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Community Service in Intercollegiate Athletics: A Student Involvement Approach to College Athlete Engagement

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Community Service in Intercollegiate Athletics: A Student Involvement

Approach to College Athlete Engagement

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The prioritization of athletic commitments by student-athletes has only increased in recent years as student-athletes frequently sacrifice academic opportunities to focus on their sport. Movement toward athletic prioritization has led to a decrease in academic development for student-athletes. Community service is an integral part of the college academic experience and is a frequent activity of college students, including student-athletes. Using the theoretical lens of the Student Involvement Theory, this study investigated the participation of student-athletes, with support from their athletic department, in community service. The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) examine how intercollegiate athletic departments integrate community service into the educational experience of student-athletes, and (2) investigate variables associated with frequency of student-athlete community service. Multiple non-statistically significant findings were reported, raising concerns on the application of Student Involvement Theory to the student-athlete academic experience.

Keywords: community service, student-athletes, intercollegiate athletics, educational experience

Since the advent of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), student-athletes have faced difficult choices in finding a balance between athletic, academic, and social expectations. With college sports embracing lucrative television contracts and increased pressure to field successful teams, the pull toward prioritizing athletics has only increased (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Ortagus & Merson, 2015; Rankin et al., 2016). As such, student-athletes make academic sacrifices, including a lack of commitment towards classes (Miller & Kerr, 2003) and selecting a major conforming to their sport schedule rather than interest (Fountain & Finley, 2011; Navarro, 2015), which stunts their academic development through decaying soft skills and reducing career optimism (Linnemeyer & Brown, 2010; Tyrance, Harris, & Post, 2013).

These sacrifices, however, should not imply student-athletes lack interest in being academically engaged on campus and pursuing opportunities to further their personal development (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009; Levine, Ethison, & Oppenheimer, 2014; Weight & Huml, 2016). One study recounted a student-athlete wanting to learn more about the opportunities at their school, stating, "I feel comfortable here but there's a lot of stuff out there from the University, like what it offers, that I still don't know about" (Clift & Mower, 2013, p. 362). Athletics have attempted to fill this gap by rapidly increasing academic support through increased personnel focused on improved academic performance (Huml, Hancock, & Bergman, 2014), but such scholarly work is limited in directly supporting academic development.

One possibility for supporting student-athlete academic development involves community service. For the purpose of this article, community service is defined as service designed to improve the quality of life for members of the community and providing the volunteer (i.e., student) with a learning opportunity related to their formal education (State Student Incentive Grant Program, 1987). Community service has inherent benefits as it relates to university athletic departments. Research shows student-athletes are willing community service participants (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013). Further, athletic departments enjoy numerous contacts with local/national community partners, who can provide a valuable experience to student-athletes while also benefitting from a formal relationship with the university's athletic program (Svensson, Huml, & Hancock, 2014). The NCAA has highlighted the importance of community service mentioning it in their mission and core beliefs (NCAA, n.d.a.; Stark, 2017). Community service can also combat many of the previously mentioned academic issues plaguing student-athletes. For instance, community service has shown to be correlated with higher student's GPA, increased knowledge on future career fields, improved communication and critical thinking skills, and expanded cultural awareness (Chesbrough, 2011; Cochrane & Schill, 2013; Rettig & Hu, 2016).

Research into student-athletes' involvement in community service has recently expanded (e.g., Czekanski & Brown, 2015; Hoffman, Kihl, & Browning, 2015; Huml, Svensson, & Hancock, 2014; Svensson et al., 2014), but a need exists to further examine the involvement of athletic departments in supporting student-athlete community service. The purpose of the present exploratory study was two-fold: (1) examine how college athletic departments integrate community service into the student-athlete educational experience, and (2) investigate variables associated with the frequency of student-athlete community service. The researchers employed a Student Involvement theoretical approach (Astin, 1984) to examine the involvement of the athletic department as a supplementary partner between student-athletes and community service.

Theoretical Framework

Student development theorist Astin (1984) suggested higher education institutions were taking an incorrect approach in fostering college student academic development. Specifically, Astin suggested universities often overwhelmed students with countless academic activities in an environment that would negatively affect college student development. Further, Astin proposed no previous student developmental theory identified the student as the primary decision-maker in their academic development. Thus, Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory focuses on how students develop instead of focusing directly on development outcomes (i.e., *what* student's developed). In other words, the present study presumes the development process itself is the point of emphasis rather than more important targeting specific skills.

Astin (1984) proposed through the Student Involvement Theory (SIT) that the university, and their corresponding faculty and staff, need to assume a secondary role in helping students academically develop while in college. This involves highlighting academic opportunities available, but not requiring these activities in an effort to "force" academic development upon students. Students have limited amount of free time to pursue academic activities, and if universities require activities and events, it further limits the student from choosing opportunities aligned with their personal interests. Aligning with a student's personal interests is especially important for an activity such as community service, as it provides greater benefits for the student (Bryant, Gaston-Gayles, & Davis, 2012; Taylor & Pancer, 2007).

