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Balancing academic and athletic time management : A qualitative exploration of first year student athletes' university football experiences

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Balancing academic and athletic time management: A qualitative exploration of first year student athletes' university football experiences

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Introduction

In a university setting, academic success is a challenge where student athletes have to deal with demanding requirements (Padilla & Baumer, 1994). Time management may shape the academic and athletic success that varsity athletes achieve at university. Although varsity student athletes may receive time management support from administrators of athletic programs (Gabbard & Halischak, 1993; Klem & Connell, 2004; Rhodes & Nevill, 2004; Solomon, Battistich, Kim & Watson, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, Vasquez, & Mehan, 2000), this may not always be the case. It may be that some university varsity athletic programs provide a greater academic supportive environment than others, including time management assistance.

Participation in a varsity athletic program requires a great amount of time and effort to meet the demands of practices, meetings, training, film sessions and games, thus adding extra stressors to first year students trying to integrate into university life in general. These time commitments may reduce a student athlete's academic engagement and therefore negatively affect one's academic success. Thus it becomes paramount for student athletes to manage time adequately to achieve academic success.

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Time management is not an easy thing to do. Indeed, for many first year students, the adjustment from a standardized time structured high school schedule (e.g., 9-3pm) to a more non-structured university schedule (15 hours of class time per week with classes during different time slots – often day and nights) is challenging in and of itself. Although a study in an urban high school found no association between sports involvement and academic performance (Fisher, Juszczak, & Friedman, 1996), the university setting may pose new challenges on young adults' time management in regards to their academic engagement. The stress of adjusting to a non-structured schedule is a difficult one without factoring in the impact of time commitments (e.g., practice and training) for varsity athletes. The availability of academic engagement opportunities, particularly for first year students, may play a key role in helping students time manage and ultimately find success both in the classroom and on the playing field.

This study's purpose is to identify the challenges of time management experienced by first year varsity athletes. Specifically, the intent of this paper is to identify challenging factors of time management for first year varsity football players at a Canadian university and the potential impact that time management issues may have on athletic and academic success. It is assumed that first year student athletes encounter a significant amount of challenges when managing time effectively in order to succeed both on the playing field and in the classroom. This assumption is based on the understanding that university varsity sports are serious leisure pursuits engaged by student athletes. Therefore, student athletes are focused on trying to succeed at two serious endeavours – academics and varsity sports–within a limited time period.

Review of Literature

Varsity Sports as Serious Leisure Pursuits

Varsity football participation is considered to be a serious leisure activity. Within the football program there rests a particular community of practice consisting of first year student athletes. All of these student athletes are also members of their university's academic community of practice. Thus, the time commitments of university athletes are two-fold: (1) a time commitment that centres on the varsity sport or team, and (2) a time commitment that centres on all aspects of university life, including academia, outside of the commitment to the varsity team.

Cheng and Koozechian (2007) expressed how sports may serve as a miniature society within a larger social setting (i.e., a miniature society of an athletic group within a university setting). Student athletes who are

serious about their participation in these miniature societies usually take upon themselves a new set of commitments and these commitments have the potential to obstruct the engagement with other communities (i.e., academic engagement).

Serious leisure participation has the potential to affect one's lifestyle and *central life interest*. Central life interest, a concept put forth by Dubin (1992), is often associated with a major role in life, which emerges through positive emotional states. Central life interests include physical and intellectual energies invested towards activities, such as amateur athletes' dedication to their sport (Dubin). Stebbins (2001) has expressed that serious leisure can become a central life interest for football players, "as it is a segment of their lives in which they have made a substantial emotional investment" (Stebbins, 1993, p. 81). In the case of student athletes, one is said to be involved in a central life interest when he or she devotes much more time to practice and training than will be invested in actual competition (Dubin). These theories which match the lifestyle of varsity student athletes has helped conceptualize participation in serious leisure activity.

Serious leisure may be further defined as the "systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3). The word "serious," in serious leisure is not to represent distress, anxiety, or joylessness, but rather to embody such qualities as carefulness, earnestness, sincerity, and importance (Stebbins, 2001). Serious leisure is not to be confused with unserious "causal" leisure. Causal leisure activities are relatively short-lived, require little or no special training for the activities to be enjoyed and unlike serious leisure, do not offer ongoing, continuous leisure "careers" for the individuals pursuing these activities.

