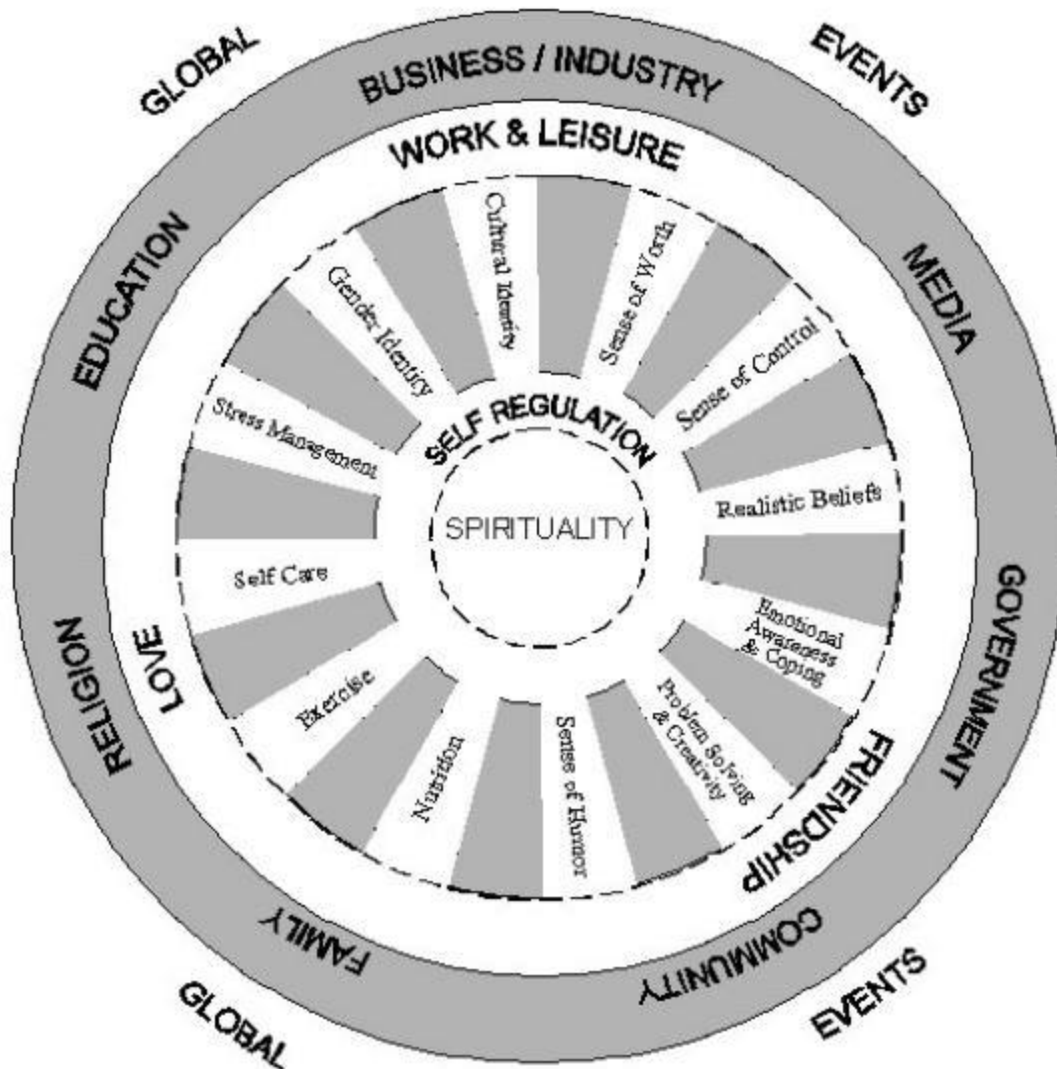
Figure 1. Wheel of Wellness. Copyright © J. M. Witmer, T. J. Sweeney, and J. E. Myers, 1996. Reprinted with permission. WEL Sampler, © 2001, 2004 Jane E. Myers, Thomas J. Sweeney, & Melvin Witmer. All rights reserved. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com. Reprinted with permission.

Regarding psychometric properties of the WEL, Hattie et al. (2004) examined this version of the holistic model and found that the components of this model do not interact exactly how they anticipated. The Wheel of Wellness was determined to be a theoretical model as opposed to an evidence-based model of wellness, so Myers and Sweeney (2004) used the results of the Hattie et al. (2004) study to update the model as the Indivisible Self.

Indivisible self model of wellness. The Indivisible Self (IS-WEL) is the most current

version of the holistic wellness model (Myers & Sweeney, 2004) and is an empirically-based,

restructured version of the Wheel of Wellness. The IS-WEL consists of three tiers of factors

starting with the highest order factor of the Indivisible Self which represents overall total

wellness. There are five second-order factors that are comprised of 17 third-order factors. These

factors include: the Creative Self (thinking, emotions, control, work, and positive humor), the

Coping Self (realistic beliefs, stress management, self-worth, and leisure), the Social Self

(friendship and love), the Essential Self (spirituality, self-care, gender identity, and cultural

identity), and the Physical Self (exercise and nutrition). Each third-order factor impacts the

holism of the second-order factors, and each second-order factor impacts the holism of the first

order factor, which is the Indivisible Self. Myers and Sweeney (2004) were also conscientious to

include various contextual variables that impact human life, development, and wellness. They

included four main components comprised of 16 subcomponents which account for sociocultural

factors that may impact wellness. These components include: Local (family, neighborhood,

community), Institutional (education, religion, government, business/industry), Global (politics,

culture, global events, environment, media, community), and Chronometrical (perpetual,

positive, purposeful). All of the societal factors interact with the individual factors to comprise a

person's total wellness and healthy functioning. See *Figure 2* for a representation of the IS-

WEL.
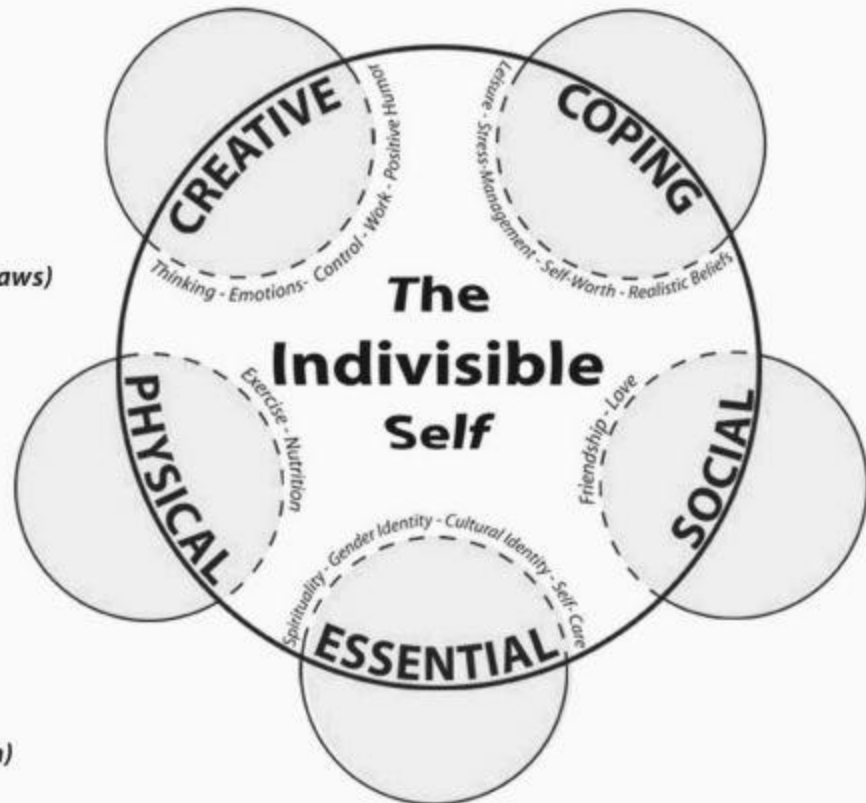
Figure 2. The Indivisible Self. FFWEL Manual, © J. E. Myers & T. J. Sweeney, 2005, 2014. All rights reserved in media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com. Reprinted with permission.

Myers et al. (2000) suggested recommendations for how to use the holistic wellness model with clients and includes a four-phase intervention. These phases include 1-an introduction to the Wheel of Wellness; 2-formal or informal assessment based on the model; 3-purposeful interventions to develop specific areas of wellness; and 4- evaluation and follow-up of the previous two steps. During the assessment phase, the authors note that a formal assessment can include the Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle (WEL; Myers, Sweeney, Witmer, &

Hattie, 1998), which was based on the earlier models of the Wheel of Wellness. To keep with the current model and its components, the WEL was refined to include the different dimensions of wellness included in the IS-WEL and is now called the Five Factor Wel (5F-Wel; Myers & Sweeney, 1999; Myers, Luecht, & Sweeney, 2004). Thus, the four-phase intervention is the same, but now includes the updated 5F-Wel instead of the WEL to assess client wellness.

Though the holistic wellness model was used in two studies to assess and compare the overall wellness between college student-athletes and non-athletes (LaFountaine, 2007; Watson & Kissinger, 2007), it has not yet been used as an intervention, but rather solely an assessment tool. LaFountaine (2007) compared 71 freshmen female athletes to 465 freshmen non-athletes at an all-girls Catholic university using the WEL. It was given to students in a health and wellness class to assess their wellness for a behavior modification project. Female student-athletes scored higher on 11 of 19 subscales of the WEL with significant differences found on the nutrition, exercise, and total self-direction scales. Regarding total wellness, the student-athlete group scored slightly higher than the non-athlete group, and these results were not statistically significant (LaFountaine, 2007). This study has major limitations considering the restricted sample size and demographics.

The only other study that used the holistic wellness model to assess total wellness between college student-athletes and non-athletes is a study by Watson and Kissinger (2007). The authors used the 5F-Wel as their assessment tool to measure the wellness of 62 student-athletes and 95 non-athletes. While the majority of the athlete group contained men ($n = 43$), the non-athlete group had relatively equivalent representation of men ($n = 48$) and women ($n = 47$). On 22 of the 23 subscales, non-athletes scored higher means than student-athletes. The one exception was that student-athletes scored higher on the third-order factor of exercise. The

highest means for second-order factors for both groups was the Social Self with the Coping Self as the lowest means for both groups. Additionally, significant differences were found as non-athletes scored higher on second-order factors of the Social Self and the Essential Self and also on a third-order factor of love. Though student-athletes scored lower means on the total wellness than non-athletes, it was not statistically significant. This study was limited to one university, so it is likely that a sample at additional universities may yield different results.

While the holistic wellness model is relatively new to the counseling field, the Wheel of Wellness, WEL, IS-WEL, and the 5F-Wel have been used with various populations such as counseling graduate students, undergraduate students in a teacher preparation program, and with newly employed teachers (Harwell & Daniel, 2012; Meany-Walen et al., 2016; Ohrt, Prosek, Ener, & Lindo, 2015; Watson, Harper, Ratliff, & Singleton, 2010). Further, it is the recommended intervention for addressing wellness with caregivers of persons with dementia (Clark, Adams, Wilkerson, & Shaw, 2016), transgender individuals (Avera, Zholu, Speedlin, Ingram, & Prado, 2015), and adult women survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Hodges & Myers, 2010). Specific to college students, Choate and Smith (2003) used the Wheel of Wellness with first year college students in a one-semester, one-credit course that was required for graduation. The authors found that students increased their overall scores of the WEL as well as specifically targeted areas of the WEL. Spurgeon (2009) used the holistic model to examine the wellness levels and differences of African-American males who attend predominately white institutions (PWI) versus those who attend historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). No significant differences were found in the total wellness between participants attending PWIs versus those attending HBCUs. Spurgeon (2009) did note that students attending PWIs scored higher on the Sense of Worth construct than those attending HBCUs. In a later study, Spurgeon

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and Myers (2010) used the 5F-Wel to look at differences in racial identity and wellness in African-American males attending PWIs versus HBCUs. They found differences on certain aspects of both the racial identity scales and subscales of the 5F-Wel. Students at PWIs scored higher on the Physical Self scale while students at HBCUs scored higher on the Social Self scale. The authors found no significant relationships between overall racial identity and wellness.

The holistic wellness models have been used to assess the wellness of additional college-aged populations. They have been used to examine stress and wellness of cadets at military institutions (Gibson & Myers, 2006; Myers & Bechtel, 2004), predict alcohol use and driving among undergraduates (Lewis & Myers, 2010), explore negative body image and wellness with college females (Sinclair & Myers, 2004), and investigate the liking, love styles, and wellness of young adults (Shurts & Myers, 2008). Criticisms of the holistic wellness model are limited. However, Villalba and Myers (2008) noted that the IS-WEL does not encompass all beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that comprise the different domains of wellness. They used examples of self-care activities of sleep habits and preventative dental hygiene as areas of self-care that are not included with this model. They surmised that it is possible to score a 100% on the 5F-Wel, but still be lacking in total wellness due to potentially missing absent beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Villalba & Myers, 2008). While there is plenty of research and support on using the holistic wellness model with various populations, there is no literature available on using any versions of the holistic wellness model to assess risk factors or augment overall wellness with collegiate student-athletes.

Implementing the holistic wellness models with college-aged populations is well supported in the literature. Thus, the extant literature supports that this model would be a natural fit for collegiate student-athletes. Further, college students are at a critical age where they are

formulating their identity and working through various tasks towards that identity (Chickering, 1969). This wellness model further supports the developmental tasks asserted by Chickering (1969) as this most updated model works towards developing the Indivisible Self. This is especially critical for student-athletes as they are maintaining multiple identities as both students and athletes. Their struggles and obstacles related to their athlete role often compete against their student role as noted in the struggle with academics (Ayers et al., 2012; Case et al., 1987; Cosh & Tully, 2013; Eckhard, 2010; Fountain & Finley, 2009; Kulics et al., 2015; Parsons, 2013; Simons et al., 2007; Southall et al., 2015) and post-sports life (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Murphy et al., 1996; Tyrance, et al., 2013).

Additionally, the holistic wellness model will help student-athletes integrate their competing identities as they work through various sociocultural contexts noted in the IS-WEL that are specific to the student-athlete experience. They have to work with multiple local systems including their team and athlete communities (Aghazadeh & Kyei, 2009; Crozier et al., 2013; Fletcher et al., 2003; Gardner et al., 1996) as well as multiple institutional systems including the university, athletic department, and the NCAA (Fletcher et al., 2003; NCAA, 2016a; Mahoney & Piasecki, 2016). The major global context that can affect student-athlete wellness is the very culture of sport (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Gruber, 2003; Harper et al., 2013; Menke et al., 2015; Southall et al., 2015; Van Rheenan, 2011). Lastly, student-athletes are working to develop a purposeful life and future that can be impacted by the competing student and athlete roles. This model works to integrate these identities and address the whole person. With the lack of literature on wellness interventions with student-athletes, it can be surmised based on their unique experiences and the applicability of the holistic wellness models that this model is best suited to meet student-athlete needs.

Current Wellness Interventions with Student-Athletes

While student-athletes exhibit many more stressors than non-athletes (Etzel et al., 1996), are more likely to exhibit psychological distress (Ferrante et al., 1996; Watson & Kissinger, 2007), and exhibit lower levels of overall wellness (Watson & Kissinger, 2007), there is not much literature about wellness interventions with this population. Some of the interventions with student-athletes focused on certain aspects of wellness such as relaxation or stress reduction (Beauchemin, 2014; Dubuc-Charbonneau & Durand-Bush, 2015; Harris et al., 2003). Others focused on mental health and mental health referral knowledge (Van Raalte et al., 2015). The lack of interventions available to student-athletes is problematic because of their underutilization of counseling services (Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989) and accessibility to services (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopex & Levy, 2013).

