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### Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Racing to Class: School, sport and inequality

By

Kirsten Hextrum

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Lisa García Bedolla, Chair

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Spring 2017

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Kirsten Hextrum

## Abstract

Racing to class: School, sport, and inequality

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Lisa García Bedolla, Chair

College sport is a uniquely American phenomenon in which participants must split their time, energy, and devotion between two institutions: school and sport. In recent years, the institution faced legal threats and possible player unionization. The research informing these efforts assumes that sports are entertainment based and therefore non-educational (Sperber, 2000; Ingrassia, 2012). Yet framing the conflict for student athletes and schools as education versus entertainment leads to a narrow set of proposed reforms such as paying athletes or eliminating sports (Bowen, 2014; Smith, 2011; Wilbon, 2011). Using participants who are free from commercial pressures—male and female Olympic sport student athletes—this research asks: *How do social structures such as race, class, and gender shape student athletes' ability to negotiate the competing demands of sport and school?* To address this question, this year-long qualitative study used multiple sources of data including in-depth interviews and time diaries with student athletes, interviews with academic advisors, and tutors, and various institutional measures. Research and analysis was guided by theories of social reproduction theory and intersectionality. By moving away from an economic-centric analysis of college sport I unveil how the struggles facing student athletes cannot be solved through employee status. Instead it reveals that in the current context of U.S. higher education, school and sport are fundamentally structured to conflict along central areas of college student life: requirements, availability, and legibility. The institutional make-up and legal support of college sport disguises the conflict present and individualizes the resulting educational problems for athletes to navigate on their own. Even athletes with robust economic and social resources struggle to achieve success in both school and sport simultaneously.

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## Terms used Throughout the Dissertation

### College Sport Terms

**NCAA:** National Collegiate Athletic Association or the governing league of U.S. college sport.

**D-I:** Refers to Division I sports, which is considered the most competitive and selective of the three Divisions within the NCAA (the other Divisions are D-2, and D-3)

**Athletic Conference:** Refers to the regional conferences within the NCAA.

**Revenue Sports:** Refers to men's football and basketball or those that generate large sums of money for colleges

**Olympic sports:** This term refers to all sports in the NCAA that are NOT men's football and basketball. The term can include sports, even if they are not hosted by the international Olympic event. For instance, "baseball" and "lacrosse" are considered college "Olympic" sports but are excluded from *the* Olympics.

### Research Site Terms

**Coastal U:** Research site. A large, Tier-1 public research university located on a U.S. coast.

**CLS:** College of Letters and Science, or the largest college at Coastal U. Most study participants were part of this college

**SAASC:** Student Athlete Academic Support Center, or the academic support center with tutoring, learning specialists and advising geared towards student athletes

**Weights:** Refers to a weight-lifting session which occurs on campus and is supervised by a weight-lifting coach. These workouts vary by sport and team.

**NARP:** Short for "Non-athlete regular person" or a term used by student athletes to differentiate themselves from undergraduate who were not college athletes.

**Gear:** Refers to clothing or accessories that the athletic department gives to Coastal U athletes.

### Sport terms

**K:** Is short for "kilometers." This is a metric used in rowing and distance running to measure the length of a workout or race. In rowing, the two most common races are 6K in length which occur in the fall season and 2K in length which occur in the spring season. In distance running for college, men race 10K or 8K and women race 6K or 5K. During track season, men and women race a 5K and a 10K. There is also a 3K steeplechase event. Track and rowing also used "M" or "meters" as their main system of measurement. In track, races are often referred to as 100M, 200M, 400M, 800M, 1500M and so on events.

**Repeats or Pieces:** In both rowing and track athletes refer to portions of their workouts as "repeats" or "pieces."

### Rowing Terms

**Crew:** Refers to the sport of rowing, but can also refer to a boat. A "crew" could mean the

**Coxswain:** The position within a boat that steers, directs, and coaches the crew.

**Sweeping:** This is the style of rowing that occurs in college. It means a rower holds only one oar and as they row they reach out to one side or the other.

**Port and Starboard:** Refers to the left and right side (looking from the coxswain's vantage point) of the boat. In sweep rowing, rowers are assigned a "side" and become either a port or a starboard. When coaches decide who to put in an eight-person boat, they must narrow it down to four ports and four starboards.



**Sculling:** This kind of rowing allows rowers to hold two oars, which are smaller in size than sweep rowing. It is common internationally and has several featured events at the Olympics. The “single” event, at the Olympics, is a one-person sculling boat and is considered one way to measure the world’s greatest rower.

**Erg:** Shorthand for an “ergometer” or a stationary rowing machine. This apparatus can measure the speed, force exerted, number of strokes per minute, and time a rower goes over a set distance. Erg “tests” are an important measure in boat selection for coaches. A test would be how fast a rower completes a set distance. At Coastal U the common tests were a 6K erg in the fall and a 2K erg in the spring. Rowers were ranked and known by their scores on these tests.

**Uni:** is the one-piece, spandex uniform that rowers wear.

### **Track Terms**

**Track team:** Captures all events including running, field, jumping, or cross country.

**Cross Country:** Refers to a segment of the track team and separate fall sport. This sport takes place not within a track stadium but on fields and trails. The distances are longer and over mixed terrain.

**Long-distance:** Only refers to the cross country or long distance part of track. Sometimes this group is called “distance.”

**Jumps:** Refers to all jumping events which include high jump, triple jump, and long jump.

**Throws:** refers to all throwing events which include the hammer, discuss, weight throw, shot put and javelin.

**Sprints:** Refers to any event shorter than 800 meters in length.

## Acknowledgments

I spent eleven years and completed three degrees at UC Berkeley. I returned to this school because of its inspiring and challenging people who pushed me to question anything and be grateful for everything. If you were my professor, GSI, teammate, student, coach, employer, roommate, advisor, tutor, or friend, at any point since 2003, know that our experience together deeply influenced this project. In particular, I want to thank the following for their support.

The UC Berkeley Graduate Division, Graduate School of Education, and the Center for the Studies in Higher Education for their financial grants throughout my PhD. Two fellowships programs also offered training that enhanced this project: the Assessment Fellowship, run by Yukiko Watanabe and the SMART Program run by Sabrina Soracco and Linda von Hone. Both programs provided the tools, guidance, and motivation to complete this work. One of the greatest benefits was the opportunity to mentor UC Berkeley B.A. Candidate Suyang Lu. Your focus, work ethic, and precision helped set my writing process in motion. You pushed my project into new quantitative and disciplinary terrains.

My committee members who collectively supported my project in its nascent stages and pushed me to think big now and refine and trim later. Thank you to my advisor, Professor Lisa García Bedolla for giving me a home in the GSE, for reminding me that odd-ducks do belong in academia, and allowing me to take breaks from writing and go outside. Thank you to Professor Zeus Leonardo who introduced me to the critical education theories that became the basis of this dissertation, for allowing our meetings to meander a wide intellectual terrain, for promoting and believing in my scholarship, and for your love of sport. You truly made the GSE feel like a home. Thank you to Professor Raka Ray. In our first meeting you told me what I needed to hear to stay in graduate school. You provided the clear structure and direction to design, implement, and write a large research project. And, most of all, thank you for reminding me to never settle and remain ambitious with my research. Your faith in me as a person and as an academic gave me the confidence over and over to keep moving forward.

The SCS community of students and faculty. Thank you for teaching me a new way to examine the social world. In SCS I found a place to name, understand, and explore inequality in ways I did not know were possible. In particular, thank you to Angelica Guevara for making the time for weekly meetings, for always wearing bright colors, and reminding me that optimism and positive outlook are a daily struggle but worth the fight.

The CSEE faculty, Dr. Mirabelli, Dr. Van Rhee, and Dr. Sperber. You provided the early foundation for what would later become this dissertation. You all provided the vision that a dumb jock could become a scholar and that sports can be a critical area of scholarship. To Dr. Sperber in particular, thank you for taking me aside and encouraging me to apply for a PhD, for taking the time to read early versions of this draft, for always taking a bet, and for being a role model in the field who can both love and be critical of sports.

The Athletic Study Center staff and students. Thank you for your financial support throughout my two graduate degrees. Through working there, I learned that theory and practice can be two sides of the same coin. And, how to keep sarcasm alive and well in the workplace. John Cummins. I am deeply grateful for our long-lasting writing partnership and friendship.

Thank you for revealing the inner workings of Berkeley, for affirming my passion for the topic, and for offering a public platform and legitimacy to present our work on college sport.

My friends and family outside of academia. Thank you for reminding me what a gift it is to be in graduate school, that even academics deserve a weekend, and that I am more than my dissertation. To my mom for raising three strong, feminist daughters, and teaching us that there are morals in the universe worth fighting for. To Robin Hextrum you are a compassionate competitor who pushed me to be a better student, athlete, scholar, and sister.

Steve, my armchair sociologist, sparring partner, and emotional rock. You challenge me daily to think sharper, to be positive, and to be confident. We are in this process together and you deserve an honorary PhD.

All my former coaches, teammates, parents of teammates, and students. Our journeys together are present within these pages. I would never have been able to be a college athlete and later have the pleasure to study college athletics without your support, encouragement, and mentorship. My positive experiences in sport give me the strength to remain a true-believer that it is possible for intercollegiate athletics to be an enriching experience for all participants.

Finally, all my study participants. Thank you for sharing the intimate corners of your lives. You all candidly recounted the joy, struggles, and passion for school sports. Know that I did all I could to honor your experiences in this work. To three participants in particular, Merlin, Sophia, and Stephen. Your belief in the project, your help with recruitment, and your enthusiasm for my written work facilitated and inspired this project. I hope others are as inspired by your stories as I am. You all can consider me your number one fan.

# **PART I: INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, THEORY, AND METHODS**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

College sport is a visible, iconic, and uniquely American part of higher education. U.S. intercollegiate athletics is different than any other global college-sporting system because of the governing principle of amateurism. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) defines amateur athletes as full-time students who forgo any current or future compensation based on their collegiate athletic ability. Recent college sport reform efforts target amateurism to solve the problems that arise between school and sport. This project goes beyond naming amateurism as the single problem and reveals a broader conflict facing today's student athletes.

After a century of governing college sport, the NCAA faces new legal challenges against amateurism. In 2009 former UCLA and professional basketball player Ed O'Bannon sued EA Sports—a video game company that used his Bruins image and likeness within their games—and the NCAA (O'Bannon v. NCAA, 2015). A year later, eleven college athletes joined O'Bannon's suit, arguing the NCAA and private companies should not be able to earn revenue in perpetuity on a student athlete's likeness. The case spent four years weaving through the appeals process which resulted in a settlement with EA sports and no change to the NCAA's amateurism policies (Solomon, 2014). In 2014 Kain Colter, a quarterback at Northwestern University, offered another route to reform. He announced plans for the team to unionize. That same year, scandals hit the University of North Carolina (UNC) as decades of academic fraud led to inflated graduation rates within a fake degree program. Students from that school filed a collective suit alleging damages for an unequal education. Also in 2014, two track and field athletes from the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) argued that they should be compensated as university employees for their labor within athletics. Each case took a different slant to contest amateurism.

The academic research these legal challenges draw upon remain deeply polarized. The arguments on both sides use economic approaches to examine college sport (Clotfelter, 2011; Oriard, 2001, 2009; Smith, 2011; Zimbalist, 2001). Those in favor of the existing model of amateur college athletics cite how sports can unite a campus, earn revenue, inspire donations, and contribute to a well-rounded student body (Clotfelter, 2011; Duderstadt, 2000). Those against amateurism see college sport as a multibillion dollar industry based on the unpaid labor of low-income men of color in men’s football and basketball programs (Branch, 2011; Eitzen, 2012; Singer & May, 2010; Smith 2011). Low graduation rates, particularly for African American male student athletes, support criticism of the existing model. According to Federal Graduation Rates for Division I athletes in 2016 only 55% of African American males and 66% of African American females graduated. In contrast, 64% of White male and 76% of White female student athletes graduated (NCAA Graduation Rate Report, 2016). Moreover, 96% of all NCAA Division I athletic programs have lower graduation rates compared to the general student body (Harper, 2006; Harper, Williams, Blackman, 2013).

Recent court decisions added further precedent to the NCAA’s long-lived claim that the term “student-athlete” has legal backing thus reinforcing amateurism. The Ninth Circuit allowed amateurism to remain the governing principle in the O’Bannon ruling. Northwestern University athletes lost their bid to unionize, and any legal claims to employee status. As the Indiana Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the Penn track and field case, college sports remain “extracurricular.” The judges concluded that under the existing legal definition of employment: “Simply put, student-athletic 'play' is not 'work,’” (Farmer & Pellegrini, 2016, para 6). By failing to define sports as “work” advocates for student athletes enabled the courts to levy a dismissive binary—if sport is not work, it must be play.

The economic approaches to studying college sport show the public at least two important issues present within intercollegiate athletics: 1) the role and purpose of sports within higher education and 2) how the current model exploits the labor of unpaid student athletes. But economic approaches have several limitations. First, they disguise how other power structures are reproduced within sports, namely race and gender. Second, they lead to narrow reform solutions such as paying athletes or eliminating athletics entirely (Bowen, 2014; Smith, 2011; Wilbon, 2011). Third, they assume all student athletes<sup>1</sup> are in the revenue producing men's sports of football and basketball (Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Sperber, 2000).

This project moves away from economic-centric analysis of college sport to demonstrate how the struggles facing student athletes cannot be solved through employee status. Instead it reveals that in the current context of U.S. higher education, school and sport are fundamentally structured to conflict along central areas of college student life. The institutional make-up and legal support of college sport disguises the conflict present and individualizes the resulting educational problems for athletes to navigate on their own. Even athletes with robust economic and social resources struggle to achieve success in both school and sport simultaneously.

### **Olympic Sports: “Quality” Education for Athletes**

The U.S. judicial system reaffirmed amateurism on the virtue that college athletes are students above all else. Rather than following the previous efforts by O'Bannon, this dissertation questions the NCAA's claim that colleges provide student athletes with “the skills to succeed on the playing field, in the classroom and throughout life” (NCAA's mission statement, 2015). To

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms “student athlete,” “college athlete,” and “athlete” interchangeably to refer to NCAA participants. The NCAA coined the hyphenated term “student-athlete” in the 1950s to stave off claims for employee status and in turn workers' compensation (Byers, 1994). Over the preceding decades, the NCAA has won multiple court cases that link the phrase “student-athlete” to a uniquely American model of amateur (or non-employee based) sport. As growing evidence of the farcical nature of the *Student-Athlete* route mounts, some scholars do not use the term as naming it reinforces the legitimacy behind the phrase (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). This study uses a different approach and instead was designed to take the NCAA at its word. I searched for the NCAA's version of “student-athletes.” I only use the hyphenated version of the term in the final empirical chapter that demonstrates the aspirational, transitional, and oppositional nature of the “student-athlete” experience.

do so, I include participants in two non-commercialized men's and women's sports: track and field and rowing. The study used multiple sources of data including in-depth interviews and time diaries with student athletes, interviews with academic advisors and tutors, and various institutional measures. The data is used to assess educational quality for student athletes through the core research question: *How do social structures such as race, class, and gender shape student athletes' ability to negotiate the competing demands of sport and school?*

To address this question I combine two theoretical frameworks—social reproduction and intersectionality—as neither on its own can reveal the scope of conflict facing student athletes. Social reproduction views schools as inherently ideological institutions with particular hierarchies, knowledge systems, and organizational mechanisms, all of which produce, reproduce, and maintain unequal social relations (Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1981; McLaren, 2007; Oakes, 2005). I use social reproduction to map the institutional bureaucracies, hierarchies, ideologies, and identities within school sports. A fault of social reproduction is it elevates one structure—race, class, *or* gender—missing the interactions between power structures (Lather, 1991). To understand the social complexities another framework is necessary. Intersectional theory assumes race, class, and gender are simultaneously reproduced in interrelated ways and argues there is no universal gendered, classed, raced, etc., experience (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Glenn, 1992). By rejecting a singular view of power, intersectional approaches reveal inconsistencies and possibilities within society. Yet intersectionality cannot offer a template for institutional analysis. Thus, I combine social reproduction and intersectionality to offer new theoretical understandings of how power operates within educational settings.

Both social reproduction and intersectionality rely on the theory of ideology to explain

how inequality persists inter-generationally. This project uses an Althusserian definition of ideology or how state sponsored institutions like schools and sports produce ideas, beliefs, and meanings in society that inform an individual's position in society, interaction with other individuals, and interactions with institutions (Althusser, 1971). College sport circulates at least three prominent ideologies that impact student athletes and the public at large: the ideology of meritocracy, the ideology of natural race differences, and the ideology of natural gender differences. Throughout the following chapters I discuss how these three ideologies are produced within school sports and reproduce race, gender, and class in society at large.

### **Structure of Dissertation and Main Findings**

To understand the conflict student athletes face, I start by questioning how some individuals become elite level athletes in the first place. I use social reproduction and intersectionality to show how access to school sports is restricted to those with economic, community, and social resources. The lifetime of sports participation necessary to become an elite athlete has two impacts on participants: 1) it encourages youth and high school students to elevate sports commitments over academics, training them at a young age to view school/academic performance differently than their peers and 2) through a lifetime of sports participation, athletes embrace the ideology of individualism or that any success or failure comes through individual effort (or lack thereof) rather than institutional benefits or setbacks. Once elite athletes arrive in higher education, the pipeline that allowed socially advantaged individuals into college does not help them through college. Instead, they struggle to navigate the deep conflict between school and sport. Yet again, the ideology of individualism disguises how the conflict for college sport participants is much greater than simply entertainment versus education.

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 offers the broader historical context



in which college sport emerged and the legal definition of amateurism was sustained. It also reviews the theoretical frameworks of social reproduction and intersectionality. Chapter 2 explains why on its own each framework cannot uncover the conflict within college sport. Combining an intersectional approach with social reproduction offers an empirical template that reveals how multiple forms of inequality are maintained within the athletic-academic conflict. Chapter 2 ends with a high-level literature review of empirical work on college sport. It points out why capitalism alone cannot explain the depth of conflict athletes face in trying to earn a college degree. Chapter 2 then uses the gaps in the literature to introduce the research methodology. It includes a review of the research site, procedures, and study participants.

The remaining chapters explore the results which are organized into two parts. Part II explores how individuals access and become high-level athletes. It reveals the “sports-track-to-college” or the alternative pipeline by which individuals enter higher education. The pipeline limits entry through various barriers to sport access. Chapter 3 explores how “Community Access” limits entry into the sports pipeline. Chapter 4 builds on the findings in the preceding section and shows how “Social Access” or relationships within communities further limit who can gain entry into the sports-track-to-college pipeline. The final chapter of Part II, Chapter 5 describes how the sports-track-to-college becomes hidden from public view by “Meritocratic Ideology.” I demonstrate that the primary beneficiaries are not disenfranchised groups. Instead, the pipeline disproportionately benefits White and middle class athletes. Overall, this section shows how the educational pipeline to higher education rewards and institutionally supports athletic over academic performance and reproduces class, race, and gender power structures.

Part III assesses what happens to athletes once they arrive at college. Here, the institutions turn against each other, no longer aligning to support athletes. Chapter 6 examines

the bureaucracies and social relationships within school and sport that maintain the institutions. In doing so, I demonstrate that the conflict present within college sport is more expansive than explained by capitalism. Instead, I observed three areas of conflict: Expectations, Availability and Subjectivity. The core of the conflict emerges in the *body* or how certain bodies are and are not regulated, monitored, and welcomed into higher education. The system of college sport denies the conflict through the ideology of individualism and through bureaucracies and social relationships that posit academic or athletic failure as the result of lack of effort or time management skills. Chapter 7 uses one salient example, the dumb jock stereotype, that circulates on college campuses to show how the conflict cannot be mitigated by individual effort.

Chapter 8 concludes the findings by outlining the institutionally-backed routes through college as an athlete. I outline four intersecting routes through higher education for athletes that are formed through a combination of academic and athletic rejections endured by participants. All routes include a compromised educational experience for athletes preventing them from engaging fully in their academic pursuits. Each route is defined by bodily experiences, or ways the institution manages, rejects, and controls athletes' bodies. Finally, each route is shaped by race, class, and gender, offering different social and economic opportunities to participants. Chapter 9, the conclusion, revisits why the current economic-centric reform movement for college sport failed and offers recommendations based on the lives of Olympic sport athletes that would result in greater rights and compensation for all athletes in higher education.

By bringing the student athlete's voice and body into research, this dissertation uncovers several theoretical and practical implications. First, this project demonstrates how educational institutions utilize spaces beyond the formal classroom to reproduce unequal social structures. Second, this project extends social reproduction to structures beyond class, considering how

economic inequality is tied to racism and sexism. Third, it shows how individualism circulates within K-12 and higher education and disguises the institutional conflict between school and sport. Individualism disguises the institutional hurdles present in educational systems that further disadvantage marginalized populations. In doing so, it questions the relationship between high level sport and school in its current form. Finally, in accomplishing the above points, this project elevates the body in the reproduction process. It shows how social processes shape athletic bodies and how athletic bodies shape social processes.

## **Chapter 2: History and Context of College sport**

### **Historical Context**

Historians believe college sport emerged and persisted because of capitalist forces (e.g., Clotfelter, 2011; Smith, 2011; Thelin, 1994). But economic motivations are inadequate to explain a nearly 100 year period of race and gender segregation in college sport. This historical review argues college sport is also a raced and gendered institution. By this I mean that cultural beliefs, unequal power relations, and unequal benefits involving race and gender shape college sport (Acker, 1988). As Fraser (1977) explains, race and gender are simultaneously material and symbolic power relations. The symbolic refers to how an individual or group is valued in society. When an individual or group is socially and culturally misrecognized in society they have fewer opportunities to be part of social institutions such as politics and education. The material relates to economic resources such as fair wages and housing. Gender and race are examples of what Fraser calls a “bivalent mode of collectives” in that both structures contain economic and cultural oppression (p.20). This section demonstrates how college sport legitimates unequal symbolic and material relationships and maintains unequal race and gender relations. Using an intersectional lens, I first discuss why schools adopted sports, and then reveal why capitalism alone cannot account for the historic and current conditions of college sport.

### **Origin of School Sports**

There are several reasons why school sports emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some believe sports better assimilated newly arrived immigrants than reading, writing, and arithmetic (Gems & Pfister, 2009). Others contend students initiated sports to resist the repressive and boring humanist curricula (Smith, 1988). A third group believes the Greek ideal of “sound mind in a sound body” inspired East Coast boarding schools and later public schools to bring athletics

into education (Bundgaard, 2005; Lester, 1995). These explanations in combination with the major political, cultural, and economic shifts of that time show how sports became part of the school experience. The spread and popularity of sports in American schools coincided with westward expansion; industrialization; the rise in immigration; the end of slavery and the establishment of Jim Crow; and changing roles for women in society (Crawford, 2008; Gems, 2000). These forces shaped the make-up, values, and structures of both higher education and intercollegiate athletics. While college sport began as an elitist institution, the following review demonstrates the inherent contradiction of school sports: they are at once exclusionary and accessible. This “paradox” of sports allowed the institution to take on multiple meanings, iterations, and above all else, take hold of the public imagination in a newly formed nation (Eitzen, 2012).

The first intercollegiate contest demonstrates college sport’s birth in the American elite. In 1852 the Harvard and Yale crews initiated college sport with their first inter-school race sponsored by the Boston Concord and Montreal Railroad Company (Smith, 2011). The match-up employed two incongruous principles still present in the institution: amateurism or the notion that the athletes cannot be paid and commercialism or the way schools, leagues, or any private business earns a profit off university sponsored athletic leagues (Smith, 2011; Sperber, 2000). Amateurism assumed athletes had enough family wealth to pursue sports for the love of competition rather than economic reasons (Thelin, 2011).

The 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act expanded access to higher education beyond the East Coast. This federal law encouraged new curricula such as agriculture, teaching, and engineering programs, and in its wake, expanded college sport (Thelin, 2011). Many land grant institutions like Texas A&M and UC Berkeley started sports programs soon after opening their classrooms

(Ingrassia, 2012). As higher education moved west so did newly invented American college sports like football. Sport provided a way for colleges to connect with the surrounding communities (Oriard, 2001). The expansion of college and in turn sport also brought a need for systemic regulation. In 1905 18 athletes died and 149 were seriously injured in football (Smith, 2011). This led to then president Teddy Roosevelt posing an ultimatum to universities: form a national governing body to curb the violence in the sport, or, end the sport. That same year the NCAA was formed and amateurism became the official and nation-wide governing principle for American college sport. (Thelin, 1994; Smith, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century technological and commercial innovations such as radio and later television increased the revenue stream for both the NCAA and universities. This also led to universities seeking out top athletic talent regardless of family wealth or academic ability. Soon, colleges were offering athletic-based scholarships, or what some saw as the equivalent of violating amateurism (Thelin, 2011). Newspapers covered upward mobility tales of a coach offering a local boy a chance at an education and a middle-class life (Oriard, 2001).

Critics argued that commercial pressures of intercollegiate athletics professionalized athletes and negated the mission of higher education (Cowley, 1930; Sperber, 2000; Smith, 2011). In the 1950s the NCAA responded with regulations on scholarships and admissions. These regulations and the newly minted term “student-athlete” kept participants non-professional and solidified the relationship between sports and education (Byers, 1995; Smith, 2011).

No reform to date addresses the revenue that universities, media corporations, and the NCAA can earn through college sport. For the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the money circulating in intercollegiate athletics only increased (Thelin, 2011). The economic explanation for the origin of school sports traces how the vast sums of money present can

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<sup>2</sup> For a more thorough historical review of amateurism, see Appendix I.

degrade universities' educational missions and exploit student athletes (Eitzen, 2012; Giroux & Giroux, 2012; Smith, 2011; Sperber, 2000). But economics alone cannot explain why for much of the history of college sport African Americans and women were actively excluded.

### **Origin of White Sports<sup>3</sup>**

Watching a men's college football or basketball game today, it is easy to forget the legacy of raced based segregation in school and sports. Today, African Americans are overrepresented on college campuses as athletes. African American males are 2.7% of U.S. college students but 57% of college football and 64.3% of college basketball players (Harper et al, 2013). Across all Division I sports, their numbers decline, as Black athletes are 22% of the total athlete population. The contradictory patterns of exclusion and overrepresentation in certain sports emerged from a long history of racial segregation.

When Harvard and Yale initiated college sport in higher education with their rowing regatta, and as the Morrill Act moved college westward slavery still reigned in the U.S. Thirty years later, as the U.S. attempted to reconstruct itself post-Civil War state-sanctioned segregation became the norm. In 1890 Congress passed the Second Morrill Act, giving federal land to open technical and agricultural colleges, including expanding education and athletics for African Americans. Within the first years of opening, these Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (at the time referred to as "Negro" Universities) hosted competitive athletic programs (Lumpkin, 2013). Many African Americans saw athletics as a place for racial uplift and a way to demonstrate that they were equal to Whites (Kaliss, 2013). In the Jim Crow segregated south, Black educational and athletic achievements brought confidence to this disenfranchised group and in some instances spurred social activism and civil disobedience (Freedman, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> The racial makeup of college sport is predominately White, and the people of color present within it are largely African American—this historical review focuses on the rejection and later partial incorporation of Black athletes into college sport.

Public spaces like athletics became arenas to fight for two competing visions of American society: the Dixie segregated Southern lifestyle or an inclusive integrated nation (Kaliss, 2013; Martin, 2010). A scattering of African American athletes were allowed on Northern and Western teams in the years leading up to World War II. But when the North faced the South in an athletic match, Southern schools insisted that the Northern teams bench their Black athletes and Northern schools complied (Martin, 2010). There was no single moment where an African American broke the color barrier in college sport, like Jackie Robinson had in major league baseball (Demas, 2007). Instead, African American incorporation into colleges and athletic programs took nearly a century of individual and collective work (Demas, 2007).

In 1954 the Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* ended official segregation in schools, but not in sports. Southern universities resisted including African Americans athletes (Martin, 2010). Practices such as roster quotas, higher recruiting standards for African Americans, and interpersonal racism perpetrated by fans, coaches, teammates, and opposing players attempted to keep sports White (Lumpkin, 2013; Martin, 2010). In the 1960s, African Americans across the nation fought for greater inclusion in athletics, staging protests, sit-ins, and demanding spots on all-White teams (Marin, 2010). It still took another decade for widespread incorporation of Black male athletes, and even then acceptance remained a challenge. Today, African Americans still must showcase greater athletic talent than a White teammate, often posting faster times or points scored (Brooks & Althouse, 2013). In addition, African American males have the lowest graduation rates of any student athlete sub-group, which reinforces the racial ideology of Black mental inferiority (Eitzen, 2012). Current legal reforms address economic injustice by offering to pay athletes but do not address the symbolic misrecognition of Black athletes in sports and society at large.



## Origin of Male Sports

While *Brown* provided legal recourse to end race-based segregation, gender-based segregation became the norm in college sport. The ideology of natural or biological differences between the genders justified separate sport opportunities for men and women (Stanley, 1996). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century women campaigned for the vote, led progressive reform movements, attended universities, and participated in sports like cycling and tennis (Gems, 2000; Mrozek, 1987; Stanley, 1996). These acts threatened male rule, and school leaders positioned football as the “antidote” to the rising role of women in society (Gems, 2000, p.49). As football conquered U.S. schools throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Americans crafted a unique identity based on rugged masculinity, violence, and competition (Gems, 2000).

Women actively resisted their subordinated social status by organizing and demanding equal access to sports and education (Stanley, 1996). Women’s colleges adopted physical education programs and intercollegiate athletics in part to combat social norms of female inferiority (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). HBCUs like Tuskegee began hosting female sports teams in the 1920s (Lumpkin, 2013). But many of these programs for Black and White women alike remained inferior and nearly non-existent compared to men’s intercollegiate athletics (Suggs, 2005). Higher education still had many institutional barriers against women such as admissions practices favoring men, banning women from certain majors, and no protections against sexual assault or harassment (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). However, continued activism led to Title IX, the 1972 amendment to the Civil Rights Act, granting women equal access to education (Gems, 2000; Suggs, 2005). The act required that schools include women in all educational curricula, but it exempted athletics, in this way institutionalizing “separate and equal” sports (Suggs, 2005). Sports programs could remain separate so long as they had comparable resources (Suggs, 2005).

Gender segregation remains the norm in intercollegiate athletics (NCAA, 2011). Gender segregated athletics reproduces an ideology of natural differences between men and women which supports female inferiority in larger society (Messner, 2007).

Recent court cases and unionization attempts by student athletes threatened the NCAA's amateur principle and brought Title IX back into the public dialogue. One defense made by the NCAA is they cannot pay men's basketball and football players because this action would violate Title IX (Solomon, 2014). The excuse for maintaining amateurism is because universities claim they cannot pay both women and male athletes (Solomon, 2014).

These race and gendered aspects of college sport are invisible in an economic framework. Material solutions alone cannot address the symbolic inequalities present in college sport. In addition, sports remain a powerful cultural site for minority groups who use sports to prove their symbolic social worth through sports participation. In 2015 the University of Missouri's football team proved as much when they went on strike in solidarity with a student-led movement against racial harassment at their university. While students had been organizing for over a year, within days, the football team's strike led to the resignation of the University's Chancellor, Hank Foley, and Missouri system president, Tim Wolfe (New, 2015). This study used these historical themes to investigate how the interlocking power structures impact the day-to-day experiences of student athletes who must be all-stars athletically and academically.

### **Theoretical Frameworks: Social Reproduction and Intersectionality**

This project combined two theoretical frameworks to guide the literature review, methods, and data analysis: social reproduction and intersectionality.

Social reproduction is a Marxist inspired theory that explains how school systems correspond to the economy. Bowles and Gintis (1976) offered an early version of social

reproduction with their “correspondence theory” of education. They revealed how schools mirror and legitimate the unequal social relationships in society therefore allowing capitalism to operate with minimal resistance. Some education scholars critique Bowles and Gintis for presenting an “Orwellian” (Giroux, 1981) relationship between schools and the economy (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2007); their lack of attention to in-school mechanisms that both further and in some cases mitigate economic inequality (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1981; McLaren, 2007; Oakes, 2005); and how their theory portrays students as automatons, unaware of their fate (Willis, 1977, 1981). In addition, critical race scholars (Allen, 2005; Leonardo, 2009; Noguera, 2003) and feminists (Arnot, 1994; Clarricoates, 1981; Grumet, 1988) argue that the Marxist nature of this theory ignores how schools also reproduce other structures such as race and gender.

Criticism gave rise to a more nuanced view of social reproduction using a Gramscian view of power (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1981; Lareau, 2003; Willis, 1977). This scholarship uses Gramsci’s (1971) hegemony theory and Althusser’s (1971) related theory of ideology. Rather than assuming schools mirror the economy, Gramsci and Althusser examine how cultural sites like education shape and legitimate unequal social relations. In Gramsci’s hegemony, capitalism is maintained through a complex and contradictory cultural process of interactions between elites and various allied groups in which the capitalist values are co-constructed and agreed upon. Schools are one such site of cultural production particularly society’s shared knowledge base.

While Gramsci theorized the importance of ruling groups to gain “consent” of the public, he had yet to develop a robust understanding of ideology, or to *what* subordinate groups consented. Ideology refers to the beliefs, meanings, and ideas in society that structure how an individual interacts with others and with institutions (Althusser, 1971; Weedon, 1987). For Althusser (1971) institutions like schools and sports are considered Ideological State

Apparatuses (ISA) because they disseminate certain ideologies to the public. A diverse range of ideologies emerges as people interact with ISAs. Through interactions like reading a book, attending class, or watching a sports game, people internalize, learn, identify with, and in turn promote ideologies of the State Apparatus. One example Althusser drew upon is how schools and sports offer nation building opportunities through the innocuous presentation of flags and anthems. In these small interactions people do not simply believe that they are citizens, they become citizens.

Althusser also theorized ideology as plural. ISAs produce multiple and competing ideologies to sustain the State. But “despite its diversity and its contradictions” the ISAs are united “*beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of the ruling class” (emphasis in original, p.146). In sports two ideologies reviewed in this dissertation, may seem different at first glance, but contribute to the ruling ideologies of White, male supremacy. Sports showcase that Black bodies are inherently designed to be superior in certain physical feats (Davis & Harris, 1998; Eitzen, 2012; Washington & Karen, 2001). But the exclusion of Black bodies from other physical terrains that may require more “mental” skill or preparation reinforces a connection between Black physicality and mental inferiority (Carrington, 2001; Davis & Harris, 1998; Van Sterkenburg, et al., 2010). Of most importance for this study is Althusser’s notion that ideologies are not fleeting or temporary. Rather they emerge through a life-long experience interacting with multiple institutions and individuals that support the ruling ideology in disparate ways.

Although Althusser focuses exclusively on the falsity of capitalist relationships, other scholars have applied this to other social relations such as race, reproduced through the ruling ideology of White supremacy (Leonardo, 2003, 2009), and gender reproduced through the ruling ideology of patriarchy (Weedon, 1987). Thus, Althusser’s articulation of how a *ruling ideology*

is produced within ideological institutions like schools, should now be viewed as *ruling ideologies* that reinforce broader relationships of inequality like race, class, and gender.

Yet the Marxist origins of the various iterations of social reproduction and its corresponding theories of political economy, hegemony, and ideology can dissuade feminist and anti-racist scholars from using it (Lather, 1991). Instead, race and gender scholars examine these structures alongside class or argue how race or gender can replace a class-based narrative of inequality (Clarricoats, 1981; Noguera, 2003). Intersectional approaches, in contrast, assume race, class, and gender are simultaneously reproduced in interrelated ways (Glenn, 1992). Intersectionality critiques research that examines only one power structure, such as capitalism or race, because it marginalizes certain groups or experiences (Collins, 1986, hooks, 1984; Crenshaw, 1991). Instead, intersectionality examines “how structures of power such as race and gender emerge as socially constructed, interlocking systems that shape the material conditions, identities, and consciousness” for all people (Glenn, 1992, p.3). Intersectionality alone cannot uncover the organizational mechanisms within institutions. Thus, an intersectional approach to social reproduction within college sport can be used to map the organization structures while also revealing how multiple power structures interact.

This project uses the more tempered reproduction approach offered by Gramscian and Althusserian scholars. I look for a more complex and contradictory reproduction process within school sports that can account for multiple power structures being produced simultaneously. Throughout each empirical chapter I examine how multiple ideologies such as natural racial differences, natural gender differences, meritocracy, and individualism reinforce larger social structures of race, class, and gender. Each ideology shares a common impact: to disguise how state sponsored entities like school sports maximize rather than minimize social inequality.

## **Literature Review**

Few scholars use social reproduction to examine how school sports promote the skills, knowledge, and social status of the White, middle class. The closest work in this area looks at how university admissions practices, namely at private schools, elevate athletic ability in the process (Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Stevens, 2009). Other approaches include examining how male athletes reproduce class and race (Singer & May, 2010) and how the spectacle of sports trains the public in social norms (Gems, 2000; Guttman, 2006; Foley, 1990). With little direct scholarship tying together social reproduction and college sport, the literature review addresses scholarship that speaks to components of social reproduction including: ideologies, hierarchical social relationships, and institutional approaches to how school sports maintain inequality. The review concludes with the components that relate to social reproduction.

### **Components of Social Reproduction**

Social reproduction is one approach to explore the “intractability of the social world” or how outside forces limit an individual’s choices and experiences in society (Corson, 1995, p. 8). Social reproduction relies on four concepts to explore how social life is constricted for individuals and groups: ideology, social institutions, hierarchical relationships, and demands on individuals (Althusser, 1971; Blair-Loy, 2003; Corson, 1995; Willis, 1977). In combination, these facets of society maintain and reproduce larger inequality.

The three most prominent ideologies in college sport are: natural and hierarchical gender differences, natural and hierarchical racial differences, and meritocracy. These ideologies reinforce power relationships in college sport and society at large (Messner, 2002; Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012). As discussed earlier in the Chapter, college sport constructs “natural” race and gender differences, both of which lead to symbolic and material inequalities for women

and/or people of color. Meritocracy—the belief that those who work the hardest will achieve success—also reproduces race and gender ideologies. Meritocracy individualizes success and disguises the way power relations influence one’s social mobility. Meritocracy permeates the institutions of sport (Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012) and school (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1971; Oakes, 2005). The dissemination of meritocracy creates a deep conflict for student athletes. How can someone give 100% to these two institutions simultaneously? Even worse, one often subtracts from the other. Further, these institutions favor certain groups over others, which means one’s race/class/gender position can mitigate their effort.

The second feature of social reproduction is how institutions are formed. Institutions are “the ‘rules’ that constitute some area of social life” (Wharton, 2005, p.9). Social institutions also include large, formally organized, public sectors of society such as education and sports. Ideologies, like meritocracy, inform the organization and social control present within institutions. Student athletes are in a unique position in that they must abide by both formal and informal rules of two institutions: sport and school. Sport and school are racialized and gendered institutions in that the ideologies described above inform the structure, organization, and day-to-day operations of these institutions (Acker, 1988; Messner, 2002; Leonardo, 2009).

The raced and gendered nature of college sport is reflected in who runs and operates the organization. In 2013, over 80% of NCAA, head coaches, and athletic director positions were White (Lapchick, et al., 2014). White men designed regulations such as banning payment to athletes to ensure that colleges, the NCAA, and corporations earn maximum revenue from the athletic performance of student athletes (Byers, 1995). The raced and gendered nature of college sport is also reflected in who is most harmed by these regulations.