To be part of a serious leisure community such as a member of a varsity Football team, participants have to embrace, as part of their central life interest, joint enterprises that include both athletics and academic emphases. Focusing on either one of these two realities while neglecting the other would make it quite difficult for a member to adhere to a varsity Football community.

Serious leisure communities cannot be considered to be in isolation from the rest of the world or independent of other practices. For example, the academic community of a university, and the athletic community of a varsity athletic program are very much interrelated. Although the athletic and academic offices may be working within different governing spheres (Gabbard & Halischak, 1993), neither work alone in isolation from one

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another, as the athletic program is dependent on its university for funding and inclusion in the intercollegiate league in which it plays. Likewise, the athletic program brings a source of recognition for the university, develops a sense of school identity, attracts students to its university, creates entertainment for its members, and may produce a source of revenue (Gerdy, 1997). Wenger (1999) warns that boundaries as to what defines communities of practice may be very ambiguous and that "crossing boundaries between practices exposes our experience to different forms of engagement, different enterprises with different definitions of what matters, and different repertoires" (p. 140). Therefore, an in-depth analysis of student athletes may reveal how the interactions between communities in which they engage affect their time management and ultimately, their academic engagement.

Time Commitments, Varsity Sports and Academic Success

Individuals often have commitments to multiple communities (either through work, family, school, or other leisure activities) in a given day and these may obstruct the engagement with other communities (i.e., academic engagement). According to Stebbins (1993), an individual is said to be serious about a sport when "it is seen as so important to that person that he or she is willing to commit the time and effort needed to do his or her best at it in practices and games, even at the expense of other interests" (p. 81). For university student athletes, this may mean that their commitment to achieve their best athletically may come at the expense of their academic interests.

Looking beyond the individual, Padilla and Baumer's (1994) analysis of 35 NCAA universities in the United States found that not only were victories associated with higher revenues, but particularly with sports like football, higher graduation rates were actually correlated with lower revenues. Hence, there may be a trickling effect, where coaches' pay bonuses and salaries are dependent on victories, and in turn, schools with higher revenues from sports (due to their assumed expended effort on athletics and reflected winning records) are represented by lower graduation rates. However, the Canadian Interuniversity Sports system does differ from the United States' NCAA, and therefore US findings that correlate winning records, revenues, and academic performances may not be representative of the large scale operations of the Canadian system. It should however be noted that Canadian student athletes may also feel a pressure to succeed athletically, which may supersede the desire to achieve academically.

According to Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, and Usinger (1995), only student engagement has a direct effect on academic success, as other variables such as external influences and psychological factors act only through engagement. Indeed, variables such as teacher

context or self-efficacy only indirectly influence academic success since they undermine or enhance academic engagement (Connell et al.; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990).

Another challenge to academic engagement for first year university student athletes is that they must cope with a variety of transitions, such as new living environments, and carrying a university course load, which may conflict with their previous living patterns. Rhodes and Nevill (2004) highlighted the importance on focusing on first year university students as it is a crucial time for academic and social integration. Likewise, research by McInnis, James, and McNaught (1995) has shown that students' first year of university studies are critical to success throughout their academic careers. Nevertheless, Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) found that first year students were able to convert different forms of engagement into academic success. Miller and Kerr (2002) reported that student athletes aggressively pursue athletic aspirations early in their university careers but often shift their focus towards academics during their later years at university. In general, first year university students may not engage in their university's various communities of practice to the same extent as do upper year students.

Given that first year university student athletes are unfamiliar with their new setting they must learn how to transition from their prior social and educational systems. First year student athletes are also learning how to effectively engage with their new athletic community. Figure 1 illustrates the transition of secondary school graduates into their new university communities. Prior to student athletes' engagement in their academic communities, the influences of the football program has already affected these individuals' university trajectories. Chronologically, integration into the football community has come before integration into academic studies, and this may have an effect on student athletes' future time management. Individuals' football, academic and social communities become unique worlds (which may overlap and influence each other) that compete for time. Beginning a new university life produces the challenge of adapting to the dynamic systems of both new academic and athletic programs which can be overwhelming for a young person.

