
MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

Peer Mentoring Canadian University Student-Athletes:
An Analysis of NCAA Division I Academic Mentoring Program Handbooks

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ABSTRACT

For many Canadian students, varsity athletics is an important part of their University experience. Prior to attending University many high level athletes are greatly influenced by their parents and/or extended family, and once at University that role is often replaced by their teammates and peers. Some students are fortunate to find a positive mentor-like figure in a veteran player. However, too often this is not the case, and bad academic habits are developed early before the student-athlete has a chance at academic success.

Transitioning into post-secondary education is challenging enough for students who are not on a varsity team, and student-athletes are expected to balance twice as much responsibility. A university's reputation is affected if student-athletes are continually forced to withdraw from their studies, providing an even further disadvantage for athlete recruitment. It is the university who is allowing student-athletes to take on additional responsibility to represent the university and even accepting student-athlete who are not as academically prepared. Therefore, it should be the university's responsibility to provide proper assistance and support, because student-athletes should not be sacrificing their academic experience to play their sport. All students, including student-athletes, should be graduating with the same education and skills.

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory looks at the recursive nature and "duality" of structure (Orlikowski & Yates, 2007). When applying the principles of structuration theory in a grounded theory analysis of five National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) academic mentoring handbooks, it becomes clear that when student-athletes enter university they are entering a completely different social structure and university experience than non-athletes. What becomes clear is that any assistance and support needs to be tailored to student-athletes at that specific institution, and different from non-athletes. Furthermore, implementing an athlete academic peer mentoring program could help to change negative views of academics that have developed in the student-athlete social structure. Considering that Kerr and Miller (2002) found Canadian university student-athlete to be experiencing similar challenges to those in the NCAA, then they should also have provided to them academic assistance specific to their needs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I. Setting the Scene

For many Canadian students, varsity athletics is an important part of their university experience. Top quality facilities and high achieving teams help to build community with the students on campus. The Ontario University Association (OUA) oversees 19 Ontario schools, and aims to provide its student-athletes with a high level of athletic competition while completing their education (OUA, 2011). However, the OUA currently does not have standards to ensure that student-athletes are graduating with the same educational experience as their non-athlete peers. Many students enter university with high personal academic and athletic expectations, but without the proper support it easily becomes too challenging to balance the two.

Prior to attending university high level athletes have developed a support system with their family, coaching staff, and/or high school administration, and once at university that role is often initially filled by their teammates and peers. Some students are fortunate to find a positive mentor-like figure in a veteran player. However, too often this is not the case, and poor academic habits are picked up before the term begins. Even though the athlete is academically intelligent, they do not give themselves the chance to succeed and fall behind early.

Research in higher education has recognized that the transition into university is very stressful for first-year students, and this often limits their academic success (Adler, 2008; Hewitt, 2002). Athletes are faced with additional challenges over the general population and expected to fend for themselves. This increased strain on the body and mind can create a role conflict for the athlete, leaving them unsure of where to focus their limited time (Adler, 2008). Although athletes

claim their academics as being equally important as their sport, it is for many impossible to fully commit to both. This means that athletes have to prioritize their time and without the immediate satisfaction and pressures their sport produces, often the academics slide (Miller & Kerr, 2002; Hewitt, 2002; Figler, 1987).

Throughout the term, as athletes become less committed to their classes, their chances of academic failure rise. If the athlete's academics are not being tracked and appropriate assistance provided, the likelihood of them receiving required-to-withdraw standing also increases. This status could mean the end of their athletic career and in many cases also their university education. Cuseo (2004) states, "The most critical period or stage of vulnerability for student attrition continues to be the first year of college" (p. 1). The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange further supports this statement with their findings that, "More than half of all students who withdraw from college do so during their first year" (Cuseo, 2004, p. 1). Considering student-athletes experience challenges additional to those of the general first-year population, institutions should be providing additional resources to assist first-year student-athletes with both their transition into academics and athletics.

II. Importance of the Issue

The academic success of student-athletes should be of great importance to the university. These students have chosen to take on increased stress in their daily lives in order to represent the institution. It is not right that many athletes are pressured to reduce their course load or change majors in order to maintain their athletic eligibility status. It should be the responsibility of the university that these student-athletes be able to experience university academics at the same level as the rest of the student body (Hewitt, 2002; Whitner & Myers, 1986).

Furthermore, many universities are accepting student-athletes who may not be equally as prepared for the academic challenges as non-athletes. It has been known that universities will bend the rules in order to enrol athletes with valuable athletic talent. Some student-athletes start their university education with lower entrance scores and high school grades than their non-athlete peers in the same program (Carodine, Almond, & Gratte, 2001). If the university is willing to accept these students at different academic standards then it should be its responsibility to assist them in reaching the required standard for continued education.

The university's reputation is also affected if student-athletes are continually forced to withdraw from their courses and/or change academic programs. Poor retention rates affect the reputation of the school's Athletic and Recreation Department, reducing its credibility (Adler, 2008), and providing an even further disadvantage for athlete recruitment. American colleges and universities in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have developed restrictions on athletic commitment and standards for academic support in order to protect their athletes. Therefore, Canadian schools and the OUA should be following suit in order to not only provide students with the tools to succeed, but also stay competitive with the American institutions.

This paper will investigate who the Canadian student-athlete is and how a peer mentoring relationship that begins in first year could assist them with their academic challenges and socialization into the interuniversity athletic social structure. It will analyze academic mentoring handbooks that are provided to student mentors at successful NCAA institutions to highlight key communication strategies being practiced consistently across all programs. In the end it will offer suggestions, using Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, for why Canadian universities should

offer peer mentoring programs that rivals those of their American neighbours. This will answer the question, what is an effective peer mentoring system for Canadian student-athletes?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Peer Mentoring in Higher Education

There is an abundance of work done on NCAA Division I athletics, but research on Canadian University athletic and academic assistance for the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is much more challenging to come by. It does not appear when reviewing the literature on student-athlete academic assistance that the Canadian perspective has been taken into account. Therefore, in order to investigate peer mentoring for the Canadian student-athlete, first there needs to be an understanding of general peer-mentoring for higher education, and then research that has been done for the NCAA. Once these two areas have been reviewed, the findings can be applied to what is currently known about Canadian student-athletes.

In rare instances an individual student-athlete will achieve a high level of academic or athletic performance on their own. However, key people have often offered them guidance that has acted as a catalyst to their success. These advisors, whether they are searched for or occur as an informal connection, can be called mentors to one's career. History has many examples of mentoring relationships where someone who is experienced in the appropriate skills helps to guide another through their development. The first known use of the term "mentor" was recorded in Homer's "The Odyssey" in 1200BC. When Odysseus departs for Troy he entrusts "Mentor" to be his son Telemachus' guardian (Stone, 2002). Through the years this relationship has been utilized in many settings, including in higher education. Today mentoring relationships have proven to be very successful, and a relationship that is worthwhile and beneficial in post-secondary institutions (Jacobi, 1991; Budge, 2006).

Currently there is not a standard definition for mentoring that could be applied to mentoring in higher education. However, based on a list of fifteen different perspectives provided by Jacobi (1991), some common words can be used for creating a definition specific to this project. These key words can be summarized as a relationship process with guided learning, further development of skills, goal setting, with a role model and trained advisor (Jacobi, 1991).

Maryann Jacobi is regularly referenced in the field of student assistance services and especially mentoring in higher education. Jacobi (1991) has looked at the link between mentoring and academic success in undergraduate students. An important finding of Jacobi is that of higher education institutions increasing their use of undergraduate students in peer mentoring programs (Jacobi, 1991). At the time of the article there had not been sufficient research done to judge its success, but Jacobi states that more and more universities and colleges were providing undergraduate peer-to-peer mentoring services to their students.

Some of the researchers building on Jacobi (1991) are Angelique, Kyle and Taylor. Angelique et al. (2002) highlight peer mentoring as the current trend in mentoring, describing it as reciprocal in regards to information sharing. Peer mentoring is similar to that of a traditional mentoring relationship in so far as maintaining similar goals, but the peer mentoring relationship differs in that it consists of a guide who is closer in age and stage to the mentee. Peer mentors are currently experiencing, or have recently experienced, similar challenges to their mentee, and are handling them with a higher rate of success. In order to ensure success with the peer mentoring relationship, the content they discuss is often more structured and directed toward specific goals decided upon by the institution (Angelique et. al., 2002).