African American men from low-income communities who are overrepresented in sports

like in football and basketball bear the burden of regulations like amateurism (Eitzen, 2012; Majors, 2001). These demographic allocations reinforce the notion that the best chance for a young Black male to earn an education and wealth is through athletic prowess. Yet across the nation, only half of all African American male student athletes graduate college, and only 1.6% of Division I college football players, and 1.2% of Division I college basketball players make it to the professional leagues (New, 2015). The over-representation of Black males in some sports is then used to deny claims of racial injustice in political, social, educational, and economic arenas (Leonardo, 2009; Majors, 2001). Therefore, combining school and sport into one institution perpetuates the dream of upward mobility, while simultaneously reinforcing class and race inequality.

Fewer scholars examine how college sport reproduces patriarchy. Most research on sport and gender looks at how media representations of female athletes reinforce male supremacy in at least two ways: by limiting coverage of female sports and/or by portraying women as male sexual objects (Cooky et al, 2010; Cooky, et al, 2015; Daniels, 2009; Daniels & Wartena, 2011; Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Kane & Maxwell, 2011; Messner, 1995, 2002, 2007; Weber & Carini, 2012). Another approach to examining how sports reproduce patriarchy is to track the progress female athletes made post-Title IX. A recent study revealed that nationally women have 1.3 million fewer athletic opportunities than men (Maatz & Graves, 2012). The underrepresentation of women in sports despite federal intervention points to one way patriarchy is reproduced in college sports. But it is also important to note that the share of gender “progress” in sports is mostly enjoyed by White women. In educational settings three-quarters of White women, two-thirds of African American women, and two thirds of Latina women participate in sports (Maatz & Graves, 2012). Racial differences within female sports



participation increase in college as 75% of all female student athletes are White, 8.9% are African American, and 4.3% are Latina (Lapchick, et al., 2014).

Despite White women's high athletic participation rates, a "glass sneaker" remains limiting a woman's presence in coaching and leadership positions (Heckman, 2003). In 2013, only 38.7% of women's college teams and less than 1% of men's teams had female head coaches (Lapchick, et al., 2014). In addition, only 8.6% of college athletic directors were female, and none of the football commissioners were women (Lapchick, et al., 2014).<sup>4</sup> The lack of women in head coaching and leadership positions in college sport naturalizes differences between men and women and supports female inferiority in larger society (Messner, 2002, 2007; Rhode & Walker, 2008; Suggs, 2005). Moreover, women's absence in sports hierarchy and highly watched sports reinforces a public belief that equates men with athletics. This in turn trains people to believe that there are fundamental rather than social differences between men and women (Messner, 2002). Yet it remains unclear how these disparities impact the educational experiences of female student athletes. Most studies on the academic performance of student athletes assume women face little to no conflict between their athletic and educational responsibilities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2010; Meyer, 1990; Sperber, 2000). The voices and experiences of how actual female student-athletes experience school sports is absent, giving support to the notion that athletics are male-only terrains. It remains unclear how patriarchy impacts their time in college and beyond.

Ideologies like male and White supremacy are substantiated and disseminated in college sport through many layers of governance. Coaches, administrative units, athletic leagues, the NCAA, and universities control student athletes' lives. Many of the regulations separate student athletes from their non-athlete peers and can undermine the academic mission and integrity of

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Lapchick's TIDES program publishes semi-regular race-gender "report cards" on the status of sport. The most recent report that tracked data on race and gender representation in leadership was published in 2014.

universities (Sage, 1998; Sperber, 2000; Eitzen, 2000; Duderstadt, 2000; Smith 2011). For instance, student athletes are often brought into the university through a coach and an alternative admission process, i.e., recruited to play sports, not for academic prowess (Schulman & Bowen, 2001). Through athletic talent, students with less-than-stellar grades and test-scores can receive exceptional admission and/or scholarships to top universities (Brand, 2006; Eitzen, 2012; Schulman & Bowen, 2001). The exceptional admission process for athletes is positioned as an alternative route of upward mobility, particularly for low-income men of color. Researchers quantify athletic merit by offering physiological explanations for athletes' exceptional physical talent (e.g., Baxter-Jones, 1995; Burgess & Naughton, 2010; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Ostojic, Mazic, Dikic, 2006). Others examine the effort athletes put in to improve in their sport (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2008; Duda & White, 1992; Gilbert, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2001). Each of the above mobility stories attributes sports success to individual-level variables. Part II of this dissertation will address whether or not sports is an upward mobility vehicle for disenfranchised groups.

The third component of social reproduction is hierarchical relationships, those that reflect and reproduce power and control and help maintain oppressive structures like race, class, and gender (Connell, 2005; Gramsci, 1971; Leonardo, 2009). Most notably, Willis (1977), observed how the lads' hostility with peers, teachers, and administrators, all furthered their isolation from, and distrust of, schooling as a mode for upward mobility. Willis and others have showcased how interactions within social institutions reinforce hierarchical relationships and confer power to authority figures. For instance, schools teach young students to obey teachers which becomes a template for their later-in-life obedience to their employer (i.e. Anyon, 1983; Giroux, 1981; Beyer & Apple, 1988; Apple, 2004). As Willis observed, *lack* of obedience to your teacher can

expel the student from a future life-track in the middle class. Willis and others uncovered not only hierarchical relationships to authority figures, but how social networks such as family units (Lareau, 2003; Gutman & McLoyd, 2000) and peers (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004; Noguera, 2003; Stewart, 1998; Wills, 1977) connect to the norms, behaviors, and attitudes of the schooling system that are central to a student's performance.

Student athletes must simultaneously contend with two hierarchical relationships: those within sport and school. The athlete/coach relationship defines much of the student athlete's existence in higher education. Coaches can give, or take away, scholarships, set curfews, control meals and nutrition, and even determine sleeping patterns (Sage, 1990; Sperber, 2000; Eitzen, 2012). As a result, student athletes may feel more obligated to their coach than any instructor (Duderstadt, 2000; Rigauer, 1980; Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Smith, 2011; Sperber, 1990). However, student athletes still must adhere to hierarchical educational relationships with certain faculty and campus administrators (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sperber, 2000; Thelin, 2011). Academic interactions are further complicated by negative perceptions from faculty members. Research conducted at various universities demonstrates that some faculty members believe the stereotype of the "dumb jock" or that student athletes are less academically competent than non-athletes (Meyer, 1990; Engstrom, Sedlacek, McEwen, 1995; Jolly, 2008). The "dumb jock" is exacerbated for male athletes, particularly African American males (Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Eitzen, 2012; Engstrom, Sedlacek, McEwen, 1995). Stereotypes, in combination with institutional hurdles, can make students academically underperform (Steele, 1997; Noguera, 2003). Thus student athletes must combat institutional hurdles, hierarchical relationships, and stereotypes, all of which can hinder their academic performance.

The fourth and final component of social reproduction is institutional demands. The

demands—what an individual is accountable for, such as day-to-day tasks and responsibilities—of school and sport often conflict.<sup>5</sup> Athletic contests can be held during exam seasons, practices conflict with class schedules, and universities often do not enforce the NCCA’s twenty-hour per week limit on practice time (Adler & Adler, 1991; Coakley, 2007; Schulman & Bowen, 2002; Smith, 2011; Sperber, 2000). These significant athletic time commitments mean student athletes have less control over academic decisions like course and major selection (Lanning, 1982; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Martens & Lee, 1998; Watt & Moore, 2001). Student athletes’ schedules can lead to isolation from the general student body (Sparent, 1988; Watt & Moore, 2001). Isolation, in turn, “can encourage student athletes to neglect the student aspect of their roles” (Watt & Moore, 2001, p. 14). Also some coaches and academic advisors may persuade student athletes to pursue less rigorous academic majors for fear that demanding coursework will impair the participant’s athletic performance (Adler & Adler, 1991; Watt & Moore, 2001; Duderstadt, 2000). In addition student athletes must overcome physical exhaustion that can impair their ability to academically engage (Watt & Moore, 2001; Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012). The cumulative demands of practice, scheduling constraints, pressure from coaches, and isolation ultimately harm student athletes’ ability to engage and perform academically (Fried, 2001; Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Palamia, 2006). These demands, in combination with hierarchical relationships, institutional structures, and various ideologies, create a cumulative disadvantage for student athletes trying to succeed academically.

This above literature outlines the various organizations and relationships present in college sport. It also reveals the multitude of potential institutional conflicts for student athletes beyond sports. Yet intersectional approaches within the college sport literature remain limited. Studies that do include the student athlete voice examine only one dimension of oppression such

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 6 for an overview of demands on college athletes including time requirements.

as gender (Meyer, 1990), or race (Comeaux & Harrison, 2010). In addition, several of these studies assume that Olympic sport athletes, and/or women, have far less conflict in terms of navigating sport and school (Howard-Hamilton & Sina, 2000; Upcraft & Stephens, 2001). With so few studies on female athletes and/or Olympic sport athletes it is difficult to tell whether any of these claims are valid. Finally, these structural accounts focus only on the oppressive nature of college sport which cannot explain the positive experiences some have within college sport or why people continue to choose to be student athletes.

### **Research Questions**

The historical, theoretical, and literature review sections reveal that few scholars examine the interactions between multiple social structures within college sport. While historical and empirical work has addressed one social structure at a time, telling a detailed history of women's involvement in sport (Stanley, 1996; Suggs, 2005), or exploring how racism first shaped the absence of and now over-representation of Black male bodies in intercollegiate athletics (Adler & Adler, 1991; Martin, 2010), few look at how multiple forms of inequality operate simultaneously to shape college sport as an institution and the outcomes for participants. Further, the centrality of economic approaches to the questions within college sport leads researchers to continually re-examine how commercialism, professionalization, and privatization limit the educational opportunities for student athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Clotfelter, 2011; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Smith, 2011; Sperber, 1990, 2000; Thelin, 1994). Finally, scholars reference how pre-college factors shape in-college outcomes, yet to date there is no thorough examination of how students experience the pipeline to and through college sport.

To address these gaps in the literature this project turns to Olympic sport athletes to examine whether schools offer a quality education to all student athletes. It asks: *How do social*

*structures such as race, class, and gender shape student athletes' ability to negotiate the competing demands of sport and school?* The final section of this chapter explains the research methodology employed to answer this question.

### **Research Methodology**

This project used multiple sources of data to uncover the conflict that prevents student athletes from achieving success in school, sport, and life simultaneously. The data emerged from two separate interviews with student athletes, archival materials, time diaries—or a record of how a student athlete spends their week—and interviews with institutional representatives such as academic advisors and tutors. These varied methods were collected over a one-year period (September 2015 through August 2016). The study included men's and women's teams in track and field and crew. I used the interviews with student athletes and institutional actors to identify how school and sport conflict and in turn reproduce various ideologies such as meritocracy, and natural race and gender difference. Social reproduction and intersectionality guided the project's framing, methods, and analysis. The interviews and analysis explore how the interlocking structures of race, class, and gender influence the student athlete experience.

I selected an athletically and academically prestigious Division I, public research institution located on the Coast of the United States (henceforth known as "Coastal U") as my research site. I chose this site because Division I student athletes face greater educational and athletic conflicts than their counterparts at Division II and III universities (Emerson et al, 2009; Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Watt & Moore, 2001). Further, researchers have found that student athletes at academically prestigious and Tier 1 universities face even greater conflict than Tier 2 schools (Harper et al., 2013; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016).

As I described in the literature review, this project targets Olympic sport athletes, those

not associated with men's football and basketball. Coastal U has 31 intercollegiate sport teams, the second largest number in their regional conference, 29 of which are considered "non-revenue producing" or "Olympic" sports. I narrowed down the choice of sports to two that would provide the greatest contrast: track and field and rowing (also known as "crew").<sup>6</sup> Both sports have around 50 participants and include individual and team competition. They are also considered racing sports not game sports and emphasize rigorous physical conditioning rather than fine motor skill development. As Olympic sports the participants can compete internationally during or post-college. Yet the demographic make up of the teams vary. Crew, known as a "country club" sport, requires tremendous resources and infrastructure to participate, making rowers more often elite and white (Bourdieu, 1978; Eitzen, 2012). Track, on the other hand, requires little infrastructure or resources and draws participants from working class backgrounds and underrepresented minorities (Bourdieu, 1978; Eitzen, 2012). At the time, I thought athletes from these sports would uncover the various experiences of student athletes within the University.

Student athletes took part in three study components: in-depth, semi-structured interviews, time diaries and gathering institutional materials.<sup>78</sup> I chose in-depth semi-structured interviews to elicit how student athletes understand and reenact the contradictions within sport and school (Creswell, 2013; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2013). Interviews are important for researchers engaged with historically disenfranchised populations and/or those interested in uncovering structural inequality (Oakley, 1981; Rudolph, 2005; Soss, 2013). Semi-structured interviews rely on an interview questionnaire but allow the researcher and the subject to engage

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I use the participants' jargon. "Track" encompasses running, field, and distance events. "Crew" refers to men's and women's rowing. Track athletes who race distances more than 800 meters are also referred to as "runners", athletes who race shorter than 800 meters are called "sprinters", athletes who compete in throwing events like hammer or javelin are called "throwers", and athletes who compete in jumping events are "jumpers." Crew athletes are referred to as "rowers."

<sup>7</sup> The athletes received no compensation to be in the study. All participants signed IRB approved consent forms to participate.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout I quote Coastal U institutional materials without citation as the reference would compromise the research cite. Upon request, the full text cited can be provided and will be scrubbed of identifying information.

in topical digressions that are not captured in formalized, structured, interviews (Creswell, 2013). This method is still susceptible to the same power dynamics present in quantitative approaches (Oakley, 1981; Stacey, 1988; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2013). While there is no way to erase the power dynamics, the researcher can reveal rather than disguise inequality in the framing of the methods, conducting the interviews, and the analysis (Collins, 2000; Harding, 1991).

The first interview was a “life history” of the participant.<sup>9</sup> Life histories explore processes that influence one’s access to institutions, how one makes sense of current experiences, and how both shape one’s view of the future (Connell, 2005). At the end of the interview participants chose their own pseudonym to safeguard their confidentiality.<sup>10</sup> The life-history interviews offered four themes: 1) access to sports 2) access to athletic/academic support systems 3) why people pursue sports over other activities and 4) how sports influence educational engagement. To situate these four lines of inquiry, I created a unique database (hence known as “Athletes’ Hometown Stats” Database). The database consisted of ten years’ worth of rosters for Coastal U’s crew and track teams. The rosters included student-athletes’ hometown, high school, sport, and gender. I then used the student-athletes’ hometown and high school, along with reports from the U.S. Census and Department of Education to create measures for family median income and high school rank. The database provided comparisons across social characteristics influencing educational attainment such as family income, neighborhood wealth, and school quality (Baker & Corcoran, 2012; Lareau, 2003; Nasir, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Oakes, 2005; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). Institutional reports from the study’s University, the University’s larger public school system, which includes ten universities, and the NCAA, were then used to compare

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<sup>9</sup> All interview protocols can be found in Appendix D.

<sup>10</sup>A table of participant biographical characteristics can be found in Appendix B.



student populations.<sup>11</sup> The results from the first interview and Athletes' Hometown Stats are explored in Part II of this dissertation.

The second interview allowed athletes to explore their journey through higher education. This interview included several specific themes and tactics to deepen the analysis. For example, I included "ordinary language interviewing" to capture how participants understand what it means to be a student athlete (Scharffer, 2013). I asked participants how they make sense of the phrase "student athlete." The responses to this question later informed how I organized the routes through college explored in Chapter 8. I also designed the second interview in part based on Coakley's (2007) four ideal conditions necessary for a successful student athlete: 1) positive experiences with school, 2) access to academic networks, 3) career opportunities post-graduation, and 4) relationships and experiences beyond sports (p.497). The interview questions address these four themes within social structures. For instance, "social relationships" is not a neutral concept, one's race and/or gender position influences their interactions with others.

To further contextualize the interview responses, participants completed four weeklong time diaries distributed randomly throughout the study.<sup>12</sup> The time diary offered seven criteria, three academic in nature, three athletic in nature, and the last one being, "sleep" for which the participant was asked to track the hours spent each day. The questionnaire measured self-reported data on individual action and behavior (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). Time diaries are an important and well-vetted method in sociology to capture the actual behaviors of individuals (Berk, 1985; Robinson & Godbey, 1999; Sayer, 2005). Time diaries can be more reliable than surveys that ask participants to recall or reflect upon how they spend their time (Sayer, 2005). Time on task also shapes one's identity (Blair-Loy, 2003). Therefore, I included four survey

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix H describes how I compiled, cleaned, and analyzed the data.

<sup>12</sup> The time diary questionnaire can be found in Appendix E

questions with the time diary that asked how the participant identified that week.

Student athletes also provided me with three sets of materials: college transcripts, course syllabi, and Degree Audit Reports (DAR, a degree progress report).<sup>13</sup> These materials revealed several mechanisms of social reproduction. Syllabi and course selection are measures of curriculum selection, grades reflect how departments evaluate students, and degree progress shows the likeliness of matriculation (Oakes, 2005). The transcripts, syllabi, and DAR items showed trends in course selection, majors, and degree progress, and itemized the academic demands of the institution. Participants could either bring these materials to the second interview or allow me to collect them from academic support staff.<sup>14</sup>

After interviewing all student athlete participants, I met with the institutional actors that student athletes frequently interact with. The interviews with academic advisors and tutors explored the main sources of conflict for student athletes. College sport literature implicates advisors in providing a watered down educational experience by steering student athletes into “easy” majors or focusing on NCAA regulations instead of academic growth (e.g., Lanning, 1982; Jordan & Denson, 1990; Martens & Lee, 1998; Watt & Moore, 2001). Being funneled into an irrelevant major can lead student athletes to become disinterested in education turning instead towards sports as possible careers (Benford, 2008; Comeaux, 2007). Blaming academic support figures minimizes the milieu of cultural and structural forces involved in educational disengagement. Interviews with academic advisors and tutors illuminated the institutional barriers present in college sport. Coastal U has six academic advisors and nearly fifty tutors—a

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<sup>13</sup> A more thorough description the institutional materials and a sample of each is included in Appendix G.

<sup>14</sup> The NCAA requires student athletes waive their FERPA rights, otherwise known as the "Buckley Amendment" (Batista, 2004; Branch, 2011). This is so the NCAA and academic support officials can examine athletes' records (Batista, 2004). Some departments routinely release athlete's GPAs in athletic programs or offering it to the media (Batista, 2004). As such, the confidentiality surrounding the academic information surrounding student athletes is held to a different legal standard than university students (Batista, 2004; Branch, 2011; Smith, 2011). Despite this, I sought student athlete's consent to retrieve their academic information, rather than going directly to an academic support official or athletic administrator.

combination of graduate and undergraduate students—who support student athletes academically. This second group of participants contributed to findings in Chapter 6 that detail the complex layers and corresponding conflict within the school and sport bureaucracies.

### **Recruitment and Participant Pool**

To better understand the depth and extent of the pressures student athletes face, beyond commercial pressures, I solicited 40 participants, representing nearly one-quarter of the teams' collective populations. The first stage for recruitment was to gain support from the gatekeepers within college sport. In the literature review I pointed out the various hierarchical relationships student athletes are accountable to daily. Due to the high-profile nature of athletes on college campuses, I met with leaders within the athletic community before beginning recruitment. I met with the Faculty Athletic Representative, the Senior Women's Administrator (or top-ranking woman in the athletic department), the director of the SAASC, the assistant director of the SAASC, and coaches. The goal through these meetings was to share my research objectives and allow them to share any questions or concerns. In these meetings, I also asked permission to attend an athletic practice (to recruit athletes) and SAASC staff meetings (to recruit academic staff) to present my research project and the opportunity to participate.

Once I received approval from the Board of Human Subjects and the Athletic gatekeepers I scheduled team meetings for early October 2015. At the meetings, I gave a brief five-minute overview of the project, at which point I also intimated that I was a former student athlete and academic support staff person. Initial responses from these meetings were minimal. I received about two to three responses after each team meeting. Still, by the first week of October, I had completed five interviews with student athletes. I used the "snowball" recruitment method with these early volunteers which proved successful in similar qualitative studies, (Biernacki &

Waldorf, 1981; Messner, 1995; O’Brien, 2008). I asked if they felt comfortable recommending my project to their teammates or colleagues. Referrals became a much more successful method of recruitment. By the end of the first semester I had nearly 28 volunteers. In early January, I did another round of recruitment, asking the existing participants to once again recommend my project to any of their teammates. By the end of the study, I exceeded my initial participation goals, gaining 47 students athletes, 14 tutors, and 4 academic advisors as participants. I also had greater retention than expected as only three participants did not complete the second interview.

*Table 2.1. Counts of Study Participants and Materials*

Role in Study	Interview One	Interview Two	Time Diaries	Institutional Materials
Student Athlete	47	44	41	47
Tutor	14			
Academic Advisor	4			

Interview One asked the athletes to self-identify their race and gender positions. Eleven identified as “people of color” and thirty-six identified as “White”. In comparison to the student body, White people were overrepresented in my study population. Coastal U is considered a “historically White” university rather than a “PWI” or “predominately White university.” The student population is no longer majority White. About 28% of the student body of Coastal University students identified as White, whereas 47% of the athlete population is White. The rowing teams in my study were nearly 100% White, which skewed the recruitment pool.<sup>15</sup> Students identifying as Black are also overrepresented in the Coastal U athlete population, though not in the sports for this study. At Coastal University, only 3.4% of the student body identifies as Black, whereas of 23.3% athletes identify as Black. The overrepresentation of Black athletes remains concentrated in two select sports, football and men’s basketball (NCAA, 2015). Finally, athletes identifying as Latino and Asian remain highly underrepresented in college sport. 42.5% of Coastal U’s student population identifies as Asian yet they represent only six-percent

<sup>15</sup> During the the study men’s rowing had no person of color. Women’s rowing had one person of color walked on to the team.

of the campus's athlete population. Less than one-percent of the study's athlete population identified as Latino, compared to 10.6% of the University's general student population. Because of these demographics, discussions of "Race" in this study centers on the experiences of those within White and Black races.<sup>16</sup>

Twenty-eight participants identified as women and nineteen as men. All participants were cisgender, or maintained the gender category assigned at birth (Schilt, 2010).<sup>17</sup> I use the biological terms "male" and "female" sometimes when describing gendered experiences in college sport in part because the participants are cisgender and in part because the governing bodies define "women's" sport on biological notions of "female" by testing sex characteristics and testosterone levels (NCAA, 2009; Pieper, 2016). White women were the largest group reflected in the study, with 21 participants, eighteen of whom were rowers. White men were the next largest group, six of whom were rowers. The next group was seven women of color, five of whom identified as Black, all of whom were on the track team. And finally, there were four Black men in the study, all of whom were on the track team.

Socioeconomic status emerged as a prominent narrative, particularly for access to athletics and education, as explored in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Only three people (all female) identified as "poor." They all relied on some form of aid for access to sports. One participant strongly identified as upper class, the remainder were middle or upper-middle class.

## **Data Analysis**

Throughout the forthcoming data chapters I use various methods of analysis including quantitative summaries and distributions of the Athletes' Hometown Stat and time diaries,

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<sup>16</sup> My study population reaffirms race as a construct of a White/Black binary. The problem with this approach to race is it erases the racialization and marginalization experiences of mixed-race, Asian and Latino populations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Kim, 2003; O'brien, 2008). Due to the nature of my research site and participant pool I could not adequately discuss the racialization of Latino and Asian athletes. To remedy this limitation, I focus on White supremacy in school sports which harm all people.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout the paper I use the term "they" if I do not know the gender pronoun of a person. This occurs often when I'm summarizing a story a participant shared about their teammates or families.

qualitative coding of interviews, and close reading of institutional documents. The methods generated an immense dataset. Throughout the study, I kept a journal detailing my thoughts and reactions as the study unfolded. After each interview, I completed a field report that included open ended reflection and targeted responses adapted from Shwalbe and Wolkomir's (2002) field note template.<sup>18</sup> At the end of the study I had 168 single-spaced pages of field notes, 30 pages of journals, and twenty pages of running themes from the study. By the summer 2016, I had conducted 109 in person interviews lasting anywhere from one to three hours in length. I had approximately 218 hours of interview tape that I transcribed. The transcription process also became a source of reflection as I updated my journals and running list of meta-study themes throughout. These catalogs of notes became the starting point to develop code books.

Once I had transcribed all the interviews, I coded through both emergent and fixed-coding methods (Creswell, 2013). Fixed-codes were derived from a social reproduction framework identifying institutional features such as curricula, hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic layers, and policies in both sports and school (Anyon, 1983, Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2007). Emergent codes came from a year of field-work research memos, reflections, and iterative readings of interview transcripts (LeCompet, 2000; Yanow, 2013). In total, 203 unique codes guided the interview one analysis and 306 codes guided interview two analysis.

## **Limitations**

The methods had several shortcomings. First, my own subjective position provided both strengths and limitations for this work.<sup>19</sup> My status as a former collegiate student athlete allowed me to quickly connect with the participants through our shared experience. My own impressions, memories, and feelings influenced my interactions with the participants and the meaning

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix F for sample field report

<sup>19</sup> A longer overview of my positionality can be found in Appendix A.

constructed from the data (Soss, 2013). Yet my position as a White researcher limits how I understand connections between race and gender. My racial privilege can lead to “blind spots” within the research process including the extent to which people of color would open up about their experiences of racism with me (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). To minimize these blind spots, I framed this project to focus on relations of power within college sport including racism. I cannot relinquish my own racial privilege but I can try to reveal how White supremacy operates (Harding, 1995). As a woman, I also brought some “bright spots” to the project that I used to connect with participants and explore how patriarchy permeates sport.

Second, this project relied on one university, which leaves little room for generalizability. To capture the variety within the student athlete population I used various comparisons such as sport, social status, early experience with sport and school, in-season vs. out-of-season, gender, and race. Adding another dimension of analysis such as the differences among Division I universities, is outside of the scope of this work, but recommended for future research.

Third, the research site itself has several limitations. Coastal U is located on a U.S. Coast. As the next sections demonstrate, geography proved to be an important feature of the sports-track-to-college pipeline. Future research should examine whether these results are consistent in other U.S. regions. Coastal U is also an elite university. Recent research within higher education on upward mobility indicates that Tier 3, state schools, junior colleges, and less prestigious universities offer better mobility chances for students (Bowen et al, 2009; Brock, 2010; Haverman & Smeeding, 2006). Again, future research should consider if these findings are consistent across a variety of college sport institutions.

Finally, structural-based projects run the risk of over-determining the role of outside forces and removing agency from participants (Willis, 1977; Weedon, 1987; Cho, 2012). To

limit this risk, I centered individual experiences within the context of larger social forces.

Despite these limitations, this study adds a broader understanding of how individuals interact with institutions as well as specific insights into the landscape of college sport. Intersectionality and social reproduction theories showcase the complex interactions amongst individuals, institutions, and structures. By combining these theories to examine college sport I highlight how an individual can be simultaneously agentic and restricted, privileged and disadvantaged, and therefore present a more nuanced account of the student athlete experience.



## **PART II: REPRODUCING SPORTS STARS**

*“The more I think about rowing the more I think is I’m not that great at rowing, I just had the privilege to row. Because I think it’s so difficult for people to get the chance to row... I’m sure there are more athletic people than I am, but they just didn’t have the chance” – Monique, Women’s Crew, Interview One*

*“Most of my teammates are White girls-- But seriously, being a runner, you have to have a lot of time, dedicated, and definitely, growing up, I was just given the opportunity to focus on myself and be selfish, and not have to do a job, not have to work, not have to worry about this and that. So I was able to get really good at my sport, and now I’m here. And I think a lot of my teammates had that same situation... Most people live pretty comfortable lives. No one’s really struggling every day” – Taylor, Women’s Track and Field, Interview Two*

### **Chapter 3: The Sports-Track-to-College: Community Access**

#### **Introduction**

Every January eclipsing the Super Bowl, high school football makes national news as college signing day approaches—the moment when future college athletes sign a Letter of Intent to attend an intercollegiate athletic program. Much of the coverage presents an image endemic to American exceptionalism: anyone born in the U.S. can improve their lot in life through education, sports, or, in this case, the best of both: college sport. Sports magazines, networks, paid-for recruiting websites, and reality television shows all track the journey of how a few athletes through grit, drive, determination, and hard work are offered passage from a racially segregated, and impoverished, neighborhood and “given” a chance to earn a university degree. It is as American as apple pie, as patriotic as it gets.

The media is not the only institution promoting the possibility of upward mobility. Schools further this notion by sponsoring sports programs. As soon as intercollegiate contests began in Ivy League universities in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, questions arose regarding whether athletes should emerge from the student body or should be brought to the campus with the specific purpose of performing a sport (Smith 1988, Thelin, 2011). Today, nearly all NCAA institutions use some form of recruiting athletic talent and exceptional admission process for their student athletes. Instead of questioning whether sports allow someone to *make it out*, the next chapters uncover a “sport-track-to-college” that *keeps people in* their position within the

existing power structures such as class, race, and gender.

To make an ecological argument for how the sport-track-to-college favors certain groups, I use social reproduction to review an original quantitative student-athlete database (hence called “Athletes’ Hometown Stats”), forty-seven in-depth life-history interviews with Division I college athletes, and various institutional measures. Combined, these data challenge the national belief that elite athletics are a road out of poverty (Bourdieu, 1978, Eitzen, 2012). Rather, White, middle and upper class youth more often use athletics to access elite colleges.

The pre-college experiences are divided into three chapters. The first chapter, *Community Access*, outlines the features of an athlete’s hometown that facilitated their development. Community access closely aligns with Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of cultural capital. Cultural capital is an ephemeral type of capital that takes the shape of an embodied set of characteristics, knowledges, and skills and can be traded for economic capital. This form of power, like economic capital, can be transmitted intergenerationally and used for social and cultural reproduction and exclusion. I selected the term “community access” rather than cultural capital because Bourdieu’s concept is pinned to reproducing economic inequality (and does not account for race and gender inequality) and as such posits economic capital as the main currency. Instead, I prefer the term access as it can facilitate mobility but is not a direct exchange of economic capital. I describe the community features that enable differential forms of school and sport access that later translate into greater opportunities to attend elite universities.

The second chapter, *Social Access*, explores the relationships athletes rely upon. Again, this is like Coleman’s (1986) concept of social capital that builds on Bourdieu’s work. Coleman uses Bourdieu to outline how social ties can be exchanged for economic currency and maintain class inequality. I prefer the term access as the relationships I observed do not yield direct

economic results. Instead, I describe the types of relationships that are necessary to become a high level athlete and the knowledge forms that flow through these networks.

The third chapter turns to how the ideologies of natural ability and hard work circulate through the sports-track-to-college pipeline and obscure *Community* and *Social* access. The three chapters collectively reveal how individual merit or physical ability alone do not create elite athletes. Instead the sports-track-to-college prohibits broad athletic participation. In the process, the pipeline also shapes broader social structures of economic, racial, and gender inequity.

The pathway to college via elite athletics is littered with social, cultural, and geographic limits. Here, “Community” is defined broadly to include the geographic, institutional, and time features of a given regional area. As will become clear in the following chapters, the lines between Community and Social access are blurred particularly when it comes to families. For analytical purposes, I separate the features of the “Community” and “Social” Access into distinct categories. In doing so it is easier to observe how these forces are informed by the three major power relationships in the U.S.: race, class and gender.

### **Geographic and Regional Differences**

Taylor grew up in a mostly White and middle class suburb in the Western U.S. As the child of two college-level long distance runners, becoming a competitive track athlete was commonsensical. By fourth grade she recalled joining a private track club. At one practice she trained so vigorously as an eight-year old she threw up during a workout. Despite track’s reputation as a sport requiring little more than a pair of shoes, in high school Taylor noticed the creeping community, racial, and economic barriers that restricted access to her team.

My team was all these white girls. I remember there was this one guy on the team and he was really fast. He was Mexican. But then his Mom couldn't drive him to practice so then he stopped coming. And one time we were on a run and we saw him smoking weed under this bridge. And my coach was like, ‘No!’ It was so sad because he was so good but he

just couldn't come... And there was this Hispanic girl who didn't have running shoes. [She] had on converse or something. And we were like, 'OK, everyone needs to have running shoes.' But it's hard to be like, 'you have to go buy them.' Because they're expensive. Yeah, it's just sad because it's definitely not always equal (Interview One).

For Taylor, access to high-level school sports came through an elaborate support network from her surrounding community, family, and school. She did not have to consider features such as getting to and from practice or purchasing the right shoes to participate, small but potent economic barriers that prevent equal representation in athletic participation. This section examines how children like Taylor who grow up in resource-rich families or geographic areas enjoy greater access to sports that can later yield an exceptional route to college.

Social reproduction scholars use geography in their analysis by examining how school settings, curriculum, and access privilege suburban over urban and rural areas (Anyon, 1983; Lareau, 2003; Roscigno & Crowle, 2001; Tobin, et al, 1999). This analysis does not consider how the natural and physical landscape of a region is a resource in and of itself that influences college access. Geography refers to the natural and physical landscape along with the urban infrastructure in each community. Geography defined what sports were accessible in schools and communities. For instance, the common first sports for Canadians and Americans from the Midwest, and Northeast was ice-hockey. In contrast, participants from Southern California were more likely to be introduced to water sports at a young age, like swimming.

Rowing depends on access to certain geographic features, namely, a large body of calm water. This geographic imperative inherently restricts the areas in which the sport can be found. Morgan, a White woman who grew up in New York State, spent her early years as a swimmer, finding initial success in the sport using her "raw power." But as she plateaued in one sport, she decided to find a new one. Rowing was a natural choice as it was central to her town's history.

Our town was built because of the Erie Canal. We were like a port I guess but not anymore. It's just a decorative little thing that moves through the State. But that's what

we row. So, it goes through the whole town. So, everybody knows about it. It's like a very, family-oriented homey-suburban town. And so, everybody knows everybody. And rowing is in the middle of it all (Morgan, Interview One).

Morgan was not the only rower who fell into the sport because of its accessibility. Three of the participants grew up in the Pacific Northwest, surrounding by bays, inlets, and rivers, where rowing, according to Amanda, did not seem “elitist” it just seemed “available.”

On a national scale, proximity to water is not the only reason for geographic differences in rowing participation. The National Federation for High School Sports reported in 2015 that only seven U.S. states had high schools with rowing programs, with a total of 152 high schools offering programs to women and 102 offering programs to men (NFHS, 2015). In total, the survey reported there were 6,679 high school rowers in 2015. Compare that to the Nation's most popular sport, football, which is hosted in high schools in all 50 U.S. states and Washington D.C. with a total of 1,124,150—mostly male—high school athletes (NFHS, 2015).

School-sponsored sports programs are not the only route to athletics. Of the twenty-four rowers who participated in the study, only one accessed the sport through their public school team. Four others picked up rowing through their private-boarding schools, and the rest through private clubs. Private rowing clubs are not evenly distributed throughout the United States.

*Table 3.1. States with Top Number of Rowing Clubs<sup>20</sup>*

	State	Number of Clubs	University Programs	Total
1	New York	121	27	148
2	Massachusetts	96	19	115
3	Pennsylvania	82	23	105
4	Virginia	77	12	89
5	Florida	70	16	86
6	California	54	30	84
7	New Jersey	72	4	76
8	Connecticut	62	9	71
9	Ohio	42	12	54
10	Washington	39	9	48

<sup>20</sup> Table results come from the U.S. Rowing Association. US Rowing sponsors 1305 rowing clubs in the U.S, 295 of which are connected to universities. The remaining, or 1010 clubs are available for all levels of rowing, including juniors, or under 18.

An analysis of rowing clubs in the U.S. showed that seven of the top ten states are on the East Coast of the United States, five of which are in New England. The sport has a history in this region as it was the location where the sport was first introduced to the U.S. from England through the Harvard and Yale programs (Smith, 1988). But, it also has a high concentration of wealth, and, as will become apparent, is a necessary component to run, operate, and participate in the sport (Riess, 1994; Wessells, 2011). Geography also closes off sport participation. Thirty States have eight or fewer high school rowing programs, including water-rich areas such as: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Hawaii. Five states have no rowing programs whatsoever: Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Someone born into these states must leave the area to participate in a private club or high school program.

At first glance, track is more geographically accessible than rowing. Whereas rowing is accessed mostly through private clubs in a few select regions of the U.S., track is the second most featured American sport; offered by high schools in all 51 U.S. states and districts. There are just over 16,000 high schools in the U.S. that sponsor track and field programs, with 578,632 men and 478,726 women participating in the sport (NFHS, 2015). That is roughly 160 times the amount of U.S. high school rowers. USA Track & Field, the governing body for the sport, has over 2,000 private club memberships for those willing to pay a little extra to participate in the sport. Weather even seems to do little to restrict this outdoor activity. Instead, high schools encourage students to endure the frigid or sweltering temperatures. Three study participants came from areas with frequent snowfall and/or close-to-zero temperatures. Another twelve came from areas where temperatures rise to one hundred degrees in the summer. This meant practices occurred as early as 6am to save the athletes from heat-stroke.

Track may seem unrestricted by geographical or physical environment, but the cultural

landscape impacted the sport. Reputable programs, coaches, and meets, are highly concentrated in the Western U.S., namely, Southern California. Being from this region conferred athletic success on athletes more so than those from other regions. Of the study's track participants, five of twenty-two participants were State or National champions in their event. Ten of the participants came from the Southern California region, yet only one was a State Champion. The remaining four came from a different part of the State, Country, or World. Track and field participants, from areas other than Southern California, felt additional athletic performance pressure. Two participants from other areas had to win their state meet to gain recognition in the recruiting process. The one international track and field athlete in the study won her national competition and was a three-time national team member.

The concentration of athletic programs and talent in Southern California also advantaged athletes. Those outside the region felt as though the lack of regular competition made it difficult to improve each week. Terrance, a mid-and-long distance runner from Nevada described how difficult it was to become an elite athlete absent of real competition.

You don't get a lot of the race experience that these southern California kids have, where they're racing sub-4:12 milers week in and week out. Where in Nevada they're two 4:20 milers in the whole state and one of them is in Reno and one is in Vegas. I raced him at State and that's it... The meets we'd go to back home are like, the Fallon Invitational where you drive an hour into the middle of Nevada and there's a track, and a high school, and then it's surrounded by farms. And there's schools with thirty kids there and--if you run a two mile and you're lapping kids twice...it's hard to get fired up for these things... But then if you go to a big meet there's people there. There's vast competition. You want to do good. You don't want to look bad. You get fired up to run, and you're in the zone and you're not so much worried about running fast because you have everybody around you to gauge how fast you're running (Terrance, Interview One).

Embedded within Terrance's response is how a high school student emerges as a potential college athlete. For men's track and field at the high school level, the difference in running a 4:25 or a 4:14 means being or not being on the watch-list for college recruitment. Here, Terrance shows that physical ability, in some sense, has less to do with shaving those seconds off the time,

than the geographical competition of other faster teammates and competitors.