The notion that SIT suggests a secondary role for colleges and universities has been problematic for college athletic departments. Often decisions about academic majors, daily schedules, and study time are made, or at a minimum greatly influenced, by coaches, athletic academic advisors, or other personnel affiliated with an athletic department. For example, student-athletes have expressed a lack of autonomy when choosing education-related activities (Hardin & Pate, 2013). The lack of decision-making for student-athletes has shown to stunt their career interests and de-emphasize the importance of academics (McPherson, 2013). Echoing principles of SIT, McPherson recommended athletic departments focus on providing academic opportunities for student-athletes that empowers them to be the decision-makers. Another SIT emphasis that is problematic for athletic departments is limited time for students to pursue academic activities. The lack of available time for student-athletes is well-documented (e.g., Benford, 2007; Huml, Bergman, & Hums, 2014), but provides a unique opportunity for athletics to identify corresponding academic activities that fit around their athletic and class schedule (Weight, Cooper, & Popp, 2015).

SIT has been limited in its application to studies examining the student-athlete educational experience; additionally, concerns can be raised for a theoretical framework originally applied to the college student experience more than 30 years ago may have limitations in relation to the current environment. Still, recent studies emphasizing SIT applications to student-athlete development (e.g., Andrassy, Bruening, Svensson, Huml, & Chung, 2014; Huml et al., 2014; Navarro & Malvaso, 2015; Weight, Navarro, Huffman, & Smith-Ryan, 2014) highlight the potential connections between the current student-athlete experience and SIT. The application of SIT to student-athletes has received mixed results, which highlights the need for a re-contextualization of SIT for student-athletes.

Student-Athlete Community Service

Research on community service and student-athletes is limited, but has shown similarities with the general student population. Student-athletes have reported similar levels of community service participation compared to other student populations (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Symonds, 2009). They also have reported similar categorical benefits from volunteering (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009; Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013). For example, Jarvie and Paule-Koba (2013) interviewed senior men's basketball players, who described their volunteer experience as a beneficial learning experience outside of the classroom, an opportunity to develop leadership skills, and as events which provided them with personal satisfaction. These student-athletes reported their volunteering experience was irreplaceable and a unique educational practice not replicated by in-class experiences. Student-athletes have reported similar reasons for volunteering as other students, such as helping those in need or connecting with well-known community service organizations (CSO) (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). A unique motivation for student-athletes is their belief that their position as an athlete carries an expectation to give back to their community (NCAA, 2014). The frequency and motivations to volunteer may be similar, but there are also internal and external variables that impact community service involvement.

Community Service Variables

For university entities looking to increase the number of students volunteering, or enhance the skills they inherit from volunteering, certain variables have shown to activate volunteerism more than others. These variables include, but are not limited to: support from the student's university, university/department mission statement, university's geographical location, person choosing the service activity, the CSO's cause, and whether community service is being used as punishment.

University support. College students who attend a university with a stronger commitment towards community service are more likely to volunteer, both during and after college, than students who do not (Sax, 2004). Also, students involved in a "quality" service experience, defined as feelings of organizational support and support learning skills, were more likely to continue their volunteerism in the future (Taylor & Pancer, 2007). With student-athletes, this support would be most crucial coming from the athletic department (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). Unfortunately, CSOs have expressed their concerns about attempting to build a relationship with local university athletic departments (Svensson et al., 2014). Specifically, Svensson et al. (2014) found CSOs found athletic departments were unorganized, or relied on previous personal connections with coaches to associate with student-athlete volunteers.

The athletic departments can benefit from the relationship between student-athletes and CSO, as student-athletes performing community service has shown to provide a personal connection with fans and create a closer relationship between student-athlete and coach/administrator (Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013; Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). A strong relationship in the athletic department also assists the CSO, as they have stated their desire in connecting the athletic department with their cause, and utilizing the university's athletic brand to increase public awareness towards their organization (Svensson et al., 2014). This would also benefit student-athletes, who have previously mentioned how athletic department personnel are "well versed" into the challenges they face regarding time availability and connecting with non-athletic entities (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009; Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). This highlights a

need for athletic departments to hire a liaison for improving the relationship between the department and CSO. This liaison could work with CSOs to find volunteer offerings coinciding with student-athlete schedules.

Mission statement. Higher education has a long history of institutional mission statements citing the importance of community service (Cochrane & Schill, 2013). Mission statements mentioning community service make a positive impact on students, staff, and faculty performing community service (Chesbrough, 2011). While it is a positive development for universities to mention community service in their mission statement, the university's administrators also need to create connections with their local community's leaders to ensure the relationship is fruitful for both parties (Blouin & Perry, 2009).