A final important challenge for university students that should be addressed in a peer mentoring relationship is assisting with the transition into a higher-level academic culture (McLean, 2004; Correll, 2005). McLean (2004) discusses the importance of socializing students into the university academic culture in order to ‘optimize their learning experience’. This includes providing assistance not only in academics but also moral and emotional support. Correll (2005) touches on the benefits of peer mentoring in this transition, and the greater empathy a peer mentor may have toward the new students, considering they may have recently, or are currently still, experiencing similar challenges. There is a consensus among many researchers that peer mentoring is beneficial and should be provided for students in higher education (Angelique et. al. 2002; Budge, 2006; Correll, 2005; Jacobi, 1991; McLean, 2004).

II. Peer Mentoring Student-Athletes

Often a high level of academic achievement promotes success in athletics and vice versa. As noted in Simon Fraser University’s independent student newspaper, “many top-level athletes are also excellent students” (Frayne, 2000; Coleman, 1961). In high school students this relationship is proven repeatedly, and it has been shown that athletes may be more motivated to continue into post-secondary education than non-athletes (Coleman, 1961). However, university brings a new level of autonomy and forces many students to reconstruct their social identity. For students participating in fall sports, their first introduction to university life will be their team and the athletic training camp. This differs from the general non-athlete student population who have their transition into post-secondary education eased with an orientation or frosh week.

Lubker and Etzel (2007) discuss the challenges non-athletes have adjusting to their new environment in higher education, and state that “The freshman year of college is usually

acknowledged as a stressful time of social and academic adjustment” (p. 457). First-year varsity student-athletes are expected to perform under different standards than non-athletes. Balancing a varsity team and academic responsibilities is similar to working two jobs. The strict schedule may help develop time management skills early on in the athlete’s academic career, but too often this is not the case. It is essential that these skills be developed early on or the work demands of their semester will become too much. Even though the athlete may be intelligent and a strong student, falling behind from the start means they do not give themselves the chance to succeed.

Hewitt (2002) discusses the challenges faced by freshman student-athletes in higher education. One key finding in Hewitt (2002) is that the student-athletes are not identified as academically ‘at-risk’ early enough in their academic careers, and often it is not until extreme consequences have been handed out that they seek help from the institution (Hewitt, 2002). Upon entering post-secondary education, the student-athlete’s priorities are skewed and “manipulated by the demands of their sport” (Hewitt, 2002, p. 14).

This internal conflict of student-athletes not knowing where to focus their limited time is a major focus of Figler (1987). Figler (1987) defines this challenge faced by student-athletes as a role conflict and suggests that it should be addressed in any assistance program offered to student-athletes. A role conflict is challenging for student-athletes to deal with on their own, because of the immediate successes and consequences experienced in their sport and not in their academics (Figler, 1987). Missing a practice may result in sitting out a game that very weekend, whereas the effects of not attending class do not surface until the next exam, or the conclusion of the course when a low grade is assigned or the student-athlete does not achieve a credit. Figler (1987) stresses that assistance is required for student-athletes to help prioritize their time and take some of the intense pressure off their time schedule.

Pfister (2004) has written her dissertation on mentoring student-athletes. Pfister (2004) does a quantitative analysis of peer mentoring vs. faculty mentoring and their effect on freshmen transitional stress. The study is of particular interest because it focuses specifically on the transition from high school to university. In support of creating a peer mentoring program, Pfister (2004) found that, “no significant differences were found in the perceived stress levels of student athletes mentored by faculty versus peers” (p. viii). Pfister (2004) further states that this paper is the ‘building block’ for a future mentoring program for student-athletes.

Carodine, Almond and Gratto (2001) agree with Pfister (2004) that an academic assistance program is needed to ease the increased strain on student-athletes as they transition into university. They further add to this argument stating that it is the institution’s obligation to provide assistance to these athletes. Even though student-athletes have increased expectations on their performance for the institution, they are still admitted with lower entrance scores than their non-athlete counterparts. Carodine, et. al. (2001) argue that if universities are willing to admit these student-athletes, then they also must be willing to assist them in developing their academic skills to at least the same levels as those of their peers.

The research suggests that student-athletes are taking on increased strain and a loaded time table in a situation that is already considered demanding and challenging for even their non-athlete peers. Without the proper assistance this can cause increased stress and role conflict that prevent them from achieving both their academic and athletic goals.

As stated earlier most of the research on peer mentoring for student-athletes has been done on athletes in the NCAA Division I system. However, many if not all of these same concepts can be applied to the life of the Canadian student-athlete. There appear to be gaps in the

literature in regards to how these student-athletes are being mentored, the structure of the mentoring programs, and which tools and resources are being used while mentoring these student-athletes.

III. Canadian Interuniversity Sport Learning from the NCAA

The 1980s were a decade full of well-publicized academic scandals in the NCAA that threatened the integrity of higher education for athletes. As a result, in October 1989, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (2001) created a commission to reform the agenda for college sports. The Knight Foundation (2001) stated that this commission was necessary not only to improve how collegiate athletics is viewed, but to put the integrity back in the ‘whole institution of higher education’. It had become clear in the ’80s that universities in the United States were no longer concerned with the education of their athletes.

NCAA Division I teams had become major money makers, but some institutions had graduation rates below thirty percent for their basketball and football programs (Knight Foundation, 2001). Although the commission was not formally supported by the NCAA, by 1993 two-thirds of their suggestions had been implemented, and by 1996 even their most significant concerns had been dealt with (Knight Foundation, 2001).

This original commission gained significant ground in restoring credibility for intercollegiate athletics, but when the issue was revisited ten years later it was clear that some significant concerns were still surfacing. Although the NCAA has strict regulations in place with its Academic Success Rate, schools are still finding a way to put sports first and the athlete’s academics a distant second (Knight Foundation, 2001).

If the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) is to learn from the NCAA, then it must see that it is a great concern that the CIS currently has no regulations for academic success in place, and only implements eligibility standards. Even though the issues seen on the NCAA athletic stage are in the distant future for Canadian universities, there should be some acknowledgement that athlete academic success is important to Canadian universities.

Evidence from the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Strategic Plan for 2010 through to 2012 suggests that there are some gaps in its values, vision, and strategic direction that do not account for protecting the student-athletes' educational experience. The CIS states one of its five values as, "Quality educational and athletic experience", and its vision as, "CIS is the destination of choice for student-athletes to pursue excellence in academics and athletics" (Canadian Interuniversity Sport, 2010). The nature of these statements is in stark contrast to the NCAA's core purpose stated on their website: "to govern competition in a fair, sage, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the student-athlete is paramount" (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2011). If it truly is the CIS's vision to be competitive with the NCAA in attracting Canadian athletes then it must also address the academic experience offered to its athletes.

Miller and Kerr (2002) are two of the few researchers who have looked at the university experience of Canadian student-athletes. To assess the current situation for Canadian student-athletes, Miller and Kerr (2002) interviewed upper year athletes about the challenges they faced throughout their university education, and find that the CIS and NCAA athlete may have much more in common than originally assumed.

Miller and Kerr (2002) found the Canadian student-athlete's experience to be divided between three key areas: the athletic, the academic, and the social sphere. Similarly to what Figler (1987) suggested about the NCAA, Miller and Kerr (2002) find that dividing the student-athlete's identity between multiple activities can produce a role conflict, in which it becomes challenging for them to balance their priorities. Exactly as Hewitt (2002) observes about the NCAA, Canadian high school student-athletes enter university with sport being an important, if not the most important, aspect of their young lives. The quality of athletic experience was for many Canadian student-athletes their number one factor when selecting their post-secondary institution (Miller & Kerr, 2002). This finding points to students' priorities being skewed when entering their first-year of university, and similarly to the NCAA, more heavily directed to their athletics (Hewitt, 2002; Miller & Kerr, 2002).