Beauchemin (2014) created a wellness outreach model for student-athletes with the goals of increasing awareness of mental health issues, understanding various principles of sport psychology, and reducing stigmatization and barriers to accessing mental health services. The wellness model was delivered in three 83-minute sessions or five 50-minute sessions that occurred in two separate course sections of a class just for student-athletes. The model included a variety of lecture, video, and participation in exercises. This mixed methods design included self-report questionnaires for the 32 participants as well as interviews from 10 of those participants. The results supported the effectiveness of this model including increased relaxation, positive perceptions of mental health, and decreased stigma of mental health services. The data also supported extant literature on various barriers of student-athletes seeking mental health support. The author identified several limitations including a small sample size, treatment fidelity due to varied formats of the intervention, and the potential for sampling bias as students

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self-selected to participate in the interview. Further, one of the model co-facilitators and interviewer was also the researcher, which creates a potential bias due to social desirability.

Also, using a mixed methods design, Harris et al. (2003) utilized an eight-week psychoeducational group for freshmen student-athletes conducted during the first semester. Student-athletes were enrolled in a three-credit course with the purpose of helping them identify behaviors and social interactions that were considered either productive or destructive. As part of the course design, the student-athletes were given the option to join the eight-week psychoeducational group instead of attending class. Some of the group topics included time management, alcohol/drugs, sexual responsibility, and stress management. Seventy-seven students enrolled and were divided into 11 groups of seven students. Each group was led by a different facilitator in the graduate counseling program. Of the 77 participants, 68 completed the two-part evaluation with Likert scale questions and open-ended questions during the last group meeting. Results showed that the participants enjoyed the overall group experience, found it productive, would take it again if offered, and would recommend it to incoming freshmen. Some of the participants reported that they did not enjoy discussing personal matters or feelings and that they felt pressured to talk during group. The authors of this study provided several recommendations for practitioners when conducting groups with student-athletes. However, a glaring omission is that no limitations of their study were discussed.

Dubuc-Charbonneau and Durand-Bush (2015) studied the impact of a person-centered, self-regulation intervention on stress, burnout, and well-being with eight Canadian collegiate student-athletes from two universities. These students were identified because they scored the highest on the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ) out of 147 surveyed. This mixed methods

designed employed questionnaires and interviews conducted before and after the intervention. The researcher met with each participant individually for seven to nine biweekly sessions of approximately 40-60 minutes each to deliver the intervention. The intervention was assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, and the Self-Regulation Questionnaire, all of which were given pretreatment and posttreatment. Correlations and internal consistency were provided for each of the scales. The ABQ was not administered during the post-intervention phase because all of the participants were "out of season" and assumed their burnout levels to be automatically lower. Both the quantitative results and qualitative feedback indicated that the intervention was effective. The participants reported a decrease in stress and burnout while increasing their self-regulation and well-being. The authors reported several limitations including small sample size and issues with generalizability due to the intervention being tailored to the individual participant. They also stated that participants self-reported their burnout and agreed to participate, which could have meant that they were more self-aware and ready to take steps to decrease burnout. Implications for practitioners included developing this individual intervention to fit into a group-style intervention

Lastly, Van Raalte et al. (2015) conducted three mini-studies on the mental health referral process of student-athletes. The first study was conducted to determine if the web-based referral process (www.SupportForSport.org) operated properly. For the second study, athletic directors and administrators evaluated this website for its perceived effectiveness. The third study conducted was a randomized control trial using a national sample of 153 student-athletes from eight universities. Pre-test data assessed participants' knowledge of the mental health referral process as well as mental health self-efficacy. Participants were then randomly assigned to the

treatment group (viewing the website) or a control group. Post-test data, including open-ended

qualitative questions, showed that viewing the modules on www.SupportForSport.org increased

student-athlete mental health referral knowledge and mental health self-efficacy when compared

to the control group.   While the results of this study were favorable, the authors noted that many

of the participants were female and it may impact the generalizability of the results.

While each of these studies addresses various components of wellness with student-

athletes, none of them address wellness from a holistic perspective. Student-athletes receive

professional support services in academics, elite sport training, and premium medical care

(Osborne, 2014). However, due to their athlete status, they are incredibly high-risk for

encountering extreme stressors and are at a disadvantage when it comes to career adjustment,

mental health needs, and social support (Brown & Glastetter-Fender, 2000; Fletcher et al., 2003;

Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Parham, 1993; Rubin,

2016; Tyrance, Harris, & Post, 2013; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Further, they experience

various forms of bias at a microlevel as well as systemic level (Fletcher et al., 2003; Harper et

al., 2013; Southall et al, 2015; Parham, 1993; Rubin, 2016; Van Rheenan, 2011). All of these

factors contribute to student-athletes' overall lower level of wellness compared to non-athletes

(Watson & Kissinger, 2007). To compound these issues, holistic wellness is not easily addressed

due to barriers including stigma and accessibility to services due to time (Ferrante et al., 1996;

Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2006). However, student-athlete

academic advisors with counseling backgrounds may be in a better position to understand these

needs more than any other athletic support personnel. Academic advisors with counseling

backgrounds are trained in areas of mental health concerns and holistic wellness approaches.

Because student-athletes are required to meet with academic advisors for graduation and

eligibility purposes and are perceived as consistent supports, advisors with counseling backgrounds are uniquely positioned to address wellness deficits with student-athletes.

Conclusion

The current literature base is full of research on various issues and experiences of student-athletes. With these negative experiences and stressors so well documented, it is a call for more support and interventions in working with student-athletes on total wellness as opposed to working on wellness with the separate athlete and separate student identities. Regarding the academic advising field, literature strongly suggests a struggle for a unified professional identity. This struggle is exacerbated by a lack of training and educational experiences for current advisors. The current study aims to explore how academic advisors with counseling backgrounds, a unified educational training combined with their knowledge of holistic wellness, address the wellness needs of student-athletes in their advising sessions. Chapter Three will include details on the methodology of this study.

Chapter Three

Chapter Two provided a review of the relevant literature surrounding student-athlete issues, academic advising, and wellness and counseling. The research demonstrated the high need of student-athletes in other areas of wellness outside of the physical component. More specifically, student-athletes exhibit deficits in career, emotional, and mental wellness. Because student-athletes must meet with academic advisors who are consistent supports to student-athletes, academic advisors are in the best position to address issues of holism and wellness. Further, academic advisors with counseling degrees may be better prepared to address wellness and the whole person. To date, there has not been any research on academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. This chapter will review the methodology and design procedures utilized during this exploration of student-athlete wellness.

Methodology

An interpretative phenomenological approach is best suited for this inquiry because it is examining a phenomenon of wellness as addressed by academic advisors in their sessions with student-athletes. The academic advising profession is partly in flux due to a lack of unified educational training and curriculum plus variability in both job descriptions and responsibilities of academic advisors (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Lynch, 2002). Further, there are several constructs that help define wellness in addition to multiple wellness models (Roscoe, 2009). The combination of these two phenomena makes for very individualistic and diversified academic advising environments. Because of this variability, a qualitative methodology using in-depth, individual interviews are the best method to capture the total experience of the participants.

Qualitative researchers try to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Because of the different job titles of academic advisors, their varied responsibilities, and multiple constructs of wellness, this design is best suited as a qualitative study. It is about understanding how each participant constructs their own meaning of wellness and wellness intervention into their sessions with student-athletes (Hays & Singh, 2012; Rabionet, 2011).

Several types of research design such as ethnography, narrative analysis, and phenomenology fall under the broader concept of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). This current study employs an interpretative phenomenological qualitative design (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Oxley, 2016; Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Seidman, 2013). Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the lived human experience and how that experience is consciously constructed (Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Hays and Singh (2012) state that phenomenological is a process where researchers are trying to understand "the life-world of a participant and then searching for commonalities across participants to see how their lived experiences relate to a phenomenon of interest" (p. 50). Moreover, interpretative phenomenology is concerned with *how* people make sense of and interpret their own experiences (Oxley, 2016). They are viewed as "experts on their own experiences and [provide]…an understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings through telling their own stories, in their own words, and in as much detail as possible" (Reid et al., 2005, p. 1). They are also selected because of their expert knowledge about a particular phenomenon. The goal of this current study is to understand the phenomenon of student-athlete wellness as addressed by academic advisors. Further, this approach is "well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). Because

student-athletes experience a wide variety of stressors and because these participants have counseling backgrounds, it is assumed that some of the sessions can become intense and potentially emotional.

In addition to being an interpretative phenomenological qualitative design, this study also falls under a broader research paradigm of constructivism. Constructivism is the notion that individuals are responsible for creating their own meaning based on their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and interactions (Creswell, 2007; Lee, 2012; Paul, 2005). It is the idea that perception is reality and focuses on the meaning-making processes for each individual (Paul, 2005). In constructivism, there is no singular truth to an experience, but rather it embraces multiple realities and subjective experiences. With this research study, I hope to understand the individual realities of each of the participants, but also find commonalities and broader themes to understand the phenomenon of addressing wellness in advising sessions.

Research Question

Considering the lack of consistency in training and educational experiences of academic advisors, it is pertinent to narrow the focus on advisors with counseling degrees. As detailed in the literature review, college student-athletes are a high-needs group who exhibit lower levels of overall wellness and have a propensity to not seek counseling services (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Watson, 2005; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Graduates of counseling programs, and specifically CACREP-programs, are trained in developmental approaches to meet the academic, career, and social/emotional issues of clients (CACREP, 2016). Even more specifically, graduates are trained in wellness styles and models with which there are constructs that are congruent with the developmental approach emphasized by NACADA (Gordon, 1986;

NACADA, 2005; Schubert & Schubert, 1983). Thus, having participants with a counseling degree is even more pertinent to the study. The research question I seek to answer is:

1. What are the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with collegiate student-athletes?

Participants

Participants for the current study were recruited in a couple of different manners. The first manner was through purposeful sampling in which participants were selected based on criteria set by the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012). Purposeful sampling is appropriate for phenomenological inquiry because "it is necessary for all participants to have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 128). I am curious about the phenomenon of addressing wellness in academic advising sessions with college student-athletes. In order for me to understand the phenomenon of how this is addressed, I had to speak to the people who are living this experience.

For this study, I developed specific criteria to screen potential participants for inclusion. To help identify potential participants, an initial invitation to participate (see Appendix A) was sent to the N4A listservs which is specifically for academic advisors. I also posted the invitation to the ACA Call for Participants forum and the CESNET listserv. This forum and listserv are open to counselors, counseling graduate students, and counselor educators. This invitation specifically addressed the criteria for inclusion which is for participants to have received a master's degree in counseling or enrolled in a counselor education graduate training program, be currently employed at a university as an academic advisor, and work directly with the student-athlete population. Because these criteria are very specific, sending the invitation to these listervs and forums were beneficial in recruitment. In all invitation requests, a link to a survey

website (i.e., Survey Monkey) was used to collect demographic data of participants and screen for appropriate inclusion. The second method to solicit participants was by referral or snowball sampling. Snowball sampling or network sampling is when a participant knows of other participants who fit the criteria and refers them to the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). I solicited universities with whom I had contacts and asked for potential participant referrals.

Ten participants are recommended for a phenomenological study because that is the number determined to meet the minimum requirements for data saturation (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012). Saturation in the data occurs when there are no new ideas or themes identified, but rather the researcher sees repetition in already established themes. Typically, in qualitative research, 10 participant interviews are sufficient to reach saturation. As the research team was individually coding the transcripts, we each started to see similar patterns and experiences in the participants' stories leading us to see that themes were being saturated. After coding the transcripts for the 10 participants selected for this study, my research team and I determined that saturation occurred and there was no need for additional participants.

Design Procedures

An interpretative phenomenological approach is the most fitting qualitative approach for this study because it focuses on understanding the phenomenon of addressing student-athlete wellness in academic advising sessions. More specifically, it examines how the participants interpret their own experiences of addressing wellness with their student-athletes. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted via face-to-face and telephone. This data collection method was employed because the researcher is able to address specific topics of the academic advisors' experience while also allowing room for follow-up or probing questions

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(Rabionet, 2011). Data was then systematically analyzed until salient themes emerged detailing the lived experiences of the participants.

Interview Questions/Instrumentation

Before participants agreed to participate in this study, I provided them with the informed consent detailing the purpose of the study, role of the researcher, procedures of study, and benefits and risks of participation (see Appendix B). This informed consent was written at the beginning of the demographic questionnaire and then read aloud to them prior to recording the interview. Participant demographics were collected in the recruitment stage via an online website (i.e., Survey Monkey) and were verified by the researcher at the beginning of each individual interview to ensure accurate participant inclusion. Information collected included gender, educational credentials, type of accreditation of counseling program (i.e., CACREP), job title and responsibilities, length of employment as advisor to athletes, and previous collegiate athletic experience (see Appendix C).

The interview questions were designed from a thorough review of the literature. The questions specifically focus on the relationship between advisor and athlete, how the advisor defines wellness, how wellness is addressed in the sessions, the advisors' personal experience in college athletics, and what other types of resources student-athletes utilize. Proper communication, observation skills, and trust are crucial to the advising environment, so some of the questions focus on the advisor-athlete relationship (Harper & Peterson, 2005; Preece, 2007; Thompson, 2013; Zhang, 2016). Because wellness has such varied definitions, constructs, and models (Ardell, 1977; Barden et al., 2015; Hettler, 1984; Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Myers et al., 2001; Reese & Myers, 2012; Roscoe, 2009), it is pertinent to know how academic advisors define wellness and how they implement wellness into their advising sessions. Additionally, it is

well-documented that student-athletes are less likely to seek help than non-athlete peers (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Watson, 2006). Thus, questions pertaining to other resources student-athletes may utilize are relevant. Lastly, student-athletes have stated that they feel better understood and are more likely to open up about their challenges and obstacles to someone who was formerly a student-athlete (Lopez & Levy, 2013). Hence, the question about the academic advisors' previous involvement in collegiate athletics is merited.

Prior to data collection, the interview questions were piloted. Turner (2010) suggests piloting interview questions to ensure that any flaws or limitations are addressed before conducting the study. He further suggests that pilot testing should be done with people who have similar interests in the study. For this study, I pilot questions with two participants who were formerly university academic advisors and both hold counseling degrees. During the piloting, they both made suggestions that clarified the questions, provided insight into additional probing or follow-up questions, and addressed flow and timing of the questions. Questions in this semi-structured interview included:

1. What are some of your job responsibilities when working with student-athletes?
    a. What would you say are your primary responsibilities?
    b. What is your caseload?
    c. How often do you meet with the student-athletes on your caseload per semester?
        i. Is it required for you to meet with them?
        ii. If so, what is the required number of times you must meet with your student-athletes?

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iii. Do you ever see your student-athletes more than the required number of times?

2. What sorts of issues/stressors do you see with your student-athletes?

    a. What are the most common issues/stressors you see?

    b. How do you address these issues?

3. What type of counseling skills do you use in your work with student-athletes?

    a. How often do you use them?

    b. What other skills do you use in your work with them and why?

4. What would you consider as your counseling theoretical perspective or perspectives?

5. How would you describe your relationship with your student-athletes?

    a. To what degree do you think your student-athletes open up to you and/or trust you?

    b. To whom do you report if you have concerns?

6. How would you define wellness?

    a. What does it mean to you?

7. What are wellness-related activities or approaches that you incorporate in your work with student-athletes?

    a. How do you incorporate them?

8. How would you describe your role in addressing wellness compared to other resources available to student-athletes? (Think academic services, strength training, sport psychologist, etc.)

9. What support resources are available to your student-athlete caseload?

a. How do you know what support services are available to student-athletes? (Think professional development, training on resources, etc.)

b. Do your student-athletes utilize these resources?

c. Which ones do they utilize most?

d. What may be some reasons that student-athletes do not use these resources?