Terrance comments also raise another geographical limitation in track: being seen at big races. The biggest race that virtually every track athlete mentioned is Mt. SAC Relays, whose tagline states: “Where the World’s Best Athletes Compete.” The meet occurs in April at Mt. San Antonio College, about 25 miles East of Los Angeles in Norwalk, California. For those from the Southern California area, attending this meet is a regular part of their season, giving the potential-collegiate athletes years to be seen by college recruiters. Yet for those other regions and nations, attending the meet requires financial means or sponsorships.

### **Community Wealth**

The physical landscape of an area was also shaped by the community’s access to wealth. In describing their hometowns, many participants, across sport and racial identity, described their community as “affluent” or “suburban.” Their communities included local parks, recreational centers, public fields, and blacktops. Regional differences, again, accounted for the types of community-supported sports. In the Midwest and Northeast, public ice-rinks and cross country-ski courses were more common, whereas southern Californians had access to volleyball courts and pools. C.M., a White woman and long-distance runner from Southern California, picked up swimming as her first sport because pools abounded in her area. “My community, we have 27 pools that we have access to, two lagoons, two man-made lakes” (C.M., Interview One).

Brandon, also a track and field athlete, but from the Midwest, spoke at length in both our interviews about the importance of his community recreational facilities. He stayed involved with his local recreational teams through high school, when he became a year-round track and field athlete. His community, a suburb of a major Midwestern city, offered several recreational leagues, varying the sport depending on the season. Soccer in the fall, basketball and hockey in



the winter, and volleyball in the summer. Brandon recognized the low-cost youth sports were subsidized by the community's collective time and income.

There's a lot of money obviously. Lots of free time. So people were able to make their kids, you know, practice or get better, playing these summer travel teams... It was something that [is] kinda really obvious--every Saturday morning if you had a kid aged four to ten then you're doing [sports] on a Saturday morning (Brandon, Interview One).

For both C.M. and Brandon, the community provided infrastructure for local children to engage athletically with one another in a variety of athletic activities. The availability of athletic opportunities was so commonplace in the community that sports participation became common-sense logic. As Brandon explains, "it's just what your kid does."

To untangle how class, race and geography influence sports participation, I looked beyond the participants for a wider view. The Athletes' Hometown Stats includes measures for average community income and high school ranking. 68% of the student athletes came from California, whereas 19% are from other states, and 12% from outside the U.S. Measures for family incomes and secondary-education quality yielded stark differences between student-athletes' and general students' backgrounds. For state definitions of "low-income" only 0.43% student-athletes met these criteria compared to 25.8% the general student population. The wealthier communities also reflected better access to schools. The t-distribution of high school ranking showed the density of population increased steadily with a higher ranking high school score (Appendix H). Sixty-four percent of athletes went to a high ranking high school<sup>21</sup> This suggests the athlete population comes from academically strong high schools. Compared to the undergraduate population, a smaller distribution of athletes attended low ranking high schools. Further, athletes were more likely to be represented in the middle or upper-middle income range, with 71.21% from communities whose income is higher than their state's family median income.

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<sup>21</sup> High school ranking determined by State educational ranking system. "High" is eight or above on a 10 point scale. Low ranking is a score of four or below.

While Coastal U athletes seemed more socially advantaged compared to the student population, differences across sport remained. Rowers went to better ranking, more often private, and most likely White-majority high schools. Rowers also came from neighborhoods with greater median incomes than track and field athletes. But even track athletes, who are supposed to represent the most free, open sport with the greatest upward mobility potential were clustered in upper incomes. Less than three percent of track athletes came from communities where family incomes averaged less than \$50,000 per year. Instead, track athletes were most likely to be found in the communities ranging from \$80 – 124,999 per year.

*Table 3.2. Family Median Income Comparison Across Student Populations*

Estimated Family Income*	Coastal U Students	Coastal U Athletes	Coastal U Crew Team	Coastal U Track Team
Less than \$50,000	24%	1.94%	0.78%	2.77%
\$50,000 to \$79,999	14%	31.17%	23.50%	36.60%
\$80,000 to \$124,999	23%	43.61%	42.03%	44.73%
\$125,000 or more	38%	23.27%	33.68%	15.90%

\*U.S Census data, represented in 2014 dollars

The t-distribution analysis on median family income shows athletes’ income density peak ranging between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Further, the athlete population has a group of people at the high end with income above 200,000 dollars (Appendix H). The median of the athlete population family income is \$91,028 and the mean of athletes population family income is \$102,098, and the standard deviation is \$39,374 dollars, which could be used for a future research population. Compared with general student population, athletes have a larger population with family income beyond \$150,000 dollars. Further, the mean of family income for athletes is much higher than the median which suggests that there is a population of athletes that come from very wealthy families that drags the mean higher than the median of population.

The study participants’ community characteristics represent the larger trends in the dataset. Sixteen, half of whom were rowers, came from communities that were 80% or more White. Only eight, most of whom were people of color, came from areas that had less than fifty

percent White populations. Further, 18 participants came from communities where the Median Family Income was greater than \$100,000 per year, well above the respective State and national average. All but three of these communities with incomes over \$100,000 were majority-White.

In closing, the first hurdle in the sports-track-to-college is geography. The very nature of where in the U.S. or the World a person is born can dictate the types of sports opportunities both physically and culturally available. Yet there is no guarantee that even with the right geographic features in a community, there will be equal access to the sports-track-to-college.

### **Institutional Access and Barriers**

Geography creates broad distinctions in access to sporting opportunities. But within geographic regions, institutions—or people-run organizations with rules, regulations, and economic standards—further restricted access (Wharton, 2005). Despite regional and international differences in the student athlete’s upbringing, similarities abounded in how they accessed and incorporated sport into their lives. Physical activity sometimes pre-dated conscious memories, recounting stories like their “mom throwing me into a pool at two months old” (Captain America, Interview One). Many remembered their first physical activity as “playing tag” with their siblings or friends. These physical movements may be considered “play” rather than formalized “sport” defined as athletic activities supported by social institutions with hierarchical relationships and governing bodies (Guttmann, 1978). But sport participation, even by this formal definition, started before most student athletes had begun school. All but three participants were involved in organized sport by kindergarten.

This study also captured the experiences of a generation of student athletes who grew up after one of the most monumental pieces of Civil Rights Legislation, Title IX. Title IX prohibits public educational institutions from gender discrimination. As discussed in the Literature Review

Chapter, Title IX led to an exponential increase in sports participation, particularly for White women. While gender alone cannot be the sole barrier to school-sports participation, it still lingers in athletic experiences. Title IX has no impact on private clubs, how a family allocates their resources, and/or it still permits school sports to remain gender segregated and unequal. This section examines the common trends in sport access, namely recreational, private club, and scholastic sports. In doing so, it uncovers the social and economic barriers that limit sport access.

### **Access Through Recreational Sports**

Access to sports for 46 of the 47 participants came through their community sponsored recreational leagues. For U.S. born students, the leagues were in religious affiliations, such as Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) basketball, recreational centers with low cost fees for residents, or non-religious affiliated youth organizations like American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) soccer. International students had access to sports through private clubs or lessons such as ski teams, hockey leagues, tennis clubs, or gymnastics.

A distinction emerged between “recreational sports organizations” or those run by volunteers with non-profit status, and “private clubs” or those in which administrators, coaches, officials or referees, receive compensation. Typically, the latter included higher fees, more time spent practicing, a greater investment in equipment such as uniforms, and included traveling to competitions beyond the immediate community. Athletes differentiated between “rec” and “club” sports due to the “seriousness” in athletic competition that emerges from an investment of time and resources. This led to a secondary distinction between “fun” rec sports and more “competitive” club sports. Chelsea, transitioned from rec to “travel” hockey around fifth grade.

I started playing travel hockey, I think in grade five or six. And that was more, at least four or five, practices a week. And it was more intense. Usually someone's Dad would still coach us. But it was a lot more intense and really working on being in good shape and good hockey players, rather than just having fun. I mean it was still about fun, but

more about winning (Chelsea, Interview One).

What Chelsea refers to as the “fun” of recreational leagues was reiterated through the study. There was almost a longing, or nostalgia, expressed by the participants for the days when, as Duane put it, “I was picking daisies in the middle of the soccer field” (Duane, Interview One). Often, the participants described their early years with sports in contrast to how they experience sports today. The “fun” in athletics came from a *lack of* pressure, stress, or time commitment, common features to the more bureaucratized athletic experience.

Another common experience with the joy or fun they felt from sports at a young age was success or winning. Victoria, a Canadian who participated in any sport available in her community or school, explained that sports ceased being fun “If I’m bad at them they’re definitely not as fun. They can be funny. But they’re not fun for me” (Victoria, Interview One). Victoria’s statement was echoed by many of her fellow student athletes. As they tried different sports, much of the “fun” came from achievement and success. Morgan, who immigrated to the U.S. from Germany, described herself as a shy and awkward child. She struggled in school, learning a new language, and adapting to American culture. She tried several sports but felt like she couldn’t use her body effectively in common coordination sports like soccer. In middle school, she joined a community swim team, and finally found sports fun, because she won.

At the beginning I really, really liked it. Because I was actually good at it. Because, like I said, I was bigger and I had raw power I guess. I’m not very technical at it. That was really fun. And so I started to care about it more. ...But then, by the end, by like eighth grade, everybody started getting really, really fast. And I just wasn’t that good at it. And I really started to dislike it. I don’t really know why. I feel like I hit a cap and I just didn’t want to push through it. I don’t know, I was fourteen (Morgan, Interview One).

For Morgan, her enjoyment in the sport, tied to winning, meant when the success faded she left the sport. This fleeting experience with success still did give her the confidence to join another sport, one where her athletic success was no longer fleeting: rowing.

For the three, self-identified, low economic-class or “poor” participants of the study, their experiences with sport differed from the other 44 participants. Sanya and Savannah, both White women, lived on the fringes of wealthier communities. Neither came from families that supported, or knew much about, athletics. But the women became involved in low-cost recreational sports through their community. Ultimately, Sanya’s success in her sport came through her high-school sponsored track program, a public school in one of the richest neighborhoods in the U.S. Savannah joined a private rowing club through an athletic scholarship.

Chantae, a Black woman, grew up in a racially segregated farming community. Her part of town lacked public parks, infrastructure, or community impetus for sports participation. In sixth grade Chantae had a chance to move from an “all Black school” in her neighborhood to a public school on the other side of town, in an “all White” area. This second school offered a track program that she joined with her grandfather’s encouragement. When I asked why he felt it important for her to join a track program, she explained, “Just to exercise. Because I came from a bad neighborhood so just trying to keep us doing positive things that we actually enjoy, rather than just being out on the streets” (Chantae, Interview One).

In contrast, Brittany, now Chantae’s track teammate, is a Black woman who grew up in a racially diverse community but had a higher average family income than Chantae’s. Her neighborhood park had a local recreational center with various sports, a playground, low-cost afterschool childcare, supervised homework time, arts and crafts, and dance lessons. Brittany learned all her sports, including cheerleading, at the park. Her first glimpse of track came from playing at the recreational center and witnessing other kids engaged in the sport.

I actually had friends that I went to day-camp with, at the park, and we used to all be up there together, and their dad was their track coach, and I used to see them sometimes, I’m playing on the jungle gym and they’re running around and pulling sleds, and I was like, ‘Ugh, what are they doing?’ They could be on the swings, what the heck?’ And their dad

had actually told me, we were playing tag one day, and their dad had actually told me, 'You need to run track for my team' (Brittany, Interview One).

Despite her initial aversion to the sport, Brittany would later join track. Even with these low-cost opportunities in her community, her family supplemented the low-cost athletics with high-cost private clubs and coaching to improve her athletic performance.

This is particularly true for the White, middle-class rowers in the study. They came from communities with plenty of low-cost sport options yet opted for private sports clubs. In this sense, those from athletic-resource-rich areas had a cumulative advantage over others, like Chantae, coming from poorer communities. The middle-class participants benefited early on from community-subsidized low-cost sports, and, later paid for additional opportunities with private clubs or coaches. A total of thirty-six of the forty-seven participants joined private, fee-based, club sports throughout their athletic careers. Prior to high school, private clubs were commonly referred to as “travel” or “all-star” teams in which the advanced players in rec leagues could continue their sport at a higher, more competitive, level and for months of the year. These competitive teams required greater financial and time contributions from families including paying for travel costs, additional uniforms, club memberships, and equipment.

### **Access Through Club Sports**

Rowers were more likely to access their eventual college sport through a private club than track athletes. Of the eleven participants who never participated in club sports, nine were eventual college track and field athletes, and two were rowers. The race and gender differences in club participation were negligible. Financial cost and availability of private clubs in the community were the greatest drivers of club sport participation. Eight of the eleven people of color and all but two women in the study participated in club sports. But the race and gender make-up of club teams did impact how athletes experienced their sports participation.

The cost of private club affiliation varied by region or sport but in all cases required family financial contributions. On the high end, two participants in the study were national-level skiers before joining their college sport. Victoria tried skiing at age two and fell in love with the “adrenaline rush” in downhill ski racing. She joined multiple private clubs and travel teams. By high school, her father forced her to choose between skiing and private school.

To get me through a year of ski racing at the semi-lower level was about the same as going to private school, so like 25-30 thousand dollars a year...And so, [my dad] was like, 'You can do one or the other.' So I went and I did [ski racing] and I went to this big public school (Victoria, Interview One).

Rowing through private clubs had more variation in cost than skiing. Some families spent up to \$25,000. Unlike skiing, where all athletes bought their own equipment, rowers do not need to own their own equipment. Clubs provide the boats, oars, ergometers—stationary rowing machines—and other materials. But, three participants purchased their own single scull, a one-person boat, to train on their own. A used single-scutt shell, not including riggers, oars, and other essential features costs between \$1,500 to \$6,025 (Row2K, 2016; Vespoli, 2016). Fees to store a boat could be an extra \$60 per month (Marin Rowing, 2016). The club membership fees for rowing also vary in price. The average membership for the top ten U.S. junior rowing programs was \$2,674 per year. The most affordable club, located in upstate New York cost \$1,300 per year. The most expensive came from a neighboring state, Connecticut, costing \$3,900 per year.

The membership fee was just the beginning in terms of costs for participants and their families. Many of the clubs required donations, either financially or through volunteer hours working regattas. If they did neither, they could be fined up to \$200. Clubs also had rigorous handbooks detailing the appropriate clothing, behavior, and appearance for the sport. All clubs required participants to purchase uniforms for the sport. For instance, a New York Rowing Club required all athletes to have a uniform for the fall and spring. In addition, it offered pricing for



“recommended” athletic gear. If you purchased their required and recommended gear, it would cost \$507.43 per person (Pittsford Crew, 2016).

All top-ten rowing programs advertised athletic scholarships. The specifications varied as to how the club would award these need-based awards. An East Coast Rowing club, for instance, had students turn in parents’ tax returns, write an essay, and, if selected, were required to do maintenance for the club including cleaning the boat house. The scholarships also had contingencies around them including coaches’ discretion, attendance, and athletic performance. As one California Rowing club explained, “The Scholarship Committee grants aid based on financial need, positive attitude and volunteer participation. All grants are subject to certification by a coach that the rower had good attendance and a positive attitude the prior semester” (Oakland Strokes, 2016). If a scholarship athlete is required to clean the boathouse after practice, while the rest of the team heads home to rest, recover, or begin their homework, it is no wonder someone might develop a “negative attitude.”

Furthermore, it is unclear how often clubs offer scholarships. The study’s college rowers offered overwhelmingly consistent memories of junior rowing. Most described their teammates as “well-off” and “White.” There were only two instances of the twenty-five rowers, where finances prohibited participation. Only one of the twenty-five participants received a junior rowing scholarship. Savannah, who grew up in a California “hick town” came from a divorced family and neither parent nor her older siblings completed college. She had minimal recreational sports participation as a young child, and admitted her siblings and mother are baffled that one of their own could become an athlete. Savannah recalled in high school a friend coming up to her “out of the blue” and said, “Hey, you're really tall you should come to a [crew] practice.” Savannah knew nothing about the sport. She thought it was canoeing or kayaking. “I was really

confused. I didn't know what it was. I'd never been in a boat before” (Savannah, Interview One). Savannah attended the first practice and performed well on the erg—often a first test given to rowers to assess basic strength and athleticism. After her first practice, she remembered telling her mom: “That was so much fun. I'm so invigorated, and I'm so energetic. And I'm so excited about this new thing.” Despite her enthusiasm for the sport, she felt, right away, that she could not continue. She didn't return to practice the next day because she knew her mom could not afford the club dues.

Luckily for Savannah, her friend persisted, and tracked her down at school. She mentioned to Savannah that the rowing coach kept asking about her. Savannah hesitated and confessed to the friend she could not afford the sport. Then, Savannah learned about rowing scholarships. Savannah's club funded her throughout the rest of her high school rowing career. At times, the club couldn't cover all her costs, including a stint on the junior national team. So Savannah sought donations from her school, community, and extended family, and hosted fundraising events like car washes to complete her rowing experience.

The club membership fees for track and field were much lower than for rowing. I researched track programs in comparable areas to the rowing clubs and found the cost for membership ranging between \$100 per year to \$960 per year. But the costs accumulated beyond dues. Athletes had to purchase gear like uniforms, multiple pairs and types of track shoes and spikes. The required clothing costs for one California track club, with membership dues of \$960 per year, totaled \$155.96, excluding shoe costs (Marinwaves, 2016). Track participants explained that shoes were an essential cost in their sport. All participants needed at least one pair of shoes and one pair of track spikes. Each averaged around \$100 per pair. For longer distance runners, an athlete could go through a pair of shoes per month. In addition, the shoe and spike type varies per

event. Even among events involving jumping the shoe varied. LeVar remembers changing his spikes three times at a meet between jumping and sprinting events.

For lower-income families, clothing and gear required for sports is a barrier. Chantae recalled being ungrateful for her mom's financial investment in her sports participation.

My mom does hair, so her money was really inconsistent. One week she'll have a good week when everyone comes in and gets their hair done. And then other weeks, she wouldn't. And so during club season, you have to pay for [the club]. And pay for your way to the meet. And have money to spend [at the meet]. They didn't give me anything. So it kinda influenced it. But, for the most she always got it done (Interview One).

As was true for Chantae, economic barriers were also shaped by race and gender constraints. The under or overrepresentation of particular races and genders in certain sports also drove whether student-athletes sought out and stuck with a particular team. Unlike Chantae who lived in a majority-minority community, Malcolm and Josephine grew up Black in mostly White communities. Like LeVar, they each tried many mostly White sports. Track became a space that they could access people of similar racial backgrounds. But the diversity did not come through the school teams, and instead, existed in their private track clubs.

We grew up, in an all-White neighborhood. And we had--and the [club] track team, was an all-African American team, pretty much. I mean they didn't want it to be like that, but it just started to be like that. So we were exposed to our culture. And it was just like, 'Yes.' We were around people that got us. A lot of times people in school didn't get me. I was just a different kid. And I was able to go there and have friends. And have mentors. I had other people I could look up to, other than my father. (Malcolm, Interview One).

For the Black study participants, being on track and field was important to their sense of identity, self, and combating harmful racial stereotypes. Being around other "Black folks" as Malcolm described, gave him a community that was absent in his school or neighborhood, where people would just "get it." He didn't need to explain to his fellow track teammates what it meant to be Black in a mostly White world. Of equal importance, Malcolm had a private track coach, who could be a Black male authority figure in Malcolm's mostly White community upbringing.

## **Access Through Private Coaching**

Malcolm's need for a private coach shows another restricting mechanism. It may seem that for track "all you need is a pair of shoes" but the sport itself is complex. Track has at least seven specialties: sprints, jumps (long, triple, pole vault, and high jumps), throws (hammer, javelin, shot put, discus, and weight throw) mid-distance, long-distance, relays, and hurdles, all of which require different training, knowledge, and expertise. The variation in track led several athletes to seek private coaching to increase their abilities. They did so when a club or high school program lacked a coach with the knowledge of a certain event. Private coaching for all kinds of youth sports has been on the rise since the early 2000's (Bick, 2007). Of the study participants (all of whom were track athletes), eight hired a private coach. Track coaching is offered between \$50 - \$100 per hour in most regions (Bick, 2007; MarinWaves, 2016).

Malcolm entered the sports-track-to-college at a young age. He had a private coach with whom he developed a deep bond and with whom he still works with to this day. By seventh grade Malcolm competed in club track, quickly specializing in the long-jump event. His older sister also had early success in the long-jump and their family decided to invest in a coach for the two young athletes. Their club and his school lacked effective coaching in this area, offering up a sprints coach to help them with the long-jump. After two years with a private coach, Malcolm became one the nation's top junior long jumpers. Malcolm and his sister endured a grueling schedule training with both a private coach and high school program. They spent Monday through Friday with their high school team, supplemented by workouts from their private coach. On Saturday and Sunday the siblings commuted 45 minutes to train with their private coach. Their private coach came to all their track meets, and even in college acts as Malcolm's mentor. Looking back on his youth sports, Malcolm recalled that he trained like a "professional." "It's

always been me and my sister and coach. We've trained like professionals. He was a professional long jumper. He trained us like professional long jumpers” (Malcolm, Interview One).

Malcolm’s story illustrates how track and field also includes additional costs and time for coaches and clubs. The difference between track and rowing is track appears accessible because it is offered within most U.S. schools. The cumulative advantage for middle and upper-middle class families extends through the types of free, public schools available in their communities. As previously discussed, the three self-identified “poor” participants in the study, were all able to transfer into majority White, well-funded public high schools.

### **Access Through School Sports**

The last major way study participants accessed sports was through schools. Sports were incorporated into schools in three different ways: 1) as part of the formal curriculum, 2) as part of the informal schooling curriculum, 3) as part of an after-school, extra-curricular activity. First, track was part of the formal curriculum through physical education (P.E.). Although P.E. courses continue to be cut in recent years, this cohort of athletes, attending K-12 schools from 2000 – 2015, still had access to P.E. (Diamant, Babey, & Wolstein, 2011; Marshall & Hardman, 2000). Many track athletes were first exposed to the sport through the P.E. mile test as early as second grade. Second, track appeared as part of the informal curriculum in K-12 schooling. Several participants’ first athletic experience was a “fun run” or a “jog-a-thon” at their elementary school. These events were school fundraisers, adding even more capital to the already well-funded educational systems. Josephine’s experience with the school jog-a-thon was nothing short of transformational. Through the race, she dispelled the powerful cultural archetype of female physical inferiority to men.

I was always the one in my grade that would always do the most laps, or be equal to the guys in my grade. Obviously, once I got older and I got to sixth grade, the guys got a

little faster. But I remember from first grade to fourth grade, I was always the girl who was always just as great as the guys, how many laps they did. I just remember the feeling of feeling really free, and loving the feeling of competing (Josephine, Interview One).

By middle school, Josephine joined a private club and had a private coach.

In contrast, rowing only appeared in the school's formal or informal curricula at private boarding schools. Four participants accessed the sport as part of the required physical activity for their school. In the boarding environment, the curriculum required that all students participate in a sport for each term. Reggie and Will attended boarding schools in Australia. In their respective schools, rowing was a "massive" sport, almost as popular as the country's beloved rugby. Their school regattas would draw crowds upwards of 10,000 people. The accessibility, prestige, and the chance to "get some muscles" drew them to the sport. Their boarding schools covered all the costs of the sport including coaching, clothing, race entry fees, and equipment. But the cost of attendance for these boarding schools is near \$60,000 per year.

The third way sports were integrated into schools was through extracurricular opportunities. Extra-curriculum refers to activities that are connected to schools but are not required or do not occur during the designated hours of school (Eccles & Barber, 1999). All track participants were on private or public high school teams where practice occurred before or after school. Even standout athletes like Malcolm, who worked mostly with a private coach, had to be affiliated with a high school team to be recruited to college. Geographic and institutional access alone may not lead a student to become an elite athlete. The next set of mechanisms further restrict who can access the sports-track-to-college pipeline.

The study's participants came from wealthier and Whiter communities than their non-athletic college-going peers. Thus, participants were more likely to attend schools with well-funded sports programs. Further, future chapters show how a high school program and coach influence how college sport programs recruit and identify athletes.

### **Additional Access: The Gap year**

Four of the study's student athletes did a post-graduate year of high school or a "gap year." Three of the four participants were international students, and all could attend university. They had yet to secure a spot on an elite, American university's athletic team. Through word-of-mouth from family, friends, or their high school club teams, they learned they could enhance their athletic, and in one case academic resumes, by delaying college for a year.

Three international rowers met at a prestigious British rowing club on the River Thames. They each took a "gap year" to advance in their sport, working casually, and traveling through Europe. Through financial support and blessing from their families, the three men's rowers applied independently for the rowing club. The application process was rigorous. The rowing club is nearly two hundred years old and is world-renowned for training national team members, future Olympians, and college-level athletes. Monetary contribution or athletic feats alone did not guarantee entry. To be considered, you must be nominated by a current club member and complete an application including multiple letters of reference from your previous rowing clubs, a physical assessment, and a personal essay. The three aspirational college rowers who joined this club in the gap year, all noted that the demands and physical conditioning of the club were not as rigorous as their high school program. One rower admitted he got slower during his gap year, especially after traveling in Europe for several weeks. But all three agreed that their time at the prestigious club, and recommendations from the club coaches, were key to being recruited and receiving scholarships to U.S. college rowing programs.

Will explained how he was on the margins in terms of his 2K score, a central measure rowing coaches use to evaluate athletes. The college coaches asked that he drop his time to be considered for their program. After a few months at the British club, he was unable to do so. The

Coastal U Recruiting Coach then ceased contact with him. Will then used a recommendation from the Club to gain back favor with Coastal U.

The [English] coach was like, 'Will, he won our seat racing. He's doing really well on this, blah blah blah.' Steve was already going, this English bloke who was there. He got in. And said I was doing really, really well, blah blah. I was like, 'Ah thanks.' And then [Coastal U Coach] was like, 'OK, you can come,' (Will, Interview One).

Will, who attended boarding school in Australia, rowed for a top program in his home country, and secured a spot at an Australian university. He had a lifetime of academic and athletic achievements, but had yet to make it into an American university, a dream he developed towards the end of his time in boarding school. His time at a prestigious British rowing club only furthered his college-going opportunities and granted him access to a top university.

For American students, an increasingly more common route to improve college-going chances is a post-graduate year, or an additional year of high school (Kahn, 2011; Treat, 2016). Post-graduate programs, or “PG’s”, are offered at many boarding schools on the East Coast. Goose grew up in a Southwestern town of only a thousand people and attended a high school so small it only had one hallway. He lettered in three varsity sports, football, baseball, and basketball, and won the State championship in Basketball. He dreamed of becoming a Division I athlete at a top University. Yet he was not recruited in football, basketball, or baseball. He also admitted he did not have the academic “chops” to get into a reputable university without sports. He “dreamed bigger” than most of his high school classmates, and wanted more for himself than simply becoming an “insurance salesman” who “worked in a cubicle” (Goose, Interview One). Goose’s Great-uncle was on the East Coast and had attended a boarding school decades earlier. He knew a PG-Year could improve students’ college resumes. Goose believed the boarding school showed leniency in admission because he agreed to play sports. After an in-person interview, that included an East Coast makeover from his uncle including a tailored suit, Goose



received a generous financial aid package and an opportunity to attend a boarding school attended by America's wealthiest and most well-connected progeny.

Within a few weeks on campus, Goose's height and athleticism caught the eye of the school's rowing coach. Simply based on his affiliation to this boarding school and its rowing program, Goose caught the attention of some of the country's top rowing programs. He had not even rowed his first stroke when he took an official recruiting visit to Coastal U. When I pressed him on how this was possible, the best answer Goose gave was the reputations of his boarding school's coach. "My [boarding school] coach his family is big into rowing. The [Ivy League] coaches and [Coastal U] coaches know him... So he was the reason I got recruited. It wasn't any amazing erg score I was pulling, it was that" (Goose, Interview One).

The Gap Year and PG Programs may seem like outlier routes to college via sports. But as the competition for spots at elite universities grows, so do the alternative routes to access it.

### **Time**

The final facet of *Community Access* is time. Being part of a community that can invest time into developing elite athletes is just as necessary as providing institutional infrastructure. Social reproduction scholars include "time" in their educational analyses as a social conditioning mechanism to train future laborers. Schools teach youth the habits of the workforce including how to obey clocks, time schedules, learn punctuality—or face the consequences—and develop an innate ability to sit still in one location for large chunks of the day (Apple, 2004; Anyon, 1986; Jackson, 1968; Foucault, 1977). In the sports-track-to-college pipeline, time limited broad-based participation in sports in three ways. First, the number of hours needed to become an elite athlete restricts participation to those with leisure or free time. Second, the nature of the time spent in sports impacts athletes in physical, emotional, and psychological ways that carry over

into other aspects of their lives. Third, the opportunity cost of time spent in sports, means there is time *away* from other commitments such as school, work, or activities like music, dance, art etc.

When I asked participants to recall how much time they spent in either youth or high school sports, often their first response was, “So much less than today.” The time towards sports, and the consequences of how this time is spent, only intensifies as the athletic level increases. There was a general sense for both the skill based sports, like the jumping events in track and field, and the endurance sports like running and rowing, increased performance required an investment in time. In recounting the time commitment towards sports, three features of time commitment emerged, all of which could limit participation: 1) Sports are year-round, 2) Athletes practiced more than once a day, 3) The amount of required practice time per week.

*Table 3.3. Sports Time Commitment, Prior to College*

Sport	Youth Sports Year-Round	High School Sports Year-Round	Double-day workouts	Average practice time (hr.) per week*
Women's Track & Field	67% (N, 6)	80% (N, 8)	20% (N, 2)	15.45
Women's Crew	56% (N, 10)	78% (N, 14)	44% (N, 8)	17.47
Men's Track & Field	92% (N, 11)	83% (N, 10)	33% (N, 4)	17.79
Men's Crew	71% (N, 5)	71% (N, 5)	43% (N, 3)	17.5
Total (N, 47)	68% (N, 32)	79% (N, 37)	36% (N, 17)	17.1

*\*Excludes commuting, traveling, and meets/competitions*

At the youth level, seasonal sports took place in the fall, winter, spring *or* summer. If a participant engaged in sports “year-round” this meant participants did multiple sports during different seasons. For instance, one could play soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, track in the spring, and swim in the summer. At the high school level, “year-round” referred to participating in the same sport, say rowing, at all points of the year. High school sports often required camps, retreats, or practices throughout the summer. Merlin, who participated in both football and track, noted his summer practice commitment was upwards of 30 hours per week, training with football in the morning and track in the afternoon. Most of the cross country runners received training schedules that they could either complete on their own, or with the

team at a specific time. Along with running five days a week in the summer, C.M.'s high school track program went to a "Mammoth Camp" in the California Mountains. For club sports like rowing, the participants either continued to row with their club, or tried out for the junior national team. With large, and often financially costly, summer commitments, high school level athletes' only "time off" was a brief reprieve in December. As Taylor described, there were always implicit expectations that athletes train on their own, even during a vacation.

Winter break we don't have anything. But it was always expected that you do stuff on your own... I was always doing stuff. My parents would be like, 'Oh you should do this, do that.' And it was like, 'Aw.' But I like, 'yeah, I want to be better, I want to do this.' I would definitely supplement stuff in those off periods (Taylor, Interview One).

By high school, athletes did "double-day" or twice daily practices. Will, who went to boarding school described his rowing commitment as "ten practices" a week, most of which were double-days. He says, "It was tough. Especially in high school, that's quite a lot. So yeah, it was quite a lot of training. It was just trying to get through it" (Will, Interview One).

Double-days for the athlete involve waking up earlier than other students to train before school followed by a second practice session after school. By squeezing in practice before the sun fully rises coaches get more time out of their athletes who are in school from 8am-3pm. As the above table represents, the average hourly practice commitment per sport, during the school year, was about 17 hours. Further, 16 students, across all sports, spent twenty hours a week or more practicing for their sport. This does not include time spent commuting to practice or competing at meets. Rowing and track competitions could last twelve hours, occurring on most spring weekends. For instance, Mount Sac, the popular track meet, begins with athlete registration at 7:00am on Saturday, with events lasting until 8pm.

In addition to required practice and competitions, thirty-two athletes put in optional work for their sport. This included aerobic conditioning, weight-lifting, and skill development. Casey,

described the time investment for required and optional rowing practices:

We trained six days a week, for three hours, required. And you had extra work...the extra work wasn't required extra work. Because, [in college], your extra work is frickin required...I would come, two hours early, do practice, stay an hour later. Literally, I was there for six hours, my senior year (Casey, Interview One).

The time towards sports also means time away from other aspects of life, such as school.

Camilla, a high school rower, had to start her day at 4:30am to be at practice at 5:15am. When she arrived at school by eight am she had already done two hours of intense physical conditioning. Then, after a full day of school, she'd attend a second rowing practice and then complete at least "three hours of homework a night." The time commitment demanded in the sports-track-to-college makes it difficult for athletes like Camilla to fully engage academically in school work. As the sports commitments increased so did the school commitments.

A major difference between high school and college academics is the school day is determined by state laws, regulating secondary education such as requiring attendance during certain hours. For those in private or public schools in the U.S., Monday through Friday consisted of attending class on some rotating schedule from either 7am – 2pm or 8am – 3pm. Athletic commitments, even if for a private club, had to fall outside of this time window. Coaches and athletes needed permission from teachers or administrators for an athlete to miss a day or hour of class for a sports commitment, again, something that will systematically change in college. Of course, the school day did not often end at 2pm or 3pm. Homework is now a common practice, particularly in secondary education (Buell, 2008 Stigler & Hiebert, 2009; Warton, 2001). Assigning mandatory work to be done outside of the school day has also been cited by reproduction scholars as a common way to ensure that those from economically or racially privileged families have a further advantage in academic achievement (Bourdieu, 1977; Lareau, 2003; Oakes, 2005). There is much debate in the educational literature about whether

homework leads to greater learning (Dichele, 2006; Landers, 2013; Silvis, 2002; Walker, 2007). There is, however, evidence that shows students with higher achievement levels, and those on the track to college, do consistent and increasingly larger amounts of homework (Keith, Diamond-Hallam, Goldenring Fine, 2004; Paschal, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984). This is particularly true for those in Advanced Placement or college-track pipelines (Honken & Ralston, 2013; Oakes, 2005; Walker, 2007). Yet for study participants, only five of the 47 participants remarked that they experienced heavy loads of homework during high school. This is particularly interesting as recent research also suggests that youth who participate in extracurricular activities like sports, report higher rates of stress and fatigue, as it relates to completing homework, than their non-athletic peers (Brenner, 2007; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Merkel, 2013). How, then, did those on the sports-track-to-college manage their sports and school time commitments?

I observed three types of students in the participants. The first group included Camilla: students who maintained high athletic and academic achievements throughout their lives. There were about half a dozen students represented in this group. These participants reported extreme fatigue and stress, particularly in the Spring which had Advanced Placement Testing and athletic competitions. When I pressed this group about what skills, strategies, or resources they used to compete in both sport and school at a high level, most responded with a mixture of gratitude for a life-time of economic and social privileges and a belief that they just had a greater work ethic than others. As Noelle put it, “I just didn’t sleep in high school” (Noelle, Interview One).

The second group felt school was not that difficult, making it easy to balance a high-sports time commitment. This group originated from either underfunded and low-resourced schools, often which accompanied lower academic demands. Some also felt they were “naturally smart” and could cope well in school. Chantae, who attended public schools in a majority-

minority and highly impoverished section of California, embodied both explanations.

I was more naturally smart and I didn't have to try so hard. Whereas my brother...he was smart, but he had to do all of his homework. He was always sitting at the dinner table, turning everything in on time...everything just came easier. Math, I didn't really have to try too hard. I didn't have to spend all my time trying to figure it out... And I swear, my memory of school is just never doing homework. I never did any of my homework, I always cheated or slipped by, doing the easiest stuff, just to pass (Interview One).

Chantae's account also references the third coping strategy of students who just "got through" school. Unlike sports, where they believed more time led to better results, school work was avoided or done as efficiently as possible. The less time put in school, the better.

George saw himself as a top high school student and who successfully completed five Advanced Placement courses including Calculus AB and BC, still described school as something to simply "get through." He did so by exploiting the "down time" in school.

I would do homework when we were in class and weren't doing anything. So I would just finish most of my homework then. So then, yeah, I would only have to do very limited homework when I got home. Or I would take homework to other classes, and just do that during class. If like I wasn't doing anything in one class I would do math homework while I was just kinda sitting there (George, Interview One).

George's strategy of completing his homework during class, lunch, or during other courses, is only successful for a student who feels confident with the course material. George acknowledged that he understood the concepts when the teacher first iterated them, and could start the homework when school seemed to become repetitive.

Student athletes' efficiency-mindset towards school came from the very immediate impact sports have on the physical and emotional components of the body. Probably the greatest impact sport has on the body is fatigue. Casey, who described putting in six hours a day to her sport—a normal college-level load—did weight lifting, erging, and rowing during that time. Each of these activities require aerobic: lung-related, or heavy breathing activity, and anaerobic: muscular exerting, physical commitments. To sustain that level of physical exertion also takes

mental focus. Often the athlete is fighting off the urge to slow down, do less reps, or take a break. Therefore, at the end of a multi-hour workout, or a day with multiple multi-hour workouts, someone is physically, mentally, and emotionally spent. Ten participants in the study said their fatigue was so extreme they often slept through classes and sometimes entire subjects. Will, who had ten practices per week, believed fatigue impacted his school work.

I used to fall asleep in class a lot. Sometimes it was like once a class. And you just miss stuff. And you get behind... And then some classes I wasn't enjoying it. I was so bored, I [was] not really listening... But in rowing, I ended up being OK at that, and I guess that's why I liked it. But sometimes in class it's like, 'I don't really care' (Interview One).

When faced with extreme fatigue, Will made an understandable decision. He continued to put his limited energy in the area he excelled in, rowing, rather than school. But, as he articulated, once you start sleeping in class, the course work quickly slips by and you fall further behind.

Other participants took a different tactic, openly prioritizing sleep above all else. Taylor, whose parents were college-level runners, recalled how they constantly reminded her to go to bed early, even if she had to finish her work. George went to bed at 6pm after hard practices, then woke up at 5am to finish a bit of homework and go to school. That way, he said, it ensured he was rested enough for practice. C.M. openly admitted to simply not doing school work. After three hours of long distance running and drills, she spent her evenings resting and recovering.

Sports participation also meant time away from other activities, like employment or socializing. Only a particular kind of individual can engage in sports, one with leisure time, or who is free from the burden of employment or family obligations. One of the more striking features of the student-athletes' life histories is how few of them had jobs or childcare responsibilities. Only a handful of participants worked, and none said it was out of necessity to contribute to their family incomes. Iceman had a job in high school, but, as he explains, employment was for individual growth, not economic need.

Along with playing a sport, we all had to have a summer job...So that's what I did. I would wake up at 4:45am to row, and then I had to go to work, and then I had to go to a practice or a game in the afternoon. And the workdays were really long. And I wanted to row and play hockey. I [told] my Dad, 'I can't do this. I need to row. I really want to play hockey. And I don't have to work.' And he was like, 'Yes you do. You've just got to be tough,' (Interview One).

Iceman's time working construction for his father was laborious, but it was not from economic need. As he pointed out, the family didn't "need" his income from employment. His family could financially support his sports participation and private school tuition during this time.