Miller and Kerr (2002) further highlight that many Canadian student-athletes' coping techniques for dealing with challenges when faced with increased intensity in both athletics and academics, are to switch majors or reduce their course load. As stressed in Carodine, Almond and Gratto (2001) it should be the responsibility of the institution to support these athletes when part of their increased obligations includes representing the university athletically. Although CIS athletics do not have the same revenue produced through television and advertising as the NCAA (Miller & Kerr, 2002), their student-athletes are still experiencing similar challenges when it comes to role conflict, restricted time, and graduating on time. Therefore, in order to assist our Canadian athletes we can learn from what has been developed in the NCAA, especially if the CIS is looking to become competitive with the NCAA and the 'destination of choice' for Canadian high school athletes (CIS, 2010).

IV. Structuration Theory

Structuration Theory is a general social theory that looks at social organization (Currie & Galliers, 1999). It concludes that social structures are not separate from human actions, that it is in fact through human actions that social structures exist (Jones, 1999). Anthony Giddens is seen as the most influential contributor to the development of the theory and outlines his principles of Structuration in three main works, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976), *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979), and *The Constitution of Society* (1984). His perspective became well known for the way in which he looks at the recursive nature and “duality” of structure (Orlikowski & Yates, 2007). Actions outcomes can be facilitated through regulation but also limited.

Prior to the acceptance of Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory, sociologists were divided into two schools of thought when dealing with structure and human actions (Rose, 1998). The first school could be considered ‘naturalistic’ sociology such as functionalism, structuralism and post-structuralism, putting the constricting qualities of structures at the forefront and minimizing the effects of human agency over society (Rose, 1998). The second school is interpretive sociology and is in opposition to the structure-based approach. The school of interpretive sociology includes phenomenology and ethnomethodology, which focus their attention on the agency that is overlooked by functionalists and structuralists, choosing to view phenomena in society as the result of human actors (Currie & Galliers, 1999).

Giddens’ Structuration theory works to bridge the structure vs. human agency dichotomy, taking on more of a hermeneutic approach than naturalistic sociology and viewing social

structure not as separate from human actions, but interdependent (Ihlen, van Ruler & Fredricksson, 2009). Giddens found a way to blend these two theories showing that it is through human actions that social structures exist (Jones, 1999). Although ‘structural forces’ may constrain people’s actions, human is still “the primary actor in, and interpreter of social life” (Rose, 1998).

To understand structuration theory and how it can be beneficial to a Canadian student-athlete peer mentoring program, I have chosen to focus on three aspects of the theory: 1) the duality of structure, 2) the recursive nature creating routine, and 3) reflexive monitoring and motivation.

The Duality of Structure

As already stated, within structuration theory, social structures are not separate from human actions, that it is in fact through human actions that social structures exist (Jones, 1999). The two are interdependent, and going back to social structures’ recursive nature, not only do human actions shape the structure, but in turn social structures create new standards for humans to act. Structures are both the medium and the outcome of actions. As Jones (1999) summarizes, “This leads to a view of human beings as being in a constant state of reflexive monitoring of their situation and to the omnipresent potential for change” (p. 105).

For Giddens, structure and agency are not independent or conflicting, but instead mutually interacting. It is the human agents’ actions that allow social structures to be carried out (Currie & Gallier, 1999). Rose (1998) when looking at structuration theory describes structure as ‘activity-dependent’: it acts as the medium as well as the outcome in a social system (Rose, 1998). Giddens (1984) defines a social system as, “constituted by the activities of human agents,

enabled and constrained by the social structural properties of these systems” (p. 25).

Furthermore, according to the principles of structuration theory, duality explains that structure does not only restrict, “but is also a resource to be deployed by humans in their actions: it is enabling as well as disabling” (Jones, 1999, p. 104). Structure can be seen as a process that is continually changing over time as more actors contribute to habitually performing the construct.

The Recursive Nature Creating Routine

Structuration theory views social sciences as recursive social practices reproduced and recreated by human actors, and through their actions continually making the practice conditions possible (Giddens, 1984). For the purposes of this paper recursive will be defined as social structures being continually reproduced through repetition of agents’ actions. Furthermore, recursive practices are not a random act but one that is mindfully repeated within societal rules and regulations that have come to be known as the norm (Rose, 1998). As social practices become more recursive, they also become less conscious on the part of the actor. In other words they become routine (Currie & Gallier, 1999). Rose (1998) comments that routine, which makes up the majority of daily activities, reduces the ‘unconscious sources of anxiety’ in our lives (Rose, 1998). It is at this point that the human actor’s behaviour is becoming repetitive and no longer motivated.

Reflexive Monitoring and Motivation

The continual repetition of practices makes them reflexive and the same over time and space. Giddens clarifies the difference between reflexivity and self-consciousness because reflexive action is still ‘purposive actions,’ and is continuously monitored in interactions and as a result rationalized by the actor. Actions are not simply a series of acts, but have ‘intentionality’

to their continuous process. By continually repeating these recursive social practices, they become reflexive and practical, reducing the actors' knowledge of any continuous monitoring that is occurring (Giddens, 1984).

The continual monitoring and rationalization of our reflexive practices is a cyclical process (Giddens, 1984). This monitoring or analysis of behaviour is not only of our own actions but also of others, and our environmental surroundings. In order to change our actions, the monitoring of these reflexive practices needs to be assessed for the intentionality of the actions (Giddens, 1984). Assessing the intentionality can change the rationalization and, in effect, the agency we have toward that reflexive action.

Giddens further explains agency and how we are not asked to rationalize or reflect on our actions as long as they keep with the norm, which reduces our knowledge of the purpose behind our actions. The actions that have been practiced into routine are unmotivated due to their practical nature. It is when unusual circumstances present themselves that actors must react with their motives in mind. Therefore, most people's conduct on a day-to-day basis can be considered not directly motivated (Giddens, 1984).

In structuration theory, even when the actor is not fully aware of the way they are producing and reproducing structure, they are still knowledgeable agents (Currie & Gallier, 1999). Giddens (1984) outlines the types of consciousness, explaining that there is still intention behind actor's actions--practical and discursive consciousness. Practical consciousness is the most common due to the fact that most recursive actions are practical in nature. It is our ability to 'go on' with the routines of daily life (Giddens, 1984). With practical consciousness actors are aware of our actions, but unable to express why they are doing them. On the other hand, with

discursive consciousness the actor may not feel in the moment they are knowledgeable of their actions, but when asked they are able to rationalize and put their motivations into words (Rose, 1998).

This focus on the knowledgeability of the actor and his/her motivations is important because it shows there is room for change within routine and the structure we have created in our day-to-day lives (Whittington, 1992). However, in order to do modify a social structure, one would need to break routine, change motivation, and consciously conduct new social practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Athlete academic mentoring programs are much more commonly implemented in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA); however, it is challenging to find comparable data between the NCAA schools that show their specific program's successes and challenges. To view common communication strategies used within these programs there needs to be a way to analyze each program individually, and not just general academic mentoring for student-athletes. When conducting research of current athlete academic mentoring programs for the purpose of using them at Canadian universities, the mentoring handbooks need to be compared for similarities and differences in communication strategies used.

While looking further into NCAA Division I schools that are currently running academic success programs, I came across East Carolina University's handbook for tutoring student-athletes. This handbook is available publically online for site visitors to download. This source is developed by East Carolina's Office of Student Development in partnership with the Department of Athletics to assist those who are tutoring, mentoring, and counselling the intercollegiate student-athletes. What is of most significance to this project is that the handbook entitled *A Guide to Tutoring Student-Athletes* lays out for its reader the standards the institution expects of its support staff, a breakdown of the program that is being offered, and additional aids which highlight program content. I found that the handbooks of other NCAA Division I schools were publically available online, which provides a useful way to take a closer look at structure within these American programs. Having access to these handbooks allows for the opportunity to compare the programs and the grounding principles that could be contributing to their success.

I. Athlete Academic Mentoring Handbooks

Five handbooks were randomly selected from the examples found online to make up a sample group of programs offered in the NCAA. The only specific criteria required of the handbooks is a section devoted to a peer mentoring program for the institution's student-athletes. The schools that were selected vary in academic and athletic levels, but all have NCAA Division I status. NCAA Division I is the highest level of athletic competition offered to American post-secondary institutions. In order to maintain this status, the school must compete in a required number of competitions, offer a minimum amount of financial aid, and have teams competing in at least fourteen of the NCAA sport divisions offered. Additionally, schools that are considered Division I must also maintain their Academic Progress Rate (APR). The APR is made up of the student-athlete's eligibility standard, and Graduation Success Rate (GSR). If the institution has a team that does not meet the APR four years in row then the entire athletics program will be stripped of its Division I status (NCAA, 2011).