10. How do you know when student-athletes are in need of these support services?

a. How do you refer student-athletes to these support services?

11. If you could provide student-athletes with any assistance, support, etc. without restrictions (time, money, etc.), what would they be?

12. What is your relationship with the coaching staff of student-athletes?

a. Does the coach or coaching staff influence what you do?

b. If so, how?

13. Is there anything else about your experience as an academic advisor working with student-athletes that you'd like to share with me?

Role of the Researcher

The main role of the researcher during this process was to serve as the primary instrument in data collection, as is often the case in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Because I am the primary instrument in data collection, it is natural that biases were present. Thus, it is important to understand the lens from which I operate and to confront any biases that I potentially brought to this study from the beginning. Though aware of my potential bias yet also trying to remain objective, I have several identities that may have factored into the data collection and interpretation of the results of this study.

First, I was a Division I FBS (former Division I-A) NCAA college student-athlete at a large university in the Southeast. I experienced many of the student-athlete experiences detailed in the literature review including a career-ending injury which resulted in the loss of my scholarship and, more importantly, ended my formal identity as a student-athlete. While I witnessed and experienced firsthand both the joys and privileges of being a student-athlete, I was also subjected to the immense stressors, injustices, and exploitations of being an ambassador/representative of the university.

Secondly, I am a current full-time school counselor, part-time doctoral student, and emerging counselor educator and researcher. For the past six years, my responsibilities as a school counselor were to meet the academic, career, and emotional/social needs of all of my students. There is a uniformity and standardization in educational training to be a school counselor. I acknowledge my difficulty in understanding why the academic advising profession has struggled with solidifying its professional identity and required educational training when NACADA advises a similar developmental approach that is seen in K-12 school counseling. My doctoral student and emerging counselor educator/researcher identities come into play because I see the opportunity to create new knowledge surrounding this topic and be a part of the solution to augment wellness in the student-athlete population. Because of this desire to be a part of the solution, I acknowledge that I had to be wary of looking for answers that were not there, but rather let the data inform me of potential solutions.

In addition to serving as the data instrument, I also interpreted the data. It was impossible to separate my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences from influencing the data. It was important for me to be reflective throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Before I

analyzed the data, I bracketed my own thoughts and assumptions about the data and set them aside in order for me to critically view the data (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through recorded interviews both in-person and via telephone. The goal of data collection was to gather the participants' exact stories and experiences in their own words. The telephone interviews were recorded using an internet program called www.freeconferencecall.com and the in-person interview was recorded using the record feature on my telephone. Recording the interviews was necessary to ensure accuracy when analyzing the data. Interviews were kept in a password-secured electronic location that was only accessible by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

After each interview was recorded, it was transcribed verbatim utilizing a transcription company called Matchless Transcription, LLC (www.matchlesstranscription.com) and kept confidential. Matchless Transcription guaranteed 100% confidentiality in that they did not use the recorded interviews for anything other than transcription. This company has been vetted and used by several other research institutions. They also ensured deletion of the audio files after I confirmed receipt of the transcripts. Once I received the transcripts, I removed any identifying information such as name and university affiliation from each transcript before giving to members of my coding team. To further ensure participant confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms to participants on the transcripts. I was the only person who had access to the pseudonym key and it was safeguarded in my password protected computer file.

After I bracketed my own assumptions about the data, I recruited experienced qualitative researchers who have prior experience with coding transcripts to assist in the data analysis process. A team of two other peer coders, in addition to myself, comprised the research team.

This was within the range of appropriate number of members on the research team (Hays & Singh, 2012) and assisted with triangulating the data and providing different perspectives. My research team members had prior experience in qualitative coding by participating in the coding process on at least one other research study.

According to Saldana (2009), a code is a word or phrase that symbolizes a notable or striking characteristic that is present in the data. Codes are then collapsed into broader themes that are representative of the data. Saldana (2009) notes that "a theme is the *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (p. 13). Identifying codes and subsequent themes can often take several iterations of reading the transcripts. Thus, to begin this process, each member of the data analysis team independently read and coded the first transcript to determine if the interview questions were sufficient for the remaining interviews. After our first coding meeting, we decided there was no need for additional questions as the interview protocol seemed to adequately capture the advising experience of the participants.

After I interviewed the remaining nine participants, the coding team again individually coded the first couple of transcripts using the original codes created and agreed upon from the first participant interview. We all met to discuss the transcripts and negotiated new codes that emerged. We collectively agreed upon final codes and themes for the code book and recoded all of the transcripts again using the final code book. Lastly, team members met to review each transcript against the final code book and came to a consensus of evidence for each code/theme. Throughout this process, I utilized the Atlas.ti (2016) computer software system to aid in the coding process. This software is an organizational tool that provides accessible features needed in notetaking, creating codes, and combining codes into broader themes. Additionally, I used a

peer debriefer, who is also skilled and experienced in qualitative methodology, to offer insight and challenge the findings of the research team (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Trustworthiness refers to the validity of the overall study including applying appropriate methodology, data collection procedures, and appropriate data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2011). It ensures that the study is of sound quality and credible conclusions are drawn from the data collected. First, I attempted to have as varied of a sample as possible. I recruited nationally for participants from multiple national listservs in an attempt to have participants from different universities who could bring various perspectives to this study.

Another method implemented to maintain trustworthiness was reflexive journaling, which detailed how the research process impacted me both personally and professionally (Hays & Singh, 2012; Valandra, 2012). I wrote reflexive journals after each interview throughout the data collection phase. This allowed me to monitor my own biases and assumptions that I may have brought to this study.

Further, because the interviews were semi-structured, this allowed me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions or questions to clarify the participants' statements for understanding. Member checking, an important measure for trustworthiness during interviews, was also employed in the data collection phase (Merriam, 2009). After the interviews were transcribed, they were sent back to each participant to ensure accuracy. The participants were also given the opportunity to amend any thoughts or ideas originally expressed in the interview.

To help during the data analysis phase, I utilized a peer coding team for consensus coding to triangulate the data. This helped maintain credibility by having multiple perspectives and

opinions interpret the meaning of the data.   I also used my dissertation chair as a peer debriefer.

She is skilled and experienced in qualitative methodology, but was not involved in the data

analysis process. This allowed her to provide objective feedback and challenge the findings of

the research team (Hays & Singh, 2012). Lastly, I maintained an audit trail of my data collection

protocol and analysis procedures. This included a timeline of my research activities, interview

protocols, research team meetings, my reflexive journals, and evolution of the codebook (Hays &

Singh, 2012).

Conclusion

Chapter Three identified the research question and appropriate methodology for

investigating the research question. The recruitment of participants, procedures, and research

design including the interview structure and questions, role of the researcher, methods of data

collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness were all included in this chapter. The methodology

is a qualitative, phenomenological design that utilizes semi-structured, in-depth interviews to

address the research question. The data was secured appropriately and protected to ensure

confidentiality. Results and interpretations of the data will be detailed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. In this chapter, the results of the 10 individual interviews are presented through various themes and subthemes. Four major themes of Academic Planning and Skills, Counselor Practice and Knowledge, Barriers to Seeking Support, and Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes were identified in the interviews. Additionally, seven subthemes emerged during data analysis. The three subthemes for Counselor Practice and Knowledge are an emphasis on fostering relationships, counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy. The four subthemes for Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes are career and life skill development, psychological support, coach-advisor relationship, and case management. Chapter Four provides a description of the participants and is followed by evidence of the themes and subthemes.

Description of participants

An invitation to participate along with a Survey Monkey demographic questionnaire was posted on the N4A listserv, the CESNET listserv, and ACA's Call for Participants forum. Additionally, I solicited the invitation to various people who had contacts with university athletics' departments. Thirty-seven people responded to the demographic questionnaire, but several did not complete the education section or did not qualify because they were not from counseling programs. Of the 10 remaining qualified participants, four were from NCAA Division I Football Bowl Series (FBS) schools, two were from NCAA Division I Football Championship Series (FCS) schools, two were from NCAA Division I schools with no football team, and two were from National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) schools.

Participants are identified by a pseudonym assigned by the researcher to maintain anonymity. There were seven females and three males. Ethnic breakdown of participants included two African-American participants and eight Caucasian participants.

Table 1 includes a description of participants' job title, number of teams currently advising, experience, counseling degree concentration, and previous collegiate athletic experience. Regarding educational background and experience, nine of the participants held a master's degree in counseling and one was a current counseling master's degree student completing his practicum. The master's degree student also held a Licensed Chemical Dependency Certificate and had previously worked with chemically dependent clients. Six of the 10 participants indicated they were graduates of programs that were accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; CACREP, 2016), which is considered the gold standard of counseling certifications. The remaining four participants were unsure if their programs held CACREP accreditation. Each of the 10 participants has varying degrees of experience as an academic advisor to athletes with an average of 5.81 years of experience. In addition to their academic advising duties, three of the participants had more administrative and teaching duties compared to other participants who did not have any teaching or administrative duties. They all had additional administrative responsibilities outside of their advising responsibilities.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant Name	Job Title	Experience	Counseling Degree Concentration(s)	Sport Caseload	College Athletic Experience
Stewart	Learning Assistant	2 years	Addictions; Clinical Mental Health	8 teams	No
Katherine	Assistant Director, Student	10 years	Higher Education	4 teams	Yes

	Athlete Support Services				
Mark	Assistant Athletic Director for Academics	13 years	Mental Health	13 teams	No
Jana	Academic Advisor	4 years	School Counseling	4 teams	Yes
Shannon	Associate Professor, Counselor-Student Athlete Support Programs Coordinator	13 years	Marriage and Family Therapy	11 teams	Yes
Darcy	Athletic Academic Counselor	4 years	School Counseling	4 teams	Yes
Patrick	Student Success Coach	6 years	Student Affairs	8 teams	No
Laura	Student Athlete Development Specialist	2 years	College Student Personnel	3 teams	Yes
Ashley	Associate Director of Student-Athlete Academic Services	2 months	Higher Education	8 teams	Yes
Elizabeth	Senior Athletic Academic Advisor	4 years	Higher Education	3 teams	No

Analysis of Research Findings

The results of this study include the experiences of athletic academic advisors with

counseling degrees or in counselor education training programs through four major themes and

seven subthemes. Each member of the research team individually analyzed the first transcript and then met to determine if additional questions needed to be added to the interview protocol before conducting the rest of the interviews. After the initial coding, the research team determined there was no need for additional interview questions. After I interviewed the remaining participants, each research team member individually analyzed each of the nine remaining transcripts and met to discuss various codes and themes. The transcripts were analyzed and a consensus was made for each quote and code identified. Direct quotes and descriptions of the participants' collective experiences support the findings of the identified themes. As the research team met over several sessions, names and definitions of broader groups of codes were developed into larger themes. Codes continued to be collapsed and folded into broader themes that the research team felt captured the essence of each participant's experience.

In coordinating the limited availability of all members of the research team, the in-person coding with my research team was done using Microsoft Word in order to add line numbers and aid in the speed of coding and discussion of themes. After the final coding with the research team was complete, I inputted all of the interview transcripts and codes into ATLAS.ti (2016). This computer software program aids in analysis of qualitative data and helps organize the codes into a more manageable format. Inputting and entering codes into ATLAS.ti (2016) after the in-person coding allowed me more time to organize the finalized codes and consider them from a broader vantage. Additionally, my dissertation chair served as a peer debriefer to the research process (Hays & Singh, 2012). Being removed from the data analysis process, my chair was able to look at the raw data more objectively, challenge any conclusions drawn by the research team, and provide insight into best organizing the themes. Table 2 provides a synopsis of each theme and applicable subthemes before they are examined more in depth.

Table 2. Major Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Academic Planning and Skills	
2. Counselor Practice and Knowledge	a. Emphasis on fostering relationships b. Counseling skills and theory c. Athletic empathy
3. Barriers to Seeking Support Services	
4. Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes	a. Career and life skill development b. Psychological support c. Coach-advisor relationship d. Case management

It is important to note that some of the themes or subthemes could potentially be included in other themes. For example, Academic Planning and Skills could very easily be included in the theme of Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes. However, because this was a main and fairly obvious job responsibility of the advisors, my team and I felt it was necessary to keep these two major themes separate. The subtheme of providing psychological support, which is included in Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes, could potentially be included in Counselor Practice and Knowledge. Though counseling skills are used in providing appropriate psychological support, we thought that it was best included in its current theme. By providing psychological support, the participants were modeling psychological health and focusing on student-athlete wellness. Additionally, the subtheme of case management could perhaps also be included in the Counselor Practice and Knowledge theme. While we felt this was a large and often hidden component of the participants' job responsibilities, we felt it was best under Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes because they were again modeling how to be resourceful for their athletes and promoting wellness by breaking the barriers of seeking help and support.

Academic Planning and Skills

The first theme presented in the findings was the academic planning and skill building responsibilities of each participant. These are the major job responsibilities that each academic advisor must address with the athletes on their caseload. Participants were asked to describe their job responsibilities and almost immediately they began to list off various duties that included "grade checks", "grade reports", "scheduling classes", and "progressing towards graduation". Mark stated, "A major part of my job is advising. Helping them to pick classes, helping them to do degree plans and roadmaps." Spencer stated, "Another big part of my job is being aware of grades and constantly going into Blackboard and looking at grades." Jana, like many other participants, holds scheduled weekly meetings with students on her caseload. She described a typical meeting as a brief "check in, kind of catch up on grades." However, she also stated that she recently had a student-athlete, who is majoring in biology with the intent of attending medical school, begin questioning her future. Jana said, "obviously that conversation was a little bit longer because she just had a complete meltdown." Shannon similarly described her curricular responsibilities, but also spoke about compliance with NCAA rules:

> The main thing is creating their educational plan so they're going to be able to meet their educational and athletic goals in a timely manner. Due to the NCAA eligibility clock, they need to be out of here in two years to be able to still have three years left at the four-year college...so planning their classes and their major coupled with what they want to do with life after sports to really make sure that when they do transfer, they can stick to their true major due to APR and requirements like that.

Participants continued to expand upon their job responsibilities as they discussed other assistance they provided to their athletes. Many of them use various strategies to help with

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organization and time management for their students. Both Ashley and Laura expressed that

many of their student-athletes are ill-prepared for college life. Ashley, who works with some of

the highest academically at-risk student-athletes at her school shared, "I don't feel like their high

school educational plan was rigorous enough and they do not even have the basic skills to really

succeed past our most basic courses." Laura said, "They don't understand time management—

they're not college ready. They don't understand study skills." Thus, another of their duties is to

teach student-athletes these skills. Patrick described how he is very visual with his student-

athletes:

> I'll have them pull up their phones if they have a phone and they can show me how they
>
> would put something on a daily calendar. Or I bring in a dry erase board and map it out
>
> like that. But I try to be very, very visual with them. I'll communicate verbally and do all
>
> that as well, but I try to be very visual with them so they can have something to see in
>
> front of them.

Katherine sees the need to use similar strategies as Patrick by "writ[ing] everything down for my

students" and making "them a checklist of everything they have to remember when they leave

my office." She utilizes this tool "as a constant reminder. And I'm trying to get them to

remember to write things down as well." She also found the need to be very hands-on with some

of her athletes by organizing their school supplies, binders, and schedules.   Darcy uses a

different organizational tool by making weekly plans with some of her student-athletes:

> I've had a student where I've met with him twice a week, on Monday and Friday to make
>
> sure that Monday we laid out a plan for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
>
> and then Friday we would make a plan for the weekend just to make sure that he was
>
> doing work constantly and not hanging out and not doing anything.

Similarly, Laura stated, "I actually break down every syllabus or syllabi for my students that I meet with and I know when their tests are before they do."

