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**Academic Engagement of First Year Student Athletes:
University Football as a Serious Leisure Community of Practice**

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Academic Engagement of First Year Student Athletes:
University Football as a Serious Leisure Community of Practice

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Abstract

Students must engage in communities supportive of academia to achieve success at university. Academic engagement is crucial for success, given that low levels of engagement have been shown to develop risks for a variety of adverse consequences, including absenteeism and dropping out of school. Students with a supportive environment have been shown to have higher levels of academic engagement. The purpose of this research was to use a phenomenological approach to explore how participation in a Serious Leisure (Stebbins, 1992) Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999) affects academic engagement. This research may be practical for coaches, educators, student athletes and researchers aiming to promote student athletes' academic engagement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve first year student athletes in the University of Ottawa's Gee Gees varsity football program. Results showed that football participation is so demanding that it may inhibit academic engagement. Conversely, football participation has helped individuals enter university, create a new home, integrate into a brotherhood/pseudo-family, develop an identity, time manage wisely, and become academically motivated. Although athletic pressure may be detrimental, the social support from the football program has proven helpful towards academic engagement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the university setting, academic success is an ongoing challenge. There are many factors that may influence academic achievement such as one's academic engagement. There are also a multitude of factors and situations that may become obstacles inhibiting a student from engaging academically. Indeed, some aspects of a student's life may be helpful and harmful towards academic engagement and thus, achieving academic success. A prime example of this would be the participation in a serious leisure community of practice of a university's athletic program. Varsity student athletes can develop social support from being members of an athletic program. A sound social support network could then lead to a greater quality of life at university, as social support is believed to influence one's emotions, cognitions, behaviours, and both adherence and compliance to activity programs (Carron, Hausenblas, & Estabrooks, 2002). Likewise, participation in the varsity athletic program requires a great amount of time and effort in order to meet the demands of practices, meetings, training, film sessions and games – all of which may reduce a student athlete's academic engagement. How do the communities within which student athletes are engaged influence what is expected of them and impose their engagement in academia? Why are some university student athletes struggling to pass courses whereas others are able to place themselves at the top of their class while remaining serious leisure participants? Applying a social learning theory, the focus of this research was to study first year student athletes who have recently begun their careers on the varsity football program at the University of Ottawa and discover factors that may influence their academic engagement.

This research project takes a qualitative approach, adopting a constructivist worldview and using a phenomenology methodology to conduct semi-structured interviews with

academically first year student athletes in the varsity football program at the University of Ottawa. Factors influencing these student athletes' academic engagement were explored throughout the research. The social learning theory of communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) provided structure to conduct research and created a framework for understanding how individuals learn from the communities in which they engage. The notion of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992) guided the research in a more defined direction as participation in a varsity football program was deemed serious leisure participation. Furthermore, serious leisure was able to aid in the structuring of interview questions to probe student athletes as to why and how they became enrolled as both students and athletes simultaneously. As adaptation to a new environment may be overwhelming, the goal for this research was to discover and explore factors affecting academic engagement of student athletes entering university; in the hopes that strategies may be developed to effectively promote the academic engagement for future cohorts of student athletes. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to discover how participation in the football program affected first year student athletes' academic engagement.

Operational Definitions

The current study has borrowed some terminology and complex theoretical frameworks. To avoid misinterpretation in meanings, a concise set of definitions for ambiguous terms have been provided to apply throughout the research.

Serious Leisure:

Amateur, hobbyist or volunteer in nature. Distinguished by six characteristics: 1) *persevering* in the participation of the activity; 2) finding a *career* in the undertaking of participation; 3) *effort* towards acquiring specific knowledge, training, or skills; 4) *durable benefits* or *outcomes* of participating; 5) *identifying* strongly with the pursuit; and 6) the

development of a *unique ethos* or special social world around the serious leisure activity.

“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).

Communities of Practice:

Characterized by shared repertoire, joint enterprise, and mutual engagement.

Communities where individuals are able to mutually engage in a practice. Mutually defining, as practices define the communities and communities dictate which practices are to be engaged.

Communities of practice are able to exist within other communities of practice (e.g. a defensive line community, inside a football program community, within a university community).

Communities of practice often overlap with other communities of practice. Likewise, an individual is able to become a member in multiple communities of practice (overlapping or not).

Serious Leisure Community of Practice:

A community of practice within the serious leisure pursuit. Similar to the unique ethos developed through serious leisure, yet specific to a particular community of practice within the activity. For the current research, first year student athletes is the community of practice within the serious leisure pursuit of Canadian interuniversity football.

Engagement:

Taking part in the practices which define a certain community. For example, academic engagement would be taking part in the practices of the academic community (such as actively taking notes during a lecture). May be characterized by *behavioural*, *emotional*, or *cognitive* engagement (Fredricks & Blumenfeld, 2004). Although it takes time to become engaged in

certain practices, engagement is not synonymous with the amount of time spent on an activity.

Background

This research applied a social theory of learning. Schools are social places where students learn in collaboration with their professors, the support of their families, and in the company of their peers (rather than learning on their own); therefore, learning is a social process (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Wenger (1999) proposed that a social theory of learning must integrate the necessary components to characterize social participation as a learning process. According to Wenger, *meaning*, *practice*, *community*, and *identity* are the four components of a social learning theory. These four components are interconnected and mutually defining, helping to describe the conceptual framework of a *community of practice*.

Within a social learning theory, learning occurs as we interact with each other and the world around us, and therefore practice can only occur within the community of our interactions. Communities and practice become mutually defining terms, being that the community defines which practices are to occur, and practices further define the community. Wenger has further stated that “it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (1999, p. 47) and therefore practice is conceived as social practice.

Engagement in the Academic Community

School success is a term that should not be solely defined by one’s grade point average or test performance. The process of attending school teaches more than the materials learned in class. It is indeed a fully humanistic learning experience that fosters the balanced growth of an individual. Elias, Wang, Weissberg, Zins, and Walberg (2002), also stated that to more fully understand the outcome of school success, it must be more broadly defined than the scores that students receive on standardized tests. There is a vast array of variables associated with school

success, and therefore school success can be reflected in many different ways (Zins et al., 2004). For example, a student's enrolment at university not only focuses on an academic learning process, but also becomes a transitional phase into an independent adulthood lifestyle.

Clearly, schools are to focus on more than the academic performance of a student to judge one's success. Attention must be placed on the social and emotional learning that occurs within the attendance of school to promote the most effective learning experience within one's community of practice. According to Zins et al., "there is a growing body of scientifically based research supporting the strong impact that enhanced social and emotional behaviours can have on success in school and ultimately in life" (p. 19, 2004). Therefore, the current research focused on factors outside of students' school materials (such as interactions with peers) that are not simply converted into grades to express their academic success.

Connell et al., (1995) outlined a model to understand the roles that psychological and contextual variables play in determining student academic success. School engagement is at the centre of the model because, according to Connell et al., only student engagement has a direct effect on academic achievement, as all other variables (such as external influences and the student's self-systems) act through engagement. Therefore, variables such as teacher context or self-efficacy indirectly influence academic success by undermining or enhancing a student's academic engagement (Connell et al.; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990). For students to succeed and learn at their full potential, they must engage in academic communities supportive of such engagement.

Supporting Engagement

Along the lines of social learning theories was Deci's (1992) notion that interpersonal relationships are able to provide students with a strong sense of belonging, which act as powerful

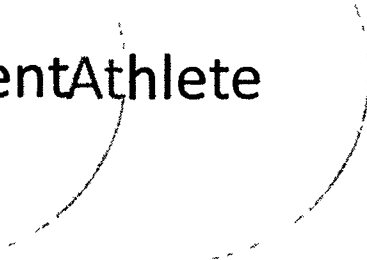
motivators to maintain interest in school and remain engaged. According to Christenson and Lynne (2004), *belonging, participation, identification, and school membership* illustrate social and emotional factors which describes the aspects of engagement that are relevant to academic learning. These terms not only require active student behaviours; they also require the psychological connections within the academic communities for students to be considered engaged.

It has been shown that students with a supportive environment have higher levels of academic engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004; Solomon, Battistich, Kim & Watson, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, Vasquez, & Mehan, 2000). Adults of significant influence (e.g. parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) and peers can potentially create supportive environments to foster engagement in certain communities. There is a growing body of research linking student engagement directly with the quality of relationships they have with teachers (Klem & Connell; Solomon et al.; Stanton-Salazar et al.). Just as good coaches create a supportive environment for their athletes to play their best and stay motivated towards achieving athletic goals, a teacher must provide a similarly supportive environment for students to believe in themselves, place effort into their work, and remain engaged in their studies.

There are many members of a community that can create supportive environments; therefore, this research focused on student athletes' academic engagement as affected by their perceived supportive environment. Although external factors (such as a supportive environment, institutional structure, or social norms) are able to play an integral role in students' academic engagement, internal factors, such as personal beliefs or other psychological factors, may also affect why or how students engage academically.

The Student Athlete

Throughout this research, the terms *student athlete* are used rather than *student-athlete* (as a singular term), reflecting the idea that an individual's student athlete identities are formed through membership within multiple communities (one as a student, and the other as an athlete; see Figure 1), rather than falling under the singular categorization and membership as a student-athlete (which would reflect that these individuals are members of strictly that specific community of practice). Likewise, *student* comes before *athlete*, not only to emphasize the importance of being a student before an athlete, but also because at the university setting, the student community is much larger to engage with than the athletic community (which would predominately fall within the student community).



StudentAthlete

Figure 1: Individual's Identities Formed through Engagement with Multiple Communities.

The interestingly unique social structures and identities of student athletes have influenced this study to pay special attention to these issues. Student athletes' relationships with others (e.g. peers, coaches, teachers, family, etc.) are able to influence their academic engagement (Lipsitz, 1995; Noddings, 1992; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000; Valenzuela, 1999). Likewise, the relationships that coaches have with student athletes may also influence their athletic engagement. If student athletes have higher quality relationships with coaches than with their teachers, then student athletes may become more athletically engaged than academically.

The intertwining role that identities have with communities of practice (and vice versa) should not be ignored. Identity is one of the four components to Wenger's (1999) social learning theory and is mutually defined through the interconnectedness with the community, practice, and meaning. Ryan and Deci (2003) have stated that the multiplicity of roles and the different identities that individuals must adopt are among the major psychological challenges of our era. It is also emphasized that an individual must deal with issues surrounding multiple identities rather than a singular overall identity (Ryan & Deci). Not all identities are created equal, as a person may place greater commitment towards fulfilling the needs of one identity over another (Ryan & Deci). Student athletes are no different, as they may devote greater engagement with their athletic identity, rather than attempting to fulfill the needs of their academic identity (which may lead to being a good athlete with bad grades), or vice versa (leading to academic success at the expense of reduced participation in the varsity athletic program's activities).

Sport and Situation Specific

The choice to focus on the academic engagement of football student athletes instead of student athletes from other sports was influenced by research done by Maloney and McCormick (1993). In their study, Maloney and McCormick found that student athletes' grades were lower than non-athlete students. Their study included measures of student athletes coming from different sport backgrounds. When distinguishing between the different types of sports, it was found that only men's basketball and football student athletes held significantly lower grades than non-athlete students. Maloney and McCormick also expressed that there may be an "in-season" effect that influences student athletes' grades. That is, athletic programs with a more defined season (very short sport season with longer off-season) have a greater effect on students' grades than athletic teams with seasons lasting longer throughout the year. The adjustments that

student athletes have to make in their daily routines during the transitions between being in and out of an athletic season may affect student athletes' academic engagement (Maloney & McCormick).

If transitions between athletic seasons can affect the academic engagement of student athletes, then surely, lifestyle changes associated with transitioning to a new school must also affect students' academic engagement. Christenson and Lynne (2004) have illustrated that family support and involvement are associated with student engagement. But what happens to students once they move away from home and begin their university career? Will football student athletes be able to remain as engaged as before, even though the support which they may have had from family is now greatly reduced due to their new university life? Perhaps, identities may begin to be reconstructed due to such a transition. In fact, Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1998), have found that students have great difficulty in making transitions between the values, beliefs and actions among different social worlds.

First year university student athletes must cope with the transitions of a new living environment, consisting of a new home, school, athletic program, city, etc., that may conflict with the norms of their previous living environment. Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) expressed that first year students and seniors convert different forms of engagement into academic success. Miller and Kerr (2002) have found that student athletes aggressively pursued athletic aspirations early in their university careers and later shifted their focus to academics in their upper years. First year university student athletes are unfamiliar with the university setting and must learn how to transition from their prior educational system. Likewise, first year student athletes are also learning how the athletic program functions as they are exposed to the culture embedded within the community. Having the challenge of adapting from secondary school to a new

university setting and adapting to the dynamic systems of academic and athletic programs can be overwhelming.

First year student athletes may not fully participate in the football's community of practice as other veterans do. However, first year student athletes are still able to develop a strong sense their identity and learn the practices of the community through legitimate peripheral participation and engagement with other members of the football program (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Since the practices of being a student athlete has been passed down from the old-timers (veterans) to the newcomers (first year student athletes), the football program's influences may still be presented to the lesser engaged first year student athletes. Although the football program may have a different effect towards upper year student athletes when compared to first year student athletes, this research presumed that the football program had a distinctive influence on the lesser athletically engaged first year student athletes' academic engagement.

In conclusion of this literature review, it may prove beneficial to remind student athletes (through calculated interventions) that nurturing their career as full-time students (engaging in academic communities) will provide the opportunity to play at the varsity level (continuing their serious leisure careers) and therefore, should give as much of a priority (if not more) towards academic engagements as they do towards athletic engagements. Creating supportive environments where first year university student athletes can mutually engage in academics may prove to be an effective strategy leading to academic success (Carron et al., 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004; Solomon et al., 1997; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000). Academic engagement is crucial for success, given that low levels of engagement have been shown to develop risks for a variety of adverse consequences, including absenteeism and dropping out of school (Connell et al., 1995; Klem & Connell, 2004). The preceding has inclined the current research to explore

influences affecting first year university football student athletes and fill gaps in the literature as to what factors inhibit and promote their academic engagement.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Frameworks: Serious Leisure Communities of Practice

This research focused on a community of practice within a serious leisure activity.

Football is the serious leisure activity and within the football program lays a specific community of practice consisting of first year student athletes. Student athletes engage in a community of practice within serious leisure and therefore are deemed participants in a serious leisure community of practice (see Figure 2). Previous research has used Wenger's (1999) work to study communities of practice on athletic teams by either looking at athlete communities of practice (Galipeau & Trudel, 2004; 2005), coaching communities of practice (Culver & Trudel, 2005; Lemyre & Trudel, 2004; Trudel & Gilbert, 2004) or the interaction between coaching and athlete communities of practice (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006). Although there are many communities of practice in which one can participate, this research focused on a serious leisure community of practice (i.e., within university football). Using serious leisure in combination with communities of practice as theoretical frameworks allowed for this research to explore how first year student athletes' participation in a varsity athletic program affects their academic engagement.

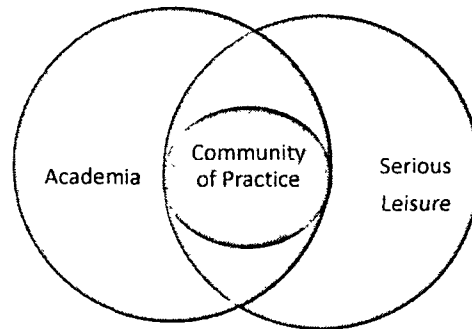


Figure 2: Community of Practice Resulting from Engagement in School and Football.

The word “serious” in the case of serious leisure is not meant to represent distress, anxiety, or joylessness, but rather it is to embody such qualities as carefulness, earnestness, sincerity, and importance (Stebbins, 2001). Serious leisure should not be confused with “causal” or “unserious” leisure. According to Stebbins, causal leisure activities are relatively short-lived, and require little or no special training for the activities to be enjoyed. Stebbins also noted that unlike serious leisure, causal leisure offers no career for the individual and individuals pursuing causal leisure cannot be classified as being amateurs, hobbyists, or volunteers.

Membership within a community of practice involves much more than simple interactions with others in a common setting. Sharing such practices with other members of a community allows not only for members to work alike, it also allows for a mutual understanding of certain paradigms and concepts defining the world around them. Individuals’ meaning is constructed through the other components of Wenger’s (1999) social learning theory, identity, community, and practice. Therefore, members pursuing the same serious leisure activity will

develop similar meanings to the world around them based on their mutual identity, practices, and engagement within the community.

Communities of practice cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the world or independent of other practices as various communities are closely interconnected. An example of this would be the academic community of a university, and the athletic community of a varsity athletic program. Neither work alone in isolation, as the athletic program is dependent on the University for its funding and inclusion into the league in which it plays, and likewise, the athletic program brings a source of recognition for the university, develops a sense of school identity, creates entertainment for its members, and produces a source of revenue (Gerdy, 1997). The interactions between the two communities may actually not be so clear cut, as Wenger (1999) warns that boundaries as to what defines a specific community of practice may often times 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 study of student athletes may reveal how the communities in which they engage influence their academic engagement.

Identities

Stebbins (2001), warns that the history of the social psychology of leisure have largely ignored the subjective aspect of leisure motivation, suggesting that a thorough analysis of the participants subjection should be explored. Stebbins has been able to make some generalizations about all serious leisure activities including that “motivation to pursue serious leisure has also been found to be related to identity” (p. 15). Since each serious leisure activity tends to be highly specific, exploration of particular serious leisure communities of practice is warranted.

Integral aspects of a social learning theory (i.e. communities of practice) are issues

dealing with identity (Wenger, 1999). “Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities” (Wenger, p. 145). Membership in a community does not determine one’s identity in a simple way and, therefore, stereotypes and generalizations often miss the lived complexity of identity (Wenger). Membership in any community of practice is only part of what makes up an identity (Wenger). For example, some full-time students may have other part-time jobs; some may be parents; some are athletes; and some may also have engrossing hobbies; therefore, not all full-time students solely identify themselves as students.

Likewise, during the course of life, identities are constantly being renegotiated (Wenger, 1999). Social interactions are influential to identities. Wenger mentions that, “our practices, our languages, our artifacts, and our world views all reflect our social relations. Even our most private thoughts make use of concepts, images, and perspectives that we understand through our participation in social communities” (p. 146). Everything individuals do is dependent on social interactions; even the way people think and view the world has been shaped by previous social interactions.

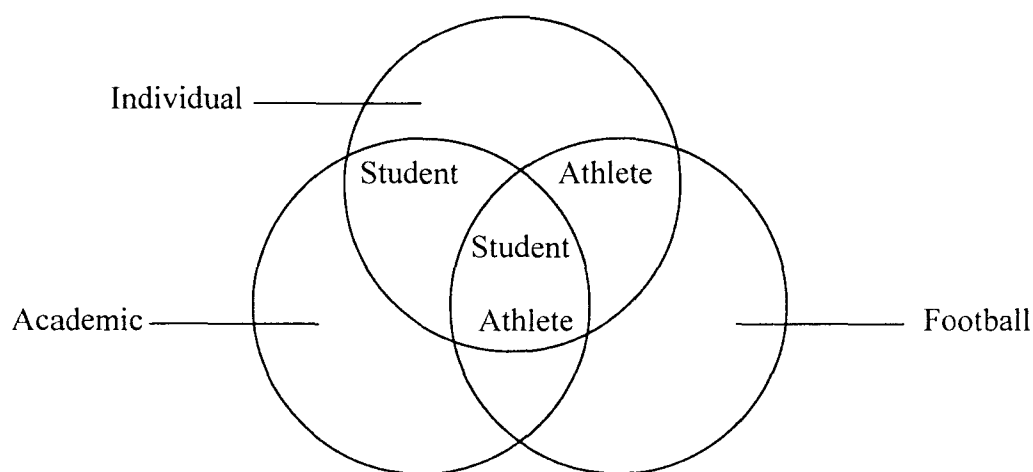


Figure 3: Individuals’ Engagement in Particular Communities Affecting Self-Identification.

Depending on the communities of practice which individuals belong to (i.e., Canadian university football student athletes), they often behave differently in each of them, gain different perspectives, and construct different aspects of themselves (Wenger, 1999). Having multiple identities developed from the membership of varying communities may lead to the formation and merging of a single unified identity for an individual (e.g., the student athlete; see Figure 3). “Different practices can make competing demands that are difficult to combine into an experience that corresponds to a single identity” (Wenger, p. 159); thus, further illustrating the need to research the intertwining communities influencing the academic engagement of university student athletes who participate in a serious leisure activity.

Stereotypes

A stereotype can be defined as “a generalized belief about a group or category of people” (Passer, Smith, Atkinson, Mitchell, & Muir, 2003, p. 508). Stereotypes may lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy where expectations lead to behaviours confirming those expectations (Martens, 2004; Passer et al.). If professors hold the stereotype that football players academically engage poorly, then these presumptions may ultimately hold true. Unfortunately, stereotypes can affect group members even if those individuals do not accept the stereotype themselves (Passer et al.). How will the stereotype of football players being unintelligent (Martens), affect individuals’ academic engagement?

Wenger (1999) noted that imagination is attached to communal experiences and social interactions, acting as a mode of belonging that involves the social world to expand the extent of both reality and identity. Through imagination, we are able to see our own practices as histories of our past and conceive new developments for the future. Imagination can also involve stereotypes that overlook the finer qualities of practice and can be misleading because it can

project our experience beyond the level of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1999).

Student athletes have typically been characterized as a homogeneous group of “athlete-students” and “dumb jocks” who are given general stereotypes of being lazy, over privileged, pampered, out of control, and whose primary reason for attending university is to play sports (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996). Imagination is another process for construction of an identity (Wenger, 1999), and unfortunately, stereotypes can project assumptions of specific practices that are projected by imagination.

Stereotypes and identities may be strongly linked to one another. Ideally, individuals will reject negative stereotypes held towards them (i.e., being unintelligent) and adopt positive stereotypes (i.e., working well as a team) as characteristics of their identities. However in reality, this may not be the case. Likewise, the effects stereotypes may be out of the control of those who fall under the stereotype. Therefore, this research attempted to determine the stereotypes which student athletes perceived of themselves and how it may affect their academic engagement.

