AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


Title: The Role of the Academic Advisor as a Support Person for Student-Athletes in Higher Education.

Abstract approved:

______________________________________________________________

Shelley I. Dubkin-Lee

Despite policies implemented by the NCAA with the intention of increasing student-athlete academic success and persistence to graduation, student-athlete graduation rates still remain low, with only 65% of student-athletes receiving their college degree. Certain non-cognitive variables, including the availability of a strong support person, have been shown predict persistence to graduation in higher education for non-traditional students, including student-athletes. As the NCAA requires that academic advising services be offered to all student-athletes at Division I universities, the purpose of this thesis is to determine whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball consider their academic advisor as a source of support, and if so, what are the specific behavioral characteristics of these academic advisors which students find supportive? Additionally, the current study aimed to determine whether or not a difference exists between races with regards to whether or not student-athletes view their academic advisor as a source of support. In order to address the research questions, the researcher developed and distributed a survey to 43 student-athletes on the football and men’s basketball teams at a large research university in the Pacific Northwest. Survey results found that 20% of the participants in the present study viewed their
academic advisor as a source of support, while 67% of participants stated that their academic advisor could potentially play the role of support person to them. While the majority of participants who selected that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them identified as White, White individuals were also the least likely to state that their academic advisor could potentially play the role of support person to them. In contrast, African American student-athletes were most likely to believe that their academic advisor could be a source of support for them. Additionally, certain behavioral characteristics associated with academic advising best practices and immediacy were associated with student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person. These findings have implications for policy and practice, as academic advisors should remain available as a source of support for the student-athletes they work with due to their expertise in helping student-athletes navigate their university experience.
The Role of the Academic Advisor as a Support Person for Student-Athletes in Higher Education

by
Rachel Phillips

A THESIS

submitted to
Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Presented June 10, 2014
Commencement June 2014

APPROVED:

______________________________________________________________________________
Major Professor, representing Adult Education

______________________________________________________________________________
Director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program

______________________________________________________________________________
Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

______________________________________________________________________________
Rachel Phillips, Author
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to all of my committee members, including my major advisor Shelley Dubkin-Lee, my committee members Erin Gallagher and Steven Ortiz, and my graduate counsel representative Lori McGraw. Their contributions have been very helpful in guiding my research, and their extra consultations were integral in the writing of my thesis. I can safely say that they have all contributed to my growth and success during graduate school, and I am very grateful for their guidance.

Additionally, I would like to thank my family for their constant love and support throughout this process. Without my parents, Brad and Trish, as well as my grandparents Roger, Judy, Bud, and Betty, I would not be where I am today. I am extremely grateful for all of their guidance and care, both throughout my life and during graduate school.

I also wish to express gratitude to the mentors who have helped to guide me through this journey, because without them, I would not be here today. Specifically, I look to thank Laura Smithers, Bethany Ulman, and Racheal Aragon, for the passion they have for their careers initially inspired me to pursue graduate school in the first place.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1—Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1—Background............................................................................................................................ 1
  1.2—Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................................... 4
  1.3—Problem Statement and Research Questions........................................................................ 5
  1.4—Rationale for Methodology/Research Design........................................................................ 5
  1.5—Terminology.......................................................................................................................... 6
  1.6—Overview of Thesis............................................................................................................... 7

Chapter 2—Literature Review......................................................................................................... 9
  2.1—History of Athletics in Higher Education.............................................................................. 9
    2.1.1—NCAA History.................................................................................................................. 9
  2.2—NCAA Regulations in Higher Education for Student-Athletes............................................. 10
  2.3—Student-Athletes in Higher Education.................................................................................. 11
    2.3.1—Cognitive Variables Impacting Student-Athletes............................................................ 12
    2.3.2—Non-Cognitive Variables Impacting Student-Athletes.................................................... 13
    2.3.3—Additional Variables Impacting Student-Athletes.......................................................... 15
      2.3.3.1—Time Demands.......................................................................................................... 15
      2.3.3.2—Institutional Racism & Stigma................................................................................... 17
      2.3.3.3—Coping with Stress.................................................................................................... 20
  2.4—Academic Advising in Higher Education.............................................................................. 22
    2.4.1—Academic Advising.......................................................................................................... 22
    2.4.2—Academic Advising with Student-Athletes..................................................................... 24
  2.5—The Impact of Communication with Regards to Immediacy Behaviors............................. 25
    2.5.1—The History of Immediacy............................................................................................... 25
    2.5.2—Nonverbal Immediacy.................................................................................................... 26
    2.5.3—Verbal Immediacy.......................................................................................................... 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.6—Race/Gender Relations.............................................................28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3—Methodology.................................................................31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1—Overview of Study/Research Questions.........................................31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2—Research Context........................................................................32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3—Participants/Sampling..................................................................32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1—Sampling Process.................................................................32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2—Criteria for Participants.........................................................33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3—Participant Selection...............................................................33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.4—Participant Demographics.........................................................34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4—Data Collection...........................................................................36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1—Developing the Survey.............................................................36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2—Distributing the Survey..............................................................37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5—Data Analysis..............................................................................37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1—Coding of Survey Responses......................................................38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2—Analysis of Descriptive Demographics........................................38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3—Analysis of the Psychometric Properties of the Survey...............39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4—Analysis of the Research Questions...........................................39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.5—Limitations..............................................................................40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4—Results.............................................................................41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1—Psychometric Properties of the Survey..........................................41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1—Factor Extraction.....................................................................41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2—Factor Interpretation.................................................................43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3—Reliability................................................................................45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4—Correlations.............................................................................45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2—Research Questions......................................................................46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1—Research Question One.............................................................46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2—Research Question Two...............................................................47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3—Research Question Three............................................................51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter 5—Discussion.................................................................54

5.1—Evaluation of Research Questions...........................................54
  5.1.1—Research Question One.......................................................54
  5.1.2—Research Question Two.......................................................60
    5.1.2.1—Immediacy Behaviors...................................................60
    5.1.2.2—Academic Advising Practices.........................................63
    5.1.2.3—Academic Performance................................................66
    5.1.2.4—Shared Experiences......................................................67
  5.1.3—Research Question Three..................................................70

5.2—Limitations...............................................................................73

Chapter 6—Conclusion.................................................................76

  6.1—Implications for Policy and Practice.......................................77

Bibliography....................................................................................79

Appendices.......................................................................................84

  Appendix A—Survey.......................................................................84
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Four Factors</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Reliability Estimates</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Correlation Matrix</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1—Background

The National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA, is a billion dollar industry which thrives due to the collegiate student-athletes it supports ("Revenue," 2013). The relatively recent integration of athletics into the arena of higher education has inspired many researchers to examine the relationship between academics and athletics in these universities. Policies have been developed by the NCAA with the intention of increasing student-athlete academic success and graduation rates (Meyer, 2005). However, even with the implementation of the aforementioned policies, student-athlete graduation rates still remain low, with only 65% of student-athletes receiving their college degree (“Understanding the graduation,” 2013). For many student-athletes, the policies implemented by the NCAA are not successful in increasing academic success and ultimately, graduation rates, of these students. As intercollegiate athletics appear to be here to stay, continued research regarding student-athlete persistence to graduation is necessary.

While there is no simple solution to address this issue, research has found that certain non-cognitive variables are predictive of academic success and persistence to graduation in higher education for non-traditional students. Student-athletes, due to their unique experiences in higher education, are considered to be a non-traditional student group on college campuses (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Non-cognitive variables, defined as the psychosocial factors which relate to motivation, personality, and experiential intelligence, have all been shown to
impact college success (Sedlacek, 2003). The variables contained within the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ), include: self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understands and deals with racism, prefers long-range goals, successful leadership experience, availability of a strong support person, demonstrated community service, and nontraditional learning experience (Sedlacek, 1993). Of the many non-cognitive variables shown to be predictive of minority student success, Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992) found that the availability of a strong support person, having a positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, and community involvement were all significantly correlated with first-term grades for student-athletes specifically. These variables have been successfully correlated with persistence to graduation for student-athletes as well (Sedlacek, 1993). As having a strong support person has been shown to be correlated with student-athlete success in college, this non-cognitive factor may aid faculty and staff in higher education, as it could be a means of increasing academic success and persistence to graduation for the student-athlete population.

Additional research supports the finding that minority students benefit from having someone to count on for support throughout their college experience (Nasim, Roberts, Harrell & Young, 2005). In a study examining African American student perceptions of race on campus climate, Reid and Radhakrishnan (2003) found the support and mentorship of faculty to be an important factor for persistence of African American students. Additional studies related to student-athlete integration to the college environment, described by Hyatt (2003), show that integration can be hindered for student-athletes due to isolation. This isolation is characterized by a lack of involvement in the campus environment and a lack of relations with faculty and staff, and will be discussed in further detail in section “2.3.3.2—Institutional Racism & Stigma”
As a result of this isolation, many student-athletes do not have a support person whom they feel comfortable turning to for help.

Beginning in January of 1991, the NCAA mandated that academic advising services, in addition to other academic support services, be available to student-athletes at Division I universities (Meyers, 2005). Aimed at increasing student-athlete persistence toward degree completion, academic support for student-athletes initially included counseling and tutoring services, as well as services aimed at increasing career awareness (Meyers, 2005). With time, the NCAA determined that “institutions [could] finance any academic-support services determined to be necessary for student-athletes’ academic success” (Meyers, 2005). As a result, most universities implement advising programs for their student-athletes. Advisors work with student-athletes on issues related to eligibility, degree progress, and course scheduling. They also determine if the student-athletes they work with should participate in programs such as study hall or tutoring as well (Hyatt, 2003). The role of the academic advisor in higher education cannot be understated. Studies have shown that specific styles of academic advising, such as proactive and intrusive academic advising, can lead to minority student success in college (Museus & Ravello, 2010; Gaston-Gayles, 2003). The use of insight-oriented intrusive advising, which includes “personal contact, generating student responsibility for problem solving and decision making, assisting students in identifying resolvable cases of poor academic performance, and offering negotiated agreements for future actions” has been shown to be effective when working with at-risk student groups (Schae, 2007). Because retention is increased when students are in contact with the staff and faculty at their institution of higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005),
the use of the services made available to student-athletes should result in increased academic success and persistence toward graduation.

Student-athlete academic advisors are in a unique place, as they have the opportunity to frequently interact with the students they serve. Due to these frequent interactions, academic advisors could potentially play the role of the support person to their students, as we know that the availability of a support person has been shown to be related to academic success and persistence for student-athletes (Tracy & Sedlacek, 1984; Nasim et al., 2005). As characteristics of academic advising have been shown to affect retention of minority students in higher education (Museus & Ravello, 2010), the role of the academic advisor becomes increasingly important. Currently, the existing research does not address the role of the academic advisor as a support person for student-athletes in higher education. Thus, we know very little about whether or not this specific population believes their advisor is someone they can rely on for support.

1.2—Theoretical Framework

This study approached knowledge from both contextual/sociocultural and humanistic perspectives. With regards to the contextual/sociocultural perspective, the researcher believes that the accumulation of knowledge an individual develops over time is inextricably combined with the sociohistorical context in which it occurs (Miller, 1993). Knowledge accumulation is therefore impacted by various attributes such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, among others. With regards to the humanistic perspective, it is the belief of the researcher that each individual has the potential to grow, learn, and develop throughout their lives, and that perceptions continually change as knowledge continues to increase. With this perspective in
mind, the researcher has made a conscious effort to realize and bring to light any of their own biases which may impact this study.

1.3—Problem Statement and Research Questions

In order to support student-athletes and ensure they persist through degree completion, academic advisors should take every measure to assist their students in their academic pursuits. How, then, can our academic advisors develop relationships with their students which result in the student-athlete viewing them as a support person? This thesis examines whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball view their academic advisor as a support person whom they can rely on throughout their college experience by studying current relationships between student-athletes and their academic advisors.

The research questions for this study include: Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person? What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of the support person to their students? Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person?

1.4—Rationale for Methodology/Research Design

Due to the lack of qualitative and quantitative research that has been done to determine if and how academic advisors can serve as a support person for the student-athletes they work with, the use of a mixed-methods research design will allow the researcher to determine specific characteristics and behaviors of academic advisors who student-athletes believe successfully play the role of support person to them.
1.5—Terminology

The researcher has created a list of key terms which may aid the reader in understanding the terminology used in the writing of this thesis.