Another feature to Iceman and the other participants' lives is that none were required to contribute to the domestic responsibilities of the home. A few did symbolic chores but none were required to help with childcare for younger siblings and/or other extended family members. The freedom from domestic or economic employment was central in allowing the participants the time and energy to dedicate to high level sports participation as developing youth.

Time toward sports also meant time away from socializing. Some felt disconnected from their high school class and the rituals of secondary education. Many missed their high school graduation or prom because of a meet. Steve felt like he was missing out on socializing with friends because of his sports. He explained this was in part because he tried to have friends at school, outside of sports. And, they would often invite him to hang out, or spend time together, but he always had practice or a meet. Over time, the relationships diverged. While missing out on time with friends seems like a petty inconvenience, it becomes more significant at the college level as student athletes' social ties become increasingly limited to the "athletic" world. Teammates, coaches, and athletic administrators do offer a tremendous emotional support network, but, future chapters show, they also offer a limited worldview.

### **Conclusion: Reproducing Inequality Through Community Access**

This chapter illustrates how economic investments by communities, schools, and



families, shape access to sports. Each athlete had financial privilege, either through the community they were connected to or their family status. Duane, a Black long-distance runner from California, felt his mom's financial investment in his sport made him take athletics "more seriously." As he explained, the greater investment of "all this time and all this effort and all this money into [track]" meant, "this has to become a lifestyle" (Duane, Interview One). Duane was in a unique position in that he straddled both a middle-class mixed-race community, and a predominately low-income Black community. He lived and went to school in the former, whereas, his extended family lived in the latter. He witnessed many of his cousins and fellow teammates drop out of the sport because they lacked the resources to properly invest.

A lot of difficulties for people in track [are] because they're not using proper equipment or they don't have the proper nutrition, they don't have the proper tools... I can see why people would think, 'Oh you don't need a lot of money. You just throw on your shoes, throw on your shorts and run.' It's not that simple (Interview One).

The money needed for sports not only excludes individuals, but entire communities, genders, or racial groups from the sports-track-to-college. This chapter also uncovered that economic barriers are not the only hindrance to athletic participation. Lack of demographic representation, including race, turns potential athletes away from certain sport. Rowing remains, almost exclusively, an all-White sport. After listening to the challenges that Black athletes face in a somewhat racially diverse sport like track and field, it is no wonder more people of color do not join rowing. The three last Olympic U.S men and women rowing teams were exclusively White. Most college programs across the country are completely White. The lack of representation of people of color in rowing perpetuates a lack of diversity. As the next chapter shows, access or lack thereof, to a sport within a community is inherently informed by social relationships within institutions including: family, teachers, coaches, and teammates.

## **Chapter 4: The Sports-Track-to-College: Social Access**

*“I neglected to do a lot of school work in high school. I decided it’s going to be better for me to get eight or nine hours of sleep a night and not do some of these small, little BS assignments and try to be really good at running, than get a perfect high school GPA...I thought, ‘No, I’m going to [do] these assignments [that] are just busy work... And when [I] get into a decent college for running [I’ll] take school really seriously’” – Brandon, Men’s Track and Field, Interview One*

### **Introduction: How Social Access Wins a College Roster Spot**

As Brandon’s excerpt indicates, early knowledge and trust in the sports-track-to-college allowed him to cope better with the demands of high level sport and school. Brandon could opt-out of a few school assignments because he was part of a community and social network that supported his process of college athletic recruitment. For aspiring college athletes, athletic merit and community access alone are insufficient to gain a college roster spot. Instead, athletes with social relationships with the knowledge of how to navigate the highly subjective and bureaucratic college-athletic recruiting pipeline had a distinct advantage. Brandon’s journey to Coastal U is indicative of many Olympic sport athletes in the study. Brandon’s community access facilitated his later social connections to teammates and coaches who, collectively, provided the crucial knowledge to Brandon of how to best be noticed by and contact potential college coaches. This chapter demonstrates how social relationships add to the community advantages in the sports-track-to-college pipeline by providing further access to institutions. In doing so, it reveals a constellation of social support for developing an elite athlete.

Social reproduction scholars uncovered the connections between knowledge, relationships, and bureaucracy by going into classrooms (i.e. Apple, 2004; Anyon, 1983). By doing so, scholars uncovered that schools, as highly bureaucratic, state-supported entities maintained unequal economic outcomes by offering distinct forms of knowledge to different groups. Unequal knowledge sets are provided in at least two ways. First, through offering different “tracks” or routes through education (Oakes, 2005). The second is through what

Jackson's (1968) and later Snyder's (1973) landmark works reveal is a hidden curriculum within schools. The hidden curriculum exposes students to the same formal knowledge but creates different outcomes because of the entire way that students, teachers, and parents come to understand implicitly, how to complete particular tasks within the schools. Students who intuit this process are quickly elevated within education. Those who struggle are labeled as deficient or unintelligent, falling behind on assignments, tasks, and placed into "easier" classes.

Students "learn" the hidden or implicit curriculum through social relationships and knowledge sharing. One facet of the hidden curriculum, uncovered by reproduction scholars and showcased by Brandon, is how to navigate bureaucracy. Bureaucracy refers to the rules and regulations that govern or organize a social institution (Apple, 2004). Both schools and sports at the K-12 levels have multiple bureaucratic organizations. Schools are accountable to State and Federal laws and regulatory agencies, local laws, school districts and boards, accrediting agencies, credential standards, internal review boards, and rules and regulations specific to a school or given classroom. Sports are accountable to national governing bodies, state leagues and organizations, local leagues, and team specific rules. School sports are subject to district-wide policies and mandates. Students in the sports-track-to-college pipeline needed certain knowledge sets to navigate each layer of governance. The most extensive bureaucracy and knowledge set is the NCAA and the corresponding ability to traverse the college athletic recruiting process.

Study participants described elaborate support networks assisting them along their journey as students and top-level athletes. The interview design spent equal time discussing their early engagement with school and sport. But the important figures and life experiences overwhelmingly drifted to their athletic experiences. Overall, there were 484 references to social relationships, 135 of which referenced relationships supporting school such as family, school

friends, and teachers. In contrast, there were 349 references to sport-related support networks including family, coaches, and teammates.

Within sports, the main idea circulated is meritocracy, or those with the greatest athletic ability will rise to the top. As the previous chapters demonstrated, this is far from the case. Instead, geography, institutional access, and time all shape how individuals improve. In revealing the hidden curriculum within the sports-track-to-college, I found that at least two knowledge sets transmitted through social relationships. First, the knowledge that there is an alternative college admissions process for athletes. And second, that there are rules, regulations, and social morays to navigate said admissions process. The knowledge of the sports-track-to-college, and how to best access it as a route to higher education, circulated through the student athletes' support networks, including their families, teachers, coaches, and teammates.

### **College Athletic Recruitment**

The fundamental difference between student athletes and the rest of the college student population is how they are brought to the University. The differential access to college via high level sports shapes the entire pipeline. Before outlining how social relationships impacted how students first became engaged in athletics and later became high level athletes, it is worth understanding some of the features of the athletic recruiting process. Here, the interwoven bureaucracies are the NCAA, college admission, and athletic recruitment. After exploring the bureaucratic intricacies, this chapter shows how knowledge of the layers of governance are passed between families, coaches, and teammates and secure college admission.

Only one of the 47 students in the study was *not* “recruited”<sup>22</sup> to be a college athlete. This

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<sup>22</sup> The NCAA defines “recruiting” as “any solicitation of a prospective student-athlete or a prospective student-athlete’s relatives (or legal guardians) by an institutional staff member or by a representative of the institution’s athletics interests for the purpose of securing the prospective student-athlete’s enrollment and ultimate participation in the institution’s intercollegiate athletics program” (NCAA, 2016, Bylaw 13.02.14, p.85).

student joined the team after she enrolled in Coastal U. Athletes' memories of recruiting resemble the courting process. Contacts between students and schools involved late night phone calls, emails, face-to-face meetings, dinners, and introductions to the student athlete's family. The length and extent of the process varied based on the number of schools they considered and whether they negotiated an athletic scholarship. But, the process of how knowledge circulated amongst social relationships and how student athletes enacted that knowledge were consistent.

The NCAA manual of all athletic rules is a 414-page tome. The recruiting process has its own 60-page chapter. Contrast this with the two-page chapter on "Ethical Conduct" within college sport. There are two vantage points from which the NCAA regulates recruiting. First it controls how a college can interact with potential student athletes. Second, the NCAA sets minimum requirements for what student athletes must adhere to in the recruiting process.

The NCAA's recruiting rules exist to maintain parity in how colleges contact young athletes. They accomplish this in several ways. First, the NCAA sets a timeline for when coaches can contact athletes. The coach cannot speak directly to an athlete by phone or in person until September 1 of the athlete's junior year. Prior to that, college coaches can only make contact through mail. On July 7 before their senior year, coaches can invite students to visit the campus. This leads to the second rule that states athletes can only take five paid-for "official" visits. The NCAA monitors these trips by restricting the time to 48 hours; restricting the money schools spend on food, housing, and transportation, and restricting what the recruit can do on their visit.

To take an official visit prospective student athletes must first be certified as an NCAA "eligible" student athlete. Students are an "NCAA qualifier" meaning they meet a minimum academic standard.<sup>23</sup> To pass the NCAA eligibility certification athletes must maintain a 2.0 high

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<sup>23</sup> The qualifier system has controversial history dating back to the 1980s when it emerged to remedy growing national concern over athletes like Dexter Manning who played football in college, graduated, yet was illiterate. Since then the NCAA revised the

school GPA in 13 core-courses and a combined SAT score of 700 (Smith, 2011). The eligibility standards also include a sliding scale for GPA and SAT scores. If someone has a higher GPA than 2.0, they could earn a lower SAT score, and vice versa (Smith, 161, 2011). The Qualifier Rule confirms the rumors that circulate among athletic communities: colleges hold lower admission standards for athletes.

Coastal U has a highly competitive undergraduate admissions processes. The incoming class of 2016, had an acceptance rate of 17% with over 82,000 applicants. The average unweighted high school GPA stands at 3.90, weighted at 4.42, and a combined average SAT score of 2125 (Coastal U Admissions Office, 2016). Coastal U, as a public institution must publish their admission policy for athletes. Since 2010, the Athletic Admission Policy changed three times. In all revisions, the standards for athletic exceptional admissions remains below the general student body admission standards. The first policy used a four-tiered system category system of A, B, C, and D admits, each with declining SAT and GPA requirements, A having the highest requirements, D having the lowest. Each category had quotas, A allowing the most athletes in and D the least. Each category had to abide by minimum GPA and SAT scores, which were calculated on a sliding scale (i.e. the higher the GPA the lower the SAT score needed to be). The only floor established for these special admits was the NCAA Qualifier rule.

In 2011, the policy changed. It revised the four categories into a three-tiered system of athletic admissions—Gold, Blue, and Red—all of which had much lower standards than the general student body. The Gold category maintained the same standards as the A admits previously, the Blue category combined B and C, and the Red became the “D” category.<sup>24</sup> Under

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qualifier system three times, including a brief stint of allowing “partial” qualifiers to still be admitted to universities. Today’s standards reflect over a century of compromise within the NCAA regulatory body of how much autonomy to grant individual universities in governing their athletic programs (Smith, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> The standards for each category remained somewhat consistent even through policy revisions. The A and later Gold admits were considered “Institution Eligible.” Institutional Eligibility refers to a standard set by the larger system of which Coastal

this policy, a Red student must have a minimum of a 2.8 GPA and an average of 370 on the three subject areas of the SAT scores. While test scores and grades are by no means the only way to measure whether a student will succeed at Coastal U, it is worth considering if these exceptional admission policies grant special advantages to already privileged groups. Under both policies, in the most extreme instance, a student athlete could be admitted with a 2.0 high school GPA and a combined SAT score of 700 in math and writing at a university alongside an average student body required to score above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on their SAT and GPAs. Chapter 6, 7, and 8 explore how lower admission standards for athletes shape how institutional actors like students and faculty treat student athletes once they arrive on campus. Finally, it should be noted that during this study, Coastal U yet again changed its admission policy to strengthen the academic criteria for student athletes. The revised policy did not impact the study participants and remains below the system-wide standards for applicants.

Flexible athletic admissions arose to produce a “well rounded” incoming class (Duderstadt, 2000; Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Smith, 2011). Yet suspiciously absent from NCAA policy are athletic minima or guidelines for universities to evaluate athletic merit. Schools let coaches and support staff evaluate athletic talent and run the recruiting process. One window into how coaches evaluate potential athletic merit is through recruiting questionnaires.

The questionnaires were a central part of the recruiting process for participants. Many remembered that process but few remembered the components of the questionnaire, vaguely

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University partakes. System wide admissions requirements stipulate students must earn a 3.0 high school GPA in 15 “A-G Core Course” such as English, History and Science. System Admissions also requires students to take either the SAT or the ACT. The System does not require a minimum test score for entry into the system. But, if students fail to meet the GPA component, an average SAT score (of the three combined subject areas: math, writing and English) of 580 is needed. The B and later Blue admits had a slight deficiency in meeting Institutional eligibility. A B admit, for instance, could miss a core course, or the GPA requirement. The C admits below in multiple System-wide eligibility standards such as low GPA *and* lack of a college-ready curriculum. The D admits were deemed significantly deficient. Each category had to abide by minimum GPA and SAT scores, which were calculated on a sliding scale. In revising the policy in 2011, the admissions committee combined the C and D categories into Red. In theory, this limited and provided clarity around the number of student athletes admitted with significantly low GPA, SAT, and college-prep courses in their profiles.

recalling that it was simply a contact sheet, or way for colleges to get in touch with them later. There are two ways that students have access to these questionnaires. First, they receive them via the postal service, a letter and form arriving at their homeroom high school class. Second, they may go online to find if their preferred school offered a form they could mail in or fill out electronically. The questionnaires themselves are quite telling in what the institution desires in a potential athlete. I reviewed over a dozen questionnaires from top sports and academic universities, comparable to Coastal U. The common features across all included:

- *Biographical information*: Name, age, date of birth
- *Institutional information*: School's name, mailing address and phone number
- *NCAA clearinghouse and eligibility certification*
- *Academic performance measures*: High school GPA, and a few cases, SAT scores
- *Athletic performance measures*: Height, Weight, personal best time or distance in event
- *Comment section*: for students to elaborate on any achievements listed above.

The recruiting questionnaire is misleading on several fronts. Although it asks questions about both athletic and academic records, there is no sense of acceptable standards. For instance, what is the right height for a potential 100-meter sprinter? Further, only twelve of the athletes I spoke with said a college coach gave them a specific athletic or academic benchmark to reach. As the following chapter demonstrates, there is no set system for how athletes are evaluated in the recruiting process. Athletic scores, body size, academic marks, coach's recommendation, or team's past performance, make for an alchemy of vague, and in some cases, impulsive decisions on the part of both the athlete and the institution. What seems clear is that athletes with the disposition, social connections, and reputation may outweigh physical ability or merit.

### **Social Access Within the Home: Family**

Families with the knowledge of athletics as a possible pipeline to higher education, strategically enrolled their children in sports, financially invested in their athletic futures, and invested time into their development as athletes. For other participants, their family gained the



knowledge of the sports-track-to-college once their child became involved in athletics. In this instance, families got on board and began to further research, invest, and generally support their child’s athletic interests. Families gained the information about the sports-track-to-college from other teammates, doing their own research, or from the clubs themselves.

One of the most highly cited authors of social reproduction, Lareau (2003) focused on connections between family units and institutions as a mode for maintaining economic inequality. At first glance, one may assume the families in this study, most of which were middle class, fit Lareau’s framework of “concerted cultivation” or the active parenting model in which middle class parents shuttle their children around from activity to activity to offer them an enriching developmental experience. This contrasted with Lareau’s conception of the working-class families who practiced “natural growth” leaving children to their own devices to explore and develop, often free from structured activities like sports and music lessons.

*Table 4.1. Representation of Family View Towards Sport*

Family’s View Towards Sport	Number of Participants
Disinterested	8
Committed	25
Sports-Track-to-College	14

Scholars emphasize the caregiver’s educational history as a key component for a child’s success within the schooling system (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Davis-Kean, 2005; Sewell & Shah, 1968; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). This literature uncovers a multitude of ways a caregiver’s educational level manifests in other attributes that influence a child’s educational outcomes like language practices, dispositions, goal-setting, and even tastes or interests (Gee, 1991; Hart & Risley, 2003; Jordan, 1988; Valdés, 1996; White, 2005; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). For these participants, the parent and caregiver’s educational and athletic backgrounds were important, but not as significant as I expected in the student’s school life. In terms of educational history, most participants came from homes with family members who

attended university. Only seven of the participants were first generation college students.

The families in this study did not fit neatly into Lareau's binary where class and educational background dictated one's parenting style. Instead, I found at least three groups of families with variability within each category along race and class lines. The variability in my findings could be in part because of the regional, international, and racial diversity in the study. In addition, sixteen had divorced parents and another three only had one parent in their life. Finally, a major difference in this study is the elevation of sports as an area of inquiry. Lareau noted organized sports for *concerted cultivated* families but only as an additive feature to child raising. By elevating athletics as a central lens of analysis, I found that sports took, in many cases even for White, middle class families, primary importance over schooling.

For instance, White families were just as likely as families of color to participate in and promote sports in the home. This contrasts to what other authors propose about Black families' views towards sports, namely that it is over-emphasized compared to education as a life-path. This study did not show racial patterns in sport participation rates and achievement (Edwards, 1998; 2000; Hoberman, 1997). Black and White families alike ranged from indifferent to invested in their child's sporting success. Another difference from the family's view towards school is the caregiver's athletic background. It did not heavily influence sports participation. Around twenty-five percent of participants had one parent who participated in sports after high school including college-level club sport participation, Division III participation, competing for a respective country's national team, and, in one instance, being a semi-professional athlete. Only three of these adults were women. Several participants intimated that their mothers were unable to, or discouraged from, participating in sports, a marked change from their own experience in athletics. Parents with absolutely no sports participation were nearly as common. Nine

participants described, almost with glee, their caregivers lack of athleticism.

Even with variety in athletic background, views, and interest towards sport, three distinct categories emerged. The family types are: *Disinterested*, *Committed*, and on the *Sports-track-to-college*. *Disinterested* refers to families with little or no knowledge of athletics, but nevertheless allowed their children to participate in sports. Sports *Committed* families include those who actively enrolled their children in sports at a young age for holistic development. The third group, *Sports-track-to-college* families included at least one caregiver with knowledge and intent to use athletics to gain entry to a university. It is worth noting that even *disinterest* towards sport still required some sort of emotional or financial contribution. No caregivers banned sports or forbade their child from participating in sports. There were no athletic rebels here, sneaking out to do athletics. This section reviews each family type, and in doing so, demonstrates how family support networks are central in facilitating a young person's journey to college via sports.

### **Disinterested**

Eight participants described their family or caregivers as having no knowledge of, interest in, or experience with athletics. This is markedly different from a family's view towards, and engagement with, schools. All participants had family members that attended some form of schooling up until high school, regardless of their country of origin. In contrast, sports remain optional in most U.S. public school systems. In effect, one could reach adulthood with no experience in organized sports. As a result, children in disinterested families often initiated sports participation by requesting to play on a team with her school friends. Even though these eight family units had no interest or experience in athletics, they remained supportive. Other similarities in this group include a strong orientation and involvement in education. Five of the families had at least one member with an advanced or professional degree and imposed high

academic achievement goals on their children. Two parents had a “laid-back” view of school, assuming their child would make their way to higher education without overt parental involvement or support. And the final participant, Savannah, whose family suffered extreme financial hardships had both school and sport disinterested parents. The disinterested category also included two of the study’s three working class families. The final pattern across the disinterested group is all participants were White, American, and female.

Sanya and Sophia, both fell into the disinterested category, but had markedly different financial backgrounds. Still, their stories indicate how even with mothers who have little to no interest in athletics, they still found ways to support their daughter’s athletic journey to college.

Sanya, the child of a single mother, had never played organized sports. She believed this was because she lacked a “male figure” in her life to introduce her to athletics. When Sanya was in seventh grade, growing up in California, she noticed her peers had friends from other schools. Through some sleuthing Sanya discovered her classmates played youth soccer and made friends with children from other parts of the region. Sanya went home and “begged” her mom to sign her up for youth soccer. Sanya described her mom as “very unathletic” with no knowledge of sports, but her mom conceded to Sanya’s pleas. She says, “She grew up in the '60s, she went to the same High School and Middle School I went to. And they didn't have women's sports...She's just not into sports. Even to this day. She's like, 'How many laps are in the 800? How many laps are in the mile?’” (Sanya, Interview One). Despite her mother’s lack of interest or knowledge of sports, she still paid the dues for recreational leagues, and later, allowed her daughter to take on a demanding athletic load by joining the high school’s cross country and track teams. Even when her mother lost her job and home in the financial crisis of 2008, Sanya was still allowed to spend her afternoons at the track. Sanya’s mother took on extra work, and rented out her bedroom in

their small apartment so Sanya could continue running and going to school.

Sophia, a White rower from the opposite side of the country from Sanya, had a similar experience. Though she came from several class brackets above Sanya, Sophia's parents also were indifferent to sports. Sophia's main form of physical activity growing up was playing tag or hide-and-go-seek with the neighborhood kids. When she got to high school, she noticed a poster for a rowing club connected to an esteemed Ivy League college—one she dreamed she'd one day attend. While her parents were unaware of the sport, they financially supported her at first so she could join the team, helped her purchase new athletic clothing, drove her to practices, and later paid the travel expenses so she could attend far-off competitions including one in London.

Because of their family's lack of knowledge and interest in sports, these participants used other social relationships. Six of the eight women relied heavily on their private rowing clubs, teammates, and coaches for insight, access, and knowledge of the recruiting process. How other sports networks aided in college recruitment will be discussed in the next section.

### **Committed**

Twenty-five participants fell into the category of sports *Committed* families. This category had the most variety in demographics including race, gender, country of origin and parental educational background. International students, all regions of the U.S., people of color, both genders, and all levels of parental education are represented in this group. The family's view towards education also ranged in this category. Unlike the *disinterested* group who explicitly and frequently supported school success in a variety of forms, sports *Committed* families tried to balance sports with school. They believed athletics were a valued part of development but hoped it would not supersede school commitments.

This group showed support for school in various ways. Like the *disinterested* group,

parents supplemented the child's schooling curriculum by offering extra materials, tutoring, or educational-based activities. Others, showed their support financially by sending their children to what they perceived to be more educationally enriching private schools. Another way caregivers expressed support for school was with the mantra: "School first, sports second." Sport was allowed into their family so long as it did not interfere with school. I pressed several participants in terms of how they interpreted the phrase, "school first." The common response was best articulated here by London, who would later use her mediocre track ability, along with savvy marketing skills, to gain admission to a top university.

Always academics first. That was always very, very important. You get home, you do your homework, and then you go play or you go to practice or something like that. Sports were...something you did after you got your academics done...At a certain point, after being an athlete, you'll stop being an athlete, even if you do go Pro, say in Track or football...and you need to have your education to make a life out of (Interview One).

The two themes in London's statement were reiterated throughout the study: 1) academics should be the priority before sports, because, 2) sports do not lead to long-lasting careers.

*Sport Committed* also differed from *Disinterested* families by explicitly enrolling their children in athletics at a young age. These families encouraged sports for three reasons: 1) to further connect the family, 2) for holistic development, 3) for physical development. All three of these reasons took precedent over athletic ability or success. The families, and in turn the sports participants offered a greater purpose than simply winning or setting personal records.

Masculinity scholars have showcased that sports help develop social bonds amongst males within family units (Connell, 2005; Messner, 1995; 2002; 2010). More than half of the participants, 27 in all, of varying race and gender positions, recalled how sports brought their family together. The connections varied depending on the circumstances. Eight reported their family united through sports as spectators and "die-hard" fans of a professional team. Fifteen reported they were part of an "athletic family" in that sports were something they did as a unit.

Kayla's story embodies all three of these features. She grew up with "active" but not "athlete" parents, joined a local basketball team, and later, a track club. By high school, she became a competitive runner, making it to the state meet. Her sister also joined track, showing some promise at a young age. Her father, encouraged by his daughters' athleticism and motivation, picked up running himself. He took an active interest in their development, researching and learning about the sport. He even qualified for the Boston Marathon after a few years of training. When describing what facilitated her success in sports, Kayla's first response highlighted her father's support. She explained how even in college, she speaks with him daily about her sports success. She believed that running brought them closer as a family.

Sport for holistic development refers to a wide range of moral beliefs about athletics. Participants reported how their parents encouraged sports because it could offer a sense of community; teach social habits like obeying authority, competition, and goal setting; and build "character" by tolerating loss and failure. While these features were often reiterated and reported as key benefits for sports participation, no one remembers their family following up to ensure these values were instilled. Rather, there was a sense that sports added something to children's lives, and therefore, it was important for them to participate.

The third characteristic had a much more measurable and achievable result. Several participants said their parents encouraged sports participation so they could be "active" or "out of the house." Iceman explained that Dad's worst fear was his kids would become "lazy" so he required his kids to do sports year-round. For Victoria and Noelle, their bodies became the catalyst for sports. Victoria was "tall" as a child with an athletic build and her mother figured she should put it to use. Same was the case for Noelle. Morgan, who described her mom as "physically fit" was a "chubby" child. When her parents encouraged her to join swimming in

middle school, she believed this was a way for her to stay “active” and “healthy.”

As children matured to high school sports, the characteristics and values of sports took on extreme iterations. Those who wanted physically active or morally upright children would soon see it become harder and harder to maintain a “school first” mindset towards their development. For George, who described his family as laid-back, and his community as a “beach town” with a chill attitude, sports began to take over his emotional and physical development. By eighth grade, he was traveling year-round as part of a youth basketball league. While his parents emphasized “school first” their actions sometimes belied their philosophy.

Sometimes we wouldn't get back until late Sunday night, and then [we'd] cram to do all the homework. One time in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, we had this huge project due where we were supposed to pick [a] topic in the news and write [a] paper on it. There was this [basketball] tournament and I was freaking out, like 'I'm not going to be back in time to be able to finish it.' I get back and I start working on it. And my mom was like, 'yeah, you're not going to school tomorrow. Yeah, you'll just go half-day...it's due at 1:00pm.' ...I remember all my teammates rolled into school at the same time. We're like, 'alright, none of us got it done' (Interview One).

In this scenario, George and his mom were aware he had a big project due. But, George traveled for the tournament anyway, in effect putting sports first. He even missed part of school because of his sports commitment so he could finish the project. This slippage into allowing sports to increasingly take over more of the student's life, regardless of what the child or family intended, only intensified during high school and into college.

### **Sports-Track-to-College**

The unifying characteristic in this family archetype is all athletes had a caregiver with knowledge of how to use sport for college admissions. Many elevated sports activities, commitments, and development over educational pursuits. They still viewed college—not a professional sport career—as the result, keeping education as a core value. The background characteristics of this group were also varied and included families with high school all the way



to professional degrees, international students, both genders and various racial groups. This category did have the most number of Black participants. Even though Black families were more likely to emphasize sports as a route to college I contend that negative schooling experiences played just as large a role in elevating sports.

When I first met Imani, a mixed-race track runner who was on a hiatus for her sport, she was excited to share her life story. She immediately explained that her father, from the beginning, just knew that she would be able to use sports to get to college, something neither of her parents achieved. Sports for her were both a way to have “structure” in her life, and something “constructive” to do, but also to get into college.

My Dad was always an advocate for me getting a college scholarship doing sport...But his view [was] athletics is what brings you to college, if you do well in school too. Not like, having me take all these AP classes. His view was that my performance in the sports is what's going to carry me on...but I would say that my Dad was pushing more for athletics. Although he would push for school as well (Interview One).

Imani's father enrolled her in a variety of sports at a young age, both recreationally and club. She showed initial promise in swimming, winning many meets as a youth, practicing five or six days a week. Through her swim club, a teammate spoke to her about track. Imani decided to try it and initially found success in the 400. From there, her father found her a club to train with, a private coach, did workouts alongside Imani, invested in a diet and exercise regime, and later took her on a college road trip to meet coaches. All of this time, money, and resources, was geared towards Imani reaching her eventual goal of becoming a college-level athlete.

A few thousand miles away and across a national border, Victoria's family also encouraged sports participation over school. At a young age, she developed an addiction to the “adrenaline rush” of downhill skiing (Victoria, Interview One). This costly, time consuming, and physically demanding sport, meant she missed nearly six months of school every year. Her parents still required she always make “honor roll” which in Canada is the equivalent of B-minus

average. Victoria openly admitted she would never have become a successful skier, and later rower, without both of her parents' support and vision for her future athletic achievements. Her father, a "successful businessman" supported the family on his income. Her mother, a part-time graphic designer, worked from home and had a flexible schedule. The more involved Victoria became in skiing, the more her mother shifted her time away from work and towards shuttling Victoria to athletic commitments.

I went to everything and anything. And what I think really helped me in ski racing was the combination between my mom being able to take me to all of these camps and the fact that I wanted to and I was able to go to anything that was offered. I went to every camp that was offered no matter where it was, when it was. School kind of came second (Victoria, Interview One).

Beyond promoting sports above school, the families in this category also were more dedicated to their children's athletic success. Most notably, this included either investing in private coaching, training, or crafting their own additional workouts for their burgeoning athletes. By supplementing the "athletic curriculum" the families believed they were better preparing their children to become elite athletes.

Chantae did not have a family unit supporting her athletics. And, she believes this was to her detriment. Chantae explains that by fifth grade she saw differences in the families that had resources, support and connections to facilitate their children's athletic success and those that did not. She felt that her peers took the sport "more serious" than she did. As she experienced some success in her event, the triple jump, she fell behind her peers and believes "And now, I'm kinda paying for it, trying to take it so serious. When I should have just started when I was younger" (Interview One). I asked if she could clarify what she meant by taking the sport, "serious." She explained, "Just doing it all the time. Like even when you're not at practice, having your parents dedicated to it, with you. Like you're not the only one dedicated to it. And they're making you run at home or doing little stuff like lifting weights at such a young age" (Interview One).

Chantae's observations were confirmed in my conversations with athletes from *Sports-track-to-college* families. A total of ten participants reported they did some sort of extra workouts with their families. Taylor, whose parents met as long distance college runners, would look at her training schedule and supplement her workouts, based on their own understanding of what a proper running plan should include. They also supported her gym membership so she could do extra lifting. Most of all, they provided structure, resources, nutritional advice, and always encouraged her to "get more sleep" so she would be rested for practice (Taylor, Interview One). Anthony Blue's father was also a college track athlete. When the track coach went on maternity leave, his father volunteered to take over the coaching responsibilities. This included planning both Antony Blue's required and supplemental training plans. Anthony Blue's father set up a makeshift gym with weight lifting equipment in his home. After spending several hours on the track—including staying after all his teammates to do extra sprints—Anthony Blue would come home to do circuit and weight training exercises.

The sports path to college offered many positive benefits including a deeper connection to family members, holistic development, physical development. They all ultimately made it to an elite university, but the sports commitment did overwhelm all other parts of their childhood and adolescence. All this extra time in sports did impact how, mostly White families, emphasized school commitments.

Of all the athletes I spoke to, C.M. a White woman from Southern California, was the most direct about how her family's genetics, knowledge, and resources, put her on the pipeline to be a college track athlete. "Running runs in my family, literally" she told me during our first interview. Her mother was part of the first women's Olympic marathon competition in the 1980s. Her two older sisters were recruited to top college programs. By the time C.M. was growing up,

her family had figured out the optimal time to introduce her to track so she would not “burn out” too early. She did all kinds of sports prior to high school including soccer, swimming, and horseback riding. By high school, she knew her destiny would be to run cross country like all the other members of her family. In describing her high school experience, C.M. reflected on the centrality of sports to her family unit, often at the cost of school.

Sophomore year I was taking honors geometry and I was struggling. And my Dad sat me down and he was like, 'Just don't take it. You should just drop this class. Take normal geometry. Running can take you wherever you want to go.' So I did not take an honors or AP in high school... My Dad pushed me so hard athletically. He was always the one who's like, 'If you need to go to bed and you can't finish your homework, that's fine. Just get it done in the morning. Do it quickly. If it's not that great, whatever.' It was just so different from all of my other friends. I was still getting A's and B's. But they really didn't care... I don't know why, because you'd think, as a parent, you would want to push the academic side, because that's ultimately, where you're going to end up (Interview One).

The luxury to disengage from school was a luxury reserved for White families. For people of color in the study, including those in the sports *Committed* and *Sports-track-to-college* groups, none had a “laid back” family attitudes towards school. Black families explicitly encouraged their children academically, regardless of their own educational background. The stakes were higher for their children to succeed. Brittany spent her youth at the local recreational center and had very involved parents. When I asked her to describe her parents view towards school, she groaned. “My Dad, if I had an essay to do, he used to make me re-write my essays, over and over again until they were perfect. I used to be at the kitchen table, until like 2am in the fifth grade and the sixth grade, just re-writing a little book report until it was perfect. He was like, 'You didn't read through this, this is a run-on sentence.' So academics were serious” (Brittany, Interview One). The investment in education for Black families came from what can only be described as the life or death consequences associated with lack of schooling. Duane explained this when reflecting on why his mother sent him to a private school.

As a single mother [with] as a young, Black student—someone who’s going to have to deal with society and sort of assimilating into it—she really wanted me to have the best opportunities possible. And she really liked the idea of private schools versus public schools because of the atmosphere, the type of people I would meet, the type of friendships I would develop... I was the first Black male in my family to go to college... For mom, it was an expectation, like, ‘Boy you better go to college’ (Interview One).

The seven first generation students gave similar descriptions to Duane, of highly involved and invested caregivers towards educational achievement. Kayla, also a person of color, said her parents set explicit educational goals for her since they themselves did not attend college.

Of the nine Black American students, eight expressed that their race often came up in educational settings. They recounted a variety of interactions with school representatives, including teachers and administrators. Most remembered a feeling of isolation, or not belonging in the school environment. Malcolm, LeVar, Duane and Chantae each recalled a moment of overtly racist and hostile interactions within the school. Chantae, who attended a high school with a fairly even population of Black, Latino, and White students. She explained that as she became an upperclassman, she felt the school administration had it “out” for her.

They got new security in, and new faculty my senior year, and they just started enforcing the rules hella hard. And they actually did kinda single out the Black people. Because one section of students, that are all Black, we all sit in the same place. So they would just come over there. If we had a hat on, [they’d] try and make us take it off. There was one day, when I had a bad hair day. And she tried to make me take it off and I’m like, ‘No, I’m not taking it off.’ And so, I ended up [in the principal’s] office. And then she wanted me to call my mom. And then it was just a big mess (Interview One).

Ultimately, her suspicions came true. Chantae did not pass the class she referenced, Spanish 2 taught by “a White lady” a course she needed to attend University. After graduating high school, Chantae it delayed her admission to University one semester, as she finished her language requirement; an experience that set her behind her teammates who began college on time.

Despite the often-hostile environment athletes of color endured, they all remained academically engaged. Seven of the eight took honors or advanced coursework. Only one,

Chantae, was not on track to attend college. But, after being recruited for athletics, she attended junior college to gain the courses needed to enter University. While Black families may appear to support sports over school, they did so at no greater rate than White families.

### **Social Access Within Sport**

Chantae was far from the only participant to use sports for college admission. Forty-six of the 47 study participants received athletic exceptional admission. If only 14 families had the knowledge and intentional child-rearing style to develop college sport-ready adults, then how did the other 32 become intercollegiate athletes? One of the greatest and lasting benefits to sports participation are the social connections. Participants with non-sports-track-to-college families learned about college athletics, developed the necessary skills to become a college athlete, learned about the recruiting process, and in some cases were given a spot on a college team all through sport-based social networks. The first step in this process was selecting a sport.

Floating through the sports-track-to-college was also the knowledge that certain sports, or sub-specialties within a sport like a particular event in track and field, yielded better odds at being recruited to college. Children from families who had an early knowledge of the sports-track-to-college tried different sports until they found their fit. Imani, Captain America, Noelle, Monique, and Morgan, all joined competitive swimming, showing prominence up until the eighth grade. In each instance, they were aware that the chances of improving their swimming ability in the time necessary to be recruited to college were low. Thus, they sought other sport opportunities that seemed less impacted by burgeoning college athletes.

Participants presented both track and rowing as sports with “better” odds at gaining admission to college. Forty-five percent of participants said they selected their current sport because they believed it would help them get into college. Tyrell, LeVar, Merlin, and Anthony

Blue, all came from families who explicitly believed from a young age that sports were a route to college. Tyrell and Merlin, each raised by single parents who had never attended university, believed football would be their chance at a college degree. LeVar and Anthony came from family units untouched by divorce, and with college educated parents. Both were raised believing basketball could be their “ticket” to school. By high school, all four young men joined track in the spring, at first, because it was something to do in the Spring off-season. Quickly, they saw greater potential in track. LeVar explained that he received more recognition in track than basketball. He quickly became the school and region’s top track athlete, a level of success he had yet to achieve in what he saw as his primary sport, basketball. “I was getting a lot more attention for track. So then, it was just like...I’m going to take what’s happening in this circumstance. Yeah. And so, it was just kind of a recognition of what was going on and what’s going to get me the farthest” (LeVar, Interview One). Further, LeVar increased his odds at being recruited for college by joining the jumping events in track and field. Even though he did not perform well at the highest level in his events, his broad aptitude across events, he believed, helped him gain recognition giving him a better chance at college recruitment.

Rowing’s exclusivity gave rowers uniquely positive odds within athletic recruiting. It remains one of the few sports where an athlete could be recruited to the University before they competed in the sport. Goose, the young man who did a post-graduate year at a private boarding school, went on a visit to Coastal U before he even sat in a boat. For those athletes that grew up in families or communities closely connected to rowing, the sport’s potential to skirt the strict admission standards for Ivies and other elite universities was a taken-for-granted fact. Iceman grew up playing hockey and had a family friend who got into an Ivy League school for rowing. When I asked Iceman what drew him to rowing, his first response was college admissions.

I saw an opportunity to make up for the fact that I was bad student...I remember talking to a [Coastal U] volleyball player and she was saying that yeah, 'I'm basically just here because it's a means to an end.' You didn't do very well in high school, so you kinda did much better at something else, so you kinda found a way to get around the whole 'having good grades' thing, to get into a top-tier university, to get a better job (Interview One).

Iceman, Goose, and other White rowers used the elitist history of rowing to increase their own odds of entering college. They could do so through their social networks.

Even though much of the above evidence stems from male athletes using sports to gain entry to universities, many of the female athletes I spoke with believed they were uniquely advantaged in this process. Their awareness that sports could get them into college came from a vague understanding of Title IX. Captain America, Monique, and Morgan, all of whom rowed in high school and had athletic brothers, came to believe their gender was an “advantage” because fewer women did sports. Monique, learned the message that women’s sports are “less competitive” from watching her younger brother and from conversations in her rowing club.

I'm six-foot [tall] so that's huge for a woman...All [the] people in my high school judged me that I got into certain places as a woman, with Title IX... friends would be angry that they didn't get into [Coastal U] or they didn't get into their Ivy League [of choice]. They're like, 'Oh you only got in because of sports.' Or 'you only got in because of Title IX.' Or, 'Oh you get a scholarship. I don't have anything.' Things guys would say. Oh yeah, lots of guys on the men's rowing team (Interview One).