Commitment

The commitment to pursuit a serious leisure career is another component worthy of greater exploration. Stebbins (1992; 2001) mentioned that positive commitment plays an important role by empirically characterizing serious leisure. Competition within a football program is high and even seasoned veterans with secure positions on the team want to impress coaches with their commitment to the game (Stebbins, 1993). This kind of modeling by veterans is reflected onto rookies and sets a standard for rookies to maintain if they would like to reach the level of contribution that veterans have with the team.

Likewise, participants often have commitments to multiple communities (either through work, family, school, or other leisure activities) in a given day. These commitments have the

potential to 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). Serious leisure has the potential to affect one's lifestyle and *central life interest*.

Central life interest is a concept put forth by Dubin (1992) and is often associated with a major role in life and can only emerge from positive emotional states. Central life interests include the energies invested both physically and intellectually towards activities, such as a dedicated amateur athlete (Dubin). In fact, Stebbins (2001) stated that serious leisure can become a central life interest. Based on amateur football players in Stebbins study, football became a central life interest, “as it is a segment of their lives in which they have made a substantial emotional investment” (1993, p. 81). In essence, a central life interest can be compared to a workaholic who lives and breathes an occupation, and in the case of student athletes, one who devotes much more to practice and training than will be invested in actual competition (Dubin). These theories certainly match the life of varsity student athletes and therefore help conceptualize the participation in serious leisure communities of practice.

As abstract as it may be, the theoretical framework of communities of practice with its concepts regarding imagination, identity, meaning, engagement, practice, communities, and social learning, are crucial for understanding the factors affecting student athletes' academic engagement while pursuing a serious leisure activity. Although serious leisure is a theory which may stand on its own, its relations as having a unique community of practice brings to our attention that there are other communities which may be closely interrelated to football participation. This research focused on multiple aspects of student athletes' lives as they

participated in a serious leisure community of practice while pursuing an education as a university student. The research's data collection was guided by a broad research question: how does participation in a serious leisure community of practice influence academic engagement?

Methodology

To begin with, a worldview or paradigm in which the current research project was encompassed was carefully chosen. As there are many qualitative research approaches to choose from, it was important to review the available options. Creswell (2007), suggested that there are four main paradigms or worldviews (a basic set of beliefs that guide action) to apply in qualitative research. These worldviews (constructivism, postpositivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism) are able to shape the practice of research (Creswell).

The most appropriate worldview appeared to be social constructivism. In this paradigm, individuals seek to understand the world in which they live (developed by subjective meanings of their experiences) (Creswell, 2007). Meanings, from this viewpoint, "are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). In other words, individuals create meaning through interactions with their environment. Even though individuals may go through similar experiences, each of their unique interpretations of a situation is created by their own perceptions. The goal of research from this paradigm, according to Creswell, is to rely on the participants' perspectives of the situation as much as possible.

Adopting a constructivism worldview suggests that researchers recognize that their own background influences their interpretation with the intent to interpret the meanings that others have about the world (Creswell, 2007). Creswell further suggested that subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically, implying that meaning is created through interaction with others and through the norms (historically and culturally) that operate in individuals' lives. Such

implications within this worldview matches nicely with Wenger's (1999) theory of communities of practice and the notion that learning stems from individuals' interaction with the world around them. Adopting a constructivist epistemology avoids the search for a singular objective truth, as focus is directed towards understanding unique human practices and the knowledge that is created by the interactions between human beings and the world around them (Crotty, 1998). Given the similarities of a constructivist worldview with Wenger's notion that meaning is created through engagement in communities of practice, this paradigm appeared well matched to the theoretical frameworks of this research.

Based on the selected paradigm, a matching methodological research approach to inquiry must be chosen. In an effort to simplify the complexity of how to conduct qualitative research, Creswell (2007) addressed five main qualitative approaches to inquiry. These five research methodologies were: narrative, grounded theory, ethnographic, case study, and phenomenological research. Deciding which qualitative approach to apply meant its influences would affect the research process of this study. Therefore, choosing an appropriate qualitative methodology became a meticulous task.

Out of the different qualitative approaches to inquiry, phenomenology appeared to be best suited for this research. 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). Because this research did not rely on direct observations of engagement within certain communities, only the participants' perceptions of engagement (as reported by them) were collected as data. "A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). This approach may deem useful when attempting to apply Wenger's (1999) theory which imposes that *meaning*,

identity, community, and practice are mutually defining concepts. Although direct engagement may not be measured, student athletes' meanings were constructed through their communal engagement. In a phenomenological study, the focus is on describing what the participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell). In the case of this research, the phenomenon of study is academic engagement (through the eyes of first year university football student athletes).

The purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences to describe a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). "A phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals" (Creswell, p. 62). Phenomenological studies attempt to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). These studies try to explain what it is like to experience certain situations. Analyzing multiple perspectives on a single situation allowed the researcher to make generalization of what the phenomenon is like from participants' perspective (Leedy & Ormrod).

Phenomenology is best suited when a researcher is 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. Phenomenological research is highly dependent on lengthy interviews of about one to two hours, and according to Crotty (cited in Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) and Polkinghorne (cited in Creswell) has sample sizes ranging from five to 25 individuals whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon of study. These characteristics matched the current study, as 12 participants, whom all have had direct experience with the phenomenon, were interviewed at lengths lasting up to 75 minutes. Typical interviews in this type of research, according to Leedy and Ormrod, usually involve the participant doing most of the talking while the researcher does most of the listening.

Phenomenological studies are as much in the hands of the participants as they are in the hands of the researcher (Leedy & Ormord).

An important aspect of phenomenological research is to describe the phenomenon and may also be seen as the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007). Marshall and Rossman also suggested that the role of the researcher is included in the discussion of a phenomenological research study (cited in Creswell). Moustakas (1994) illustrated procedures to conduct phenomenological research which includes: identifying a phenomenon to study, "bracketing" or putting aside one's experiences as a researcher, and collecting data from several people who have experienced the phenomenon themselves. The data can then be analyzed by combining participants' significant statements into themes (Creswell).

The data analysis phase of a phenomenological study usually has the researcher identifying divergent perspectives and grouping these statements into meaningful units so that identified meanings may be used to develop an overall description of the phenomenon as it is experienced by those who are involved (Leedy & Ormord, 2005). The result of such a study, according to Leedy and Ormord, is to create a description of the phenomenon as seen through the eyes of people who have experienced it firsthand.

Given the nature of the football program and through thorough consultancy with the academic coach of the football program (who has had many years of experience with the population of interest), a phenomenological inquiry approach deemed as the best qualitative research design for the current research project. The amount of participants involved in the research (12), matched the requirement for such an inquiry approach. Focusing on the phenomenon of academic engagement and implementing previous theories (i.e., communities of practice and serious leisure) further supported the notion that a phenomenological research

approach be used over other commonly used qualitative research methodologies (e.g., narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, or case study research). Likewise, according to Creswell (2007), constructivist worldviews manifest in phenomenological studies. Therefore, it became evident that the current study was to pair a constructivist worldview with a phenomenological research methodology. Ultimately, with the given theoretical frameworks and the descriptions presented above, the current research was best able to benefit from a constructivist paradigm paired with a phenomenological research methodology.

Data Collection

The University of Ottawa is North America's largest bilingual university, located in Canada's capital, less than 2 kilometres from Parliament Hill. It is a very diverse university which offers over 300 undergraduate programs and includes students and faculty from about 150 countries (University of Ottawa, 2010). In the fall of 2009, there were 32,630 enrolled undergraduate students. Out of the 50,300 applications, 9,100 undergraduate students were granted admissions as first year university students (University of Ottawa). The University of Ottawa is host to fourteen Canadian Interuniversity Sports (CIS) teams. There were 400 student athletes involved in CIS sports at the University of Ottawa during the 2009-2010 season (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Student Athletes from Different CIS Teams at the University of Ottawa.

Sport	Gender	Number of Athletes
Basketball	Male	16
Basketball	Female	15
Cross Country	Male	22
Cross Country	Female	20
Football	Male	101

Hockey	Male	27
Hockey	Female	24
Rugby	Female	35
Soccer	Female	24
Swimming	Male	13
Swimming	Female	9
Volleyball	Female	12
Total		400

(University of Ottawa Gee Gees Interuniversity, 2010).

During the 2009-2010 football season, there were 101 football student athletes listed on the University of Ottawa's official roster. Out of the 101 football student athletes, 58 of them were listed as being in their first year of CIS eligibility, yet only 32 were first year (academically) student athletes. The data collection process began with the collaboration of the football program's Side-By-Side (SBS) program. The SBS program has been running for nearly a decade at the University of Ottawa and is an off-field support program for members of the Gee Gees' football program. SBS includes 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, SBS's study hall sessions are available exclusively to student athletes and are designed to tailor specific sport teams' needs. Although the SBS program includes multiple areas that create support networks for student athletes, this study only focused on the academic portion of SBS. Therefore, further references to SBS refer to the academic support program within SBS.

Although the SBS program is mandatory for first year student athletes and red flags

(student athletes who have a grade point average of 3.0 or less), SBS is not geared solely to struggling student athletes and is open to all student athletes in the football program. Therefore, SBS is not to be considered a remedial program, but rather a performance program that focuses on reaching one's full potential. As an intervention program that offers mentorship, SBS acted as a crucial component for the researcher to collaborate with student athletes on the Gee Gee's football program.

The first step towards collecting data involved a recruitment speech (as approved by the University of Ottawa's ethics committee; see Appendix A) in early September during a group meeting at SBS to introduce potential participants to the researcher and the study which was to take place in the months to come. About four were given for the potential participants to naturally engage in the communities around them and integrate to the university setting before conducting interviews. During those weeks, the researcher worked as the appointed student mentor during the regularly held SBS sessions twice a week, which helped build greater rapport with potential participants. Acting as a student mentor allowed for the researcher to become integrated into the football community and recognized by those attending SBS. Building a trust with the participants allowed them to feel comfortable during the interview process, leading interviews to be genuine and in-depth.

About a third of the participants willingly approached the researcher to volunteer in the study after the recruitment speech. The rest of the participants were recruited in person by reminding them of the recruitment speech and research project during SBS study sessions. Interviews were scheduled while at SBS and all took place at SBS's location during routinely scheduled hours. Opportunities to participate in the study were equally given to all first year student athletes who showed up at SBS. Semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with all

twelve participants who were first year (academically) football student athletes and were willing to partake in the study. Interviews began on October 8th, 2009 and continued to take place until December 2nd, 2009. It may be of importance to note that although the interview process began during the football season, about a third of the interviews were conducted after the football season was completed. The same interview guide was used to conduct the semi-structured interviews with the football student athletes, however, the ordering of some questions changed (e.g., placing questions about transitions to university after demographic questions) to allow for a more natural flow among questions regarding similar concepts (see Appendix C for updated interview guide).

Data Analysis

All twelve audio recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Fictitious names were given to participants to protect their privacy. Transcripts of the interviews were typed verbatim, including ums, mmms, like, whatnot, etc. types of repetitions which may communicate something about the thinking or emotions of the participant being interviewed (Bazeley, 2007). Even 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 further analyzed using the computer software NVivo (version 8). Each transcribed interview was reread by the researcher and then scrupulously coded using NVivo. Advice on how to code the data was gathered from the book *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo* (Bazeley, 2007). Reading about qualitative data analysis with NVivo in particular, allowed the researcher to combine historical coding methods such as reading and re-

reading text as a whole, reflecting on ideas, linking between passages of text, drawing connection seen in the data, etc., with the use of state-of-the-art computer software (Bazeley).

The analysis process involved coding speech text into categorized nodes. Nodes are categories in which passages of text may be coded. QSR International (2008), the creators of NVivo, described a node as, “A container for a theme or topic within your data. For example, you can create a node called ‘community’ and code all community-related data at it” (p. 118). Coding from the collected raw data began by creating nodes based on the theoretical frameworks for the study. Tree nodes (see Figure 4) stemmed from various communities of practice (football, academic, family, and social) and from serious leisure’s distinctive qualities (durable benefits, effort, identity, preserver, career, and unique ethos).

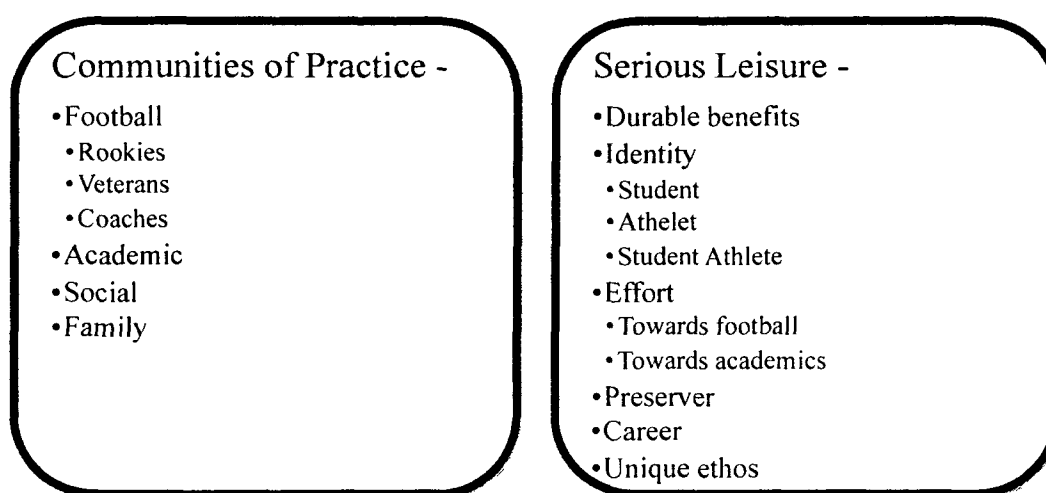


Figure 4: Example of Tree Nodes Created for Data Analysis.

Initial coding involved chunking pieces of data into broad topic areas as suggested by Bazeley (2007). Because theoretical frameworks were used for this study, a “lumping” or “bucket coding” approach was used to categorize data into their respective themes (Bazeley). However, since trends appeared outside of the concepts stemming from the theoretical frameworks, several free standing nodes were created to distinguish the unique categorization of

data (i.e., time management, stereotypes, influences, SBS, training camp, recruitment, having a hometown far away, etc.).

The NVivo software allowed for text to be coded into multiple nodes at once. The software also allowed creating relationship nodes amongst categories to further analyze the data. Because certain passages sometimes fit into multiple coding categories, Bazeley's (2007) suggestion was taken into consideration as multiple codes were often used for the same passage of text. Likewise, some nodes (e.g., football and academics) emerged as having linked relationships and were able to be coded in such a manner for further analysis.

Having a list of *a priori* codes can be useful, yet it may confine text to be coded with differing concepts (Bazeley, 2007). This is why passages of text were coded both *a priori* (bases on pre-existing concepts) and *in vivo* (derived directly from the data). As suggested by Bazeley, the language of the participants was used to label typological concepts (e.g., brotherhood). Doing so allowed for the data to remain in accurately labelled categories rather than forcing them into general categories which may not accurately represent the occurring phenomenon. Often times during the coding process, ideas were brought to the attention of the researcher. Luckily, thanks to NVivo's sophisticated software program and Bazeley's advice on how to use the program, the researcher was able to write memos alongside the coded text to be reviewed later without having to significantly halt the coding process or having to let those ideas disintegrate. Therefore, although the analysis process was able to start off with a base list of coding ideas, its progression "hung loose" and was receptive of alternative coding ideas.

In summary of the data analysis' process, tree nodes (nodes falling under other nodes) were created based on the existing theoretical frameworks of communities of practice and serious leisure. Free nodes were also created as reemerging themes and concepts of significance

deserved their own distinctive nodes to code the raw data. Although the original theoretical frameworks were used to create an interview guide, and further, to help code the transcribed data, the analysis process was not restrained by these frameworks as text was coded into appropriate categories by the researcher. Using the language of the participants and freely linking concepts together allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the results. Once all the interview transcriptions had been appropriately coded, major themes or nodes related to academic engagement (organized by student athletes' chronological integration into university life) were revisited to produce the following results.

Chapter 3

Results

The following chapter presents results divided into different sections. The chapter begins in a chronological fashion beginning with the participants' decision to attend university (the first step towards academic engagement). It is followed by the transitional adaptation that first year student athletes make towards their new university lifestyle. Then, the football family or brotherhood, and its influence on participants were discussed. That section is followed by three sections which focus on specific members of the football family (*rookies, veterans, and coaches*) and their influence on first year student athletes' academic engagement.

The results chapter continues by discussing the stereotypes of football student athletes as perceived by the participants and its affect towards academic engagement. The next section in the chapter goes on to investigate the relationship between academic engagement and the identities that first year student athletes had of themselves (either as *students, athletes, or student athletes*). Finally, the results chapter concludes with a section discussing time management as affected by participation in the football program and both the benefits and consequences it may have towards academic engagement.

Entering the University Communities

Section Key Points –

- Individuals continue football career to play at next level.
- Football acts as gateway to enrol in university.
- University chosen to attend is based on perception of its football program.

Attending university is a life altering transition. The decision to attend university is the

first step towards academic engagement following the completion of secondary school.

Following this decision, choosing which university to attend becomes an important step determining the communities (academically, athletically, and socially) with which an individual will be engaging for the years to come. The following section demonstrates how the Gee Gees' varsity football program has influenced participants to transition into the University of Ottawa's communities (see Figure 5), the first step leading to their academic engagement.

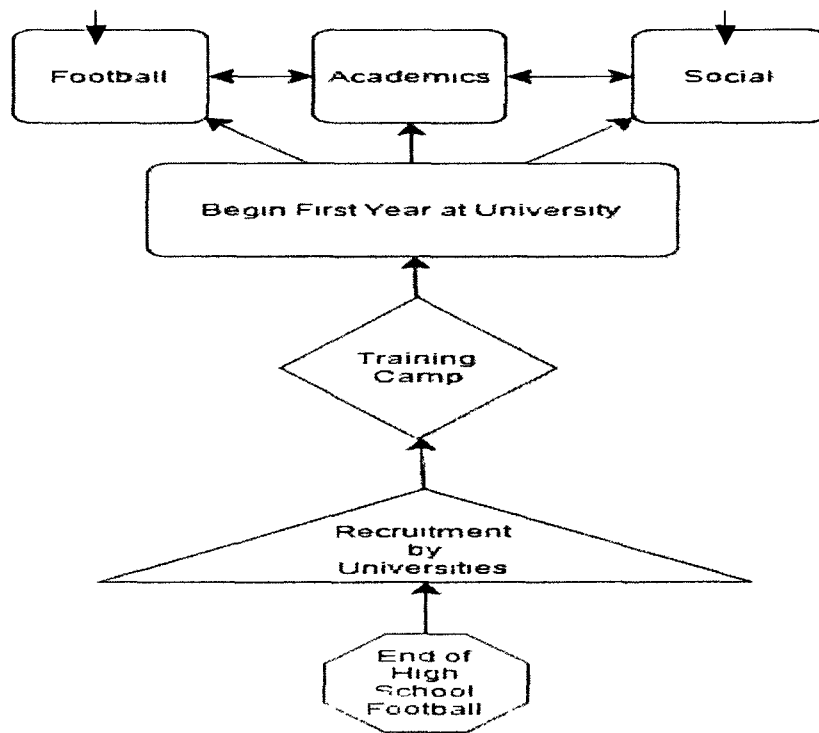


Figure 5: Transition from High School to University Communities.

Each of the interviewed student athletes' football careers began at least three years before entering university with some of the student athletes having played 11 seasons beforehand. Their football careers have already taken them a long way, and yet each of the participants did not want to end their football careers directly after secondary school. When the participants were asked why they decided to pursue a career in football after secondary school, "playing at the next level" became a common response.

Tom: Basically, talent wise. I was told a lot and I just, I just wanted to play the highest football I could and give myself the best ability to play it. We'll see where it leads to, but I just wanted, I wanted to test my ability to see how good I am.

George: Um, I just always enjoyed playing sports. As of now that's the sport I'm best at. I always enjoyed playing it, so it felt like that was the next step in my career. To play at the next level.

Bob: After secondary school...I saw myself...like I saw that I do have potential, to go to the next level. So that pretty much helped me make the decision to continue playing.

Wanting to 'play at the next level' may have been a motivating factor for some of the participants to continue their football career. However, other influential factors may have helped the decision of other student athletes. Some of these influential factors include, being looked at by schools (scouts)/recruitment, money in terms of scholarships, fear of ending a career and missing the lifestyle, or a combination of all the above.

Researcher (R): What made you decide to continue your football career after high school?

Joe: It was mostly because I wanted to. I mean, I heard from a lot of older guys who decided to end their career after high school, that they miss it a lot, and that the fall isn't the same without football. And I mean, if I wasn't good enough so I couldn't play, then I really wouldn't of had a choice. But I got a couple of looks from schools and all the coaches said that I could play there. So I decided to play in university.

Yet some other student athletes were blunter about the external influences helping them decide to continue their football careers.

R: And what made you decide to continue your football career after secondary school?

Moe: I wanted some money out of it to tell the truth.

Student athletes who expressed that external influences influenced their decisions to play football were quick to express the joy which they received from the sport, and pointed out that they would not be playing football if they did not enjoy doing so. For other student athletes, the mere enjoyment of participating in the serious leisure community was enough to ensure their continuation of their football careers. Some even claimed that participation in a football program was helpful towards other aspects of their life (including being helpful towards their academics).

R: So what made you decide to continue your football career after high school, or secondary school?

Harry: Football has always been, the sooner I started playing it seemed like everything came a lot easier after.

Regardless of the reason for joining the football program, inclusion within the varsity football community aided some student athletes to enrol in communities which they otherwise would not of have been a part of. More specifically, thanks to the football program, some of the participants decided to attend university, a path which they otherwise would not have taken.

Joe: I know some of my friends that if they weren't playing football, they wouldn't be in university. They would go to college, go to the workplace.

R: What helped you decide that you wanted to attend university?

Tom: That I had a future in football, really...and, I just, I dunno, that's basically it. I was gonna go to...like, college maybe, I really didn't know what I wanted to do and then when I was contacted for football, I was like, hey, I'm smart enough to go to university, why not, and go and get a degree and play football.