Methodology

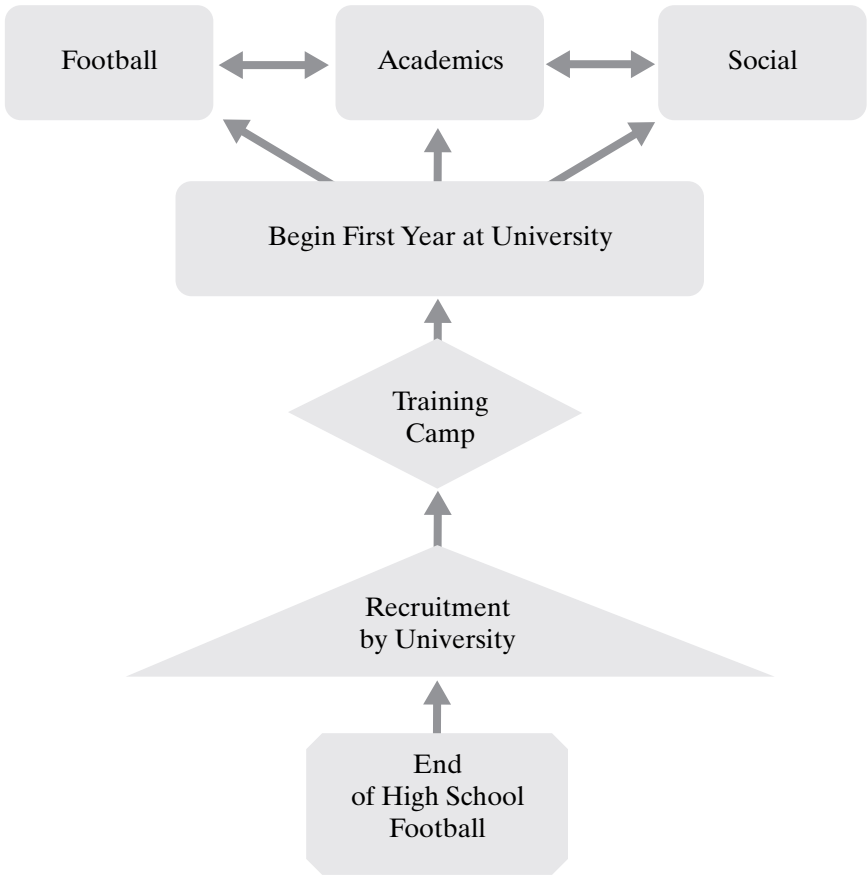
Phenomenology was chosen as the research methodology for this study since it matched well with the constructivist paradigm. Phenomenology refers to "a person's perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to the event as it exists external to the person" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 139). This research did not rely on direct observations, only the partici-

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pants' perceptions (as reported by them through interview). Note that as this research was explorative in nature and focused on student athletes' perceptions rather than quantitatively assessing their academic grades or tracking the amount of hours spent in certain communities. In the case of this research, the phenomenon under study was academic engagement of first year university football student athletes, through which, time management emerged as a significant component.

FIGURE 1

Transition into New University Communities



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Phenomenology is suited when trying to understand several individuals' common experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell, data collection in phenomenology often consists of in-depth interviews and has sample sizes ranging from five to 25 individuals whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon of study. These characteristics are reflected in this research, as 12 participants, all of whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon, were interviewed at lengths lasting up to 75 minutes. During these interviews the participants did most of the talking while the researcher did most of the listening, congruent with Leedy and Ormord's (2005) notion that phenomenological studies are as much in the hands of the participants as they are in the hands of the researcher.