This theme of Academic Planning and Skills encompasses one of the primary obligations of the participants. They are responsible for maintaining academic eligibility of their student-athletes. However, the participants make it clear in the next section that their duties encompass much more than eligibility and describe how their counseling training is incorporated in their other job responsibilities.

Counselor Practice and Knowledge

This theme describes the various pieces of counselor identity that academic advisors still hold. Many of them still utilize their counseling skills and theory while also focusing on building a relationship with their athletes. Though these skills were used often, some of these participants did not recognize their use of counseling skills and theory without being prompted directly by an interview question. Three subthemes of emphasis on fostering relationships, counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy comprise the Counselor Practice and Knowledge section.

Emphasis on fostering relationships. One of the most consistent thoughts expressed in all of the interviews was the importance of building relationships with the athletes. Words like "mentor" and "rapport" were used throughout the interviews. Several advisors talked about having an "open door policy" for their athletes to come in and discuss things at unscheduled times. Elizabeth described her role as "big sister…or mom Elizabeth". Jana stated, "I would say that the biggest part of the job is building relationships and getting to know students as individuals because that's the foundation for everything else that you're going to do." She also added that she believes there is "a misconception that we're eligibility specialists." She was

referencing that those outside of athletic academic advising assume that their job is solely focused on monitoring the student-athletes for academic eligibility purposes. While she acknowledged that eligibility is a large component of her job, she continued by saying "it's not the main responsibility" and elaborated more on developing the advisor-athlete relationship. Darcy shared a similar sentiment, "I feel like…because we meet with the students consistently we have a pretty good rapport with them and they're able to drop their guard down and reveal things to us." Patrick stated the importance of being a role model to his advisees:

> You have some of these kids who they don't have parents who are 20 minutes away. They have parents who are hours away. They have parents who are in other states. They have parents who are in other countries. So really trying to kind of be that adult figure in their lives that they can look at and know that I'll be there for them.

Laura echoed Patrick's thoughts when she talked about being an example for her athletes to follow. She said, "All in all, just mentoring the kids and making sure that I'm a good example for them." Additionally, several participants discussed attending their athletes' sporting events and competitions to help further that genuine interest in facilitating their relationship with their student-athletes. Moreover, they also spoke about staying in contact with some of their athletes after they left the school, which indicated the authenticity of each relationship.

To also help nurture the relationship with their athletes, participants also spoke about confidentiality. The participants' jobs often entail academic progress monitoring and reporting to the necessary parties if a student becomes ineligible to participate in sport or commits an NCAA violation. While they must report any potential violations, many participants described using discretion, often using the word *confidential*, when collaborating with coaches or other parties when it is not mandatory for them to report. Of her relationship with her athletes,

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Katherine said, "I would say confidential and they are trusting in that what they tell me is between us." Shannon added, "If it's just like a confidential matter, I still have confidentiality in terms of my counseling, so if it's not something that I'm mandated to report, I keep it confidential". Darcy elaborated and shared:

> There are certain things they reveal to you that no one else needs to know, so obviously I keep that confidential. But if it's something that's going to impact eligibility or the team, then I do report it. But I do it very carefully to make sure that the student athlete is not going to get hurt in the process of it.

Ashley stated, "I think I use my discretion" while Stewart professed, "I would tell students there's no level of confidentiality here [but] I could be judicious about what I share and how much I share." Elizabeth shared similar sentiments of confidentiality, but also seemed to think the coaches were fairly aware of what was going on anyway. She said, "I don't report everything all the time to my boss or to coaches. I think they are adults. They're 18, 19-years-old. I'm going to say most of the time what the kids disclose to me, the coaches already know."

Counseling skills and theory. The participants described employing many different strategies and skills they learned in their counseling programs. Basic counseling skills or "first semester counseling skills" like listening are what Mark uses daily with his students. Darcy uses them as well when she stated, "I feel like everyday counseling [skills are] definitely is used in some way or form." Jana incorporated "some of the communication skills like summarizing things and making sure that I'm clarifying and making sure that I'm understanding -- that's what I meant when I say listening." Similarly, Shannon shared, "I empathize and I reflect and I do all the basic skills that they teach you in graduate school." Stewart noted that he employs "Rogerian kind of reflection that would kind of get [my athletes] to open up."

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Many participants spoke of awareness of body language and communication when discerning if there is an issue with their athletes. Darcy said that she "can tell by physical appearance or even body language. And just being careful and considerate of their feelings and trying to find out if there's anything that you can do." Shannon shared, "I think it's learning how to read people, learning how to make sure you know what they're feeling in a time of need is very important as well. Communication's key." Similarly, Patrick noted that he "would kind of gauge the tone of the conversation and gauge the body language of the student."

Other advisors are a little more intentional and use some more advanced skills or techniques when working with their student-athletes. When needing to seek out a resource to talk with someone unfamiliar, Elizabeth role plays various scenarios with her athletes to "make [them] feel a little more comfortable with the situation." Darcy incorporates intentional silence into her sessions and noted, "I have noticed that I don't even have to be silent for long because the student athletes will just start spewing because they either feel uncomfortable or they know that it would be beneficial for them to talk." Patrick spoke often about cultural considerations with some of his athletes:

I did a lot more listening, especially when it was with the international students. And that was really how I would counsel them because I had to be careful with those kids because it's just different. I mean you have to take cultural factors into consideration.

Katherine also noted the importance of various cultural considerations:

You have to understand that everybody has different experiences than what your thoughts are. Their background of what college is, is different than an international student or even a student whose parents were in college to ones that didn't. So, you have to really understand the differences and each student as individual.

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A subtler counseling skill used by the participants is fostering autonomy and independence in the relationship. Ashley said, "I don't tell them what they should do. I try to help them be realistic and take ownership and responsibility of what they think will work best for them." Empowering her athletes to find their own solutions is a tool Laura uses often in her office. She gave an example of an international athlete on the golf team who has struggled with homesickness and shared, "I'll just sit there, I'll just listen and then he'll talk his way out of what he needs to talk his way out of it, so it's kind of cool to watch that." Darcy added, "I always try to not tell them what to do but have them like brainstorm and have them come up with the idea." Similarly, Elizabeth stated the importance of "instilling that confidence in them that they can handle things on their own."

Regarding counseling theory, there was a mix of results between those who intentionally incorporated theory into their work as advisors and those who had forgotten about various counseling theories, but reported they were using some form of theory in their work. Elizabeth stated she operates from both a solution-focused and cognitive approach. Stewart, still a current counseling student, was most aware of his theoretical orientation when he said, "I would probably say it would be a core of REBT, DBT, and existentialism."

Other advisors were less certain of their theoretical orientation or less intentional. Katherine stated, "I can't think of theories -- and I clearly am using them but I don't honestly know what they are. Like I couldn't name them." Several others could not remember the names of any theories either. Jana was hesitant to use the word "solution-focused", but then elaborated on some key components of the theory such as short-term goal setting. Shannon stated, "I haven't thought about that question in years", but was able to say she incorporated behavior modifications based on behavior therapy in her work. Similarly, Ashley noted, "I cannot think of

specific theories", but went on to describe some components of behavioral therapy. Laura was a little hesitant to express her theoretical orientation, but was still able to identify the theory when she said:

> I mean, person-centered. Wasn't that one of them? I think that's one. I mean, I'm all about the kids and whatever they need.   I let them talk and I let them come to me about their situation. And, overall, I think it's important because it's about them. It's not about me.

Athletic empathy. Though four out of the 10 participants did not play a varsity sport in college, every participant expressed a deeper understanding of what student-athletes experience at the collegiate level. The participants expressed that they really empathized with their student-athletes. They seemed to really understand that their athletes were a special population that has a unique college experience compared to the traditional, non-athlete student. For example, Patrick, who did not play a sport in college, shared:

> If you told a non-student athlete that they could only go to class at a certain time, that they couldn't choose a major based on obligations that they had to adhere to be able, to keep their scholarship, that they wouldn't be able to ingratiate themselves on campus because they have to go to practice, they have to go to film, that they had to give up their Saturdays, that they couldn't go home, that they couldn't go to the movies, they wouldn't do it. They wouldn't give up that freedom. But student athletes do. They have a code of conduct they have to follow that's even more stringent than a code of conduct for just a regular student who is not participating in a sport.

Patrick continued by saying that there are misconceptions about student-athletes and "definitely a lack of sensitivity to what they go through and to what they experience on a daily basis." He

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further shared that this misconception is also held by some faculty members who discriminate against the athletes. He noted this experience of negative faculty interactions with athletes to be "disheartening."

Some advisors spoke about how athletes are overworked and time management is a big stressor. This stressor lends itself to the academic skill building that advisors often do with helping organize schedules for athletes. Katherine stated:

> I think time management is a big issue. Time that they don't have and then how do they
> manage that time. They're exhausted because they're staying up late to get assignments
> done and then getting up early to get to practice. So, it's a constant battle with them on
> figuring out how are you using your time the best.

Shannon noted how time is also an issue with her student-athletes:

> Due to the rigors of not only practice but preparing for your sport, keeping your body
> healthy, having to be in the training room, having to still go to classes, having to go to
> mandatory study hall and beyond that still trying to manage your classes. And for our
> community college athletes, on top of all that, most of them also work. So, time is
> definitely a struggle for community college athletes.

Some advisors also expressed frustration with the NCAA because some of the rules actually limit and hinder some of their student-athletes academically. Elizabeth shared that some of her athletes are very high achieving and come to college with many credits. By entering with so many college credits, the NCAA eligibility rules impact their course selection and subsequent major. She shared:

> Some of the eligibility rules for my high-achieving students make it really hard for them.
> They have to add another major or have to do crazy things to meet certain eligibility

semester rules. I think that's the hardest for me and my population. I had a physics major

that had to add a math major because he was so far ahead because he's so stinking smart

that that just makes his life so much more difficult.

Katherine expressed a similar experience and frustration with NCAA rules, but for some of her

athletes who are trying to change majors:

Because of the structure of our institution…I can't make a way for you to be an

engineering major. There's no electives. It's 130 credits and you haven't taken any

credits towards that major yet. I understand they want them to progress through the

major, but students realize sometimes late after a year of taking classes, I actually want to

do engineering and I can do engineering and now I'm not going to be able to do that and

my sport.

Counselor Practice and Knowledge describes how the participants incorporate their

counseling skills and theoretical knowledge into their work with student-athletes. Though not

always explicitly stated, it is evident that the participants still have a semblance of their

counselor identity intact. In addition to skills and theory, the participants emphasized the

importance of building a genuine relationship and expressed a true understanding of the

challenges of their student-athletes. Many universities, in an attempt to reconcile some of the

stressors their student-athletes face, provide access to various supports services (Osborne, 2014).

However, a critical component of the participants' responsibilities is recognition of barriers to

seeking these supports and then finding creative ways to work through these barriers.

Barriers to Seeking Support Services

Student-athletes face many obstacles and challenges, but are provided with many

different resources such as tutoring, counseling, nutritionist, career services, and more to assist

them (Osborne, 2014). However, the participants noted some common barriers that prevent student-athletes from taking advantage of these support services. Time is one of the biggest barriers. Katherine said that due to the combination of practice times and classes, resources are not always open when student-athletes have free time. Regarding counseling services, she stated:

> They're not open all the time. I would ideally see a staff of everybody being open to work with students at 10 p.m., at 11 p.m. at night because that's when our students are free. To me, it's important that there's times that aren't just 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

She further noted, "They are smart on their time too because they're not going to go to some places they don't feel like is helpful." Similarly, Ashley expressed, "They're too busy. They probably don't see the need right now until something happens." Mark stated that athletes will say they don't have the time and noted that, mathematically, there is enough time in a student-athlete's day or week. However, he expounded on this:

> But it really comes from like a mental wellness point of view. It's like okay, I do have 27 extra hours, but do I have to keep filling it with other people's stuff? So, from that standpoint I wish there was time I could help these guys have a break.

Stigma associated with seeking help is also a common barrier. For example, regarding seeking counseling services, Mark stated, "I think that when you talk about the mindset of the student athlete asking for help and needing to be vulnerable is one of their hardest things to do." Jana shared, "I think there maybe is a little bit of a stigma if I'm meeting with somebody because I'm trying to gain or lose weight or whatever, I don't want people to know my business and that I'm meeting with a nutritionist." Patrick also sees it as a stigma and tries to play to the athlete identity to encourage seeking help. He stated:

Student-athletes don't like to ask for help, which is hilarious because I'll have them in

here with me and I'll say, you play football. You play the ultimate team sport. But you're

afraid to ask for help on an English paper? You know, but you're not afraid to ask for

help in practice, you know what I mean?

Ashley stated, "I would say for the most part they are shy and uncomfortable asking for help.

Even just asking for help like in basic things." She noted a resistance and hesitation when

referring her athletes to specific resources when she shared, "I feel like it's a stigma that they

have, especially going to tutoring or counseling." Darcy shared, "The other ones who just don't

want to admit to it, I would go with the stigma of I don't need counseling. Or they're afraid of

someone seeing them going there."

This theme of Barriers to Seeking Support Services described two main challenges that

prevent student-athletes from taking advantage of available resources: time and stigma. The

participants expressed recognition of these impediments to seeking support, which indicated

even further that they are keenly aware of the challenges of the student-athlete experience. This

awareness, combined with their previous counseling training and identity, allowed the

participants to express how they integrated their skills and knowledge to facilitate the holistic

wellness of their student-athletes.

Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes

This last theme of Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes discusses how the

participants work on total wellness and helping student-athletes find fulfillment outside of their

athletic identity. Each advisor was asked about how they defined wellness, and they all

described wellness as comprised of multiple components. For example, Patrick defined wellness

"not only as a holistic congruence between the physical, the emotional, the spiritual, the

transpersonal, all those elements." He continued by saying "being able to be positive and happy even when your circumstances or whatever's going on around you ecologically may not be ideal." Laura stated that wellness is "overall being holistically satisfied with who you are as a person." In addition to being multifaceted, Shannon shared that wellness is a "lifelong process", a "balancing act", and "the ultimate way of living that can create happiness in one's life."

When asked directly what kinds of wellness interventions they incorporate with their athletes, only Shannon has utilized a formal wellness intervention in her sessions. She stated, "…there's a wellness wheel and you think about every aspect of your life in the shape of a pizza or wheel. I have them do this wellness wheel so they can visually see where they're struggling." Other participant responses for this question emphasized the importance of self-care and building that into the athlete's daily schedule. Darcy stated, "I always stress to my student athletes, leave time for yourself. Don't fill up your schedule with just academics and athletics." Elizabeth noticed that sometimes her athletes "need permission" to take time for themselves and decompress.

The participants seemed to understand that their student-athletes are in need of holistic development and finding life satisfaction in areas outside of athletics. Though they did not intentionally use wellness activities in their sessions, the descriptions of their interactions with their athletes along with their job responsibilities were about meeting the needs of the total person and not just the student or athlete identities. Thus, this section of addressing wellness is made up of four subthemes of career and life development, psychological support, coach-advisor relationship, and case management.

Career and life skill development. Apart from working with athletes solely on academics, many of the participants were responsible for integrating career and life skill

development. Mark is intentional about how he works with his athletes on seeing themselves "outside of the athletic bubble". He said that as the athletes get older, their conversations and programmatic interventions are geared towards life after sport. Stewart similarly stated, "There's not enough discussion around…helping them have a more well-rounded, holistic appreciation for who they are as people. That okay I'm a really good baseball player, but there's more to me than that."

Participants described their role focused on career development is particularly important for their junior and senior student-athletes as they begin to transition to life after sport. While many participants have a career services center on campus and try to utilize their resources, often times they are addressing career development issues in their offices or from a programmatic standpoint. For the upperclassmen at her university, Katherine said:

I'm doing a lot of resumes because it's April almost and we're doing resumes, cover letter workshops, talking to them about the application process about what they should be doing and how to find those careers and sending them out.