Larry: I knew I wanted to play football at a higher level. So get an education. But still have fun playing football and meeting people and that.

R: How would your life change if you were not a member of the football program? And how would you fill in all the extra time?

George: Um... Well first of all, I don't know if I'd be at school. As of now. Like I might of taken a few more years off. Done other things. Traveled or something like that. But since football, I want to get started, I want to get back playing.

Although some participants would have pursued a college education, the progression of their football careers has prescribed them to enrol at university if they would like to play at the next level. Therefore, participants pursued a university education to fulfill the requirements of playing the next level of football.

Bob: I sort of see myself as a guy that would do better in college, but because I do want to play football, and I want to be a police officer as well, so they do recommend that you have a university degree. So it's one of the reasons why I picked university as well.

Bob: Cause you can't play football for a college, you have to be part of a university in order to play, you know, while attending school.

R: What helped you to decide to attend university?

Joe: Mostly football. That was the main part. And I mean, my program was offered at

the most of the schools that I applied to. So it basically came down to football and the coaches and the people here.

The reason that some student athletes enrol in a university is so that they could be a part of the football program. In this regard, football becomes a way of promoting academic engagement. Although, not all of the participants stated that they otherwise would not have gone to university if it were not for the football program, the majority mentioned that their choice to attend this particular university over another university was influenced by the football program in which they would be enrolled.

R: Ok, so how did you decide to attend the University of Ottawa compared to other universities? Cause of the football program?

Joe: Yeah, because of the football program and the coaches; it basically came down to football.

R: Then how did you decide to attend the University of Ottawa compared to other universities?

Brett: Football was a big thing. And the program is pretty good here. And also, I wanted to get away from home, but this is kind of far.

Frank: And there was two schools I was going to pick from. It was either going to be Laurier or it was going to be Ottawa. And uh, football was half the reason I was going. Or it was a big portion of the reason why I was going to university. Because I figured if I had a shot playing football at university I would take every opportunity, so when I applied to both schools, I also sent highlight film of previous games I played in the years. And uh, Laurier didn't really get back to me but, um, this team seemed to be really interested, they were really genuine about everything and I don't know, I felt more comfortable here and like they have great programs at this school as well.

Regardless whether or not these participants planned on attending university if it was not for football, their decision to attend the particular community at the University of Ottawa was influenced by their desire to play for this football program. Therefore, the varsity football program at the University of Ottawa has shown to affect the life changing decision to enrol in this particular academic institution and thus leading individuals onto a path of academic engagement. The decision to attend the University of Ottawa was the first step in becoming academically engaged. However, before student athletes become academically engaged, they

must first transition to their new university environment.

Transition to University Life

Section Key Points –

- The football program helps with adaptation to university environment.
- Football training camp provides academic benefits.
- Participation in the football program reduces homesickness.

First year university students must cope with the transitions of a new living environment, consisting of a new home, school, athletic program, city, etc., that may conflict with the norms of their previous living environment. Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1998), have found that students have great difficulty in making transitions between the values, beliefs and actions among different social worlds. Being away from home can be very difficult for young adults entering university. Eight of the twelve participants interviewed had hometowns at least 3 hours away (by car) from where they were currently living. The current section expresses how the hardships of living in a new environment have been found to be reduced by the integration in the varsity football program.

R: What was the toughest part about transitioning to your new lifestyle at university?

Larry: It was definitely not living at home.

Brett: I think being away from home. For me is the toughest. Like some people find partying a distraction and stuff. I'm not like that at all. Like I don't drink or anything. So stuff like that is not hard for me to like, like I'm not partying too much or anything. So, but, being away from home is hard for me.

Harry: It was hard to leave home and not have the comfort of your own bed and have your family there to talk to.

Being part of the football program appeared to be helpful for many of the student athletes. Especially, for first year student athletes who are living away from friends, family, and home for the first time, it is easy to develop a “feeling like on your own” (Harry) and perceive a

lack of social support. As previously mentioned, students with a supportive environment have higher levels of academic engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004; Solomon et al., 1997; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000) highlighting the importance of developing a supportive network at university.

As McQuarrie and Jackson (2002) have pointed out, constraints have an effect on transitions and may further hinder the transitional adaptation of student athletes. Living in a new environment (new home, city, etc.) may act as a constraint and make transitions more challenging as greater adaptations must be made to one's surroundings. First year university student athletes must transition to a new environment, consisting of a new home, school, athletic program, city, etc., that may conflict with the norms of their previous living arrangements. Carini et al. (2006), expressed that first year students and seniors convert different forms of engagement into academic success. First year university student athletes are unfamiliar with the university setting and must learn how to transition from their prior educational system. Likewise, first year student athletes are also learning how athletic programs function and the cultures embedded within the communities. Having the challenge of adapting from secondary school to a new university setting and adapting to the dynamic systems of an athletic program can be overwhelming. Thankfully, the participants were able to rely on the football program for support to help their transitions into a new lifestyle.

Don: Had I not played football it would have been much harder to come to a new city like Ottawa and integrate myself. Just simply because I wouldn't of had those immediate connections. Out of every single person I met, as twenty, thirty thousand people pour in and fill the campus all at once. I would have been meeting every single person for the first time. It was nice cause training camp was two weeks, and I met a bunch of people. So like by the time everyone was moved in, I had already move my stuff before everyone else. I was already in the res(idence) I'm in now. And it's nice. To have those connections. But I mean, yeah, that would have been difficult. I'd probably... I wouldn't be here if I wasn't going to play football.

Football training camp was held two weeks before the start of the academic year. The

training camp was designed to develop the athletic aspect of the student athlete; yet, it has also shown to be helpful towards developing the academic aspect of the individual. Training camp allowed participants to move to campus before the general student population. This allowed first year football student athletes to gain a sense of their new surroundings and embrace the environment before the stresses of academia and added social pressures began. Likewise, training camp allowed for the development of friendships to occur before the start of university courses, so that once classes began, student athletes already felt that they had a sense of support and comfort amongst their peers.

R: If you could maybe just describe the experience of what it's like going through things with other rookies as opposed to having to go through things on your own.
 George: Well like going to class, like first class I had, was that class with the ten football guys. Going into first class, I didn't know what to expect. Didn't know anything; like didn't know who was going to sit beside me, like what was going to happen, like what the prof was going to be like. And I sat down, I was one of the first people in class. A few football guys came in, we see each...like we made eye contact...like, 'hey, what's up?' They just came up, sat beside me and it just, as soon as they got there, it felt like better. It just felt like you were more comfortable; made it more comfortable; made me feel better about it. Rather than being nervous and like whoa, first day, you're kind of...cause you've been with those guys for two weeks already. And you guys came in as rookies and you guys are still part of the team, you're still on the team. So...it helps a lot.

Some of the participants also expressed that they were able to have a head start over other student non-athletes because of their involvement with the football program. Participants believed the football program was helpful towards adapting to the seemingly overwhelming university lifestyle. The following is an example of how the football program helped Theo reduce constraints and transition to his new lifestyle:

R: So what's the toughest part about transitioning to your new lifestyle?
 Theo: Uh, like having to take care of yourself and not having someone there reminding you constantly that you have to do this, do that, brush your teeth, eat, eat properly.
 R: Do you think that being part of the football program kind of made it harder to transition to this new lifestyle or did it make it easier?
 Theo: Definitely easier. Cause like we were here for two weeks before everyone else. So, we got to know the campus and we got used to living on our own. Even though we were already being fed. Like it was definitely better.

R: So you find that training camp and that moving on campus before classes start...

Theo: Was a lot easier.

R: ...than if you were to kind of come right from the start and have class and have football and have all this stuff?

Theo: Yeah. Yeah, definitely a lot less stressful too. By the looks of things. When people started arriving on campus.

This participant expressed how being part of the football program helped him adapt to his new environment by getting used to living on his own before the added stresses of academia. The trend of first year student athletes mentioning how helpful it was moving in two weeks prior to the start of school signals that training camp may not only be helpful in terms of athletic performance, may also be helpful towards creating a social support network, engaging in academics with less stress, reducing transitional constraints, and comforting an individual in the university environment.

Feeling homesick may be a sign that individuals long for their prior lifestyle and have not yet transitioned to their new university life. Some of the football student athletes mentioned that their intense involvement during training camp was so engaging that it did not give them a chance to even feel homesick.

Brett: It [football] makes you a little bit less homesick. And I am close to my family, and like my girlfriend is back home too, which is even way worse. Like I have to come back, I miss her so much, that it takes your mind off that for a little bit. But like, it makes it so you don't always have to think about it.

R: I think you mentioned this earlier. But does this help you cope with the fact that you're away from your biological family?

George: Yup. Big time. I found that, and my sister, when she went away for university. I remember when I was younger that she broke down crying, called the house, like all freaking out. She was homesick. And I came, and pretty much for all of training camp, I didn't even call my parents or even talk to them. Cause I was just so tired, so worn out. Like I'd get home from practice and just fall asleep. And then, you'd have to wake up at 8 o'clock in the morning and do it all over again. So I was just completely involved with football, so my brain was just thinking, like it didn't even have time to think. It was just, work, work, work, work, work. And then when school got brought up into it, it didn't even have time to worry about school work, worry about anything. It was just, oh! A well oiled machine. It was just get the assignments done, hand it in, go to practice. Sleep, wake up, class, test, assignment, like and you just, you wouldn't really have any time to worry about studying, like I should of studied earlier, I should of... You just do what you do when you have the time and you just get it done.

Participants mentioned that the reduced structure in an individual's academic schedule, when compared to secondary school, creates a challenge of having too much freedom. First year student athletes repeatedly mentioned that dealing with the freedom of living "on your own" is a challenge when transitioning to the new university lifestyle. Luckily, for football student athletes, this challenge of too much freedom has been kept under control by the football program's structure (shared repertoire, joint enterprise, and mutual engagement of the community of practice) which it imposes on its members.

Kurt: Then living with my cousin has made being away from home so much easier. And then football helps so much more because it takes your mind off...even if you were worried about that kind of stuff, football takes your mind off it all. So when you, like the first two weeks when you're here and you've never been away from home and you're figuring out what you're going to do, like you don't have time to think. You're two days in film and meetings, and you're meeting with the boys, and like, like I said Ottawa is such a nice place because these guys just invited you into the family right away. So as soon as you left your family, you're only going solo for like four hours, right? And then you jump right back into another family. Initiate into it and like, away you went.

R: Do you want to add anything else about the transition from high school to university, either academically, or on football teams?

Don: Academically, it's much more independent for sure. No one is saying do this. It's entirely on you. Which is a big switch up obviously. I'm sure everyone deals with that.

R: What do you think is the toughest part about transitioning to your new lifestyle here at university?

Kurt: Being able to cope with all the freedom. There's nobody here watching you. Like, you're in a residence but I mean, you're...there's nobody there, there's no parents, there's no nothing. I know I'm a lot older than most of those kids, but I still haven't experienced being away from home. Like, I can go and do whatever I want. And nobody can stop you. So, being able to cope with that. All that freedom. And that's why football is so good. It kept you under control. Like [the head coach] is still kind of like the dad. And he still will whip your butt if you screw up kind of thing. You don't have that fear; you know that he's there kind of thing. But other than that, everything else is pretty easy.

Football was reported to help first year student athletes transition into their new environments. Football has especially helped student athletes remain structured in the liberated academic setting of the university. This topic addressed as *time management* is discussed as an

independent section later in the results chapter. It has briefly been discussed in this current chapter because time management (in the form of having too much freedom), is an issue that first year student athletes quickly discover once they begin their transition into the new university lifestyle.

Early in the university student athlete's career, being a member in the football program has shown to indirectly influence academic engagement. The participants' involvement in the football program has shown to help with adapting to the new university environment, building a support network, leaving its serious leisure participants less homesick than anticipated, and providing structure to the sense of having "too much freedom." In turn, being familiar with the university setting, having a support network, not being homesick, and remaining organized with their time may relieve constraints which may otherwise act as barriers inhibiting academic engagement. The following section will focus on the social support and comfort created by the "brotherhood" within the football program.

The Football Family and Brotherhood

Section Key Points –

- Highlights significance of participation in serious leisure activity.
- Football develops sense of belongingness and social support.
- Support is carried over into the academic setting.

This section was created based on its significance as a re-emerging theme in the interviews. The terms family and brotherhood were frequently included in the student athletes' responses to describe the football program. Here, the term family refers to a close group of people who are generally not related by blood, but share common interests, goals, attitudes, and lifestyles. These "family members" care for each other and are able to build a sense of social

support from such a network. If members of the football program are viewed as a supportive family, then football may lead to higher levels of academic engagement since according to Klem and Connell (2004), Solomon et al. (1997), and Stanton-Salazar et al. (2000), students with a supportive environment have higher levels of academic engagement.

As previously mentioned, football's serious leisure community of practice is a unique social community within the larger university community. It can be overwhelming being an individual in a sea of roughly 32,000 other undergraduate students. Being part of the football program has led first year football student athletes to feel less like a "number" in the larger university community, and more as noteworthy person thanks to the "family" presence from the football community.

Kurt: Like a teacher will just throw a number at you, if it's a good or a bad number, they aren't going to do anything after that. They don't care. Their work is done. Like, coach will follow up on that. He's like the dad of the family. He'll follow up, make sure you get it done; make sure you get it right the next time.

The football community is seen as a family unit from the perspective of its members. The close eye of the football family motivates student athletes to do well academically because they believe that their school marks will be reviewed by their coaches. Student athletes are going to school for more than just themselves, they are also trying to do well academically for the football family (which requires its members to maintain an academic standard).

Participants described some members of the football community to be like brothers (older and younger), uncles, and fathers. Living in a new university setting, some members of the football program may replace the missing roles which they expect from their distant biological family with the care, trust, and support from members in the football community.

Kurt: But it's like, you trust one another so much that; almost like during the season, your team is more important to you than your own family. This is family. Like when coach talks about like you can miss practice for family commitment, like this is family commitment. Like you don't want to miss this for anything.

R: But you also mentioned that the social world of the football program is kind of like a brotherhood. So do you see the other guys on the football program as family?

Tom: Yeah! Definitely. We all want, all of each other to succeed and do well on the field. And in order to do well on the field, you have to do well in the classroom. So we want everyone to just do...succeed in general. No one is...thinks they are too good for anyone. It's kinda like how it is in a brotherhood. You have your older brothers, and you have your mediums, and your youngest. They joke around with you, they bully you...not in a mean way. But like in a brother way. Joking around.

George: Like I'm part of a team, a part of a family. Like walking around, like you know, if you see people on campus, like, 'oh, hey, what's up?' You guys are pretty much brothers. Whereas, if you come just as a student, you're just another one going to class. Whereas, here you're going to class, getting an education while being part of something, something better.

First year student athletes in the football family feel as if they belong to something more than the general student population. They have a greater sense of belongingness with the football community compared to the vast student non-athlete community. Once football student athletes recognize other members of the football program, they begin to feel a sort of instant connection with them. Even if do not know each other so well personally, they still feel a bond knowing that they are going through the same experience of having to deal with both school's academic and football's athletic demands.

R: So do you have the sense that other people inside this community care for each other?

Harry: Yeah, definitely, definitely. Even if it's...If I see another player that I don't even know, I don't even talk to all that much, but we're just walking past each other on campus and everything, it's always at least a 'hey, how's it going?' Ya, know? Like just stop for a second and talk to them. You can just, it's that...I dunno, sense of brotherhood, or whatever it is.

These "brothers" engage in similar practices in both academic and athletic communities. Having the supporting bond from the football community, that sense of support is therefore carried over when they engage in academic practices outside of the football community together (such as going to class, or studying).

George: You're part of a family almost on the football team. Like people will watch out for you. Like if you're having trouble in school. You can talk to the coach and he could get you a tutor.

Harry: Everyone's got everyone else's back. Like the coaches really care about the players. So, their number one goal is to make sure that we're OK with school, and we're OK with everything else. Basically it's like a big family, that's how the community is here.

Football student athletes are able to develop a sense that someone (in their current environment at university) cares about them. They may know that their family six hours away cares about them, but interacting with people on a daily basis reinforces the notion that they are also cared for and supported here at university. These interactions with other members in the brotherhood can become a strong influential factor keeping these young student athletes happy and motivated to achieve their best both athletically and academically.

Harry: It's like a mix of that, knowing that I'm going to have another support system here at university. And knowing that...I just love the community, the family, that's all involved in football. Everybody is just like a big family. The trainers and the coaches, offense and defense, its just, it's great.

Brett: But like the football team, like, it's a pretty close group of guys. Like you're with them a ton, so you get to know them pretty well and there's a lot of joking going on.

Theo: Like it [involvement in the football program] gives you a sense of belonging. Like a brotherhood that you can fall back on if times are hard or school is hard.

Theo: Like a family I guess. People you can fall back on. Go out, have a good time with. It's like, they're always going to be there.

Being able to rely on a support network can carry over to areas outside of football as well. They are able to joke around and socialize with each other. University does not have to be about work all the time, there is also room for socializing and having fun. Being part of the football community brings a sense of balance to their new academic life. It helps develop their social networks as well and leads to lifelong friendships. The family aspect also develops student athletes' notion of belongingness. They begin to realize that if they succeed, then the football team also succeeds, and if they fail, then the team also fails. The nature of student athletes' community acts in a reciprocal manner. If the individual is committed towards helping his

family, then the family will remain committed towards helping the individual members and vice versa.

Bob: Yeah, it's much more than a sport. People say, 'oh football is a family.' Some people throw that term around. But there is some people that believe it.

George: Like the defensive coaches at least, like the ones that I deal with more, are like, they treat it more like a family than a community or a football team at that. It's more family than anything.

Frank: Well like, especially with just the players, because we're all going through sort of the same thing. We're all like, we're all learning the same plays. It's kind of like two competitive brothers. Cause we're all fighting for the same position but we're not being hostile towards each other. It's sort of, we all want to get better. So we start to push each other to get better by improving ourselves in a way. Like I'd kill for any guy on the team because just that sense of knowing that we have your back on and off the field, I guess that's sort of like family in a sense. You see the coaches sort of like as a fatherly figure because he has that authority and like he'll use that authority if needed but at the same time if need be, you come talk to you if there's a problem, stuff like that. It's not all military based, you know, get stuff done, do it right, and all stuff like that; there's a softer side to it.

The unique experiences from the University of Ottawa's football program may not be felt at every academic institution. It may take much longer for members to develop a sense of being in a brotherhood or part of a family within a different football community. Other football communities may never reach a level of caring, support or togetherness which may resemble a family unit. However, the Gee Gee's football program was able to provoke a sense of belongingness even before one's university career began.

Joe: It was just like, you get that feeling when I came here for my recruiting visit. It just felt like I should be here and like, it just felt like home to me even though it's 6 hours away. Whereas when I went to the other schools, I didn't have that feeling.

During the first few months at university, participants spend more time with members of the football program than with members of other communities, integrating them in the football family. Luckily, for this particular community, being integrated into the family unit came fairly easy for the newcomers at the University of Ottawa as the culture embedded in the football program (from the different coaches, alumni, veterans, down to the rookies) foster a sense of

togetherness and unity.

George: Like you end up feeling like an outsider coming in. But by the end of the year, you're so much a part of the team, that it's not even funny, like you become part of the family.

Kurt: Like within the first two weeks, you felt like part of the team. Like there's no...like I've played on other teams where there's guys that are kind of like you're a rookie, like get out of my face kind of thing, but there's nobody like that on this team. So they all, they just invite you in and they want you to be part of it.

R] So it's a big family feeling eh?

6] Yeah, oh for sure.

Larry: And you're always at the field with the same people so you get more of a family feeling.

The family culture had begun before first year student athletes enrol with the university.

The culture is already a part of the team from the previous cohorts of student athletes. The caring is first experienced during recruitment trips when coaches take the time to meet individually with potential student athletes and their families back home. The family-like support then becomes more apparent during training camp when student athletes need to persevere through long and hard practices for two weeks. The togetherness and support becomes even stronger as the academic year begins and the new hardships of dealing with academics begin to take place. These first year football student athletes obviously do not go through the university experience uninfluenced by those around them.

This section has depicted an aspect of the football program's culture which is shared by individual members. The importance of highlighting the football family or brotherhood is to reflect the seriousness of this leisure activity and the significant impact that the football program may have on its members. Student athletes care for one another and create a social support system which may lead to higher levels of academic engagement. Members in the brotherhood stick together even outside of football and the influences which they have on each other carry over to other communities where they may interact, including academic, social, and residential

communities. Ultimately, the football family brings a sense of belongingness to its members. It motivates individuals to do well in school because the family will be monitoring their progress (since their academic standing affects their placement within the football community). Student athletes are working not only for themselves, but also in correspondence with the football program. The following chapters will take a deeper look at members of the football family (rookies, veterans, and coaches) who influence first year student athletes and their academic engagement.

Rookies' Influences on Academic Engagement

Section Key Points –

- Participants share the most experiences with other football rookies at university.
- Rookies go to class and work on academic projects (engaging academically) together.
- Rookies learn from each others' mistakes.

As mentioned in the previous section, the football family was able to have a significant impact on the lives of first year student athletes. Each member of the football family plays a different role affecting one another. Newcomers to the football program are referred to as rookies. All the participants in the current research are considered rookies as it is their first year in the football program. Rookies' influences on first year student athletes differ from other members of the football program as rookies often go through similar learning experiences together and face equivalent situational challenges. This section takes a closer look at how rookies influence other first year student athletes and its affect towards academic engagement.

First year student athletes on the football program were able to create friendships and a support system from football which was carried over into the academic setting. It was common for first year football student athletes to study together (in fact, it was mandatory through SBS).

It was also common for them to sit together during lectures and work on class projects with each other. Rookies not only learn side by side with one another, they also learn *from* one another.

R: You learn more from the other rookies than the vets?

Tom: Yeah, cause they're in the exact same position than you are. And to see how they are dealing with it. It gives you like, 'hey you know what? He's finding time and he's first year rookie. He's going through the same changes you are.' There's nothing different. With vets, they know what to expect right? They tell us, 'hey, you know first year is pretty easy, relax.' But how am I supposed to relax if I haven't experience 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, 5th year? So, with the guys in their first year, they don't know what they're going through either. So... We learn a lot from each other.