Most intercollegiate athletic departments have their own departmental mission statements. In an exploratory study of 72 NCAA Division I athletic departments, athletic departments were found to frequently mention community service in their mission statement, but the departmental websites lacked any information on community service being performed by student-athletes or departmental members (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011). A more recent study found athletic department mission statements rarely mentioned community service (Huml et al., 2014). Mission statements for Division II athletic departments were even less likely to mention community service than Division I athletic departments, even though the NCAA Division II Philosophy Statement specifically mentions the importance of community service (Huml et al., 2014). These findings raise concerns on the implementation of NCAA organizational initiatives among their university members.

Geographical location. There is limited research on the influence of geographical location (urban, suburban, rural) on community service participation. Most of this research has examined land-grant institutions. Land grant institutions were initially created with the expectation of providing higher education in an area lacking accessible college instruction with the output of increasing the number of educated and civically engaged individuals in the surrounding community (Jacoby, 2009). Unfortunately, this focus on community service seems to be lacking at land-grant institutions. For instance, Weerts and Sandmann (2008) found land-grant institutions less likely to include service language into their mission than urban universities. The authors also reported how faculty and administrators perceived their service expectations as an institution were more aligned with other educational organizations and not the local community (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Examination of the urban institutions found their willingness to utilize their city's civic opportunities and greater integration of community service into university-wide curriculum (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). These studies draw connections with previous findings of mission statements mentioning community service as more likely to increase community service participation (Chesbrough, 2011; Sullivan, Ludden, & Singleton, 2013). Further examination on the impact of geographical location on community service is needed to provide clarification between the two variables.

Person(s) choosing the service activity. College students are less likely to volunteer again in the future if they perceive to have limited control of choosing their volunteering experience (Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999). For example, Henderson, Pancer, and Brown (2014) found students expressed concerns about the lack of connection between the volunteer's personal interest and how that may lead to lack of community service involvement in the future, "if it [volunteering] doesn't come from your heart I don't think it's going to mean a lot and you're not going to keep up with it" (p. 135). Going further, students called "forced" community service as similar to "blackmail" or "forced labor" (Warburton & Smith, 2003, p. 779).

In contrast to the general student body, student-athletes are often dependent on athletic department personnel for connecting them with potential academic opportunities, such as community service (Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2013). While larger NCAA Division I universities can financially support hiring additional personnel to support student-athletes, other universities cannot and need their current staff to assist in multiple roles (Nite, 2012). With the contrast between student-athletes and non-athlete students, further investigation of athletic department personnel (coaches and athletic administrators) connecting student-athletes with community service opportunities is needed.

Community service as punishment. Similar to not choosing community service, some college students perform community service as a punishment. This situation seems more prevalent for student-athletes than college students (Huml et al., 2014). An examination of student-athlete handbooks found community service was frequently mentioned as a form of punishment following rule violations (Huml et al., 2014). As mentioned previously, an environment where student-athletes are potentially introduced to community service as a form of punishment is likely to build negative connotations between the student-athlete and performing community service (Stukas et al., 1999). While Huml et al. (2014) found athletic departments frequently mentioned community service as a form of punishment, no previous study has examined how frequently student-athletes perform community service as a form of punishment.

Community service causes. Finally, college students have shown a preference when it comes to the CSO and their purpose. College students often prefer working with youth, health-related issues, environmental issues, fighting hunger, and civic awareness campaigns compared to other issues (Johnson, Levy, Cichetti, & Zinkiewicz, 2013). Astin and Sax (1998) found similar results, with education, human needs, public safety, and environmental being the most frequently chosen topics. In a study combining the community service activities of both student-athletes and non-athlete students, youth organizations, health-related, and environmental were the most selected areas of service (Hoffman, Kihl, & Browning, 2015). A deeper investigation into the service choices of student-athletes could provide greater information to athletic departments on the CSOs they should highlight to student-athletes.

Method

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) examine how college athletic departments integrate community service into the student-athlete educational experience, and (2) investigate variables associated with the frequency of student-athlete community service. Based on the literature review of student involvement among the general student body and student-athlete community service, the researchers developed the following research questions for this study: Research Question 1: Does the frequency of community service engagement for student-athletes vary based on:

(1A) their NCAA division level?
(1B) their athletic department's mission statement (e.g., mentions community service)?
(1C) geographical location of their institution?
(1D) whether community service is a chosen or required activity?
(1E) whether community service is used as punishment?
(1F) who chooses the volunteering experience (e.g., coach, athletic administrator, student-athlete)?

Research Question 2: From the information known by the athletic department, are student-athletes more likely to volunteer with organizations focused on specific causes?

