**DIII Student-Athletes and Their Treatment by Institutions: End of Summer Report**

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1. Introduction
   1. DI and DIII student-athletes share many experiences, however, there is a gap in research between DI and DIII athletes due to America’s obsession with big-time Division I athletics. This project examines the understudied population of Division III student-athletes and takes a look at how institutions treat these athletes as well as various factors that affect their lives. This summer research is being done to assist Dr. Melzer with collecting and analyzing data for his next book. It is a multi-method national study that is following a smaller on campus Pilot study from last fall. We used a combination of interviews, documents, and official institutional data that was compiled by the US Department of Education.
   2. Dr. Melzer is conducting a broad study on D3 student-athletes and athletics. The project began with an Albion College pilot study last Fall, surveying and interviewing current and former student-athletes. Insights and findings from the pilot research led to Dr. Melzer revising the questionnaire and interview guides for the national study. Originally, we anticipated collecting lots of interview and survey data last semester so we could spend much of FURSCA coding and analyzing it. However, covid hit and delayed data collection, and we instead focused on already available institutional data Then we made the decision to delay soliciting interview participants *again* out of respect for the rising Black Lives Matter movement, after George Floyd was killed in late May. We have been doing many different tasks to help push the project forward in other ways. Still, as planned we did Grounded Theory Method training. And we have been able to collect, code, and analyze some interview data. Today we’re presenting those preliminary data and analyses. Dr. Melzer will continue data collection for his large project. To better understand how colleges are treating student-athletes, Scott will also be interviewing coaches, athletic directors, Admissions staff, Presidents, and NCAA staff.
   3. There have been many studies on Division I athletes that have given us insight about inequality that exists in the NCAA. One of the biggest criticisms of college athletics is the exploitation of these amateur athletes, especially African-American men football and basketball players because they generate millions of dollars in revenue and only receive their scholarships. The main question of our research is how do colleges treat their Division III student-athletes? More specifically, are institutions setting up athletes for failure or success? Are students athletes being used or exploited because they generate millions of dollars in revenue and only receive their scholarships? Are they recruiting students just to pay their bills? Are they satisfied or dissatisfied with their experiences?
2. Summary/Results
   1. Dr. Melzer trained us in the qualitative research method called Grounded Theory Method. Grounded Theory Method, “…consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves…Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006). To start the research I took notes on and analyzed NCAA documents and did literature review on articles Dr. Melzer sent me. Next, we had to recruit participants for Dr. Melzer to interview. By constructing a collective list of NCAA DIII colleges, we were able to look through those schools rosters in order to find student-athletes. Additionally, we looked through NCAA twitter and instagram to find potential participants. We then coded the interview transcripts, which is the process of defining what the data is about. After coding the interviews, we discussed our codes noting similarities and differences, and analyzed the data, coming up with theoretical categories
   2. Although our interview participants report some positive experiences, the institutional data leads us to believe that something else may be going on. Some data that I have pulled out shows that private DIII colleges may be exploiting their student athletes and tells us that we should look further into it. For the enrollment percentages at these schools 64% were white, 9% were African American, 9% were Hispanic, 3% were Asian American, and 4% were two or more races. The remaining students are “race unknown” students and international students. Only 32% of students at these 300 institutions are men, but men comprise 59% of the student-athletes at these colleges. The average percentage of all student athletes that are men is 59%. The average retention rate of all schools is 78%, however, there are 8 outlier schools with retention rates under 60%. The average graduation rates of all schools is 63%, however, there are 18 schools with graduation rates under 40%, one as low as 17%. The 2018 average net price of schools is $24,812 and for students whose families have incomes of $0-30,000 it is $17,924. However, looking closer, some schools charge the same amount for all students and low-income students, one school even charges low-income students more than all students. Many liberal arts colleges are adding new football programs in order to cope with rising costs and declining enrollments (Demirel 2013). A roster of 65-70 new football student athletes could net a college around $2 million a year. There is also no regular-season roster limit in DIII . DIII schools have low averages of male students, although, high averages of male student-athletes. Colleges need and want to recruit more diverse student bodies because they're competing for fewer high school graduates; they especially want more men of color. Football is one way to help with this. Could schools be recruiting athletes to bring in more men and money? Are they just using them or setting them up for success? Interview data shows that student athletes are having mostly positive experiences at their colleges. However, when digging into the institutional data there seems to be evidence that some colleges may be using their student athletes. Dr. Melzer will be continuing this research, and to better understand how colleges are treating student-athletes, he will also be interviewing coaches, ADs, Admissions staff, Presidents, and NCAA staff.
3. Conclusions
   1. I am a Division III athlete and I was interested in doing this study because I wanted to see how different institutions treat their athletes and compare and contrast my own personal experiences. Being a student-athlete myself was an advantage when doing this study, I had many existing contacts when looking for interview participants and I had an insider's perspective when coding interviews and analyzing the data. Doing this project allowed me to learn valuable research skills, such as Ground Theory Method, that I will be able to use in the future.
   2. This was an amazing experience and that made learning and research fun. I would like to say a special thanks to the director and assistant director of FURSCA Dr. Vanessa McCaffrey and Renee Kreger, my advisor Dr. Scott Melzer, and thank you to my FURSCA Scholarship Sponsor, Jean Bengel Laughlin, '50 and Sheldon Laughlin Endowment for Student Research.