Student athletes in similar positions relate to one another and motivate their peers to achieve as they have. Football “brothers” act as role models when they excel in their practices which may motivate success and academic engagement in other first year student athletes. Relating to the theory of communities of practice, by mutually engaging with one another, first year student athletes learn how to engage in the practices defining the communities of which they are members.

Every so often, university courses ask their students to work on projects together. It may be more difficult for football student athletes to work on projects with student non-athletes rather than working with other football student athletes. Already knowing the person with which a project will be worked on may provide an advantage towards mutual academic engagement. The demanding football schedule is another reason why it may be more difficult to organize mutual engagement in academics with student non-athletes.

George: We'll have classes with friends and with guys from the team. But because I ended up in a class this semester, where there's like ten guys in the class who are on the football team. And we all sit together, we all, when we have group assignments, we all kind of group up together and get it done. Since we have like the same schedule, we all have the same slots where we can get work done. Whereas, if you teamed up with like just another student, I guess they'd get really frustrated with you, because you're gone so much, you're so busy, that they'll want to work a certain day and you'll be like no I can't, I'm busy. Whereas, you'll be with a football guy, you're both, after practice let's go do it. Before practice let's do it. How about Sunday, like when we get back? It's all because you have the same free time. So you can get work done.

Having the opportunity to do schoolwork with other football student athletes rather than with student non-athletes allowed for engagement within the unique football student athlete community. Rather than jumping back and forth between exclusive athletic and academic communities, these individuals were able to engage in an overlapping student athlete community. Engaging with peer student athletes allowed individuals to take part in the practices of both the student and the athlete, without having to transition between the engagements among members of differing communities.

R: Do you feel that you've learned from the other rookies on the team?

Theo: Yeah, for sure. We've like fallen back on each other and like helped each other out.

R: How?

Theo: Well academically, we're all first years and we don't know what to expect, so... I dunno. Like we help each other out.

R: Just by being in the same boat you kind of figure out...?

Theo: Yeah, you can relate to them a lot more. So that helps.

Being able to speak the same vernacular, understanding similar terminology, and having an immediate connection with peers may aid academic engagement. Speaking the same language and being on a similar level of understanding may allow for more efficient studying strategies. Although student athletes may learn important study strategies from other people (including veterans or mentors), it may be easier for them to relate to the strategies applied by individuals who follow worldviews similar to their own.

Harry: It's good to learn from their mistakes but it's like even study tricks. Like a couple of the guys, taught me an easy way to remember, like if I have a few sociologist and I have to remember their theories, there's ways to relate them to cookies, this guy taught me a way to figure it out. It's just like different study tricks I guess that I've learned from rookies too.

Having to go through obstacles was perceived more difficult when alone compared to going through experiences with a group. The sense of belongingness or brotherhood may be strongest with other rookies who face similar situations as themselves. Although every football student athlete goes through similar experiences, the rookies' experiences are unique when

compared to other members of the football program. Rookies can go through similar experiences together that they normally would not go through with veterans on the team or other student athletes from different sport backgrounds.

George: We're all kind of lost. We're all kind of, this is sort of new to us. So, we don't really like understand it. So I guess we're all just kind of going along together figuring it out. And if somebody's telling us, we're just dealing it out together.

R: Do you find it helps that you're all together doing it?

George: Yeah, yeah. Yeah for sure. Because you feel like, like again, you're part of a group. Where going around learning something as a group is easier than just walking around campus by yourself lost. It's easier to be lost looking for something with 5 guys, so you don't feel as overwhelmed, like, 'oh my god!' If you have a few guys with you it makes it better.

Bob: For the most part, just in..., you know, you spend a lot more time with [the rookies]. You sort of help each other along the way as well. But the veterans usually are there to help you, right? They're there to just, ya know, tell you this, tell you that. But you can teach and learn things from other rookies. You know, how to do this, how to do that. Stuff off the field and on the field too. If that makes any sense. You spend more time with them in general.

Not all of the lessons that rookies learn from other rookies stem from positive experiences. In fact participants admitted that you learn what you *should* do from the veterans and what you *should not* do from the rookies. Perhaps, football student athletes are able to learn more from other rookies' mistakes rather than correct examples. Learning from others mistakes is beneficial so that one does not have to experience an unpleasant situation to learn a useful lesson. Seeing the consequences of other student athletes fail a course may motivate peers to achieve success and therefore may promote their academic engagement.

R: Do you feel that you've learned from the rookies on the football program?

Brett: Uh, yeah a little bit. Like more what not to do. But like, a lot of stuff like, you just like hear stories and stuff and then you don't want to, you just don't want to put yourself in that situation. Like you think about something before you do it.

Joe: Um...yes and no. I mean, learn from other people's mistakes, not your own. That's how you get ahead in life. That's something that I learned from football actually. I mean if the rookies made a mistake then, and if I saw it, I'd pick that out and I wouldn't try to make the same mistake.

Don: Um, some of them...some of them are not in full university mode I think. They're kind of half-ass in the academic part. But, that's where I have to know you have to be

doing, I just have to remind myself not to be slacking off. Because someone else is doesn't mean that I shouldn't do my work. I have to take care of my own stuff and try to disregard any sort of influence like that. Whereas some other guys are really showing, yeah, they're working hard and it's, they're staying on top of it. It's good.

The lessons that first year football student athletes learn from their peer rookies are different and unique than what they learn from the veterans on the football program. Rookies spend a lot of time with one another and experience many events outside of football together including socially, residentially, and academically. Participants not only learn alongside other rookies, but also from them. Rookies are even able to motivate and support other rookies to engage academically. As rookies are in the same cohort, student athletes who are in the same academic programs often take mandatory first year classes together. Football student athletes in the same courses often sit in lectures and work on group assignments together since they have very similar structured schedules, use similar linguistic terminology, and already have a bonding sense of togetherness. Since first year student athletes have so many opportunities to be around each other, they have many chances to learn from the mistakes of other rookies. Although the socializing aspect of doing schoolwork with friends or sitting together in class may act as a distraction for some, being in both the same academic and athletic communities ultimately becomes beneficial towards promoting academic engagement.

Veteran's Influences on Academic Engagement

Section Key Points –

- Veterans helped participants with both athletics and academics.
- Veterans' experience provided different learning than from rookies.
- Veterans acted as role models.

Veterans influenced participants differently than rookies. Veterans are upper year football student athletes who have more experience than rookies in both the academic and athletic

communities of which they are members. Related to Wenger's communities of practice (1999), old-timers are to veterans, as newcomers are to rookies. According to Wenger's theory, newcomers learn how to engage in the practices of the community based on the practices of the old-timers. Rookies can learn from other rookies, but the practice is already defining the community before the rookies arrive at university. Rookies must integrate into the student athlete communities and often learn from those already engaged in those practices (i.e. old-timers or veterans).

R: Which one do you think you learn from the most, the vets or the rookies?

George: Uh, vets for sure. Cause they've gone through all the stuff that we're going through right now. They all went through it. They're experienced. That's why they call them veterans. So they know what's going on. And they can help you with any situation.

Harry: Probably from the vets. Because, they're really good...they want you to succeed, they want you to do your best, they want you to reach your full potential. So they'll do, whatever you need help with. They'll teach you what you did wrong on film. They'll teach you a new way to study, they'll teach you a new way to take notes. They'll teach you anything you ask to do, and they know it, they'll teach you. It's a lot easier to go to them, because they've already experienced what you're going through, so they have that life experience that they can relate to you.

Frank: Probably the veterans, but that's mostly because they have more knowledge on it because they have been there and they've done all that.

Don: It's hard to say. You know cause, you see what happens with all the hard work from the veterans. But with the rookies, you're sort of with them.

Do first year football student athletes learn more from the rookies (with which they spend more time), or the veterans who act as role models and teach the practices composing the football student athlete community? Results were equivocal as some participants mentioned that because they spend more time with other rookies (a possible community of practice within a larger community) they are able to learn more from them. Yet other participants answered that the know-how and experience of veterans taught more meaningful lessons about how to behave and plan for their future. More importantly, veterans were able to help rookies engage in

academics in some ways that other rookies could not.

Tom: There's a few vets though that *do* teach you a lot. One I'm thinking of right now, he'll stop and take you aside, he's taken the class before, and he explains it all, and he tries to help you out as much as best he can. I've learned a lot from him. And there's other ones as well.

Moe: Also, there's some people who are taking the same courses I am now and they're like in 3rd or 4th year. And I was really thinking, 'wow, this is pretty hard, I don't think I can do both.' But seeing them still in the program lets me know that it is possible to do both. It's just going to take a lot of work.

R: Do you feel that you've learned from the veterans on the football program? And if so, how?

Bob: I think so. I think I have. Because a lot of them end up saying, as well as the coaches said, they emphasize school, schoolwork a lot. There's a lot, this is generally a first year thing, but there's a lot of guys that are 3rd year, 4th year, 5th year guys; so that goes to show that even they use it, so that's not a place to waste the time.

R: Your talking about Side-by-side?

Bob: Yeah, side-by-side, side-by-side. So side-by-side is not only for first year guys, there's 4th year guys that use it, 5th year guys that use it. Take advantage of it. So it's sort of an influence, like a role model kind of thing. Like 'hey they do it. You know, we should do it' because you know it's really good for us, cause obviously they wouldn't use it if it wasn't good, right? So ya, just stuff like that. They are always on us about schoolwork. You have classes with some of the older players, and as a first year guy, they would help talk to you, and show you the way students at university do things as opposed to high school students. How to take notes and you know, what to study, how to study, and stuff so...

First year student athletes learned what to do and how to do it, by the engagement with veterans, not simply by observing their behaviours. Studying together at SBS, student athletes are engaged in the practices of being a student athlete (i.e., studying). Rookies did not simply watch veterans study; they studied with them, mutually engaging in the practice. If rookies needed help, they trusted that veterans are able to provide that for them. Veterans were able to help out rookies through their prior experiences as student athletes. Since veterans have gone through the same phase that rookies are currently in, a trajectory is paved for rookies to pursue (both as students and as athletes).

R: Have any of the veterans on the football program influenced your decisions, either as a member of the football program or academically?

Bob: Umm...A lot of the players, there's a guy on the team, who's (name protected due to confidentiality), he's also in side-by-side right now. But he's like a 4th or 5th year

guy. He's influenced me academically. Cause he...just by the way he does his things right? He focuses a lot on school, you can tell. He's like a really smart guy. And because of that he makes others like myself, ya know, be smarter and go to classes, take the notes, and stuff. But just stuff like that. Like, they do help you academically, but in terms of the football program, often times, ya know, you see them at the gym a lot. And they're always talking about, 'hit the gym, hit the gym' when you're not practicing or you're not doing schoolwork. So a lot of that too. You know, that relates to the football program. So that influences me.

R: In both aspects...

Bob: Yeah.

R:...academically and the football program.

George: Like I; school wise, they teach, like they help you out. Like how to manage it. Football wise, they teach you like techniques, certain things that will help you at the higher level as you're coming in. And yeah, they do help you a lot. You just can't be afraid to go up to them and ask them for help.

Veterans influence both the student and athlete in a first year student athlete. Results showed that veterans did a good job promoting rookies' academic engagement. However, academics were not the only factor influenced by veterans. Effort placed towards athletics outside of the football program is another topic which was influenced by veterans, however, the focus of this research restrained for this topic to be studied at great depth. It is of importance to note that if veterans influenced participants to "hit the gym" or go over football plays whenever they could, the extra time devoted to football related activities would reduce time that could be spent engaged in academics. Although there are many ways that rookies could learn how to become better football athletes from veterans, the focus of this research remained on the first year football students athletes' academic engagement. Likewise, participants' social activity and time management also appeared to have been influenced by veterans in the same university football community. Veterans lead by example and affected first year student athletes in more ways than one (e.g. academically, athletically, socially, psychologically, etc.).

Harry: Yeah, 100% I've learned from them. A couple of the guys ... Like I've learned pointers of how to take notes at meetings, about my own, like during film watching myself, like learning how to take notes, that stuff. What to take from the coaches like the important stuff they say. Umm, even learned from one of the vets like notes in class and everything. And for like readings, like how to scan them and get the important stuff

out of it. Out of like reading 105 pages straight through and getting the important details out of it instead. I've learned a lot of academic stuff from them.

R: Do you feel that you've learned from the veterans on the football team? And if so, how?

Frank: Um, I've learned...actually a lot from the veterans in more ways than one. Like obviously there's the football aspect where they teach you what they know, cause coming into it, it's all fresh and new. And they have a better grasp on it and they have certain ways of explaining it that's easier than when the coach just tells you what it is. There's also, a sense of like, they've all gone through the university thing, they've been doing it for a couple of years. So they know certain teachers, and they know certain courses, and like, they can give you helpful hints and stuff like that. Or they can help you, like some of them, I'm sure would help you edit a paper if you really asked them to. And like, I dunno, some of them just give off a presence, especially the captains on the team. They give like, not maturity, but like this sense of leadership and they sort of put themselves out there for you. It's sort of lead by example; I sort of want to be like that because I know what it was like to be in the position that I am now, if I could help someone who is in the position that I'm in now, I figured I'd do it, I'd take up the opportunity.

R: So you find that they kind of act as role models?

Frank: Yeah.

Participants learned by direct engagement *and* by observing behaviours modeled by the veterans. They also learned from the veterans that school is a priority and have gathered a better sense of what needs to be done to keep academics a main concern. Rookies recognized that with enough effort and commitment, next year they will end up in the position that some of the veterans are in. Although mutual engagement is emphasized to become a legitimate member within a community of practice, participants were able to learn how to become successful student athletes by simply observing the behaviours of the veterans.

Harry: Yeah just, one of the offensive linemen, he's kind of, the way he is, the way he acts, he's taught me like that, there's, that school is very important. Like he's a good football player but he's always about school first. Like I mean, he'll come to practice late if he's got a class running overlapping with football practice. He's always been about school first and he's got that kind of work ethic so... I kinda, I've learned from that and I guess he's rubbed off on me like that so...

Don: He's in biochemistry. most people don't even know what that is. And I mean, he's still an outstanding player. But he takes both things seriously. It's something to look up to I guess.

Frank: Football wise. Like, I've just gotten a better sense of what it's going to be like when it comes around to deciding in whether or not I'm going to be playing football

professionally. Or whether or not I might be going off into another field or something like that, and the vets they're going to help me get a better sense of it. Not by talking to them personally, but sort of like watching and seeing how they're sort of going about it. It just helps me get a better understanding of what I might be going through later on in a couple of years.

First year student athletes were able to learn from other rookies and veterans alike. As some of the participants pointed out, it was a different type of learning. "I haven't learned more or less from either I guess. It's just like a different kind of something to look at" (Don). Although rookies may have had more interactions with other rookies, a veteran gives rookies someone to look up to and provides valuable information which other rookies simply cannot. In other words, rookies were likely to have greater engagement opportunities with other first year football student athletes (which may be either harmful or helpful towards academic engagement), yet the seasoned veterans provided a trajectory and taught rookies the practices of the experienced football student athlete. Participants were able to learn from the veterans by engaging with them individually and by observing their behaviours from a distance. Veterans have influenced rookies in more ways than one; helping newcomers in many aspects both on and off the football field. Most importantly, the influence of the veterans has coached first year student athletes to engage academically.

Joe: I mean, my veterans are my coaches. That's what I thought coming out of this season and after the season, I had a lot of time to think about everything. And I've thought about all this stuff, but definitely thought that the veterans were my coaches. And whatever they told me, either on the field or off the field, I take it to heart. And I worked on it. If it was a mistake on the field then I can get better, I'll work on it off the field. If it's like, academics and I have to go to the library and study and stay in school, then I work on that too.

Coaches' Influences on Academic Engagement

Section Key Points –

- Coaches viewed as fatherly figures in the football family.
- Coaches have greater academic influence towards engagement than professors.

- Acted as life coaches pushing a family first, school second, football third mentality.

Coaches are a part of first year student athletes' support network and take the role of fatherly figures in the football family. There are 20 team staff positions on the football program at the University of Ottawa, consisting of various coaches and trainers which may influence student athletes. Coaches on the football program do more than teach and organize how the sport is played. Coaches influence the way participants view different aspects of their life. As a result, pressure to excel in a certain domain may therefore influence the amount of engagement that one spends in the practices which define a community.

Three of the main aspects of a student athlete's life which coaches influence are the participants' perspectives on family, school, and football. Below, Tom provided an example of how coaches have influenced him:

Tom: And coaches. They influence us a lot. To come here. First of all by recruiting us. And then basically, them coaching us; and what they say: Family comes first. Second school. Then football. That teaches us how football is a lot of our life but it's not the only thing. And we have to remember that we still have school and we still have our family. And also, don't let school affect how you play football. And don't let football affect how you perform in the classroom. So we got to leave it all in the field, or leave it all in the classroom.

The less student athletes have to worry about completing their academic work, the more they can remain focused on the football field. It is therefore, in the best interest of the coach to emphasize completing other significant commitments and staying organized, so that student athletes can have a clear mind when focusing on athletics. Coaches take a humanistic approach when dealing with their student athletes and become "life coaches," respecting that there is more to life than just football. Coaches honour non-athletic commitments and in fact promote engagement in academics according to the participants.

R: Have any of the coaches or professors influenced your behaviors at university?

Bob: I'd say, a lot of the coaches for the most part have influenced me to do better in school. Cause in general, they're there not just as football coaches but life coaches, ya

know? They help you off the field and on the field. And when it comes to off the field it comes to also in the classroom, right? So for the most part they have influenced us.

R: So do the coaches emphasize “school first, football second,” or is it the other way around?

Bob: School first, school first. They always talk to us, at the end of every practice we always get together, they always emphasize, ya know, ‘get your schoolwork done.’ And whatnot, stay on top of it. So when you do come to practice you’re focusing on practice, and vice versa, right?

R: Do you find that any part of the football program kind of promotes your academic engagement?

Larry: Uh, yes. Like the side-by-side program here, makes you, for the people that do come, like come and do their homework. You’re here for a reason, so you might as well do work. Also just like the coaches always saying, like, “school comes first.” And like you can’t be a good football player if you’re not at school enough. So it does motivate you to keep the marks up and get to class.

Coaches have influenced the participants’ psychology, helping them to think “school first.” First year student athletes may learn specific studying behaviours from peer student athletes, but it is the coaches who motivate their academic engagement leading to achievement. Once football practices were completed, student athletes were not free to do as they pleased, as coaches emphasize to “get your schoolwork done” and complete the other obligations which individuals may have as student athletes. The closeness of the football’s family unit imposed a sense of responsibility on student athletes to achieve academic success not only for themselves but also for the football community. According to the participants, coaches guided individuals on the right track towards becoming successful student athletes.

R: Have any of the coaches or professors influenced your behaviours at university?

Frank: Um, yeah, there’s been a coach or two who like, they sort of, they’re sort of like the crazy uncle who like, always keep you on track and like, sometimes I need a good kick in the butt to send me in the right direction, cause I sort of veer off on occasion; so they sort of help me along. They haven’t really taught me too much, but they sort of help guide me a little bit, I guess you can say.

Student athletes felt that they would disappoint coaches (not only themselves) if they performed poorly in school. They understood that if classes were not passed, they could not play for the football program and would be letting down those expecting the individuals to play for

the team. Although this motivation to engage in academics may stem from external sources (i.e., the coaches' pressure to remain eligible), the perception (of remaining eligible to play) became projected through the individuals' interpretation of the situation. First year student athletes adapted their psychology to match those of other members in the football program and therefore engage academically because coaches believed that it was important.

R: Have any of the coaches, or any professors influenced your behaviours at university?

Brett: Um, yeah. Like the coaches stress, like they do actually stress, um, like studying, and like school first over football. Like some people don't think...they actually do. Like they're always telling you to get on...like this week is going to be packed, like especially from Wednesday on, they might say something like that, so you better do as much as you can before so it makes it a little bit easier and stuff like that. They can guide you kind of that way. And they're always there, like if you need help. We can get you help. Like if we can't help you, we can get someone to help you.

Joe: Recruiting process, the first thing that coaches asked me was, "what are your grades like?" Right? So I mean like, even though their recruiting you to play football for the school, you still have to have the grades to get in. So one comes with the other. Like I don't think you could ever separate being a student athlete.

Coaches appeared to promote the academic engagement of student athletes more than professors. This may be due to the fact that professors lecture to many students in large first year courses. The closely bound football family leaves student athletes accountable for their academic behaviours as football coaches rely on their sound academic performance to remain members of the football program. Since student athletes knew that coaches care about (and will look at) their academic marks, an added level of motivation is directed towards their academic engagement.

Kurt: No I wouldn't study as much. Like when coach talks about he's going to see the mid-terms, it scares me. Like you want to do good because, ... it's not that I'm afraid of coach, but like, he has more of an influence on my life now than most of my teachers do. Like a teacher will just throw a number at you, if it's a good or a bad number, they're aren't going to do anything after that. They don't care. Their work is done. Like, coach will follow up on that. He's like the dad of the family. He'll follow up, make sure you get it done, make sure you get it right the next time. So you don't want him on your back. So you make a bigger effort to get your marks done, so you can be...so he's satisfied with it, so that you're taken care of like that.

R: Have any of the coaches or professors influenced your behaviours at university?

Joe: Um, coaches definitely. They really emphasize you're a part of the football program. And you represent the Gee Gee program. You're not just another student

who's just walking around town. Like I said the students see me as a football student athlete. So I can't just say that I'm just a student and I can do whatever I want. Right? And the professors, not really. Cause, I mean, most of my classes are like 100 people plus. So there is no, like that togetherness with the profs.

Coaches pressed for more than athletic success, as participants believed that they also pushed for academic success. Coaches also urged that student athletes remained committed to the football program, which involves going to practice, hitting the gym, reviewing the playbook, watching film, showing up to meetings, etc. The pressure to succeed in academics combined with the added pressure of committing to the football program may result in a mixed understanding of what is being asked of football student athletes. Ultimately, the decision as to which commitment deserves greater attention (school or football) depended on individual student athletes. The coaches however, encouraged a balance of engagement in both the athletic and academic communities. Unfortunately, some participants felt that during the football season, there was a greater pressure by the coaches to excel in football than in school.