*Non-cognitive factors/variables:* Factors which relate to motivation, personality, and experiential intelligence (Sedlacek, 2003). Despite their name, non-cognitive variables do relate to the cognitive aspects of academics, but are not directly measured by standardized tests such as the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), the ACT (American College Test) or the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) test.

*Academic advisor/academic counselor:* Article 16.3.1.1 Academic Counseling/Support Services of the NCAA Division I manual describes that NCAA member institutions must make general academic counseling services available to all student-athletes. Member institutions may also finance other sources of academic support for student athletes, including career counseling and/or personal development services (NCAA, 2013). This study uses the terms academic advisor and academic counselor interchangeably, yet it must be noted that the term academic advisor/counselor applies to the academic counseling/support services personnel who work specifically with student-athletes at NCAA Division I member institutions.

*Proactive academic advising:* Proactive academic advising involves both formal and informal components (Museus & Ravello, 2010). Formal practices include scheduling frequent meetings, monitoring grades, and implementing intervention systems when necessary (Museus & Ravello, 2010). Informal practices differ depending on the context of the situation, but can be
viewed as the personal practices the advisor implements which help lead the student to take the steps necessary to achieve their goals (Museus & Ravello, 2010). For example, an advisor may meet with a student four times per term to discuss course grades (formal proactive advising), and realize during one of those meetings that the student is struggling to pay tuition. During their next meeting, the advisor might suggest the student apply for a scholarship they qualify for (informal proactive advising).

*Insight-oriented intrusive advising:* An academic advising perspective which focuses on “both academic and nonacademic factors that may prevent students from realizing their academic potential” (Schee, 2007). With regards to academic factors, insight-oriented intrusive advising involves a higher level of personal contact between the student and the advisor in order to work through any school-related issues and determine future actions related to academic performance (Schee, 2007). Nonacademic factors such as time management, study skills, family and social relationships, and financial issues are also considered so that student can learn how these variables impact their academic performance (Schee, 2007).

1.6—*Overview of Thesis*

Directly following the introduction is Chapter 2, which provides a review of the significant literature, including a thorough analysis of each of the following topics in relation to higher education: the history of athletics, NCAA regulations, student-athletes, academic advising, the impact of communication with regards to immediacy behaviors, and race/gender relations. An explanation of the methodology used in the research (Chapter 3), and the results of the research (Chapter 4) will follow the literature review. Next, the researcher will discuss the
results of this study supported by the existing research and the limitations which arose during the research process (Chapter 5). Finally, the researcher will discuss concluding remarks, explain implications the research poses, and suggest where future research may be beneficial in the conclusion chapter (Chapter 6).
Chapter 2

Literature Review

As previously mentioned, this literature review will begin with a brief history of athletics in higher education, including information on the development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The researcher will then discuss the NCAA academic regulations, as well as the literature pertaining to student-athletes in higher education, academic advising in higher education, and verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors respectively.

2.1—History of Athletics in Higher Education

Athletics as a part of higher education originated in colonial America as a form of entertainment for students (Flowers, 2009). Unorganized student groups participated in sports, with classes forming teams and competing against one another (Flowers, 2009). These student-run sporting events, coined intra-collegiate athletics, eventually became known as inter-collegiate athletics, as the advent of the railroad in the 19th century allowed student teams from neighboring colleges to compete against one another (Flowers, 2009). Industrialization near the end of the 19th century resulted in higher education leadership reform, and institutions looked to athletics as a potential source of income. As a result, inter-collegiate athletics programs flourished, and universities began recruiting athletes to play for their institutions (Flowers, 2009).

2.1.1—NCAA History
In 1906, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, now known as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), was created in order to develop rules, regulations, and policies for university athletics programs to follow (Flowers, 2009). Over the years, the NCAA continued to evolve “into a national organization controlling the recruitment, distribution, and subsidization of player talent” in addition to determining the rules and regulations for universities to follow (Flowers, 2009).

2.2—NCAA Regulations in Higher Education for Student-Athletes

Originally developed as a means of regulating rules in sporting events, the NCAA has now expanded to include regulations related to academics. In order to support the welfare of the student-athletes it serves, the NCAA states that “…commitment to academics and student-athlete success in the classroom is a vital part of [their] mission to integrate athletics into the fabric of higher education” (“Academics,” 2013). In addition to mandating academic support for student-athletes, the NCAA has developed initial eligibility legislations and graduation rate requirements for high-school athletes looking to compete at the collegiate level (Meyers, 2005). The NCAA also monitors the grades of student-athletes once they are in college, and maintains that student-athletes must meet the NCAA’s specific academic standards in order to remain eligible (“Academics,” 2013). In 2005, new academic standards went into effect, which required institutions to publish their APR or Academic Progress Rate (Meyers, 2005). The APR is a measurement calculated each term to measure the “eligibility, retention, and graduation” rates of student-athletes, and a low APR score could result in penalties for the institution’s athletics program (Meyers, 2005). Another reform, known as 40/60/80, affects student-athletes more
directly. Student-athletes are required to complete 40% of the program requirements for their
degree by the time they reach their third year in school, 60% of their degree requirements by
their fourth year, and 80% of their requirements by their fifth year (Meyers, 2005). This reform
was developed in order to steer student-athletes toward graduation, yet it remains problematic for
students who wish to change their major after their second year of school.

In order to keep track of student-athlete academic progress, academic advisors are
employed by many universities to work specifically with the student-athlete population. For
schools who are categorized by the NCAA as being a Division I institution, academic advisors
who work specifically with the student-athlete population must be employed by the university
(“Academics,” 2013). While the academic advisors do work to keep students eligible for
competition, their job includes much more than regulating eligibility requirements. These
advisors monitor eligibility requirements as well as perform the same functions as academic
advisors on campus who meet with traditional students. The role of the academic advisor will be
further discussed in the section of the literature review titled “Academic Advising in Higher
Education.”

2.3—Student-Athletes in Higher Education

A variety of literature exists analyzing the experiences of student-athletes in higher
education. It must be noted that student-athletes are a complex and diverse population, and thus,
their experiences prior to, during, and after college will all be unique to each individual. The
research presented here will focus on student-athletes and their experiences in higher education.
A review of the existing literature provides evidence to support the following propositions:
student-athletes face variables affecting the cognitive aspects of their education, the non-cognitive aspects of their education, and other additional variables which impact their education. Each of these variables will now be discussed with regards to its impact on student-athletes.

2.3.1—Cognitive Variables Impacting Student-Athletes

The cognitive variables which impact student-athletes are directly related to measures of academic success as demonstrated by “scores on standardized tests, GPA, grades and graduation rates” (Hyatt, 2003). These measures of success are used to determine whether or not student-athletes are eligible to compete and remain on the team. In response to the low graduation rates of student-athletes, a study was conducted by the Knight Commission in 1993 to analyze the efficiency of the NCAA academic regulations which were currently in place (Hyatt, 2003). In their analysis, the Knight Commission suggested that the NCAA needed to increase academic requirements for freshman students, and require continued degree progress for current student-athletes (Knight, 1993). It was this research that lead to the implementation of the academic regulations listed earlier in section 2.2—NCAA Regulations in Higher Education for Student-Athletes of this chapter. The current NCAA regulations now require student-athletes to meet more rigorous standards related to cognitive variables such as GPA requirements and progress towards degree requirements. Student-athletes must also meet the NCAA initial eligibility standards during high school in order to be eligible to compete at the collegiate level. Research has shown that for minority student groups (which includes student-athletes), cognitive variables are less successful at predicting student success in higher education than are non-cognitive variables (Sedlacek, 1993; Sedlacek, 2003; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Despite these
findings, the NCAA still maintains the use of initial eligibility legislations, graduation rate requirements, and progress toward degree requirements.

2.3.2—Non-Cognitive Variables Impacting Student-Athletes

In addition to the impact of cognitive variables on student-athletes, research has shown that there are also non-cognitive variables which impact student-athlete success in higher education. Research by Comeaux and Harrison (2011) found that precollege characteristics and levels of commitment were two of those non-cognitive variables. Precollege characteristics are the “attributes and lived experiences that directly and indirectly influence [student-athlete] college experiences” (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Specifically, the characteristics which are associated with success in higher education include family background and individual characteristics, among others (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Beginning with family background, there are three variables which have been shown to be accurate in predicting whether or not students will be successful in college, which include: socioeconomic status, level of education attained by parent(s) and amount of support from parent(s) or guardian(s) (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Comeaux and Harrison (2011) also reported in their review of the literature that studies have shown that socioeconomic status (SES) is associated with academic success in the student-athlete population. Socioeconomic status is directly related to the level of education achieved by the parents and estimates of how much money the parents earn, and research has shown that, in general, a student-athlete from a lower socioeconomic status family shows less academic success than does a student-athlete from a higher socioeconomic status family (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). This is likely due to the additional resources students from a higher socioeconomic status
might have. Additionally, support from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student-athlete, shown by an expressed interest in the student-athlete’s well-being, is related to student-athlete success (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Individual characteristics, including the student-athlete’s “sport, race/ethnicity, gender, and level of competition” are also correlated with student-athlete academic success as well (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 240). These variables will be discussed in more detail in the section of the literature review titled “Race and gender relations.”

In addition to these non-cognitive variables, other non-cognitive variables exist which are correlated with student success in college. Historically, standardized tests have been used by colleges and universities across the nation to predict whether or not potential incoming freshman students will be successful in college. Research by Sedlacek (1993) has shown that these tests correlate well with freshman grades for White, middle- to upper-class students, but not for minority students or non-traditional students. As such, Sedlacek developed the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ), which was designed to assess college preparedness for minority student groups. According to Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston (1992), student-athletes are considered to be a minority student group due to their unique college experience. The NCQ contains eight psychosocial variables which have been shown to impact college success, including self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understands and deals with racism, prefers long-range goals, successful leadership experience, availability of a strong support person, demonstrated community service, and non-traditional learning (Sedlacek, 1993). These variables have been successfully correlated with persistence to graduation for minority student groups (Sedlacek, 1993). In their 1992 study, Sedlacek and Adams-Gaston used the NCQ and the SAT to predict the academic success of student-athletes in higher education. Scores from the NCQ and the SAT were used to predict
student-athlete first semester grades. The results found that scores on the NCQ were correlated with first-semester grades for student-athletes, while scores on the SAT were not (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Specifically, the NCQ variables of availability of a strong support person, positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, and community involvement were all significantly correlated with first-term grades (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). As having a strong support person has been shown to be correlated with student-athlete success in college, the role of the academic advisor as a support person for student-athletes should be studied in order to determine if and how academic advisors can help the student-athletes they work with persist to graduation.

2.3.3—Additional Variables Impacting Student-Athletes

Additional variables impact student-athlete academic success as well. Here, three variables: time demands, institutional racism and stigma, and stress, will be discussed as they directly and indirectly impact student-athletes in higher education.

2.3.3.1—Time Demands

In order to comply with NCAA policies, universities must limit the number of hours student-athletes can participate in athletically sponsored events in order to ensure that adequate time can be spent on academic activities (Ayers, Pazmino-Cevallos, & Dobose, 2012). NCAA Division I Bylaw 2.14 states that during the competition season, student-athletes are limited to 20 hours of participation in athletic-sponsored events per week, not exceeding four hours on any given day (Ayers et al., 2012). In the off-season, this number drops to just eight hours per week, and no more than four hours per day (Ayers et al., 2012). Even with these limits in place, many
student-athletes devote additional time to practice their athletic skills outside of their required commitments. Pope (2009) found that this 20-hour limit was not enforced by many institutions, and that student-athletes frequently spent over 20-hours on sport related events. Additional research corroborates this notion, that the amount of time intercollegiate athletes devoted to sports was higher than the NCAA limitations (Potuto et al., 2007). During competition season, 82% of student-athletes stated that they spent over ten hours per week practicing sports, and another 40% stated they spent over ten hours per week playing sports (Potuto et al., 2007). During the off-season, the numbers were even more shocking, with 53% of student-athletes spending over ten hours per week practicing sports, and 21% of student-athletes spending over ten hours per week playing sports (Potuto et al., 2007). Additional research (Eitzen, 2009; Wolverton, 2008) supports these findings, suggesting that student-athletes spend significantly more than 20-hours per week participating in activities related to their sport, often totaling or exceeding 40-hours per week. As a result, student-athletes could “potentially miss out on the learning that takes place from interacting with peers and engaging in other educational activities outside of the classroom and off the field” since they have even less time to pursue other social and academic endeavors (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009, p. 329).