Katherine also added that she and the other athletic advisors in her department have, at times, been responsible for hosting career fairs just for the athletes which included "pulling donors and companies and creating this whole big career fair for our students."

In Jana's experience, she is very intentional about the career conversations she has with her athletes. She expresses some frustration or disillusionment with some other advisors in solely focusing on the academic piece of advising. She shared how she tries to incorporate career development discussions in her sessions:

Sometimes those [career] conversations get left out about why they're pursuing this degree and what they plan to do with it. Because they go, oh, meet with the life skills

person for career stuff. I mean, a lot of us are well-connected so we might know someone in your field of interest that we can just connect you to and say hey, can they just talk to you for five minutes and see kind of where your head's at or what your journey was.

Darcy explained that she works with her athletes on "mock interviews, phone interviews and in-person interviews to get them that experience." She also spoke about one of her athletes who was majoring in nursing only because that was the wish of his parents. After giving him the Strong Interest Inventory, a career counseling assessment, and finding some interests he never considered, she stated:

> We ended up changing his major and boom, GPA totally different, from one extreme to the next. So again, looking at the student athlete and trying to figure out who they are as a person and how they can contribute to life outside of athletics.

Regarding life skills development, Jana sees it as an inherent responsibility of her job to educate her athletes on various life skills. She states that she's seen other advisors at her previous schools "almost rely solely on that one life skills person or that life skills department instead of taking advantage of that opportunity to do that on their own to some degree." Laura stated that not only does her university address life skill development with their freshmen immediately when they arrive on campus, she also said she works with them individually in her offices as well. She shared:

> I swear to you, I read an email that said yo professor, why'd I fail my test?' And I was like oh man. And it was sent. I didn't read it before because I figured he could perform an email. So that's one thing I really try to work with my kids, is how to be proper towards your professor and how to be proper towards your coaches and to treat people.

Patrick expressed similar thoughts in teaching his athletes how to act professionally. He stated, "teaching them how to approach professors. How to not embarrass yourself with the professor. How to handle it professionally" are life skills that he works on with his athletes. Additionally, Shannon spoke about some programs that her athletes are required to attend. She shared, "We bring all our student athletes together and we have a topic, whether it's sexual assault or drug and alcohol abuse, just to raise awareness for issues that student athletes deal with." Laura also discussed transitioning to college, roommate issues, and teammate issues as a stressor she confronts in her office. She stated, "I've had an instance where both of the [teammates] came in here and they talked to me about it at the same time and they hashed it out and we took care of it." Mark discussed some frustration with athletes who expected everything to be done for them and did very little on their own. He tried to instill these life skills by stating, "we try to build in natural consequences and things like that so that the students learn to be a student, learn to be a good worker so to speak."

Psychological support. Participants found that they were often confronting and addressing issues in their offices that were not related to academics. Several participants described some developmental or transitional issues of being homesick or having relationship issues with either teammates or coaches. Katherine stated that "you kind of have to talk them through" some of these experiences.

However, some participants described more severe cases in which they needed to provide psychological or emotional support. Elizabeth has seen a wide range of issues including drinking and drug use, "depression in some students. Boyfriend abuse. Physical and verbal, emotional." Laura stated, "I did have a student athlete who lost a sibling in the fall. It was kind of a very intense situation. She would come in to see me quite a bit about it." Darcy described

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"one of the most severe cases" she's encountered in her four years as an advisor was when one of

her athletes revealed that she used cutting herself as a coping mechanism. About another serious

issue, she shared:

> A student athlete came out and said he was having issues with not being able to not do
>
> drugs. So, we sent him to counseling and I reported to my supervisor because obviously
>
> we have to. And just to make sure everyone was aware and to get him the support that he
>
> needed.

Stewart describes many issues he has seen including "learning disabilities that were

undiagnosed. Definitely ADHD, OCD, general anxiety disorders with one particularly severe

case that once it was diagnosed, it allowed our situation to improve for that particular athlete."

Additionally, he detailed gender identity issues that he encountered in his office:

> Athletes who elected to come out of the closet because it's a very conservative area down
>
> here. Sometimes the freshmen come in and they're still very sensitive about that whereas
>
> juniors or seniors are just like Ahhh, I'm just going to come out.

Shannon stated, "There's a lot of different things that I deal with in terms of personal and crisis

intervention." Because her community college does not offer housing, Shannon sees the

psychological strain that homelessness creates for her some of her student-athletes. On mental

health issues, she shared:

> [I] have a couple handfuls of students a semester that are dealing with stress
>
> management, are dealing with depression and are dealing with gender identity and
>
> coming out issues and things like that.   I think because of the top three issues that I feel
>
> student athletes face and struggle with, it creates mental health issues. I've been here 11
>
> years and in my time here I've had to deal with I would say probably 20 [mandatory

psychiatric detentions] and probably half of them were actually taken for a 72-hour hold

because it was that critical. And the problem is community colleges lack resources. So,

when you lack resources but you're having a higher level of mental health problems,

you're going to see more of this. So, I think over the last couple years that's where a lot

more of this has come up for athletes.

Coach-advisor relationship. The participants all had varied experiences with the

coaches of their athletes. Many of the coaches influenced their jobs by requesting that the

advisors meet with their athletes a certain number of times per week or requested that they

mandate the athletes to a specific number of study hall hours per week. In other instances, the

coaches and participants collaborated about addressing personal issues for the athletes. At

Stewart's school, he found this to be a "wonderful…collaborative spirit" and said that the

coaches "were willing to look at all of the moving parts and work with people to try to figure out

what's the best path forward." The subtheme of coach-advisor relationship best fits with the

Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes theme because this collaborative relationship

works to benefit the whole person in their athlete, student, and personal roles.

Regarding the coaches' influence on their jobs, some advisors meet with the coaches

regularly to discuss academics. Laura stated:

> we meet early on in the semester and, based on GPAs and based on performances from
>
> previous semesters, we determine study hall hours and require any kid that has study hall
>
> hours to come and meet with me once a week if not twice a week depending upon the
>
> situation of the kid.

Mark stated that his relationship with the coaches is mostly academic and that "they try to come at us with hey, can you call this professor and see if this kid's been going to class." Katherine spoke of this collaboration as:

> I almost in a sense report to them too. But then they also in a sense report to us and there's that collaboration. They want to make sure that we're doing what we're supposed to but we want them to do what they're supposed to and we're all here to help with the student.

Ashley described her relationship with the coaching staff as an "open door policy." Ashley, who generally works with more academically at-risk student-athletes, sends "an academic report every week to my coaches that outlines my meetings with each one of their student athletes so they are completely up to date with how the student is doing."

However, there is collaboration with coaches that revolves around personal issues as opposed to just academics. Ashley stated that an athlete reported some concerns to the coach about a teammate, "so the coach came to me and said hey, I have a reason to believe that things aren't going so well. Can you reach out just to make sure that things are okay?" Darcy used an example where she sought out the coaches to see what was going on with her athlete. She stated she had a football player she noticed was shutting down and withdrawing and said:

> I went to the coaches and I said do you know what's going on, is he the same way in practice and one of the coaches actually revealed to me, he was like well, his parents are going through a divorce. And I was like, okay that makes sense because he's very close with his family.

Elizabeth similarly said, "something will happen with a kid that's like, this isn't right or something's wrong, something feels off, I'm going to call coach and see if they have any more

insight on it." She said that sometimes coaches can help with certain issues like finding housing

for one of her students she discovered was homeless. However, she also cautioned discretion

with collaborating with the coaches as well:

> I've had to be very careful with certain coaches about information that I do disclose to
>
> them. Some coaches will take that information and take it and run and use it against the
>
> kid. So, I think there's a way of knowing is this going to help the situation? Is this going
>
> to benefit the kid? Is this going to help? Do they need to know this?

Case management. An additional duty that was unanimously found in each participant's

experience was case management. In this study, case management describes how each

participant is responsible for knowing various campus and community resources and providing

that information to the athletes, if needed. Some of the participants viewed themselves as a

coordinator of such services. Assessment, consultation, and referral were some of the methods

of case management the participants employed.

Stewart described himself as "the first line of defense" when it came to student-athlete

issues. He compared his experience to being the first buoy out in the Pacific Ocean when an

earthquake is coming when he stated, "I was the first buoy way out there. So, I had the

responsibility to kind of be like 'heads up' to the rest of the team. People who were purely

academic advisors or purely academic tutors or purely NCAA." Jana described herself as "the

middle man…who operates between different entities and organizations on campus, different

departments on campus and the students."

Referral and consultation are a large responsibility of the participants. Knowing the

various campus resources available to both athletes and non-athletes and to whom to refer is

imperative. Ashley said, "I mean I've seen everything from mental breakdowns to walking kids

over to the counseling center because their boyfriend broke up with them." Mark stated, "I try to assess the student and then send them to where they need help, where they can get help on campus, whether that's the student health center or the counseling and testing center or whatever that is." Patrick also walked students directly to various services and stated the following about some of the referrals he has made:

> If the student has question about a FAFSA, [I] connect them with the right folks in the financial aid department. If they have questions about their major that maybe they didn't put it in their application correctly, their initial admissions application, getting them in contact with people in our registrar's office. If they have questions about test scores, I answer those questions before referring them to our testing center. So, do little things like that that go along with the primary duties of being academic advisor.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the participant interviews. The analysis of the transcripts yielded four major themes including Academic Planning and Skills, Counselor Practice and Knowledge, Barriers to Seeking Support, and Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes. Further, the various subthemes accompanying Counselor Practice and Knowledge and the Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes were also discussed. Direct quotes from each of the participants were used to support the themes. A discussion of the themes along with implications and recommendations for counseling programs, athletic departments, and advising professionals is provided in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The current study investigated the experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. This chapter provides summary of the results and discussion of the various themes. The discussion section includes implications for the counselor education field, the advising field, and athletic departments. It also addresses limitations of the study as well as explores recommendations for future research.

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. There is currently no literature that documents if and how academic advisors address wellness or meet the wellness needs of their student-athletes. Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological inquiry is to explore their experience and discover what happens in their advising sessions with their athletes.

To understand this phenomenon, data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 participants who serve as academic advisors to college student-athletes. After data analysis, the results showed that the participants have multifaceted responsibilities in working with college student-athletes. Additionally, the results revealed that the participants are addressing wellness and operating from a holistic perspective to meet the needs of their student-athletes.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews: Academic Planning and Skills, Counselor Practice and Knowledge, Barriers to Seeking Support, and Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes. Additionally, seven subthemes were also found in the data. The three subthemes for Counselor Practice and Knowledge are emphasis on fostering relationships,

counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy. The four subthemes for Cultivating Holistic

Wellness in Student-Athletes are career and life skill development, psychological support, coach-

advisor relationship, and case management.

Discussion of Themes

Although there is considerable evidence in the literature supporting the need for student-

athlete interventions, there is a dearth of literature addressing student-athlete wellness. This

research study sought to understand the experience of academic advisors with counseling degrees

in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. This section will include a discussion of

each theme and subtheme presented in the data analysis. These themes will also be discussed in

comparison to existing literature.

Academic Planning and Skills

This theme emerged as the primary responsibility of academic advisors of student-

athletes. Findings of this study support previous research that states that part of the advisor's

role is to employ strategies to maintain academic eligibility (Harding, 2008). In addition to

creating educational plans and helping with scheduling, the participants utilized different

strategies to help student-athletes remain academically eligible and make progress towards

degree completion. Many of them created schedules for their athletes to help keep them focused

throughout the semester while other advisors drew out weekly schedules. These organizational

tools centered around time management. Other advisors utilized checklists for their athletes or

helped them organize their supplies for class. Thus, the participants often taught these skills and

strategies as a way to assist student-athletes with maintaining eligibility.

Additionally, many advisors held scheduled meetings with their student-athletes at least

once per semester, but sometimes as often as weekly meetings if the student was a freshman or

deemed academically at-risk. The majority of the participants employed an intrusive advising structure in which they mandated that their athletes must meet with them a specific number of times per semester. The participants reported that these mandates came from the university or at the request of coaches. Intrusive advising is when advisors take a much more active role to engage their advisees in the advising process with some institutions placing registration restrictions if students do not meet with their advisors (Donaldson et al., 2016; Glennen, 1976; Schwebel et al., 2012). Email, phone calls, and appointment reminders are all methods of intrusive advising (Abelman & Molina, 2001, 2002; Steele & Gordon, 2001). Participants reported that they utilize these methods, but added that texting their student-athletes on their cell phones is the most common form of communication outside of the individual face-to-face meeting.

While the majority of participants implemented an intrusive advising structure, not everyone did specifically. For example, one advisor reported that she was not required to meet with her athletes a specific number of times, but rather she informally employed intrusive advising by meeting with all of her student-athletes at least a couple of times per semester. She deemed this as a best practice and in the best interest of her student-athletes. Furthermore, almost all of the advisors stated they had an "open door policy" which allowed for student-athletes to come by unannounced if they needed to talk. In addition to individual meetings with their student-athletes, some advisors maintained contact with their athletes' professors or monitored their academic progress on Blackboard. These meetings and frequent communication allowed advisors to stay abreast of any academic issues. This supports extant literature of recommending that advisors of athletes employ intrusive advising methods (Abelman & Molina, 2001, 2002; Gayston-Gayles, 2003; Glennen, 1976; Steele & Gordon, 2001).

The participants described academic skills and planning as a main component of their job in working with student-athletes. However, this details a portion of their daily responsibilities. The additional responsibilities are discussed in later themes. The next section details how the participants utilized their counseling degrees to meet the needs of their student-athletes.

Counselor Practice and Knowledge

Three subthemes emerged from this larger theme of Counselor Practice and Knowledge: emphasis on fostering relationships, counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy. While the participants were asked directly about their use of counseling skills and theory, it was evident throughout the interviews that they underscored the importance of developing a relationship with their athletes. Having a deep understanding of the student-athlete experience was also reiterated throughout their interviews.

Emphasis on fostering relationships. The participants collectively expressed the importance of building rapport and providing a safe and supportive environment with their student-athletes. Building this connection with each of their athletes allowed for their athletes to open up about many of their issues and struggles. This facilitated the helping relationship and assisted with getting resources and necessary help to alleviate any challenges they faced. Additionally, many of them shared the significance of being a mentor or role model as well.

Part of this subtheme encompassed confidentiality as a method to building rapport. While the participants had obligations to the athletic department and the university itself, many held information confidential with their student-athletes. Thompson's (2013) study discussed some of the ambiguity of confidentiality in the advisor-athlete relationship. However, his study discussed athletes asking their advisors to not share information with coaches. In contrast, none of the participants in this study shared that their athletes asked them to not share information.

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Rather, the participants spoke about keeping information confidential unless it was information that needed to be shared such as potential academic ineligibility or other mandated reporting concerns. It is possible that the participants' counseling training is the reason that they so willingly agreed to keep information confidential. The counseling profession generally guarantees confidentiality with a few exceptions of court subpoena, threat of harm to self or others, or child abuse (ACA; 2014).

Counseling skills and theory. As graduates of counselor education programs or current counseling students, the participants were directly asked about how they incorporated counseling skills and theory. While not always able to explicitly state which theories they used, they were more able to express various counseling skills they executed in their practice. They spoke about incorporating basic counseling skills such as listening, paraphrasing, and interpreting both verbal and nonverbal communication. These skills are an incredibly important foundation of a trusting and collaborative relationship from which the athlete can optimally benefit (Hughey, 2011; Nadler & Simerly, 2006).