Joe: But football, like another saying: "coaching is kicking in the butt when you're high, and giving you a hug when you're down." And like, coach telling me to go do work, setting up side-by-side for us, stuff like that. Like makes me feel like I don't have as much commitment in the football program as I should in academics. Just because of the people around. I know I should have equal commitment to both.

Larry: They do influence, like knowing what you, like, like knowing the playbook, knowing the new insertions each week. But they also know that you have your own life. And like they know you have to stay on top of your school work too. So they do influence both saying, you should stay on school work. They do say at the odd time. But it's more, like know your plays, and know the playbook. More than, get to do your homework.

R: So do they kind of push you to learn more about football, or learn more about school?

Larry: Uh, during the season, more football. They want you to know the playbook. Just know where you have to be on the field. And then they expect you to know the school work on top of that. But they influence more with football.

R: So during the season, the football season, they give the priority to football?

Larry: Yeah. Yeah.

R: And then during the off-season, the priority is on school work?

Larry: Yeah.

Even though coaches may push for a "school first" mentality, student athletes could have

devoted greater effort towards the football program than their academics. This may be due to many different factors. Coaches presented expectations for student athletes to be committed to the football community (training camp, knowing the plays, showing up to practices, training at the gym, reviewing film, traveling with the team, etc.), but they also aimed at establishing a balance between family, school, and football. Although there may be perceived pressure from the coaches to excel in football (leading to student athletes taking away time from academics engagement), coaches also influenced their student athletes to stay on top of their schoolwork and promoted their academic engagement. Coaches were viewed as fatherly figures to some of the participants in the football family urging that school should come first. They were able to guide student athletes' lives on a track towards remaining eligible to play football. Ultimately, coaches promoted academic engagement by motivating student athletes to enrol at the University of Ottawa and maintain a grade point average which would allow them to play for the school.

Stereotypes

Section Key Points –

- Less of a “dumb jock” stereotype experienced at university compared to high school.
- Negative stereotype may increase academic engagement.
- Participants perceived positive stereotype held by significant figures such as professors.

Unfortunately, stereotypes can affect group members even if those group members do not accept the stereotype themselves (Passer et al., 2003). Stereotypes can project assumptions of specific practices that are projected by imagination (Wenger, 1999). Generally, football student athletes have been stereotyped as “dumb jocks” who take easy academic courses so they can focus on their athletic careers (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996). Even though most people may not reveal this specific stereotype towards individual student athletes, participants in this study

mentioned that they acknowledged the fact that there was a characteristic stereotype held towards people in their position. The effects of the stereotype may not have been directly experienced by participants, but the belief that the stereotype exists is enough to affect their academic engagement.

Don: But I'm positive there is your generic, oh football player jock. Or you know...

R: But you haven't experienced it?

Don: No, no, I haven't.

Theo: But I can definitely see teachers looking at us as the dumb jocks.

R: Well you can see it, but have you experienced it?

Theo: No, not yet. Not with teachers. But uh, like I said some people who don't know us, like in residence.

There are two ways that negative stereotypes can affect academic engagement. First, negative stereotypes that football student athletes do not care about academics may create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Martens, 2004; Passer et al., 2003), or expectations for individuals entering university that not much effort needs to be placed towards school, therefore decreasing academic engagement. Second, the reverse effect may occur, where negative stereotypes held towards football student athletes may motivate participants to go against and fight the stereotype, therefore increasing their academic engagement. In other words, if others believe that football student athletes are "dumb jocks" and do not care about school, then student athletes would try to disprove the negative stereotype and as a result engage academically.

The negative "dumb jock" stereotype that football student athletes perceive has been best described by the participants. It is not a stereotype that one would be proud of and is described as follows:

Bob: Like a lot of people look at football players as not being as smart; rowdy people. There is always stereotypes to football players right?

R: Can you describe the stereotype a little bit? Is it kind of like a "dumb jock" stereotype?

Harry: Yeah, I'd say the "dumb jock" stereotype. Like I mean, uhhh, whenever I think of it, I think of Archie comics. Like Moose from Archie comics. You familiar with that?

R: Can you describe him?

Harry: Ok, Moose is like a big guy. Probably like I'd say 6'6". Blond hair, blue eyes. He just plays football, and he just, he's dumb. Doesn't really know what he's doing. But he plays football and he's good at it. And he's an athlete. And all coaches love him. And all the teachers just accept him as a jock and kind of just accept him as being dumb and that's just how athletes are. And everything. So I mean, that's kind of the stereotype that I feel is surrounded with football players.

R: So you think it's a negative stereotype?

Harry: Yeah. It's definitely negative.

Theo: But then there's also the negatives, like they're complaining about homework and stuff. And like, I was like, 'well I've already done mine.' And they're like, 'well yeah, you play football. So, what do you really take?' So like I guess people look at us as like the dumb jocks as well as the football players.

Brett: I think a lot of people see us as an athlete before a student. Well like, I'm first year though, so I think, maybe someone like you, or like someone older that has been here for a few years would probably see me more as a student. But it's like the first year kids that just, like that's all they think about. Like, "oh, you're on the football team." Like sometimes they think that you're not smart because you're on the football team. And taking an easy program or something. So I think they see, like most of the people my age, see me more as an athlete than they do as a student.

Brett: But uh, I think some, I think for academics and stuff, some people think of you as not quite so smart when they find out that you're on the football team or something like that.

George: There's obviously always people who will resent you for it, think the bad stereotypes of football players. Like they're jocks, like they're rude. Or like all those bad stereotypes. There's obviously the people who think that and just resent you for, just they see you as a football player and they label you and they just automatically think you're a bad person.

These stereotypes mentioned above are perceived to be held, but are rarely experienced by football student athletes at university. Participants mentioned that they experienced these stereotypes more from playing football at high school than at university. Although these negative stereotypes may not always be experienced at the university setting, these assumptions may carry over into their new environment as football student athletes believed that there was still this negative image that other people associate with them.

Joe: There are some people who are like, 'oh, you play football, so you're going to; you're like mean and stuff.' Yeah. This is just in high school though. And it's a smaller environment. There's people like that, but not a lot.

R: So it's by your peers and stuff like that.

Joe: Yeah. Peers yeah.

R: But you haven't experienced this at university?

Joe: Nope. Not yet. I mean, I've been here for a couple of months.

Brett: In high school I found that some teachers did like, like I did play four sports in high school and like I think they did, I think it's a little bit negative. Like some offensive or rude comments like, "oh you should put your hockey helmet on tighter next time," like if you said something wrong. But like at, like in university, I don't think any teacher knows my name. Like they wouldn't really know if you're on a football team.

Contrary to the self-fulfilling prophecy (Martens, 2004; Passer et al., 2003), negative stereotypes of football student athletes (about them being dumb jocks and not actually being at school for academics) may actually be helpful towards their academic engagement. It is not a pleasant stereotype to be labelled a "dumb jock." Stereotypes may overlook the finer qualities of practice and can be misleading (Wenger, 1999). Student athletes did not want to fall under such a category, especially if the stereotype is untrue. Therefore, they claimed to do what they could to fight the stereotype. To prove it wrong, participants tried to excel where others believe they would fail. Ultimately, football student athletes may engage more in academia than they would if they did not believe that others held this negative stereotype towards them.

R: So you think having this, let's call it, just for the sake of calling it, "dumb jock" stereotype. Do you think it's more harmful, or helpful to student athletes? Because, let's say people think there's this, let's say stereotype that you're a dumb jock, do you want to go out and disprove that stereotype, or you're going to try extra hard to make sure you don't give off this image that, 'hey look, ya I do fit the stereotype?' You kind of want to go against it so you kind of achieve more because of it.

Harry: Yeah, I think that's what has happened. Because I don't want to fit under that category. Because like, I've heard it all through high school. I've heard it through everyone. Even just jokes that... I don't want to fit under that category because, it's not a pleasant category to be under. So there's no, there's no point, if you can work towards doing something and you can work towards like, getting higher grades and actually maybe if teachers did have that "dumb jock" stereotype, impressing them then...I mean that's like the main thing that it's done for me to help me work towards that. And getting higher grades and doing better in academics.

R: So it hasn't brought you down?

Harry: No, no. It's kind of helped me out in a way.

R: So you'd like to kind of get rid of this stereotypical image of a jock.

Theo: Yeah. Yeah.

R: How do you think...like what can we do to kind of get rid of it?

Theo: Well...

R: Like what could you do as a student athlete to help get rid of this image?

Theo: Prove yourself in the classroom I guess. But then, there's going to be the group of people who are always like, 'oh well the prof knows that you play on the football team and he knows that he'll give you good marks.' But like, that's not how it works. Like we have to work just as hard as you do.

Football student athletes may be treated unjustly by being labelled a jock. However, at the post secondary education level, there does not appear to be much of an unfair treatment experienced by the student athletes as a result of the negative stereotypes. In fact most of the negative stereotypes were perceived to come from other first year student non-athletes in particular. Significant persons, such as university professors and family members portrayed a more positive image towards the participants. Depending on who was viewing the student athlete, a more positive image may be held and presented to the participants. For example, some participants believed that university professors viewed student athletes as being well organized, coachable, team players, who also work hard towards achieving success in academics.

R: And do you feel that you are being treated differently for being identified as a football student athlete, either positively or negatively?

Harry: Uh, yeah, I think it's...depending on who's identifying me as it, it can be positive. Like I mean, if it's my aunt, uncle, my parents or whatever. They it's the positive thing. But, I found, even in high school, like being identified as a football player first, a lot of the teachers kind of looked at it as, 'oh, you don't want to do schoolwork. Your just here to play football.' Ya know. And then, I haven't really gotten any of that sense from any of my profs at university. but that's kind of how it was in high school.

Bob: For the most part I haven't ran into anyone that has, you know, brought negative stereotype to me and acted in that way. There was a prof that, I'm not going to say his name, but there was a prof that some students said, 'oh, he wouldn't like football players because...' I don't know, he doesn't like them. Cause he has negative stereotypes, they didn't specify, just that he wouldn't like us or something. But he asked us in the class, 'are there any athletes in the class?' There's a whole lot, a whole row of us. We all put our hands up, and he wasn't fazed or anything, he said, 'oh, I actually like football players because they know how to work as a team. They know what needs to be done in order to get the job done,' right? You know, what route to take. So, you know, he looked at it in a positive way. We're in a sense...he didn't specify that we are better students but we have the ability to be coached and be helped better by profs, than a lot of just regular students.

Theo: There was one time where we were in class and he asked how many of us were football players...

R: You mean the prof.?

Theo: Yeah. And we all put up our hands thinking he was like draw us, or like call us

out. And he was like, 'yeah, football players get good marks in my class. They're not just dumb jocks.' I thought that was pretty cool.

R: Although you do find that sometimes you're treated in a positive sense?

Harry: Yeah, like, I mean, I was talking to my sociology teacher. She...this is actually a positive thing. Kind of what changed my mind about it a little bit about it. She said...like I told her I was playing football and everything, and she kind of congratulated me on being able to balance football and schoolwork and social life. Like she said that it's like a tough thing to do, like kudos to me for being able to balance all my work and my time with football and everything. So...it's kinda like...that's one where she clearly doesn't have that stereotype that football players are stupid.

Bob: But at the same time there are people that realize, that you know, football players are actually students. And can do anything that regular students can do. But we just have extra things on the plate that we have to do.

Participants felt that others' image of football student athletes may lead to being treated differently (either positively or negatively depending on the people distinguishing them) than student non-athletes. In regards to academics, football student athletes were sometimes viewed negatively, as "dumb jocks." Yet this stereotype was one stemming from previous experience at high school and was reported less likely to be experienced at university. If the negative stereotype was experienced at university, it typically came from other first year students who may have less of an influential factor compared to family members, coaches, or university professors. Even though student athletes may still perceive that this negative image exists, some of the participants expressed that they were able to use the stereotype as a motivational factor promoting their academic engagement.

First year student athletes also felt that they have been distinguished in a positive image. More importantly, the image of a student athlete achieving academic success has been presented to participants by significant figures within their university setting (e.g. professors, coaches, family, and upper year football student athletes). Creating the image that football student athletes can balance academics, athletics, and a social life may act as an important factor promoting their academic engagement. The preceding point is especially important to the individual who

strongly identifies himself as a football student athlete, since a strong identity may lead to stereotypes having a greater effect. The following section will go into greater detail analyzing the identities of first year football student athletes.

Identities

Section Key Points –

- Participants identified themselves as either: *students*, *athletes*, or *student athletes*.
- Identity may lead to engagement; likewise, engagement may develop one's identity.
- Identities are able to change over time.

“Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities” (Wenger, 1999, p. 145). Football student athletes were members of different social communities, each of which partially contributed to one's overall identity. During the interviews, questions regarding one's identities were asked. A particular question which sparked discussions of interests was question #22 of the interview guide (see Appendix C), “As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete, a student, or both equally?” As both students and athletes, the research examined which identity participants associated with the most. Stebbins (2001) mentioned that there may be a link relating motivation to pursue serious leisure with one's identity; suggesting that one's identity may reflect their motivation to engage in the practices of a serious leisure community of practice. The current section explored participants' identities as they may illustrate their engagement amongst different communities.

Frank: But like, I'm not all football all the time. You know, eat, breath, sleep football. I love football, it's been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. But it's not all of who I am.

R: So it's only a part of your identity?

Frank: Yeah.

Ambiguity over the results appeared throughout some of the interviews. For example,

student athletes' personal identities may differ from how they believed others perceived them. Likewise, student athletes mentioned placing more time or effort into a certain community while identifying more with another. Lastly, the participants were also asked which they preferred; being an athlete or a student (the vast majority preferred being an athlete). The answers which they provided did not always match the identity which they associated with the most. Although the current study did approach exploring football student athletes' identities, a more in depth research project is suggested to analyze any direct effects it may have on academic engagement.

For the purpose for this research, participants' identities were distinguished by three categories: *athlete*, *student*, and *student athlete* identities. These three choices were presented to the participants (please note, since questions were presented to participants orally, participants may have interpreted student athlete as consisting of the singular merging identity, student-athlete). They then decided for themselves which category they identified with the most. Although no cause-and-effect analysis stemmed from the research, results indicated that football student athletes did not identify identically to their peers.

Athlete Identity

Some participants expressed that they view themselves more as athletes than students or student athletes. Even though some of the student athletes viewed themselves more as athletes than students, participants found value and importance associated with being a student.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as a student or an athlete, or both equally?

George: I would probably say more as an athlete. Like I know education is important, but like, I've always grown up; like I've been enjoying sports for all my life. And like, school hasn't really been like that. I haven't been a big fan of school. Like I know it's important, but like I'd rather be playing football, be playing sports.

Frank: Um, that's a good question. I guess I'd have to identify myself as more as an athlete than a student. I know how important school is but part of the reason why I came here was because of football. And I know I have to get my school work done, but I've been an athlete pretty much all my life, so it sort of, I sort of categorize myself

automatically as an athlete. And then as a student second. Sort of, because in my younger life they were separated for the most part cause I didn't play a lot of sports in high school. But I played a lot of sports outside of high school. And then I enjoyed sports more than I did school. So I kind of felt like an athlete student rather than a student athlete.

Kurt: I would say athlete. Because like I said before, if I wasn't playing football, I probably wouldn't be at university. I just, I don't like school. I never liked school. Like I got through it, I wasn't failing out or anything. But I always needed something to keep me in. Something to look forward to at the end of the day.

The preceding quotations exemplified student athletes identifying themselves more as athletes with a reoccurring theme; they enjoyed sports more than school. However, this may not be a determining factor for all of the participants (as some of them mentioned identifying more as students, yet obtaining greater enjoyment out of athletics). Participants who identified themselves more as athletes may or may not be as academically engaged as participants who identified primarily as students or student athletes. However, their identity as athletes and desire to continue playing football has placed them within an academic institution. Therefore, because of their perseverance in football's serious leisure pursuit, student athletes found themselves more engaged in academics than they would have been if their football career had ended in secondary school.

R: ...so do you find that you're engaged more in football than academics because you enjoy football more?

Frank: Yeah. It's sort of the sense of... I don't know, I've always had the sort of mentality...like I like to read and that's why I do it a lot. I don't really like vegetables so I don't eat them as much. I sort of go through the motions because I know they are good for you, you should eat them. So like, I figure, you're not always going to enjoy everything you do but sometimes you gotta do them because they need to be done. But you always, I always get a sense of pride, like I do something like even if it's something, even if it's hard work and you don't enjoy it, still doing it anyway. even if it's just going through the motions, as long as you do it right. I don't know, everything seems to be easier when you enjoy it.

Participants appeared to engage in practices which they enjoy. They may "go through the motions" of certain activities because they value their importance, but may not fully engage in such practices. Student athletes may not fully identify themselves as being students because they

may not enjoy the practices of being a student, which would therefore be reflected in the amount of engagement they pursued as students. However, student athletes may identify more as athletes than students due to the amount of time spent with the athletic community.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete, or as a student, or both equally?

Larry: Um...during the football season, more as an athlete. Just always, like at the complex, pretty much always getting ready for football or studying football plays. Like really going to class when you have to, but not doing the excess work that you could of been doing. That's what I was doing. So more as an athlete at that time.

Tom: I would say as an athlete. I spend more time, like... I'm in the classroom on average 3 hours a day. And here (referring to the football program), I'm here a lot longer. And when you start including the gym and then the therapy, and all that...It's more of an athlete. Basically, I'm going to school for football, and taking school.

The cause-and-effect relationship between time spent on practices of a community and identity have not been thoroughly analyzed and therefore it is not conclusive whether engagement in a community leads to the development of an identity, or if it is one's identity which leads to engagement in the practices of certain communities. According to Stebbins, "motivation to pursue serious leisure has also been found to be related to identity" (2001, p. 15) suggesting that it may be identity leading to engagement in the serious leisure activity. On the other hand, Wenger stated that, "building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities" (1999, p. 145) suggesting that identity is the product of one's engagement. Therefore, a reciprocal effect should be considered (one's identity leads to engagement in a community and engagement in a community further develops one's identity; see Figure 6) as one's identity may be related to academic engagement.

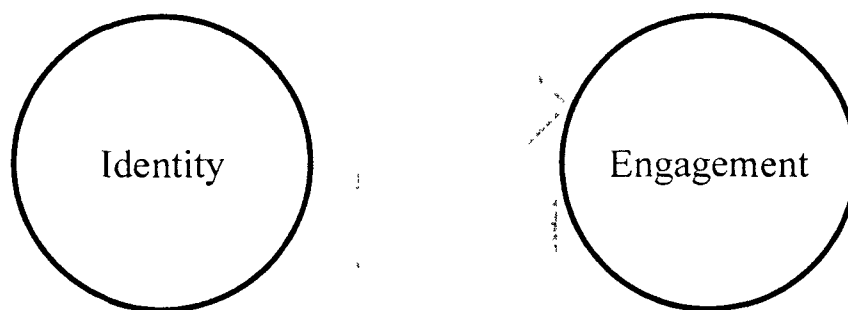


Figure 6: Reciprocal Influential Relationship between Identity and Engagement.

Student athletes who identified primarily as athletes suggests that more time may be spent within the football community when compared to the school community; therefore implying that football participation reduced academic engagement. However, it is uncertain whether football participation lead to a more profound athletic identity and consequently decreased engagement in student activity, or if having a distinctive football identity lead to an unbalanced engagement between the athletic and academic communities.

Student Identity

Participants also provided examples of identifying more as a student than an athlete. These participants may in fact engage more in academic practices than with those of the athletic community. Factors influencing the way that one identified himself may consequently influence academic engagement. For example, not fully engaging in all of the community's practices, such as playing during competitive football games against other teams, may result in student athletes identifying less with an athletic identity. The following is an example of a participant who viewed himself more as a student than an athlete or student athlete.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete, or a student, or both equally?

Moe: Pretty much, more as a student. As I'm not currently not a dresser. but if I was, I'd definitely throw out the fact that I'm a football player more often.

R: Do you think you would identify yourself more as an athlete if you were, for example, a star player, as opposed to being on the bench during games. or not even dressing?

Moe: That's it. I didn't even dress. so...yeah pretty much. I mean if I was a star, just

enough to get on the field that would be good.

In the example above, Moe expressed not identifying strongly as an athlete based on the fact that during football games, he did not get a chance to even put on his equipment or “dress” for a game. He was to watch the game from the crowds with other spectators (and many other first year student athletes on the team). Even though he devoted his time and placed his efforts attending practices and to other football commitments, the fact that he did not have a chance to dress for a game showed that he was not yet fully integrated into the football community. Like many rookies, participants such as Moe may be considered legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) rather than fully integrated members of the serious leisure community of practice. As a consequence of not dressing for games, this particular student athlete identified primarily as a student (even though he may have engaged in the football community’s practices as much as other first year players who also did not dress for games). Even though student athletes may engage a considerable amount of their time into the football community as legitimate peripheral participants, factors (such as dressing for a game) may determine one’s integration into the football program and the identity which an individual provides for himself.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete or a student, or both equally?

Joe: Myself, like personally, I like to identify myself as a student more than an athlete. I’ve seen people wear their football gear around campus and all that stuff. It’s like a good thing, like you should be proud of it. But I don’t like putting myself above or below other people on campus. Right? And if I identify myself as a football player that could, like put me above the other students who don’t take part in varsity sports. And I don’t like doing that, I rather just be a student.

Some participants evoked a sense of modesty when it came to their participation in the serious leisure pursuit. It has become apparent that some football student athletes have done a good job checking their egos at the door. Joe in the example above showed how a student athlete is still a student. The fact that he is also an athlete has not privileged his position as a student.

Academic achievement does not discriminate between student athletes and student non-athletes. To properly engage as a student one should identify himself as a student. Identifying as a student-athlete (as a singular identity) may actually be limiting to one's engagement with the larger student population.