Research has shown that regardless of background characteristics such as race/ethnicity and gender, student-athlete engagement in educational activities leads to increased learning and communication skills, personal development, and positive self-concept (Gaston-Gayles & Hu, 2009). Unfortunately, research has found that 45% of student-athletes do not feel that they can spend as much time as they would like participating in campus organizations or attending campus events (Potuto et al., 2007, Trade-Offs para. 5). Additionally, another 53% of student-
athletes feel that they are unable to spend as much time as they would like on their academic work as a result of the time constraints of athletics participation (Potuto et al., 2007, Trade-Offs para. 4). In the same study, comparisons between African American student-athletes and White student-athletes were made with regards to time spent on academics and educational opportunities. Of those surveyed, 44% of African American student-athletes said they spend as much time as they would like on academics compared to 48% of White students (Potuto et al., African Americans vs. Caucasians para. 5). When questioned about time-management, 50% of White student-athletes felt positively about their time management skills, opposed to 36% of African American student-athletes (Potuto et al., 2007, African Americans vs. Caucasians para. 7). Gaston-Gayles and Hu (2009) suggest that instead of turning a blind eye to how student-athletes spend their time, athletic administrators should encourage student-athlete participation in educationally purposeful activities, especially for student-athletes who spend a large amount of time on athletic events. Student-athletes who are able to manage their time successfully are more likely to be successful academically (Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010). Martin et al. (2010) found that by balancing their athletic, academic, and social lives, student-athletes were able to remain competitive in their sport while still achieving in the classroom.

2.3.3.2—Institutional Racism & Stigma

Other pressures faced by student-athletes are the issues of institutionalized racism, which runs rampant on college campuses even to this day, and stigmatization. A stigma, or an attribute which discredits an individual and may interrupt personal and social relationships, becomes pervasive as cultural beliefs regarding the stigma converge and result in labeling and
stereotyping of those individuals (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Granberg, 2011). Student-athlete stereotyping, or stigmatization, occurs in a variety of ways, and has been shown to impact how student-athletes are both perceived and treated (Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jenson, 2007). Negative stereotypes held by university faculty and staff, traditional students, and community members about student-athletes take a variety of forms, and can be detrimental to the overall student-athlete experience. If student-athletes are “less engaged and competent academically than other students,” negative stereotyping is more likely to occur, and may impact student-athlete performance on academic work (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). The main stereotype experienced by student-athletes is often coined the “dumb jock” stereotype, and significantly impacts the university experience for these students (Harrison et al., 2009).

In a 1996 survey of traditional student beliefs regarding student-athletes, Sailes found that White students and male students perceived student-athletes as being less intelligent than traditional students, and thought that student-athletes took easier classes than other students in order to meet the eligibility requirements set by the NCAA (Harrison et al., 2009). Negative perceptions of student-athlete abilities aren’t limited to the minds of students, but are prevalent in the minds of university faculty and staff as well. When compared to the traditional student population, university faculty and staff rated student-athletes more negatively when presented with scenarios such as “driving an expensive car, receiving a scholarship and special advising/tutoring, being admitted to the university despite low test scores, and missing class” (Harrison et al., 2009, p. 79). Reinforcing the dumb jock stereotype, perceptions of intercollegiate athletes have been found to include that these students are “more likely to cheat on exams, receive ‘special’ privileges from academic faculty in writing papers and taking exams,
and to receive leniency in grading so they can remain sports-eligible” (Harrison et al., 2009, p. 79). For these reasons, it is clear that student-athletes are discriminated against due to their status as collegiate athletes. Unfortunately for some student-athletes, the discrimination does not end there.

Martin et al. (2010) found that stigmatization of student-athletes occurs frequently at institutions of higher education, and is based on racial/ethnic group identification in addition to identification as a student-athlete. Research suggests that in addition to the dumb-jock stereotype, student-athletes may also face prejudice and discrimination as a result of their race/ethnicity (Simons et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2010). African American student-athletes, in comparison to White student-athletes, face negative perceptions and treatment as a result of their racial status (Simons et al., 2007). Qualitative interviews from Martin et al.’s (2010) study suggest that many student-athletes have to face more than one stereotype at a time. These compounding stereotypes are a result of the double stigma which minority student-athletes face as a result of their status as a student-athlete and their race (Simons et al., 2007). One student-athlete made the following comment in response to a question about his status as an African American student athlete: “[b]eing a Black male football player, I feel that I have to prove that I can handle Stanford academics. I don’t have any room for mistakes” (Martin et al., 2010, p. 138). Another described his experience in this way: “I’m penalized twice, because I’m both a Black male on campus and I’m an athlete. I feel that I have to work twice as hard as some of my White teammates” (Martin et al., 2010, p. 138). Though the student-athletes in this study respected their White teammates, the overwhelming majority mentioned that their White teammates were not stereotyped as frequently, simply because of their race (Martin et al., 2010). Despite findings
suggesting that academic success is correlated with increased student-faculty contact, African American student-athletes in particular may not share this same experience as a result of “a hostile campus racial climate and reinforcement of low academic expectations by…members of the campus community” (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 241). Regardless of these negative stereotypes, there is the potential for student-athletes to address them in a more positive way.

Simons et al. (2007) found that student-athletes differ in the ways they address negative stigmas. Student-athletes either “implicitly or explicitly [accept] or [reject] the stigma” (Simons et al., 2007, Coping with the Sigma section, para. 1). The student-athletes in this study were questioned about how they would react to negative stereotyping from a faculty member (Simons et al., 2007). Of those surveyed, 35% said they would reject the stereotype and choose to work harder, consistent with existing research which suggests that “most college athletes believe these negative stereotypes do not apply to them personally” (Harrison et al., 2009, p. 80). However, it should be noted that 32% of student-athletes confronted with negative stereotyping from a faculty member would choose not to participate in class (Simons et al., 2007). In order to ameliorate these negative stigmas, Simons et al. (2007) suggest that student-athletes, coaches, and university personnel can take action by understanding and challenging the negative stereotypes that student-athletes are being held to. Additionally, student-athletes may benefit from increased support by university faculty and staff who can help distribute more accurate information about student-athletes (Simons et al., 2007).

2.3.3.3—Coping with Stress
Finally, student-athletes are also pressured by the high-stress stakes of athletic participation and academic eligibility. Managing their roles as student and athlete can be difficult for intercollegiate athletes, especially if they are unable to find a balance between the two. Potuto et al. (2007) found that over 60% of student-athletes identify as an athlete more than as a student, likely due to the fact that “athletics participation claims much of their time and energy…” as evidenced above (Potuto et al., 2007, Academic Behaviors para. 6). Research suggests that student-athletes who are able to separate their roles have higher levels of self-esteem and psychological well being (Settles, Sellers, & Damas, 2002). In addition, these same student-athletes reported lower levels of stress and depression (Settles et al., 2002). As a result, researchers were able to conclude that “role interference” results from a lack of balance between one role and the other, possibly due to heightened involvement in both roles (Settles et al., 2002).

With regards to role interference, it is interesting to note that Potuto et al. (2007) found that 24% of African American student-athletes strongly agree with the notion that they identify as an athlete more than as a student, while only 16% of White student-athletes felt that way (African Americans vs. Caucasians para. 3).

In order to cope effectively with the stress inherent in these two roles, research has found that athletes will likely use different coping styles based on their race (Anshel, Sutarso, & Jubenville, 2009). Anshel et al., (2009) tested acute stress levels in athletes and the coping mechanisms they used to deal with that stress. White athletes experienced higher and more intense levels of stress when compared to African American athletes, and were more likely to use an approach behavioral coping style (Anshel et al., 2009). The approach behavioral coping style factor contained items such as “I discussed the problem with others,” “I asked other people to
give me their opinion,” in addition to two similar items (Anshel et al., 2009, p. 165). In contrast, African American athletes were more likely to use an avoidance cognitive coping style (Anshel et al., 2009). Examples of avoidance cognitive coping style factors include items such as “I prayed to help me deal with the problem or situation,” “I thought to myself that things could be worse,” in addition to two similar items (Anshel et al., 2009, p. 165). Regardless of the type of coping style used, having one in place allows the student-athlete to deal with their stress in a constructive way. Participation in sports has been shown to lead to “mental fatigue, physical exhaustion, and nagging injuries” for student-athletes, which can affect students’ ability to achieve their academic and athletic pursuits (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, p. 236). Thus, a healthy coping strategy for dealing with stress is crucial for student-athletes to develop early on. In addition to these coping styles, student-athletes can also turn to others as a source of support. For academic support, research has found that student-athletes turn to their coaches, academic counselors and advisors, and favorite professors, and that this support is viewed as positive over 90% of the time (Potuto et al., 2007, Support Received para. 2). However, it should be noted that these relationships are more likely to be viewed as supportive for White student-athletes than for African American student-athletes, as was previously discussed. Student-athletes also receive social support from other sources, namely family members, teammates, roommates, friends, and classmates (Potuto et al., 2007).

2.4—Academic Advising in Higher Education

2.4.1—Academic Advising
A developmental process, academic advising serves the purpose of assisting students in determining the necessary steps to take in order to accomplish their educational goals (Hester, 2008). These educational goals, in turn, influence and shape the life goals of the student after their education is complete (Hester, 2008). As stated by Szymanska, academic advisors should also help students “develop independent thinking skills, [a] good understanding of career paths in their chosen fields, [and help them] gain knowledge about available campus resources” (Szymanska, 2011, p. 1). Successful communication between advisor and advisee should ultimately foster growth and independence in students to ensure students reach their educational potential (Hester, 2008).

Currently, there are three models of advising which are commonly used in the arena of higher education (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). They include prescriptive advising, developmental advising, and intrusive advising (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). In a relationship based on authority, prescriptive advising places much of the responsibility for the student on the advisor, as the student typically shares their problem with the advisor, and the advisor gives a solution back to the student (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). A more mutually-beneficial relationship, developmental advising is characterized by the student and advisor working together to come up with a solution to the problem at hand, thus giving the student responsibility for their actions and giving the advisor an opportunity to learn from the student as well (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Finally, intrusive advising combines characteristics of the prescriptive and developmental advising models. In this model, advisors make an effort to find students who may need academic guidance, and work collaboratively with them to ensure they meet their academic potential (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Pioneered by Earl in 1988, intrusive advising is specifically defined as “deliberate and structured
student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty in order to motivate students to seek help” (p. 28). Much research has shown that intrusive advising practices are successful when working with the student-athlete population, and will be discussed in more detail in the next section (Gaston-Gayles, 2003; Harrison, Comeaux, & Plecha, 2006; Comeaux, 2005).

2.4.2—Academic Advising with Student-Athletes

In a study designed to assess academic support programs with high student-athlete graduation rates, Gaston-Gayles (2003) conducted interviews with seven public and private institutions in order to determine which specific practices were correlated with student-athlete persistence to graduation. Among other factors, her research found that intrusive advising practices where the advisor emphasizes the importance of obtaining a college degree and deemphasizes issues of eligibility, were correlated with higher student-athlete graduation rates (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Additionally, she found that academic support from the advisors, especially for freshman and sophomore student-athletes, helped the student-athletes become more independent, leading to their success in college (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). In a study of the environmental/institutional variables which impact student-athlete success, Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) found that student-athletes who were challenged intellectually and encouraged to achieve their career goals were more likely to graduate from college. Comeaux’s (2005) study of the predictors of academic achievement for male student-athletes also found that “students who receive[d] assistance from faculty in achieving professional goals” were more successful in their academic careers (Environmental Effects section, para. 2). In addition, the study found that
students who felt respected by faculty members also performed better academically (Comeaux, 2005).

Despite the fact that these studies indicate that intrusive advising practices are correlated with student-athlete persistence to graduation, we still see low graduation rates for student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball. Perhaps if more student-athletes viewed their academic advisor as someone they could rely on, a support person, these practices could be more effective, as the availability of a strong support person is also correlated with student-athlete success in college.