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Data Collection and Setting

At the university under study there were 101 student athletes listed on the official football roster. From these 101 student athletes, 58 were listed as being in their first year of CIS eligibility, but only 32 were academically first year students. The data collection process with these first year football student athletes began with the collaboration of the football program's off-field support program for team members. The program included similar services to those described in Gabbard and Halischak's (1993) research, including off-field football training, psychological counselling, therapy, performance training and academic support (including study hall) for student athletes. Contrary to Miller and Kerr's (2002) claim that no study hall sessions are available specifically for Canadian university student athletes, study hall sessions were available to student athletes at this university and were tailored to accommodate their teams' schedules. Although the program included multiple areas that support student athletes, this research focused on its academic division. Therefore, further references to the program refer to the academic support component only.

The recruitment process for participants (first year football student athletes) began with a recruitment speech during a meeting in early September, 2009. Some of the participants willingly approached the researcher after the recruitment speech to volunteer in the study. Other participants were reminded of the recruitment speech and research project during study sessions throughout the semester. Interviews took place at the program location during routinely scheduled hours with willing participants. Note that this research did not contain an intervention component, but rather worked in collaboration with the football programs' academic support system to be able to recruit participants and conduct interview with them. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with twelve participants who were academically first year football student athletes.

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Interviews began in early October, 2009 and continued until December of that year. The majority of interviews were conducted during the football season yet several interviews took place once the football season was completed. Questions regarding student athletes' enrolment at university were asked, with a focus on engagement in the academic community, athletic community, and the influences that one community may have over another. The interview guide was developed through the concepts embedded within communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) and serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992). Although time management was not of primary focus throughout the interviews, time management emerged as the most challenging aspect of being new members in academic and athletic communities simultaneously. While some interview questions that were asked focused on time management, other questions also included information on identity, career, effort, outcomes, perseverance, and the unique social world revolving around serious leisure participation as a football student athlete.

All twelve semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Fictitious names were used to protect the participants' privacy. Transcripts of the interviews were typed verbatim, including "ums," "mmms," "like," "whatnot," etc. as these types of repetitions may communicate something about the thinking or emotions of the participant being interviewed (Bazeley, 2007). Nonverbal cues were noted in the transcription, such as pauses, laughter, mental calculations or deep thinking, since according to Bazeley, "emotional tone and use of rhetoric are important to record" (p. 45) as the meaning of spoken words may be influenced by emotions. The transcribed interviews were then organized using the NVivo (version 8) computer software. While several nodes were created *a priori* based on the concepts of serious leisure, other nodes (i.e., time management) were created *in vivo* (derived directly from the data) to help code the data for further analysis. The following results go into detail regarding student athletes' perceptions on the particular challenge of time management.

Results

While typical first year student non-athletes have to adjust to new academic scheduling (attending classes, study time, assignments, etc.), social integration, and adapting to their new living environment, first year varsity student athletes also have to adjust their living arrangements to accommodate for football practices, meetings, film review sessions, therapy, conditioning, and games. The time commitment of football players to a varsity program is quite important. During the football season coaches' expectations are that players will invest up to 40 hours a week in football over and above regular requirement of their academic program. This investment in time will include

team practices, films sessions, team meetings, strength training, therapy sessions, and study hall. During the winter and spring (football's off-season) commitment to the football program is still quite important. Players are expected to commit 20 hours a week to football between regular morning runs, team meetings, strength training, study hall, therapy sessions, a total of 20 practices and a spring game.

One of the greatest challenges for a first year football student athlete is that not much free time remains after fulfilling the obligations of the academic and athletic communities. Coming to university becomes a comprehensive lifestyle change for these student athletes and engagement in activities outside of school or football become much less of a priority. Although many of the student athletes worked at paying jobs during the summer and some even planned to work during the winter school semester (during football's off-season), participants claimed that there was not enough time to work a part-time job while remaining committed to school and football.

Moreover, participants of this study claimed that there was not enough time during the fall semester to complete daily living chores, such as shopping for groceries, cooking well balanced meals, doing laundry, and getting a healthy dose of sleep each night. Living on their own (many for the first time), participants quickly discovered that more time must be given to daily activities (such as eating a meal) than once thought (since the support of their family was no longer there to shop for, cook, and clean after their meals). For the busy student athlete, time given to engage in non-structured activities becomes a valuable commodity.