It may be easier to engage with the general student population as "just a student" than a student-athlete. Other participants may not fully identify as athletes because they believe they are not full members (rather, legitimate peripheral participants; Lave & Wenger, 1991) within the serious leisure community of practice. Each participant held a unique self-identity which may either be a reflection or an influential factor of one's engagement in particular communities. For some, identifying themselves as a student may help promote their engagement in academics or may be a reflection of greater academic engagement compared to athletic engagement. Yet for other participants, identifying themselves as both students and athletes was the best way to balance engagement within multiple communities.

Student Athlete Identities

Although some participants mentioned that they would be university students without being athletes, it was a more common finding that participants would not be students in their current position if it was not for their involvement with the varsity football program. In some regards, football has helped student athletes engage in academics in a manner which would have not been achieved as student non-athletes. Having a balanced identity may be related with a balance of engagement in both academics and athletics.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete or a student, or both, or which one do you see yourself more, as an athlete, a student or both equally?

Don: Definitely both. Cause I can't really afford to be one more than the other...with engineering so...

R: So both equally?

Don: Yeah.

Bob: I've never thought of myself as a football player before a student, or a student before a football player. It's sort of a balance for me, right. In terms of obligations of one to the other.

Brett: Yeah, I think it's equal. A student and an athlete.

R: But you personally, do you identify yourself as being, student, athlete, or both?

Harry: Both, like a student athlete. Like a student first. Yeah, academics are the main goal.

R: So not a athlete student, a student athlete?

Harry: Yeah. A student athlete.

When attempting to balance between the two communities of the student and the athlete, participants stated that academia held greater importance than their involvement in the football program. Even though some student athletes may place more time and effort into the football program during its season, they claimed that the academic community is more valuable to engage with than athletics. Behaviours may be contradictory to one's beliefs (as some participants reported spending more time in one community over another, yet claimed to equally identify as both students and athletes), suggesting that their unique identities may not be an accurate measure of one's engagement.

R: As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete, or a student, or both equally?

Brett: It's hard. I guess, maybe I'll say equal. It's cause, I probably do put more time into football, but I think that school is more important than football. It's cause like, the chances of you making money in football are slim. So you kind of have to have your priorities straight. But like, I've sacrificed studying and stuff to come to football.

The relationship between identity and engagement may not be as clear as originally proposed. Likewise, participants' transitions between different communities were unclear, as some practices may represent engagement in more than one community. The student and athlete worlds may be kept separated by participants, but the two communities may also be brought together as an exclusive student-athlete community. A merging of the two communities could be observed at SBS, where student athletes were attending mandatory football sessions to work on their academics. However, an individual is likely to be engaged in the practices of a single

community at a time. For example, student athletes could not work on their academic homework and get ready for the next football game at the same time (unless they were taking academic courses which they could apply towards football).

Some participants stated that they would not have pursued their football careers without school; and that attending university without football would have been unlikely (in this sense, the individual must be both a student and an athlete to be either). To some participants, the football and school worlds were integrated as one community with different obligations and commitments. In this respect, some participants likely viewed the student and athlete communities as one single student-athlete community rather than two separated communities. These participants appeared to have a hard time keeping the two worlds separated as they may have been cognitively focused on one community while physically attending the other.

R: Does it cross over, or can you keep the two separate all the time?

Joe: I can at times keep them separate. Because once I say I need to; cause a lot of thought goes into both. Obviously. And once you start thinking of one over the other, then you start screwing up on the thing you're doing. Let's say at practice I'm thinking of the mid-term I just failed, then that always has an effect on your performance on the field. So at times, there comes a time where you have to separate them. But it definitely mix mashes and comes together more than times I have them separated.

R: So it does mix mash around more than it does separate?

Joe: Yeah.

R: And I don't really know from your perspective, but do you think it's possible to be one without the other?

Brett: Probably, I don't think so. But I don't think I could cause sometimes you're studying, but I'm still thinking about football. Or like you're at football and you're think about like I have to study so much when I get home. And like, you're never just, like you're focused when you're on the football field or you're studying. But like, you're always like, thinking about when you get home, or like during a meeting or something, what time is it going to end cause I have to get home and study. Or like I have to cut studying short to go to football. So, it's hard to separate totally cause you're always thinking about both.

Other participants were better able to follow coaches' advice, keeping academics and athletics separated. They viewed the academic and athletic worlds as being two separate entities. Although there was a connection between the two, participants attempted to focus and engage

with only one world at a time. The mentality for some of the participants was similar to what they have been coached, as Tom stated, “don't let school affect how you play football. And don't let football affect how you perform in the classroom. So we got to leave it all in the field, or leave it all in the classroom.” Note that this may be easier to be done for some individuals with schedules that do not overlap and for student athletes which did not dress for games or travel with the team during away games.

R: Do you think it's possible to separate being an athlete from being a student, vice versa, being a student from being an athlete?

Frank: Um, I guess you could. I sort of don't do it as much. I sort of, like I said before, you learn in everything you do. But there has been aspects where like you have to separate the athlete from the student because there are certain aspects to school that you can't apply to being an athlete. And there's certain aspects to football, for example, when it comes to being a student because there's sort of two different worlds in a sense. When you separate them completely, like when you look at school and you look at a particular sport. So, yeah, I guess...

R: So you guess what? That you can separate them?

Frank: Yeah, you can separate them.

Kurt: If I had to for sure. For sure, they are two different worlds. Like some guys try to bring them together right. You try to use the advantages you have on a team, playing on a team, in a class. Like you could get a signal from a doctor here for a mid-term, or... I never believe in that. I like to keep them separate.

Theo: I guess you can separate them. Like I'm at school for some part of the day, and for the other part of the day, I'm at football. So they don't really intertwine with each other.

R: They [the coaches] kind of want you to keep the two separate?

Tom: It's kind of like two different lives, yeah. Don't let it affect you.

R: Like when I was talking about, for example, a student athlete, can you separate the two? Can you separate the two and don't let the two cross over?

Tom: Yeah.

Student athletes identified themselves as being members of two different communities, and possibly a third community consisting of the unique life as student-athletes. Even within the unique student athlete communities, micro-communities may emerge (e.g. first year student athletes; see Figure 7). Some participants may have viewed academic obligations as a part of being a football player, or that a physical outlet (such as football) is necessary for them to

become successful students. Although participants attempted to separate the academic and football worlds (which arguably may not be possible), individuals identified themselves as being both students and athletes.

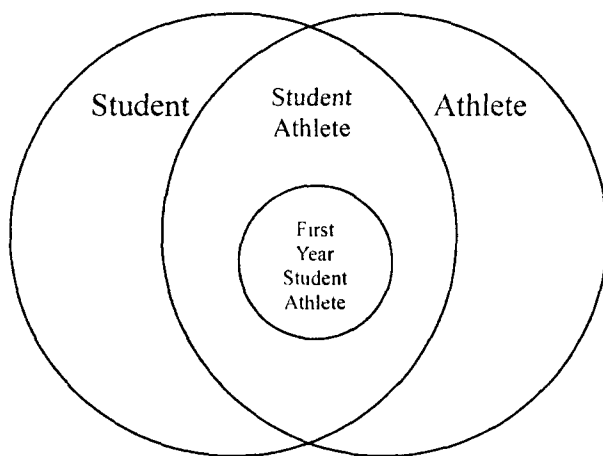


Figure 7: Multiple Identities Merging to Create a Distinctive Unified Identity.

It is of importance to mention that student athletes' identities have been shown to change over time. As participants progress through their university careers, they may create a more accurate image of themselves. It appeared that the shift in one's identity was due to the difference in the amount of time spent engaged with the football community. For example once the football season was over, some student athletes mentioned that they began to view themselves more as balanced student athletes rather than athletes.

R: And now (that the football season is over) do you identify yourself more differently?

Larry: More as a student athlete now.

R: So both equally?

Larry: Yeah. Still like going to the gym and everything. But spending more time on school to get the marks up.

R: Now why is that? Why do you think you've made that kind of change from viewing yourself more as an athlete, and now...?

Larry: Cause football is not as demanding right now. When you have an extra five hours a night, it's a lot easier. And you aren't as tired to do homework or spend more time on the school work.

This research found a relationship existing between the engagements in the activities of a

community to be linked with the development of one's identities. Identities' influence towards academic engagement was not so clear. It was uncertain whether engagement affected identities, identities affected engagement, or if both affected each other. If engagement is truly reflective through identities, then the finding that some participants viewed themselves more as athletes than students or student athletes acts as a warning that more time may be spent in a serious leisure pursuit than engaged in academics.

Results showed that participants were able to be placed under three different categorizations of self-identity: identifying predominately as *athletes*, *students*, or *student athletes*. In all three categories, identities may be developed through the engagement in respective communities (e.g., athletes enjoy athletic engagement more than school; students do not play as much as other football players; and student athletes attempt to equally balance engagement in both communities). However, the manner in which one identifies himself may prescribe the engagement in the matching communities. Ultimately, individual student athletes create their own personal identity for themselves based on their experiences. Identities may change over time as participants' engagement with certain communities renegotiates the meaning of their identities. Those who simply identified themselves as athletes act as a warning that too much time may be spent engaged in athletics, resulting in reduced academic engagement. Regardless, football student athletes who identified themselves as students (at least partially) indicated that these individuals engaged considerably in academics.

Time Management

Section Key Points

- Not much time allotted for activities outside of football and school.
- Even when time is devoted for academics, football may psychologically distract from effective academic engagement.
- Football's demanding structure helped student athletes manage their time wisely.

Given the commitments of first year football student athletes, not much free time remained after fulfilling obligations to the academic and athletic communities. Participants mentioned that they did not have enough time to work a part-time job during the football season. Although many of them worked during the summer and some even planned to work during the following school semester when there was no football, they claimed that there was simply not enough time to work a part-time job while having to also juggle school and football. Participants even 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 of the participants soon found that more time must be allotted to activities (such as eating a meal) than once thought (since the support of their family is not there to shop for, cook, and clean after their meals). Time is a very valuable commodity, especially for the busy football student athlete who must balance the obligations of two serious communities.

Time management was an important and common challenge for participants. Some student athletes reported that they would be able to spend more time focusing on schoolwork once the football season was over. Other participants reported that there is only so much time that one can spend on schoolwork and did not believe that once they would have more free time

(at the end of the football season) that they would spend more time on academics. The football program may have both a negative and positive affect towards time spent engaged academically.

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 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 helped student athletes manage their time wisely. Participants had little time to waste considering the amount of time spent with both academics and football. Brett reported that in combination of school and academics, he spent approximately 70 hours a week committed to both school and football; leaving him with little time to procrastinate. Student athletes may not have trouble finding time for school or football (as long as they remain organized and keep their priorities straight), but as some of the participants reported, they may experience trouble finding time to properly engage in routine life activities such as cooking well balanced meals, grocery shopping, doing laundry, socializing and getting the proper amount of sleep to name a few.

R: 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.

R: 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.

Football has taught participants to manage their time wisely in an effort to balance the workload of multiple communities. However, being first year student athletes, there is much room left to improve their time management skills as they progress through their academic and athletic careers; so that commitment towards certain communities do not overlap with other important activities. Membership in the football community has taught student athletes to be aware of their time, remain organized and to be efficient in the activities in which they decide to

engage.

R: How do you manage your time effectively so you focus on your schoolwork? You said you cut into your sleeping habits...

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 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.

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.

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.

Football has helped some participants create awareness and structure their time to be spent efficiently. This structure allowed football student athletes to organize their time. Time was set aside for both work and play. First year student athletes are forced into a position to manage their time if they would like to accomplish the tasks of being both a student and an athlete. In this sense, football has added a structural system to help 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: Organization skills. 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.

R: What about football and academic community, do you find those ever conflict with one another?

Bob: For the most part no, because of the fact that it is somewhat structured. 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.

R: So you don't even think you'd be even more productive in your school work?

Harry: I don't think so, no. I think, actually, I'd be less productive. Because like I said, football gives me that structure.

The football program's demanding schedule produced a structure that student athletes can use to their advantage to become organized. However, the same demanding schedule may result in more time engaged in athletics than in academics; transforming the student athlete into an athlete student. Participants often reported that during the football season, more time was spent engaged in football related activities when compared to academic related activities. In fact, football appeared to take up as much time during the course of an average week as a full-time job. It was reported that football engagement characteristically takes up to 40 hours per week when including activities such as practice, watching films, meetings, studying the playbook, exercise sessions, etc. For student athletes traveling on away games, it would be common to spend almost an entire weekend devoted to football related activities. At the end of a day, after football related activities were finished, participants reported feeling too tired to expel energy on other activities such as schoolwork. Although football did a nice job of bringing structure to student athletes' lives, it also required so much commitment, which reduced engagement in alternative activities (e.g., academics), therefore, leaving other obligations uncompleted.

Harry: 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.

R: 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.

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.

Tom: Yeah, football can easily take over if you don't manage your time, focus on school. Easily.

R: But then 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.

Moe: Um, I actually was banking on an 80 average. So I did do a lot of studying. But unfortunately because of football, I didn't do as much.

Moe: Oh, I could be much more focused [on schoolwork].

R: Much more focused?

Moe: Yeah. If I didn't have football.

R: 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.

These quotations above provided examples that football can cut into academic related activities. If participants did not remain organized, it would be hard for them to find time to engage academically. As mentioned, football took time away from other activities, not specifically school related activities. Even if student athletes were able to complete academic and athletic commitments, they may cut back on other necessary activities, such as a full night's rest. Balancing obligations of multiple communities was definitely a challenge for first year football student athletes, but was not unachievable.

Time management may be more of a concern for some first year student athletes than others; possibly due to the psychological perceptions of individuals. The physical time commitment of the football program was not the only conflicting factor with academic engagement. As Joe demonstrated below, psychologically the football program may inhibit student athletes from focusing (and thus fully engaging) on academics, even while attending a

course lecture. Participants may have done a fine job allotting time to certain commitments, structuring their activities and scheduling their time, however, mental focus on football consumed more time than anticipated and acted as a distraction from academic engagement. Although student athletes attempted to keep academics and athletics separated, they were not always able to control their thoughts (as they started thinking about school while at football practice or vice versa, think about football while attempting to engage in academics).

Joe: I mean, like I said there's one day of the week where my classes go till four. And four is when practice starts. But you have to be ready before, and that takes like half an hour. So like, once class is over, I get to practice, I'm starting practice by like 4:45, 4:30. Just during that time, I always sit in class and think of what to do and everything so I can be good for practice.

R: Yeah, so you're not focusing in class.

Joe: I know after a frustrating practice I wouldn't be able to do emotional stuff. Like after a bad practice, I come home and I won't be able to do homework cause I'd just be thinking about how I did in practice. And uh, it's just, that kind of makes you want to put more time into football kind of thing. Doing bad in football. So that kind of takes away from the academic part. But you can control that. You know what I mean?

R: So when you do bad in football and you want to go back, improve in football...

Joe: Improve in football, which takes time away from the academic part. But that's one thing I can control and get rid of. And there's a lot of heart and passion that goes into football.

Thinking about football while attempting to participate in other activities reduced the psychological engagement in those other activities such as academic homework or lectures. Participants daydreamed about football while doing homework, which acted as a barrier towards academic engagement. Likewise, thoughts about how to improve football performance lead to greater engagement in football related activities independent of the football program's demands. As these thoughts resided within the individual's psychology, participants believed this factor affecting their time management was one that they could "get rid of" and control. Therefore, the barrier harming one's potentially effective time management may only affect student athletes who allowed football to break their focus during academically related activities or vice versa, focused on academics while participating in football related activities.

The emotional aspect of the football program brought student athletes to devote greater attention to football than academics. As Joe mentioned, “there’s a lot of heart and passion that goes into football.” This emotional aspect of the football brotherhood would take time away from academic engagement; not only from a student athlete’s devotion to athletics performance, but also as a result of the desire to socialize with other members of the football program. Again, this pressure to engage in football related activities was a result of personal psychological pressures rather than stemming from the football program’s requirements. The desire to socialize with other football student athletes may unexpectedly disrupt one’s time management and take time away engaging on school related activities.

Larry: At the beginning, like during the season, it would be more of a bad way because you kind of want to be more with the team and be a part of it. So you’re always willing to be with them or go out with them. So you didn’t really focus more on school work and you always push it until the last minute.

R: Does the football program’s social world affect your academic life? And if so, how?
Kurt: Sometimes it could. Some Thursday nights when you want to go study, or you feel like you need to study, and your buddies are partying, like, I mean that’s just peer pressure. Like it could be your friends, it could be your teammates, but I notice here, it’s definitely my teammates. Just because they’ve become my best friends kind of thing. If they go out partying, then I’ll probably go out partying. And then cost myself a night of studying and stuff.

Socializing with friends would disrupt the organization of one’s time. Individuals could have reduced academic engagement due to greater amounts of socialization. Socializing may be inevitable for first year student athletes (and non-athletes alike), but the closeness of the football program’s brotherhood developed a strong desire to socialize with other football student athletes. These unexpected disturbances in student athletes’ time management would eventually harm their academic engagement.

In terms of managing one’s time, engagement within the football program has both helped and harmed first year student athletes’ academic engagement. The football program has harmed academic engagement by requiring a great amount of time devoted to the football

program itself. Whether it was mandatory football activities such as practices, games, meetings, etc., or unsupervised activities such as studying the playbook, training in the weight room, etc., football may take up as much time in a week as a full-time job. Likewise, football student athletes' strong bond with one another has shown to act as an advantage towards creating social relationships which in turn have taken time away from academic engagement. Thinking about football even acted as a distraction when attempting to spend time engaged academically.

Balancing football and school can be a real struggle at first, and it was wise to avoid working a paying job as participants have. Conversely, being a member of the varsity football community has taught valuable organizational skills which promoted academic engagement. Membership in the football program taught participants to be particularly aware of their time, remain organized, become efficient with their engaged activities, and added an element of structure to help manage their time wisely. The high demands of the football program's structure required first year student athletes to manage their time wisely to properly complete their academic obligations. Although football student athletes' study time has been reduced due to engagement in football related activities, participants reported that involvement in the football program has done more to help promote their academic engagement than inhibit it.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The vast amount of data provided by the interviews allowed for the exploration of different topics. Given the importance of academic engagement in the university setting (Connell et al., 1995; Connell et al., 1994; Klem & Connell, 2004; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Skinner et al., 1990; Solomon et al., 1997; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000) special attention of the phenomenon was taken from the perspective of first year football student athletes who were members of a unique serious leisure community of practice.

To narrow the research topic, analysis of academic engagement was structured by theory suggesting that participation in a university's varsity football program was a pursuit in a serious leisure community of practice. Football as a leisure activity began in high school, if not earlier, for participants. Football participation was already an activity which the participants enjoyed doing in the past and decided to pursue at the university level. Each participant had slightly distinctive reasoning as to why they wanted to continue the serious leisure activity (family history, recruitment from coaches, friend's recommendations, scholarship opportunity, challenging one's abilities, etc.). However, the enjoyment which individuals received from football emerged as a common factor influencing their continuation in the sport.

Stepping on the (University's) Field

Some participants claimed that they would have continued to pursue an academic career at a university institution regardless of their participation in a football program. However, other participants stated that their desire to play football at such a competitive level had been the determining factor to enrol in a university. Although some student athletes would have attended university regardless of football, their decision to attend the particular university in which they

were currently enrolled was influenced by the university's football program. In other words, participants engaged in university academics (at least at this particular university) thanks to the University of Ottawa Gee Gee's varsity football program.

The start of the football season, beginning with training camp, allowed participants to get a two week head start transitioning to the university's setting in comparison to other student non-athletes. Training camp allowed participants to move into university residences (for those who lived on residence) two weeks before the start of the academic year. Moving out of their parents' house weeks before the start of the academic year allowed participants to adjust to their new surroundings and lifestyle before the stresses of academia began. Therefore, once the academic session began, participants were already familiar and partially adjusted to their new independent lifestyle. It also allowed for student athletes to feel comfortable in their surroundings, alleviating some of the first-day-of-school butterflies, since they already recognized familiar faces as they sat down to their first university lecture.

More Than a Team, a Family

Involvement in the varsity football program has created a brotherhood amongst its members. Being a member of the football program meant inclusion within a close family-like unit. This football family acted as a strong support group for those living far away from home. A sound social support network lead to a greater quality of life at university, as social support is believed to influence one's emotions, cognitions, behaviours, and both adherence and compliance to activity programs (Carron et al., 2002). Members of the football family (which is quite extended and includes more than players) care about one another and motivate success in both athletics and academics. They stay close together (in and out of football) and push each other towards overcoming challenges. Deci's (1992) suggestion that interpersonal relationships are

able to provide students with a strong sense of belonging, acting as powerful motivators to remain interested and engaged in school may explain how belonging to the university's football brotherhood supported academic engagement. However, the desire to remain close with one another outside of football (and school) may lead to increased socializing and act as a distracting factor hindering academic engagement. Otherwise, the support from the football family has convincingly presented its capability to promote student athletes' academic engagement.

Football Members' Influences

Three significant influential populations within the football community were presented as affecting first year football student athletes' academic engagement: other first year football student athletes (rookies), upper year football student athletes (veterans), and coaches.

Participants were in the same position as most other rookies. Rookies were new to the university's football program, and most were also new to the university's academic programming. Rookies were able to learn with and from one another (including from their mistakes). For rookies who take the same classes together, a group of student athletes who can engage in the same academic and athletic activities was created. Unfortunately, being around the same group of student athletes may act as a distraction during lectures or while studying as they may begin to discuss football related activities during inappropriate times. During times intended to focus on academics, student athletes may use their time for other purposes (such as socializing with close friends, or discussing occurrences during previous football practice), rather than remaining academically engaged. However, group projects were often successfully completed in collaboration with one another. Likewise, study groups became proficient, as rookies worked around the same demanding football schedule, used similar linguistic patterns, and worked

towards accomplishing mutual objectives.

Participants were able to learn valuable lessons from veterans which they were not able to receive from other rookies. Veterans brought a level of experience to the presence of rookies. In this sense, rookies looked up to veterans as role models as to how they should behave at university and how much commitment should be expelled towards various communities. Participants were able to learn from veterans' examples that achieving success in both academics and athletics was possible (even when enrolled in the "harder" academic programs, such as Engineering). Veterans also provided participants with studying advice and pointers as to what certain professors may be looking for in assignments or projects. Besides occasional pressure to party with teammates and to hit the gym whenever possible, there has not been much evidence supporting the notion that veterans harmed participants' academic engagement. Therefore, interactions with other veterans on the football program has, for the most part, helped the academic engagement of first year student athletes on the football program.