In addition to the basic counseling skills, many of the advisors used more advanced skills such as silence, role-playing, and being considerate of various cultural experiences. Regarding international students, Charles and Stewart (1991) found that many have difficulty transitioning to college life. Despite increased awareness of transitional difficulties and other issues related to international students (Lamont, 2005; Chow, 2015; Sturzl-Forrest, 2012), Zhang (2016) found that advisors can still be dismissive of and invalidate the experiences of these students. In this current study, several participants described being multiculturally competent and aware of not only their international student-athletes, but also their student-athletes who came from various family and home life backgrounds. They described this awareness as imperative to

understanding each individual athlete's experience and how this understanding allowed them to tailor their techniques to best meet the athlete's needs.

Another skill that is central to the counseling profession and also discussed throughout the interviews is fostering autonomy and independence. As opposed to always giving student-athletes the answer to their problems, the participants often allowed them space to take responsibility not only for their actions, but also to formulate and decide upon a solution. They intentionally created this space in order to facilitate empowerment and ownership with their student-athletes. As student-athletes are people whose lives are often controlled and micromanaged by others around them, the participants recognized this as a crucial skill that needed to be nurtured. Fostering self-reliance and independence is a central component of the counseling profession (ACA, 2014; Ivey, 2013), so it is not surprising that the participants emphasized this in their relationships with their athletes.

Athletic empathy. This subtheme describes how the participants seemed to have a deeper understanding of their student-athlete's lives and experiences. The participants each understood that student-athletes are a high-needs population deserving of extra support and attention because of the challenges they face due to their athlete status. Exhibiting athletic empathy supports existing literature that identifies student-athletes as an at-risk population in need of individualized attention and additional resources (Gayston-Gayles, 2003; Glennen, 1976; Harding, 2008; NCAA, 2014).

An interesting note about athletic empathy is that six of the 10 participants were collegiate athletes. The National Association of Academic Advisors of Athletes (N4A) recommends that advisors of athletes have a minimum of bachelor's degree with some experience in collegiate athletics (N4Ab, n.d.). It can be surmised that those advisors, as former

athletes, will have an idea of what their student-athletes are experiencing. Moreover, one study also found that student-athletes have a strong preference for working with mental health counselors who have knowledge of sport or experience in collegiate athletics (Lopez & Levy, 2013). While the populations were different, this current research study appears to contradict those results. Collegiate athletic participation did not seem to impact the ability to empathize more with student-athletes. Just over half of the participants had collegiate athletic experience, yet previous athletic experience seemed to have no bearing on the participants' ability to understand and identify with the daily struggles and challenges of their athletes. The findings from this study suggest that having a counseling degree may be more helpful than having previous collegiate athletic experience alone.

This theme of Counselor Practice and Knowledge revealed interesting information as to how the participants utilize their counseling education on a regular basis. It also demonstrated that having a counseling degree and subsequent knowledge and skills were advantageous in meeting the needs of student-athletes. Though more research must be done, the findings suggest that having a degree in counseling may be more essential than having previous collegiate athletic experience alone. Having specialized training in counseling skills can help advisors identify various barriers to seeking support. More importantly, these skills can be used to help find creative ways to confront these barriers, particularly the stigma of seeking support, as discussed in the next theme.

Barriers to Seeking Support Services

The participants were cognizant of existing barriers to student-athletes seeking support services. Specifically, participants noted that time and stigma hindered student-athletes from seeking support. This is consistent with previous research studies as well. Time constraints

were a major factor in student-athletes not following through with referrals (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2006). More specifically, student-athletes found it difficult to seek services because the activities and services were only available during day time hours, which is when athletes are either in class or practice (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013). In addition to operating hours of various resources, participants described the perception of a lack of time prohibited student-athletes from taking advantage of various support services. Some participants surmised that this is because student-athletes are so busy and exhausted that they have difficulty working anything else into their already hectic schedules.

In addition to time, stigma is another barrier that impeded student-athletes from seeking support. Stigma associated with student-athletes seeking counseling services is well-documented in the literature (Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Wahto et al., 2016; Watson, 2005, 2006). However, some of the participants noted that this stigma was not just associated with seeking mental health or counseling services, but rather any interventions including tutoring or academic support. Some participants reported using counseling skills of appropriate self-disclosure and role-playing to help mitigate some of these barriers to seeking help.

This theme of Barriers to Seeking Support Services stood out because it was consistent with literature that focuses on why student-athletes have difficulty utilizing various support services. Further, it is important for advisors to recognize that these barriers exist so that they can help their student-athletes find creative ways to get support. Lastly, this theme shows that the participants incorporated their counseling knowledge to help student-athletes overcome some of these barriers. Overcoming these barriers and providing student-athletes with access to proper support is crucial in facilitating wellness as discussed in the next theme.

Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes

Wellness is one of the cornerstones of the counseling profession and it was decided by the American Counseling Association Governing Council in 1989 that counselors should be advocates for wellness (Myers, 1991; Myers & Sweeney, 2007). NACADA's Statement of Core Values insists that "effective advising is a holistic approach" while they also recommended a developmental approach to advising (NACADA, 2005, para. 5). In NACADA'S *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, it specifically states that advisors must guide student-athletes "based on their academic, personal, and career goals" (Harding, 2008, p. 197). As the participants described their multifaceted roles in working with student-athletes, it became quite apparent that they were responsible for far more than merely academics.

Though only one participant in this study implemented intentional wellness techniques into her sessions, the very nature of their job responsibilities including their individual advising approach, conversations, referrals, and programmatic interventions focused on developing the whole person as opposed to solely the student and athlete identities. In addition to their academic responsibilities as noted in the Academic Planning and Skills theme, it is evident that participants also worked toward the career and personal goals of their student-athletes as recommended by NACADA (Harding, 2008). Thus, the findings of this study show that academic advisors with counseling degrees are in fact cultivating holistic wellness in their student-athletes. Additionally, this theme and subsequent subthemes are compared to the current holistic wellness model, Indivisible Self (IS-WEL; Myers & Sweeney, 2004). This theme is divided into four subthemes of career and life skill development, psychological support, coach-advisor relationship, and case management.

Career and life skill development. One of the more obvious connections to the academic side of the participants' job responsibilities is career development. Less than 2% of student-athletes become professional athletes (NCAA, 2015), so it is essential for advisors to work on developing a career identity with their athletes. Career development is especially important for athletes as some research suggests that a stronger athletic identity is associated with lower career maturity and indecision (Houle & Kluck, 2015; Jaques, 2000; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Murphy et al., 1996). The participants in this study spoke of working with their athletes on developing this identity and visualizing their life outside of athletics from the moment they arrive on campus as freshmen. However, they described this process of career development as especially imperative for juniors and seniors as they begin to transition out of sport. The participants described a multitude of interventions from administering and interpreting career assessments, practicing mock interviews in their individual sessions, and coordinating programmatic events like career fairs and workshops.

In addition to career development, the participants were also responsible for teaching life skill development in their student-athletes. In NACADA'S *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, advisors are encouraged to incorporate strategies outside of the academic realm to foster "lifelong learning skills" (Harding, 2008, p. 197). Some of these lifelong skills included educating their student-athletes on how to properly write emails, talk to professors, and transitioning to college. Other life skills, which they taught individually or organized programmatically, addressed other relevant college topics like alcohol abuse and sexual assault. The need for life skill development with student-athletes is supported in the literature as they are more likely to engage in at-risk behaviors including alcohol consumption and drug use (Martens et al., 2006; Parham, 1993; Yusko et al., 2008) as well as disordered

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eating patterns (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Greenleaf et al., 2009; Parham, 1993; Shriver et al., 2016).

Many of the responsibilities of addressing career and life skill development are congruent with holistic wellness and several of the third order factors of the IS-WEL (Myers & Sweeney, 2004), which is also supported in the literature. Prior to the IS-WEL Smith, Myers, and Hensley (2002) found the WEL (Myers et al., 1998) to be a useful tool in assessing career wellness by implementing it into a college life and career planning course. Lawson and Myers (2011) found the 5-WEL to be a useful assessment in identifying career sustaining-behaviors and burnout in counselors and counselor educators. In this study, third order factors of the IS-WEL that were addressed by the participants in their interviews were work, control, realistic beliefs, self-worth, friendship, and love.

Work and control are components of the Creative Self, one of the five second-order factors. Myers and Sweeney (2004) describe work as a crucial component of the human experience that can impact life satisfaction. Control is associated with the belief that one can change or influence one's own life events. Realistic beliefs are one component of the Coping Self, which is described as the absence of irrational thoughts, which often serve as a source of unnecessary stress and disappointment. Having realistic beliefs helps prepare individuals for unavoidable life stressors without causing undue anxiety. These components of wellness were addressed by participants through an emphasis on career development and relating the academic components of college to a future career. As their student-athletes' lives were often dictated by various individuals and institutions, it was especially essential to the participants that they convey that their athletes had choice in their major and subsequent future careers. Additionally, the participants emphasized working with their student-athletes on creating a career identity

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outside of their athlete identity.   Most importantly, fostering a realistic career identity was underscored by participants because the likelihood of athletes becoming professional athletes is so slim (NCAA, 2015).

Psychological support. Another area in which the participants facilitated the holistic development of the student-athletes was by providing them with psychological support through various challenges or problems they were experiencing. The participants reported dealing with their student-athletes on numerous psychological issues. These stressors were experienced on a continuum of mild to severe. Some of the less severe issues dealt with student-athletes experiencing homesickness, interpersonal issues with teammates or coaches, or undiagnosed learning disabilities. Other more serious challenges included depression, self-injurious behaviors, drug and alcohol use, physical and sexual assault, gender identity conflict, homelessness, and behaviors that merited evaluation by a psychiatric hospital.

Many of the experiences student-athletes shared with the participants were present in the literature. For example, regarding issues with coaches, there is research that shows that the student-athlete's perception of the coach-athlete relationship can either positively or negatively impact the athlete in areas of motivation and burnout (Barcza-Renner et al., 2016; Raedke, 1997; Rhind & Jowett, 2010). However, the participants did not share enough detail about their athletes' challenges with coaches to either confirm or refute any research findings. If anything, the participants made these issues with coaches sound a little more superficial or related to adjustment than extremely problematic. However, participants expressed more of the serious issues in greater detail. These issues are well documented in extant literature and include the prevalence of depression among student-athletes (Storch et al., 2005; Wolanin et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2007), increased drug and alcohol use (Martens et al., 2006; Parham, 1993; Yusko et al.,

2008), gender identity issues (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Menke et al., 2015), and the propensity for disordered eating patterns and negative body image (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; DisPasquale & Petrie, 2013; Greenleaf et al., 2009; Shriver et al., 2016). Regarding gender identity issues, LGBTQ athletes, particularly male student-athletes, are more likely to experience negative mental health issues including increased substance abuse (Kroshus & Davoren, 2016; Veliz et al., 2016).

What compounds these various psychological issues is that student-athletes are less likely to seek out mental health support even when referred due to stigma and time constraints (Ferrante et al., 1996; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Lopez & Levy, 2013; Watson, 2005, 2006). The participants in this study confirmed that their own experiences were similar to extant literature as explained in the previous Barriers to Seeking Support Services theme. The experience of academic advisors confronted with these types of student issues is also represented in the literature. Preece et al. (2007) found that almost half of the advisors surveyed lacked training in working with students with disabilities. Moreover, about one-third of respondents expressed discomfort or extreme discomfort when working with students with emotional disorders such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia. This is where the lack of training in the advising profession is problematic.

These types of psychological and mental health issues are specifically addressed in counselor education programs (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016). More importantly, counseling programs train their students how to evaluate and assess crisis situations, how to appropriately and safely deescalate clients, and how to skillfully manage these situations with sensitivity and care. While the participants in this study were often confronted with a multitude of psychological issues ranging from mild to severe, they said that they relied heavily on their

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counseling training to provide proper support and crisis intervention, if needed. They

additionally called upon their mental health knowledge to make referrals to the appropriate

resources. Not a single participant expressed any discomfort or trepidation when handling these

situations as the advisors in the Preece et al. (2007) study did. In fact, many of them stated that

their counseling degrees helped them not only in dealing with psychological issues, but also in

all areas of working with athletes.

It is also important to note that intrusive advising plays a role in these participants

providing psychological support for their athletes. As this proactive approach to advising was

not only designed to support academically at-risk students, but also designed so that referrals to

an outside counselor decreased (Glennen, 1976). The rationale was that advisors could meet

some of the psychological needs of their advisees and assist them before they turned into crisis

situations. By the very design of intrusive advising, providing psychological support and

knowledge is almost a prerequisite.

Managing these various psychological issues parallels a large number of the second-order

factors within the IS-WEL including the Creative Self, Social Self, Essential Self, and Coping

Self (Myers & Sweeney, 2004). The thinking and emotions third-order factors are components

of the Creative Self. Myers and Sweeney (2004) described the interconnectedness of thoughts

and emotions. The impact of this cyclical relationship can also manifest physically in the body

(i.e., physical impact of prolonged stress). Friendship and love are third-order factors that

comprise the Social Self. They are described on a continuum and, though difficult to distinguish

at times, these social supports are associated with longevity and increased quality of life.

Conversely, absence of love and friendship (i.e., estrangement, seclusion, etc.) are associated

with poorer quality of life. Gender identity, cultural identity, and self-care are components of the

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Essential Self, which describes one's sense of purpose or meaning in life. Gender and cultural identity are characterized as "filters through which life experiences are seen and as influences upon how others are experienced in response to ourselves" (Myers & Sweeney, 2004, p. 239). Self-care is described as proactive attempts or habits that promote living well and fully. The Coping Self, comprised of third-order factors such as leisure, stress management, and self-worth, represents the ability to successfully manage or work through life events and inevitable stressors.

Many of the participants discussed how they assisted their athletes in working through various thoughts and feelings related to transitional issues and relationship issues. Providing assistance for some of these issues also falls into the friendship and love third-order factors as participants described issues with romantic partnerships ending or conflicts with teammates or coaches. Regarding components of the Essential Self, some of the participants spoke of having their LGBTQ student-athletes reveal struggles with gender identity issues or come out about their gender identity to them. The participants stated that their athletes often expressed anxiety or fear when deciding to disclose to others about their gender identity. Other athletes, particularly international students, expressed difficulty with transitioning to life in the United States. Of the three third-tier factors in the Essential Self, self-care was most consistently emphasized by the participants. They stated they often had discussions about what their athletes were doing for themselves outside of their student and athlete roles. When working on weekly schedules with their athletes, participants also built in time for self-care. Though self-care was often discussed, participants often spoke about coping skills and how their student-athletes coped with these psychological stressors.

The Coping Self was probably one of the most significant areas that participants emphasized with their student-athletes. Finding strategies to cope with balancing the student and

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athlete identities dominated many of the conversations and interventions participants employed. Developing these coping skills was often centered around avoiding burnout for the student-athletes. Participants consistently expressed the importance of leisure time by disengaging from the student and athlete identities to find something purely enjoyable. In addition to building self-care into their schedules, participants also incorporated leisure time with their student-athletes. Participants also incorporated stress management activities such as mindfulness and consistently asserted the importance of self-worth as many student-athletes often saw themselves as one-dimensional and confined to their athlete identity.

  Coach-advisor relationship. The participants described working collaboratively with the coaches of their student-athletes. The participants expressed overall satisfaction with their coaching staff and stated that many of the coaches looked out for the best interests of the student-athletes. The coaches worked with the participants on academic issues such as requesting that the advisors meet with and monitor their athletes for a specific number of times per week or semester. Other coaches requested that advisors check-in with certain athletes if they found out the athletes were not doing well academically or noticed changes in behavior. Conversely, the participants expressed that they often sought out the help of the coaching staff if they noticed an issue with a student-athlete. Sometimes the coaching staff was privy to certain personal information about an athlete, so they were able to provide the participants with insight as to any issue so that the participants could provide as much support as possible.