The schools that were selected to represent the sample group include the following: 1) East Carolina University, 2) The University of Memphis, 3) The University of Texas at Austin, 4) Purdue University, and 5) The University of Oklahoma. The handbooks are put together either by the support services devoted entirely to student-athletes or by the university's academic support services in conjunction with the Department of Athletics. Ranging in length from twenty-eight to sixty pages, the handbooks cover not just academic mentoring but also guidelines for general assistance staff, and some outline a tutoring program specific to athletes. The handbooks vary in the types of academic aides that are provided but most include general information, policies and procedures, ethical conduct guidelines, forms, and strategies. The

sections written for general academic staff and academic mentors are the primary focus when analysing these handbooks. Table 1. outlines a comparison of each school and their Academic Assistance Handbook.

Table. 1 Handbook Comparison

	East Carolina University	The University of Memphis	The University of Texas at Austin	Purdue University	The University of Oklahoma
Year Established	1907 (*East Carolina university”, 2011)	1912 (University of Memphis, 2011)	1883 (The University of Texas at Austin, 2011)	1869 (Purdue University, 2010)	1890 (The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, 2011)
About the University	Awards bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees (*East Carolina university”, 2011)	Operating budget of \$439 million and a total enrollment of 22,421. Awards bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, education and law degrees. (University of Memphis, 2011)	Operating budget of \$2.14 billion and enrollment of approx. 51,000. Awards bachelor’s through doctoral & special professional educational levels. (The University of Texas at Austin, 2011)	Budget of 1,812.5 million and enrollment of 39,726. Awards bachelor’s through doctoral, special and professional. (Purdue University, 2010)	Budget of \$1.5 billion and enrolls more than 30,000. Doctoral degree granting university (The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, 2011)
# of Teams	19 (CBS Interactive, 2011)	17 (University of Memphis, 2011)	20 (The University of Texas at Austin, 2011)	18 (CBS Interactive, 2011)	17 (Oklahoma Athletics Department, 2010)
Info about Athletics	14 student-athletes named to their respective All-Academic Teams with 208 being named to the C-USA Commissioner’s Honor Roll (CBS Interactive, 2011)	In Spring 2010, had 96 athletes on the Dean’s list, 166 named to C-USA Commissioner’s Honor Roll (Center for Athlete Academic Services, 2010)	114 UT student-athletes named to Academic All-Big 12 teams in 2009-10, and 36 UT student-athletes registered a perfect 4.0 GPA in 2009-10 (CBS Interactive, 2011)	154 Academic All-Big Ten Honorees and 2 Academic All-Americans (CBS Interactive, 2011)	50 student-athletes earned a perfect 4.00 in Spring 2010, 278 student-athletes on Big 12 Commissioner’s Honor Roll Spring 2010, 3 CoSIDA Academic All-Americans in 2009-2010 (Oklahoma Athletics Department, 2010)
Last APR Penalty	MBB received penalties in 2004-2007 (NCAA, 2011)	Track received penalties in 2004-2005 (NCAA, 2011)	Baseball received penalties 2004-2005 (NCAA, 2011)	MBB received penalties 2006-2008; M Golf received penalties 2007-2008 (NCAA, 2011)	No penalties recorded (NCAA, 2011)

Document Title	A Guide to Tutoring Student-Athletes	CAAS Academic Mentor Manual	The University of Texas at Austin 2010-2011 Mentor and Tutor Handbook: 100% Student	Mentor Manual	The Prentice Gautt Tutoring & Learning Specialist Program
Document Length	57 pages	42 pages	44 pages	28 pages	60 pages
Length of Mentoring Section	11 pages	Entire document 42 pages	8 pages	Entire document 28 pages	10 pages (entitled Learning Specialist)
Who Produced the Document	Office of Student Development & Department of Athletics	Center for Athlete Academic Services (CAAS)	University of Texas at Austin Intercollegiate Athletics Student Services	Student-Athlete Support Services	Coordinator of Athletic Academic Services & Athletic Student Life Office
Document Purpose	“Initial training utilized tutor manual to identify policies and expectations of program staff, illustrate common scenarios, and provide strategies for working with student-athletes in an academically supportive role” (p. 2)	“Manual is meant to be a comprehensive guide to being a tutor or academic mentor for student-athletes” (p. 4)	“This handbook offers insight into rules, procedures and expectations of the Academic Staff” (p. 1)	“...to acquaint you with the important aspects of Mentoring as well as with the policies and procedures of our Mentoring program” (p. 3)	“The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the goals, policies, and procedures of the tutoring and Learning Specialist program” (p. 5)
Major Sections in Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Support - The Tutorial Process - The Mentoring Process - Being a Study Hall Monitor - Final Points - Appendix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAAS Information - Policies and Procedures - Ethical Conduct - Forms - Academic Mentor Strategies - Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Longhorn Pride - UT and NCAA Guidelines - Staff Expectations - Mentoring - Tutoring - Appendix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Mentoring Program - Mentor Policies - Compliance with NCAA and Big Ten Regulations - Student-Athlete Academic Support Services Directory - Resources Available on Campus - Rights of Student-Athletes with Learning Disabilities - Time Management and Procrastination - Mentor Tips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rules, Policies, and Procedures - Tutoring Overview - Learning Specialist - Students with Disabilities

Some important points to draw on when comparing the handbooks are that although the universities have different operating budgets, a different number of teams, and have different emphasis on mentoring in their handbooks, they are all producing high academic results from their student-athletes. The documents serve the same purpose--to outline policies, procedures and expectations to the academic assistance staff. It is also interesting to note that although the handbooks are very structured, their major section breakdown is quite different. For example both the University of Memphis and Purdue University have devoted their entire handbooks to the mentoring process, whereas The University of Texas at Austin has only devoted eight pages to this subject in its handbook.

Data on academic penalties to the institution have not been posted for the current academic year but is available up until the 2009-2010 year. Of the universities investigated, Purdue University had the most recent APR penalty which was received in the 2007-2008 year by the Men's Basketball team (NCAA, 2011). The APR results for all the institutions in the sample group indicated that the appropriate adjustments are being made at each institution to ensure that their student-athletes are achieving the standards set in place by the NCAA. In the 2009-2010 academic year none of the five schools received any academic penalties (NCAA, 2011).

II. Data Analysis

The method used for data analysis is grounded theory. Grounded Theory was first developed by Glaser and Strauss in their work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, published in 1967. Since then it has become an influential model used for

coding qualitative data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Grounded theory is also known as the constant comparative method, which has theory grounded in the relationships between the data and coded categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This analysis will use *open coding*, which means the document will be analyzed sentence by sentence to establish categories of codes for comparative analysis. Through comparisons with additional documents, the categories will be reshaped until they establish consistent findings to be theorized. Using grounded theory will allow an investigative approach into finding the common communication traits that the NCAA programs are using to implement successful programs.

The goal of this data analysis when using grounded theory is to draw out trends in communication strategies used by the NCAA institutions. Having access to these mentoring handbooks allows the opportunity to view the communication strategies that these institutions have chosen to focus their resources on when assisting student-athletes. The handbooks were analyzed sentence by sentence looking for what appeared to be key communication traits of the university's mentoring program. Key traits were compared using the constant comparative method (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) to those of another handbook in the sample group to establish consistency. This comparison established approximately sixty codes, which were divided into six categories: 1) Strategies for assisting student-athletes, 2) Assistance program content, 3) Behaviour expectations for mentors, 4) Rules and policies for working with student-athletes, 5) Rules, policies and assistance for the mentors, and 6) Key themes.

Strategies for assisting student-athletes addresses tools and techniques mentors can use while working with the student-athletes. These include practices such as illustrating common scenarios, providing examples, tracking student progress, goal setting, using checklists and protocols, and asking questions.

Assistance program content looks at the areas on which the learning strategies are focused. These areas include study tips such as defining learning styles, tips for managing test anxiety, time management strategies, methods of note-taking, identifying and dealing with learning disabilities, essay writing tips, and life skills assistance for the workplace.