2.5—The Impact of Communication with Regards to Immediacy Behaviors

As previously mentioned, successful communication between advisor and advisee is related to student growth and independence (Hester, 2008). Therefore, the impact of communication between the advisor and the student-athlete must be addressed. A concept termed immediacy, developed in the 1960’s, provides an explanation of the communicative behaviors people engage in when interacting with others. Inspired by aspects of approach and avoidance, this construct has pioneered research in the field of instructional communication, which aims to determine how teachers can effectively communicate with their students in order to increase student learning. Academic advisors can use these same immediacy behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, when working with their students in order to foster the development of a positive advisor-advisee relationship.

2.5.1—The History of Immediacy
Mehrabian (1969) first introduced the concept of immediacy, which represents the behaviors people engage in to enhance both physical and psychological closeness between themselves and others. As described by Mehrabian in *Silent Messages*, verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors all impact our feelings and evaluations of the communicative discourse which occurs between interactants (Mehrabian, 1971). Over the years, these verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors have been assessed via extensive research (Andersen, 1978; Andersen, 1979; Gorham, 1988), and signal “approachability…availability for communication…and interpersonal warmth and closeness” (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 341). Verbal immediacy behaviors have been defined to include the “use of humor…praise of… work, actions, or comments…frequency of initiating and/or willingness to become engaged in conversations… self-disclosure… asking questions or encouraging [conversation]… [and] asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions,” among others, while nonverbal immediacy behaviors have been defined to include “eye contact, gestures, relaxed body position, directing body position toward [conversation participants], smiling, vocal expressiveness, movement, and proximity” (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 342-3).

2.5.2—Nonverbal Immediacy

Andersen (1978, 1979), built upon Mehrabian’s concept of nonverbal immediacy by applying it to the fields of communication and education. By extending the concept of immediacy to an instructional context, Andersen was able to examine the relationships between instructor immediacy, student learning, and teaching effectiveness (Powell & Harville, 1990). She found that a positive association existed between nonverbal immediacy and student affective
learning (Andersen, 1978, 1979). These nonverbal immediacy behaviors, including “eye contact, gestures, relaxed body position, directing body position toward students, smiling, vocal expressiveness, movement, and proximity,” were found to be related to increased student affect toward instructor communication, as well as to course content, the overall course as a whole, and the course instructor (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 342).

In another study, researchers aimed to determine whether or not teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors were correlated with affective learning in students of different ethnicities (McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996). The researchers developed a survey which they distributed to college students from a variety of cultures, and the results found that the “[relationship] between nonverbal immediacy and affective learning” is consistent across cultures (McCroskey et al., 1996, p. 7). The researchers found that specific nonverbal behaviors, which included “[v]ocal variety, eye contact, and smiling” were the nonverbal immediacy behaviors associated most highly with affective learning (McCroskey et al., 1996, p. 7).

This research adds credible knowledge to the concept of immediacy by extending the impact of nonverbal immediacy behaviors to students of different cultures. As the student-athlete population is often made up of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, races, and ethnicities, we know that these nonverbal immediacy behaviors, if used by advisors, may be beneficial in helping the advisor develop a relationship with the student-athletes they work with. Other studies assessing the use of these immediacy behaviors with students of different ethnicities have found similar results (Powell & Harville, 1990; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

2.5.3—*Verbal Immediacy*
In 1988, Gorham further expanded on research conducted by Mehrabian and by Andersen to address the role of verbal immediacy in the classroom. By developing her own scale measuring verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, Gorham was able to conclude that verbal immediacy was positively associated with student perceptions of learning, behavioral intent, and affect toward their courses (Gorham, 1988). The verbal immediacy signs which stood out as being particularly important to students included the use of humor by the teacher in class, praise of the work, actions, or comments of students in class, engaging in conversations with students either during, before, or after class, teacher self-disclosure, encouraging students to talk or ask questions, and asking about student opinions on due dates, assignments, or topics. These immediacy signs were all associated with cognitive and affective learning as reported by the students (Gorham, 1988). Her research also supported Andersen’s findings on nonverbal immediacy in the instructional setting as well (Gorham, 1988). The implications of this study suggest that these teacher immediacy behaviors can be used by instructors, or advisors, in order to potentially increase student learning.

2.6—Race/Gender Relations

As mentioned earlier, certain individual attributes of student-athletes are associated with academic success in higher education. Those individual characteristics included race/ethnicity, gender, sport played, and level of competition (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

With regards to race, African American student-athletes have been shown to be the least prepared for the academic rigors of college (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Because many of these students come from a lower socioeconomic background than their non-African American peers,
the education they received may have been sub-par, resulting in a lower level of academic achievement (Sellers, 1992).

Gender also impacts student-athlete success in higher education. Research has shown that female student-athletes tend to be more prepared academically, and that they perform similarly to traditional students, while outperforming their male student-athlete peers (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). With regards to faculty interaction, Comeaux and Harrison (2007) found that regardless of gender, male and female student-athletes tend to seek contact with faculty during their college experience.

While level of competition may not necessarily impact race and gender relations, the sport which a student-athlete participates in does have some relation to gender. The two sports which produce revenue for universities include football and men’s basketball. The male student-athletes who participate in these sports have been shown to perform at a lower academic level than student-athletes who participate in other sports (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Research conducted by Adler and Adler (1991) and Comeaux et al. (2011) suggests that this is likely due to an imbalance in the academic and athletic identities of these student-athletes.

Despite the fact that much research exists examining student-athletes in higher education, the current research does not address the role of the academic advisor as a support person for student-athletes. As the availability of a support person has been shown to lead to student-athlete persistence to graduation, the current study hopes to determine if student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person. If so, the aim of the study is to determine the specific behaviors, characteristics, and methods used by advisors which result in their students viewing
them as a support person. It is the hope of the researcher that this information can be used by current and future academic advisors in order to better serve the student-athletes they work with.
Chapter 3
Methodology

In this chapter the researcher will discuss, in detail, the methods used in the research process. The chapter will begin with an overview of the study and the research questions to be answered. The researcher will then address the context of the research, including the location and the time frame. Following will be a discussion of the participants, detailing the methods of and criteria for identifying study participants as well as the participant demographics. The researcher will then describe the data collection process, which included the development and distribution of the survey. Finally, the researcher will describe the data analysis process, including information related to the psychometric properties of the survey.

3.1—Overview of Study/Research Questions

Within this study, the researcher looked to assess the role of the academic advisor as a support person for student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions: Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person? What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of the support person to their students? Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person? By better understanding whether or not student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person, and why or why not, the researcher hopes that the information
generated as a result of this study can be used by current and future academic advisors in order to better serve the student-athletes they work with.

3.2—Research Context

The data collection process took place at a large, public research university in the Pacific Northwest. An NCAA Division I university, this institution identifies research, outreach, engagement, and academic excellence in their mission statement and values. The data collection occurred during August through October of 2013.

3.3—Participants/Sampling

In this section, the researcher will discuss the sampling process, the criteria for participants, participant selection, and participant demographics.

3.3.1—Sampling Process

To determine how many student-athletes would be eligible to participate in this study, the researcher contacted student affairs personnel who worked specifically with the student-athlete population at the university. Through their computing software, it was determined that a total of 97 student-athletes met the criteria identified as being necessary to participate in the study; criteria for participants are described below. The sampling process was not random, and all eligible participants were informed of the opportunity to attend a voluntary meeting where they would complete a brief survey. Student-athlete academic counselors were responsible for
informing all participants of the opportunity to participate in the study during the weekly meetings required for all student-athletes.

3.3.2—Criteria for Participants

Listed here are the criteria for participants. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, and the ability to read and speak English was required as well, as participants had to be able to comprehend the verbal consent process and understand the survey questions. Participants were also required to be student-athletes eligible for competition on either the men’s football or men’s basketball team. Additionally, the participants were required to have been at the university for at least one term in order to ensure that they have had prior experience interacting with their academic counselor.

3.3.3—Participant Selection

Participants were identified by student affairs personnel using computing software which was able to isolate only the student-athletes who met the aforementioned criteria. The participants were made aware of the opportunity to participate in the survey during weekly meetings with their academic counselors, and voluntarily attended the meeting where the survey was distributed. Thus, student-athletes self-selected to participate in the study. Before receiving the survey, the Survey Administrator handed out copies of the verbal consent card, and participants were read the contents of the verbal consent card by the Survey Administrator, following Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. At this point, students were notified of the option to turn in a blank survey, were they no longer interested in participating.
3.3.4—Participant Demographics

A total of 42 participants responded to the survey, meaning that close to half of all athletes on the specified teams participated (43.3%). Respondent ages ranged between 19-24 years old, with nine respondents identifying as 19 years of age (21%), 11 respondents identifying as 20 years of age (26%), 11 respondents identifying as 21 years of age (26%), eight respondents identifying as 22 years of age (19%), two respondents identifying as 23 years of age (5%), and one respondent identifying as 24 years of age (2%). No participants identified as either 18 years of age, or “Other.”

With regards to race/ethnicity, the most predominate race identified by respondents was African American, with a total of 20 respondents (48%), followed by White, with a total of 13 respondents (31%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, with a total of four respondents (10%), Multi-Racial/Ethnic, with a total of four respondents (10%), and American Indian/Alaska Native, with a total of one respondent (2%). No participants identified as Asian, Hispanic, or “Other.”

With regards to year in school, the most predominate year identified by respondents was Junior, with a total of 15 respondents (36%), followed by Senior, with a total of 12 respondents (29%), Sophomore, with a total of 11 respondents (26%), and 5th year Senior, with a total of four respondents (10%). No participants identified as Freshman, Graduate Students, or “Other.” It should be noted that Freshman were excluded from the study, as the researcher determined that they would not have had adequate experience interacting with their academic advisor, deemed crucial for participation in the survey.
With regards to current GPA, the majority of respondents, a total of 23, identified that their GPA fell within the range of 2.50-2.99 (55%), followed by ten respondents who identified a GPA within the range of 3.00-3.49 (24%), and nine respondents who identified a GPA within the range of 2.00-2.49 (21%). No respondents identified a GPA range of 0.00-0.99, 1.00-1.49, 1.50-1.99, or 3.50-4.00.

With regards to the highest level of parent (mother) education attained, 16 respondents identified that their mother held a Bachelor’s Degree (38%), followed by nine respondents who identified that their mother had completed some college, but had no degree (21%), nine respondents who identified that their mother was a high school graduate (21%), three respondents who identified that their mother held a Master’s Degree (7%), three respondents who identified that their mother had completed some high school (7%), one respondent who identified that their mother held a Professional Degree (e.g. M.D.) (2%), and one respondent who identified that their mother held an Associate’s Degree (2%). No respondents identified that their mother had attended Technical School, had a Doctoral Degree, or “Unknown.”

With regards to the highest level of parent (father) education attained, ten respondents identified that their father held a Bachelor’s Degree (24%), followed by seven respondents who identified that their father had completed some college, but had no degree (17%), seven respondents who identified that their father was a high school graduate (17%), five respondents who identified that their father held an Associate’s Degree (12%), five respondents who identified that their father’s level of education was “Unknown” (12%), four respondents who identified that their father held a Master’s Degree (10%), two respondents who identified that their father had completed some high school (5%), and one respondent who identified that their
father had attended Technical School (2%). No respondents identified that their father had received a Professional Degree or Doctorate Degree.

With regards to sport participated in, the majority of participants, 31, identified Football (74%), with the remaining 11 participants identifying Men’s Basketball (26%).

3.4—Data Collection

Here the researcher will outline the data collection methods utilized in this study, including information on the development and distribution of the survey.

3.4.1—Developing the Survey

The researcher developed the survey questions based on the research questions and a comprehensive review of the literature. A paper survey was developed by the researcher as it was determined that respondents would be more likely to participate than if a web-based survey was distributed via email. Within the first section of the survey, seven demographic questions were posed in order to collect information such as age, race/ethnicity, year in school, grade point average, and level of parent education. Next, the researcher developed five questions regarding the respondent’s academic advisors and support persons in their life. Finally, the researcher formulated 24 Likert-type questions, some of which were adapted and modified from Gorham’s (1988) study on verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Gorham’s (1988) questions were used to assess teacher immediacy behaviors and student learning, and were adapted to assess academic advisor immediacy behaviors and student learning. Respondents were able to select answers to the Likert-type questions based on the following scale: strongly agree, agree,
disagree, strongly disagree, not applicable, and “no answer.” The researcher then reviewed the questions with faculty members to ensure the questions were well-worded and clear. Following the review, the researcher made slight adjustments to the questions, changing some of the wording to enhance clarity. After the changes were made, the researcher felt confident that the questions were clear enough for participants to understand.