Time management was an important and common challenge reported by the participants. Some participants believed that they would be able to spend more time focused on schoolwork once the football season was over. However, other first year student athletes reported that there was only so much time that could be spent on schoolwork in a day; and did not believe that at the end of the football season more time would be spent engaged in academics. It appeared that the university football program may have had both a negative and positive effect towards time management and academic engagement. This is evident in the following statement made by one of the respondents.

> Researcher: How would your life change if you were not a member of the football program, and how would you fill in the extra time?
>
> Harry: If I wasn't part of football I…I don't think I would succeed nearly as much as I do in school. And, I don't think that, I don't know what I would do with the extra time. I mean there would be so much time on my hands that I could just, like now I'm saying now that I'd probably fill it in with school work, but I mean, there's only so much school work you have and there's only so long that you want to do it, you

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> know? So, it's I don't even…I think I would just be a bum if I didn't play football. Like I don't know if I'd go to the gym, I don't know if I'd do any of that if I didn't play football.

Football has helped student athletes manage their time wisely. Considering the amount of time spent with academics and football, student athletes have very little time to waste. Brett, for example, estimated that when he combined the amount of time spent on school and athletics activities, he totalled approximately 70 hours a week committed to these communities; not leaving him with much time to procrastinate. Student athletes may not have trouble finding time for school or football (although some may have trouble finding time if they do not keep their priorities straight and stay organized). However, as Tom and Brett reported (see below), there may be trouble finding time to properly engage in routine daily activities such as cooking well balanced meals, grocery shopping, doing laundry, socializing and getting the proper amount of sleep.

> Researcher: Can you describe the challenges of starting a new university life and a new football season at the same time?
>
> Tom: Just try and stay organized. Manage your time. That's pretty hard. Get enough sleep, eat properly. Those are the main problems for me.
>
> Researcher: What's the most difficult part of being a member of the football program?
>
> Brett: You don't really have much time for other things. Like between school and football, there's not much time for other stuff. It's good, it keeps you on schedule. But, like now that the season's over, it's like I have so much extra time. So it was really just going, going, going, like get home at 10 and you're dead after practice and you just want to go to sleep.

Participants have learned through their experience with football that time must be managed wisely if they wish to balance the workload of multiple communities. However, being first year student athletes, much room remains for improvement of their time management abilities. As student athletes progress through their academic and athletic careers, they must adapt their engagement in certain communities so it does not negatively impact other important commitments. As identified by Bob, Harry and Don below, membership in the varsity football program appears to have influenced student athletes to be aware of their time, remain organized and be efficient in their engaged activities.

> Researcher: How do you manage your time effectively so you focus on your schoolwork?
>
> Bob: I cut into my sleep habits, I try to make my...the time that I'm not doing anything more efficient, I try, you know, if I'm sitting on the bus going to school, I'll pull out my notebook and do some readings and whatnot. So any little chance I get, I'll try to better myself and my schoolwork. So even on the weekends, I won't party. I recently stopped

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that stuff. Just cause I've had bad experiences and stuff; so I rather use the time I would be preparing for those events or recovering from the events to actually get my readings done, homework finished and stuff.

Researcher: Do you feel you have enough time for schoolwork?

Harry: It's more, I think of time management now. Like being able to get done what you need to get done, and setting up times to do it, setting up times to get breaks, and setting up times when you need to get something done, you need to know when crunch time is. You have to be able to, I guess, push through. So of the harder times, like if you're tired, or you have a headache, or you're not feeling good, you have to be able to push through it sometimes.

Researcher: So then, how do you overcome this difficulty of time commitment?

Don: On the other hand, where other people have more time, I just don't have much time to waste, that's all. Just try to be efficient with my time. Like obviously it's not undoable. We have 70 guys on the team and they do it. It's very possible, it's just you have to have the right mind set. Or so it seems. I'm still learning and I haven't perfected it, but, by far it's basically to remain focused on what you have during the season. Not to let one take over the other kind of thing. Keep an even balance.