  The participants collectively expressed overall satisfaction in their interactions with the coaching staff. Further, they spoke generally about student-athletes adjusting to coaches and teammates as opposed to providing specific examples of conflict. Current research indicates that an athlete's perception of the coach-athlete relationship can impact motivation, athlete

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performance, and burnout (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Isoard-Gautheur, 2017; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Rhind & Jowett, 2010; Riley & Smith, 2011). Because the participants spoke generally about relationship struggles and also provided positive feedback about their coaching staff, their experiences cannot support or refute the literature about the coach-athlete relationship (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004). This subtheme fits best under the Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes because the participants expressed that many of the coaches held a genuine desire to help their athletes develop as people outside of sport competition.

This reciprocity between coach and advisor to work in the best interest of the student-athlete also meets some of the components of the IS-WEL (Myers & Sweeney, 2004). The Physical Self, comprised of exercise and nutrition, is the area of wellness in which this relationship impacted the most. Myers and Sweeney (2004) express the importance of exercise and nutrition as well as how they are both are empirically supported to improve length of and quality of life. However, they also acknowledge that exercise and nutrition are often over-represented in wellness literature to where they overshadow other areas of holistic wellness.

Coaches, as the main source of the athlete's exercise, worked with the participants when they noticed physical or psychological changes in their practices or competitions. The coaches would notify the participants of any perceived changes so that the participants could provide appropriate intervention or support. Conversely, when participants noticed behavioral changes in their offices, they were comfortable speaking with the coach to gather as much information about any potential issues before strategizing an action plan to address potential issues. The participants expressed that this reciprocal relationship worked in the best interest of the student-athletes in addressing wellness.

Case management. Adams, Hazelwood, and Hayden (2014) define case management in the higher education setting as "connecting distressed students or employees to appropriate services in an effort to resolve their issue(s). The case manager serves individuals by arranging, coordinating, monitoring, evaluating, and advocating for individuals or the university community who are in need of assistance" (p. 49). This details a primary responsibility of the participants in this study. They often applied their counseling skills to assess or evaluate the situation for their student-athletes. They also needed to be well-informed of various campus and community resources to make the appropriate referral to their student-athletes. Often, they consulted with resources like the campus counseling center, academic support, athletic trainers, career services center, disability services and others to help advocate for their student-athletes. Lastly, the participants stated that they tended to follow-up with the student-athletes to see if the referral option was utilized to provide continual support and encouragement of seeking assistance.

The case management role of advisors is present in some of the advising literature (Kuhn et al., 2006). While NACADA recognizes student-athletes as a unique population that faces several challenges (Harding, 2008; Harper & Peterson, 2005), there is little clarification or recommendations for how advisors are supposed to meet the multitude of needs that student-athletes face. Further, the advising literature really underscores the magnitude of advisor case management responsibilities as well as the skills required to appropriately assess and make the proper referral. The case management role does not fit with a specific factor in the IS-WEL, but rather helps address many of the third-order factors (Myers & Sweeney, 2004). For example, the participants often referred students to tutoring, counseling, career services, nutritionist, etc. for support. Taking on the case management role and making referrals to these outside services helps student-athletes with third-order factors like work, control, realistic beliefs, nutrition, and

others. While it is not specifically congruent with any of the third-order factors, it is a critical responsibility and skill to have when addressing holistic wellness with their student-athletes.

Each of the subthemes of Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes was discussed individually and contextually with the various second-order and third-order factors of the Indivisible Self holistic wellness model (Myers & Sweeney, 2004) model. However, it is essential to note that this model includes four contextual factors and 16 sub-factors that impact healthy human functioning. These environmental components do not operate independently of each other or the Indivisible Self, but rather they are all interconnected and influence one another. These contextual factors are: Local (family, neighborhood, community), Institutional (education, religion, government, business/industry), Global (politics, culture, global events, environment, media, community), and Chronometrical (perpetual, positive, purposeful).

In the overall responsibilities of the participants', it was evident that they maintained awareness of many of these contextual variables that impacted the lives and functioning of their student-athletes. For example, many of them were cognizant of team dynamics (i.e., Local – family and community) that can hinder or help with an athlete's transition to college. The participants were painfully aware of their own university rules as well as the NCAA rules that governed their student-athletes and mandated what their athletes could and could not do (i.e., Institutional –education and business/industry). Additionally, the participants often tried to fight the misconception of privilege associated with student-athletes and to confront the culture of collegiate sports by demonstrating athletic empathy (i.e., Global – culture, environment, and community). Lastly, in their every interaction, they challenged student-athletes to view themselves from a lifespan perspective, recognize that they are more valuable than just their athletic contributions, and to find a life purpose beyond athletics (i.e., Chronometrical).

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Each of these themes and subthemes represents the commonalities of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. Specifically, these themes demonstrate the connection between their job responsibilities and the holistic wellness model. Many of the advisors' experiences are reflected in extant literature. However, there are some experiences such as how advisors with counseling degrees use their counseling skills to address wellness or the immense case management responsibilities of academic advisors of athletes that are not yet represented. This study sought to bring light to these experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with their college student-athletes. While this study hopes to make a contribution to the existing literature base, I would be remiss to not acknowledge the limitations of this study.

Limitations of the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher is often the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Thus, researcher bias is inherently present as researchers cannot completely separate their previous experiences from themselves during data collection and analysis. However, steps can be made in an attempt to limit researcher bias and the influence on the data. In an attempt to limit my own bias, I bracketed my experiences as a school counselor and former collegiate student-athlete prior to data collection and then again during data analysis. I also wrote reflexive journals after each interview and throughout the data analysis phase to help mitigate my own assumptions. Additionally, the data analysis phase was conducted using two peer coders to triangulate the data and provide for different perspectives outside of my own. While this inquiry was of sound design and conducted with trustworthiness, it would be negligent to not acknowledge other limitations.

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One of the main limitations with this study was regarding sampling method and size. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants who worked with student-athletes and had a master's level counseling degree or were enrolled in a master's level counselor education training program. Nine of the 10 participants were recruited using the N4A listserv and referral sampling, or snowball sampling, was used to recruit the remaining participant. While a sample size of 10 participants is sufficient to reach saturation for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012), it can be difficult to generalize the results to the entire academic advising profession. It is possible that the thoughts, experiences, and opinions of these participants do not accurately reflect the student-athlete academic advising experience as a whole because the criteria were very specific (i.e., master's degree in counseling). Although data saturation was met, there are likely other experiences of academic advisors of athletes that were not shared as academic advisors of student-athletes who do not have counseling degrees may share an entirely different experience. Further, nine of the 10 participants were recruited using the N4A listserv. It is possible that their experiences may be different than other advisors who are not members of this professional organization.

In addition to the minimum number of participants needed, I sought to have as varied of a sample as possible. While I was able to have participants from varied parts of United States including the South, Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and West Coast, not every part of the country was represented. Further, while the sample included participants from all three subsets of the NCAA Division I as well as two participants from the NJCAA, there were no participants from other NCAA divisions or other collegiate athletic organizations. The experiences of advisors from NCAA Division II and Division III as well as other athletic organizations may be very different than the experiences expressed in this study. Moreover, the gender and ethnicity

noted by the participants was fairly homogenous as seven participants identified as female and eight participants identified as white.

Throughout the data analysis process, the transcripts of participant interviews were reduced to various excerpts and quotes that seemed notable or pertinent to the research question. These excerpts and quotes were then assigned a code to which the research team thought best captured the essence of the participant's experience. During this process, codes continued to emerge and collapse and were later categorized into broader themes. While the participants were sent copies of their interview transcripts to member check for accuracy, they were not privy to any part of the analysis phase. Because they did not partake in the formulation of codes and themes, it is entirely possible that they would have coded things differently. It is also possible that the research team incorrectly inferred the saliency of the participants' responses.

While steps were taken to make this study as trustworthy as possible, no study is without limitations. Methodology, sampling, and data analysis are some of the major limitations to this inquiry. These are important to note as they may impact the implications of this study and recommendations for future research as discussed below.

Implications for Counselor Education

The results of this study yielded several implications for the counselor educators and counselor education curriculum. One of the most obvious implications for counselor education programs is to incorporate more theory-based skills and techniques with a continued emphasis on the connection of theory to practice. Many of the participants in this study had difficulty identifying their theoretical orientation and connecting their skills and techniques to a specific theory. Further, many counseling programs, and particularly those who have earned credentialed status from the CACREP (2016), are required to take courses that address various counseling

theories and implementing them into practice. Hence, there needs to be a stronger emphasis on theoretically based skills and techniques.

As opposed to superficially discussing theory in counseling programs, the connection between theory and practice can be supported by using relevant literature in which practitioners describe the theoretical framework that is linked to their intervention. For example, a prominent counseling theory called Solution-Focused Therapy or Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) uses a limited number of sessions, focuses on the client's strengths instead of deficits, and elicits change from the client by focusing on present issues and goal-setting behaviors (de Shazer et al., 1986). It is often used in the school counseling setting because of the large caseloads and limited time (Cook & Kaffenberger, 2003; Dameron, 2016; Jones et al., 2009). However, Burg and Mayhall (2002) found this to be applicable with career indecision when working with advisees who had not decided a major. This is also one of the theories sited by one of the few participants who could name a theory. This one particular participant purposefully used SFBT and goal-setting with her athletes.

Another recommendation is to highlight the specialized needs of student-athletes as an at-risk population in school counseling programs as opposed to solely in college counseling and student affairs classes. CACREP (2016) requires that all counseling programs, regardless of concentration, receive the same training in eight common core areas. In addition to these eight common areas, each counseling concentration has its own specialized training. For the college counseling and student affairs track, standard 5E.2.l explicitly states that graduate students receive training for students with unique needs. The standard then lists several populations that require specialized attention and identifies student-athletes among them. However, the school counseling track does not explicitly state addressing specific populations or student-athletes at

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all. Perhaps elite student-athletes or future collegiate student-athletes are a population that should receive a little more attention in the school counseling concentration, particularly in areas of wellness. School counselors are responsible for helping students with postsecondary transitions to college. Perhaps it would be prudent for school counselors to be more knowledgeable of college student-athlete issues and work more closely with potential college athletes to make their transition to college smoother and more focused on holistic wellness.

In addition to these recommendations for student-athletes, it may be wise for school counselors and academic advisors to work together in understanding each other's roles pertaining to transition to college for all students. One university saw the connection between the occupational responsibilities of school counselors and academic advisors and created a program called On Track to help with student-retention (Thorngren, Nelson, Baker, Zuck, & Koltz, 2013). The authors piloted this program at their university using secondary school counseling interns and the American School Counselors Association National Model (ASCA, 2016) as a framework for their intervention program. It focused on the holistic development of freshmen through seniors and was used to augment traditional academic advising services. The impetus for the creation of this program was feedback from students who withdrew from the university prior to degree completion (non-persisters) compared to the feedback of students who remained at the university and worked toward degree completion (persisters). Both groups reported that the quality and quantity of relationships with university faculty and staff need to be improved in areas of advising, faculty relations, teaching, and communication/awareness. Though a one-year program, it yielded positive results. Advisors lauded the program and stated it was successful for themselves, advisees, and the counseling graduate students. Advisees expressed positive results

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as well and school counseling interns stated that this program gave them more insight to better prepare high school students for the transition to college (Thorngren et al., 2013).

Lastly, many of the advisors had difficulty implementing wellness interventions in their individual sessions. Only one participant used a wellness wheel to help her student-athletes balance their lives. While the holistic wellness model was relatively new when some of the participants were graduating from their counseling programs (Myers et al., 2000), it has evolved and the current Indivisible Self model (Myers & Sweeney, 2004) now has an empirically supported assessment tool called the 5F-Wel (Myers & Sweeney, 1999; Myers et al., 2004). As wellness is considered an essential element of the counseling profession, it is recommended that counselor education programs specifically address the history and development of wellness, the evolution of various wellness models including the holistic wellness model, and teach students how to conduct various wellness assessments and techniques.

To help with this, it is recommended that counselor educators utilize the Wellness Model of Supervision (WELMS; Lenz & Smith, 2010) when working with their students. This empirically supported model of supervision is grounded in the four-phase intervention of the holistic wellness model as recommended Myers et al. (2000). The WELMS consists of wellness education, formal and informal assessments intervention through addressing wellness deficits, and evaluation of interventions. This model of supervision is further supported in the literature as counselors-in-training who participated in WELMS were able better able to articulate their personal definition of wellness and increased their total wellness when compared to other counselors-in-training who participated in other models of supervision (Lenz, Sangganjanavanich, Balkin, Oliver, & Smith, 2012).

Implications for Academic Advising

The findings of this study perhaps have the greatest implications for the academic advising profession. These results not only support extant literature, but also provide further confirmation of the need for systematic changes in the advising profession. Specifically, there is evidence that supports the intrusive advising structure, the developmental advising theoretical framework, and the critical need for more uniformed training for academic advisors. Lastly, recommendations are made to incorporate more intentional wellness interventions and practices into advising sessions. Each of these recommendations is discussed with references to current literature.

One implication from this study is for NACADA to mandate postsecondary institutions to implement intrusive advising structures (Donaldson et al., 2016; Glennen, 1976; Schwebel et al., 2012). In a study by Powers, Aaron, and Kenneth (2014), just over one-third of academic advisors responded that they do not require any type of mandated advising for their undergraduate students. Intrusive advising combined with the frequency of academic advising meetings is associated with increased student-retention and academic success (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013; Vander Schee, 2007). From this study, as most of the participants also employed intrusive advising, they were able to stay informed of academic and personal issues with their student-athletes and strategically problem solve solutions before the issues became too great to manage. This proactive approach is supported in the literature as Glennen (1976) noted that intrusive advising reduces the need for students to attend an outside counselor because many situations are handled before they reached crisis level. Lastly, seeing the academic advisor is less stigmatizing than going to the counseling center, as stated by the participants in this study. Thus, the intrusive advising structure uniquely situates academic advisors of athletes to meet

some of their personal needs that do not require counselor intervention because the advisors are required to meet with their athletes.

In addition to the advising structure, this study supports NACADA's recommendation for using developmental advising as opposed to other advising methods like prescriptive or appreciative advising (Crookston, 1972; Dedmon, 2012; Howell, 2010). Developmental advising is a theoretical framework that addresses the student from a holistic, strengths-based perspective to meet their personal, educational, and career goals (Crookston, 1972; Grites, 2013; McGill, 2016). This holistic approach to students is supported by NACADA's Statement of Core Values (2005, para. 5) and is also one of the goals of the N4A's Strategic Plan for working specifically with student-athletes (2014). This developmental approach is also congruent with the various components of the holistic wellness model and the primary instrument used to assess holistic wellness, the 5F-Wel (Myers et al., 2000). While only a couple of the participants spoke directly about using a developmental framework, it was evident throughout their interviews that they take a holistic view of their student-athletes. They all worked to incorporate the various third-order factors like self-care, stress management, leisure, friendship, realistic beliefs, and others when working with their student-athletes. Though not using the exact language of the holistic wellness model, the participants intentionally worked with their athletes on integrating several of these third-order factors to create wellness for the total person, not just the athlete or student identities. They often spoke about how they continually emphasized the importance of their athletes to view themselves outside of their athlete role.

Though NACADA (2005) suggests that a developmental approach is taken with students, it can be difficult to support the educational, career, and personal needs of all students without proper training. Currently, there is a lack of uniformity and preparation in academic advising,

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which is part of why there has been a struggle to develop a professional identity (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Allen Dyer, 2007; Cook, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2010). While the participants in this study were graduates of, or currently enrolled in, counselor education programs, they all had varying job titles which included either "advisor" or "counselor". This is consistent with existing literature that cited differing job titles as one of the challenges of developing a professional identity (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Preece et al., 2007; Taylor, 2011). While these issues of varied training were not applicable to this study as all participants had similar educational experience, it was evident that having a master's degree in counseling was critical to most, if not all, of the experiences they shared and to responsibilities of being an advisor of student-athletes.