3.4.2—Distributing the Survey

Student-athletes who attended the voluntary meeting were given a copy of the verbal consent card and were read the contents of the verbal consent card by the Survey Administrator, following IRB protocol. During this time, participants were made aware of the opportunity to opt-out of taking the survey, and were told they could turn in a blank survey if they chose not to participate. The Survey Administrator then distributed surveys to the participants, allowing respondents as much time to complete the survey as was needed. The surveys were then returned to the Survey Administrator, and were placed in a manila envelope which was sealed once all surveys were returned, and the envelope was then immediately returned to the Principal Investigator’s office to be kept under lock and key.

3.5—Data Analysis

In this section, the researcher will briefly discuss the data analysis process, including the coding process for participants’ survey responses, the analysis of participant demographics, the analysis of the psychometric properties of the survey, and the analysis of the research questions.
3.5.1—Coding of Survey Responses

First, the researcher created an identical version of the paper survey utilizing the Qualtrics Survey Software program, an online survey platform available to students through the university. After the participants' paper survey responses were obtained from the Principal Investigator, data from all paper survey responses was input into the Qualtrics Survey Software program by the researcher.

3.5.2—Analysis of Descriptive Demographics

After the paper survey responses were input into the Qualtrics program, the researcher was then able to utilize the Qualtrics program to analyze participant demographics, including participant age, race/ethnicity, year in school, grade point average, and level of parent education.

3.5.3—Analysis of the Psychometric Properties of the Survey

After descriptive demographics regarding survey participants had been analyzed, the researcher then performed exploratory factor analysis and reliability estimates in order to confirm the underlying structure and internal consistency of the survey items related to the research questions using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Exploratory factor analysis was performed to isolate factors within the survey, and inter-item correlations and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were then utilized in order to examine the internal consistency of the sub-scales which the researcher initially expected to see. Next, the sub-scales were then interpreted by the researcher and named according to the specific construct(s) they measured. Finally, reliability estimates for each sub-scale were computed to determine the internal
consistency of the items on each sub-scale, again utilizing Cronbach’s alpha coefficients, which led to the development of four factors.

Based on the four variables which emerged from the factor analysis, Pearson correlation matrices were conducted for the total sample group. The variables included Immediacy Behaviors (Factor 1), Academic Advising Practices (Factor 2), Academic Performance (Factor 3), and Shared Experiences (Factor 4). Some significant correlations were revealed among the four variables of the study and will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.5.4—Analysis of the Research Questions

Before examining the research questions, the researcher conducted exploratory factor analysis to assess the underlying structure of the items on the survey. The results of the factor analysis yielded a factor structure congruent with the measures used in this study. Reliability estimates for each subscale were very high, ranging from 0.902 – 0.987. The researcher applied a general rule to retain factors with loadings of 0.30 or better. The common characteristics of the items loading on each factor assisted in naming the factors appropriately for further analysis. To address the first research question, the researcher used qualitative measures to examine whether or not respondents viewed their academic advisor as a support person. For the second research question, the researcher first isolated participant responses which indicated that the participant considered their academic advisor to be a support person, and subsequently examined those responses using qualitative measures to determine what specific behaviors respondents found most supportive. Finally, the researcher addressed the third research question by first isolating participant responses which indicated that the participant considered their academic
advisor to be a support person, and subsequently examined those responses using qualitative measures to determine whether or not there was a difference between students of different races viewing their academic advisor as a support person.

3.5.5—Limitations

Even though the survey was able to address the research questions qualitatively, there are some limitations that are worth mentioning. First, although the survey items were assessed qualitatively, quantitative measures were also used to assess the reliability and validity of the 24 Likert-type survey items. While these items provided important information regarding behavioral characteristics of the participants’ academic advisors, their application to the initial research questions was limited. Thus, had a fourth research question been proposed, this data could have been incorporated more successfully. Finally, as in most surveys on college students, self-reported data was used in this study. Even though student self-reported data are considered to be a valid measure, readers should be reminded that students might not use the same baseline to respond to survey questions in general.
Chapter 4

Results

The results of this survey provided important insight regarding respondent demographics, including information related to age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, year in school, current GPA, level of parent education attained, and sport played. Additionally, the survey was able to determine whether or not respondents found their academic advisor to be a support person, and for what particular reasons. Finally, the survey was able to collect information surrounding the attributes and behaviors of academic counselors which participants found to be beneficial in their relationships. This survey specifically sought to determine whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball view their academic advisor as a support person, and what particular behaviors or characteristics of their academic advisors respondents found most supportive. First, the psychometric properties of the instrument are discussed, and following, the researcher will address each of the research questions using the descriptive statistics obtained from the results of the survey.

4.1—Psychometric Properties of the Survey

Exploratory factor analysis and reliability estimates were performed by the researcher to confirm the underlying structure and internal consistency of the survey items. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to conduct the analysis.

4.1.1—Factor Extraction
In developing the survey, it was expected that the survey would yield four factors, a factor related to academic advising practices, a factor related to verbal immediacy behaviors, a factor related to nonverbal immediacy behaviors, and a factor related to sociological elements (i.e. race and gender relations, student-athlete experiences). To test this, the maximum likelihood extraction method was utilized to isolate the factors. Several criteria were utilized to determine the best fit of the model to the data: the initial eigenvalues, the extraction sums of squared loadings, the scree test, and interpretability based on the characteristics of the items loaded on each factor. In general, there were a total of four eigenvalues greater than one; however, two eigenvalues accounted for the largest amount of variance. The scree test supported a four-factor model as well, although in examining the scree plot it was clear that there were two large factors which accounted for most of the explained variance.

Inter-item correlations and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were examined for each of the four sub-scales initially expected in order to assess their internal consistency. These measures gave an indication of which items were problematic in the survey. While the factor analysis produced a four factor model as was expected, the items within each of the four sub-scales were slightly different than anticipated. However, after further analysis, the items loaded on each sub-scale shared common characteristics with one another and were left as is. Although it was expected that verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors would load to different sub-scales, eight of the 12 survey items related to verbal and nonverbal immediacy loaded on the first sub-scale (Sub-Scale 1). Three other survey items related to verbal and nonverbal immediacy loaded to Sub-Scale 2 and will be further discussed next. The second sub-scale (Sub-Scale 2) was expected to load items related to academic advising practices. Of the nine survey items related to
academic advising practices, six loaded to this sub-scale, in addition to one item related to nonverbal immediacy (“My academic counselor’s office is warm and inviting”) and two items related to verbal immediacy (“My academic counselor asks me questions and encourages me to talk” & “My academic counselor praises my work, actions, or comments”). The third sub-scale (Sub-Scale 3) which emerged from the factor analysis contained three survey items, two related to academic advising practices (“My academic counselor helps me identify causes of poor academic performance” & “My academic counselor helps me determine future actions related to my academic performance”) and one item related to verbal immediacy (“My academic counselor praises my work, actions, or comments”). The emergence of this sub-scale (Sub-Scale 3) will be further elaborated on in the following section of this chapter—4.1.2—Factor Interpretation.

Finally, as was expected, the fourth sub-scale (Sub-Scale 4) which emerged from the factor analysis contained the four survey items related to race and gender relations and the student-athlete experience. Interpretation of the four sub-scales follows in the following section of this chapter, as these sub-scales supported the use of a four factor model.

4.1.2—Factor Interpretation

The items which loaded on each sub-scale shared common characteristics with one another which aided in the naming process of the factors. The first factor (Factor 1) was named immediacy behaviors (IB) and consisted of eight items (see Table 1). This sub-scale indicated the extent to which the participants viewed specific verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors utilized by their academic advisors as supportive. The second factor (Factor 2) was named academic advising practices (AAP) and consisted of nine items (see Table 1). This subscale was
distinct from the IB sub-scale in that the items represented specific support behaviors which one would expect academic advisors to give, as these practices are associated with intrusive academic advising best practices. The third factor (Factor 3) was named academic performance (AP) and consisted of three items (see Table 1). This subscale was distinct from the AAP scale in that the items were specifically related to academic performance as opposed to specific advising practices. The fourth factor (Factor 4) was named shared experiences (SE) and had a total of four items (see Table 1). The items on this subscale represented the extent to which the participants felt that their academic advisor understood their experiences as a student-athlete.

Table 1: Four Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1: Immediacy Behaviors (IB)</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor uses humor when talking with me.</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor addresses me by name.</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor smiles while talking to me.</td>
<td>0.963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor makes eye contact while talking to me.</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor uses personal examples he/she has had when talking with me.</td>
<td>0.968</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor asks me questions to make sure he/she understands what I am saying.</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor speaks with me in a way which makes him/her easy to understand.</td>
<td>0.963</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor is professional and cordial when talking with me.</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 2: Academic Advising Practices (AAP)</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor has made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with my academic counselor has grown stronger over time.</td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor’s office is warm and inviting.</td>
<td>0.666</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor is prepared for our appointments.</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor asks me questions and encourages me to talk.</td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor is able to refer me to campus resources.</td>
<td>0.879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor maintains regular contact with me via email, telephone, social-media, etc.</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor invites me to meet with him/her if I have any additional questions.</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor helps me make decisions and solve problems.</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 3: Academic Performance (AP)</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


4.1.3—Reliability

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were computed to determine the internal consistency of the items on each sub-scale. The reliability estimates for each sub-scale were very high (see Table 2). The Cronbach’s alpha value for the immediacy behaviors (IB) sub-scale (Factor 1) was 0.987. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the academic advising practices (AAP) sub-scale (Factor 2) was 0.917. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the academic performance (AP) sub-scale (Factor 3) was 0.911. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the shared experiences (SE) sub-scale (Factor 4) was 0.902.

Table 2: Reliability Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Immediacy Behaviors (IB)</td>
<td>0.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Academic Advising Practices (AAP)</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Academic Performance (AP)</td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4: Shared Experiences (SE)</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4—Correlations
Some significant correlations were revealed among the four variables in the current study (see Table 3). The immediacy behaviors (IB) variable was significantly correlated with the shared experiences (SE) variable ($r = 0.87$), and the academic advising practices (AAP) variable was significantly correlated with the academic performance (AP) variable ($r = 0.52$). Additionally, the immediacy behaviors (IB) variable was correlated with the academic performance (AP) variable ($r = 0.36$), and the academic performance (AP) variable was correlated with the shared experiences (SE) variable ($r = 0.25$).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.075703</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.357573</td>
<td>0.517429</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.864869</td>
<td>-0.04011</td>
<td>0.24454</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pearson Correlation ($r =$)

4.2—Research Questions

The research questions for this study included: Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person? What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of support person to their students? Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person? Each research question will now be addressed utilizing the results of the survey.

4.2.1—Research Question One
With regards to research question one: “Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person?” a total of eight of the 40 respondents (20%) identified that their academic counselor has been a support person to them. However, almost all (95%) of the 42 respondents identified that they have had a support person (academic counselor or otherwise) whom they can count on during their college experience.

4.2.2—Research Question Two

With regards to research question two: “What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of support person to their students?” the researcher first isolated respondents who had identified that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them (n=8). The researcher then utilized those participant responses to the 24 Likert-type questions to assess what specific actions/behaviors the student-athlete participants found supportive. Based on the four factors identified through the exploratory factor analysis (i.e. Immediacy Behaviors, Academic Advising Practices, Academic Performance, and Shared Experiences) participant responses for each survey item will be reported below.

Factor 1, Immediacy Behaviors, contained items related to both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. With regards to the first survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor uses humor when talking with me,” five respondents (62.5%) answered Strongly Agree (SA), two respondents (25%) answered Agree (A), and one respondent (12.5%) answered No Answer (NO). No respondents answered Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) or Not Applicable (N/A). With regards to the second survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor addresses me by name,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, two respondents
(25%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the third survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor smiles while talking to me,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the fourth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor makes eye contact while talking to me,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the fifth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor uses personal examples he/she has had when talking with me,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, two respondents (25%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the sixth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor asks me questions to make sure he/she understands what I am saying,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, two respondents (25%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the seventh survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor speaks with me in a way which makes him/her easy to understand,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A. With regards to the eighth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor is professional and cordial when talking with me,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D, SD or N/A.