Behaviour expectations for mentors is examples in the handbooks where communication techniques for mentors are outlined. These include being supportive, being a role model, providing guidance, being empathetic, and being sincere.

The category of *rules and policies for working with student-athletes* refers to the guidelines the institutions have outlined for their mentors to follow. These include confidentiality, professionalism, academic honesty and integrity, the chain of communication to follow, and disciplinary actions directed toward student-athletes.

Rules, policies and assistance for the mentors is a category of information that is directed only toward the mentors. This includes references to ongoing mentor development, resources for mentors, benefits for mentors, support for mentors, and disciplinary action procedures.

Finally, *key themes* is a category that emerged from common ideas and terms that occurred in the handbooks. Some of these themes include empowering the student-athlete, improved attitude toward academics, academic responsibility/accountability, transitioning into university, improved self-image, and balancing academics and athletics.

Although these categories produced comparable results for approximately half the handbooks in the sample group, the categories did not prove to be of any significance for the other half. The six key categories were producing a wide range of results highlighting more of the differences between the programs than any constants. This was an important finding because

it reshaped the focus of the document analysis. Differences in the handbook's communication traits did draw attention to consistency in the program's goal, the document's layout, and the way in which the mentor's role is described.

The goals, layout, and mentor roles of the handbooks in the sample group can be summarized to show the trends that have emerged around mentoring programs in the NCAA.

Program Goal: Assistance programs are defined as support programs for student-athletes that provide a positive learning environment and contribute to academic achievement. The handbooks then become reference tools for the mentors, and outline goals, policies, procedures, rules and expectations of the support staff.

Document Layout: The handbooks' layouts are similar to those of instruction manuals with information grouped under major headings and easily referenced using the table of contents. Most handbooks included sections devoted to mentor expectations and behaviour, and provided checklists or procedures for mentors to follow in a prescriptive manner when assisting student-athletes. As noted from Table 1, the handbooks' layouts did differ drastically in how much of the document was devoted to specifically academic mentoring. However, what was strikingly the same was how prescriptive and structured each section was, laying out carefully-worded policies, procedures and expectations for the assistance staff.

Description of Mentor's Role: The role of an athlete academic mentor can be summarized as a role model who provides guidance to the student-athlete and assists them in setting and achieving their academic goals.

The common trends that emerge from an analysis of the goals, layout, and description of the mentoring role were that the handbooks are all quite structured, providing mentors with rules,

policies and procedures in a prescriptive manner. Furthermore, these expectations were focused on the mentor being a guide who provided a positive learning environment that empowered the student-athlete in their education. Despite all the differences between the institutions and their programs, what stayed consistent was that the structured programs were focused on building an effective supportive relationship between the mentor and student-athlete.

Reviewing the document's goals, layout, and the mentor's role led to reshaping the research focus from communication strategies to how structure is being used to assist mentors with developing effective relationships with the student-athletes. This re-focuses the data analysis to two key categories; 1) Creating structure: providing a format to act, and 2) Creating an effective mentor/mentee relationship: actions in the relationship and dynamics.

For this analysis structure refers to ways the institution is regulating the mentor's behaviour and providing a format to act within. Instances of structure in the mentoring handbooks are procedures, categorization of student-athlete behaviour, restrictions on mentor behaviour, checklists, and action plans, to name a few. All instances in the document when the institution reduces the mentor's decision making process were coded to operationalize the category. These instances provide a standardized way of implementing the mentoring program, creating more consistency and unity in behaviour from mentor to mentor.

The second category for analysis, creating an effective mentor and mentee relationship, refers to instances in the handbook when the expectations for this relationship and its dynamics are referenced. Examples of this category would include guidelines for the relationship, references to the power dynamic, or descriptions of the soft skills being used to develop the relationship. To operationalize this analysis, all the instances of interaction or communication

between the mentor and mentee were coded. This analysis stresses what the standard of behaviour is for the mentor to succeed in their assistance of the student-athlete.

After an initial analysis of the *University of Texas at Austin 2010-2011 Mentor and Tutor Handbook* six additional sub-categories emerged from an investigation of the category of ‘Creating Structure’, and four developed under ‘Creating an effective mentor/mentee relationship’. All these sub-categories presented themselves continuously throughout the rest of the sample group of handbooks confirming each institution’s focus on creating structured programs to assist mentors in developing a strong relationship with the student-athlete. Table 2 highlights examples of each sub-category as they appear in the handbooks produced by the University of Texas at Austin and East Carolina University.

Table 2. Example Coding for University of Texas at Austin and East Carolina University

Category or Theme for Analysis	Example for University of Texas Document	Example from East Carolina University Document
<i>Creating Structure: providing a format to act</i>		
Identifying Policies & Expectations: Rules and regulations for mentors and academic support staff. Expectations for behaviour.	“Any notice of academic dishonesty must be reported to the academic counsellor immediately. This includes cheating, plagiarism, and unauthorized possession of course materials” (p. 16). Outline the dress code requirements on p. 16	“Communication with coaches should be done by the Academic Counsellor and NOT the mentor!” (p. 15). “Should you need to cancel or reschedule a session, try to contact the student at least 24 hours in advance” (p. 30).
Strategies & Action Plans for Common Scenarios: Breaking down common scenarios and how a mentor or academic support staff should behave and handle it.	“During the semester, you will undoubtedly encounter a situation or question that is outside your responsibilities. Make the student’s academic counsellor aware if you have reason to believe that a student is experiencing significant difficulties of an academic, emotional, psychological, or social nature” (p. 14). For learning styles list common signs of each style, and how to accommodate each style (p. 15). Outline strategies for students receiving a poor grade (p. 21).	Situations and Strategies (p. 32 – 39) Ex. – “The student is passive and contributes little to the discussion” (provides possible reasons and possible approaches). Does this for 15 possible challenges.
Defining Learning Strategies: Outlining what educational skills should be focused on in meetings.	“Everyone learns differently, and it is your role to determine your student’s most effective method of learning” (p. 14). Define these as: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic. Implementation of Active Studying (p. 19). Outline Study Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time Management - Note-Taking - Test-Taking 	“Verify that the student has an academic planner/calendar. If not, assist the student in do so as well as inputting due dates for assignments, quizzes, tests, and presentations” (p. 16). Groups under the heading ‘Successful Learning Strategies’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know each professor’s course requirements - Do assignments on time - Attend Class Faithfully - Take a Notebook to Class - Be Prepared for Tests - Study the professor - Keep up-to-date with course work Divide skills into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test Taking Methods - Notetaking Tips - Studying and Time Management