Monique’s experiences reflect how the public still misconstrues Title IX as taking something *away from* men rather than *removing* historic barriers enacted against women. Even with the law, women remain underrepresented and underfunded in sports at every level of the athletic pipeline (Milner & Braddock II, 2016; Suggs, 2005). Ultimately, blaming as the catalyst for unfair access and admission to college disguises how the system of the sports-track-to-college maintains rather than disrupts social structures. As the next section demonstrates, social access to a renowned coach can trump athletic and academic merit in the admissions process.



## **Social Access in Sports: Coaches and Teammates**

One of the largest differences between students on the sports-track-to-college and their non-sport focused peers, is the relationships forged in sports. In addition to interactions with teachers and administrators, student-athletes are accountable to and mentored by coaches and teammates. Sometimes, coaches even overlap with other influential roles, doubling as parents and teachers. Sporting relationships also have a different consistency than those developed in schools. Study participants described a spectrum of athletic interactions. In the most positive sense “trust” emerged as a defining characteristic, not present in school settings. Athletes learned to give their minds, bodies, and futures over to their coaches and teammates. In the process, they forged deep social bonds. On the opposite end of the spectrum, student athletes revealed “authoritarian” and “cut-throat” relationships with their coaches in which they were forced to unquestionably obey orders, or else be physically or emotionally punished. Regardless of the nature of the sport relationship, athletes gained the following from these social connections: 1) the knowledge of which sports yield better odds for college recruitment, 2) the vision to become a college athlete, and 3) knowledge of the rules within the recruiting process and 4) knowledge of the lowered college academic admission standards for athletes

Floating through the athletic connections was the knowledge that certain sports, or sub-specialties within a sport like a particular event in track and field, yielded better odds at being recruited to college. Children from families who had an early knowledge of the sports-track-to-college, tried different sports until they found their fit. To reiterate, forty-five percent of participants selected their current sport to get into college. Imani, Captain America, Noelle, Monique, and Morgan, all joined competitive swimming, showing prominence up until the eighth grade. By high school they evaluated the chances of improving their swimming ability in

the time necessary to be recruited to college were low. Thus, they sought other sport opportunities that seemed less impacted by burgeoning college athletes.

Club and high school coaches were equally important social relationships in the recruiting process. Particularly for the athletes without athletic family members the coach provided the vision and means necessary for someone who wished to be a college-level athlete. Fifteen participants said their coach was the first to tell them they had the ability to be a college athlete. Sophia, whose first sport was high school rowing, never imagined she would be a college athlete. Part way through her time rowing for a private club, the team hired a new coach. The coach brought the vision that his athletes would continue to the next level of their sport.

He really revamped the whole program and [held] one-on-one meetings with rowers about rowing in college. I would say the number of people who committed to rowing in college definitely increased after he came because he put much more of an emphasis on it. And also our team was just way better after he came [which helped us] get recruited. But prior to that, there were definitely people who did, but a significantly less amount. And now everyone does (Interview One).

Sophia's coach normalized the concept that athletes from the program go on to participate in college sport by first telling them it was a realistic goal. He did that through repeated meetings, encouragement, and ramping up the athletic commitments.

Alongside vision, coaches offered explicit recommendations. The word of a high school coach, especially one with a positive reputation, carried some athletes very far. The college recruiting process varies university to university. There is no universal template or application for how it proceeds where, for example, coaches write formal letters of recommendation. Rather, the interaction happens in informal communication such as at high-school level meets, international events like World Championships, or through working at a sports camp. Some athletes recalled how being attached to a school with previous success of producing college athletes can give you an advantage in the recruiting process.

Reggie, who came to the U.S. for college, believed that a phone call from his high school coach secured him admission and the financial assistance needed to attend college in the U.S. He saw his coach, a former Olympian, playing a “massive” or huge role in the process.

He’s no bullshit, straight on the point—you just trust his opinion. I think he helped so much. Especially with getting money. Erg score wise, on paper, there’s people who’ve done Worlds, got better scores, or better times [than me]... I [was recruited] a lot more based on personality, and work ethic, just all around character, [and] how someone carries themselves (Interview One).

Reggie’s story reflects the subjective nature of the athletic evaluation process. Reggie did not have the athletic benchmarks “on paper” that other athletes might. Instead, his coach used his connections and reputation in the sport to secure Reggie a spot at the American university.

While the NCAA regulates the cost and frequency of interactions between college coaches and high school coaches, it does not monitor the interactions between college and high school coaches. Personal connections between college and high school coaches allowed preferential access for certain recruits. The Coastal U coaches worked for the national team, and were once college athletes. Their long history in the sport gives them a wealth of high school contacts to use when selecting athletes. Several of the rowers and track athletes had high school coaches who went to college with or worked alongside with the Coastal U coaches. Brittany, recalled her high school coaches acting as a go-between between the athlete and the future college before the July 1 recruiting deadline. “My high school coaches at the school I went to my senior year, they had also run track. So they knew everybody, so I had a lot of connections. In that I was lucky [that] people would call my coach for me” (Brittany, Interview one).

A coach’s reputation and connections were not the only factors aiding the college recruitment process. The final major social relationship for Coastal U athletes were teammates. Teammates, like coaches, provided endorsements, access, and knowledge of the recruiting process. Nineteen participants had older teammates who were recruited to a University. Sophia

observed how her older teammates navigated the recruiting process, asking them questions along the way of how she could, in her remaining years as a high school athlete, best prepare to be scouted by universities. For both Vera and Sophia, a teammate's recommendation became a primary driver of how they ended up at Coastal U. In the spring of her senior year, Sophia was denied admission to her dream school, a top Ivy League University. She decided to take a year off, hoping to improve her SAT scores and reapply in the fall. Then, one of her high school teammates, a rower at Coastal U, mentioned she should talk to the Coastal U coaches. Sophia reached out to the coaches, and a few months later arrived on campus as a freshman. These teammate connections offered hindsight-style advice on how athletes could better position themselves as college prospects. They also offered a candid tale of the admissions process.

Athletes often learned from their older teammates that they did not need the same academic background as their high school classmates to attend college. All study participants at the time of their recruitment had a 2.0 GPA or higher, if not much higher. They easily passed through the NCAA qualifier stage. The next step meant assessing what the individual university required of athletes. For instance, Ivy League universities were known for having little or no "sway" or leverage in the admission process. Some athletes were told they needed to get in on their own and could join the team later. Since these universities are not required to publicize their athletic admissions policies it is impossible to verify. Twenty of the study participants were recruited by these schools and only three got in. The rest were told their high school GPAs were satisfactory, which for most was in the mid-3.0 range. But they needed higher SAT scores. Elite public schools, like Coastal U, were preferred by athletes because coaches did have "sway" with admissions. College coaches told recruits they had leverage and could push an athlete through the admissions system. Iceman, who struggled throughout his whole K-12 career, explained:

Everybody said, ‘We can offer you a spot. Fill out the application.’ They all had the same little spiel. ‘You’re not going to be super easy to get in, but we have pull in the admissions office and we can get you in’ (Interview One).

More troubling, a dozen athletes remembered their coach did most of their college application for them. Several of these athletes could not recall if they wrote a college admission essay.

The knowledge of exceptional admissions for athletes influenced participant’s high school course selection. Teammates advised one another on how to take “easier” routes through high school so they could focus on sports. Merlin, George, and Brandon all sought advice from upperclassmen teammates about which courses they should take in high school. Merlin avoided the honors track altogether, instead, dedicating time to football and track. He believed this provided a better chance of getting him into college than his grades. Through the *Social Access* to parental, coaching, and teammate support networks, study participants gained the knowledge necessary to best position themselves on an alternative route to college. The final section explains how students enacted this knowledge in the recruiting process.

### **Enacting Knowledge: Navigating the Recruiting Process**

The previous section demonstrated how knowledge about recruiting and admission circulates through social connections within the sports-track-to-college pipeline. The dissemination and application of knowledge remain central components for how schooling systems maintain a larger unequal social system (Giroux, 1981; McLaren, 2015). In schools, interpersonal interactions between students and teachers influence how knowledge is applied and how the rewards of education are distributed. The same is true for sports. Even student athletes with similar backgrounds approached recruiting differently.

This section shows how students apply knowledge in interactions with future colleges. Circulating through the pipeline are three ways students *should* approach universities: 1) How athletes should contact coaches *first* rather than wait for coaches to contact them, 2) How to

properly contact and approach a coach and 3) How to research and assess a school and program. Yet, with interpersonal interaction, there are no strict rules or one “right” way to interact. The entire process is filled with subjective interpretations for the student and coach, of whether someone is a “good fit” for the program. By elevating interpersonal interactions, universities instill an anti-meritocratic selection for someone to gain a spot on a top athletic team within an elite university. In turn, schools can preference participants who meet normative standards of acceptability, recreating rather than disrupting social systems of race, class, and gender.

The advice that students should reach out to potential college coaches early and often resulted in some creating elaborate emails, mail packages, and, in effect, marketing materials to sell themselves to future universities. Only 17 out of 47 participants believed that their athletic performance, particularly at a top meet or competition, was the reason they got recruited to be a college level athlete. Further, only 12 recalled any sort of athletic standard such as a time or mark needed for recruitment to college. Rather, the process of what an athlete needed for eligibility for Division I competition remained nebulous. The one constant across all athletes with a range of abilities is they actively pursuing the schools they wanted to attend. Athletes like Cooper, Erwin, Iceman, Victoria, Vera, Captain America, Boris, and Malcolm, were on their respective country’s junior national team, an indicator that they may be a top, or desirable, recruit for colleges. There were an equal number of athletes that were not the top performers in their high school program. Yet they too contacted colleges. The third, and smallest group remained passive in the process and waited to be recruited by colleges. In this instance, they regretted the decision and later transferred to Coastal U.

The most common marketing effort was to send an email of interest to coaches. In most instances coaches, teammates, or parents helped draft the initial emails. The first email could be

as basic as an introduction and statement of interest. Reggie, an international student, relied on an older teammate who was recruited to an Ivy League school to help him start the recruiting process. “His advice was to sort of approach as many as you can. Start the process going, and sort of cycle through that. He [also] told you to tell everyone that they're your top choice” (Reggie, Interview One). As Reggie explains, an important part of the email included making the school *believe* that they were your top choice, regardless if that was the case. C.M. received similar advice from her older sisters who went through the process years before. C.M. made a list of her top schools by selecting the top running programs in the country. Then she sent emails explaining that each school was her first choice and awaited a response.

Others included more elaborate “athletic resumes” in their introductory email. Athletes highlighted their assets and tried to disguise their weaknesses. Amanda explains: “I knew that [my] strong suits were my GPA, my height, and my years of rowing experience. I knew that my 2K wasn't that big of a selling point. So I focused on those three things, ” (Amanda, Interview One). Noelle, who began rowing her last year of high school, knew she needed to promote her skills in a certain way. She relied on her coach’s recommendation, someone who was personal friends with the Coastal U coaches. As she explained, she lacked the physical scores or merits to be recruited, so she created a highlight reel. “I had no erg scores, nothing to go off of...It wasn't like the summer time in the year before where [the Coastal U coach] would have time to come look at me. And I sent him video and he was like 'This looks good. This is pretty good,’” (Noelle, Interview One). The Physicist, Amanda, and Noelle, admitted that Coastal U would never have actively pursued them. These athletes attributed their initiative and outreach efforts as key reasons why they were recruited to Coastal U.

Some took the resume process a step further, creating detailed portfolios of achievements.

These included an athletic history of all times, scores, meets and regattas attended, any national team appearances, lists of prior teammates who were recruited to college, and media coverage. Stella, had not rowed crew in high school but hoped to be recruited to a top program based on her athleticism in other sports. She used a clever marketing tool to attract coaches. Stella viewed the recruiting process as “mostly just, fake it till you make it. You have to be your own advocate. I am a big deal--even though I wasn't--I had to make it seem like I was. One of my coaches, she went to the Olympics a lot. So she wrote me a letter, and I put an Olympic head on it. It looked really cool” (Stella, Interview One). In addition to using Olympic imagery to lure coaches, Stella’s phrase, “fake it ‘till you make it” encapsulates the next part of recruiting. Once the Coastal U coaches were intrigued by Stella’s potential, she was invited to meet with them in person. The interpersonal interactions between the coaches and student athletes further showcase how characteristics like one’s personality can determine if they become a college-level athlete.

The in-person contacts between athletes and coaches seemed to be a central assessment tool for selecting a future team. As a freshman in high school, London was on the cover of a local, free magazine. She sent this article, along with her high school transcripts, athletic resume, statement of interest, statement of athletic goals and potential, and coach’s recommendation prior to visiting over 20 schools. Once on campus, London treated meeting the coaches like interviews, or an opportunity to further market her strengths to the staff.

They'd ask me about my training. And so I would tell them, like a [typical] day, or my training. And that would come out, like, 'Oh I have to study before this, or I have to go home and study.' I think they just kinda know. And then they also see on your resume. They'll ask you about other stuff you're doing. So I talked about debate. Or I'd talk about how the independence of being a track athlete transfers over to my school and academic life. So I'd just purposefully weave in who I was into my answers. And I don't think that everyone does that. But I just sort of knew that I had to (London, Interview One).

As London reveals, she believed the recruiting process necessitates a strategy of human interaction to best present oneself as a potential athlete. Interestingly, there seemed to be no set



pattern of interaction. Some were told to be humble, others were told to be aggressive, and others were told to be a good “fit” with the team.

One way athletes increased their chances of making a good impression on coaches was through paying their own way to a campus and take an “unofficial visit.” These visits are unregulated by the NCAA and give the potential athlete more time in assessing an athletic program, coach, and university. As a result, the unofficial visit advantages students with financial means, knowledge, and social connections. Of the three low-income students in the study, only one did an unofficial visit because she lived close to a University. Even then, her recruiting process still unfolded through the regulated channels, as she went on two, paid-for or University sponsored visits. Fifty-seven percent of participants took unofficial visits to Coastal U. Students set up unofficial visits relying on many of the skills, knowledge, and connections outlined above. Often, it began with an email asking for permission to visit the campus and meet the coaches. Those who took unofficial visits were surprised by the offer of admission during these informal conversations. Merlin, Imani, Terrance, and Josephine, all received offers of University admission during their unofficial visit. The advantages these well-connected, and funded, individuals have expanded during the scholarship negotiation process.

Yet again, the NCAA has few rules as it relates to athletic merit scholarships. There are limits on the amount a student can receive in any given year, the amount of total scholarships a coach can have per sport and the time a coach can offer a scholarship to a high school athlete. There are no guidelines about how a student can negotiate a scholarship. Consequently, there was no pattern in how participants earned scholarships based on athletic merit. Fifteen said they entered the recruiting process with the knowledge that it would take “negotiating” skills to earn a scholarship. Two of the more successful negotiating strategies included stating that they could

not go to college unless they had funding, or using offers from other schools as leverage. The first tactic was common for the low-income, out-of-state, and international students. These students could not pay their way, or, for international students, could not receive federal loans for Coastal U. The second tactic was to leverage offers from one school against Coastal U to get a better aid package. For seven of the students, this worked. Captain America levied schools against one another. “[Recruiting] is like a betting game. Like, ‘Well this college can give me this. What can you give me?’ I saw that and I definitely used my rowing abilities as a leverage to put myself out there for colleges to see what they could offer me” (Interview One). For eight participants, the game of chicken did not end in their favor. Eight participants turned down full scholarships from other institutions, one they perceived as less prestigious than Coastal U. Four of these students were told they could earn an athletic scholarship if they performed well once they arrived on campus. Anthony Blue’s family, for instance, went into debt to pay for Coastal U. He hoped he would have a full-ride athletic scholarship by his senior year but he never did.

The luxury to turn down a full-ride to one school to attend another, or to wait to earn a scholarship later, reveals another mechanism of the sports-track-to-college: getting an athletic scholarship has as much to do with money as prestige. Sixteen participants said they wanted an athletic scholarship, not because their family needed the money, but because they wanted their peers and community to know they earned one. C.M. earned a 50% scholarship, which covers half of her costs to attend Coastal U. In reflecting on the process, she recognized that she was caught up in the prestige of earning an athletic scholarship.

Further, the recruiting process exposed potential student athletes to how unimportant academic performance was to their future coaches. Eleven recalled a Coastal U coach explicitly saying they were looking for top athletes, not top students. Even more telling, only one student

recalled a Coastal U coach discussing at length their academic interests. More often, coaches bragged about their own power to easily get an athlete into a top-ranked University.

This process shows a dramatic difference between what the sports-track-to-college pipeline evokes compared to the traditional route to higher education. Student athletes focused on packaging their athletic resumes, leveraging personal connections, creating marketing materials, and paying to travel around the country to visit coaches. Despite the social manipulation required to stand out in the sports-track-to-college, athletes still over-attributed their success to individual athletic ability and merit. The curricular foundations and lessons of this pipeline disguised the structural mechanisms at play and instilled in athletes that natural ability and effort are required to become successful student athletes.

## Chapter 5: The Sports-Track-to-College: Meritocratic Ideology

*“To be good in track, you have to have raw physical talent. But if you want to be great in a sport...you have to put your time in regardless of what sport it is...And it’s the same thing with track, you got to work your form because it’s not easy... And that’s what people don’t understand. They think that because Usain Bolt is the fastest man in the world because he has the fastest man in the world genes. I honestly don’t think so. I think there’s somebody on the block somewhere that can probably run faster than Usain Bolt if they got the same coaching and the same technique. I personally believe that. I don’t think the world sees that. I think they’re like, ‘He’s just some God, so he can do it.’ No, he put his time in”— Malcom, Men’s Track and Field, Interview Two*

### Introduction

One of the final interview questions was: *what factors facilitated their success, or ability, in becoming a college-level athlete?* Malcolm’s response, shown above, addresses how talent and training are both needed to become a top-level athlete. As he explains, one can be “good” in a sport based off “genes” but to be great, an athlete needs more than ability. His quote also demonstrates how race, class, and gender are maintained in high level athletics. His example of Usain Bolt, a Black man and the reigning fastest human in the world, inscribes and naturalizes understandings about bodies, ability, and social outcomes. By refuting the genetic connection between ability, Blackness, and maleness, Malcolm reaches for another example; “somebody from the Block.” In American slang, “the Block” connotes the urban, Black poor. By going away from ability and towards resources, work, effort, time, Malcolm still falls on Blackness and genetic ability as the cornerstone of athletic success.

Malcolm is limited to offering a biological (genetic) or social constructionist answer to explain athletic success. The same polarized explanations exist in the academic literature. This chapter shows how school sports remain a powerful indoctrination engine for participants and society alike in certain notions of bodily ability, and social mobility. But it also points to ways that academics remain limited in our understanding of how bodies mediate social structures.

Previous chapters explained why particular groups may be over and underrepresented in college sport. The data demonstrated that athletics in general, and sports like rowing in

particular, favor athletes from certain racial and economic backgrounds, namely White and middle class. Despite the social, economic, geographic, and cultural advantages outlined in the above chapters, most participants attributed their success to: 1) Natural Ability and 2) Hard Work. Athletes learned these two, competing, ideas through sports. Scholars use reproduction theories to explain why unequal social relationships persist over time and how public educational institutions maintain unequal social dynamics. I brought sports into the discussion because athletics are school, and in turn, state sponsored activities that also produce unequal outcomes.

As discussed in Chapter 2, sport and school are raced and gendered institutions, meaning cultural beliefs, unequal power relations, and unequal material benefits involving race and gender influence the design, make-up, and history of these institutions (Acker, 1988; Messner, 2007). One way sports and school remain raced and gendered institutions is by elevating, celebrating, and advantaging some bodies over others (Anderson, 2008; Blackstone, 2012; Cooky, Wachs, Messner, Dworkin, 2010; Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Crosset, 2007; Eitzen, 2012). In the U.S., possessing wealth, Whiteness, and maleness remain the advantaged statuses. To maintain control, these statuses are reproduced in complex ways. In both sport and school, White male bodies are not always the victor, yet they still maintain dominant status. This chapter unveils how the sports-track-to-college pipeline reinforces racism, capitalism, and patriarchy. By existing in school and sports, participants learn to value certain physical and mental traits above others. In the current political, economic, and social conditions of the U.S., the physical and mental traits that are valued are historically and inherently connected to certain race, class, and gender positions. Thus, the meritocratic ideals of school and sport are disrupted.

Social reproduction points to school curricula as a central way to disseminate ideology (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1981). A definition of curriculum could be as narrow as an “outline of a

course of study” or as broad as everything involved in “planning, teaching, and learning” (Tyler, 1981). Curriculum, therefore, encapsulates the actual work that goes into running schools. Beyer and Apple (1988) outline at least eight ways that critical scholars implicate the curriculum in maintaining unequal social relationships. For the sports-track-to-college, the most relevant is the “ideological critique of curriculum” which examines the ideologies that circulate within schools and society and in turn shape public consciousness. For Apple (2004) the ideological critique of the curriculum is to examine how various ideologies in schools make the public consciousness more susceptible to social control. The form school takes, how knowledge is selected, and how educators are trained, are all shaped by ideologies.

In the sports-track-to-college, social control is achieved by disguising the processes that advantage specific individuals and groups. Two competing, yet complementary, ideologies promulgate throughout the pipeline: 1) Natural ability and 2) Hard work. Curriculum scholars have noted how both these ideologies are also produced and maintained in the school system (Apple; 2004; Giroux, 2015; McLaren, 1998). Bowles and Gintis, known for showing the relationship between schools and the economy, demonstrated the relationship between these two ideologies. Their work in the 1970s intervened when education reformers were questioning why students who were “working hard” in school still failed to matriculate. Some used the “heritability of intelligence” rhetoric, claiming that those who failed in school lacked the genetic intelligence quota, IQ, necessary to be successful (p.9). The belief in IQs as a system of measurement that can determine one’s success in schools and society at large, substantiates the ideology of natural ability. Natural ability is the belief that people have “natural” differences in aptitude towards certain tasks (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). When participants recalled a challenge in school they faced prior to college, seventeen replied, “I’m just not good at math.” This

statement illustrates the deeply held belief that individuals either can or can't possess certain skills. This belief disguises how most tasks, but particularly within schools, should be taught and learned. Someone's success in each area should not be determined by a perceived innate ability, but how well another person helped teach and develop their skills in that area (Dewey, 1939).

Hard work can be both the corollary and complement to natural ability. Hard work refers to the concept that social institutions like schools are designed to favor and allow those who work the hardest to rise to the top (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The belief goes that what one lacks in ability one can make up for with effort. It also complements natural ability by supporting the U.S. meritocracy belief, or that America and all its social institutions including work, school, politics, and sports, elevate and reward those with the best ability and effort (Apple, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). To adjudicate meritocracy the institutions implement certain tests, measures, and filtering systems. It is within these mechanisms that critical curriculum and reproduction scholars point to how society actually rewards those from dominant social groups like men over women, White people over people of color, and middle class over the poor.

In examining the sports-track-to-college pipeline, I found four features that support the dissemination of natural ability and hard work. The four features are:

1. *Sport selection process*: Using the body to determine athletic ability
2. *Interactions with social actors*: peers, parents, and coaches
3. *Assessment in sports*: using "objective" measures to determine athletic success
4. *Competition*: beating yourself and others

In exploring these features, I also show how the ideologies of natural ability and hard work, socially construct race and gender. Critical theories, even of the curriculum, still favor an economic approach to inequality.

### **Sport Selection Process: Bodies Determine Athletic Ability**

Of the 47 participants, only one, Sophia, joined her first sport in high school. Rowing was

her first and last sport. The rest had long athletic histories shifting from sport to sport until they found their current proclivity. In describing how and why they moved from one sport to the next the phrases “natural ability” and “hard work” either stood in contrast to one another or emerged, in the same statement. Natural ability, as CM describes, is the absence of hard work. An athlete with a “work ethic” is “someone who comes to practice, and they have to work, really, really hard, to get a certain time” compared to their teammate with “natural talent” who “is that person who just goes out there and runs it like its nothing. Time trial and they're just like, 'That was easy, give me something else'” (C.M., Interview one). The concepts meshed into one another, demonstrating the fluidity of ideology. Collectively, participants offered three reasons for how ability and effort determined their college sport their 1) genetics 2) body and 3) ability.

Participants did not invent these four explanations, rather they emerged through experiences within school sports. Attributing sport selection to natural ability disguises how social systems impact which groups are advantaged in the sports-track-to-college pipeline.

Both sport and school offer opportunities to train participants and the public to believe that achievement is due to genetically inherited, or biological, attributes (Apple, 2004; Eitzen, 2012; Milner & Braddock II, 2016). For participants whose parents were college-level athletes, genes were an easy explanation. They pointed to a blood-based lineage as the reason for success. Anthony Blue’s father was an Olympic-level high jumper. Until high school, Anthony favored basketball. Sophomore year, his father sat him down and explained it was time to switch sports.

He gave me the whole, ‘I’m a high jumper so you’re probably going to be a good at it, if you do it. You’ve got talent...It’s in your blood’...He jumped seven feet-six inches in college and he made an Olympic team the year they boycotted. Yeah, he told me he traveled the world and saw everything. It was a super good experience. I just wanted to do that... Basketball never got me thinking, ‘Oh you can travel’ (Interview One).

Anthony’s shift towards track exemplifies the mutability between the concepts of natural ability, genetics, and hard work. Joining track began with a belief that jumping is a heritable skill. But,



he also had a vision and goal for himself— to beat his Dad and potentially travel the world—that did not exist in basketball. Further, his father, who would later become his track coach, gave him extra workouts and created a home gym for Anthony to train in after school.

Athletes saw the tenuous connection between genetics and effort. When they offered genetic explanations for success, they were both prideful and ashamed. To be “genetically gifted” means your success is both deserved and undeserved. As Captain America explains, she feels she cannot relate to a core experience in sport: working harder than others to improve.

I was never that kid on the team that was constantly on the bench. So, I can't relate to athletes [who] put in the same amount of effort that I do, but they don't get the same results that I do... I don't want to say genes but there was never a sport where I struggled with the movement of doing something. I remember being at basketball practices and seeing a girl try and dribble a ball between her legs. And she couldn't do it. And I would be sitting there thinking, 'Why can't she do that? It's so easy?' (Interview One).

Captain America, who later that year won the NCAA championship in rowing, “hated” to admit that sports came easily to her because this statement violates the meritocratic element of sports. She saw teammates putting in the same “effort” as she did, but not receiving the same results.

Captain America's articulation of athletic success leads to the second feature of why people selected certain sports: their body. While fifteen participants explicitly attributed athletic success to “genetics”, another 27 attributed it to some physical aspect of their body. Even though they did not use the heritable-specific language, the phrasing conjured a similar meaning. Comments like “my athleticism,” “my height,” “my speed,” or “my endurance,” painted the body as a fixed entity, unchanging through the sports process. The winnowing mechanisms within sports favored certain physiologies over others, leading participants to view body as a fixed, an object to be possessed; people either had “athleticism” or they did not.

Height was an oft cited necessary physical attribute. Twenty-six participants said height increased their athletic success. This physical feature was an advantage in certain sports. Boris,

who as an eighteen-year-old college freshman stood at six-feet-seven-inches, explains his height, which he received from his parents, gave him an advantage in rowing.

Boris: I'm very big. And I have--my mom is 6'1" or 6'2"... So I think that. And my Dad's like 6'4". But I think my mom is pretty tall for a woman. I think that's where I got it from. My mom is also strong. My mom is also stronger than my Dad.

KH: So what factors do you think made you a successful rower?

Boris: Genes. Genetics...Yeah, two years ago when I went to the first junior worlds, I was pretty tall... But I was pretty thin. So from that point, I just started getting a bit bigger, a bit more muscular (Interview One).

Boris elevates one feature of his body, height, as the primary cause for sport success. He is not wrong; as previously discussed, some rowers were offered spots on college teams largely based on height. But, attributing athletic success to a singular physical feature minimizes the social, cultural, and economic factors that prohibit equal entry into sports like rowing.

In shifting sports and events, athletes learned a third feature of “natural” ability or that different bodies have different capabilities. With the time, opportunity, and resources to try a variety of sports, athletes determined which activity best suited their body. Seven participants identified as completely “uncoordinated” meaning they eliminated any sport that required the use of balls. Several of the female rowers tried gymnastics or ballet as young children. Sometimes, athletes described their body as if it betrayed them; changing in ways that went against their athletic interest. A common reason for stopping these activities and moving to a new sport was “I grew out of it.” Sometimes a coach or parent said they were too tall for the activity. Amanda, who grew fast and early as a child, struggled in her favorite sport, soccer. Her height later pushed her into two “tall people sports” basketball and rowing (Amanda, Interview One). Through the process, athletes learned to view bodies and sports as fixed versus moldable entities.

Body weight was equally as important in sport success as height. Women athletes more so than men, learned weight is both natural and should be controlled through effort. In rowing and track, athletes cited weight as facilitating the physical characteristics of speed, strength,

agility, stamina, and overall fitness. Track emphasized bodies that needed to be, in the case for runners and jumpers, as light as possible. Track athletes did point to the variability of physiques across events, but weight was a determining factor. C.M. explained women of all heights did her sport, ranging from 5'2" to her stature at 6'1". Kayla, also cautiously attributed her success in running to her lightweight body. "I feel like my body type mostly determined [my sport]. Because I'm like a skinny, White-Hispanic, person, you'd lump me in with the distance people" (Kayla, Interview One). While Kayla and C.M. were naturally light, others struggled with their weight, feeling like their bodies betrayed them as they aged.

Imani, a 400 runner, struggled with her weight, blaming her decline to puberty.

I hit a plateau, my junior year [of high school], because I hit puberty and I started to grow into my woman's body. And it affected my running. And my times were digressing. It made track stressful. Coming from being the top to not the top anymore. Because of how my body's meant to be. And then, it [was] hard because my Dad put me on a protein shake program. And I would have two shakes a day. And one meal at night. I just felt like I couldn't eat like everyone else. But then, I would just think, 'It's OK, I'm doing it to get to college. I'll be fine.'... It felt more [like] a job—maybe if I could eat whatever I wanted to eat, I would feel more like a normal person. But I didn't (Interview One).

Before Imani's "womanly changes" she ran college-level times in the 400-meter race. Even when putting in the same amount of time and effort to her sport, she slowed as much as four seconds her junior year. As she recounted, the physical changes made her feel as though her body now limited her success in the sport, and her chance to attend college. With no other options, she embraced dieting to improve her speed. She never ran another 56 second 400-meter dash, but, using her resources, knowledge of the recruiting process, and initiative, set up an unofficial visit to Coastal U, and later, accepted a walk-on position on the team.

Imani's experience also indicates how sports remains a masculine institution. Imani mentioned several times during our interviews how her "womanly" body harmed her sports performance. She thought that fat brought on by puberty was a determinant in her sport. This

idea came from messages she received in the sporting world including from coaches, teammates, and her father. Particularly at the high school level, coaches introduced athletes to the concept that their physical body mattered to their sport performance. In long distance running, women reported that their coaches emphasized that the faster runners were often the lightest—many of whom had yet to go through puberty. In jumping and sprinting events, weight also mattered. Chantae’s coach constantly told her that her greatest weakness was her “diet.” She admitted she liked sweets “too much” and this limited how far she could jump.

Some coaches took more extreme approaches toward weight loss. Several rowers had a junior national team coach who wanted athletes with a certain tall and slender body type. She would tell rowers as young as 15 that they need to lose ten pounds if they want to be on the team.

Laura described a tactic the coach used to motivate girls to lose weight:

She would tell girls, if they jumped in front of the mirror, they would have to lose anything that jiggled. That was pretty messed up. But at the same time, when she gave you a compliment [and then] you felt like you were on the top of the world. It always felt like I was [loyal] to her. I had this attachment. Like I wouldn't be this person that I am today without her. She taught me discipline, which I needed, she taught me how I have control over my own life... It was helpful to have someone be like, 'You can change the way you're viewed. You can change your situation by working hard' (Interview One).

Laura’s positive memories of her coach shows the complex ways ideologies travel through sport. Embedded within an account of overt, public body shaming, Laura recalls how her coach shaped her into a disciplined, independent woman. Laura’s coach encouraged her to view her body as both a determinant and an asset to the sport. While she may “naturally” have the wrong body, she learned that she could change her faults with proper work. Yet, in elevating certain physical features, Laura’s coach—also a woman—taught adolescent girls to reject their female bodies and, in the process, reinforced sport as a masculine institution.

### **Interaction with social actors: Peers, parents, and coaches**

The ideologies of hard work and natural ability circulated throughout sports and school as

student athletes encountered social actors. Peers, parents, and coaches all emphasized that ability and effort enhanced athletic performance. As LeVar explains, even though he was “naturally” gifted in sports and school, he received more encouragement from authority figures and peers to pursue athletics. I asked him why he thought this was the case.

On the playground, everybody can see who can jump, run, throw, more so than you can see [who can] recite Shakespeare. [Sports] are more readily shown to everyone. So people can tell you, ‘This is where you belong.’ My path [to sports came from] natural ability. It’s easy for me to place myself somewhere where that can be showcased.’ My natural ability is genetic [and] it’s not something possessed by everyone (Interview one).

Those around LeVar saw his athletic talents and pushed him towards sports instead of school.

Like LeVar, 22 participants had a coach notice their body and encouraged them to pursue a sport or position. The most common reason why a potential athlete was pushed towards a sport was their early growth curve. Monique heard through a family friend she would be good at rowing because the sport required height. When she showed up for the first day of practice, the coaches looked at her and said, “‘Oh you’re tall, you’d be good at it.’ So then I did and I turned out to be pretty good” (Monique, Interview One). Monique later became a junior national team member and won the college rowing national championships. In reflecting on her sport successes it was easy to attribute it to what others saw in her; her physical height and strength.

Not all athletes’ bodies were the main driver for sports success. In both rowing and track, athletes were told their body would lead to greatness that never fully manifested. At Josephine’s first track practice, her coach sized her up and said she had a future in long-distance running.

She looked at me she could tell that I was built [for] running. Especially longer distances. And she said that to my mom ‘Your daughter is built to do long distance running. I hope you know that.’ ...[At the time] I was really tall and really thin. I didn’t grow into my body until high school. I was just a big toothpick. But I, apparently, had a noticeably athletic build... She saw that a future Josephine would be an athlete that could be built for a 1500-meter race or a mile race (Interview One).

Josephine did not make the leaps in athletic performance predicted by her first coach. She did

two workouts a day, had a private coach, and personal training lessons. But, she only started improving her times by a second each year, to the frustration of her coaches. Many athletes shared this disappointment of not living up to their perceived athletic potential. Especially some of the rowers, who gravitated to or were pushed into the sport because of their height. Amanda, one such rower, began the sport in seventh grade. Even after all these years, she did not feel she had true success in the sport until she made it to college. Instead, she believed she received a slot on the Coastal U team, based on her “potential” or her height.

When natural ability does not yield physical successes, the next piece of advice is still individualized: *work harder*. Participants who faced an athletic challenge or a performance setback, were often told that they should put in more work, or effort, to overcome their difficulty.

Participants described “putting in more work” as the following:

- Voluntary extra workouts for skill development or physical conditioning
- Push past perceived physical or mental limits during practice
- Centering sport and subordinating all other activities
- Increase the volume of training, putting in more time, distance, or repetitions

The messages and methods of how an individual athlete could improve their performance circulated throughout the sports community. Coaches set the tone, telling athletes they need to put in more volume, effort, or overall “work” to improve. There seemed to be a general dislike for efficiency; instead, coaches encouraged more time at practice, more distance, or more repetitions. Most athletes did not feel, at the high school level, that their coaches asked too much of them. Rather, as aspiring college athletes, they were more than willing to put in extra time and effort. Thirty-six of the participants explained that they, too, believed and, in turn, initiated putting in more overall “work” to improve their athletic results in high school. Parents also told athletes to work harder in sports. Several, like Taylor and Anthony’s parents, did workouts alongside their offspring; literally pushing them to train longer and harder during a session.

There are at least three faults with elevating work ethic as the dominant explanation for athletic success. First, it disguises the pipeline that allows particular individuals, or social groups, to excel. Second, as Camilla explains, pushing people to and beyond their mental and physical limits has damaging psychological effects. Camilla recalled how two of her previous coaches used “mind games” to motivate athletes, using personal attacks, insults, or demeaning comments to motivate the athletes to work harder. I asked her why she did not like this style of coaching. “I’m already hard on myself. I don’t need someone else being hard on me. I don’t have a lot of confidence in the first place, so if someone’s going to be degrading your skill, or ability [then]. you take it really personally as an athlete” (Camilla, Interview One). Camilla tried to parse whether coaches who use these tactics are degrading an athlete as an individual or simply an athlete’s abilities. But what is an individual if not for their body, abilities, or work ethic?

Finally, elevating hard work comes at a physical cost to the athletes. Seamus, by his junior year of high school, showed promise in long-distance running. With a family friend as a mentor, a strong high school coaching staff, and a desire to use sports to gain entrance in a top university, he put in extra workouts before and after school. By his senior year, he was running close to three hours a day. The volume and workload caught up to him, physically.

Constant injuries because I was increasing rapidly. I constantly had an Achilles injury or a Hip injury. I ended up running through a lot of them. Which you can do... There were a few that I couldn't run through. For the most part, I was just running through, taking the risk. Because I knew I didn't have that much time. I knew that I couldn't take a week off here or there because you take a week off you're back a month or two (Interview One).

Seamus did succeed in his goal of getting a spot at a top university. Coming into college, Seamus spent his first two years battling multiple injuries missing multiple seasons of competition. As such, he has yet to recover physically, from the ideological consequences of hard work.

### **Assessment in sports: “Objective” measures determine athletic success**

Within the sports-track-to-college pipeline “objective” measures were used to evaluate an

athlete's hard work or natural ability. As discussed in the admission section, the "objective" academic measures such as GPA and standardized test scores are somewhat eliminated in the sports-track-to-college. As a result, athletic measures take on heightened value. All sports assess performance. In game sports like basketball or football, an individual's shooting or rebound average per game, or number of tackles, yards, or catches is used. In racing and field-event sports like rowing and track, times or distances are used. Participants who transitioned from game to racing sports noted track and rowing seemed more objective. Several called this an absence of the "politics" of games. Racing sports seemed better at evaluating a winner based on a natural ability and effort. The winner came through because the measurements were designed to be "neutral" and "objective", and therefore, "meritocratic"; a measurement of the best athlete.

Malcolm, Merlin, and Duane all played football before, or during, their track careers. All three noticed football coaches wielding more authority and control over their athletes. Malcolm and Merlin were pushed into playing positions on the field that they did not choose; the coaches moved them around like chess pieces to fit the intentions of the offense or defensive plan. Sometimes, coaches did not select the "best" athlete for the job. Malcolm recalled how the starting quarterback, was "terrible" but he got the top spot because he was the coach's son. Track, on the other hand, seemed free from favoritism for Malcolm. He came to see track as a sport where the "best players" made it into the starting lineup.

Track isn't political. You're either fast or you're slow. It's right there on paper...If you jump this far, you're going to go to the national meet. There's no biasness. There's no room for politics. It's just like, you either got it or you don't (Interview One).

Malcolm's observation that there is "no room for politics" in track belies two features of the sport. First, many track athletes, including Malcolm, recounted how a given race, day, or even how an event is measured, varies given the external conditions. And second, presenting sports as "objective" disguises the entire processes that led to a given athlete lining up to race.