Factor 2, Academic Advising Practices, contained items related to best practices in the field of academic advising. With regards to the first survey item in this factor: “My academic
counselor has made an effort to get to know me,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the second survey item in this factor: “My relationship with my academic counselor has grown stronger over time,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the third survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor’s office is warm and inviting,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the fourth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor is prepared for our appointments,” four respondents (50%) answered SA, and four respondents (50%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the fifth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor asks me questions and encourages me to talk,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the sixth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor is able to refer me to campus resources,” seven respondents (87.5%) answered SA, and one respondent (12.5%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the seventh survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor maintains regular contact with me via email, telephone, social-media, etc.,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the eighth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor invites me to meet with him/her if I have any additional questions,” seven respondents (87.5%) answered SA, and one respondent (12.5%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the ninth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor helps me make decisions and solve problems,” five
respondents (62.5%) answered SA, and three respondents (37.5%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO.

Factor 3, Academic Performance, contained items related to students’ academic performance. With regards to the first survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor helps me identify causes of poor academic performance,” four respondents (50%) answered SA, and four respondents (50%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the second survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor praises my work, actions, or comments,” six respondents (75%) answered SA, and two respondents (25%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO. With regards to the third survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor helps me determine future actions related to my academic performance,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, and three respondents (37.5%) answered A. No respondents answered D, SD, N/A, or NO.

Factor 4, Shared Experiences, contained items related to how well students and advisors are able to relate to one another. With regards to the first survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor’s gender impacts our relationship,” two respondents (25%) answered SA, three respondents (37.5%) answered A, one respondent (12.5%) answered D, one respondent (12.5%) answered N/A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered SD. With regards to the second survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor’s race impacts our relationship,” two respondents (25%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, two respondents (25%) answered D, one respondent (12.5%) answered SD, one respondent (12.5%) answered N/A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. With regards to the third survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor understands how the culture at
Oregon State University impacts my experiences here,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, one respondent (12.5%) answered N/A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D or SD. With regards to the fourth survey item in this factor: “My academic counselor understands my experiences as an athlete,” five respondents (62.5%) answered SA, one respondent (12.5%) answered A, one respondent (12.5%) answered N/A, and one respondent (12.5%) answered NO. No respondents answered D or SD.

Participants were also asked how their support person(s) (academic advisor or otherwise) showed them support (i.e. “Asks questions related to school,” “Asks questions related to sport,” etc.). To assess participant responses to this question, the researcher first isolated respondents who had identified that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them (n=8). The researcher then utilized those participant responses to assess the specific ways in which respondents felt their academic advisor showed them support. When asked how their academic advisor showed support, seven respondents (87.5%) identified “asks questions related to life,” six respondents (75%) identified “asks questions related to school,” six respondents (75%) identified “asks questions related to sport,” four respondents (50%) identified “keeps in contact with me frequently,” four respondents (50%) identified “helps me develop goals for myself,” four respondents (50%) identified “helps me make decisions,” three respondents (37.5%) identified “praises my efforts,” and three respondents (37.5%) identified “encourages me to talk.” No respondents identified “other.”

4.2.3—Research Question Three
With regards to research question three: “Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person?” the researcher aimed to address this question in two ways. First, the researcher isolated respondents who indicated that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them, and second, the researcher isolated respondents who indicated that their academic advisor could potentially be a support person to them. Results for both scenarios are reported below.

Respondents who indicated that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them were isolated from respondents who indicated that they receive their support from another individual(s) (i.e. a family member, friend, coach, other). Of those eight respondents, five (62.5%) identified as White, two (25%) identified as African American, and one (12.5%) identified as Multi-Racial/Ethnic. No respondents who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander indicated that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them. It should be noted that no respondents who answered this survey item identified as Hispanic, Asian, or Other, a limitation which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Next, the researcher isolated respondents who indicated that they believe their academic counselor could be a support person to them from respondents who did not believe their academic advisor could be a support person to them. Over two-thirds of the 36 respondents identified that they believe their academic counselor could be a support person to them (67%). Of these 36 respondents, 18 identified as African American (50%), 11 identified as White (31%), four identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (11%), and three identified as Multi-Racial/Ethnic (8%). Of the 18 African American respondents, 14 responded that their academic advisor could be a support person to them (78%), while four responded that their academic
advisor could not be a support person to them (22%). Of the 11 White respondents, five responded that their academic advisor could be a support person to them (45%), while six responded that their academic advisor could not be a support person to them (55%). Of the four Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander respondents, three responded that their academic advisor could be a support person to them (75%), while one responded that their academic advisor could not be a support person to them (25%). Of the three Multi-Racial/Ethnic respondents, two responded that their academic advisor could be a support person to them (67%), while one responded that their academic advisor could not be a support person to them (33%). Again, it should be noted that no respondents who answered this survey item identified as Hispanic, Asian, or Other, a limitation which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5
Discussion

The overall aim of the present study was to gain an understanding of whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball view their academic advisor as source of support and what specific characteristics of academic advisors are viewed by this population as supportive. The survey created by the researcher was used to collect data from all student-athlete participants. This data was then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative measures to determine whether or not participants viewed their academic advisor as a support person, and for what specific reasons. Specifically, the study looked to answer the following research questions: Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person? What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of support person to their students? Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person?

In this chapter, a more detailed analysis of the survey results will be discussed, including support for the findings based upon the existing literature. Additionally, the researcher will address the limitations of the study.

5.1—Evaluation of Research Questions

5.1.1—Research Question One

As research (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Sedlacek, 1993) has shown that the availability of a strong support person is significantly correlated with persistence to graduation
and academic success for minority student and student-athlete populations, it seems fitting that student-athletes could look to their academic advisor as a source of support throughout their university experience. Additionally, because student-athletes at Division I universities are required to meet with their sport-specific academic advisor on a relatively frequent basis, the academic advisor is then easily available to the student as a source of support ("Academics," 2013). As such, the first research question “Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person?” aimed to address whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball view their academic advisor as a source of support.

In regards to the first research question, “Do student-athletes view their academic advisor as a support person?” the results of the present study found that 20% of the student-athlete participants stated that they currently viewed their academic advisor as a support person. While this number was lower than expected, research suggests that student-athletes receive support from a variety of sources, such as family members, friends, teammates, roommates, and classmates, in addition to academic faculty and staff (Potuto et al., 2007). With so many sources of support available, student-athletes may not first think to turn to their academic advisor as a support person.

However, when asked whether or not their academic advisor could be a support person to them, 67% of participants stated that they believe their academic advisor could be a support person to them. The remaining 33% of respondents stated that no, they did not believe their academic counselor could be a support person to them. While this number was also lower than expected, open ended participant responses can be used to shed light on this issue, and will be further discussed next.
When participants were asked an open ended question regarding why/why not their academic advisor could be a source of support, participants gave a variety of responses which provide useful insight to the research question at hand. Based on participant responses, five themes emerged, including three with regards to why participants believe academic advisors could be considered support persons, and two with regards to why participants believe academic advisors could not be considered support persons. The first three themes regarding why respondents believe their academic advisor could be a support person include: helpfulness, safety, guidance. The final two themes regarding why respondents believe their academic advisor could not be a support person include: personal connection, and time. Each of these themes will be further discussed in the sections that follow.

**Helpfulness:**

Of the participants who stated that yes, their academic advisor could be a support person to them, many responded that this was due to the helpfulness of their academic advisor, particularly with regards to their academic success. Participant responses included statements such as: “[They] encourage me to strive in my academics and help me in any way possible,” “They have always been helpful in my academic success,” and “[They are] able to help me with school and life, [and] choosing [a] career path,” among others. These findings support existing research which has found that academic support from advisors working with the student-athlete population helped the student-athletes become more independent, which in turn lead to increases in overall academic success (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Additionally, these findings support research conducted by Harrison et al. (2006), which found that when challenged intellectually and
encouraged to achieve their career goals, student-athlete participants were more likely to graduate from college.

**Safety:**

In addition to responses regarding the helpfulness of academic advisors, student-athlete participants in this study frequently stated that safety was an important variable in whether or not they viewed their academic advisor as a support person. Participant responses included statements such as: “She cares. I feel safe talking to her,” “I feel I can come to them and talk about anything life or school related,” and “They are willing to keep…conversations between the two of us…” among others. While there are a variety of reasons why student-athletes may not feel safe discussing issues they face with certain individuals, these findings support existing research (Harrison et al., 2009) on the stigmatization of student-athletes in higher education. As stereotypes of student-athletes held by university students, faculty, and staff impact how these students are both perceived and treated, the availability of the academic advisor a support person with whom the student-athlete feels safe sharing information with supports research findings on student-athlete stigmatization (Simons et al., 2007; Harrison et al., 2009).

**Guidance:**

The third theme identified by student-athlete participants in this study with regards to why they believe their academic advisor could be a support person to them was guidance. Participant responses relevant to this theme included statements such as: “[T]hey are someone who has experience with guidance to give you the help [you need],” and “[They are] a resource
towards help with schooling, and finding [other] resources” among others. These findings support existing research related to intrusive advising practices. As intrusive advising is characterized by working collaboratively with students who may need academic guidance to find solutions to the problem at hand, it seems fitting that the student-athlete participants in this study find guidance to be an important element with regards to whether or not they view their academic advisor as a support person (Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Additionally, the emergence of this theme supports findings in the literature which state that student-athletes who received support from academic faculty in order to achieve their professional goals were also more successful in their academic careers (Comeaux, 2005).

**Personal Connection:**

Of student-athlete participants in the present study who did not believe their academic advisor could be a support person to them, some stated that this belief stemmed from the fact that they have no personal connection with their academic advisor. This theme, personal connection, was reflected in participant responses such as: “Our problems are personal,” “Not close enough with them,” and “No personal connection.” While there are many reasons as to why some student-athletes may not feel they have a personal connection with their academic advisor, one finding in the research may address this issue in part. Many student-athletes turn to their parent(s)/guardian(s) for support, as these individuals have typically expressed interest in the student-athlete’s well-being prior to their university experience (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). As such, the student-athlete may feel more comfortable turning to their parent(s)/guardian(s) as a source of support because of the personal connection in this pre-existing relationship. Additional
research (Potuto et al., 2007) has found that student-athletes also look to teammates, roommates, friends, and classmates in addition to family members for social support—individuals with whom a personal connection may already have been developed.

*Time:*

The last theme which emerged from responses with regards to why the student-athlete participants believed their academic advisor could not be a support person to them was time. This theme was reflected in participant responses such as: “[T]hey work with a lot of people so they aren’t as…available,” and “There’s too many of us,” among others. Because academic advisors only have so much time to meet with their students on a daily and weekly basis, participants in the present study may feel that they would need to spend more time with their academic advisor in order to consider them as a source of support. While the amount of time spent in one-on-one meetings may be difficult to change, the advisor’s use of verbal immediacy behaviors which signal availability for communication, willingness to become engaged in conversations, and asking questions and encouraging conversation may be helpful in making the most of the time which is available (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Participant responses to the survey items described above have helped to shed light on whether or not student-athletes consider their academic advisor to be a support person to them. Next, a more detailed analysis of the specific characteristics of academic advisors which students found supportive will be discussed.
5.1.2—Research Question Two

As research has shown that student-athletes turn to university faculty and staff for support (Potuto et al., 2007), an understanding of the specific attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of support person to their students is important as it helps to clarify what particular advisor behaviors/actions student-athletes find supportive. When effective academic advising is taking place, students are able to think independently, understand potential career paths in their chosen fields, and learn about the campus resources which are available to them (Szymanska, 2011). The researcher aimed to determine what particular attributes of academic advisors student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball found supportive by posing the following research question: “What are the attributes of academic advisors who successfully play the role of support person to their students?” Participant responses will be further analyzed in the following paragraphs in order to clarify what particular behaviors/actions the student-athletes in this study found supportive.