Coaches on the varsity football program appeared to have a greater affect on participants' academic engagement than university professors. Coaches held their student athletes accountable for their actions. Student athletes in danger of failing academic courses may be close to ending their serious leisure pursuit. Participants understood that coaches would be looking at their grades once their courses were completed, and if their marks were too low, they could not remain active members of the football program. Participants stated that coaches pushed for family first, school second and football third; keeping the priorities of student athletes in check. Unfortunately, for participants who viewed the football team as a family, they may have consequently placed a greater priority to the football family than academic obligations. The demanding features of a football program, such as pressure to know the playbook, attending

practices, and training, may give the impression that these are the activities where coaches would like to see their student athletes excel, rather than excelling academically. However, coaches provided a strong sense of support towards academics, as participants felt that coaches would be able to provide them with references to get academic help if they were not able to do so themselves. Although these three populations within the football team (*rookies*, *veterans*, and *coaches*) affected first year student athletes differently, they each were able to influence their academic engagement.

Stereotypical Labelling

Participants believed a stereotype of football players existed. For the most part, they believed it was a negative “dumb jock” stereotype which viewed student athletes as athlete students who want to be in school to play football. Individuals’ self-identity and behaviours may be influenced by the terms used to describe them, according to the self-fulfilling prophecy (Martens, 2004; Passer et al., 2003). Although some participants mentioned that football was an influential factor to enrol in a university, football was not the sole reason to attend school. Student athletes were also working hard towards the completion of their academic degrees. Participants perceived that not every individual held the same stereotype towards football players. In fact, participants mentioned the stereotypes held towards them changed based on its source. For example, at the university setting, participants hardly experienced the “dumb jock” stereotype presented to them, unless it was by other first year student non-athletes. The majority of the “dumb jock” stereotype was experienced in high school or through various exposures to the media’s representation of football players.

Regardless of the exposure to the stereotype at university, participants believed that a stereotypically label existed. The negative stereotype may not actually give way to the self-

fulfilling prophecy described by Martens (2004) and Passer et al. (2003), but rather motivate student athletes to engage academically, achieve academic success, and prove the stereotype to be incorrect. Some university professors have been exposed to football student athletes who have done an excellent job balancing both school and football, and accredit their success to their strong work ethic, ability to be coachable and work as a team (the result of being members of the football program). Not only does greater teacher support lead to increases in student engagement, but in congruence to what Klem and Connell (2004) and Tucker et al. (2002) have pointed out, there appears to be a bi-directional effect, as increases in student engagement also increase the supportive environment. Increasing a student's academic engagement leads to improvements in academic performance, illustrating the importance of creating supportive communities (Connell et al., 1994; Klem & Connell; Tucker et al.). Having university professors express positive expectations or stereotypes of football student athletes may provide a greater sense of support, help develop one's academic identity, and increase motivation to engage in academics.

Self Identities

The various influences of which first year football student athletes were exposed shaped the identities of the participants. Three identities emerged in the current study, although it is not to say that these are the only identities of which participants are comprised. The three identities of interest included participants viewing themselves as *students*, *athletes*, or *student athletes*. It was unsure whether participants' identities led to involvement in specific communities, or if it was the engagement in those communities which helped shape participants' identities. Regardless, there was an apparent link between participants' self-reported identities and engagement within respective communities.

Some participants admitted that once the football season terminated, they began to view

themselves more as students or student athletes, rather than athletes. Doing so suggested that engagement in the football community may take away from the development of a student identity, and ultimately reduce academic engagement. However, participants that viewed themselves more as athletes still recognized the importance of an education and the value behind an academic degree. Those who viewed themselves as students displayed an understanding that academics was a priority to them and that football engagement is actually their leisure pursuit. Participants who identified themselves as student athletes expressed a greater balance between engagements in various communities. Consistent with Wenger's (1999) notion that during the course of life, identities are constantly being renegotiated, participants stated that their identities changed in conjunction with the completion of the football season. Therefore, more research is warranted with particular attention to student athletes' identities to determine its affect towards academic engagement.

Time Management

Time spent engaged in football related activities took away from time which could have been spent engaged in academia. Time management emerged as the toughest aspect of being a member of the football program. Because football engagement took up so much time during its season, student athletes often reported difficulties finding time for other activities (such as time for studying, working on assignments, eating properly, or getting enough sleep). Participants also reported that university's academic structure and the free time between university courses (when compared to their previous educational institution) has also been a challenge. The independent, unstructured lifestyle of a university student does not require students to attend lectures. Likewise, unexpected socializing opportunities with other football "brothers" acted as another barrier when individuals attempted to effectively organize their time.

Members of small groups, social networks, and social worlds created by leisure participation, structure their social behaviors in particular ways, often unique to that organization (Stebbins, 2002). The football program's highly structured nature encouraged its student athletes to use their time wisely if they wished to accomplish the tasks of both the academic and athletic communities. As a result, football student athletes became further talented when it came to time management. Organized student athletes were able to effectively plan time to engage in academics.

During time devoted to schoolwork, the strong passion that individuals had for football may break the concentration of individuals attempting to engage academically. Therefore, student athletes must be weary that even though they may be attending lecture hall or have a text book open in front of them, they must control their focus to remain academically engaged and therefore avoid disturbances to their time managing schedules. Even though football participation demanded so much of a student athletes' time and focus (potentially reducing time which could be spent engaging academically), the structure and time management skills developed from football participation taught student athletes to be aware of their time, remain organized, and efficiently engage in activities with minimal distractions, further promoting their academic engagement.

The Football Drive

Student athletes' motivation to engage in academics has been influenced by many different factors. Participation in the serious leisure community of practice linked concepts such as entering and transitioning to a university life, a family and brotherhood, a rookie, veteran, and coach's influence, stereotypes, identities, and time management to a motivational drive factor which may promote engagement in both athletics and academia (see Figure 8). These influential

factors mentioned throughout this research unlikely work in isolation from one another, as many are overlapping. Such themes therefore merged into an overall football participation experience which influenced student athletes' academic engagement.

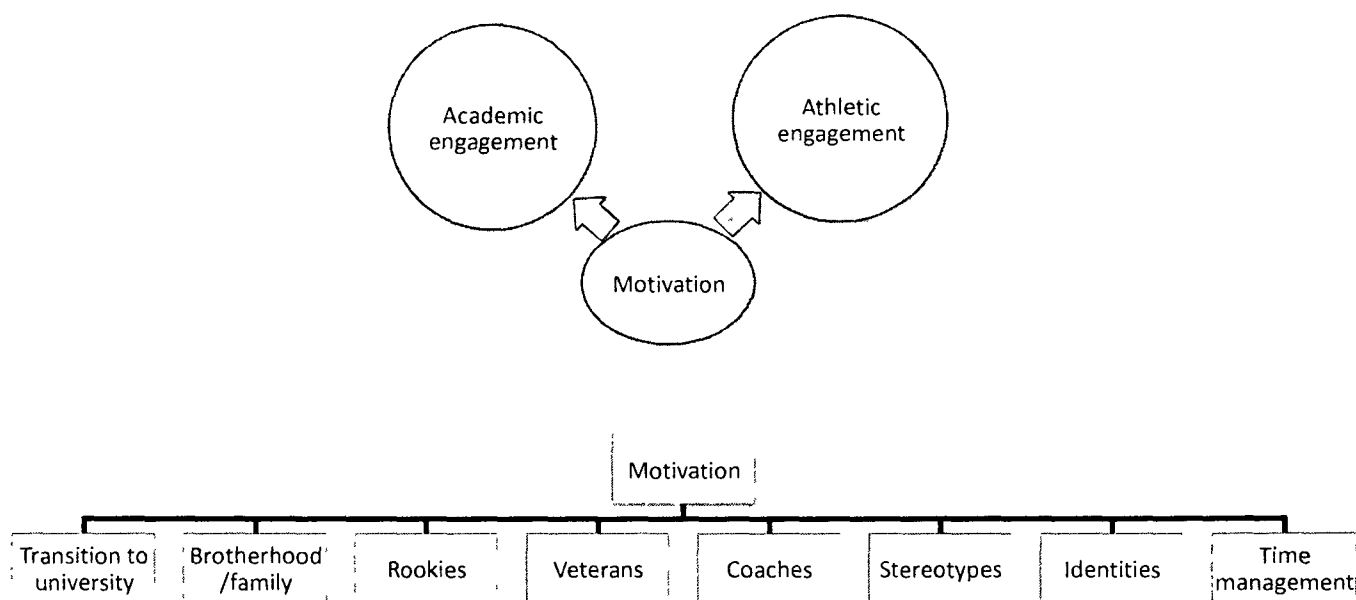


Figure 8: Engagement Motivated through a Combination of Influential Factors.

Being a member of the varsity football program has both helped and harmed the academic engagement of student athletes. Positive influences, such as support networks (by rookies, veterans, and coaches) and messages that success can and has been achieved in both domains promoted academic engagement. However, there was also a strong motivation to engage in activities promoting a successful football career, which would reduce engagement in academic activities. Remaining on the football program motivated student athletes to do well in school. “There’s reasons to study because you want to stay on the team. It’s your motive to stay in school and to do good” (Kurt). If student athletes’ grades were not up to minimal expectations, they were prohibited from playing with the varsity team.

Football student athletes also relied on each other to ensure grades did not drop. Attending classes with other football student athletes motivated them to support each other academically (a concept that was enforced by coaches). Being supported by teammates and coaches to perform well academically may affect one's sense of social support, time management, the psychology of how one stereotypically views football student athletes, his own identity, and ultimately, his academic engagement. Analyzing themes within the football program may overlook the influence that *football* (as a combination of multiple elements) may have to motivate student athletes' academic engagement. It is therefore of importance to consider a multitude of motivational factors affecting first year student athletes' academic engagement before coming to conclusions regarding separate aspects of the football program.

In conclusion of the discussion, academic engagement was affected by many different aspects of the football program, both positively and negatively. There are only so many hours in a day that one can effectively engage in academics. Football has helped structure and time manage individuals' independent university life. The university experience was reported to be overall more enjoyable thanks to involvement in the serious leisure community of practice. A strong sense of social support was created for participants through their involvement in the football program. The football's social support network extended from student athletes in the same position as themselves, more experienced student athletes, coaches, and even to alumni. Identities were formed through engagement amongst various communities, and those identities in return, helped determine with which communities individuals decided to engage. Engagement in football related activities may have taken away from academic engagement, however, football also acted as a motivational factor to attend university and do well in school. Being a member of the football program taught student athletes that they must take responsibility while at university.

Although there may be many influences affecting student athletes, ultimately, the decision to engage in academics rests within the individual.

Chapter 5

Practical Implications

There are some recommendations from which the University of Ottawa's varsity football SBS program may benefit. This research was created to learn about the specific communities of practice of serious leisure participants so that their engagements at university could be analyzed. Therefore, this current research may be helpful to the coaches (especially the academic coach and mentors), newcomers entering the serious leisure community of practice, current members of the varsity football program, educators, and researchers.

A primary suggestion would involve aid in time management for student athletes by helping them schedule their time, providing planners, strategies, and advice to effectively manage time. Managing time and the demands of both school and football (not to mention finding time for family, friends, and oneself) has shown to be the biggest challenge of student athletes entering both the academic and athletic communities of a university at the same time. Likewise, engagement in one community may take precedence over other communities, therefore hindering the productive engagement in the neglected communities. A practical implication for student athletes would be to monitor the amount of hours they spend engaging in particular communities.

Student athletes could keep track of the hours (in a log book for example) spent on different activities. The football program has already created a system to monitor the amount of time its members spend in the gym. A similar approach could be used, using an academic activity log book, to track how many hours are spent on homework. This could help ensure that student athletes do not spend more time on football than academics. This time management activity may create an awareness of time which may deem useful for managing student athletes' obligations.

Further, keeping track of hours spent in a log book may produce clearer evidence of the time physically engaging in various communities, which may also deem helpful for future research.

For the purpose of the current research, the athletic program's serious leisure community of practice was viewed as residing within a larger overall university community. Likewise, there were signs of micro-communities within the football program. Examples of communities within the football community may include rookies, veterans, starters, non-dressers, offensive unit, defensive unit, special teams unit, or by specific positions on the team (e.g., quarterbacks, running backs, linemen, safeties, kickers, receivers, cornerbacks, etc.). Some of the participants even mentioned that it took a different mentality to be on the offensive unit compared to the defensive unit. It does not seem shocking that on such a large team of nearly 100 student athletes, there may never be communication between some of them. How close is the entire football family? Could only intra-groups relationships (amongst members within the same micro-community) within the football team be close-knit, as there may be much less interaction between the micro-communities within the football program? Seeing that the amount of student athletes on a football program is vast, it may prove useful to research specific communities within the football program.

Football student athletes often reported that being around others going through similar situations as themselves was helpful. Student athletes may benefit, and learn more from one another if they engage in multiple communities of practice which are the same. On a general scale this may be presented as individuals who are both students and both football players engaging together. To maximize the benefits of mutual engagement, one may pair a Social Science student and offensive lineman with another Social Science offensive lineman. This process may occur naturally, but to recommend a buddy system to this extent may prove more

beneficial than pairing a wide receiver in Engineering with a linebacker in Human Kinetics for example. Pairing similar micro-communities together (e.g., at SBS), may create a competitive nature spilling over into academics (besides the competitiveness on the football field), leading to more productive academic engagement.

A practical implication would be to implement study groups (at SBS for example) which may utilize the knowledge of student athletes in similar programs or even better, who are in the same classes together. The participants in the current study also expressed that they were able to learn a considerable amount of valuable information from veterans on the football program. Therefore, it is recommended that these study group sessions be mentored or co-supervised (alongside the academic coach) by veterans who are also in the same academic program as the rookies. Veterans most likely have already taken the courses in which rookies are enrolled and could share their experiences, benefiting first year student athletes. Rookies will also be able to look up to the veterans as role models and realize that student athletes in the same academic programs can manage both the challenges of school and football. Veterans are also able to pass down helpful study strategies and warn rookies about unproductive habits which may take away from productive academic engagement. Maximizing the engagement with successful, experienced student athletes, who were once first year student athletes themselves, could help newcomers overcome transitional barriers and integrate into the academic and athletic communities effectively.

This research also implied recommendations for educators, coaches, and student athletes themselves. It is recommended that educators, such as university professors be supportive of student athletes' unique situational circumstances, and rather than view sport as a barrier to academic engagement, reflect that sport may be a tool for fostering successful students.

Educators should try to act as yet another support member in students' lives rather than treating individuals as "numbers" within the large university institution.

It is recommended that coaches do not promote greater engagement in athletics than in academics. There should be an emphasis by coaches to equally engage in both school and athletics (otherwise, a greater emphasis on school) to ensure individuals remain student athletes and not athlete students. Likewise, coaches' influences on student athletes seemed to be greater than professors' influences. Because individuals may rely greatly on coaches for support within a university's setting, coaches should be well aware of the institutions academic and psychological support centres for students. Coaches should also be aware of the academic schedule (e.g., the beginning and end of classes, the dates of exam periods and when major assignments may be due) to be considerate of student athletes' demanding schedule and to try not to overload them with significant athletic obligations during important academic periods.

There are recommendations for first year football student athletes as well. The primary recommendation is for them to get their priorities straight. Are they coming to university to get an education and play football (i.e., student athlete), or are they coming to university to play football and get an education (i.e., athlete student)? If they believe in the latter, then they may want to reconsider enrolling with a university as they could be predisposed to an ineffective balance of engagement in a university's communities. A simple identity check (are they students, athletes, student athletes, or athlete students?) by the potential student athletes themselves may determine if they believe that university is the right choice for them. Once at university, it is recommended that individuals effectively balance their schedules to foster engagement in both academics and athletics. They also need to schedule non-mandatory events such as homework/studying, eating, sleeping, socializing, etc., to ensure that unexpected events do not

act as surprise barriers to academic engagement. First year student athletes have the time to learn what is expected of them in both academics and athletics. They should interact with successful upper year student athletes (preferably those who take the same academic programs and play the same position on the football program) to learn which practices of the communities to engage in and which to avoid so that a similar trajectory may be taken towards success.

Theoretical Implications

The current research has been able to contribute to the growing field of research. The current study attempted to amalgamate two separate theoretical frameworks to better understand the phenomenon of academic engagement of first year student athletes. Independently, *communities of practice* have been used to study athletic teams (Culver & Trudel, 2005; Galipeau & Trudel, 2004; 2005; 2006; Lemyre & Trudel, 2004; Trudel & Gilbert, 2004). Likewise, *serious leisure* is a useful theory to better understand how amateur sport participation impacts individuals (Stebbins 1992; 1993; 2001; 2002). This research has been able to contribute to the research literature by using both these frameworks to analyze members of an athletic program.

Theoretical recommendations would include the use of more than one theoretical framework to be applied to study a phenomenon. Many different theories can be used to study the same situation and picking one (especially if it was not designed for the specific population of study) may not be fully encompassing of the situation at hand. For example, communities of practice were originally designed to explain informal (apprentice-like) learning in the workplace, and serious leisure extends to populations such as volunteers, hobbyists, and amateurs of any sort, not specifically amateurs athletes. Multiple theories can be used to fulfill different purposes in one's research. For example, one theory (e.g., communities of practice) could set a frame of

explanation as to how learning and integration occurs, and another theory (e.g., serious leisure) could recommend which aspects of a unique community to analyze as they affect individuals. Every theory may be approached differently and even though they may be applied to the same topic, one may involve broad and general implications, while another may be more specific and directional, which would allow for the use of multiple pre-existing theories to work in conjunction with one another through a research project.

As a researcher, it is recommended that a creative process be used to borrow one or more previously existing theories and combining the values within each to create a worldview which can be used for one's own research. It may prove more useful to apply a grounded theory methodological approach to research such a unique population and topic, since other previous theories may not well represent the nature of the situation. Rather than constricting one's research to the structure of pre-existing theory, grounded theory would allow the phenomenon of study to create a distinctive theoretical construct which may be used for further research on similar projects.

Nevertheless, student athletes were able to create particular communities of practices based out of the participation in a serious leisure activity. The unique ethos revolving around sport participation is one of the characteristics of serious leisure, and if one wishes may view this unique ethos as a particular community of practice. The current research did not attempt to prove such a theoretical conclusion. However, the theoretical frameworks were used as a combination of helpful tools to analyze a phenomenon rather than to use the phenomenon to prove theory. Using the frameworks to understand phenomenon has allowed a new perspective as to the possibility of combining the two such theories to approach a single research project. Therefore, it may be useful to further research how serious leisure activities are able to produce unique

communities of practice.

Limitations and recommendations

The purpose of this research was to discover how participation in a university football program affects first year student athletes' academic engagement. However, this research may not be fully comprehensive enough to jump to conclusions about every type of student athlete. One must take into consideration the uniqueness of this research project, as it may not be applicable to other categories of student athletes. Although the current research was able to shed helpful insight as to the factors influencing academic engagement in a cohort of first year student athletes at the University of Ottawa's varsity football program, different results may have been collected if data were gathered from other populations.

To begin with, only male student athletes were interviewed for the current research project as there currently is no female varsity football program. Therefore, although similar results may apply to female student athletes, one cannot assume that females face the same challenges as male football student athletes.

Another specific factor limiting the application of the current research is the uniqueness of football as a sport. Football is a sport which asks its participants to commit a lot of heart and emotion into its customs. The Canadian football season is very short, lasting only a few months and is shorter than an academic semester. The short football season may make it seem as if there is very little time to waste, and as a result, football student athletes may devote more time to football than athletes of other sports with longer outstretched seasons. Similar to how the game is played; the football season can be seen as a short all-out sprint rather than a moderately paced endurance activity. In this regard, football's extensive demands may affect academic engagement differently than other sports. Because the current study only focused on student athletes who

were on a varsity football program compared to another sport, the influences on student athletes' academic engagement may differ if data were collected across different sports.

Influences affecting academic engagement were analyzed from the perspective of *first year* student athletes. As mentioned by Carini et al. (2006), seniors and first year students use different forms of engagement which lead to academics success. First year student athletes may apply different study strategies and may be influenced by factors which may not influence their upper year counterparts. Likewise, rookies have veterans to admire for inspiration, advice, and support. The 5th year veterans on a football program may not have the privilege to rely on such a population and may have other influences (e.g., coaches, alumni, professionals, family, etc.) which may have a greater affect towards their academic engagement. Veterans also have had more time to fully integrate into the serious leisure community of practice and the academic community, and therefore, may engage in the practices of school and football differently than rookies. Indeed, football may affect the academic engagement of veterans entirely differently compared to how it influences first year student athletes. To have this study expand to student athletes with differing years of experience at university may reveal factors influencing academic engagement which were not recorded through first year rookies and likewise, some of the factors influencing first year rookies' academic engagement may not be relevant to veterans.

During the data collection phase of this research, for the majority of the participants, interviews were conducted during the football season. About a third of the participants were interviewed after the football season was completed. Likewise, as the interview process progressed, the ordering of some of the interview questions changed to allow for a more natural flow among questions regarding similar concepts. These two factors may have influenced participants to provide answers differently compared to conducting all the interviews during the

football season and if the interview questions were consistently presented in the same order.

Another limitation of the current study was that interviews were gathered at only one point in time with each participant. It may be of interest to see how participants would respond to similar questions at different points throughout their university careers. For example, further research could implement interview sessions prior to, during, and after the football season to compare and contrast the factors affecting academic engagement at different points in time. Doing so may reveal how much of a factor membership within the football program affects academic engagement and if its influences carry over once the football season has ended.

Likewise, data could also be collected from participants throughout their university careers as their position on the football program progresses. Student athletes' views may change as they progress from legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as rookies, to more legitimate contributors of the football program as veterans or starters. Likewise, reflecting on football careers as alumni may also provide useful insight about football's affect on academic engagement which may be overlooked by current members of the program.