Each of these research questions is connected to SIT. The first research question(s) relates to the involvement of the athletic department into the community service participation of their student-athletes. As mentioned previously, Astin (1984) speaks to the importance of the university playing a supplementary role in connecting their students to educational opportunities. Each of these questions relate to the athletic department involving their student-athletes in community service. The second research question provides insight to athletic departments on which service opportunities they should recommend to their student-athletes. It is important for universities/athletic departments to be efficient with the time they use to highlight opportunities to college students (Astin, 1984). Moreover, SIT posits the participating student will develop their academic skills at a greater rate if they are the primary decision-makers. By understanding the causes preferred by student-athletes, athletic departments can be more direct in their recommendations.

Participants

The target population for this study consisted of intercollegiate athletic administrators across all NCAA divisions (Division I, II, and III). This population includes all universities and athletic conferences across the NCAA spectrum. A total of 943 participants were identified within the target population. This list of total participants falls short of incorporating all NCAA institutions, as some universities' e-mail addresses did not work or the previous person in the targeted position(s) had left the university. The sample population focused on administrators with a title centralized in student-athlete development (e.g., Assistant Athletic Director of Student-Athlete Development). If an athletic department possessed multiple people with this type of title, each was added to the distribution list. These individuals were considered to provide information-rich cases for the purposes of this research study. The researchers captured administrators' e-mail information through staff directory webpages of universities.

Upon receiving human subjects committee approval, the researchers distributed the exploratory survey to the target population. The researchers used Qualtrics to disburse the instrument and collect results. A reminder was sent to the non-respondents two weeks after the original distribution. This reminder is an option offered by Qualtrics, which internally identifies participants who did not complete the survey from the original e-mail link and e-mails them a reminder with another link for the instrument. Two weeks following the reminder, the survey was closed. A total of 200 participants completed the survey, resulting in a 21.2% response rate. While the researchers originally sought a larger response rate, online surveys have shown to elicit lower response rates than paper surveys (Baruch & Holtom, 2008; Shih & Fan, 2008). Additionally, the response rate achieves the standard suggested by Nulty (2008), who recommends a response rate of 12% or higher with a sample size of at least 200 participants. Survey participants were equally distributed between NCAA Division I ($n = 67$), Division II ($n = 68$), and Division III ($n = 65$).

Instrumentation

To address the purposes of this study and build on the emerging body of research regarding student-athlete community service, an exploratory survey was developed to reach a

larger group of participants than prior studies. It is imperative to recognize an exploratory survey is distinctly different from a traditional scale development project. The latter requires a systematic multi-step process using focus groups, and multiple samples for examining the validity and reliability of a proposed instrument. Instead, as Sue and Ritter (2012) noted, "if a survey is conducted for exploratory purposes, no attempt is made to examine a random sample of a population; rather researchers conducting exploratory research usually look for individuals who are knowledgeable about a topic or process" (p. 2). This instrument is not intended to be generalized to other populations or for use in future research, rather the instrument was developed to further our understanding of factors involved in student-athlete community service.

Based on literature on student-athlete community service programs, the researchers developed an exploratory survey instrument containing items examining athletic department mission statements (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011; Huml et al., 2014), requirements of community service (Henderson et al., 2014), geographical location of athletic departments (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008), frequency of student-athlete community service (Astin & Sax, 1998), development of CSO-athletic department relationships (Svensson et al., 2014) and the nature of CSOs where student-athletes are volunteering (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Each of these topics were self-reported by the participants and were not independently cross-validated by the research team. Items were also created to allow participants to self-report their university and NCAA division affiliation, in addition to demographical information. To ensure confidentiality of the participants, the initial collection of contact information for the targeted population was completed by a member of the research team who did not have access to the instrument results. Also, university affiliation data was only used to cross reference the participant's geographical location and *U.S. News and World Report* geographical information (urban, suburban, rural) for the results reported in this study.

Following the development of the initial exploratory survey based on an extensive review of literature, a panel of experts reviewed the instrument to ensure it aligned with the literature and applied to the current environment of student-athlete community service programs. This alignment between the panel of experts and related literature provides this exploratory study a degree of construct validity. This panel of experts included scholars active in the field and current intercollegiate athletic administrators. With no changes recommended from the panel, the researchers then piloted the study with five athletic administrators at a NCAA Division I institution in the South. Participants in the pilot study recommended the instrument should provide an opportunity for people to explain certain responses (i.e., why did your institution use community service as punishment for student-athletes?). Once the research team made the subsequent changes, the survey was distributed.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using the SPSS 21.0 software. Statistical analyses of the data were computed using Chi-Square Analysis to assess the research questions. These analyses are commonly used to examine frequencies and allowed the researchers to determine if there were significant differences between observed and expected frequencies of student-athletes performing community service (Shavelson, 1996). Specifically, the researchers examined the impact of NCAA divisional level, geographic location, and athletic department mission statement. Chi-square analyses were also conducted to examine the impact of requiring community service, community service as punishment, and personnel in charge of selecting the

volunteering experience. In order to maximize the usable data, and minimize the impact of missing data, the researchers utilized a pairwise deletion, or available-case analysis, to analyze the data pertaining to the research questions. Pairwise deletion is widely used in exploratory studies and strengthens the power of the findings (Peugh & Enders, 2004). Due to the use of pairwise deletion, results for one research question may have varying levels of total participants (*n*) compared to results from another research question.