To address this research question, the researcher will discuss participant responses to the 24 Likert-type questions utilizing the four factors (Immediacy Behaviors, Academic Advising Practices, Academic Performance, and Shared Experiences) generated through the exploratory factor analysis in order to assess what particular behaviors/actions participants found supportive.

5.1.2.1—Immediacy Behaviors

Both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors have been shown to signal “approachability…availability for communication…and interpersonal warmth and closeness”
between conversation participants (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 341). Thus, students are likely more inclined to turn to their academic advisor for support if that advisor engages in behaviors which signal immediacy. Based on the findings in this study, it appears immediacy behaviors play an important role in determining whether or not student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball view their academic advisor as a support person. In the current study, no participants selected that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the items in the Immediacy Behaviors factor. Furthermore, at least six of the eight participants (75%) who selected that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them also selected that they strongly agreed with the following items. Items with the highest responses included “My academic counselor smiles while talking to me,” “My academic counselor makes eye contact while talking to me,” “My academic counselor speaks with me in a way which makes him/her easy to understand,” and “My academic counselor is professional and cordial when talking with me.” Each of these items will now be discussed in detail in order to further understand why the student-athletes in this study found these particular immediacy behaviors so important.

The items “My academic counselor smiles while talking to me,” and “My academic counselor makes eye contact while talking to me,” both represent nonverbal immediacy behaviors which have been shown to increase immediacy between conversation participants. Much research within the field of instructional communication has utilized nonverbal immediacy behaviors to assess student affect toward their instructor, course content, and affective learning (Andersen, 1978, 1979; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990; McCroskey et al., 1996). While these studies have looked specifically at the immediacy behaviors of teachers, their findings can be applied to the work that academic advisors perform with their students as well. Research has shown that
student affect toward their instructor increases when their instructor smiles and makes eye contact with them (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Thus, as 75% of the student-athlete participants who viewed their academic advisor as a support person selected that they strongly agree that their academic advisor smiles and makes eye contact with them during their interactions, this suggests that student-athlete affect toward their academic advisor may be impacted by these nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Additionally, as both smiling and eye contact are highly associated with affective learning (McCroskey et al., 1996), academic advisors may be able to impact student learning during their advising session through the use of those particular immediacy behaviors.

Next, the items “My academic counselor speaks with me in a way which makes him/her easy to understand,” and “My academic counselor is professional and cordial when talking with me,” both represent verbal immediacy behaviors which have been shown to increase immediacy between conversation participants. Research within the field of instructional communication has utilized verbal immediacy behaviors to assess student perceptions of learning, behavioral intent, and affect toward their courses, and has found that the use of verbal immediacy behaviors increases the aforementioned outcomes (Gorham, 1988). As research (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011) has shown that student-athletes arrive to college having had various degrees of precollege preparation, academic counselors who are able to speak with their students in a way which the student perceives as being easy to understand is important in order to increase immediacy between the student-athlete and their academic advisor. Additionally, as 75% of the student-athlete participants in this study answered that they strongly agree that their academic advisor is both professional and cordial when talking with them, this suggests that this immediacy behavior
is considered supportive by students. As many university faculty and staff members have negative perceptions of student-athletes compared to more traditional students (Harrison et al., 2009), it seems fitting that the student-athletes in this study were able to turn to their academic advisor as a source of support, particularly because their sport-specific academic advisor is well aware of the stigmatization surrounding the student’s status as a student-athlete, and how this may impact other interactions on campus. Thus, the student-athletes’ perceptions of their academic advisor as both professional and cordial in nature suggests that by interacting with students in a professional and cordial manner, academic advisors are more likely to be viewed as potential support persons.

5.1.2.2—Academic Advising Practices

In addition to the Immediacy Behaviors listed above, the student-athlete participants who viewed their academic advisor as a support person in this study selected that they strongly agreed that their academic advisor exhibited particular behaviors which align with current best practices within the field of academic advising. As effective advising practices have been shown to assist students in determining the necessary steps to take in order to accomplish their educational goals (Hester, 2008), it seems fitting that the participants in this study considered their academic advisor to be a support person to them. In the current study, no participants selected that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the items in the Academic Advising Practices factor. At least six of the eight participants (n ≥ 75%) who selected that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them also selected that they strongly agreed with the following items. Items with the highest responses included “My academic counselor has made an effort to
get to know me,” “My relationship with my academic counselor has grown stronger over time,”
“My academic counselor’s office is warm and inviting,” “My academic counselor asks me
questions and encourages me to talk,” “My academic counselor is able to refer me to campus
resources,” “My academic counselor maintains regular contact with me via email, telephone,
social-media, etc.,” and “My academic counselor invites me to meet with him/her if I have any
additional questions.” Each of these items will now be discussed in detail in order to further
understand why the student-athletes in this study found these particular elements of academic
advising so important.

With regards to the item “My academic counselor has made an effort to get to know me,”
research (Hester, 2008) has shown that successful communication between student and advisor is
likely to foster growth and independence in students. Additionally, effective advising is also
characterized by the opportunity for advisors to be able to learn from their students as well
(Gaston-Gayles, 2003). Thus, as 75% of the student-athlete participants in this study strongly
agreed that their academic advisor has taken the time to get to know them, this likely played a
role in the students in this study viewing their academic advisor as a support person.

The next item in this section which six of the eight participants (75%) found to be
supportive, “My relationship with my academic counselor has grown stronger over time,”
highlights the importance of building a strong relationship with students during the entirety of
their university experience. As advisors who make an effort to find students who may need
academic guidance and work with them to ensure they meet their academic potential are
exhibiting best practices (Gaston-Gayles, 2003), advisors who build a strong relationship with
their students over time may be more likely to be considered a support person by their students.
Originally considered by the researcher to be a nonverbal immediacy construct, the item “My academic counselor’s office is warm and inviting,” can also be considered an academic advising practice as well. This item received an answer of strongly agree by six of the eight (75%) participants in the study. By creating a physical space that is warm and inviting, this in turn communicates to students that the space is safe and supportive (Hughey, Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009). As a result, students may then feel more comfortable sharing information with their academic advisor.

The next item which received an answer of strongly agree by the six of the eight (75%) participants in this study who viewed their academic advisor as a support person “My academic counselor asks me questions and encourages me to talk,” aligns with the existing literature which suggests that academic advisors should help students develop independent thinking skills in order to foster growth and independence (Szymanska, 2011; Hester, 2008). Additionally, as student-athletes who are challenged intellectually are more likely to graduate from college (Plecha, 2006), by asking questions and encouraging students to talk, academic advisors are able to support their students and build their confidence as they navigate their university experience.

The next item which seven of the eight student-athlete participants (87.5%) viewed as supportive, “My academic counselor is able to refer me to campus resources,” is also related to best practices within the field of academic advising. Effective academic advising should help students to gain knowledge about the resources which are available to them on campus (Szymanska, 2011). By doing so, advisors are able to support students while simultaneously helping to foster student growth and independence (Hester, 2008).
With regards to the item “My academic counselor maintains regular contact with me via email, telephone, social-media, etc.,” six of the eight respondents (75%) who viewed their academic advisor as a support person answered that they strongly agree that their academic advisor maintains regular contact with them. By keeping in regular contact with students, advisors are able to work collaboratively with their students in order to determine whether or not they need additional guidance (Gaston-Gayles, 2003).

Finally, seven of the eight participants (87.5%) who viewed their academic advisor as a support person answered that they strongly agree with the item “My academic counselor invites me to meet with him/her if I have any additional questions.” This finding supports existing literature surrounding best practices within the field of academic advising in that student-athletes who received assistance from faculty in achieving their goals were more likely to be successful academically (Comeaux, 2005). By communicating that they are available to meet if the student-athlete has any additional questions, the advisor is then opening themselves up as a potential resource, or support person, to students if they so need. Additionally, by encouraging students to ask questions, advisors are increasing immediacy between them and their student, which has been shown to be associated with cognitive and affective learning (Gorham, 1988).

5.1.2.3—Academic Performance

In addition to the Academic Advising Practices listed above, six of the eight student-athlete participants (75%) who viewed their academic advisor as a support person in this study answered that they strongly agreed with the item “My academic counselor praises my work, actions, or comments.” Originally anticipated to measure verbal immediacy, this item also relates
to student-athlete academic performance in that advisor praise of student work, actions, or comments is a form of encouragement for students to achieve their educational goals (Plecha, 2006; Hester, 2008). Additionally, by increasing immediacy between the advisor and student, praise of student work, actions, or comments is able to signal approachability, availability for communication, and interpersonal warmth and closeness, all of which are considered to be supportive characteristics (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). It should be noted that in the current study, no participants selected that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the items in the Academic Performance factor.

5.1.2.4—Shared Experiences

Finally, in addition to the items listed in the factors above, the student-athlete participants in this study who viewed their academic advisor as a support person responded to the survey items which aimed to measure shared experiences between advisors and the student-athlete participants in a variety of ways. Unlike the items listed above, some respondents did select that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the items in the Shared Experiences factor. Unlike the other survey items which the researcher hoped would receive answers ranging from agree to strongly agree, two of the items in this factor “My academic counselor’s gender impacts our relationship” and “My academic counselor’s race impacts our relationship,” were expected to receive answers ranging from disagree to strongly disagree. The other two items in this factor, “My academic counselor understands how the culture at Oregon State University impacts my experiences here” and “My academic counselor understands my experiences as an athlete,” were
expected to receive answers ranging from agree to strongly agree. Participant responses to each of these items will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

With regards to the item “My academic counselor’s gender impacts our relationship,” five of the eight participants (62.5%) answered either agree or strongly agree, while one participant (12.5%) answered disagree. No participants answered strongly disagree. This finding may have occurred due to differences between the student-athletes’ academic advisors. Within the current study, some student-athletes had a male academic advisor, while others had a female academic advisor. Despite this, existing research within the field of supportive communication has found that women are seen as more nurturing and available for support than are men, possibly due to the fact that they use a greater amount of nonverbal immediacy behaviors than do men (Jones & Wirtz, 2007). Additionally, women may also be more responsive to nonverbal immediacy behaviors than are men, leading women to be viewed as more supportive than their male counterparts (Jones & Wirtz, 2007). Thus, the student-athletes in this study may have been susceptible to this gendered bias.

With regards to the item “My academic counselor’s race impacts our relationship,” three of the eight participants (37.5%) answered either agree or strongly agree, while an additional three of the eight respondents (37.5%) answered either disagree or strongly disagree. Similar to the finding related to gender presented above, this finding may have occurred due to differences between the student-athletes’ academic advisors. Within the current study, some student-athletes’ had an African American academic advisor, while others had a White academic advisor. Thus, participant answers may have reflected this difference. Despite this, research (McCroskey et al., 2007) has shown that regardless of race, the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors when used
by academic faculty may be beneficial in helping the advisor develop relationships with the student-athletes they work with. Additional studies have found similar results (Powell & Harville, 1990; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Thus, regardless of race, by utilizing the nonverbal immediacy behaviors which the participants in the present study found supportive, academic advisors may be able to further develop their relationships with their students.

With regards to the item “My academic counselor understands how the culture at Oregon State University impacts my experiences here,” six of the eight participants (75%) answered either agree or strongly agree. No participants answered disagree or strongly disagree. As student-athlete specific academic advisors have an understanding of how variables such as institutional racism and stigmatization can impact how student-athletes are both perceived and treated by university faculty and staff, traditional students, and community members, this knowledge is clearly viewed by the student-athlete participants in this study as supportive (Simons et al., 2007; Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). By understanding the unique culture of the university they work in, including whether or not the university is considered a Predominately White Institution (PWI), academic advisors will be better able to understand how said culture may impact the student-athletes they work with, particularly if those student-athletes do not identify as White. In turn, this understanding will likely be viewed as supportive by the student-athlete population.

Finally, with regards to the item “My academic counselor understands my experiences as an athlete,” six of the eight participants (75%) answered either agree or strongly agree. No participants answered disagree or strongly disagree. As academic advisors who work specifically with student-athletes are well aware of the additional variables which impact student-athletes in
higher education (i.e. time demands, stigmatization & stress), they are then able to adapt their practices to suit the student-athletes they work with.