<p>Defining Communication Skills: Outlining for Mentors and academic support staff what communication skills need to be used and developed.</p>	<p>Define Responsibilities of Mentors as: Guidance, Empathy and Openness touching on the communication skills that are necessary for each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask, what do you think? - Listen to your students. Understand their perspectives on schoolwork... (p. 18) 	<p>“...ask open-ended questions such as those which begin with why, how, or what” (p. 6). “To paraphrase is to put the student’s responses into your own words, to show him that you have understood what he is trying to say, and to let him know he is being heard” (p. 10).</p>
<p>Implementing Aids: The focus of handouts, forms, and guides provided to mentors and academic support staff to assist them.</p>	<p>“Create a one-page gradesheet for each student (see page 23)” (p. 22). Appendix has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting SMART Goals - A System for Effective Listening and Note-Taking - Tips for Test Taking - The Study Cycle - Kolb’s Learning Cycle 	<p>“Peer Resources: Nurturing the Mentor in You: The Mentor Survey” (p. 17). Appendix has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentoring Contact Log - Evaluation process - Who to Contact - Additional Academic Resources
<p>Tracking Student Progress: Ways in which the institution tracks and keeps record of the student-athletes academic journey.</p>	<p>“Using the student’s syllabi, construct a one-page grade sheet to help the counsellor maintain a record of all of the student’s grades and submit with your first mentor report” (p. 23). “You will submit weekly mentor report for each student that describes his or her current academic progress” (p. 24).</p>	<p>“Mentors should contact their assigned student’s Academic Counsellor on a frequent and regular basis to notify him/her of progress” (p. 15). “Keep a record of all meetings and discuss concerns and progress with student’s Academic Counsellor” (p. 16).</p>
<p><i>Creating an Effective Mentor/Mentee Relationship: Actions in Relationship and Dynamics</i></p>		
<p>Professionalism: building rapport, building a social relationship, and acting as a role model. Whether the mentor is expected to also take on a counselling role.</p>	<p>“Do not fraternize with students outside the study center (this includes MySpace, Facebook, texting, e-mailing, etc.)” (p. 13). “We expect that tutors and mentors will maintain a high degree of professionalism...” (p. 13). “Remember that you are a role model; your students will notice the dedication and passion that you bring to your occupation” (p. 13). “Support only the academic needs of your student. Any personal problems should be directed to the student’s academic counsellor immediately” (p. 14).</p>	<p>“MENTORING MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN A PUBLIC AREA” (p. 15). “Be an appropriate academic/personal role model. Remember you are working in a professional capacity. This should be reflected in your conversation topics, dress, and mannerisms...” (p. 30). “MENTORS ARE NEVER TO COMPLETE ANY COURSEWORK FOR A STUDENT-ATHLETE” (p. 15).</p>
<p>Empowering Student-Athletes: instances when the mentor is referred to as a guide, or supporter. When student-athlete is made to take control of their academic journey.</p>	<p>“When discussing course concepts or working through problems, let your students wrestle with the ideas. Offering your own opinions or solutions prematurely will deprive the student of academic autonomy. Instead, keep asking questions. Teach independent thinking by allowing your students to persevere through challenges” (p. 13).</p>	<p>“When these students begin to progress as a result of their own efforts, combined with your guidance, they gain the self-respect and pride that enhances their personal and academic self-concept” (p. 3). “Assist the student in learning to take responsibility for her own work” (p. 33).</p>
<p>Using Positive Language: instances when institution stresses the use of positive language</p>	<p>“We hope you accept your new role as a challenge to inspire a positive efficient approach toward a student’s education” (p. 1). “Your role is to promote the value of learning and express how much fun it can be. Your enthusiasm will be contagious. Show interest in the class material” (p. 13). “Find ways to compliment your students” (p. 14).</p>	<p>“...encourage regular meetings when possible” (p. 30). “Praise the student’s progress, regardless of how minimal, to help the student understand that improvement is a gradual process” (p. 33).</p>
<p>Open-mindedness: keeping personal beliefs or judgements out of relationship.</p>	<p>“Never allow political, social, educational, sexual, racial, or philosophical beliefs to interfere with the mentor-student relationship” (p. 18). “Avoid making assumptions...” (p. 18).</p>	<p>“Be respectful and establish a good relationship with your tutee/mentee. You will be working with a diverse population; a variety of personalities, learning styles, and values. Remember to be tolerant and accepting” (p. 30).</p>

From the coded sample group it became apparent that structure was occurring in all aspects of the mentoring program and was influential in the development of the mentoring relationship. The institution has broken these programs down into action plans or strategies in regards to every possible situation. Furthermore, if the solution was not in the manual then there is a process to follow in reporting these instances to a supervisor. It could be stated that structure is being used to create an effective mentoring relationship.

The data clearly suggests a connection between creating an effective mentor and mentee relationship and structure. Instead of stating that strong communication skills are essential, these communication skills are broken down into categories with their implementation strategies discussed. The handbooks in the sample group deal with the challenges of creating an effective relationship by providing more policies, expectations, strategies and action plans. Structure in the handbook is not only limiting mentor behaviour by outlining disciplinary action for poor behaviour, but it is also providing mentors with the tools to develop stronger relationships. It is from these findings that a connection can be drawn to Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory.

The mentoring handbooks were compared with the three main principles outlined for structuration theory in Giddens (1984). These principles were summarized as, 1) Duality of structure, 2) Recursive practices, and 3) Reflexive monitoring. The category of duality of structure was looking for instances where structure and agency are mutually interacting, and where structure was being used as a resource for mentors' actions. When looking for examples of recursive practices, instances of social structures being continually reproduced through mindful repetition was coded. Finally, the category of reflexive monitoring referred to instances in the handbooks where acts that are being performed with reduced consciousness are being continuously monitored.

When these categories were coded, it was unclear what trends would emerge and how closely the handbooks' practices could be explained with structuration theory. What was discovered was that patterns relating to the categories were appearing quite regularly in each of the documents. This confirms that structuration theory can help explain some of the practices associated with athlete mentoring programs at NCAA institutions. Table 3 shows examples of codes from each of the core categories as they appeared in the handbooks.

Table 3. Example of Structuration Theory Coding of Documents

Category for Analysis	University of Texas at Austin	East Carolina University	Purdue University	University of Memphis	University of Oklahoma
Duality of Structure: structure & agency mutually interacting; structure as a resource for mentor actions	“also included contemporary study techniques and resources that will facilitate your ability to help our student-athletes. This handbook will become a valuable reference tool as you work through the semester” (p. 1)	“As you mentor student-athletes, use these strategies to help them understand the importance of developing habits which lead to academic success”	“Important aspects of mentoring as well as with the policies and procedures of our Mentoring program...atmosphere that is conducive to learning and personal growth for all student-athletes” (p. 3)	“Having student-athletes make and use flash cards during sessions can be a great teaching tool, particularly in subjects where a great deal of vocabulary must be learned” (p. 38)	“It is a means by which student-athletes receive not only information, but also study strategies that will assist them in future course work” (p. 5)
Recursive Practices: instances of social structures being continually reproduced through mindful repetition	“Day-to-Day Mentoring Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review students’ class notes • Set goals for work to be accomplished that session • Check in on students’ progress • Keep session student-focused and centered on academics • Use the last few minutes of the session to review and make to-do lists” (p. 24) 	“Test Taking Methods When taking any test, remember the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and follow directions carefully • Scan through the whole test before beginning • Plan how to use test time • Answer the easiest questions first • Check answers carefully • Do not share answers • Learn from incorrect answers” 	“A weekly schedule should include the following: 1. Class schedule 2. Mentor appointment schedule 3. Other weekly appointments 4. Meals 5. Social time 6. Sleep” (p. 21)	“CAAS Weekly Meeting Checklist Every Week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update scoresheet • Review all returned assignments • Get an update on each class • Note any potential problems or tutoring needs” (p. 35) 	“Discuss importance of establishing effective routines” (p. 39)
Reflexive Monitoring: acts that are being performed with reduced consciousness being continuously monitored	“You will submit a weekly mentor report for each student that describes his or her current academic progress. This serves as the primary communication tool between you and the student’s academic counselor.” (p. 24) Monthly mentor meetings: cover updates to policies, frequently asked questions, common problems & ideas for improvement (p. 25)	“These components are subject to change based upon the performance of the academic support staff members and at the discretion of the Tutor Coordinator”	“Mentoring, viewed as mature advisement, is seen as an ongoing process” (p. 4)	“The results of the evaluations are then used to assist CAAS in assessing the tutor and academic mentor programs...Areas of strength and weakness are then addressed with the planning of the tutor and academic mentor program and in training of individual support staff members” (p. 17)	“Track semester goals weekly and have students discuss how they plan to use the objectives to reach their goals” (p. 39) “Learning Specialists will periodically be evaluated on their job performance” (p. 38)

When the principles of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory are applied to the handbook, it appears that intercollegiate athletics has its own social structure separate from the general non-athlete population at the university. The NCAA has put mentoring programs in place to assist student-athletes with their transition into the intercollegiate athletics social structure and to promote academic success.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

I. Analysis

The grounded theory analysis of NCAA mentoring handbooks resulted in findings that were greatly different than originally anticipated. It was thought that the handbooks would produce common communication strategies that could be repeatable at a Canadian university. However, the research suggested that there were in fact more differences between the handbooks than common traits. The programs are built on of common goals, document layout, and a description of the mentor role, and the handbooks are examples of how each university's social structure in intercollegiate athletes has developed to achieve academic success. One way this has been done is by providing structure to develop an effective mentoring relationship. Considering each handbook possessed the core categories developed using structuration theory, it is safe to assume that these programs will continue to develop with the university and its athletics program. What the research highlights is that there are no common communication strategies that can be seen consistently across all the handbooks. Instead the grounded theory analysis brought attention to the differences between handbooks, emphasizing that a program should be developed based around the individual school's social structure. Any assistance program for student-athletes needs to be keeping with the goal to assist the student-athletes with their transition into higher education and to empower them in achieving their academic goals.