Not only does current research suggest that advisors have a more standardized training (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Harborth, 2012; Preece et al., 2007; Robbins, 2012; Taylor, 2011), but it also draws strong comparisons to the counseling profession (Barnett et al., 2006; Hughey, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2006). Kuhn et al. (2006) noted that some issues in the advising session can be addressed by either the advisor or a more long-term counselor include death in the family, time management, interpersonal issues, family issues, career goals, personal goals, and academic goals. The authors also asserted that the following issues should be referred to the counseling center or a professional counselor: ADHD, substance abuse, eating disorder, physical/emotional abuse, sexual orientation, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and suicide (Kuhn et al., 2006). However, it is important to acknowledge that each of the participants in this study were confronted with these stressors in their sessions with student-athletes. Regarding the assertions in Kuhn et al. (2006), this study has two relevant outcomes. First, this confirms that advisors of athletes will likely encounter all of these issues in their

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offices, not just those related to academics. Thus, they should be adequately prepared. Secondly, and most importantly, when participants discussed their interactions with their student-athletes, not a single one expressed discomfort with providing support or talking about these issues unlike the participants in the Preece et al. (2007) study who expressed discomfort or extreme discomfort in addressing mental illness. Rather, the participants of this study spoke of relying on their counseling training and skills to provide appropriate support and assistance.

In addition to referring to a counselor for the above behaviors, Kuhn et al. (2006) correctly stated that advisors must refer students who disclose self-abuse or abuse. However, the lack of training and recognition of some of the symptoms is problematic (Granello, 2010; Harborth, 2012; McGlothlin, 2008; Robbins, 2012; Rudd et al., 2006). Again, each of the participants in this study stated that facilitating a genuine, caring relationship with their athletes provided a safe place for them to disclose personal issues, which is also supported in the literature (Farber et al., 2004). Moreover, when a student-athlete was not immediately self-disclosing issues, the participants relied on their training in crisis-intervention, observation, communication, and confronting to provide support and appropriate referral (CACREP, 2016; Ivey, 2013; Strong & Zeman, 2010).

Though NACADA calls for use of keen communication and observation skills to discern when a student is in distress (Harper & Peterson, 2005), the lack of educational training could not be more glaring. Current literature highlights some issues regarding insufficient advisor skills including absence of multicultural competencies (Zhang, 2016), poor listening and communication skills (Hughey, 2011; Nadler & Simerly, 2006), ineffective interpersonal skills (Hughey, 2011), and discomfort when dealing with mental health (Preece et al., 2007). These issues could be alleviated through proper, standardized training that addresses observation skills,

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communications skills, and mental health issues like the curriculum provided in a counseling program (Barnett et al., 2006; Hughy, 2011).

All of the participants in this study had consistent training from a master's level counselor education program with six participants receiving their degree from a CACREP-accredited program. CACREP-accredited programs require that all entry-level counselors receive the same standardized counseling curriculum that includes eight common core areas regardless of counseling specialty (i.e., school counseling, student affairs and college counseling, clinical mental health, etc.) (CACREP, 2016). Further, career development and exploration plus counseling skills in the helping relationship (i.e., interpersonal skills) are two of the eight common core areas of CACREP programs. Moreover, crisis intervention, trauma-informed care and strategies, and assessment of suicide and/or harm to self or others are included in the sub-criteria of the eight core areas (CACREP, 2016). Lastly, the student affairs and college counseling specialty track does require that students learn about higher education curricula and academic policies, which negates the claim made in Kuhn et al. (2006).

Regarding acquisition of necessary skills, both Barnett et al., (2006) and Hughey (2011) call for advisors to receive training in attending behaviors, listening skills, reflecting, probing questions, and confronting. Further, Hughey (2011) emphasized personal characteristics of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy as fundamental in helping relationships (Rogers, 1967). Moreover, these skills were consistently cited by the participants in the interviews. Participants found listening, reading body language, gently confronting, and other skills incredibly useful when dealing with a variety of issues. To expound further on the applicability of having a counseling degree, participants stated that their counseling training helped them be able to read people better, listen more attentively, and communicate more

effectively. They also cited their counseling training as particularly useful when addressing sensitive subjects or encountering unique experiences as they often do. Lastly, many participants expressed how their counseling training helped them develop more multicultural awareness and competencies.

In addition to the recommendation for advisors to have counseling degrees or, at least, some counseling courses, it is recommended that academic advisors incorporate more intentional wellness into their advising sessions. Again, NACADA encourages a developmental approach to advising (Gordon, 1986; Harper & Peterson, 2005; NACADA, 2005; N4A, 2014) and there is a strong connection between goals of developmental advising and holistic wellness. Both are trying to meet the needs of the whole person and developmental advising does this through meeting the academic, personal, and career goals of students. As previously stated, only one participant employed a wellness intervention. Similar to the counselor education recommendation, it is encouraged that advisors receive training and professional development in the history and evolution of wellness in addition to wellness interventions, like the 5F-Wel to use with their students.

The major findings of this study support the need for academic advisors to have a common skill set that can only come from having standardized educational training similar to the counseling profession training standards. Kuhn and Padak (2008) acknowledged that the field must establish credentials. While it is noted that there are many similarities between academic advising and counseling, it seems that having a counseling degree is certainly applicable and a worthwhile endeavor when striving for a career in academic advising. Based on the results of this study, when advising student-athletes, it can be inferred that having a counseling degree is advantageous in meeting their needs. Due to their training, academic advisors with counseling

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degrees are more equipped to handle the challenges that student-athletes face and are even more

prepared to address certain psychological issues or personal crises than advisors without

counseling degrees. Having an appropriately trained and skilled advisor not only can help

mitigate some of these challenges and stressors student-athletes experience, but can also augment

holistic wellness due to their counseling training as it is the foundation of the profession

(CACREP, 2016; Gold, 2016; Leppma & Young, 2016; Meany-Walen et al., 2016). Moreover,

it is recommended that, outside of formal educational training, advisors continue to seek training

and professional development on holistic wellness and wellness interventions. Additionally,

implementing intrusive and developmental advising while also employing advisors who are

appropriately trained seems to be the best combination in meeting the needs of student-athletes.

Implications for Athletic Departments

One of the major takeaways from this study for athletic departments is the same

recommendation for the academic advising profession, which is for athletic departments to hire

advisors who have counseling degrees. Academic advisors with counseling degrees are uniquely

positioned to meet the needs of student-athletes without imposing on their very restricted time.

This positioning is optimal because many advisors employ intrusive advising (Gayston-Gayles,

2003; Glennen, 1976) and are skilled in counseling techniques and theory. Considering the

stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors as revealed in this study and previous studies

(Lopez & Levy, 2013; Martin, 2005; Wahto et al., 2016; Watson, 2005, 2006), it is vital for

advisors of athletes to be equipped with skills to deal with a variety of issues. The participants

described how student-athletes confided in them about the many challenges they experienced. If

these participants did not have counseling degrees, they may not have been able to foster a

trusting relationship that allowed athletes to reveal some of these personal issues and struggles.

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Without their counseling skills and knowledge, they may not have been able to meet the various wellness needs of their athletes through their own interventions or referrals.

Another recommendation gleaned from this study is for the continued emphasis on holistic development in student-athletes. The experiences of student-athlete stressors and challenges is thoroughly documented in the literature, yet there are very few empirical studies that address interventions as to how to mitigate some of these challenges. Further, these studies only address various components of wellness, not total wellness (Beauchemin, 2014; Dubuc-Charbonneau & Durand-Bush, 2015; Harris et al., 2003; Van Raalte et al., 2015). Currently, only two studies exist on holistic wellness with student-athletes (LaFountaine, 2007; Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Not only do these two studies have conflicting results, but they also only assess wellness with student-athletes as opposed to using the assessment tools to inform the intervention of the holistic wellness model. Thus, it is strongly encouraged for athletic departments to assess student-athlete wellness using the 5F-Wel throughout their athletic tenure and follow the Myers et al. (2000) recommendation for implementing the four-phase wellness intervention.

The idea behind the holistic wellness model is that if a person is unwell in one subtask of wellness, then the total wellness of the individual is thrown off balance (Myers et al., 2000; Myers & Sweeney, 2004). A potential buy-in for athletic departments may be that if a student-athlete is well in all areas of life, then they will perform at an optimal level in their sport. Thus, it is important to develop and support the other identities of student-athletes outside of the athlete role and student role to help maintain optimal life functioning. Not only should this be done for the benefit of the athletic department and university, it should be done as an ethical practice to

ensure that student-athletes are receiving the utmost care as they are recruited to be ambassadors of the institution.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. While the literature is rife with data stating that student-athletes are an at-risk population, there is a dearth of literature detailing how wellness is or is not addressed. As a foundational study in exploring this phenomenon, the findings assert the need for several more studies examining wellness with college student-athletes. While this study investigated the experiences of academic advisors in meeting wellness needs of athletes, the most logical step would be to conduct an inquiry with student-athletes to see their perception of wellness and if their needs are being met. This potential future study can be designed using either a qualitative or quantitative methodology. Further, it would be interesting to expand upon the Watson and Kissinger (2007) study that measured the overall wellness of college student-athletes compared to their non-athlete peers. Instead of comparing athletes and non-athletes, perhaps a future study could investigate the differences between the various divisions of the NCAA. Division I is considered the most competitive and elite division in the NCAA (NCAA, 2016a), and a majority of studies are conducted on Division I student-athletes. It would be interesting to see if there are wellness differences between Division II and Division III student-athletes.

This current study also investigated the experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees. In order to draw more accurate comparisons to advisors with different backgrounds, it would be judicious to conduct a similar study with academic advisors of athletes who do not have counseling degrees. This may reveal variations in addressing wellness and may provide

more support for the academic advising field to develop a standardized educational curriculum. Though this current study employed a qualitative design, another future study can employ a quantitative methodology to help capture a larger audience of academic advisors with counseling degrees. Further, this can help with generalizability of results.

Regarding intervention research with student-athletes, another potential research study would be to conduct a quantitative design to measure the effectiveness of the holistic wellness model four-phase intervention with student-athletes as recommended by Myers et al. (2000). Two groups of student-athletes can be given the 5F-Wel to assess baseline wellness data. One group could meet regularly with their advisor to discuss results of the data and provide the four-phase intervention. The other group could be the control group and receive no intervention. Both groups of athletes could then be given another 5F-Wel to assess post-intervention wellness levels and determine if it is an effective intervention to use with student-athletes.

Lastly, the findings of this study offer considerable opportunities for collaboration between the various fields of counselor education, academic advising, and athletic departments. Both the academic advising field and counselor education field share a common goal of helping meet various needs of student-athletes.

Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. An extensive literature review exposed gaps in current research in the fields of academic advising and student-athlete issues, specifically in addressing wellness with this population. This study operated from both developmental advising and holistic wellness perspectives as these two frameworks are congruent with one another despite being from the advising field and counselor education profession, respectively.

The results of this study aimed to fill gaps in the current literature and yielded four major themes and seven subthemes: Academic Skills and Planning, Counselor Knowledge and Practice (emphasis on fostering relationships, counseling skills and theory, and athletic empathy), Barriers to Seeking Support Services, and Cultivating Holistic Wellness in Student-Athletes (career and life skill development, psychological support, coach-advisor relationship, and case management). These emerged from the participants' in-depth interviews and their own words were used to provide support for each theme and subtheme. Subsequently, each theme and subtheme was discussed in detail and linked to current literature. Lastly, the findings of this study provided an opportunity to explore implications for counselor education, academic advising, and athletic departments. Areas of future research in relation to each of these fields were also discussed.

This study provided a glimpse into how academic advisors with counseling degrees address wellness with college student-athletes. Data gleaned from this study found that these specific participants were, indeed, addressing the wellness needs of their student-athletes. Additionally, it highlighted some of the challenges that student-athletes encounter and how advisors address those challenges. Specifically, the results showed the importance of counseling skills and knowledge in addressing wellness with college student-athletes.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate

Dear Participant,

My name is Jennifer Gerlach and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling and Special Education Department at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation about the experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees who work with student-athletes. Specifically, my study will work with potential participants on how they address wellness with student-athletes in their advising sessions. Completion of this study will fulfill part of my requirements for a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Counselor Education and Supervision.

Eligibility criteria for participation in this study include:
1. Working as an academic advisor with college student-athletes
2. Earned master's degree in counseling

Should you meet the criteria above and choose to participate, I will conduct an either in-person or phone interview with you regarding your experiences as an academic advisor in addressing wellness with college student-athletes. Participation will take approximately one hour. This study has been approved by the Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Research (IRB # HM20009812) and there are minimal to no risks for participation. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for accuracy, but will be kept confidential and secure. Your name will not be attached to any data and any identifying information revealed in the interview will be deleted or concealed before data analysis. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any questions I may ask.

Currently, there are many studies detailing the stressors that college student-athletes experience, yet there are few studies on student-athlete wellness. Additionally, there are no available studies on addressing wellness from an academic advising perspective, so your participation will help reveal if and how wellness is addressed with this special population.

Thank you for your time and consideration in both assisting me with my professional endeavors and providing the counseling field with this useful information. If you are willing to participate or have additional questions, please contact me via email at gerlachjm@vcu.edu. Additionally, my dissertation chair, Dr. Donna Gibson, can be reached at dgibson7@vcu.edu.

With warmest regards,

Jennifer Gerlach, M. Ed.
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Commonwealth University

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Study Title: The lived experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees in addressing wellness with college student-athletes

Researcher: Jennifer Gerlach

- I understand that the researcher is conducting a research study about the experiences of academic advisors with counseling degrees who work with student-athletes. Specifically, this study will investigate how address wellness is addressed with student-athletes in academic advising sessions.

- I understand that the researcher is a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University and she is completing this research study as a partial fulfillment of earning a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Counselor Education and Supervision.

- I understand that the researcher will conduct an interview in-person, on the telephone, or via Skype. I understand that my interview will be recorded, but I will have the opportunity to review my interview transcript once it is transcribed. I understand that identifying information including my name and place of work will be kept confidential. I understand that participation in this study will take approximately one hour.

- I understand that there are both benefits and risks with my involvement in this study. Benefits of participation include assisting with understanding the phenomenon of wellness in academic advising sessions with student-athletes. Recommendations from my responses will be made to address and improve issues in academic advising, college athletics, and counseling programs. Risks of this study, though minimal, may include an imposition on my personal time and potential discomfort with some of the interview questions.

- I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I further understand that I may refuse to answer any questions asked in the interview.

Please check the box below, sign, and date.

☐ Yes, I consent to participate in this research study.

☐ No, I will not participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Participant   Date

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions below by entering your response or by checking the most appropriate response:

1. Last name: _____

2. First name: _____

3. Email address: _____

4. Phone number: _____

5. Gender:

    ☐ Male

    ☐ Female

    ☐ Other

6. Race/Ethnicity:

    ☐ African-American

    ☐ American Indian

    ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

    ☐ Caucasian

    ☐ Hispanic

    ☐ Other: _____

7. Name of college/university: _____

8. Athletic division of college/university:

    ☐ NCAA – Division I FBS

    ☐ NCAA – Division I FCS

□ NCAA – Division I (no football team)

□ NCAA – Division II

□ NCAA – Division III

9. Name of counseling degree and institution: _____

10. CACREP-accredited institution:

□ Yes

□ No

□ I don't know

11. Your current job title: _____

12. Number of years at your current job (years and months): _____

13. Previous collegiate athletic experience:

□ No

□ Yes (explain): _____