Each year on a football team, the culture changes slightly, as some of the veterans retire from the program, rookies become the new veterans and a new cohort of rookies join the football program. As individuals integrate into this serious leisure community of practice, transitioning from newcomer to old-timer, traditions and ideologies are passed onto the new cohorts of student athletes. It is recommended that a study similar to this one be repeated longitudinally over several years to determine any comparisons which may result from newcomers joining the community, rookies transforming into veterans, veterans turning into alumni, and any changes made to the coaching staff.

The current study sampled a population from a single university. Results gathered across

different universities may reveal greater insight into the academic engagement of football student athletes. The culture at the University of Ottawa's football program has been developed over many years to create what is currently present. The culture which developed is unique to the football team and its members as certain traditions or ideologies may not be present in other football programs. For example, participants in the current research claimed that their decision to attend the University of Ottawa when compared to other universities was mainly due to the impression of the culture (mostly the caring, supportive, togetherness, family-like, "brotherhood" feeling) within the Gee Gee's football program. Therefore, for this study to come to generalizations which may be applicable across other Canadian universities (granted they have a football program), more research is warranted to compare whether similar factors affected the academic engagement of student athletes across different universities.

Since the current study used a phenomenological approach (researching academic engagement from the perspective of first year student athletes) relying solely on semi-structured interviews, further research may include other sources of data collection to analyze the factors influencing academic engagement. Outside sources may validate the responses given by participants throughout the research. For example, collecting student athletes' school grades may reveal insight as to how their academic engagement has reflected their academic success. Likewise, interviews may be conducted with coaches, family members, or professors to triangulate data collected with research such as this one. Other comparisons could be made with student non-athletes as opposed to simply analyzing the engagement of student athletes. Even though the suggestions above may be helpful for further research, this research did not apply such forms of data collection.

As this current study relied purely on qualitative measures to gather data, many factors

were explored. Academic engagement allowed the study to narrow the focus in the vast amount of data collected through semi-structured interviews. Some of the explored topics may be of interest for further research along quantitative measurements to provide clearer conclusions.

The topic of multiple identities was briefly discussed, yet may be an issue that could be researched in greater detail. It is of importance to note that for this study, identities were not measured using scientific scales or measurements. Identities were self-reported by the participants who were presented three options: *student*, *athlete*, or *student athlete*. The researcher's presence may have influenced the self-presenting responses given by the participants, since student athletes may not want to produce the impression of being "dumb jocks." Likewise, student athletes appeared to identify themselves differently as time passed and the football season ended. Therefore, it may also be of interest to study how student athletes' identities change throughout their university career. Further research may want to pay special attention to the topic of identities as it relates to academic engagement. The use of well established identity measurement scales over different periods of time may provide results with reduced biases and greater accuracy.

This research took a qualitative approach to explore factors influencing academic engagement of first year student athletes in the University of Ottawa Gee Gee's varsity football program. Using the methodological approach embedded in phenomenology, the semi-structured interviews with participants were able to reveal valuable information. The results collected through this thesis project may be used to lead further research projects in the years to come. As there are many different approaches that one may take as a researcher, this study left many suggestions for further research which could not be completed due to the limitations of this project (e.g., combining with quantitative measures such as the collection of grade point

averages; interviewing upper year football student athletes, coaches, professors, family members; conducting interviews at different points throughout the year; conducting research across different sports, academic institutions, genders, etc.).

Conclusion

This research has come to the conclusion that football has shown to benefit first year student athletes' academic engagement. Participation in the football program has also shown to reduce student athletes' academic engagement. However, involvement in the University of Ottawa's varsity football program appeared more beneficial than harmful towards first year student athletes' engagement with academics.

There are many factors that may influence academic engagement. The process of attending a school is indeed a fully humanistic learning experience that fosters the balanced growth of an individual. According to Connell et al. (1995), only student engagement has a direct effect on academic achievement, as all other variables influencing achievement act through engagement. Students with a supportive environment have higher levels of academic engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004; Solomon et al., 1997; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000). Student athletes' relationships with others (e.g., peers, coaches, teachers, family, etc.) are able to influence their academic engagement (Lipsitz, 1995; Noddings, 1992; Stanton-Salazar et al., 2000; Valenzuela, 1999). Significant adults (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, etc.) and peers can create supportive environments to foster engagement in various communities.

The interactions between communities may actually not be so clear cut, as Wenger (1999) warns that boundaries as to what defines a specific community of practice may often times 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). Phelan et al. (1998), have found that students have great difficulty in making transitions between the values, beliefs and actions among different social worlds. First year university student athletes must cope with the transitions of a new living environment, consisting of a new home, school, athletic program, city, etc., that may conflict with the norms of their previous living environment.

Involvement in the varsity football program has acted as a motivational factor to enrol in a university and to achieve academic success. Likewise, the support network created from participation in the football program has been helpful to student athletes integrating into a new lifestyle, which includes the demands from academia and athletics. New bonds and friendships created a pseudo-family away from home that student athletes could rely on for support. Friendships created from the athletic community carried over into the academic community. First year student athletes often teamed up with other members of the football program when working on projects for the same courses and got together to study for exams. Football student athletes were even there to make sure their teammates made it in to class on time. Friends from the football program want each other to succeed both on and off the field and do what they can to help one another.

First year football student athletes were able to develop a sense that someone (in their current environment at university) cared about them. They may know that their family six hours away cares about them, but interacting with people on a daily basis reinforced the notion that they are also cared for and supported here at university. Being part of the football program has led first year football student athletes to feel less like a “number” in the larger university community, and more as significant person thanks to the “family” presence from the football community. Members of the football program cared about each other, leading individuals to care

more about the football program and thus, resulting in greater commitment and engagement in athletic related activities.

First year student athletes on the football program were able to create friendships and a support system from football which was carried over into the academic setting. The lessons that first year football student athletes learned from their peer rookies were different than what they learned from veterans on the football program. Rookies must integrate into the student athlete communities and often learned from those already engaged in those practices (i.e., veterans).

Based on the perspectives of first year football student athletes, coaches appeared to promote the academic engagement of student athletes more than professors. Coaches pressed for more than athletic success, as participants believed that coaches also pushed for academic success. Coaches also urged that student athletes remain committed to the football program, which involved going to practice, hitting the gym, reviewing the playbook, watching film, showing up to meetings, etc. The pressure to succeed in academics combined with the added pressure of commitment to the football program may result in a mixed understanding of what is being asked of football student athletes. Ultimately, the decision as to which commitment deserves greater attention (school or football) depends on the individual student athlete.

Imagination can also involve stereotypes that overlook the finer qualities of practice and can be misleading because it can project our experience beyond the level of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1999). Negative stereotypes of football student athletes being dumb jocks are misleading representation of the actual practices of the community. Unlike the stereotype, participants believed that they must work hard to get through university and needed to place their time and efforts into academics.

According to the self-fulfilling prophecy (Martens, 2004; Passer et al., 2003), negative

stereotypes of football student athletes (about them being dumb jocks and not actually being at school for academics) may create low expectations of how student athletes should behave. Contrary to the self-fulfilling prophecy, participants found the negative stereotype to be helpful towards promoting their academic engagement by trying to prove others' negative expectation incorrect. Depending on who is viewing the student athlete, a more positive image may be held and presented to the participants. For example, from the participants' perspective, professors viewed student athletes as being well organized, coachable, team players, who also worked very hard towards achieving success in academics. Creating the image that football student athletes can balance academics, athletics, and a social life may act as an important factor further promoting their academic engagement.

Participants were placed under three different categorizations of self-identification: identifying predominately as *athletes*, *students*, or *student athletes*. In all three categories, one's identity may be developed through the engagement in the respective communities (e.g., athletes enjoy athletic engagement more than school; students do not play as much football as other football players; and student athletes attempt to equally balance engagement in both communities). The participants in this study were also found to support Wenger's (1999) notion that their identities may be renegotiated over time.

This research found evidence to support the notion that "different practices can make competing demands that are difficult to combine into an experience that corresponds to a single identity" (Wenger, 1999, p. 159). Congruent with previous research, individuals from the university football program must deal with issues surrounding multiple identities rather than a singular overall identity (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Membership in any community of practice is only part of what makes up an identity (Wenger). Likewise, not all identities are created equal, as a

person may place a greater commitment towards fulfilling the needs of one identity over another (Ryan & Deci).

Some participants expressed that they view themselves more as athletes than students or student athletes. The reason that some student athletes enrol in a university is so that they could be a part of the football program and may result with a stronger identification as an athlete than a student. Student athletes may not fully identify themselves as being students because they may not enjoy the practices of being a student, which would therefore be reflected in the amount of engagement they pursued as students. Student athletes may identify more as athletes than students due to the amount of engagement with the athletic community; yet, this identification may change over time following the conclusion of the football season.

Participants also self-reported examples of identifying mostly as students than athletes or student athletes. These participants may not consider themselves to be full participants in the football community as they may not have the opportunities to participate in all of the program's practices (i.e., dressing for competitions). However, these participants were still affected by the football program through legitimate peripheral participation with the serious leisure community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As their football career progresses, their identities may change, as they become more influential members of the football community.

Other participants reported to equally identify as both students and athletes, representing a balanced level of influences from and engagement devoted to each community. To some participants, the football and school worlds are an integration of one community with different obligations and commitments. In this respect, some participants likely viewed the student and athlete communities as one single student-athlete community rather than two separated communities. Identity's affect towards academic engagement was not so clear. It was uncertain

whether engagement affects identities, identities affect engagement, or both affect each other in a reciprocal manner. A balance of engagement between the two communities is therefore recommended to reinforce a healthy relationship between student athletes' identities.

Student athletes claimed that they did better in school when they are able to have a physical outlet such as football. Football brought a sense of balance to the university life, as it scheduled time for football (their serious leisure participation) and consequently allowed student athletes to effectively schedule time for academics. Although football may take up more time out of the day than student athletes would sometimes want, it taught student athletes to be responsible and productive with their time.

The football program's demanding schedule produced a structure that student athletes could use to their advantage to better organize themselves and their time. However, the same demanding schedule may result in greater engagement with athletics than academics; transforming the student athlete into an athlete student. Even if student athletes were able to complete academic and athletic commitments, their engagement into other necessary regular activities (such as cooking or sleeping) may be hindered. Balancing obligations of multiple communities was definitely a challenge for first year football student athletes, but was achievable. The football program proved useful to teach its participants to be aware of their time, remain organized, and become efficient in their engaged activities by adding an element of structure to help manage their time wisely.

Besides attracting individuals to enrol in university, football also provided student athletes with a motive to do well in school. Without good marks, a student athlete cannot remain a member of the football program or may not receive a student athlete scholarship. For some student athletes, remaining a member of the football program became a motive to do well

academically.

There are instances where it may be helpful for the football and academic communities to come together. Examples of that happening would be when student athletes are working together at SBS or attending classes and working on projects together because of the similar schedule set by the football program. Programs such as SBS help football players engage in the demands of the academic community. A program such as SBS and the pre-season training camp, allowed rookies to learn through social interactions and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), as knowledge from veterans was often passed down to the newcomers and could be used as effective tools to engage academically. However, bringing the two communities together may be distracting to the individual communities at times (e.g., thinking about football while in class, or bringing homework into the gym). There are times when keeping the two communities separated may be helpful so that one may focus on the tasks at hand.

Viewing the population of study as a serious leisure community of practice was helpful to organize the research project. The combination of the two theoretical frameworks helped developed the questionnaire used for the semi-structured interviews and to analyze the data once collected. This research project has shown that the two theoretical frameworks (serious leisure and communities of practice) can work alongside each other. Further research may take a closer look into the major emerging themes from this research project (e.g., transitioning to university life, football's brotherhood, influences from specific members of the football family, identity formation, motivation to engage in academics, influences of stereotypes, etc.). Likewise, further research may want to look into the changes within a student athletes' university career (in the form of a longitudinal study), or compare influences affecting academic engagement with perspectives from different universities, sports, academic year, gender, etc.

Prospective student athletes must consider the engaging demands (behaviourally, cognitively, and emotionally) of joining a football program. The high time demands from the football program denotes that time cannot be spent on other important activities such as working a paying job, engaging in academics, socializing with friends outside of football, traveling back home to visit family, or even the overlooked daily chores associated with cooking and cleaning, such as buying groceries, cooking well balanced meals or doing laundry. If individuals are effective at managing their time properly, balancing the demands of school, football, and everything else which life throws at them, then pursuing a serious leisure career in football may deem to be a greatly rewarding activity. However, it must be clear that the challenge of effective engagement is not easy to overcome and that priorities such as those related to academics must be obliged.

Success in one community may be correlated with success in another. For example, if coaches are looking to find good football players, they should try to find student athletes who do well in school. If student athletes do not struggle with academics, then they will have more time to commit to football. Students who struggle the most with academics may need to place greater effort into academics, and therefore, reduced effort into athletics. If not enough time is found to succeed academically, then it is recommended that participation in football activities be reduced to ensure the student comes before the athlete and not the other way around. Unfortunately, first year student athletes do not obtain their course marks until the end of the football season; which may turn into a lesson to be applied the following football seasons.

In conclusion, certain aspects of the football program are indeed helpful towards promoting the academic engagement of first year student athletes. In particular, the support network developed through the football program, especially the academically focused SBS study

sessions, sends messages to newcomers that school is to be taken seriously, homework and assignments are to be completed in a timely fashion, and that support is there if they need it. Although pressure to succeed athletically and engage in football's practices reduce opportunities to academically engage, valuable lessons learned from members of the football community, a strong academic support network, and the structure enforcing effective time management have compensated for football's negative effects. Overall, for those who can manage the challenges, university life becomes more enjoyable as a member of a serious leisure community of practice.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Text to Participants: Speech at Initial Academic Seminar

Academic Engagement of First Year Student Athletes:

University Football as a Serious Leisure Community of Practice

First of all, I'd like to welcome you all to the University of Ottawa. My name is Ezechiel Rothschild-Checroune, you can just call me Zeke. I'm currently completing my Masters in Human Kinetics here at the University of Ottawa. My thesis is focused around the academic engagement of first year student athletes on the football program at the University of Ottawa; in other words, my research has to do with you. With the help of social learning theories, the focus of my thesis research is to discover factors that may support or hinder your academic engagement.

As you will find out for yourselves, academic success is an ongoing challenge throughout your university careers. There are many factors that may be helpful to succeed in academics. Likewise, there may be many factors and situations that may become obstacles to you on your path towards academic and athletic success. Some aspects of student athletes' lives may be both helpful and harmful towards achieving academic success. A prime example of this would be participation in the football program. Even though varsity student athletes can develop social support from being members of the athletic program, your participation in the athletic program requires a great amount of time and effort to meet the demands of practices, training, film sessions and games – all of which may take away from your academic engagement.

For my research project, I am planning on conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews that will be audio recorded with the first-year student athletes on the football program, focusing on your engagement in academics. The interviews should last around 20-60 minutes

depending on the responses given by participants and only a single interview session will be required by each participant. Factors inhibiting and supporting academic engagement will be discovered and explored throughout the research process. The social learning theory of communities of practice will give structure to the research and create a background to help understand how individuals learn from the communities in which they engage. The theoretical framework of serious leisure will also guide the research in a more defined direction as participation in a varsity football program may be viewed as serious leisure participation.

The eventual goal for this research project is to discover and explore the factors affecting academic engagement so that strategies may be developed to effectively promote the academic engagement for future cohorts of student athletes. Recruitment to participate in the study is on a volunteer basis and I am inviting all first-year student athletes on the football program to participate. Ideally, I'm looking for around 12-20 people to interview but will not exclude those that want to participate. If you decide to volunteer or if you choose not to participate in the study neither will have an impact on your academic standing nor your placement within the football program. Likewise, as a participant, you are free to withdraw from the study at any point or choose to skip over questions during the interview which you may feel uncomfortable answering. Your participation will remain anonymous throughout the research project and the data collected through the interviews will remain locked up in an office to ensure confidentiality.

If you are interested in this study or for more information, you can contact me by email at Zroth038@uottawa.ca or by giving me a call at 613-265-8637. Are there any questions?

Thank you for your time, and I'm looking forward to meeting each of you individually.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Title of the study: *Academic Engagement of First Year Student Athletes:
University Football as a Serious Leisure Community of Practice*

Researcher: Ezechiel Rothschild-Checroune
M.A. Candidate Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa

Research Supervisor: François Gravelle Ph.D
Professor in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the research study named *Serious Leisure Communities of Practice: A Focus on Academic Engagement* conducted by Ezechiel Rothschild-Checroune and supervised by François Gravelle Ph.D.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to discover and explore factors affecting academic engagement.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of participating in a single one-on-one semi-structured interview which may last anywhere between 20-60 minutes. During the interview I will be invited to answer a list of questions and may be asked to explain responses in further detail. The interview session, scheduled to take place between October 26th, 2009 and November 8th, 2009 will be audio recorded for further analysis. This interview is to take place at an academic study session for the football program (Side-by-Side) or at the research supervisor's office. The specific time and place for the one-on-one interview session will be arranged with the researcher after signing this document.

Risks: I understand that my participation in the research implies that I will be providing personal information and it may place me in uncomfortable situation. I am reassured that the researcher has done everything he can to minimize these risks. I will be asked questions to answer during the interview, but if for any reason I do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, I have the option to refuse answering questions. I also have the option to withdraw from the study at any point. I am reassured that my participation has no negative repercussion towards my academic standing or my placement within the football program.

Benefits: My participation in this study will benefit myself personally. I may gain a better understanding of how research studies are conducted at the University of Ottawa. The data that I provide during my interview can help the researcher gain a better understanding of how academic engagement is affected by being a member of the varsity football program and pursuing a serious leisure career. Participating in this research has the potential to help future student athletes gain both academic and athletic success.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the researcher to transcribe, analyze, and draw conclusions from for research purposes. My confidentiality will be protected as only the researcher and his supervisor have access to the audio tapes and the transcriptions of the interviews. Data and documents collected from my interview will be kept locked up in a cabinet in the locked office of the research supervisor at the University of Ottawa. **Anonymity** will be protected by giving participants pseudonyms rather than using actual names for the research. Interviews will not ask participants for their real names and any accidental references to names during the recorded interview will be altered during transcription of the interview. Therefore, the identity of the participants will not be revealed in the publication of this research study.

Conservation of data: The data collected such as the audio recordings, transcripts, notes, or any other form both electronic data or hard copies will be kept locked in a cabinet in the locked office of the research supervisor. Only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the data. The data will be securely stored for seven years after publication of the research, after which, all data will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will still be used as a source of collected data, unless requested by myself.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Ezechiel Rothschild-Checroune of the School of Human Kinetics, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa, under the supervision of François Gravelle Ph.D.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5841

Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: *(Signature)*

Date: *(Date)*

Researcher's signature: *(Signature)*

Date: *(Date)*

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Academic Engagement of First Year Student Athletes:

University Football as a Serious Leisure Community of Practice

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

*Remember, there are no right or wrong answers; I am simply looking for your opinion on these questions.

*If you ever want to skip or go back to a question, feel free to do so.

*This interview will remain confidential, and by no means will your responses be traced back to you.

Demographics

- 1) Please state your age and your current year at university.

Communities

- 2) How far is your hometown from where you live now?
- 3) Do you stay in close contact with your family?
- 4) Do you have a job while attending school?
- 5) What helped you decide to attend university?
- 6) How did you decide to attend the University of Ottawa compared to other universities?
- 7) How familiar are you with the university and the city since you have begun school here?
- 8) Do you have trouble finding your way around campus or accessing services offered to you as a student athlete?

Distinctive Qualities of Serious Leisure

Career

- 9) How long have you been playing football before coming to university?
- 10) What made you decide to continue your football career after secondary school?
- 11) Where do you see your football career taking you in the future?
- 12) If you were given the opportunity, would you play football professionally?

Preserve

- 13) Can you describe the challenges of starting a new university life and new football season at the same time?
- 14) What is the toughest part about transitioning to your new lifestyle?
- 15) What is the most difficult part of being a member of the football program?
- 16) How do you overcome these difficulties?

Effort

- 17) Do you ever go over and beyond what is expected of you in terms of effort placed in the football program? E.g. practicing on your own, or trying to get better outside of the program's requirements.
- 18) How many hours a week would you say you spend on football related activities?
- 19) In terms of academics, do you study outside of what is required or expected of you?
- 20) How many hours a week would you say you spend on academically related activities?

Durable benefits or outcomes

- 21) What personal benefits or positive outcomes would you say you gained from involvement in football programs, (either currently or in the past)? E.g. fitness, socially, self-reflective feelings...

Identifying

- 22) As a student athlete, do you identify yourself more as an athlete or student, or both equally?
- 23) Which do you prefer, being a student or an athlete?
- 24) Do you think it's possible to separate being an athlete from being a student or vice versa?
- 25) Do others identify you as a football student athlete?
- 26) (If YES) Do you feel that you are treated differently for being identified as a football student athlete, either positively or negatively?

Unique ethos

- 27) Can you describe the community revolving within the football program?
- 28) Does the football program's social world affect your academic life and if so how?
- 29) Do you feel that you have enough time for schoolwork?
- 30) How do you manage your time effectively so that you can focus on your schoolwork?
- 31) Are there activities that you do with other football student athletes outside of the football program? For example take classes together, going out/socializing, relaxing, etc.
- 32) Do you feel that you have learned from the veterans on the football program, if so how?
- 33) Do you feel that you have learned from other rookies on the football program, is so how?
- 34) Which do you feel you have learned from more, the rookies or the veterans?
- 35) Have any of the veterans on the football program influenced your decisions, either as a member of the football program or academically?
- 36) Have any of the coaches or professors influenced your behaviours at university?
- 37) How would your life change if you were not a member of the football program and how would you fill in the extra time?

Communities of Practice

38) Do you feel that the various communities which you are a part of ever conflict with one another?

39) Which communities require the greatest commitment to remain a member of that community?

40) Where do you see yourself after the next five years?

41) What is going to help you get to where you want to be in life?

42) Is there any advice you would give to first year guys coming in next year?

Are there any questions or points that you would like to go back to and talk about?

Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

Thank you for participating in this study!