Comparison of the Handbooks

The research was aimed at investigating key communication traits in mentoring programs to establish a theory on the communication strategies used by NCAA assistance programs.

However, this investigation produced more insights into the differences between the programs than their commonalities. For example, analysis of the handbooks for assistance program content indicated that Purdue University has a significant portion of its handbook devoted to student-athletes with learning disabilities, where as East Carolina University simply advises the mentor to direct the student to the appropriate services provided by the university. These differences in the handbooks occur regularly, and were especially apparent when using the constant comparison method with the originally established six categories for communication traits. It can be concluded traits could not be generalized across the sample group.

Within the original analysis there was consistency among the programs' goals, layouts and descriptions of the mentoring role. It could be stated generally that all the programs were developed to support student-athletes in a positive learning environment, and mentors are in place to guide students through setting and achieving their academic goals. The handbooks are reference tools and very structured, almost prescriptive in outlining rules, policies, procedures and expectations for the support staff. The handbooks also have sections devoted to the NCAA guidelines which stress the organization's continued role in the academic assistance of student-athletes.

Connections with Structuration Theory

These findings led to refocusing the research on how institutions created structure in their programs and how they strived to create an effective relationship between the mentor and student-athlete. When the documents were viewed from this new perspective, it was apparent that structure existed in all areas of the program, and that it was in fact structure that was used to create an effective mentoring relationship. Furthermore, the most significant finding was that this

idea of structure as both enabling and disabling is one that is shared by Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory.

The handbooks produced trends and core categories for data analysis around the key principles of Giddens (1984) structuration theory. These core categories include: 1) the duality of structure, 2) recursive practices, and 3) reflexive monitoring. The trends can be summarized to further the discussion on how structuration theory helps explain student-athlete mentoring programs.

Duality of Structure

Structure is seen as facilitating the mentor's ability to help the student-athlete. Outlining the mentors' responsibilities does regulate their behaviour, but it also enables them with tools to conduct a successful mentoring relationship with the student-athlete. The handbooks outline areas to focus on with the student-athlete such as study skills, time management, and goal setting. It is these tools that empower the mentors to guide student-athletes through academic challenges they may face. By sticking to the prescribed resources, the mentors are enabling the structure and verifying its existence. By following the regulated policies and procedures, they are promoting the continuance of the structure.

An example of the duality of structure occurs in the University of Oklahoma's handbook, which like most the other handbooks outlines mentor responsibilities for their first session with the student-athletes. Having this initial interaction structured may be restricting the content that is discussed in the session, but it is also reducing the mentor's uncertainty and allowing them to feel confident in building a stronger relationship with the student-athlete.

Recursive Practices

All the handbooks in the sample group contained a version of the checklist and procedures for mentors to use when conducting their meetings with student-athletes. These structures are tools for student-athletes to follow and help them build positive recursive practices with their academics. With the additional time commitment of both higher level academics and athletics, it is easy for student-athletes to fall victim to poor academic habits. Repetition of similar practices at each meeting can help student-athletes develop new habits that promote academic achievement. The majority of handbooks suggest areas to cover in each mentoring meeting such as reviewing grades, reviewing class notes, providing updates on each course, and weekly goal setting. Having these guidelines for every weekly meeting allows the mentor to ensure they are being consistent which increases the chances that the student-athlete will continue these practices at the conclusion of the mentoring relationship.

Reflexive Monitoring

The idea of continually monitoring reflexive behaviours is one that is relevant throughout the mentoring program. The mentor relationship is seen as a process, and although it is structured, improvements and adjustments continually occur. Conducting weekly meetings between mentors and the assistance staff allows for opportunities of reflection and monitoring of individual and program performance. Other examples would be the mentors being required to write reports or logs after their meetings with the student-athletes and evaluations throughout the relationship. Evaluations act as a way to monitor the program and staff and can bring to the surface habits that may be hindering the success of the program. Furthermore, mentors' reports

or logs allow academic counsellors to view trends that are occurring with student-athletes and make adjustments to the program. Finally, by reviewing student-athletes' goals' each week and creating new action plans to reach them, the mentoring is in fact teaching the student-athlete to perform reflexive monitoring.

The Role of the Handbook

The NCAA recognized, with assistance from the Knight Foundations Commission in the early 1990s, that student-athletes and athletic departments had different norms and shared values about the role of academics in the student-athletes' post-secondary experience (Knight Foundation, 2001). Therefore, new standards were established by the NCAA, and currently the handbooks can be seen as a result of those actions. The NCAA has recognized that their role is to protect student-athletes from the pressures created by athletic success and failure and to assist them in receiving a high quality education from their institution (NCAA, 2011). Each handbook sampled had a section devoted to the NCAA guidelines which illustrates the importance of their influence on the experience of the student-athlete.

What the handbooks have highlighted is that student-athletes are dealing with a different social structure in their university experience than non-athletes. Furthermore, each individual institution has its own unique social organization, and there is no single solution for assisting with the balance between academic and athletic expectations. Instead peer mentoring programs should be used to assist student-athletes with the transition into their university's intercollegiate social structure and help them develop an academic identity within that structure. It could be concluded that the goal at the completion of the program is for the student-athletes to have adapted their motivations in order to become positive contributors to the social organization.

Each handbook is not only an example of the program that is being implemented but also an example of how the individual institution's social structure has developed in regards to athlete academic assistance.

II. Implications

Connecting Structuration Theory and Peer Mentoring

When high school graduates enter university for the first time they are in fact entering an entirely new social structure, one which has new rules and regulations than their previous educational experience. From a review of the literature and the data collected from the handbooks, it becomes clear that university student-athletes have different patterns of interaction and relationships than their non-athlete peers. Therefore, athletes enter an entirely different social structure and university experience than the general student. With NCAA universities developing academic assistance programs specific to the student-athlete, the universities are contributing to the social structure of the intercollegiate student-athlete. They are tailoring a program to the student-athletes' specific needs in an attempt to provide them with an academic experience similar to that of their non-athlete classmates. Therefore, these mentoring programs for athletes need to be dealing with increased academic responsibilities as well as helping develop the student-athlete's academic identity.

One way to assist student-athlete with their academic identity is to introduce them to practices that will promote success in their studies. This can be done by leading the student-athlete through recursive practices each week such as time management, note review, and goal setting. Once these practices have been repeated enough times with the mentor, they will become second nature for the student-athlete and no longer feel like an additional task in their routine.

Having the mentoring program designed around recursive practices, as is done in the NCAA programs sampled, a peer mentor can assist the student-athlete in creating a manageable routine that promotes balance between athletics and academics. However, it is the student-athlete's own choice whether they continue these practices in their own time and develop them into routine. Until the student-athlete accepts the structure provided by the assistance programs their motivations may sway them elsewhere and prevent the actions from becoming reflexive.

It is not until actions have become reflexive that athletes will continue to practice them beyond their mentoring relationship and across all courses they take. In order for student-athletes and their institutions to succeed in changing the social structure already present it is essential that these actions are reflexive or at least that the student-athletes have the right motivations toward academics.

Goal setting is outlined as an important aspect of most the programs sampled. Mentors set short and long-term goals, and each week they revisit their action plans and reassess how they are proceeding toward these goals. This practice is beneficial to both the mentor and the student-athlete. For the student-athlete it is keeping them on track to achieving the goals they set at the beginning of the semester and teaching them to make weekly and daily short-term goals for their studies. Furthermore, this practice is beneficial to the mentor because it allows them to see common challenges that student-athletes are having and allows them to monitor how they are providing their assistance. By reassessing their assistance to the student-athletes each week, mentors are practicing reflexive monitoring and ensuring they do not fall into hindering habits.

Additionally, grades the student-athlete receives enable them to monitor how they are conducting their academic habits. A poor grade would mean they should revisit their recursive

practices, while a strong grade would verify the current steps they are taking. A mentor should be encouraging the student-athlete to engage in the monitoring of their practices because it shows the student-athletes that there is room for change, and that by changing their actions they can change their academic experience. If all student-athletes are coming out of the mentoring program with a new way of viewing academics, then the social organization will also change. The handbooks are examples of how each school in the sample group is developing their structure to promote academics with the student-athletes.