The subjective nature of race conditions was best explained by the distance runners. Their sport depends on the “objective” task of getting your body from one location to another as fast as possible. But the times for a race varied depending on weather conditions—if it was too hot that day, if it was raining, if it was too cold, if there was too much wind—and, more often, who was in each race. As a junior in high school, George hit his break-out times in the mile during a high school race that featured two top Division I college recruits. As seniors about to leave for University, they set a faster pace than normal for the event. George, who did not realize their ability, stayed with them, shattering his previous personal best in the event. His times at future races fluctuated, proving to himself that there wasn’t a consistent time he would run in the 800 or the mile. Instead, he noted how his performance continued to depend on how he placed in a race and who he ran against. The athletic feats runners’ bodies endure necessitate an external push or driver, and often cannot be achieved in isolation. George, by the end of high school was running close to a four-minute mile. As he and others explained, the mental stamina required to do this necessitates athletes override most pain and logic centers within their bodies.

Rowing also straddles the objective and subjective assessment measures. A key performance measure for rowers is the 2K erg: how fast they can go over a 2,000-meter distance on a rowing machine.<sup>25</sup> An athlete’s 2K time follows them like a number, as Lisa put, “haunting you” if it’s an undesirable time. The 2K, like the mile, requires athletes to override the physical pain mechanisms, a feat much easier if a crew is in a closely contested race. The still unsettled debate in rowing is to what extent a 2K erg score translates to the water. International students in the study were puzzled by the 2K tests. To them, this erg test seems like a U.S. obsession.

Several had never done a 2K on an erg before they began the recruiting process. Rowing requires

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<sup>25</sup> The machine measures the average pace, overall time, and stroke-rate, or strokes per minute, for an athlete. Each stroke an athlete takes on the machine reads a number depending on how hard they pull, giving the athlete constant feedback on their performance. For a 2K, that could mean upwards of 35 messages per minute.

finesse, technical skill, and balance to navigate on water that are not measured on the machine. In putting a boat together for eight people to race, coaches use a variety of measures beyond an erg score including switching people in and out of boats to see what combination of people's rowing rhythm and power makes the boat move the fastest. These contests are still dependent on weather, wind, water flow (if there is a current) and the quality of the athletes in a race.

Rowing and track could be much closer objective feats than other sports or even school. Even more puzzling was the inconsistency in how the measures were used in the sports-track-to-college. London, who displayed some of the savviest student athlete marketing skills in the process, wooing coaches through how she packaged her accomplishments, and her eloquent discussion of her future potential, believed that getting into college for track and field was an objective endeavor. "It's also different for track, because track is all numbers. For soccer you have to send in video. I sent a video in for track as well. But it's like, 'what are your numbers?' There's not really any subjectivity to it" (London, Interview One). There was no consistent measure used by coaches to evaluate athletes. Coaches gave some track athletes a certain time or distance and told others to "keep up the good work." Others, like London, were admitted after an engaging in-person interview. For rowing, some women were told they needed to break 7:30 on the 2K, others were told 7:20, one rower needed to break eight minutes. For men, similar inconsistencies abounded. Several were told to break 6:20, but, when this failed, a coach's recommendation could suffice. If objectivity can be used on a whim, it loses the essence of what it means to be objective. These assessments then become partial, biased, and political tools, which can be used to disseminate the ideals of natural ability and hard work.

### **Competition**

The final way the ideologies of hard work and natural ability circulate in the sports-track-

to-college pipeline is through competition. Each facet of the above points depends on beating another person; a teammate to earn a higher spot in the team or an opponent to win a contest. Competition varied by sport, team, coach, or athlete, but the goals stayed consistent: become bigger, smaller, faster, stronger, taller, mentally tougher, or more cohesive as a program to win more races or events. In essence, the “objective” measures had meaning because of a competitive element. A certain time only has value because it is measured in relation to other, faster times.

Competition fed the concepts of hard work and naturally ability in at least two ways. First, athletes learned that “competition” was a natural feature, either people had an internal competitive streak, or they did not. Second, the motivation to work harder came from this same competitive streak, understood as the desire to be better than someone else.

Competition was often referred to as a natural ability in and of itself, something inherited and passed down through families. Some of the earliest memories of sports for Kayla, Iceman, Merlin, Malcolm, and Kalie, included competing within their families. When I pressed participants to describe what they meant by an inherent competitive streak, most described it as an innate desire to be the best—as if they were born wanting to win and succeed in activities. Kalie remembers being competitive in all kinds of interactions.

I always want to win. Like no matter what it is. Even if it's a board game I never want to get last. With my family, I always have to beat them. And it's silly thing. Playing a video game with my dad and brother. It's not a big deal. And I'm like, 'Naw, I'm going to beat you. I'm going to do better.' And I guess as competitive, nothing is good enough, second isn't good enough, right? Only good enough is being the best (Interview One).

By middle school, Kalie was a top performer in gymnastics and soccer. She found an “outlet” for her competitive spirit in sports. Beating her brother in a silly activity like a video game did not take on the same kind of symbolic meaning as an organized sport which required weeks of practice, skill development, training, and the appearance of fair and equal competitors, all of which could be assessed and judged, a winner recognized. In sixth grade, when she won the

league soccer tournament, she realized how winning under these conditions felt better.

The first time you experience winning... We got medals and were like, 'Oh my god we did it. We beat everyone.'...[And I] was like, 'Oh, I did well. Oh I'm better than that kid. I like this.' I liked that a lot (Interview One).

The combined internal drives of wanting to be the best and the enjoyment of beating other people resounded through the study. Iceman, who also attributed his “natural” competitiveness to his family members, offered a succinct definition of competition: “Just wanting to be better than somebody else. In any way that can be measured” (Iceman, Interview One). Sports are positioned as an opportunity to judge, or measure, who is the best.

While many participants believed competitiveness could be inherited, they knew this feature alone did not bring athletic success. Rather, hard work or training in the sport made the victory worthwhile. Athletes recalled that they developed their competitiveness through interactions with teammates. Monique recalls a common athletic memory; using the drive to beat your teammates to improve your individual performance. She understood “competitive” to mean “wanting to be the best, and hating to lose.” Even though she won titles at the national and international level, her strongest competitive memory came from her teammates.

I had three friends who all [were around my speed] and we all wanted to make the junior national team [and to do so] we had to make the standard. I pulled a 7:18 erg. And then my friend goes and she pulls .2 slower than me. So she decides to do another one and she pulls 7:10 and then I get pissed off and I pull 7:08. And then she gets pissed off and then, does another erg and then I get another erg and [so on] (Interview One).

Through the drive to beat her teammates, Monique improved her time by ten seconds in the same week. That is a phenomenal physical improvement that she attributed to her competitiveness.

There are numerous downsides to the competitive nature of athletics. As will be shown in future sections, structuring a team based on competing against one another provides an interesting challenge for leadership, sportsmanship, camaraderie and team-building, the supposed positive hallmarks of why sports exist in educational settings. As the final section shows, the

belief that competition rewards those with the best natural ability and work ethic just reproduces racial and gender inequality.

### **The Problem with Hard Work and Natural Ability**

A society free from racist, sexist, and economically exploitative forces could use hard work and/or natural ability as a sorting mechanism. But in the U.S. these concepts have long been used to deny the poor, people of color, and women, full social and economic inclusion (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012; Oakes, 2005). They do so by positioning economic, racial, or gender difference as individualized and natural, denying the disenfranchised the ability to levy claims for social justice against the State (Skiba, 2012). Critical scholars, instead, view the emergence of race, class, and gender inequality as relational structures. For instance, the ideology of hard work feeds the concept that the poor lack economic resources because they do not try hard enough. In reality, the poor class can only exist as another group secures, and continues to amass, a disproportionate amount of capital.

There are at least three consequences of the sports-track-to-college promoting the ideologies of hard work and natural ability. First, the ideologies disguise the sports-track-to-college pipeline. As this section demonstrated, school and sports present a “fair” and “equal” society when, in reality, they favor and empower already dominant groups. The ideologies convince participants they earned a spot in a top university due to effort and ability, instead of their social advantages. Second, the ideologies reproduce “natural” racial differences, which in turn reinforce White supremacy. As will be discussed, ability maintains racial segregation and, in turn, inequality within the pipeline. And third, the ideologies maintain “natural” gender differences, which promote male superiority. Again, by elevating natural ability and effort within the pipeline, women are positioned as different, and inferior to, men.

Natural ability and hard work present the sports-track-to-college as if participants earned, or, in some cases, fell into, higher education through some genetic lottery. Goose, a White male, grew up in the Southwestern U.S. After graduating high school with few college options, his family connections landed him a post-graduate year at an elite boarding school on the East Coast. Goose still described his journey to Coastal U as “dumb luck.” After a month or so at school, he already had an opportunity to be recruited to Coastal U before ever having participated fully in the sport. “Like I said, dumb luck. 'Oh you're tall, you can row.' So I knew I was coming to [Coastal U] before I got into a boat” (Goose, Interview One). In combination with his height and athleticism, developed over a lifetime of being a high-level three sport athlete, the boarding school coaches recommended he become a college level rower at the top program in the U.S. This is not “luck.” Goose admitted that he, by seventh grade, put his energy in sports over school, believing his athletic ability or effort would lead to college admission. When this failed, he pursued a different route to university via the post-graduate year at a boarding school.

Brittany’s story has also been recounted in previous chapters. A Black middle-class female, who grew up in California, also had several social advantages. First, her neighborhood had a well-funded recreational center offering day-care, after school activities, and sports to the local kids. Later, she joined track, got a private coach, and ended up transferring schools so she could utilize a more reputable athletic program. She rightfully acknowledged that her path to college was different than the typical Coastal U student. But she still equated her journey with theirs as the same: both are based on natural ability and effort.

The way you get into school [as an athlete] is different. [Students] study, study, study, study, study, study, get a 4.3 average, get accepted to [Coastal U]. But instead of me, study, study, study, I run, run, run, jump, jump, jump, and so I get into [Coastal U]. And that's how it is. As opposed to having your grades get you in, you have your athletic ability that gets you in, and then basically it's a job. So you have to, fulfill this part of the athletics to be a part of the academic community here (Interview One).

Brittany's explanation minimizes the social forces that allowed her to have the access, time, and resources to invest in running and jumping. Instead, she has come to view her place at Coastal U as earned through her athletic ability and effort. In doing so, she also explains the theme that will be explored in the next section; how a lifetime investment in sports, and the exceptional admissions process for student athletes, impacts how athletes engage with the University once they are on campus. As Brittany put it, the unique access comes at a cost.

The concepts of natural ability and hard work do more than disguise the pathway to college pipeline. They also construct and reinforce racial and gender inequality. Both race and gender inequality were initially reproduced through segregation. Up until the mid-1960s sports at all levels remained highly segregated; college and professional level athletics were owned, operated, and performed by White men (Gems, 2000; Martin, 2010; Milner & Braddock II, 2016). Sports in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries demonstrated to the public White physical supremacy. Eugenicists—heralding from the top American research institutions—pointed to White men's athletic victories as clear evidence for the race's inherent superiority (Bederman, 1995; Paxson, 1917). Contradictorily, politicians, the press, and university leaders presented sports as the great equalizer, reinforcing American's belief in meritocracy, or that those who work the hardest will prevail. Looking backward, the hypocrisy is obvious; but many White Americans believed that African Americans were not fully human and therefore not worthy of competition (Bederman, 1995; Skiba, 2012). Women and people of color accessed athletics through their own underfunded and separate leagues and associations. African Americans and women in particular created their own sports spaces to resist the myth that they were racially inferior. Many felt sports inclusion brought broader social inclusion and advocated for athletics to be part of the Civil Rights platform (Martin, 2010; Kaliss, 2013). Two political changes first

*Brown vs. Board of Education*, banning race-based educational segregation, and later Title IX, banning gender-based discrimination did improve access, mostly for African American males and White women (Fields, 2014; Hattery, 2012). Yet inclusion did not minimize entirely the social construction of people of color and females as inferior to White men.

An often-researched area of sports is how the media portrays athletes. Research demonstrates that the physical feats of African Americans are more likely to be highlighted, whereas the cerebral, strategy, and skill of White athletes is celebrated in the media (Majors, 2001; Carrington, 2013). Positioning African Americans as more physical feeds the centuries old racial construction of dehumanized Black bodies more apt for hard labor (Skiba, 2012). The relational racial construction allows White bodies, then, to be positioned as more intelligent, schematic, and better suited for managerial, leadership, or ownership positions. Gender in the sports media serves a similar function but occurs through a different method. Male bodies are presented as physically superior, highlighting their natural strength and stamina. Women athletes are often erased through limited coverage, or when presented, they are depicted as sexual objects (Cooky, Messner, Musto, 2015; Messner, 2007). Rhetoric of women's athletic inferiority bleeds into other social institutions, justifying their exclusion from organizations like labor and politics (Gems, 2000; Messner, 2001, 2007; Milner & Braddock II, 2016). The history of racial and gender segregation, along with the media's portrayal of athletes, impact the sports-track-to-college pipeline. Growing up in American society, young athletes are exposed to these images and commentaries, shaping how they interact within their own sports settings.

Participants in the pipeline learned about, and reinforced, a racial hierarchy within sports. This manifested in two ways. One, the belief that certain sports were "White" and two, that certain positions were "Black." In both cases the racial hierarchy enacted in athletics reinforced



“natural” differences in ability between White and Black bodies. Rowing is a White sport. The rowers recalled having mostly White teammates, always having White coaches, they were surrounded by White parents and White supporters at regattas. As Monique explained, rowing and White become synonymous: “All White. Everything White...sports it’s like, [and] our team's entirely blonde” (Monique, Interview One). Amanda, sheepishly admitted, after rowing for years, she was surprised at one race, when for the first time she noticed a Black rower in a boat next to her at the starting line. When I asked the rowers if they had any idea why their sports was mostly White, most offered economic explanations citing the steep costs.

As the “Community Access” Chapter outlined, economic barriers limit sport participation for all races. In the U.S. capitalism evolved in such a way that intertwined economic wealth with Whiteness (Glenn, 1993; Leonardo, 2009). But there are still at least two problems with the economic argument. First, it conflates Blackness with economic inequality, disguising the existence of a Black middle class. Most of the Black participants in the study were middle class, from families with disposable income to spend on sports. And second, it denies the presence, experience, and harm of racism. LeVar explains that he did not do certain sports because they were all-White. As someone in a mostly White school, who experienced racial stereotyping and disciplinary action, sports were an opportunity for him to be around Black people and a reprieve from the daily harms of racism. Through sports he also learned another truth about racism: White supremacy grants greater access, and inclusion to, White bodies.

I wasn't going to play water polo. And if I did, I'd probably be the only Black person on the team.... I played a lot of sports, and, a lot of the teams were in different places. So I've been on basketball teams with all White kids. And for that reason, as a young person, it was like, 'OK, it can't be that all Black people play basketball.' That probably wasn't the 100% correct connection but it led me to the right answer (LeVar, Interview One).

LeVar’s “right answer” is that certain sports, like rowing, aren’t White, *all* sports are White.

White children have greater access to any type of physical activity, whereas Black children are

disallowed through economic and social barriers to enter White-only sports.

Social and economic segregation in sports is tied to the belief of natural ability. Different bodies are seen as possessing different abilities. Yet these abilities are clustered through the social construction of race and racial categories. Noelle explains why she believed, beyond economic barriers, so few people of color row. She begins by acknowledging her own lack of critical race perspective, one she developed and continued to work on at Coastal U.

It would have been nice for a little bit more awareness. I was playing White sports like swimming, water polo, rowing. All very European dominated sports. Or at least people of European descent. Which it does have to do with the body type and stuff like that...scientifically, a German girl, versus an African American girl, German girl is probably not going to be the sprinter. You know? When you have someone who's 6'2" and 190 pounds? But maybe she'll do shot-put or javelin (Noelle, Interview One).

Noelle's path to critical race consciousness remains stymied by the continued belief in the connection between bodies, race, ability, and athletics. Here, she acknowledges race as a social construct, meaning that Europeans are far from the only group of people to be above six-feet tall. Yet, through her lifetime of sports participation, she learned to equate that a physical feature, like height, belongs in certain sports or positions. It takes just one example, like Usain Bolt, reigning title holder as the world's fastest human, who stands above six-feet-five-inches, to show there are certainly at best weak connections between a feature like height and ability like sprinting.

Noelle's comments also point to the second feature of how natural ability re-enshrines racial hierarchies. Rowing is a sport with two positions, coxswain and rower. In contrast, track has multiple events, each with its own connection between race and body. The slotting of people in different events to highlight physical skills also furthers the public's understanding that certain corporeal feats are connected to race. Participants of all sports said sprinters and jumpers were more likely to be Black, whereas mid and long-distance runners were more likely to be White.

Several White long distance runners began in the sprinting events but shifted to longer

distances over time. Seamus had one such history in the sport. He began running sprints and he was better than most kids at his school. But at meets, “I’d get my ass kicked” he recalled. One of his mentors intervened and said to him: “‘You’re not a sprinter. You’re not what you think you are. You’re not Usain Bolt.’ So that was that. That was the transition...and I guess all the sprinters were Black and I was White, and all the distance runners were White. So that was identifying where should I be as a runner. I definitely used that I was skinny and White and short” (Seamus, Interview One). Seamus’s story reflects the forces that positioned him as a distance runner. He evaluated his initial performance against competitors, attributing his failure to his body, race, and sport. Then, his mentor, someone with a long history of success in the sport, examined Seamus’s body, and based on his race and physical features said he needed to do a different event. After assessing his body, the team’s racial composition and mentor’s advice, Seamus switched events.

The rigid characterizations between body and race deny the fluidity of racial categories. There are just as many differences within a given category of race, say “Black” as there are across racial categories, say Black vs. White (Omi & Winnat, 2014; Skiba, 2012). Vera and Josephine, for instance, physically look very similar. They both stand at around six feet tall, are very slender and possess long arms and limbs. Vera is half White and half Haitian and grew up in Germany. Josephine is Black and grew up in a wealthy, predominantly White American suburb. Vera became a jumper and Josephine became a long-distance runner. Vera admitted her coaches and competitors contributed to why she became a jumper.

Some coaches thought, ‘Oh she has Black in her so maybe she can be fast,’ because they know that some Black people with a certain body type are really good. I do think [race] influences what people think of you. For example, once [at] a meet we were running hurdles and [a race official at the state line] said to me, ‘Oh, I bet you’ll win.’ I was the only Black girl in the race. Or half-Black. And I was thinking, he said that probably because I’m Black. And I didn’t end up winning (Interview One).

Through her experience in track, Vera was racialized as a Black person with innate physical

differences. Coaches used her Blackness to place her in events and cultivate certain talents. Each time she lined up to race, her Blackness was on display, as a marker that she should win. When she loses, her Blackness is not erased, instead, she fails both her race and as an individual.

Josephine escaped racial profiling because she trained with a mostly Black athlete private club and with a Black coach. The coach still did a physical, bodily evaluation, determining she could be a good distance runner. In high school, she joined the school track team. There, White people surrounded her, in classes and in sports. In the majority-White environment, White women had to be sprinters, as there were not enough Black bodies to be slotted into these roles. There Josephine saw how the physical body had all and nothing to do with racialization.

My friend was a sprinter but she was White, and so if they asked, 'What do you do?' Obviously I think my body type gives it away that I'm not a sprinter. But they didn't assume she was a sprinter because she is White. But she is a sprinter. So that's how race got brought up. It wasn't necessarily to me, but it was when I was in the room and there was a comparison happening, because I was Black and she was White. I was a distance runner and she was a sprinter (Interview Two)

Josephine's story represents how the racialization process, using bodies as the differentiators, becomes convoluted when the body does not match the stereotype. Her White friend was "built" like a sprinter, meaning she was shorter and more muscular. Whereas Josephine was a tall, slender, Black woman. Josephine's bodily characteristics and athletic performance were not enough to erase her Blackness and place her within the racial hierarchy as a sprinter.

Alongside reinforcing difference and unequal racial hierarchies within sport, the ideologies of natural ability and hard work perpetuate the gender structure. The primary way this occurs is through gender segregated sports. While Title IX granted women equal access to education, it enshrined separate access for sports (Milner & Braddock II, 2016; Suggs, 2005). The entire chronology of sports from youth, high school, college, the Olympics, and ending with professional leagues all remain gender segregated. This separation is based on the belief that men

are physically superior to women (Milner & Braddock II, 2016; Messner, 2007). Like racial differences, a century of feminist research has revealed that there is as much physical variety within a given gender category, say “male” as across the male and female categories. Also, like race, gender inequality is a social relationship. Male superiority is enshrined by pointing to female inferiority, or vice a versa. Sports are a primary way to demonstrate female inferiority, through segregation and other means (Eitzen, 2012; Messner, 2010). Rhetoric of women’s athletic inferiority bleeds into other social institutions justifying their exclusion from organizations like labor and politics (Gems, 2000; Messner, 2002; Milner & Braddock II, 2016) Thus, the hope is, by eroding men’s power in sports through integration, the condition of women in other social institutions connected to athletics like politics and labor, will improve.

Athletes in the sports-track-to-college were raised in segregated worlds. Men and women athletes remained apart, under the belief that men had greater natural abilities. The inclusion of women in sports now allows for interactions with one another over their development in athletics. Track and field is a semi-integrated sport, in that many of the teams share practices, equipment, and coaches. Rowing, particularly at private clubs, often also means the teams are somewhat unified, sharing facilities and practice times. These casual interactions also provide “evidence” for both men and women to evaluate and enhance physical differences. George, who was on what he described as a co-ed track and field team, described his team as “close.”

George: We did everything together...Same coach, he coached both teams... It was really cool. Different than most programs in the area...

KH: And you'd have a joint practice?

George: Yeah, I mean obviously we don't work out together, but we'd start practice together. We'd do the same workouts with them (Interview One).

George, who spoke fondly of his female teammates, still enshrined biological notions of gender. He “obviously” could not practice with them because they were women. Though he did not clarify what is obviously different about women, other male track runners did.

Brandon also had what he considered to be a co-ed track team in high school. He explained that the men and women could never train together because:

There's a huge disparity...Especially in high school. In high school the best girls are often younger and they come in much more talented. As they develop physically they get worse. But the best females are definitely better than the bottom 65-70% male population a three-mile cross country race. But as far as the better people there's a massive disparity in ability (Interview One).

Brandon's insights highlight the central issue with using natural ability in combination with competition. He could make affirmative statements about female physiology because the sport itself included comparable, competitive times. Women, in turn, are devalued in the sport, because they cannot run as fast as men. Further, his comments represent the inherent problem with using bodies as the foundation to construct gender; he too had to acknowledge that the top women were beating the top men when they were younger. Thus, the differences in male performance may be greater than the difference between a top female and top male runner.

Much of the research on gender and sport believes that including women, and allowing them to perform physically, may erode the harmful social belief that women are inferior in all aspects of life to men (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Cooky, Messner, Muston, 2015; Milner & Braddock II, 2016). But a lifetime of sports participation did not inoculate women from still believing, and perpetuating, their own inferiority to men. Many of the women I interviewed spoke with gratitude that they were even allowed to play a sport in the first place. Almost a dozen referenced that they felt they were at an *advantage* over men because of Title IX. Through Title IX, they came to believe they were offered a unique opportunity to participate in sports at the college level. As Camilla explained, she thought that as a woman she was privileged over men in sports. "Everyone talks about for rowing, being a girl is an advantage, almost, because of Title IX. And there are more opportunities for women to row in college than men. Which is

unusual compared to other sports” (Interview One). Presenting Title IX as an advantage, disguises the fact that women remain *under*-represented in every part of sports; and reinforces that sports are, and should remain, a male-only activity.

Through sports participation, women accepted their physical inferiority to men. In turn, they became “grateful” to be part of something, in which they knew they could never achieve the same athletic heights as men. Captain America believed that the differences between men and women were fully physical. She attributed her athleticism to her “atypical” female body.

There's more males that have athletic capacity than there are females. I was blessed to have my body size and my build [to] use towards sports. And there's not a lot of girls that are naturally built like that. And I think that's one of the main reasons why there is such a discrepancy in athletics, because of this natural build that most guys are given but not a lot of girls are (Interview One).

Captain America learned to view herself as being exceptionally built compared to other women. She excelled in all types of sports, including, basketball, swimming, and rowing. In trying to make sense of her ability, she attributed it to her physical features that matched a male's. Through sports, she came to understand male bodies as the standard of greatness.

Another way women like Camilla and Captain America learned they were “lucky” to be athletes is through the numerous gender-based “tests” from male peers. Morgan described how a high-school male peer constantly teased her about how her sport must be “easy”—the implication being if a girl can do it, it must not be that hard. So she challenged him to an erg test.

He's like, 'Well I'm going to be beat you. I'm a guy. I'm bigger than you.' And I was like, 'Alright, try me. Let's row 500 meters each and whoever gets the lower split [wins].' And he's like, 'OK, what's your fastest time on this anyway?' And I was like, 'it's this split.' ...And I did mine. And then he got through the first 200 meters and then stopped. And he was like, 'This is too hard.' And I was like, 'Yeah, exactly' (Interview One).

Morgan's story is striking for several reasons, including the positive reinforcement she received by beating a male who challenged her athleticism. But what is most telling is none of the male athletes ever received such a threat to their athletic ability. In contrast, the women athletes

reported many instances of being forced to “prove” their athletic ability and competency.

The belief that sports are ultimately testing physical limits left several women to ponder why they remained inferior to men. There was a somber recognition that women would never be as good as men. Cooper, a White American who competed in multiple world championships, felt conflicted about gender segregation in sports:

In the rowing world, the guys’ times, [are] just a minute faster. And my competitive side is like, 'so what they're a minute faster. Be a minute faster.' But for some reason we can't get it down that low...And it's just like, as long as there are guys there, for some reason we can't be the fastest. It's separated so it's OK. And that's just the way it is. They are better than us and they deserve it if they really are. Because we train our butts off. So if they're able to beat us we know they're working hard too (Cooper, Interview One).

Cooper, like other top female athletes, felt grateful for the opportunity to be part of, and compete for, national championships, world championships, and Olympic medals. The social markers of membership on the best team in the nation, in the most competitive sports division and conference, and even receiving an athletic scholarship, were not enough to free women from the burden of demonstrating their right to athletic participation.

Through a lifetime sports both men and women learned to individualize social problems, seeing that either ability or effort are required to succeed. In an egalitarian society, free from racism, sexism, and exploitation, the notion of promoting individuals with the best work ethic or ability may be a tolerable social sorting mechanism. But in the U.S. these ideologies disguise how certain groups make it to higher education thereby reinforcing racial and gender inequality.

These ideologies do not disappear on the doorstep of higher education. Instead, as future chapters uncover, high-level sports participation enhances the ideologies of hard work and natural ability. Once in college, these ideologies disguise how the institutions of school and sport conflict, making it nearly impossible for students from disenfranchised backgrounds to make it through the system. Thus, athletes will learn to blame themselves for an inadequate education.



## **Conclusion: Sport Stars Are Reproduced**

Chapters 3-5 introduced the sports-track-to-college pipeline. This is an exceptional route to college in which individuals from dominant families, communities, or social positions are offered a pathway to elite colleges that skirt educational standards. These chapters demonstrated that there are three features of the pipeline that can restrict individuals: Community Access, Social Access and Ideology. Through this process, individuals on the sports-track-to-college learn a particular curriculum that elevates the oppositional, yet complementary, ideologies of natural ability and hard work. The stories presented here also showcased that there is variety in how individuals make it into, and succeed through, the sports-track-to-college. The power of this pipeline comes in the variety; there is no one way to successfully make it to an elite university through athletic participation. But at the same time, individuals need at least a few of the features to have a chance at making it. In this way, the sports-track-to-college does not disrupt social inequality, but rather maintains race and gender as those that reproduce economic and cultural inequality simultaneously (Fraser, 1997). In the journey to college athletics, White, middle-class, male bodies are valued and offered more economic, educational, and social opportunities than other groups. Finally, by revealing structural hurdles in the higher education pipeline, it shows what should be removed to create broader access to both schools and sports.

Throughout the first chapters, C.M. and Chantae's narratives illustrate the variety, yet consistency, within the pipeline. Both entered the pipeline at an early age, prompted by their social relationships that they could use sports to get into college. But their race and class positions meant that C.M. and Chantae's journeys through the pipeline, and later into college, varied greatly. C.M. and Chantae's stories further diverge once they arrive on campus.

## PART III: BLURRED BOUNDS: NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL CONFLICT WITHIN COLLEGE SPORT

### Chapter 6: Institutional Conflict: Competing Requirements, Availability & Legibility

#### Introduction

The sports-track-to-college is a pipeline that elevates athletic ability in the University admission process. Potential college athletes need access to community resources, social connections, and knowledge of how this pipeline works to become a college athlete. Part II uncovered how this pipeline maintains inequality by offering an alternative route to college for an already educationally advantaged, well-connected, materially resourced groups.

Part III examines the bureaucracy and social relationships that sustain the institutions of school and sport within higher education. College athletes face the same institutional regulations and relationships as the student body. But they must also navigate an added layer of sport governance. Here, I show how these two institutional entities govern three central areas of student life. Along each area school and sport come into conflict. In doing so, I demonstrate that the conflicts student athletes face are more expansive than explained by economic motive.

*Table 6.1. Friction Points Between Academia and Athletics*

Area	Academia	Athletics
Requirements	Independence	Dependence
Availability	Flexible	Inflexible
Legibility	Disembodied	Embodied

First, *Requirements*, or what a student must become to be successful in that institution. Requirements generate implicit expectations on the student and athlete that entail how and with whom they should complete their work, either school or sport related. Academia, I will explain, expects students to act independently whereas athletics requires athletes to act dependently. The second feature is *Availability*, or how the institution expects students to allocate their time. Academia expects students to be flexible with their time commitments and available to adjust

their schedule to accommodate the university workload. Athletics expects and creates inflexible schedules for athletes in which they have little to no movement in their schedules. Finally, *Legibility*, or how the institution values and evaluates the subject. Academia expects a disembodied subject in which students are valued and evaluated based on their mental contributions. Athletics values and evaluates an embodied subject in which athletes are valued and evaluated based on their physical contributions. Each area of higher education, requirements, availability, and legibility, is central to student life. This chapter examines how the bureaucracies structure students experiences along these three areas and how social actors within sport and school produce incompatible realities for student athletes.

### **Literature Review**

Theorists in sociology, education, and economics trace how higher education's bureaucratic intricacies emerge from its interconnected role in society. Universities exist in a rich interconnected historical context with ties to government entities at the state and federal level, community partnerships, national-level knowledge organizations, and private businesses (Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum, 2008). These scholars uncover how the primary mission of large public universities is not education, but the creation of new knowledge through robust research agendas and training future scholars in the field (Scott & Kirst, 2015; Sperber, 2000).

Neil Smelser's (2013) concept of "Accretion" influenced how I itemize the incompatibilities in the student athlete experience in higher education. Smelser (2013) describes higher education as susceptible to "structural accretion"; as time progresses the University takes on an increasing number of new functions, organizations, bureaucracies and policies and procedures without removing defunct or outdated ones (Smelser, 2013; Stevens & Gebre-Medhin, 2016). While the organizational accounts document the emergence and staying power of

bureaucracies, they seldom examine how students learn to navigate or survive their higher educational experience (Stevens et al, 2008).

A notable exception are researchers who study how university sponsored party cultures that disguise a watered-down college curriculum (Sperber, 2000), or are cultivated by colleges to reproduce class status (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). In the context of these arguments, student athletes are portrayed as advancing debauchery through their entertainment-based athletic performance (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Giroux & Giroux, 2012; Sperber, 2000). Sports are only seen as extracurricular activities with capitalist ties that sit outside the academic track.

Most scholarly literature focuses explicitly on the economics of college sport. This literature assumes the incompatibility of school and sport which emerges from the money attached to men's football and basketball. Thirty years of research makes the case that athletic departments use men's basketball and football to earn money for their schools, creating the poor academic performance of these athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Comeaux & Harrison, 2010; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). The researchers assert that universities intentionally exploit athletes at the cost of academics with examples like creating high-profit contests during exam season (March Madness), allowing one-year renewable athletic scholarships (that may not be renewed due to athletic performance), and/or not enforcing a twenty-hour per week practice rule (Sperber, 2000; Schulman & Bowen, 2001; Smith, 2011). In a study on Division I college men's basketball team during the late 1980s, Adler and Adler (1991) outlined the influence of sport and school collaboration around lucrative economic activities showing the direct and damaging effect of such economic collaboration. They found that despite the student entering with a desire to do well academically, many of their educational goals degraded over time due to athletic demands. Studies of this sort create an atmosphere that the money circulating within college sport is the

singular problem that stymies educational performance. The logic follows that by limiting the flow of money, student athletes will have greater educational opportunity and increased performance. While the research and work on economics is a significant part of the story, I dispute its singular importance to the solution because it masks the underlying complexity of gender, race, and power in college sport dynamics.

The student athlete experience shows how accretion limits the educational possibilities by creating robust and contradictory regulation schemes. Student athletes are like other student groups who have time commitments to responsibilities like employment or parenthood. But student athletes differ because they are also accountable to a university-sponsored multilayered bureaucracy—NCAA athletics—that is unique in its invasive and comprehensive regulatory power, and, as this chapter demonstrates, conflicts at every layer with their higher education.

To highlight how student athletes experience the institutional conflict present within college sport, I incorporate data from student athletes' interviews, time diaries, practice schedules, syllabi, transcripts, and degree progress reports. I also draw on interviews with academic support staff including four academic advisors and sixteen tutors. Finally, I include institutional data from college sport bureaucracies' reports and policies. With this data, I reveal a complicated web of university requirements, policies, and procedures that creates the incompatible reality of the college athlete. Rather than acknowledging or minimizing the conflict, the college sport bureaucracies individualize the problems and expect college athletes to solve the contradictory expectations. In this way, student athletes are immediately disadvantaged by the very institutions that offered them an advantaged route to higher education.

### **Governing Bodies and Social Actors**

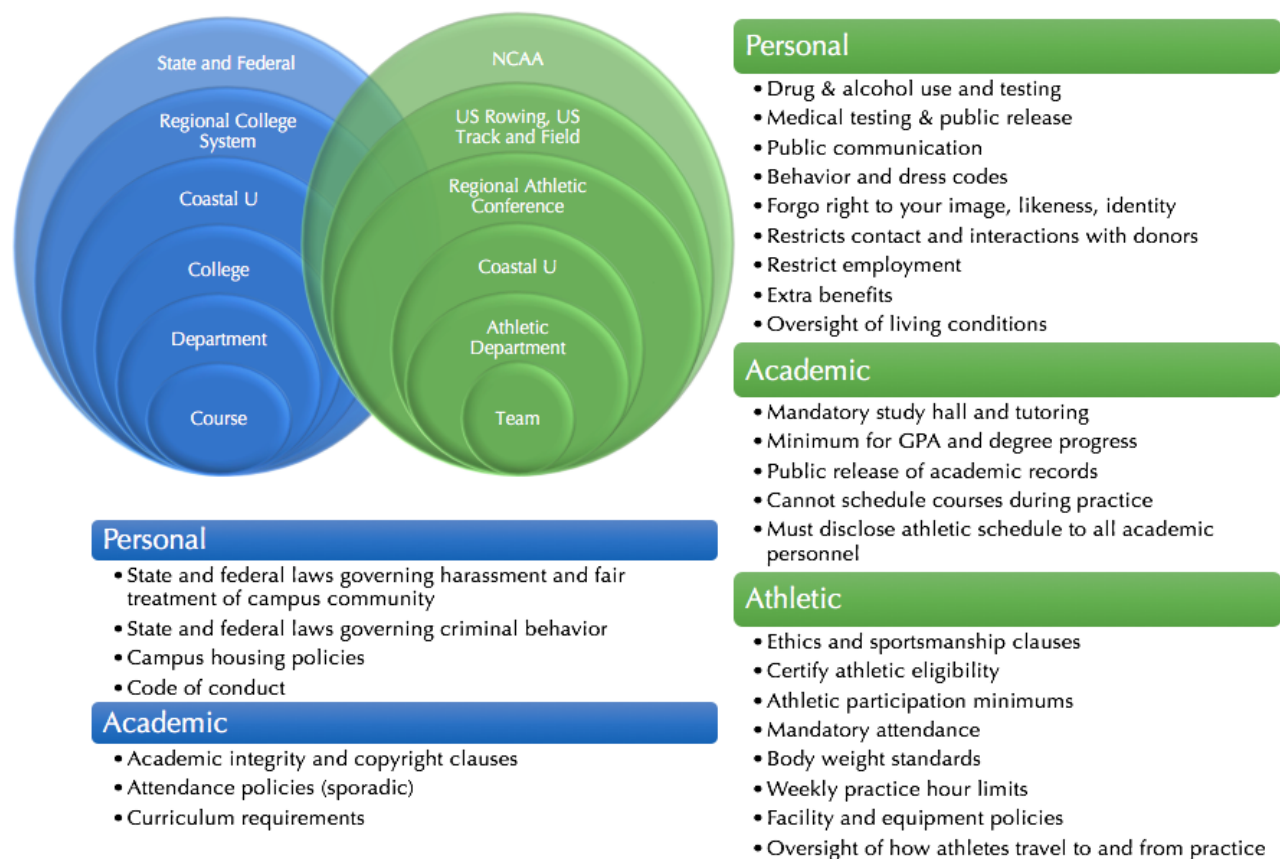
For the purposes of this discussion, “college sport” is seen as consisting of two broad

institutions: “school” or the higher education academic components and “sport” or the higher education athletic components. Institutions are created through layers of governance (bureaucracies) and social actors (individuals) who enforce the rules, regulations, and operating principles of the bureaucracies (Weedon, 1987; Wharton, 2005). Based on my observations between 2015 and 2016, student athletes navigated upwards of 12 bureaucracies at any given time. Within each bureaucratic layer are multiple social actors that can institute even more regulations, creating a multiplier effect. On the academic side, all students face the regulatory oversight from administrators, academic staff, professors, graduate student instructors, and classmates, or at least five social relationships. On the athletic side, athletes face an additional four social relationships: administrators, athletic academic support staff, coaches, and teammates. College athletes must wade through these layers of governance and social relationships with minimal instruction or guidance. Within these regulatory schemes, deep conflict arises in the demands placed upon student athletes as they navigate their responsibilities in higher education. Before exploring the conflict between athletic and academic agencies and social actors, I review how these agencies are structured and who the main social agents are within them.

The layers of governance present within higher education generally govern two areas of student life: personal and academic conduct. The University-wide academic integrity clause, for instance, regulates academic conduct by setting a uniform benchmark across all departments and colleges for how a given instructor should define and adjudicate a plagiarism case. College or department rules can clarify their own guidelines of academic integrity. The College of Chemistry may allow for group-submitted lab assignments that are not considered plagiarism whereas the English Department may have a policy that disallows any group work. Then, within a given course in a department, the instructor can further clarify the concept of academic

integrity. Some syllabi and course policies I examined allowed students to collaborate on exams whereas another defined this as plagiarism. It is here that the concept of accretion is evident—how layers of governance are added within large public institutions and rarely removed. The layers of governance allow any agency or social actor to define a rule that may or may not be consistent with all other rules. The multiplication effect ensues as one rule at the college level because interpreted differently, modified, and added to depending on the course. If a student has four courses, they could have four different academic integrity policies to follow.