Although football participation may take up as much time as a full-time job, football has created a structural system that seems to help participants remain organized. This structure allowed football student athletes to manage their time effectively so they can remain focused on academics. Individuals learned that time must be set aside for both work and play. Student athletes are placed into a position where they have to manage their time sensibly if they would like to successfully accomplish the tasks associated with being both a student and an athlete. Indeed, as Don, Kurt, Bob, Brett and Harry articulated, football has added a structural system which helped student athletes engage academically.

Don: Football brings another element of structure to everything. And it what it does is sort of gives you something to work around and that keeps me, in a weird way, more focused on…or it gives you a more clear idea of what has to be done. Cause I don't have so much time to waste or whatever.

Kurt: Well like I said before, football seems to force everything into place cause you need a place for everything kind of thing. Otherwise if you didn't have football, you would have nowhere to be at four o'clock, like if you just went to class and came home. You'd screw around so much more at home and nothing would get done for school kind of thing.

Bob: You know, the school might not be as structured but the football, because the football program does bring structure, it does help bring structure into the academics as well.

Brett: But um, like I could see, like it does keep me structured a lot better, football. So in that sense like I think it's good that I play.

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Researcher: So you don't think you'd be more productive in your school work [without football]?

Harry: I think, actually, I'd be less productive. Because like I said, football gives me that structure.

First year football student athletes were able to use the football program`s demanding schedule to produce a structural system that they could use to become organized with their time. However, the demanding football schedule may engage individuals more so with athletics than academics. In fact, participants often reported that during the football season more time was spent engaging in football related activities compared to academic related activities. Student athletes even reported that football participation characteristically takes up to 40 hours per week (similar to working a full-time job) when including activities such as practice, watching films, meetings, studying the playbook, exercise sessions, etc.

First year student athletes who had the privilege of dressing for games traveled with the team on away games (not all members of the football program had the opportunity to play during games). Those who participated in these away game road trips would often spend almost the entire weekend devoted to football related activities. Even without travelling, after daily football related activities were completed, participants reported that they were sometimes too tired to focus on other activities such as schoolwork. When the time of day came to do schoolwork, a lack of energy or focus may not have allowed student athletes to effectively engage academically. As indicated in the statements below, although the football program has done a good job of bringing structure to first year university student athletes' lives, it also required a significant time commitment, which in turn reduced the amount and/or quality of engagement in alternative activities (i.e., academics).

Researcher: Do you feel you have enough time for schoolwork?

Harry: That's one thing I'm kind of pressed with. I mean, I know there's side-by-side, which is a good time away from football. Away from res, away from everyone else, just to get your work done. And then there's just football goes and you get home and it's just...you have time to do your work but you're so tired and you don't want to really do work right now. You just want to maybe eat and get into bed and go to sleep. So it...it kinda has gotten in the way of schoolwork a little bit.

Researcher: What's the most difficult part of being a member of the football program?

Tom: For me, finding time to do the school work. Finding time to fit everything into my schedule. Not just specifically school work.

Researcher: Does the football program have an effect on your academic life?

Moe: It does take a huge chunk out of studying. Like I, it's just so much time put into it does completely take away from the studying.

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Researcher: In terms of academics, do you ever study outside of what's required or what's expected of you?

George: Um, I try to, but like considering we're so jammed with time. Like I do my best. Like I, studying wise, I could probably do more. And I don't.

Researcher: But do you ever find that your football cuts into your school life, or school life cuts into your football life? Or do you have enough time to do both of them?

Brett: I think like, if you, when I time manage my time really well, I do have time to do both. But sometimes like, it wouldn't be school cuts into football, unless it's during like a mid-term during something. Cause like football, you have to be here. But sometimes, like, you cut into... football cuts into studying a little bit. Cause your studying you can cut short for football.

Football commitments may therefore interfere with academics. Without remaining organized, it would be hard for student athletes to find quality time to engage academically. As previously mentioned, football participation has the ability to reduce time to complete other activities besides those related with academia. Even when student athletes were able to complete their academic and athletic obligations, other activities may end up being sacrificed (such as, getting a full night's rest, socializing, buying fresh food, etc.). Indeed, it was the collective opinion by all respondents that effective time management leads to an enhanced quality of life on the playing field, in the classroom, and outside of both.