Participant responses to the survey items described above have helped to shed light on particular behaviors/actions of academic advisors and their resulting impact on whether or not their student-athletes’ view them as supportive. Next, a more detailed analysis of one item within the Shared Experiences factor, race, will be discussed further in order to better understand whether or not we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person.

5.1.3—Research Question Three

As was described in Chapter 2, the lives of student-athletes are filled with a variety of demands, including athletic, academic, and social commitments, all of which compete for their time and energy (Martin et al., 2010). As a result of these demands, coping with stress becomes necessary to ensure overall health and well-being. Additionally, while all student-athletes potentially face stigmatization due to their status as a student-athlete, many student-athletes may also face prejudice and discrimination as a result of their race/ethnicity as well (Simons et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2010). In turn, this can impact whether or not the student-athlete perceives their environment to be safe and supportive. Thus, an understanding of whether or not student-athletes of differing races view their academic advisor as a support person is necessary.

Student-athletes who do not identify with the dominant racial/ethnic group of their particular university may then face compounding stereotypes as both a minority student and as a
student-athlete (Martin et al., 2010; Simons et al., 2007). As such, it seems that the availability of a support person would be particularly important for student-athletes who may be dealing with issues related to institutional racism. Thus, the researcher aimed to determine whether or not racial/ethnic status impacted whether or not participants in the present study viewed their academic advisor as a support person by asking the following research question: “Do we see a difference between races with regards to student-athletes viewing their academic advisor as a support person?”

Based on the survey data collected for the present study, it appears that a difference does exist between races with regards to whether or not student-athlete respondents viewed their academic advisor as a support person. Of the available racial/ethnic classifications listed on the survey (i.e. American Indian/Alaska Native, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, Multi-Racial/Ethnic, and Other), five of the eight student-athlete participants (62.5%) who currently view their academic advisor as a support person identified as White, two student-athlete participants (25%) identified as African American, and one student-athlete participant (12.5%) identified as Multi-Racial/Ethnic. It should be noted that no respondents who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander indicated that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them. It should also be noted that no respondents who answered this survey item identified as Hispanic, Asian, or Other. This limitation will be further discussed in section 5.2—Limitations of this chapter.

Unfortunately, student-athletes of color who attend Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) may face prejudice and discrimination as a result of their racial/ethnic status (Simons et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2010). In comparison to White student-athletes, minority student-athletes
face negative perceptions and treatment from university students, faculty, and staff due to hostile racial campus climates and low academic expectations (Simons et al., 2007; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). For these reasons, among others, the availability of a support person may be particularly important to student-athletes who do not identify as White. The results of the present study support this claim, as the bulk of student-athletes who stated that their academic advisor could be a support person to them (79%) did not identify as White. Fortunately, for those student-athletes who do turn to academic personnel such as their academic advisor for support, research has found that this support is viewed as positive over 90% of the time (Potuto et al., 2007).

With regards to whether or not student-athletes of different races thought that their academic advisor could potentially play the role of support person to them, African American student-athletes were most likely to view their academic advisor as a potential source of support (78% stated yes, their academic advisor could be a support person to them), followed by Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student-athletes (75% stated yes, their academic advisor could be a support person to them), Multi-Racial/Ethnic respondents (67% stated yes, their academic advisor could be a support person to them), and finally White respondents (45% stated yes, their academic advisor could be a support person to them). These findings will be explored further in order to examine why this difference may exist. It should be noted again that no participants identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, or Other, a limitation which will be further discussed in section 5.2—Limitations of this chapter.

While the majority (67%) of student-athlete participants indicated that their academic advisor could be a support person to them, participants who identified as White were the least
likely to view their academic advisor as a potential support person (45%). While there are a variety of reasons why this finding may have emerged, White student-athletes at PWIs are less likely to face compounding stereotypes due to their racial/ethnic status than are their teammates who do not identify as White (Simons et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2010). Because they are less likely to be stereotyped on campus and in the community, White student-athletes may not feel that they need support in this particular area, and thus may be less likely to turn to their academic advisor for support. In contrast, the African American student-athletes, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multi-Racial/Ethnic student-athletes in this study were most likely to state that their academic advisor could potentially play the role of support person to them. This may be due to the student-athlete facing compounding stereotypes and negative treatment related to or as a result of their racial/ethnic status (Simons et al., 2007; Comeaux & Harrison, 2011; Martin et al., 2010).

5.2—Limitations

Although the current study provides some insight into whether or not male student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball look to their academic advisor as a source of support, it is limited by the fact that the data was collected from a single, Predominately White Institution. Because no respondents answered that they identified as Hispanic, Asian, or Other, the findings of this study may not fully represent the perspectives of student-athletes of different races.

Additionally, while the sample size (n=42) was adequate for the purposes of this study, only eight student-athletes selected that they currently view their academic advisor as a support
person, thus limiting the data from which the researcher was able to draw conclusions. Of the eight student-athletes who answered that their academic advisor is currently a support person to them, none identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, further limiting the data from which the researcher was able to address the third research question. Future research should aim to collect data from a larger, more representative sample of male student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball, from Division I universities across the United States.

Next, while participants were asked to select only one answer to the survey question: “If you answered yes to the previous question, is this person a: (Family Member, Friend, Academic Advisor, Coach, or Other)?” many participants selected more than one answer. While this limitation may have impacted the data from which the researcher was able to draw conclusions, it does support previous findings (Potuto et al., 2007) which suggest that student-athletes receive support from a variety of sources, including family members, friends, teammates, roommates, and classmates, in addition to academic faculty and staff.

Finally, student-athlete perspectives on whether or not they consider their academic advisor as a source of support are likely influenced by a number of personal and institutional factors, including whether or not student-athletes recognize that their academic advisor could be considered as a source of support, and how and by whom advising is delivered to students. Thus, one of the methodological shortcomings of this study involves the use of self-report data. As with any study which uses self-report measures, some degree of response bias may be present within the study. Future studies should consider other measures that more directly tap student-athlete experiences and interactions with their academic advisor (e.g. direct observations of
student-athlete and academic advisor behavior during advising encounters and/or in-depth interviews with student-athletes).
Chapter 6
Conclusion

The results from this study point to several conclusions. First, the data support the claim that most (80% of the participants in the present study) male student-athletes in the revenue generating sports of football and men’s basketball do not currently view their academic advisor as a support person. However, the finding that many (67% of the participants in this study) student-athletes stated that their academic advisor could potentially be a support person to them suggests that academic advisors should remain available to their students as a potential source of support.

Second, particular characteristics and behaviors of academic advisors were more likely to be associated with the student-athletes’ viewing their academic advisor as a source of support. Those academic advisor characteristics/behaviors included: making eye contact with students, smiling at students, speaking in a way which students find easy to understand, maintaining a professional and cordial relationship with students, making an effort to get to know students, strengthening the relationship with their students over time, maintaining a warm and inviting office, asking questions and encouraging students to talk, referring students to campus resources, maintaining regular contact with students, inviting students to meet if they have any additional questions, praising students work, actions, or comments, and understanding how the university culture and student-athlete experience impacts the overall university experience. By incorporating these behaviors into their current practices, academic advisors may be more likely to be seen as a potential support person to their students.
Finally, while the majority of participants (62.5%) who selected that their academic
advisor is currently a support person to them identified as White, White students were also the
least likely (only 45% of White respondents) to state that their academic advisor could
potentially play the role of support person to them, while African American student-athletes
(78% of African American respondents), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student-athletes (75% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander respondents), and Multi-Racial/Ethnic student-athletes (67% of Multi-Racial/Ethnic respondents) were most likely to state that their academic advisor could potentially play the role of support person to them.

6.1—Implications for Policy and Practice

These findings have implications for policy and practice related to student-athletes in higher education. While previous studies have not addressed the role of the academic advisor as a support person for student-athletes, the findings from this study suggest that academic advisors should remain available as a source of support for the student-athletes they work with, as many students stated that their academic advisor could be a support person to them. This availability can be facilitated through the utilization of particular characteristics/behaviors which the students in this study found supportive, including those listed in this chapter. Academic advisors have the opportunity to lend their expertise in helping student-athletes navigate their overall university experience, including their academic, athletic, career, and life goals. In addition, advisors can help student-athletes access university resources and overcome potential barriers to their academic success. To promote desirable outcomes for student-athletes, higher education administrators and policy makers may want to intentionally require a certain number of meetings
between student-athletes and their academic advisors in order to support these students and ensure that they persist through degree completion.

In summary, as the availability of a support person has been shown to increase persistence to graduation for student-athletes, academic advisors should take every measure to remain available to their students in order to increase the likelihood that their students achieve their academic, career, and life goals. Additionally, the findings of the current study suggest that minority student-athletes at Predominately White Institutions may be more inclined to turn to their academic advisor as a source of support. Thus, while academic advisors should purposefully remain available to all students, minority student-athletes may be more likely to benefit from this support (Museus & Ravello, 2010).
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A—Survey

Please answer the following questions:

Age:
Please specify your age.
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- Other: ________

Race/Ethnicity:
Please specify your race.
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Multi-Racial/Ethnic
  Please specify: _______________________
- Other: _______________________

Year In School:
Please specify your current year in school, NOT in your sport.
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- 5th year Senior
- Graduate Student
- Other: _______________________

Current GPA:
Please specify your cumulative (overall) GPA.
- 0.00-0.99
- 1.00-1.49
- 1.50-1.99
- 2.00-2.49
- 2.50-2.99
- 3.00-3.49
- 3.50-4.00

Level of Parent Education (Mother):
What is the highest degree or level of school your mother has completed?
- Some High School
- High School Graduate (high school diploma or GED)
- Some College, no degree
- Technical School (ex: automotive school, beauty school)
- Associate Degree (ex: AA, AS)
- Bachelor's Degree (ex: BA, BS)
- Master's Degree (ex: MA, MS, Med, MBA)
- Professional Degree (ex: MD, JD)
- Doctorate Degree (ex: PhD, EdD)
- Unknown
Level of Parent Education (Father):
What is the highest degree or level of school your father has completed?
- Some High School
- High School Graduate (high school diploma or GED)
- Some College, no degree
- Technical School (ex: automotive school, beauty school)
- Associate Degree (ex: AA, AS)
- Bachelor’s Degree (ex: BA, BBS)
- Master’s Degree (ex: MA, MS, MEd, MBA)
- Professional Degree (ex: MD, JD)
- Doctorate Degree (ex: PhD, EdD)
- Unknown

Sport:
Please specify which team you play for.
- Men’s Football
- Men’s Basketball

During your time in college, do you believe you have had a support person you can count on when you come across problems/issues related to life/school/sports?
- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to the previous question, is this person a:
(Please pick one)
- Family Member
- Friend
- Academic Counselor
- Coach
- Others: ________________

How does this person show support for you? (Feel free to select more than one choice)
- Asks me questions related to school
- Asks me questions related to my sport
- Asks me questions related to life
- Keeps in contact with me frequently
- Helps me develop goals for myself
- Helps me make decisions
- Praises my efforts
- Encourages me to talk
- Other(s): __________________________

If your academic counselor was not chosen as your support person, do you think they could be a support person for you?
- Yes
- No

Why or why not? (Please be specific)

________________________
________________________
________________________
Please answer the questions based on the following scale:
SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, N/A=Not Applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor has made an effort to get to know me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with my academic counselor has grown stronger over time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor's office is warm and inviting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor is prepared for our appointments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor asks me questions and encourages me to talk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor is able to refer me to campus resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor maintains regular contact with me via email, telephone, social-media, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor invites me to meet with him/her if I have any additional questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor helps me make decisions and solve problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor helps me identify causes of poor academic performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor praises my work, actions, or comments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic counselor helps me determine future actions related to my academic performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My academic counselor uses humor when talking with me.

My academic counselor addresses me by name.

My academic counselor smiles while talking to me.

My academic counselor makes eye contact while talking to me.

My academic counselor uses personal examples or talks about experiences he/she has had when talking with me.

My academic counselor asks me questions to make sure he/she understands what I am saying.

My academic counselor speaks with me in a way which makes him/her easy to understand.

My academic counselor is professional and cordial when talking with me.

My academic counselor's gender impacts our relationship.

My academic counselor's race impacts our relationship.

My academic counselor understands how the culture at Oregon State University impacts my experiences here.

My academic counselor understands my experiences as an athlete.