For this study, the researchers also wanted to identify the types of organizations and frequency with which student-athletes volunteered with specific CSOs. As such, administrators were asked to identify specific organizations (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Susan G. Komen) or types of organizations (e.g., food bank, homeless shelter) with which student-athletes had performed community service. Based on these results, the research team generated a list of 276 unique organizations and activities. The team coded the organizations based on categorical codes from previous research (Astin & Sax, 1998; Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013; Johnson et al., 2013) via a code start list including the following categories: youth support, health services, environment, civic awareness, hunger, homelessness, education, environment/sustainability, and public safety. Following the initial coding process, the research team determined several organizations and types of organizations could not be coded into categories set forth by prior research. Therefore, the research team developed additional categories including physical activity, fundraising/donations, companionship, and disability. Data were recoded to include the new categories to offer a more distinct picture of the student-athlete engagement with CSOs.

Results

Descriptive statistics including the frequencies and percentages within each group were calculated and are reported in Table 1.

Research Question 1A: NCAA Division. When examining the differences of student-athlete volunteering across NCAA divisions, chi-square analysis results were not statistically significant ($X^2 = 8.224$, $df = 6$, $p = .222$). This indicated student-athletes participate in similar levels of volunteering, regardless of their institution's NCAA division (See Table 2). Examination of the frequencies show student-athletes at NCAA Division II institutions were less likely to volunteer 11-15 hours (9.5%, $n = 4$) compared student-athletes at Division III (13.7%, $n = 7$) and Division I institutions (23.1%, $n = 12$). Similarly, student-athletes at the Division I level were more likely to engage in 16 or more hours of community service (26.9%, $n = 14$) compared to NCAA Division III (21.6%, $n = 11$) and Division II (14.3%, $n = 6$).

Research Question 1B: Mission Statement. Athletic department mission statements were examined for mentioning community service and their effect on student-athlete community service. The result was not statistically significant ($X^2 = 9.363$, $df = 6$, $p = .154$). This suggests student-athletes performed similar levels of community service regardless of their athletic department's mission statement mentioned community service. Further analysis of frequencies revealed student-athletes in athletic departments with a service-focused mission statement were somewhat more likely to volunteer 11-15 hours (17.7%, $n = 14$) than those without a service-focused mission statement (13.4%, $n = 11$). Also, findings emerged in regards to student-athletes completing 16 or more hours of community service in athletic departments with a service-focused mission (22.6%, $n = 14$) than those at institutions were the departmental mission statement did not mention community service (20.7%, $n = 17$).

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Research Question 1C: Geographical Location. When examining the differences of student-athlete community service based on their university's geographical location (e.g., urban, suburban, rural), chi-square analysis results were not statistically significant ($X^2 = 9.363$, $df = 6$, $p = .154$). This finding indicates student-athlete volunteerism is similar regardless to their university's location. Additional analysis of frequencies revealed student-athletes at institutions located in suburban areas were more likely to engage in at least 6-10 hours of community service (54.4%, $n = 25$) than those at institutions located in Urban/Metropolitan settings (28.6%, $n = 16$) or Rural settings (30.2%, $n = 13$). In contrast, student-athletes at institutions located in Urban/Metropolitan settings (25.0%, $n = 14$) and Rural settings (23.3%, $n = 10$) were more likely to engage in at least 16 or more hours of service compared to those at institutions located in Suburban locations (15.2%, $n = 7$).

Research Question 1D: Community Service Required. Levels of community service participation were analyzed compared to whether the athletic department required student-athletes to volunteer. The chi-square test revealed no statistical significance ($X^2 = 0.208$, $df = 3$, $p = .976$), meaning the frequency of student-athlete community service was similar regardless of the athletic department's policy of requiring community service. Further analysis of the frequencies indicates student-athletes were marginally more likely to perform 16 or more hours of service when the athletic department required community service (22.5%, $n = 11$) compared to institutions where service was voluntary (20.8% $n = 20$). In contrast, student-athletes were marginally more likely to perform 5 hours or less of service when the athletic department required community service (26.5%, $n = 14$) compared to institutions where service was voluntary (25.0%, $n = 24$).

Research Question 1E: Community Service as Punishment. When examining the differences of community service participation based on the student-athlete having to perform community service as punishment, the findings were not statistically significant ($X^2 = 3.219$, $df = 3$, $p = .359$). These findings revealed the frequency of student-athlete community service was unaffected by the athletic department using the activity as punishment. Additional analysis of frequencies revealed student-athletes were more likely to perform community service at institutions where athletic departments did not use it as punishment (24.1%, $n = 26$) compared to schools that stipulated service for violation of departmental policies (13.9%, $n = 5$). At the same time, student-athletes in athletic departments using community service as punishment were marginally more likely to perform 11-15 hours of community service (19.4%, $n = 7$) than those at institutions where it was not utilized for violation of policies (14.8%, $n = 16$).