Discussion

The management of one's time emerged as the most difficult aspect of being a member in the university's football program. Time spent participating in football related activities influenced the amount of time which could be spent engaging in academics. Since football commitments occupied so much time during the season, student athletes reported finding it difficult to make time for other activities (such as time for studying, working on assignments, eating properly, or getting enough sleep). First year student athletes reported that the university's looser academic structure and the free time between courses (compared to their secondary school experience) were also challenging. The independent, unstructured lifestyle of a university student does not require individuals to show up to lectures if they chose to do otherwise. The challenge of coping with this increased independence, which may affect student athletes and non-athletes alike, is possibly mitigated by the highly structured nature of the university football program.

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Members of small groups, social networks, and social worlds, created by leisure participation (i.e., university football), structure social behaviors in particular ways that are unique to that organization (Stebbins, 2002). The football program's structural system encouraged its members to make the best of their time if they wished to meet the demands of both their academic and athletic communities. To do so, successful football student athletes become adept at time management. Student athletes who were sufficiently organized were able to effectively plan time to engage in academics as well as athletics.

However, even during time devoted to academics, their strong passion for football may break the concentration of student athletes attempting to engage academically. Clearly, student athletes must be cautious to remain focused. Physically attending a course lecture or being at the library with an open text book does not signify academic engagement unless the student athlete concentrates on the task at hand. Lapses in concentration (e.g., re-enacting football practice) may disturb otherwise effective time management schedules.

Another football influenced threat to effective time management was the tempting opportunity to socialize with other football "brothers." However, over time student athletes learn to adapt. As one participant put it: "these are factors which a player must learn to control on their own; no one is being forced to think about football or hang out with teammates."

Because the commitment to this serious leisure community (football participation) demanded so much of student athletes' time and focus, it reduced their free time and the time which could have been spent in academics. Conversely, the structural system and time management skills developed as a consequence of football participation influenced student athletes to become critically aware of their time, remain organized, and efficiently participate in activities to further promote their academic engagement.

Conclusion

Involvement in a university varsity football program may be more beneficial than harmful for first year student athletes' engagement in academics. Student athletes claimed they did better in school when they were able to have a physical outlet, such as football. This is not surprising as other studies have found that college athletes reported less perceived stress compared to non-athletes (Skirka, 2000) and that higher levels of physical activity were associated with lower levels of hassles (Nguyen-Michel, Unger, Hamilton & Spruijt-Metz, 2006). Likewise, Cheng and Koozechian (2007) concluded that varsity student athletes tend to be more engaged in university life and

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perceive barriers in a more positive fashion compared to other students. Football brought a sense of balance to university life, scheduling time for leisure participation and consequently allowing student athletes to effectively schedule time for academics. Even though football occupies much of student athletes' time, participants felt that their athletic endeavours taught them to be responsible and productive with their time.

The football program`s demanding schedule produced a structure that student athletes could use to better organize their time. However, the same demanding schedule may incline individuals to spend more time engaged in athletics than in academics; transforming student athletes into athlete students. Even if student athletes were able to complete academic and athletic commitments, their engagement in other necessary activities (such as preparing meals or sleeping) may be hindered. On the other hand, participants from the football program claimed that their athletic involvement helped them be aware of their time, remain organized, and become efficient in their engaged activities.

The seriousness in which student athletes took their serious leisure participation may have crossed over into the seriousness placed into their academics. It takes a serious commitment (to both the athletic program and the academic institution) to remain a member of the football program, and with the limited hours in a day, there is simply no time to waste if one is to fulfill academic and athletic duties. If student athletes are truly serious about their football participation, then they must also be serious with their academics, as failing marks would penalize student athletes by disallowing them to participate in their desired leisure activity.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study, further studies may benefit from quantitatively tracking the amount of time student athletes actually spend within specific communities. It may prove difficult to track for moments when student athletes may be situated within one context, while having thoughts preoccupied with a different situation (e.g., sitting at a lecture hall, yet thinking about football practice). Likewise, this study was restricted in the fact that it did not compare participant interviews with academic grades. It must be noted that because first year student athletes were used for this study, the participants had not yet completed a semester of university. To further explore the relationship between engagement and academic success, future studies may benefit from tracking student athletes throughout their university careers and comparing their academic standings with perceptions of the athletic program of which they are members.