In terms of how a peer mentoring program fits into the social structure it is in fact introducing student-athletes to their new environment, and teaching them the tools they need to be successful in that new structure. As noted by Frayne (2000), it has been proven repeatedly in high school students that many high level athletes are also strong students, so what happens when they come to university? In many universities the structure in place is not promoting academic success.

McLean (2004) observes that in order to optimize their learning experience, students need to be socialized into the culture of university academics. Many university athletes do not attend their orientation week and their first introduction into university is with the intercollegiate athletics social structure. Unless the athletic department is making it a priority to introduce the new student-athletes to their new educational environment, then it is very easy for their priorities to become skewed. A peer mentoring program is one way to address this. A peer mentoring program can create the structure that student-athletes need.

One way to look at the results of the Knight Foundation Commission is to say that the structure that was being practiced in NCAA athletics was not producing high academic

achievement. Therefore, implementing an academic assistance program was one way of changing the current structure that was being practiced. The structure is creating a new way for the student-athletes to act. Student-athletes and peer mentors participating in the structure are confirming it and its successful results legitimize it. Implementing a mentoring program can have an effect on the student-athlete social organization in a similar way to Orlikowski's duality of technology (Orlikowski, 1992). It is the human agents who are implementing a new program, and it is also human actors who are making it a reality and producing a new outcome of changed views toward academics.

According to structuration theory, it is through human actions that social structures exist; therefore, the NCAA handbooks in the sample group are examples of how the institutions have changed their actions and developed a structure with norms that promote academic achievement. There had to be recognition that the way the NCAA athletics departments were acting was creating a structure that was increasing the stress and role conflict of the student-athletes. By implementing a peer mentoring program that promoted new norms and recursive actions, the universities began empowering the student-athletes to develop an academic identities. Furthermore, by student-athletes continuing to follow and contribute to the new structure they are validating it.

What this Means for Canadian Student-Athletes

Miller & Kerr (2002) found that the upper-year Canadian student-athletes they interviewed were experiencing similar role conflict in their challenge to balance athletics and academics as was discovered in the NCAA. This means that Canadian student-athletes are most likely also struggling in finding the right motivation in their first-year to properly devote

themselves to their academics. Miller and Kerr (2002) also found that the number one factor affecting Canadian high school athletes' university selection was the school's athletics. This again confirms that Canadian student-athletes could be entering university with skewed priorities that favoured their role as an athlete.

Although CIS athletics does not have the same revenue produced through television and advertising as the NCAA (Miller & Kerr, 2002), its student-athletes are still experiencing similar challenges when it comes to role conflict, restricted time and graduating time. By having standards in place only for athletic eligibility the CIS is promoting the norms and practices that encourage student-athletes to just stay eligible. At least by adding graduation rates, the NCAA is encouraging their student-athletes to finish their academic programs in a timeframe similar to that of their non-athlete peers. This is one way that could be considered encouraging increased focus on academics.

Canadian Interuniversity Sport needs to learn from the NCAA and put a focus on its vision and strategic plan that includes protecting the student-athlete educational experience. If the CIS is striving to become competitive with the NCAA then it should start taking preventative measures to ensure it does not develop the same structural problems in its member universities. A peer mentoring program would be a preventative measure that can have a positive influence on student-athletes' success in Canada. The focus of the program would be to show students what it is to be a positive actor within the intercollegiate athletics social organization and to conduct mentoring meetings that develop successful academic habits. The idea would be that at the conclusion of their first academic year, the student-athletes exit the program with better motivations toward their academics and an understanding of how to balance their sport and schooling.

Finally, even if the CIS does not change its academic standards, by implementing an academic assistance program for athletes Canadian universities could start to change their own student-athletes norms and values in regards to academics. Similarly to what has been developing in the NCAA, Canadian schools could work towards developing new ways of viewing the role of education in the student-athlete experience. There is a need for changes away from students reducing their timetables and changing programs in order to meet eligibility standards in place by the CIS. Something needs to be done to ensure that Canadian student-athletes are receiving the same education as the non-athletes at their school. There needs to be at least a way of tracking the student-athletes' academic progress and providing assistance to those that show signs of being at-risk. From this, a program can develop that suits the needs of each school's unique structure.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Research in higher education has recognized that the transition into university is very stressful for first-year students, and this often limits their academic success (Adler, 2008; Hewitt, 2002). The stress is only increased when the pressures of representing the university in athletics is added. Although athletes originally claim their academics to be equally important as athletics when entering university, it is for many impossible to give the same commitment to both. Furthermore, if throughout the term the student-athlete is becoming less committed to their classes, then their chances of failure and uncertainty toward their role as a student increase.

Joe Cuseo (2004) describes the first year of college as being the most critical period or stage of vulnerability for student attrition. This could be due to the fact that students need an adjustment period to fully transition in the new university social organization. Due to their reduced time commitment to academics, student-athletes cannot afford to commit as much time to their academic adjustment as non-athletes and, therefore, are more at-risk of falling behind. Considering that this increased responsibility is a result of the student-athlete representing the university in athletics, it should be the institution's responsibility to ensure that they are still providing them with a high quality education.

There hasn't been a sufficient amount of research done on the Canadian student-athlete and how participating in athletics is affecting their educational experience. Therefore, in order to assess peer mentoring for university student-athletes, the research has to begin in the NCAA. The NCAA currently has higher standards in place for assisting athletes in receiving a high level education and, unlike Canada, every school within the NCAA Division I has some form of

athlete academic mentoring program in place. Therefore, if assistance programs are to be studied for the purpose of implementing them in Canada, then research would have to be conducted on what is currently being done in the NCAA.

For this comparison of programs in the NCAA, mentoring program handbooks that were publically available online were viewed and analyzed using grounded theory. An initial analysis of six categories developed from common communication traits in the documents produced results that highlighted the differences in communication strategies used in each document. However, it also showed consistency in the program goals, document layout, and the description of the mentor role. From these findings it was established that these NCAA universities have created structured programs to develop an effective and successful mentoring relationship. Although structure restricts what the mentors could do in their meetings, it also enables them to establish a stronger relationship with the student-athlete.

This idea that structure, although restricting, can also be enabling is one that is derived from Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. Furthermore, when the handbooks are viewed through the critical lens of the principles of structuration theory, the concepts of duality of structure, recursive practices and reflexive monitoring occur continuously. It is from this discovery that the conclusion was made that each university has its own unique intercollegiate athletics social structure, and that the handbooks are examples of how the structure has been developing towards improved academic norms and values. Furthermore, when taking into consideration that the NCAA has had problems in the past with how its schools view the value of education for athletes, it becomes clear that a structured academic mentoring program has been put in place to change the way academic responsibilities are viewed within the intercollegiate

athletics social structure. By human actors participating in implementing a new structured program, they are contributing to a changed outcome.

When looking at how these findings contribute to the Canadian intercollegiate athletics experience, it is important to note that student-athletes in Canada are faced with some of the same challenges as NCAA student-athletes. Miller & Kerr (2002) were able to conclude by interviewing upper-year student-athletes in Canada that they are in fact experiencing the same role conflict and increased stress as student-athletes in the NCAA. Most importantly, student-athletes in Canada are also entering university with their priorities focused toward their athletics. It is unclear at this time how this prioritization is affecting Canadian student-athletes' academic progress, but the CIS should use the NCAA as an example. Being proactive and implementing a peer mentoring program could change the academic outcome for student-athletes in Canada before problems similar to those of the NCAA develop, helping the CIS in becoming "the destination of choice for student-athletes to pursue excellence in academics and athletics" (CIS, 2010).

Structuration theory is considered a Meta theory. Although it can be applied to the student-athlete social structure and demonstrates how implementing a peer mentoring program could change that structure, it cannot explain why. Assumptions can be drawn by looking at what has occurred with the NCAA, but further research needs to be done in order to explain why student-athletes in Canada do not have strong motivations toward academics and, for that matter, how much the role conflict is currently affecting their university experience. With the CIS wanting to become competitive with the NCAA, an evaluation should be done on how Canadian student-athletes are progressing academically and what sacrifices they are having to make in order to continue representing the university in their sport.

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