Research Question 1F: Community Service Choice. Lastly, the frequency of community service participation as it related to who chose the service activity was also analyzed. Similar to the previous sub-questions, the results were not statistically significant ($X^2 = 6.658$, $df = 6$, $p = .354$), suggesting student-athletes participate in similar levels of volunteering, regardless to the personnel choosing the volunteering activity. Further analysis of frequencies indicated student-athletes were more likely to perform 16 or more hours of service when the decision of volunteering activity was made by a coach (25.3%, $n = 22$) or athletic administrator (21.1%, $n = 8$) rather than the student-athlete (5.0%, $n = 1$). Student-athletes were also more likely to perform 11-15 hours of community service was decided by an athletic administrator (23.7%, $n = 9$) compared to the student-athlete (15.0%, $n = 3$) or a coach (12.6%, $n = 11$).

Research Question 2: Community Service Causes. The second question guiding this study was to explore the causes and organizations for which student-athletes performed community service. Researchers qualitatively coded the data using categories set forth by

Johnson et al. (2013) - youth support, health services, environment, civic awareness, and hunger and homelessness. Several organizations and types of organizations could not be coded into categories set forth by Johnson and colleagues; thus, the research team developed additional categories including physical activity, fundraising/donations, companionship, and disability. Overall, participants identified 274 distinct organizations with which student-athletes volunteered. Health services ($n = 67$), hunger and homelessness ($n = 37$), physical activity ($n = 36$), youth support ($n = 36$), and fundraising/donations ($n = 31$) accounted for 75% of the types of community service organizations identified on the survey. Athletic departments identified two organizations, the American Red Cross ($n = 4$) and the Ronald McDonald House ($n = 4$), most frequently for student-athlete volunteering. Nine organizations were identified three times – the American Cancer Society, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club of America, Habitat for Humanity, the Make-a-Wish Foundation, the Special Olympics, Toys for Tots, United Way, and the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Student-athletes and athletic department personnel were no more likely to engage with national CSOs than local CSOs.

Discussion

This study examined how college athletic departments integrate community service into the student-athlete educational experience and the variables associated with the frequency of student-athlete community service. Data were collected from NCAA athletic administrators working frequently with student-athletes on education-related activities, yielding 200 participants. For the first research question, information was analyzed on student-athlete frequency of volunteering and the following independent variables: NCAA division, athletic department mission statement, geographical location of school, requiring community service, community service as punishment, and who chooses the community service activity. Each of these sub-topics reported a finding dissimilar than was expected based on previous studies on community service.

With NCAA Division II and Division III having specific initiatives focusing on student-athletes performing community service (Durham, 2015; NCAA, n.d.), the research team anticipated higher levels of community service participation in these student-athlete populations. Results from this study found no significant differences of community service participation related to the student-athlete's NCAA division. These findings raise concerns on the effectiveness of NCAA's community service initiatives. Also, it could mean athletic departments are focusing on performing community service only during those specific initiatives, thereby limiting their community service. Further examination is warranted on Division II and III community service initiatives and their interaction with student-athlete community service. Also, additional research is needed on Division I's involvement in community service since their initiatives for community service may be more conference or university affiliated. One example could be college football bowl games, which often require community service being performed by student-athletes from both teams in the city hosting the event ("Community Outreach", n.d.).

Previous research also showed an association between mission statements mentioning community service and an increase in community service of their students (Chesbrough, 2011). This led to an assumption of student-athletes performing higher levels of community service if their athletic department mission includes a statement about community service. Results found no significant differences related to frequency of student-athlete community service and athletic department mission statements. These findings align with two previous studies on athletic

department mission statements and the possible disconnect between prioritizing community service as one of the department's missions and acting on those priorities (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011; Huml et al., 2014).

Universities located within urban areas have also been found to have students perform community service more frequently than students attending universities in suburban or rural areas (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). The results from this study did not support these previous findings as there were no significant differences for frequency of community service participation related to the university's geographical location. Student-athletes have been known to receive greater academic support from their universities compared to the general student body (Huml, et al., 2014). This increased support could mean athletic departments are often seeking out the community service opportunities for student-athletes, alleviating the challenges faced by non-athlete students in rural or suburban areas with potentially smaller number of CSOs. A future, qualitative study with athletic department administrators may reveal their level of involvement in helping student-athletes locate community service opportunities.