Instances of the football and academic communities coming together may prove helpful. Examples of the communities merging would be when student athletes study, attend classes and work on projects together, a likely

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result of the similar schedule set by the football program. Support programs and pre-season training camps allow rookies to learn through social interactions, as knowledge from veterans is passed down to newcomers and used as effective tools to engage academically. However, bringing the two communities together may be distracting at times (e.g., thinking about football while in class, or bringing homework into the gym). There are times when keeping the two communities separate may be helpful so that one can focus on the specific tasks at hand.

Prospective student athletes ought to consider the time demands of joining a football program. The extensive time demands from the football program may impinge on time spent with other important activities, such as working at a paying job, engaging in academics, socializing with friends outside of football, traveling back home to visit family, or even daily chores like buying groceries, cooking well balanced meals or doing laundry. The challenge of time management is not easy to overcome, and priorities such as those related to academics must be addressed. If individuals can effectively manage their time and balance the demands of school, football, and everything else which life throws at them, then pursuing a serious leisure career in football may become a greatly rewarding activity.

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Ezechiel ROTHSCHILD-CHECROUNE, Francois GRAVELLE, Don DAWSON and George KARLIS

Balancing academic and athletic time management: A qualitative exploration of first year student athletes' university football experiences

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ABSTRACT

Participation in a varsity athletic program requires a great amount of time and effort to meet the demands of practices, meetings, training, film sessions and games, thus adding extra stressors to first-year students trying to integrate into university life in general. These time commitments may reduce a student athlete's academic engagement and, therefore, negatively affect one's academic success. The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges of time management identified by first-year varsity athletes. The phenomenological qualitative approach was used to analyze the data collected from in-depth interviews conducted with 12 first-year football players at a Canadian university. The results indicated that: (1) time spent participating in football-related activities influenced the amount of time which could be spent engaging in academics; (2) the management of one's time emerged as the most difficult aspect of being a member in the university's football program; (3) football commitments occupied so much time during the season making it difficult to find time for other activities such as studying, working on assignments, eating properly, or getting enough sleep; and, (4). the university's looser academic structure and the free time between courses (compared secondary schools) poses a considerable time management challenge, one that may be mitigated by the highly-structured football program.

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Gérer le temps académique et athlétique de façon équitable : une étude qualitative des expériences d'étudiants-athlètes en football universitaire lors de leur première année d'étude

RÉSUMÉ

La participation à un programme sportif universitaire nécessite une grande quantité de temps et d'efforts afin de répondre aux exigences des entrainements, des réunions, des sessions d'études de films et des parties, ajoutant ainsi des facteurs de stress supplémentaires pour les étudiants de première année qui tentent de s'intégrer à la vie universitaire en général. Ces exigences peuvent réduire le temps d'engagement scolaire d'un étudiant-athlète et peuvent par conséquent avoir un effet négatif sur sa réussite scolaire. Le but de cette étude est de mettre en évidence les défis que représente la de gestion de temps tel qu'identifiés par des athlètes de première année universitaire. L'approche phénoménologique qualitative a été utilisée afin d'analyser les données recueillies lors d'entretiens approfondis menés avec douze joueurs de football de première année provenant d'une université canadienne. Les résultats indiquent que : (1) le temps consacré aux activités liées au football influence la quantité de temps qui pourrait être consacré à des activités académiques ; (2) la gestion du temps apparait comme l'aspect le plus difficile lié au fait d'être membre du programme de football de l'université ; (3) les engagements reliés au football au cours de la saison occupent tellement de temps qu'il est difficile d'en trouver pour d'autres activités, telles que l'étude, les travaux, une alimentation adéquate et une période de sommeil suffisante, et (4) la structure académique lâche de l'université et le temps libre entre les cours (par rapport aux écoles secondaires) posent un vrai défi de gestion de temps, qui peut être atténué par le programme de football, qui est très structuré.

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