Figure 6.1. Academic and Athletic Bureaucracies and Rules Governing Student Athletes



Another marker of accretion is the complex and expansive curriculum offered within the University. Over time, Smelser (2013) notes, as universities grow they move horizontally, incorporating newer disciplines and subspecialties as the field of knowledge becomes increasingly siloed and complex. This is one of the greatest shifts from K-12 education as

students choose their educational trajectory. Without a centralized, imposed curriculum, students are granted relative autonomy to select their own educational path through college.

In an optimal setting, great autonomy allows students to create a curriculum that matches their interests and future goals. Coastal U hosts 170 academic departments across 14 colleges. The largest and most common college for undergraduate majors is the College of Letters and Science (CLS).<sup>26</sup> In this individualistic environment, the University distances students from rules and operations of the school. As CLS stipulates, the rules and requirements of the University are designed to have minimal impact or interaction with the student. It is only in extreme instances of student distress, such as academic probation, that a student should even need to encounter academic rules.

College athletes face the same regulations and relationships as the student body, but they must also negotiate an added layer of college sport governance. The bureaucracy surrounding sports is equally accretive. Intercollegiate athletics began as small, regional contests that were student run, and has now expanded into a complex international bureaucratic entity that regulates nearly every component of the athletic experience. The difference in the function of these accretive institutions is how they regulate the participants. Academia expects students to function independently, have flexible schedules, and primarily evaluates their intellectual contributions while the athletic bureaucracies surrounding sports create dependent athletes, who are inflexible, and evaluated on physical contribution. Participants described an all-consuming governing body that touched every aspect of their lives. The added governing bodies for student athletes at minimum include: International level, or the global governing bodies, teams or regulations for Olympic and World competition; National level, or the NCAA; Conference level or the regional athletic conference; University-specific athletic requirements; Athletic Department specific

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<sup>26</sup> Forty-five out of 47 participants began in CLS. One was admitted into the College of Business during the study.



requirements, and team-specific rules and requirements.

Some of what is described in this chapter is likely unique to large, public universities. To accommodate the growing population of students within higher education, public universities like Coastal U have adopted a style of instruction based on large lectures with minimal interaction between students and faculty (Smelser, 2013; Sperber, 2000). Coastal U hosts 27,000 undergraduate students and just over 1,500 faculty, teaching courses with hundreds of students enrolled. As higher education continues to expand, institutions may become increasingly large, decentralized, and in turn, bureaucratic. Understanding how one student group is impacted by the increasing bureaucratization of universities may be illustrative and applicable to students, parents, and researchers interested in the quality of education.

With this backdrop I propose that all bureaucracies receive their enforcement power from the social actors within them. Coastal U's nearly 100 full time coaches have a special position in the lives of 900 student athletes as the enforcer of those rules. Beyond just rules enforcement coaches and teammates compose a rich social network for student athletes in every aspect of their life—personal, academic, and athletic. Contrast this with the academic relationships that encourage independence from both faculty and fellow students. Athletic relationships require a dependence from participants to exert control. Athletes have little or no choice but to become part of the team-and-coach community group. Unlike a class where a student could switch if one does not like the teaching style or requirements of a course, athletes cannot typically switch from one sport or team to another. The forthcoming sections uncover how the conflict along the dimensions of *Requirements*, *Availability*, and *Legibility*, also leave athletes with a narrow set of educational options.

## **Sources of Conflict**

The shift to a more autonomous educational path in higher education, combined with the organizational complexity, creates challenges for any college student. The pressure to select a major, to adapt to a new learning environment, and navigate a large bureaucracy can seem nearly impossible under the time constraints provided (typically a few months). Student athletes have an even more constrained educational experience in that they enter higher education having to adjust to two large bureaucratic entities: school and sport. A student who joins another campus affiliation like a school newspaper, club, or Greek System, may also face additional bureaucracies and social relationships. But a student athlete is drawn into a difficult and inconsistent system of rules and obligations that have a net negative effect on their ability to meet the minimum criteria of both organizations. Confounding the challenge for athletes is the fact that the conflict they face is hidden and individualized. Ultimately it is left up to the athlete to solve the institutional conflict through individual practices like time management.

In reviewing the sources of conflict, I avoid a moral valuation. Each model has its merits and benefits for the participants within the institution. Instead, this section demonstrates that because school and sport function dichotomously student athletes must constantly readjust and adapt to differing conditions. It is here that the conflict arises and student athletes struggle to achieve the NCAA's mandate to be at once top level students and top level athletes.

### **Requirements: Independence vs. Dependence**

The first major difference between academia and sport are the requirements levied on participants. As I described earlier, requirements are qualities a student must adopt to become successful in that institution. A large public university like Coastal U requires students to act independently by choosing a major (either before or during college), meet the degree

requirements of that major, then follow the academic and personal policies of the institution. If a student fails to do any of the above they will be subject to dismissal from the institution. In contrast, athletics expects athletes to depend upon the bureaucracy and social actors within it to determine all areas of the athletes' lives. The independence offered by academia is overshadowed by the dependent expectations within athletics. Because student athletes are offered autonomy in completing their academic work, but not their athletic work, school is often relegated to second place. This pattern is established at the beginning with the choice of major.

Selecting a major remains a highly individualistic process. Even with the help of department and college advisors, Coastal U reminds students every step of the way that it is their responsibility to find, pursue, and navigate a course of study. Like other large, public institutions, the size of Coastal U means not all students can pursue their desired major. Majors can require GPA minimums, prerequisite courses, and written essays and letters of recommendation, all of which trim the potential student pool.<sup>27</sup>

Within the context of inconsistent realities, Coastal U athletes gravitated towards “create your own” majors such as American Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the larger student body gravitated towards a wider range of majors. The top majors for general students drew from STEM disciplines and the top major was Economics. The distribution of students across majors was also broader. The top three majors only accounted for 15% of the student body, whereas the top majors for athletes encompassed 30.6% of the athlete population. The individual choice of student athletes into majors with few rigorous entry requirements reflects the conflict between school and sport bureaucracies and social actors. The data implies

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<sup>27</sup> Appendix J reviews the academic requirements for Coastal U and outlines the rules for high demand majors.

<sup>28</sup> Findings on major comparison emerged from publically available reports (2008-2015) produced bi-annually by the SAASC. Reports showed the top-ten majors for athletes and all undergraduates. Over this period, American Studies remained the top major for student athletes, ranging from 9.3% to 20.4% of the athlete population. The popular STEM majors for the undergraduate population included: Computer Science, Economics, Environmental Science, and Biology. The top major was Economics which encompassed 2.9% to 9.6% of the student body.

that the term “choice” may mean something different for both groups and should indicate that not all choices are as free as others.

The requirements within majors can also be designed to limit the number of students. Participants refer to these as “weeder courses” that included high-stakes assessments like imposed curved exams. Weeder courses can favor students who come in as freshmen with prior knowledge in a course. If a student does not have prior knowledge, they are expected to put in more time to catch up with their classmates, something which is in short supply for athletes. Taylor, a White woman on the track team, came into Coastal U interested in economics. It was one of her favorite classes in high school. She signed up for the introductory course in the fall of her freshman year and thought with her background in the subject she would do well. At the time, she did not know this introductory course was meant to dissuade potential students interested in the department to minimize enrollment numbers.

[It’s] one of those weeder classes where there's like a million people in it... Seeing everyone [the non-athletes], so intense, in all my classes. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm in this athlete category, of you don't have enough time to dedicate to this major or that class (Interview Two).

Taylor later explained that Coastal U is one of those schools where “no one helps you.” She also believed it was her own fault for not asking the proper questions to determine if she should even take Econ 1. She began to see herself as someone separate from and less than her non-athlete peers. Study participants referred to the student body as, “NARP” or Non-Athlete-Regular-Person. Twenty-three participants, like Taylor, expressed that they were not on an equal playing field with NARPs. A little over half of the study participants confessed that they felt inadequate academically compared to NARPs in large part because of the exceptional admissions process.<sup>29</sup> They were aware that they did not have the same academic background or preparation

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<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 4 for an overview of the exceptional admission process for student athletes at Coastal U.

Taylor's story reflects how the campus expects students to be independent learners. Except for a handful of lab-intensive majors such as Architecture, Art, and Engineering, much of a student's academic workload is expected to occur outside the classroom. The implicit expectation (and sometimes explicitly stated in syllabi) is that students will work independently and seek out assistance only if needed. While technology like I-clickers makes it easier for large lecture halls to track attendance than in the past, no syllabi used attendance as a major grading criterion. Instructors recommended attendance, but it was not always required. Students could still pass a course without attending most of the lectures. In contrast, attending all athletic sessions is mandatory. Faced with two options—attending an independent, optional activity or attending a mandatory activity—the reasonable choice would be to prioritize sport.

Students are expected to understand all the layers of bureaucracy as well. The College offers a "Statement of Student Responsibility" that reminds students that: "you have the freedom to make independent decisions about your academic career. With this freedom comes the need to be responsible not only about your academics, but also about the administrative duties you need to complete in order to graduate (CLS, 2017).<sup>30</sup> The statement links to the relevant policies for students. Even if a student reads and digests every policy this assumes the rules are stagnant. At least twice during the study, major changes occurred that were not immediately communicated.

The most important campus policy that dictates the students' academic motivation and curriculum choice are GPA minimums. To remain on campus, students must maintain a certain GPA.<sup>31</sup> The College offers five explanations for why a student falls into academic difficulty: 1)

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<sup>30</sup> The first change required students to finish their R&C requirement by the end of their second year. The college communicated this change by blocking students' registration if they had yet to complete this requirement in the new timeline. The second change occurred mid-semester. The College created a new policy that if a student takes all their classes pass/no pass, they will be placed on academic probation, even if they pass all their classes. The policy roll out conflicted with the brief window allotted to students to change their course grading option.

<sup>31</sup> A student is placed on probation if their cumulative GPA drops below a 2.0 or if any given term GPA drops below 1.5. Students have one semester to raise GPA (depending on which slid) or they will be subject to dismissal.

Lack of motivation, 2) Adjustment to college life, 3) Ineffective study skills, 4) Unclear directions/goals, and 5) Personal issues (CLS, 2017). These five reasons disguise the campus's bureaucratic hurdles and minimize how larger social forces impact the school system. By individualizing performance, the University removes its own culpability or responsibility for why a student would go on probation and is the strongest indicator of the Independence ideology promulgated by the university.

Any entering Coastal U students must adhere to the expectations laid out above. The underlying message from the structure of the institution enforced by social actors including professors, graduate students, and advisors is that students must function independently in their path towards their degree. For a student athlete though, they are accountable to another set of institutional regulations and actors that offer a different and conflicting message: college athletes must be *dependent* on sport to be successful. The institution of sport cultivates a sense of dependence in at least three areas: 1) degree progress, 2) material assets like financial aid, housing, health insurance, and jobs 3) learning and development, and 4) community.

The first area of dependence is on degree progress. Undergraduates have the freedom to enroll in school part-time, try out various majors during their time in college, or take more than five years to complete their degree. Athletes, by comparison, must adhere to the NCAA's definitions of academic progress which include selecting and committing to a major as soon as their sophomore year.<sup>32</sup> While the NCAA states that requirements for degree progress are to elicit greater academic performance for college athletes, their own regulations undermine this objective.<sup>33</sup> A student who has a full time job can go to part time school status to successfully

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<sup>32</sup> A detailed history and explanation of the NCAA's academic regulations can be found in Appendix K.

<sup>33</sup> Athletic-academic advisors lamented how the NCAA unit minimums lead to burn-and-bust cycles of academic effort. The NCAA's low threshold for eligibility means a student only needs to pass six units in the fall to be eligible in the Spring. For a fall sport athlete like a cross country runner, they can fail half their course load and still be able to run track in the spring. But, come Spring semester, the athlete will need to enroll in and pass all 18 units if they want to be eligible for the coming fall semester. In

juggle two demanding schedules. But athletes, who arguably also have full time jobs for the University, cannot go to part-time status. This regulation forces them to prioritize their version of full time employment through sports while also being full time students.

*Table 6.2. NCAA Academic Eligibility Requirements by Year*

Year	Enrolled units*	Cumulative GPA	Units Earned Fall	Units Earned Fall and Spring	Degree Progress
First	13	None	6	18	Earn 24 units before the start of 2 <sup>nd</sup> year
Second	13	1.80	6	18	Declare major or file an “intent to declare” major form with NCAA
Third	13	1.90	6	18	Complete 40% of degree
Fourth	13	2.0	6	18	Complete 60% of degree
Fifth	13	2.0	6	18	Complete 80% of degree

*\*Full time enrollment for the Coastal U’s largest college is 13 units per semester*

The second way college sport requires athletes to depend on the athletic bureaucracies is through athletic aid. In Olympic sports like rowing and track the NCAA allows schools to offer athletic scholarships in “partial” increments that could be as little as \$400 a semester to cover the cost of books or up to covering the full cost of attendance. Coastal U allocates an amount of scholarship money to each team and allows the coach to divvy out the funds as they see fit. In this way, the policy elevates the coach as the main decision-maker in renewing or continuing scholarships. During the study, Coastal U scholarships were still granted on a one-year basis.<sup>34</sup> This meant coaches renewed athletes’ scholarship agreements at the end of each school year. Coaches were also granted the authority to take away a scholarship if a student violated any department, campus, or NCAA rule, including academic probation.

Renewable scholarships allowed athletes to negotiate greater aid as they went through the program. Malcolm and Anthony, for instance, qualified for nationals their first years on the team. This allowed Malcolm to earn a “full ride” and Anthony to earn a “half ride” or have his tuition covered. Coastal U, like many other public universities, faced large tuition increases to make up

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these ways, the NCAA requires college athletes to follow and depend on the athletic standards of degree progress that allow for the elevation of sport at certain points in the year.

<sup>34</sup> Appendix K reviews the NCAA’s recent policy changes and Coastal U’s policies on athletic aid.

for reduced state funding in recent years. The rising costs of attending college were felt by participants in the study, even for those from middle class backgrounds. The lack of transparency around how athletic resources are allotted leaves those who have a coveted scholarship, like Malcolm and Anthony, fearful and pressured to do what they can to keep their financial gains. Malcolm and Anthony expressed a deep sense of obligation to be the top athletes on their team, knowing that many of their fellow teammates were without athletic aid.

Scholarships were just one source of material dependence athletes faced. Sports cultivated structural dependence by providing housing and employment. As incoming freshmen, Coastal U pairs teammates with one another in the campus housing. As Erwin explains, the men's crew team provides off campus housing for students on scholarship to lessen the financial burden and acclimate to the athletic lifestyle. "Part of my scholarship agreement was to move straight into one of the rowing houses. That was pretty cool. I think if I would have lived in the dorms, I would have been sucked into other activities. Living in the rowing house surrounded me with all the rowers and [their habits]" (Erwin, Interview One). In this instance, Erwin embraces his lack of choice. Though he was forced to live with teammates, he found that being surrounded by like-minded athletes was a benefit to his transition into college.

The third major area of dependence cultivation is learning and development. In contrast to the educational wing of higher education where most learning occurs independently, much athletic work happens under institutional supervision. Practices are mandatory thus athletes can be monitored and encouraged during their workouts to finish the task at their fullest capability. Participants described this as one of the greatest benefits to college sport. They could improve their athletic ability through constant interaction with their teammates and coaches. As Sanya explained, coaches provide more than a task to complete. Athletes must depend on their coach to



create a training regime that will put athletes in the optimal spot to win on race day.

You have to be able to step up on the [race start] and be like, 'I trust everything that I've done. I've done everything that I can to be the best athlete that I can be right now.' And that's in part because I trust what my coaches have prescribed me. So, if there's any mistrust, it's so easy for your mental subconscious to be like, 'Well you haven't done everything you're supposed to be doing so that's why you're not winning.' You're right, I shouldn't win. Those little nuances that plague you (Sanya, Interview Two).

Athletes learn to trust the coaches because of their noticeable athletic improvement under coaching supervision, leading to consistent biasing towards the coaches' instruction instead of functioning as an autonomous athlete making their own decisions and choices. Though team building and working for a larger collaborative goal has benefits, for many athletes it shifts their priorities away from the classroom.

The final cultivation of dependence is the athlete joining the community of similar athletes. Athletes not only learn from and become dependent on their coach, but they also learn from and become dependent on their teammates. Even in non-team scoring sports like track, athletes depend upon their teammates to survive their athletic commitments. Brittany outlined how her jumps (Olympic track triple and long jump) squad provides one another with coaching, physical therapy, and friendly competition. In doing repetitive training workouts, she would often see her teammates in just as much pain as she was and think to herself, "there's no way if they can do it that I can't. It really makes a difference" (Interview two). In turn, these acts ensure the group improves collectively.

An athlete's relationship with her teammates extended beyond practice. The athletic community is an all-encompassing socialization experience in which teammates often live and eat together, and attend practice and classes together. As an incoming freshman international student, Will was placed in a rowing house off campus which included teammates of all ages and college level. Though he had no room and slept on an old couch in a common area the first week

he arrived, he appreciated his teammates' mentorship.

With rowing. You don't have an off-season during the year. It's pretty full-on, the coaches, you know, they're pretty tough. So, it's very demanding, and when you live with everyone who's rowing, you have the same goal. It's a lot of what you talk about. You eat together. Its full-on, it really is (Interview Two).

As Will stated, the social commitment amongst teammates is not limited to training. Once off the water or track, teammates will debrief with one another how a particular training session went, what the coaches said or did not say during practice, how a teammate did or did not do during a test or race, or simply vent about how hungry, tired, or anxious they are. Steve described the relationship with his teammates starting like a "shotgun marriage" (Steve, Interview Two). The team may be forced together. And that could turn into a negative, oppressive situation. Or, "you got to sort it out and be good friends" because "you're spending so much time together" (Steve, Interview Two). Steve refers to another theme that resonated through the study, or how athletes learned to "sort out" their differences with one another and collaborate. This is one of the admirable traits of team building that occurs in athletic spaces but it not as prevalent in academia. After spending three hours training on the water at dawn, Steve and his teammates leave this dependent environment and travel to class where they will then be expected to transition into independent actors. The large style lecture classes are non-conducive to the long-lasting relationships and opportunities to work through personal differences, collaborate, and learn from one another, that sports evoke.

There is also a downside to these "shotgun" marriages that emerge through sports. As Steve described in the previous paragraph, part of "sorting it out" meant establishing social norms of behavior for the community. Team leaders worked with the coaching staff to develop and enforce behaviors to reach the high athletic goals. Athletes referred to this as "buying into" a team culture. As Noelle explained, the first phase of buying in, consisted of elevating your sports

commitment above all else. “Most people, our lives are rowing, and maybe that's a good thing, maybe that's a bad thing. But you have to buy into that. Otherwise, you won't have a good experience” (Noelle, Interview Two). Athletes demonstrated that they elevated their sports above school by attending all practices, limiting their academic workload, taking “athlete” classes with their teammates, and obeying all instructions from coaches and upperclassmen. Athletes closely observed their teammates in each workout session, keying in on signs that their teammates put in as much “work” or pushed their physical limits as much as their colleagues. Here, the embedded contradiction in the two organizational models emerges: The Student, a singular and self-motivated decision maker focused on self-interest. The Athlete, a compromising team player with a unified and agreed outcome to succeed at sport at all costs. It's here the strongest contradiction between two models emerges. Teammates have no intention of hurting one another unless the malicious effort increases the positive outcome for the team. But in a curved class, students could choose not to work with one another as their individual grade depends on others performing worse than them.

Athletes form a strong athletic community where participants depend on one another for their achievement because athletes are evaluated collectively. Athletes depend on one another for athletic success.<sup>35</sup> What is notable is the pressure that athletes feel from one another to maintain higher standards of athletic success; a similar form of dependence does not exist on the academic side of campus. Students may enter into group projects throughout their academic career, but ultimately their success is up to their choices and practices as an academics. Camilla felt ashamed her freshmen year when the team failed to earn a conference title because of the

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<sup>35</sup> The men's rowing program has won 17 team and 43 boat national championships, whereas the women's crew has won four team and nine boat national championships. Collectively they have also won dozens of conference team and boat championships. Men's track has won one team championship, three relay and 26 individual titles. Women's track has won ten individual titles. Cross country has yet to have an individual or team title at the national level

program's legacy. "We have to meet expectations from the past because, our freshmen year, we didn't win [Conference], and that was an awful feeling also, just because we hadn't lost [Conference] in a long time. There's something about the legacy" (Interview Two). Athletes must depend both upon their current teammates' athletic performance and the reputation and expectations set forth by previous generations.

Conflict between academic independence and athletic dependence arises for college athletes as they make their way through higher education. College athletes are presented officially and socially with opposing messages through the formal institution of sport and school and it is left up to them to adjudicate the conflict. Faced with the conflict, the college athlete must choose the dependent model offered by sport (and team). Based on the interviews and research, I believe that they chose the offer that provides an immediate structure and community. As Iceman explains, the immediacy of athletics, allowed him to delay his academic obligations and drift away from school.

The thing is, nobody forces you to be a student, but if you've agreed to be an athlete, somebody is going to force you to be an athlete. You have to go to practice at this time, you can't just be like, 'Ah I'm not going to go today.' I mean you have to be constantly keeping up with the level your teammates and your coaches are setting. You choose to do the school part, choose to do the student part, the athlete part you have to do. And it's hard to do both, and it's easy to just choose one. It's easy to just choose the athlete part, and not do the school part (Interview Two).

As Iceman referenced, there are rules, social commitments, and policies that force athletes to stay engaged in their sport. In contrast, the schooling environment expects students to function independently, offering minimal support and structure for students to complete their curriculum. Each model has its own merits. But, student athletes are expected to be two oppositional subjects: independent students and dependent athletes. And, they have to move between these two subject positions multiple times per day. According to Iceman, this can be a difficult situation to resolve, and the dependent nature of sports can make it easier to simply "choose the

athlete part.”

### **Availability: Flexible vs. Inflexible**

Academia assumes, as independent actors, students have maximum flexibility in their scheduling. The binary is best thought of as free time and academic time. The independent academic model suggests that it is up to students to design their own course schedule, find time to learn the material, and seek out assistance in office hours. The campus assists students to maximize their flexibility with a large and varied set of course offerings that require minimal in-person time commitments. In contrast, athletic institutions offered no flexibility to athletes and instead managed their time and availability. The nature of an independent and flexible academia contrasting with a dependent inflexible sport forces student athletes to prioritize their athletic responsibilities over their academic endeavors.

Academia offers a much greater degree of flexibility to students. The most notable area is in course selection. Students can select from over 7,000 courses across 170 departments offered at all hours of the day. Classes are also designed with a larger out-of-school workload. This setup allows students to select the days, times, and periods in which they will engage with the academic work. The independence model assumes the students will build their schedule and manage their time to make degree progress. On its own, this is a self-consistent system and workable for any top level high school graduate entering the program. With only around 12 hours per week locked into class time, undergraduate students can keep the rest of their schedule open to fit in meetings that accommodate the busy lives of faculty and graduate students.

This is not the case for student athletes. The NCAA regulates student athletes' time by mandating a 20-hour athletic participation requirement. Known colloquially as the “20 hour” rule, Article 17 limits the time coaches can require athletes to train for their sport during the

season.<sup>36</sup> Athletes cannot practice more than four hours per day or 20 hours per week. The NCAA differentiates between countable activities that contribute to the hours limit and non-countable activities excluded from the weekly hour allotment.

*Table 6.3. Breakdown of NCAA Time Regulations*

Countable hours, towards 20-hour maximum	Non-Countable hours, excluded from 20-hour max
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Any required:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Athletic practice</li> <li>● Team meeting</li> <li>● Weight training</li> <li>● Site visit</li> <li>● Watching film</li> <li>● Post-competition discussion</li> <li>● Athletic activities run by a teammate</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Any optional training session with coach providing instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NCAA compliance meetings</li> <li>● Drug testing</li> <li>● Student initiated meetings with coaches</li> <li>● Athletic training not required by a coach</li> <li>● Any travel to and from practice or competition</li> <li>● Mandatory medical rehabilitations</li> <li>● Mandatory academic meetings</li> <li>● Training table</li> <li>● Any fundraising activities or public relations/promotional activities or team banquets</li> <li>● Mandatory practice during holidays or vacations</li> </ul>

Coaches can mandate athletes attend a variety of activities, beyond 20 hours of physical conditioning, such as: speaking to the media, promoting the University, or fundraising. Athletic departments reinforce an inflexible schedule onto athletes, requiring attendance at all practices or coach required activities such as team meetings or promotional activities (Student Athlete Handbook, 2015, p. 137). Additionally, the attendance policy for “optional” activities is enforced through disciplinary actions like losing the chance to compete, losing gear or clothing, losing funding, or, in extreme instances, losing their spot on the team (and their scholarship).

Study participants candidly admitted that the 20-hour practice rule is the least followed NCAA rules by coaches.<sup>37</sup> They described how practice time, including on the field/court/water/track training was under the allotted 20-hours per week. This is achieved through “optional” workouts,<sup>38</sup> team meetings, race preparation schedules, long competition

<sup>36</sup> Women’s Rowing and track and field are allowed 156 days in season during a 170 day school year.

<sup>37</sup> The bureaucracies’ own studies show student athletes go well beyond 20-hours per week. In 2015, the NCAA reported that men’s and women’s Olympic sports athletes spend 32 hours per week on their sports (NCAA Research, 2016, p. 33). That same year, the Pac-12 echoed the NCAA’s findings about athletic time commitments with their own study. Their survey results found athletes commit 50 hours per week to athletics, particularly when counting “non-countable” activities such as optional workouts, travel, and physical therapy (Penn, Schoen, & Berland, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> All teams in the study used some form of “optional practice.” Women’s rowing had two “on your own” required practices per

days, preparing for and recovering from practice, physical therapy, and commuting. Based on the study's interviews and time diaries, the minimal commitment (not averaged) is much closer to 30 hours per week. I call these types of activities *volandatory* (volunteer but actually mandatory) and they represent a more realistic representation of my study participants time availability.

Considering the importance of *volandatory* time commitment to the simple arithmetic of time availability, it is crucial to examine the NCAA's official stance on countable practice hours. The NCAA rule states that if the student initiates the workout and does it on their own time, then it can be considered truly voluntary. There were six participants who described incorporating this kind of activity into their week. They all used a rest day, often Sundays if they were not traveling, to do something like a yoga class, light running, or extra weights. But *volandatory* workouts were not optional. Monique's explanation of her practice requirements shows just how monitored an "on your own" practice could be.

KH: How are the "on your own" workouts presented to you?

Monique: As mandatory.

KH: So it's part of the workout, you can just pick the day?

Monique: No, so you have to do the 22K on Wednesday. And for the 12K, the amount varies, but, you have to do it, Tuesday or Thursday. I guess that one you could probably do any time during the week. But he wants you do to 12K straight. You can't break it up like 2K Monday, 2K Tuesday. I thought about that. He's clever. He's like, 'you can't do that' (Interview Two).

The *volandatory* workouts, reflected in light green in the chart below, increased the athletes' time investment in sport to closer to thirty hours a week. In calculating the total *volandatory* hours, I included four areas that are exempt from the hours count by the NCAA: 1) traveling to and from practice, 2) intercollegiate competitions, 3) campus breaks and holidays, and 4) taking care of the body. All four of these criteria are excluded or minimized in some way yet entail a

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week that could take three to four hours total. Long distance runners had weekly mileage goals set by the coaching staff that if they did not complete in each week they would make up on their off day, Wednesday. Coaches encouraged sprinting, throws, and jumping event athletes to do drills, technique work, or extra conditioning on their own time. And men's rowers were encouraged to do an additional 90-120 minutes of cardio work per week.

considerable time investment.<sup>39</sup> Alongside the recommended and required academic hours, an athlete’s weekly institutional obligations creep closer to eighty hours per week.

Figure 6.2. Weekly Institutional Hour Requirements for Sport and School<sup>40</sup>



The demanding and inflexible time commitments means athletes are much less available to engage in an academic curriculum and can compromise their educational engagement and experience. The most notable expression of this inflexibility is course selection. Athletes cannot schedule class during practice, per team, athletic department, and NCAA policies. In the Fall 2016 Coastal U offered 3,573 undergraduate courses. I compared practice schedules to the course offerings and found that athletes had twenty-percent fewer available courses.

Table 6.4. How Athletic Practice Schedules Limit Course Selection at Coastal U

Sport	Unavailable Undergrad classes, Fall	Unavailable Undergrad classes, Spring
Men's Crew	694 (19.4%)	653 (19.4%)
Women's Crew	694 (19.4%)	653 (19.4%)
Track and Field	858 (22.9%)	813 (24.1%)

All study participants said they selected their class schedule around their practice schedule.

Everyone recalled being unable to take a course they were interested in because it conflicted with practice. All but four participants said this happened on a regular basis.

Missed classes do not tell the full story of scheduling conflicts. Sometimes a student

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix K for an overview of how Coastal U implemented *Voluntary* time commitments.

<sup>40</sup> Hourly estimates came from various sources. Practice schedules were used to count the “mandatory” athletics. “Voluntary” athletics came from aggregating athlete time diaries and interview responses. The “Recommended academic hours” came from the average number of enrolled units per. Campus policy suggests students put in three hours of in-class and out-class work per unit. A student in 15 units would expect a 45 hour per week academic load.



needs a course for a major that falls during practice. Three biology majors on the women's crew team violated NCAA regulations. Due to the early practice times, these rowers could never attend their morning biology classes. Instead, the women enrolled, missed class, and used online materials to make up for their absence. This decision came at great risk. If they were caught, they could lose their scholarships. Further, their decision to evade the rules illustrates the inflexibility of athletic demands. The compromise had to come in the academic, not athletic arena.

The campus also assumes students have a flexible schedule to attend faculty office hours. Office hours are how students find support from instructors outside of large lecture halls. The syllabi review revealed instructors allotted an average of two hours per week to help students. Twenty-two syllabi did not list office hours. Many syllabi included the invitation to meet with instructors "by appointment" or outside of their scheduled time. Yet only six student athletes had a faculty member willing to accommodate their schedule. Students who did form relationships with faculty received a range of positive benefits from internship opportunities, extra credit assignments, insights on what questions would be on an upcoming exam, and research apprenticeship. Only thirteen participants regularly attended office hours. Many believed this was because their schedules were out of sync with faculty availability.

A compromised educational experience came in other forms. Higher education is intended to offer an immersive educational environment. "Learning" is not limited to the lecture hall but extended to campus speaking events, student organizations, clubs, and informal meetings with professors (Clark, 1972; Kuh, 1995; Kuh et al., 2008; Thelin, 2011). Collectively, these activities, including athletics, compose the college degree. But the rigidity in sports means student athletes' learning environment is cordoned off to lectures and training. Not all study participants were aware that their education should extend beyond school or sport. But those who

were felt that their sports took away from enriching opportunities.

*Table 6.5. Impact of Inflexible Sport Schedules*

Time Away from	Number of participants
Desired courses	35
Rest or physical recovery	33
Jobs or internships	20
Desired major	17
Clubs or student groups	19
Socializing with NARPs	16

The combination of an inflexible athletic schedule alongside a flexible academic schedule meant that sports came first in the lives of student athletes. Half of the participants recalled a moment where their coach unequivocally said sports must come before school. This was expressed by either stating: “C’s get degrees” or “The degree, not the major, matters.” Even more telling, no participant believed their coach wanted their team to prioritize their academic commitments over their athletic commitments.

Seventeen admitted that they were in their non-preferred academic major because they feared their athletic time commitments were too great to pursue their first-choice academic track. Seamus questioned why his sport, one that is not bound by scheduling facility time, weather, or even having teammates present, has 6 AM practices. His conclusion was: “it’s very much, they don’t really care about the school. I’m pretty sure my coach has said that” (Interview Two).

Seamus then detailed the ways the track team does not accommodate an academic routine:

The program should be designed around the students. It shouldn’t be stressful to get your sleep. It shouldn’t be stressful to eat. But it is, because we have to work the necessities around the track program. So, it makes track the number one necessity. Which I understand. But, when food, and sleeping, is secondary to that—it’s not going to work. When you’re not eating enough or not sleeping enough, it’s a negative feedback loop. So, yeah, the coaches have no idea what we go through... to them it’s like, ‘You got in here to run. You should run.’ But our parents are also paying a shit load of money so I want to do well in school (Interview Two).

Seamus went on to share a memory of when he told a coach once that he was tired from staying up late to do his homework. The coach asked: “why are you taking those classes?” implying that

the coach believed he should find an easier route through academics.

The juxtaposition of inflexible athletic demands, schedule, and community against a flexible and transitory academic demands, schedule and community allowed athletes to drift deeper into sports. The final area of conflict, legibility, demonstrates how even an athlete's sense of self and physical body stand in conflict with the day to day operations of the University.

### **Legibility: Disembodied vs. Embodied**

The final source of conflict for student athletes is *Legibility*,<sup>41</sup> or how the institution values and evaluates the subject. Who “counts” as a person in both sports and school conflict. Academia favors a disembodied body, or person that is defined by their mind whereas athletics favors an embodied body, or a person that is defined by their physical presence. The final section draws on the dissertation's underlying framework of intersectionality to explain how legibility feeds the larger social constructions of race and gender.

As previous sections showed, the college bureaucracy regulates the mental pursuits by monitoring academic integrity, academic probation, or academic performance. Individuals are sorted by discipline, instructors rank students based on grades, and students strive for a degree based on courses completed. The nuances within the categories abound but people are fundamentally *legible* within higher education as “students” who are pursuing intellectual activities. Institutional processes create and accept a *disembodied* subject, one that is evaluated and valued based on their intellectual contributions.

In the U.S., college athletes are only *legible* within college sport if they are students. One must be enrolled in a certain number of courses, make degree progress, and forgo any

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<sup>41</sup> My understanding of legibility draws on queer theory and poststructuralist scholarships. It is used to explain how individuals are seen, read, and valued within society (Butler, 1997; 2004). Individuals become legible as they are sorted into pre-existing categories of meaning (Foucault, 1977; Samuels, 2014). This process reinforces the power of state and federal institutions like schools, prisons, and citizenship by elevating these organizations to the job of sorting individuals and creating order within the complexity of human life (Foucault, 1977; Wildhagen, 2015).

opportunity for individual economic gain based on athletic skills. The bureaucracies within college sport also expect *embodied* subjects. Participants become athletes in that their bodies are sorted, evaluated, and valued by universities based on their physical contributions. By making student athletes legible as “athletes” within higher education, the bureaucracy and social actors further separate them from their non-athlete peers. College sport makes athletes legible through at least four regulatory processes that restrict: 1) How an athlete can use their image, 2) What an athlete can put into their body, 3) How to medically treat and monitor an athlete’s body, and 4) How an athlete behaves within their body.

The first major area of bodily regulation is how athletes can use their own physical body. This includes controlling their right to their name, likeness, and image; censoring how athletes discuss their body in public; and monitoring what goes into their bodies. For instance, several athletes in the study were approached to model for fashion companies—nothing related to athletics. NCAA regulations prohibit athletes from using their image for commercial gain. Modeling is explicitly prohibited as an act that violates this clause (NCAA 2016-2017 Manual).

The second area of bodily regulation is how the NCAA monitors what athletes put into their bodies. As part of the NCAA’s rule on “ethical conduct” they offer a long list governing drug use and testing. This is one of the more invasive regulatory apparatuses of athletic bureaucracies. The NCAA’s drug policy exists to regulate performance enhancing drugs. But the NCAA also tests for criminal drug use like alcohol under the age of 21, illicit drugs, or pharmaceuticals. If any illicit drugs are found in an NCAA test, they will pass the results are passed on to the university for student conduct adjudication. The NCAA encourages athletic departments to conduct their own random and frequent checks to catch abuses. Drug testing is a non-negotiable part of the student athlete experience. A baseline requirements for being a student

athlete is to sign a consent form agreeing to random drug testing (NCAA 2016-2017 Manual, p. 70).<sup>42</sup> Athletes reported that these tests were frequent, embarrassing, and inconvenient.

The NCAA admits that the range of performance enhancing drugs is so wide that an athlete could test positive without knowledge of taking a banned substance. Instead of providing a list of banned substances the NCAA offers classifications of drugs. If any trace of any substance related to a classification is found in an athlete's system that athlete will become ineligible. The NCAA's policy states, "There is NO complete list of banned substances. Do not rely on this list to rule out any label ingredient" (NCAA Banned Drugs List, para 6, 2017). As a precaution, the Coastal U athletic department advises student athletes to take supplements "at your own risk" and share any vitamins with staff before ingesting (Student Athlete Handbook, 2016, p. 155). Undergraduate students face no such bodily regulations and monitoring. They only have to abide by State and Federal drug laws like any other private citizen.

The third area of regulation is how to medically treat and monitor an athlete's body. To be certified as an eligible student athlete, one must first go through a university conducted exam. Once on the team, the athlete then must "complete a yearly medical history update and screening" that is filed with the athletic department and NCAA. In addition, the NCAA requests student athletes waive their HIPAA rights to allow the athletic staff to share student athletes' health information with the public.<sup>43</sup> Further, Coastal U requires all student athletes to "report all injuries and illnesses to the Sports Medicine staff" (p. 137). Athletes at Coastal U must go

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<sup>42</sup> Coastal U had a policy to administer frequent and random tests to athletes. It included three criteria for testing. Most participants went through the first criterion or "random testing protocol" which subjects athletes to a series of random tests throughout the year. There are two automatic ways an athlete can test positive, even without drugs in their system: failure to appear on time and if "it is determined that a specimen has been altered, that will count as a positive test and may include additional sanctions" (p. 156). Coastal U can also schedule a mandatory non-random drug test, for all or a portion of athletes. And third, staff can mandate a drug test if an athlete failed a previous drug test, if there is "documented evidence" of drug use, or if someone observes behavior indicative of drug or alcohol use (p. 156).

<sup>43</sup> Students can ask for and sign a waiver denying this sort of communication. Team doctors, though, are not bound by the same legal requirements. In college sport, FERPA, or the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy act, exempts athletics and allows physicians to release medical information without the athlete's consent to any school officials who have "an educational interest in the information" (Murthy, Dwyer, & Bosco, 2016, p. 57).

through all Coastal U athletic staff first before receiving medical treatment. The reason behind the policy was explained as: “THE ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT WILL NOT ASSUME ANY FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT THAT IS OBTAINED WITHOUT A REFERRAL FROM THE SPORTS MEDICINE STAFF” (emphasis in original text, p. 152). By requiring student athletes to seek treatment within and disclose their medical conditions to any staff, including coaches, the University maintains control over the student athlete’s body. In this case, the University offers the incentive to student athletes that their medical expenses will be covered—only if they are a current eligible athlete.

The final way college sport creates an embodied athlete is by monitoring bodily actions or behavior. The Coastal U athletic department handbook includes a three-paragraph definition of “personal conduct” as a governing principle for the department. The definition justifies the bodily scrutiny because of athletes’ visible nature within higher education and allows the coach to institute additional rules on conduct and behavior. “As a highly visible representative of the University, student-athletes are responsible for exercising sound judgment regarding their appearance, attire, conduct, and speech. Specific requirements established by the Head Coach may relate to dress, conduct, curfews, and free time activities” (p. 137). As Table 6.6 outlines below, in this study team rules covered these areas and more. Team rules ranged widely. Some were explicit, included in a team specific handbook, others were implicit, enforced by team leaders without the coach’s intervention. Overall, the rules spanned most areas of behavior.