How and why a student connects with a CSO to perform community service has been shown to be an important factor in their level of satisfaction with volunteering (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Warburton & Smith, 2003). This was the focus of the last three sub-questions of RQ1, (a) forcing a student-athlete to volunteer, (b) using community service as punishment, and (c) who chooses the community service activity. Previous literature has highlighted the negative ramifications of not letting the student choose and willingly attend their community service activity (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Henderson et al., 2014; Warburton & Smith, 2003). Therefore, the researchers expected a higher rate of community service if student-athletes chose their own community service activities, were not being required to volunteer, or were not volunteering as a form of punishment. The findings from these sub-questions were not significant, meaning student-athlete community service was not affected by being forced, used as punishment, or being chosen by someone besides the student-athlete. These findings may imply athletic departments primarily support student-athletes to volunteer disregarding their freedom of choice, therefore artificially elevating their frequency of volunteering. Thus, researchers are encouraged to survey student-athletes to capture the frequency of their volunteering that is not required, used as punishment, nor chosen by an athletic department employee.

For the second research question, information was gathered on the most frequently chosen community service causes by student-athletes, as known by the athletic department. Johnson et al. (2013) found college students volunteered with CSOs dedicated primarily to youth support, health services, pro-environment, civic awareness, or hunger and homelessness. As such, a similar pattern was expected within a population of student-athletes. This assumption was partially supported, as youth support, health services, and hunger and homelessness emerged as three of the most popular causes. Additionally, student-athletes also volunteered at organizations focused on physical activity, such as the Special Olympics or Girls on the Run. These findings are not surprising given the familiarly of student-athletes in sport-based environments. In this context, student-athletes may also serve as role models for participants in CSO programs (Svensson et al., 2014). Student-athletes were also likely to engage with CSOs for fundraising or donation activities. For example, teams and individuals coordinated toy donations for Toys for Tots or sponsored blood drives for the American Red Cross. Other student-athletes and teams set a financial goal to raise money for the Susan G. Komen Foundation or Relay for Life. Beyond these practical implications, the findings from this study also have implications on the theoretical framework as it relates to student-athletes.

Theoretical Implications

Non-significant findings from this study present several implications related to the application of SIT (Astin, 1984) to student-athletes. As mentioned earlier, SIT proposes two primary objectives to stimulating college student development. First, allow the student to be the primary decision-maker for participating in academic opportunities at their institution. Second, have the university (e.g. athletic department) play a supplementary role in supporting student-athlete development. For example, Astin (1984) recommends for the university to highlight potential opportunities to their students, but not require them to participate. This study examined the application of SIT as it applied to student-athletes performing community service. Specifically, the researchers wanted to capture the involvement of the athletic department and university characteristics on the frequency of student-athlete community service. With the theoretical framework, it was assumed there would be statistical significance in at least some of the sub-questions from RQ1. Surprisingly, none of the sub-questions were statistically significant, raising questions of the application of SIT to the population of student-athletes.

Findings from this study raise the possibility of the student-athlete experience being so unique that SIT is not appropriate to explain their academic development. Previous research has examined how student-athletes encounter academic support in higher education that is dissimilar to other college students. Student-athletes often have more personnel supporting their endeavors, including athletic academic advisors, assigned tutors, and even coaches (Huml et al., 2014). This support is beyond the traditional staff and faculty support the general student population enjoys in higher education. Thus, student-athletes may be more dependent on athletic department employees for their academic development than other students. Previous studies have reported student-athletes self-reporting this dependency on athletic department personnel on support for coursework and class registration (Clift & Mower, 2013; Hardin & Pate, 2013; Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2011). This study's findings suggested their dependency may go beyond the classroom and into other areas of their educational experience. Further examination is warranted on the dependency of student-athletes on athletic department personnel to complete other education-related tasks. This would further expose the relationship between student-athlete academic development and SIT (Astin, 1984).

Another possibility is athletic departments are not effective in playing a supplementary role in highlighting benefits/opportunities to increase their student-athlete's educational experience (e.g., community service). The findings from this study provide evidence the NCAA Division II and III initiatives have not positively impacted the frequency of student-athlete community service. Additionally, findings from this study indicated universities in areas known for increased community service (i.e. urban) reported similar levels of community service as rural universities. With the lack of statistical differences on NCAA initiatives and university's geographical locations, athletic departments may have to be more resourceful in highlighting potential community service opportunities. For example, athletic departments may have to investigate community service opportunities working around their student-athlete's academic and athletic responsibilities, highlighting SIT's emphasis of perceiving the student's free time as a finite resource.

This study's findings contrast with previous student-athlete research utilizing Astin's SIT (1984). Andrassy et al. (2014) found athletic departments could create a positive environment for student-athletes to academically develop through organizational capacity (i.e. CHAMPS/Life Skills program effectiveness). On the other hand, this study interviewed NCAA Division I

athletic departments pre-identified as dedicated towards student-athlete academic development. This is dissimilar to this study's participants, which targeted a broader audience of athletic administrators across all NCAA divisions. Another study found non-athletes reported greater access to education-related activities compared to student-athletes, but the self-reported academic development was similar between groups (Weight et al., 2014). These findings raised concerns about intercollegiate athletics promoting academic opportunities for their student-athletes. These previous findings, coupled with the results with this study, raise concerns about the application of SIT to the student-athlete experience, but further examination is necessary.

Limitations

Findings from this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. Although the response rate achieves the recommendations of Nulty (2008), an exploratory survey was used. This means that the aim of this project was not to develop a generalizable scale, rather the purpose of this approach was to further our understanding of factors impacting student-athlete community service. Unlike previous studies examining the athletic department mission statement (Andrassy & Bruening, 2011; Huml et al., 2014), the researchers in this study asked the participants whether their athletic department's mission statement mentions community service, but did not examine each mission statement independently. Also, this study focused on the perceptions and opinions of athletic administrators on their student-athletes and employer (athletic department). A more accurate depiction of the frequency and ramifications of student-athlete community service would have been collecting data directly from the student-athletes. Finally, with this study relying on inferential statistics to glean analysis from the data, there are some concerns about the increase of Type-I error (Batterham & Hopkins, 2006).

Conclusion

Contrary to the design of SIT (Astin, 1984), student-athletes reported non-significant differences associated with variables previously found to be impactful for non-athlete students. Specifically, findings show no statistically significant relationship between frequencies of student-athlete volunteering and NCAA Division level, service-focused mission statement, geographical location, mandatory service requirements, use of community service as punishment, nor personnel choosing volunteer activity. These findings provide new insights into the involvement of the athletic department and its effect on the student-athlete educational experience. It raises questions about the effectiveness of passive involvement by the athletic department. This passive involvement examined by the study included NCAA community service initiatives pushed by the NCAA Division II and III governing body, and emphasizing community service through the athletic department mission statement. On the other hand, active involvement by the athletic department provided a mixed bag of results pertaining to community service involvement. Requiring student-athletes to perform community service, or using community service as a form of punishment, did not have a significant correlation with the frequency of student-athlete community service. As it relates to the university's geographical location, athletic departments may provide enough support to overcome logistical challenges faced by rural/suburban institutions. Findings from this study raise the possibility the SIT does not adequately apply to the student-athlete educational experience, but further investigation is needed.

Student-athletes were also found to volunteer primarily with causes related to youth support, health services, and hunger and homelessness, promotion of physical activity, and fundraising/donation. With the similarities between these categories and community service performed by non-athlete students, this may create an opportunity for these two student populations to perform community service together. This potential combination would create better connections between student-athletes and other college students, creating a further connection within the university-side of their higher education experience.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	*n*	%
NCAA Division		
Division I	66	33
Division II	68	34
Division III	65	33
Location		
Urban/Metropolitan	77	39
Suburban	56	28
Rural	66	33
Is Community Service Required?		
Yes	70	36
No	126	64
Does Mission Statement Mention Community Service?		
Yes	91	48
No	97	52
Is Community Service Used as Punishment?		
Yes	37	25
No	110	75
Who Chooses Community Service Activity?		
Athletic Administrator	39	27
Coach/Coaching Staff	87	60
Student-Athlete	20	14
Frequency of Student-Athlete Volunteering/Semester		
0 hours to 5 hours	37	26
6 hours to 10 hours	54	37
11 hours to 15 hours	23	16
16 hours or more	31	21

Note: Totals of percentages are not 100 for every characteristic because of rounding

Table 2

The Impact on Student-Athlete's Frequency of Volunteering from Demographic Variables

Demographics	0-5 Hours		6-10 Hours		11-15 Hours		16+ Hours		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	X^2
NCAA Division									
Division I	11	21.2	15	28.9	12	23.1	14	26.9	8.224
Division II	11	26.1	21	50.0	4	9.5	6	14.3	
Division III	15	29.4	18	35.3	7	13.7	11	21.6	
Location									
Urban/Metropolitan	17	30.3	16	28.6	9	16.1	14	25.0	9.363
Suburban	7	15.2	25	54.4	7	15.2	7	15.2	
Rural	13	30.2	13	30.2	7	16.3	10	23.3	
Community Service Required									
Yes	13	26.5	17	34.7	8	16.3	11	22.5	0.208
No	24	25.0	37	38.5	15	15.6	20	20.8	
Mission Statement									
Yes	14	22.6	23	37.1	11	17.7	14	22.6	0.904
No	23	28.1	31	39.0	11	13.4	17	20.7	
Community Service as Punishment									
Yes	12	33.3	12	33.3	7	19.4	5	13.9	3.219
No	24	22.2	42	38.9	16	14.8	26	24.1	
Chooses Community Service									
Athletic Administrator	9	23.7	12	31.6	9	23.7	8	21.1	6.658
Coach/Coaching Staff	21	24.1	33	37.9	11	12.6	22	25.3	
Student-Athlete	7	35.0	9	45.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	

Note: Totals of percentages are not 100 for every characteristic because of rounding

$p < .05$.