Table 6.6. Team Rules Across Sport

Rule	W. Crew	M. Crew	W. CC	M. CC	W. Track	M. Track
Inappropriate times to wear Coastal U	X		X	X		
Appropriate foods to eat	X*		X	X		
Mandatory weigh-ins	X*					
Weight limits or goals for certain athletes	X	X	X		X	X
Appropriate and inappropriate use of social media			X	X	X	X
Clothing and behavior standards while traveling			X	X	X	X
Gender-based rule on housing while traveling			X	X	X	X
Behavioral norms and standards at practice	X					
Required academic support for low performers		X			X	X
Athletic standards to participate fully with the team	X	X	X	X		
Attending practice is mandatory	X	X	X	X	X	X
Arriving early for practice is expected	X		X	X		
Must check-out uniform from and return to the athletic department			X	X	X	X
Must reach a certain athletic standard to be eligible for a uniform	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rules for hosting and entertaining recruits	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cannot drink alcohol during the athletic season	X					

X = team had and enforced this rule

\*Rule eliminated part-way through the student athletes' membership when a new head coach was hired

All the above rules mark athletes as *embodied* subjects and separate them from the student population. The minutia of rules regarding athletes' behavior creates homogeneity within the student athlete population further marking them as something different and separate from the student body in general. In seeking homogeneity college sports also maintain unequal race and gender positions of their subjects, unequally regulating the bodies of women and people of color.

Policies extended to both the type of clothing and how to wear the clothing. In general, there was more attention paid to the rules around women's clothing and attire at practice. Casey, a White woman on the rowing team, noted that in the weight room, men could go shirtless. "Of course, the men's teams get to practice with their shirts off. Whereas if we even have a crop-top, it's like, what are you doing? Who are you? You're crazy, put a shirt on" (Interview two). CM, also a White woman, also noticed that male track athletes went shirtless at practice, but in five years on the team, she never saw women do the same. One reason for this are the gender-based

rules associated with behavior. The assumption that men could train shirtless while women could not is a social norm that reinforces “natural” bodily differences between men and women. As athletes performing the same physical acts, there should be no difference in the approach to uniform and equipment. Yet female bodies in sport settings are seen as sexual objects rather than peers or athletic performers (Cooky et al, 2015; Daniels & Wartena, 2011; Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Messner, 2002; 2007). A famous example occurred in the 1999 World Cup tournament in which Brandi Chastain, after scoring a goal to win the championship for the United States, took off her jersey in a moment of sheer celebration. The continued commentary in sports media shifted to her aesthetics and if it was “appropriate” for a woman to showcase her body in this way, rather than to the athletic accomplishments of the U.S. women’s team (Messner, 2002; Messner et al, 2003; Schultz, 2004). As Casey recounted, when she tried to resist this dress code by taking off her shirt or showing off her stomach in any way, she was called “crazy.” The censoring of her behavior came from those around her, focusing on how she looked, rather than how she performed during the practice or weight-lifting session.

The “rules” around proper female behavior and dress, were often enforced by teammates interacting with one another. Female athletes on both teams easily recited the behavioral and appearance standards attached to their sports like how to wear the uniform; appropriate brand names to wear to practice; self-presentation and aesthetics; and how to compose oneself.

The way in which we're told to carry ourselves. The way in which you present yourself in social media. The way in which you act at practice. If you are erging a really hard piece, you don't dramatically fall off your erg. You do not scream...I think it's much more than an athletic thing. It's a person thing of how you're expected to even look. You're not going to walk around with your uni rolled down. When you walk in when you're ready to go to practice, your hair is pulled back. You're ready to go. And I think that you have to buy into it. That's not everyone(Noelle, Interview two).

The commonsense attitude that women’s rowers took towards these behavioral norms reinforced the exclusivity behind the mostly-White sport. As Noelle put it, people had to “buy in” to their



team culture, or they would be rejected. Noelle's team was composed of mostly White, middle and upper middle class women coming from a similar schooling, sport, and socio-economic background. In order to fit into her team, athletes had to display a narrow form of White, middle class femininity. In her response, she references that women must censor their tone and emotions during a hard workout. They cannot "scream" or show too much emotion during a hard practice. They cannot roll down their "uni" or one-piece uniform, which would display their sports-bra and stomach. In this way, they must keep their torso covered. They must have their hair worn in a certain way. These rules inscribe a form of White, middle class femininity. Someone from a different cultural orientation towards sport, or with different hair or phenotypical features, may automatically be rejected. The "natural" gender differences, therefore, are connected to race and class understanding. Within this context, a "woman" is not only different from a man, but to be considered a part of the team, she also must adhere to White middle class norms.

Noelle's account of how women must be aesthetically and behaviorally censored at practice starkly contrasted with the men's rowing descriptions. None of the male rowers recalled rules about dress or behavior for their team. Instead, they recounted how their culture that leads to athletic success is all about the "hype." The "hype" included shouting, hitting, and yelling at one another before the workout began. The team viewed it as a necessary part of their training to develop the "aggression" needed for their sport. Steve, a White British rower described his team as "vocal." "[W]e'll shout and scream a lot and sort of hype each other up and slap each other and stuff like that." When I pressed several of the men to describe what they meant by "hype" or "aggression" they responded with a general sense of "don't be a pussy." Will, an Australian on the men's team, elaborated on what this "don't be a pussy" culture meant to him.

We're out there to try and win. I don't know how to say it nicely. There's no one being a pussy. That's the one thing, no one wants to see someone being a pussy... No people

being weak. And people are scared to look weak. If you get off an erg, everyone will talk. Everyone knows, 'Oh that guy he's a pussy.' ...So it's a culture that [will] pull people up [through the] the fear of being out-casted. And it works very well (Interview Two).

The word “pussy” became a stand-in for a whole set of masculine athletic behaviors including elevating their athletic performance, pushing through pain, finishing the task at hand, and building trust amongst one another. To build, a cohesive team bond, the men enacted a caricature of overt masculinity that hinged on degrading women. They all kept in line because they did not want to be perceived as “weak” or, womanly.

The behavioral and dress standards were amplified in the more racially and socioeconomically diverse setting of track and field. Sprinting and jumping were described by both Black and White participants as more physical and natural events. In contrast, distance running, an endurance sport, was seen as requiring consistent practice, discipline, time, and effort. Sanya, a White distance runner, lamented that the jumpers and sprinters can treat their bodies and their sport with less seriousness and intention compared to the distance runners.

Jumpers and sprinters, those girls eat like shit. They're very unhealthy. I'm telling you. It's amazing what they eat before races in the locker-room. All of us distance runners are like, 'I haven't eaten that since--' It's insane what they do. But they're just, the power movement. I think too, the power moves, the way that uses energy in your body, helps you burn fat more (Interview One).

Sanya's articulation of the various eating patterns amongst her team reaffirms the connection between bodies, sport, and race. She sees the sprinters, which are majority Black, as inherently different from herself. They can eat, diet, and athletically perform in a way that is different from her mostly White long-distance running teammates. She relies on her knowledge of the sport—that sprinting requires “power” whereas long distance running requires “endurance”—to justify the racial differences. Yet when I spoke with jumpers and sprinters, they too worried about their weight and what they eat. Imani, Chantae, Brittany, and Vera, all explained how they had been on and off weight-loss routines to improve their athletic performance. Due to the pervasiveness

of the ideology that there are natural racial difference, Sanya linked her observations to biological rather than socially constructed boundaries between racial groups. The rules and regulations set by team environments can therefore socially construct race and gender categories.

Duane, a Black male who spent time in both sprinting and long-distance running events, confirmed Sanya's observations. He too believed there were behavioral differences that factor into the social stereotypes associated with Black and White racial categories.

The sprinter side of things and the distance side of things were very different. It goes from, sprinters like, 'Aw, I'm going to be faster than you today. Who can beat you. Blah blah.' And then the distance side which is a lot more humble, a lot more modest, a lot more--you prove what you have on the track... You can't do what you do as a football player or basketball player and succeed in a distance sort of regime. Their diet is a lot looser. Their habits outside are a lot different...[In distance events] you run, and you're in pain. You're running for so long. I do like sixty to seventy miles a week. When you're running that long, and doing a lot that work, it's an intense thing (Interview One).

In Duane's own formulation, it seemed that long distance runners put in more work and had better habits and routines whereas sprinters were more likely to be "looser" and have a more unstructured approach to sport. In his explanation, he ties sprinters to other predominately Black sports like football and basketball to further his point, and reaffirms a connection between race and behavior. He also elevates the behavior in a predominately White running squad as more serious, focused, disciplined, and overall better than in the predominately Black sprinting community. In doing so, White bodies and behavior remain the normed and dominant group.

While all athletes were separated from the undergraduate population by being categorized as bodily subjects, the ways in which Malcolm, Steve, and Noelle came to understand themselves as athletic subjects within higher education were radically different and were shaped by race and gender. The final two chapters show the educational costs associated with race and gender and how intersectionality informs the conflict inherent within college sport.

## **Conclusion**

The athletic governing institutions, and corresponding demands levied on student athletes lead to academic conflicts. In an individualistic institution where students are at once granted autonomy in academic decisions while simultaneously stripped of fundamental rights to their identity, body, labor, and educational pursuits associated with their athletic commitments, it is no wonder that athletes feel a greater obligation to their athletic responsibilities. The nature of how the relationships within higher education operate make it not only easy but logical for students to academically disengage. It is encouraged to work independently and tacitly accepted that students keep their distance. Even though these social actors such as faculty and support staff hold great sway over student lives, the lack of immediacy, oversight, and interaction means these relationships remain detached, indifferent, remote, and abstract. Students who are socially aggressive and outgoing can find mentors and attention from campus actors. Social relationships in college sport are invested, personal, and overbearing. Student athletes may become less likely to seek out support from a distant group of academics as most of their personal time is spent maneuvering the demands levied by their athletic social connections. Along with the bureaucratic conflict within higher education between school and sport, the next chapter explores another hurdle student athletes face that stymie educational relationships. It examines how the embodied nature of athletes links to the social stereotype of the “dumb jock” and undermines athletes’ efforts to educationally engage.

## Chapter 7: Interpersonal Conflict: Dismissing Embodied Students

### Introduction

In advising participants how to best navigate their demands as student athletes, Coastal U's athletic department offers one piece of wisdom: *Learn how to manage your time.*

Because of the special time and energy required for successful sports participation, it is imperative that you, as a student-athlete, budget your time wisely and establish sound objectives and priorities. Experienced student-athletes have found that the only way to attend classes, practices, meetings, study table, prepare out-of-class assignments and still have some time for themselves is to be organized and create an effective schedule (Student Athlete Handbook, 2015, p. 137).

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the institutions of sport and school disguise the conflict within the combined organization of “college sport” by individualizing the problem. College athletes are continuously reminded that it is their responsibility to forge a route through higher education by operating as efficiently and effectively as possible. Rare and exceptional student athletes like Cailyn Moore—a college football player who became a Fulbright and Rhodes scholar and was drafted by the NFL—are used as living proof that it is possible to be a top-level athlete and student

School and sport ask for competing *Requirements, Availability, and Legibility* of student athletes, making it difficult for any one individual to adjudicate the conflict. However organized an athlete's schedule was, he or she still faced conflicts between their athletic responsibilities and their academic performance. It was clear to participants that the conflict could not be solved through time management. This chapter builds on the previous one to explore how student athletes find themselves forced to privilege their athletic commitments over their academic responsibilities because of institutions structures. Institutional processes that expect athletes to be dependent upon their athletic communities, that restrict their time available, and that make them visible and legible as embodied actors within higher education, reaffirmed athletes as

simultaneously different from and inferior to their non-athlete peers. This chapter explores how as embodied subjects, athletes are marginalized in educational settings. Their embodied athletic pursuits link athletes to the “dumb jock” stereotype often circulated on college campuses, and it limits athletes’ educational possibilities. This chapter also explores how the stereotype reinforces overt forms of racism and sexism within higher education.

### **Literature Review**

The existing research on how athletes interact with their peers and faculty often uses Claude Steele’s theory of stereotype threat. As a psychological researcher, Steele’s (1997) theory and findings explore how individuals of a negatively stereotyped group perform in academic settings. Steele’s work emerged by examining how women performed on math tests when their gender was introduced prior to an exam. He found women performed worse when they had to mark their gender prior to the exam. Some applied Steele’s framework to college sport noting that when participants are primed with the phrase “student athlete” they perform worse on a test than when the phrase is removed (Dee, 2013, Stone, 2012; Yopky & Prentice, 2005). Others found that the stereotype threat for student athletes is compounded by race and gender, particularly for Black males (Engstrom, Sedlacek, McEwen, 1995; Martin, et al, 2010; Simons, et al, 1999; Stone et al, 2012). This area of research shifted how instructors and exam designers create and administer tests. But it also is a narrow explanation of the salience of stereotypes within society.

Stereotype threat can offer too-narrow of a view for the conflicts student athletes face. The stereotype literature examines moments when the stereotype is invoked, and, in some branches, tries to understand how individuals can push back against, challenge, or disprove the stereotype (e.g., Martin et al, 2010; Stone et al, 2012). But these approaches do not fully uncover

or attempt to disrupt the nature of higher education. The Coastal U participants felt their *embodied subjectivity*, including their physical and mental connection to their body, was rejected by the institution. Further, as the stereotype literature found, the bodily rejections magnify across already rejected groups in the academy such as Black, queer, and women students.

A more power-centered way to explain how athletes felt rejected is to examine how academia promoted an anti-athletic *discourse*, that reinforced a dominant and accepted subject of the academy that is disembodied and cognitively superior. Discourses are publically available “meanings” that give rise to a subject, institution, and social structure (Weedon, 1987, p. 25). These meanings are not true *or* false versions of reality, as presented by theories of ideology, rather they are competing accounts of the world all of which are true *and* false (Foucault, 1980). A discourse becomes dominant in a historical, cultural, or institutional context because it is the closest version to what a nexus of power structures such as political institutions and universities view as “the truth” (Foucault, 1980). As a result, discourses are materially grounded and impact one’s access to political, economic, and social resources (Weedon, 1987; Foucault, 1980).

### **Sexualizing and Racializing the “Dumb Jock”**

At least three discourses about sports shaped how athletes experienced conflict with the academic community. The first is the racist notion that Black bodies are “naturally” athletic and mentally inferior. This discourse reinforces that a Black body is an athlete and not an intellectual. This leads into the second discourse that shaped athletes’ experiences of the “dumb jock” discourse. Reinforced by media accounts of athletically related academic scandals and television and movie portrayals of “meat head” athletes, the phrase “dumb jock” was used both against and by participants. The third dominant discourse that gave meaning to subjects’ appearance and experience within the institution was both a phrase and an image or *Coastal U* logos patterned on

clothing, backpacks, and athlete paraphernalia. These three discourses shaped how the institution interacted with student athletes, how student athletes came to see themselves, and the material outcomes or how student athletes disengaged academically.

Negative interactions with the campus community were pervasive in the narratives. Study participants recounted over 140 testimonies—some had multiple stories to share—in which the three discourses against student athletes circulated. Forty-one participants believed the campus harbored views that student athletes were “dumb jocks” incapable of producing Coastal U-caliber academic work and were in the University only for their athletic commitments. Twenty recounted an explicit experience being the victim of the “dumb jock” discourse. The other twenty-one participants were acutely aware that negative discourses circulated through the University, but could not recall a specific instance where it impacted them directly.

The stories student athletes told fell into three areas. The first were outright tales of intolerance where students and faculty said openly degrading comments about student athletes. To avoid these confrontational settings, student athletes adopted self-protection strategies such as attempting to “dress” or “act” like a “regular” student. In these cloaked moments, student athletes witnessed open acts of intolerance. The third outcome of discourses was how the subject was constructed. Not all participants could hide their athletic status. Within this third terrain, multiple and competing discourses reinforce larger unequal structures of race and gender.

Participants recalled blatant and public forms of intolerance towards athletes from both faculty and students. Seventeen athletes witnessed a faculty member stating an anti-athlete comment in front of a full lecture hall. Researchers have confirmed that faculty members harbor negative views towards athletes which impact their grading, interactions with, and perception of student athletes (Meyer, 1990; Engstrom, Sedlacek, McEwen, 1995; Jolly, 2008). Even though a



recommended University policy states faculty members must accommodate athletes' travel schedules, participants recalled professors stating on the first day of class that they would make no accommodations for any student, including athletes, if they had to miss an exam. These professors told athletes that if they see a potential exam conflict, they should drop the class immediately. In another incident, a beloved professor and leader of U.S. Leftist movements, challenged the role of athletes during his lecture. A common practice in his 550 person course is to pose a poll to the class and have the students use I-clickers or an electronic device, to record their response. Several athletes were in his class when the professor asked the class, "Do you think athletes should receive book scholarships?" He then asked the class, "Do you think athletes should get priority registration?" To both, the class overwhelmingly said "No!" Morgan felt ashamed, sitting in her Rowing shirt at the time of the lecture. "It was very uncomfortable, because I'm sitting there, with my friends, who are all athletes, and we're all wearing gear. And we're like, 'Oh hi. [Priority registration] that's why I'm in this class,'" (Morgan, Interview Two). I asked Morgan if the professor singled out any other student group on any other topics in the course for his polls; she replied, "No!"

One of the longest anti-athlete class digressions occurred at the start of a final exam, in which London and Merlin were in attendance. The professor spent the first twenty minutes, of a fifty-minute class period, publically humiliating a football player. Merlin recalled how it began with the professor pointing to a physically conspicuous male student, Merlin, described as a six-foot-nine-inch, 350-pound lineman. Merlin, a few inches shorter, also stood out. The two became victims of a professor taunting their academic merit. While disseminating the scantrons, the professor pointed to the football player. Merlin paraphrases the professor who said, "Hey, this is where you put your name. Mr. Football, what's your name?" (Tutor Interview One). London

then remembers the football player saying his last name starting with the letter “M.”

He's like, ‘That means put your scantron in front of the letter M. You got that?’ Literally calling him--he's a football player, and he looks dumb...And the guy's sitting there, and he's like ‘Yeah I got it.’ And then he calls to the guy next to him and is like, ‘Can you make sure he puts it on the letter M.’ And I'm like, ‘Is this a joke?’ (Interview Two).

The professor did not let up. After asking a student to escort the football player to the letter “M” on the blackboard, he asked the athlete to tell the class what position he played. When the student reported, “Left Tackle.” Merlin, who was a Division I recruited college football player, but chose to pursue track instead, recalled what transpired next.

He's like, ‘Oh, left tackle, not the star quarterback that's going to get rich.’ Obviously, this guy doesn't know anything about football because left tackles can make a lot of money if they go pro. And so, he says that, and he's like, ‘yeah, down the road somebody's going to be like, I heard you had a football player in your class? Yeah, left tackle. And they're going to be like, oh no one cares about left tackle.’ It was some weird thing like that. And all the non-student athletes are dying laughing (Tutor Interview One).

At this point, London and Merlin were furious while the whole lecture hall laughed alongside the professor at the student. After insulting the football player’s intelligence, athletic ability, and future earning potential, the Professor let the class take the exam. Towards the end Merlin, who was in the back of the hall with a few of his track teammates, admitted his large size makes it difficult for him to get in and out of the small lecture rows. As he was packing up his backpack readying to leave, he leaned over to ask his friend to move. The professor states, “‘You guys can do it on your own!’” Merlin shakes his head and walks to the front of the room to explain that he was not cheating, he was trying to leave. The professor turns to him and says:

‘What event do you do?’ And I'm like, ‘Shot put.’ And he's like, ‘yeah I could have guessed you're not a sprinter.’ Everyone says that to me. I don't take offense to it at all. But, still. I don't think he meant it as offensive, but maybe he did...I'm a big guy, I get it. But this kid two rows ahead was dying laughing at that comment [the professor] made [about my size]. And I'm like, ‘screw you kid.’ So that made me feel like it was supposed to be offensive (Tutor Interview One).

The stereotype literature has shown that the smallest of primes, like asking an identity question,

leads to a decrease in exam performance. The psychological studies do not even introduce such blatant acts of public shaming like teasing someone for their sport, intelligence, appearance, or job prospects. As Merlin and London explained, the entire incident was ignited and concluded based on body size. Mr. Football and Merlin could not hide in that moment, both were seen as physical subjects that did not belong in a political science course.

The intolerance towards athletes did not end at large, White men. Women rowers and men's and women's cross country runners also recalled moments where professors publicly questioned their intelligence. The Physicist knew it would be difficult to pursue a STEM major with an athletic schedule. But since high school he was drawn to Physics and wanted a career in the field. He recalled moments where professors said that athletes would “set the curve basically at the bottom” or “they're going to be at the bottom of the class” (Interview Two). The Physicist had also been told directly by professors that they felt “I won't do well in [their] class... There's just times where the Professors will try to dampen your hope of doing well in a course. And, it doesn't feel very good, but I know that may be their prerogative to try and tell me that I'm not going to succeed. But I will prove them wrong” (Physicist, Interview Two). Athletes' resilience or drive to “prove them wrong” in the face of harmful intolerance has also been noted by the stereotype threat literature (Martin, et al, 2010; Stone et al 2012).

The attempt to “prove someone wrong” might work on an individual level, but does little to curb the larger discourse against athletes. Even athletes who passed rigorous examination requirements to test into higher level courses faced discrimination for their student athlete status. During Kalie's freshman writing course, one that required a placement test before being admitted to the course, the instructor publically “outed” her as an athlete.

He's like, 'You know, I don't expect you all to be great writers. Kalie here, she got in for athletics, I'm not expecting much.' And I was like, 'What? Excuse me? I had to take a

writing test to be in this course.' You know you have to take a writing test to be placed into a course. I was like, 'I took the same writing test as every one of these kids took.' And he's like, 'Well I didn't mean anything by it.' And I'm like, 'Well, but you said it.' And so, things like that, definitely come up. I think sometimes teachers, in a weird way, look down on you (Interview Two).

Kalie went on to earn a B-plus in the course. But these acts of individual achievement did not quell the assumption that athletes are academically defunct and do not belong at an elite school. This discourse is not only perpetuated by faculty but also by students.

When speaking about negative interactions with the campus community, an everyday example was feeling excluded from group work. This happened in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Forty-three syllabi across disciplines included group work as part of the course. Some science majors, who form lab groups, recalled students actively walking away from them when it was time to form groups. Other times, when the instructors assigned groups, students rebelled, telling athletes that they do not belong, or they would complain to the professor. One of Casey's colleagues in a chemistry course told her that she would bring the score down. Her classmates tried to get switched to a different group. In discussion courses, athletes recalled people literally turning their head and back away to avoid working with them. As Duane explained, his worst interactions with classmates are in group projects:

Say you're in a group presentation, and I'm the one athlete in the group and they're thinking, 'Ah man this guy is not going to do his work.' Or, 'Ah dude, he's in his full athlete gear, and we don't want to sit next to him, because he's going to be asking us a bunch of questions, or he's going to fall asleep, or whatever.' Ah, that sucks. They just think that I'm not going to do anything (Interview Two).

The assumption that athletes *want* to do less academic work is also perpetuated through the phrase "athlete classes." At a rigorous university like Coastal U, there is no "easy" track through. But students seemed to think there were courses that were easier than others; and these courses were commonly referred to as "athlete classes." Savannah explains the concept:

'Athlete Classes.' I've heard that term so much like, 'Oh yeah, I'm in an athlete class.'

Or, 'Oh the curve is really good because there's a lot of athletes in it.' ... 'Oh yeah those athletes just really brought the curve down.' And they're assuming that it's us. Because, again, it's that stereotype that we're dumb (Interview Two).

Like the Physicist, Savannah tried to disprove that she was not bringing the curve down. But in trying to be a “smart” rather than “dumb” jock, athletes faced another form of subtle intolerance. Morgan, Brandon, Victoria, and Noelle all tried to form groups or make friends with NARPs. In doing so, they attempted to dissuade others from viewing athletes in a negative light. They often heard comments like, “Oh wow, you really know things. You can talk in class” (Morgan, Interview Two). These comments are micro-aggressions and can be just as harmful.

The worst is when, they're like, 'Oh you're a student athlete? That's funny, you say really smart things in class.' And you're like, 'Can you realize that's so insulting?' I am a student athlete, but I'm more than a student athlete too, so for someone to stereotype me in the student athlete category, whatever, there's more to me than that (Sanya, Interview Two).

Sanya's desire to be seen not only as a capable student, but someone more than an athlete demonstrates how dominant discourses structure subjectivities. The messaging within the campus community offered limited pathways. She is either a dumb jock, or a surprisingly smart student athlete. She is never a Sanya the political economy major, or Sanya who is interested in international relations and global economic policy. Instead, she is left to prove wrong or accept the dominant discourses about athletes. The individual acts of resilience and commitment to prove professors wrong is admirable considering the constant bombardment of negative messages from faculty and students that athletes are “dumb” and do not deserve to be here. As a social and institutional operating principle, student athletes should not be left to themselves to disprove the negative images of athletes.

Yet, the most common coping mechanism to combat the “dumb jock” stereotype was not “prove them wrong.” It was more common for athletes to “hide” or “disguise” their identity. In the short term, blending in and going unnoticed seemed the most efficient way to inoculate

themselves from the harmful discourses rejecting their physical presence in the academy. To minimize the chance of being viewed as an athlete, sixteen participants said they did not wear athletic “gear” or Coastal U marked apparel including clothing and backpacks to campus. One of the more common strategies was to wear “normal” outfits the first few weeks of school to establish themselves as students, not athletes, to their peers and professors. This strategy circulated through teams and the athletic community, upperclassmen warning incoming freshmen to disguise their identity. The women’s rowing team tried to cultivate an image that they were students. As an incoming freshman, upperclassmen told Savannah not to wear the Coastal U Rowing shirt she proudly received on her first day of practice. Lisa, one of Savannah’s older teammates explained that it’s important that the team does not display that they are athletes. “Most of my team goes to school in normal clothing, for the first couple weeks at least, and try not to wear the backpack, just to not give them a sense of who you are” (Interview Two). Cooper, another rower who does not wear her Coastal U clothing to school, pointed out that this behavior should not be confused as being ashamed of being an athlete. She was sad that she could not proudly represent her National Champion team.

Yes. 100%. I don't wear rowing gear. I'm actually one of those people. It's not that I'm not proud that I'm a rower. That's not who I am. But that's such a huge part and a thing I'm so proud of. But yeah, there's such a big stereotype, like 'Crap. Oh great, it's an athlete. They're not as intelligent as us.' ...Because a lot of the time, you just hear the negatives. And especially with professors. A huge reason why I don't wear gear is just because of the professors. I don't know how they're going to handle it (Cooper, Interview Two).

Along with the desire to blend in and shield themselves from harmful insults, participants said they would hide their athletic identity simply so they could feel accepted in the university.

As a track athlete, Josephine, echoed the rower’s sentiments. Some days, she is just worn out from the negative attitudes towards athletes and simply wants to fit in. "Yeah, sometimes I don't wear my backpack, I bring a different backpack to certain classes, because it's like, 'I just

don't want to deal with this today.' If I'm signed up with a person I want them to see that I have a normal backpack on and that I'm a normal person" (Josephine, Interview Two).

Josephine's fatigue at being singled out as an athlete is compounded by her race. As a Black female, she is unable to "hide" or blend in with her predominantly White classmates.

I still feel uncomfortable being one of the very few persons of color in my auditorium. My classes, last semester, legitimately, the only black person, male or female. That class is about 200. That is not ok. It needs to have a little more diversity. I didn't really notice it, because I'm so used to it, but the last month I was like, 'Am I only one?' I was looking around and I'm like, 'I'm the only Black person' (Interview Two).

Of the sixteen participants that tried to hide their "athlete" persona, only two were Black, including Josephine. The rest were White, nine of whom were women.

When speaking about their negative experiences with the campus community, 35 participants said the "dumb jock" discourse was shaped by race and gender. They believed that when professors or students treated them negatively it was because "athlete" conjured an image of a dumb, Black, male, football or basketball player. Only 39% of White students compared to 67% of Black students were direct recipients of faculty or student athletic intolerance.

Despite three decades of sociological research attacking the myth of Black physical superiority, Black bodies are still linked with athletic superiority and in turn, mental inferiority (Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012, Harrison, 1998). Scholars continue to find that the social myths extend to higher education, infiltrating how both students and faculty perceived Black students (Harrison & Comeaux, 2007; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). The "dumb jock" is exacerbated for Black males (Dworkin & Messner, 2002; Eitzen, 2012; Engstrom, Sedlacek, McEwen, 1995). Faculty members view Black male and female student athletes as less likely to do well in school and more likely to become professional athletes (Comeaux, 2010). Black and White participants in the study overwhelming confirmed that the campus equates Black with athleticism.

Chantae did not feel she was the victim of harmful athlete discourses, but she thought her

Blackness conferred athletic status. “I would definitely say that, because I'm Black and I'm here, that they associate it with being an athlete” (Chantae, Interview One). As a Black male, Duane felt his status as an athlete had a negative connotation.

I think when people see Black student athletes they think, illiterate. Especially when they think of football, because of all the different scandals that they've had. They see [athletes] taking pottery or something instead of core courses. And people will say, 'Oh well, this football player, he can't even read.' It's very negative. Especially academically. Or, they'll look at them and think they're dangerous because they're big (Interview Two).

At historically White universities like Coastal U, the lack of Black men on campus exacerbates the link between athlete and Blackness. Malcolm, who was a Black male football player before he joined track, explained that even when he tries his hardest to dispel the linkage between Black-athlete-dumb, he is simply seen as the exception not the rule.

Every time, I'm the only African American male in my class...And [students] are just like, 'Well he don't know.' You can just tell. You can sense it. You get in a group, a discussion group, and they call your name. And they're just like, <sighs>. And I get in the discussion group and I know what I'm talking about. And they're all discussing and I'm like, 'Well I think, dut-dut-dut.' And then they're like, 'That makes sense. Oh OK, he's cool. He's an exception.' Not that, 'Oh this is how they are, and maybe there are a few exceptions that aren't smart.' Instead, I'm always the exception. Which is terrible. The person who's doing the right things is the exception. But the majority, dang, are perceived as, just athletic, and not very bright (Interview three).

One of the challenges with the “prove them wrong” approach to combating dominant discourses is Black male student athletes like Malcolm cannot figure out which discourse to go against. As Anthony explains, when he is shrugged off by classmates or professors, it is hard for him to tell if it is because he is Black, because he is a Black male, or because he is an athlete.

I had a group project, and instantly I could just see that they think that I don't know anything about the class, or I haven't been paying attention or whatever it is. They'll give me the easiest thing. But sometimes you have to prove that you know stuff. Or participate in class. Actually, it's the automatic assumption, maybe--I don't want to say it's completely racial, because you're African American, but at the same time, you can just tell, when people, are surprised that you know something. Like I answer a question and they're like, 'Oh wow, he actually knows.' Just because you're an athlete (Interview One).

In Anthony's memory of the group project he conflates the negative experience with racism and



anti-athlete sentiment. For him, both are experienced simultaneously and it is unclear, like Malcolm said, whether proving their colleagues wrong will do any good.

Along with Blackness, physical size also conferred athleticism. Smaller athletes, namely male and female cross country runners and coxswains, had a much easier time “passing” as non-athletes. Steve explained that since most of the team averages six-foot-five inches, male rowers cannot hide their identity on campus. “We're all really tall. They also clump us together pretty easily. We all go to the same parties and everyone's like, 'Ah the men's team is here. The crew team is here.' It's sort of like, everyone sticks out like a sore thumb, kind of thing. It's easier to group us together” (Interview Two). And the associations with the men’s rowing team are not always positive. As a rising senior, Erwin described that most people on campus do not think his teammates are serious students.

we like to have sex, we like to booze, and, mostly that yeah. Mostly, I guess that's the stereotype that I've been confronted with. That I'm a rower--not specifically a rower, but a male athlete, I'm going for it, to try and get as much female attention as possible...Yeah, that we're just horny and--we're looking to slut it up (Interview Two).

The presence of large, fit, physical bodies in academic settings illuminates just how disembodied the academy has become. As Erwin vulgarly described, he is seen as an overly sexual being as he walks to and from class. In part, this is due to the lack of discussions, content, material, or inquiry into physical and bodily material on college campuses. The social relationships depend on disembodied interactions, ones that deny the existence of physical urges, needs, or wants.

The rejection of the athletic body and experience in academia can lead athletes to further embrace their sport. For athletes trying to do both a rigorous major and athletic load, they feel further isolated. Amanda, one of the few athletes in the entire school who also was an engineering major, tried to hide her “smarts” from her teammates. She was afraid they would think she belittled their majors or academic pursuits by talking about her interest in engineering.

Part of this feeling came from what she observed as the dominant cultural message on her team. One Thursday evening after a hard rowing practice, the coach asked the seniors and leaders on the team to explain to the younger athletes what they planned to do that evening to recover and prepare for the upcoming Friday morning workout, less than 12 hours away.

And they're like, 'I'm going to go home, and make some dinner, and watch a movie, and go to sleep.' None of them, NONE of them, said they were going to go home and study, to do anything school or homework related. None. And I turned to one of my upperclassmen friends and I was like, 'What? No one studies?' And she was being really sarcastic and joking because she said, 'No, don't you know that you're doing something wrong if you're studying on this team,' (Amanda, Interview Two).

Amanda's anecdote reflects both her fear of pursuing a rigorous academic major—one that will interfere with athletics—and the physical stressors student athletes face that may encourage them to disengage from academics. Many of her teammates did study and tried to be fully-present students. But, Amanda was one of a handful of participants that studied after a hard workout. Most said they would leave it to the next day, preferring to eat, sleep, and prepare their bodies for the upcoming morning workout.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates how the conflict between higher education and sport also maintains larger social inequalities. As the next, and final, data chapter shows, the conflict between school and sport results in narrow educational pathways for student athletes. To get through this divergent institution, athletes are forced into various routes that demonstrate how being a student and an athlete are more contrary than congruent.

## Chapter 8: Routes through College Athletics

### Introduction

When Taylor, a young, white woman, arrived at Coastal U, she felt her role was as a runner. “[Sports are] what you do every day. You wake up and you plan around your workout. That's who you are. At [Coastal U], I'm a runner. That's why I'm here [and] that's why I was recruited” (Interview Two). She was surprised by Coastal U's hyper-focus on athletics. In high school, Taylor's life was predicated on two types of experiences: Normal versus Sport. She spent part of her day as a “normal person” and part of her day as a runner. She had normal friends and sport friends, normal time and sport time, normal conversation and sport conversation. By calling these experiences “normal” Taylor saw activities, communities, and goals beyond sport as important to her identity. But once in college her whole community became running. “I just have running friends, that's all of our identities” (Interview Two). Taylor feared what would happen if she lost running. “If it gets taken away, it's like, 'What am I doing now?'" (Interview Two).

Taylor's fear of losing her sport is legitimate. College sport at the very least ends when she leaves the University. As Chapter 6 demonstrated the institutional makeup of collegiate school and sport afford participants few options to integrate the two. As a result, people like Taylor enter college assuming it would function similar to high school and give athletes a reasonable chance at also being a full-time student, a “normal person.” Instead, they are surprised by a sport-centric route through college. In this chapter I explore the shift from high school to college athletics and how college athletes navigate routes through higher education.

The conflicting nature of school and sport within higher education leaves college athletes with four intersecting pathways. These routes begin once a participant joins Coastal U and are further shaped on rejections student athletes endure through the system of sport and school.

Students are provided a single avenue by higher education that assumes there is no failure, injury, or uncertainty in sport; nor any feedback loop between athletics affecting school or school affecting athletics. The four routes are: *Athlete-Student*, *Student-Athlete*, *Second-String*, and *Injured-Athlete*. As Taylor's quote recounts, each route compromises educational experience for athletes. Each route is defined by Bodily Experiences, something I define as the ways the institution manages, rejects, and controls athletes' bodies. In turn each route is shaped by race, class, and gender, offering different social and economic opportunities to participants.

### **Literature Review and Broader Context for Routes**

Social reproduction explains how schools limit possible roads from one class status to the other (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Lareau, 2003; Noguera, 2003). In K-12 literature, students are broken into "tracks" or hierarchical roads through all education levels. The outcomes stated in this theory indicate three endpoints (or starting points) once a Student leaves pre-college: no high school diploma, a high school diploma but minimal career options, or enrollment in college (Oakes, 2005). Recent social reproduction scholarship extended beyond the K-12 system to explore how higher education is not an equal destination, and instead has its own sorting mechanisms (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2012). Armstrong and Hamilton use another metaphor, pathways (like tracks), outlining three paths through higher education. Like tracking at the K-12 level, these pathways are informed by one's incoming gender, race, and class position. This chapter demonstrates how college sport also has an institutional tracking or pathways system that create a complex and conflicting terrain that a student athlete must navigate.

The current literature largely ignores sport through the K-12 education system. Part II uncovered evidence suggesting an intentional or subversive sports-track-to-college *pipeline* in which materially and culturally privileged families used athletics to gain access to higher

education despite any academic tracking mechanisms in place like standardized test scores and AP classes meant to weed out potential applicants. Similarly, higher education research often focuses on the economic motivation behind sport. Authors suggest that sports are a spectacle put on by the University to grease the “party pathway” (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2012; Sperber, 2000). In this narrative, athletes are assumed to be institutionally advantaged, offered a free pass through non-rigorous majors provided by the University. While a growing body of literature identifies the challenges student athletes face along their route through college (e.g., Adler & Adler, 1991; Coakley, 2007; Comeaux, 2015; Eitzen, 2012; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Watt & Moore, 2001) there has yet to be a formalized account of how the institution tracks and manages the pathways of athletes through higher education. This chapter fills this void.

Scholarship on how athletes navigate the conflicts that emerge through school and sport often takes an identity-level focus (Eiche, Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1997; Epps, 2003; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Jolly, 2008; Roderick, 2001; Simons et al. 1999; Watt & Moore, 2001). Identity-level analysis misses how larger institutional and social forces, outlined in Chapter 6, shape an individual’s identity and decisions. Others uncover the social contexts, namely how economics (money and potential earning) lead to individual and institutional conflicts. One example would be that schools design “easy” majors for athletes so they remain eligible (to the NCAA rules) and, thus earn revenue for their school (Adler & Adler, 1991; Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; McCormick & McCormick, 2006; Smith & Willingham, 2015; Sperber, 2000).

The economic analysis does not match up well with my interview group and respective study. As athletes who do not earn money for the University nor who have the potential of a lucrative career in sports, Olympic sport student athletes do not easily fit into the economic view of college sport for a few reasons. First, economics does not explain why Olympic sport athletes

would be on an athletics-focused track through higher education if neither the schools nor the participants have the potential to earn revenue through sports. Second, it assumes that all universities sponsor an “easy” watered-down academic curriculum specifically for athletes. Third, it equates “sports-first” with a “no-school” mindset, erasing athletes’ academic interests. And finally, by limiting choice to athlete or student the identity based theories miss the complex and complicated interactions between school and sport in the lives of student athletes.

This project fills the void in the research by offering an alternative view of how college sport manages and sorts student athletes. Student athletes are not offered an “easy” route through higher education. Instead, they are offered an *Athlete-Student* route that is costly to their educational outcomes, athletic goals, bodily health, and future aspirations.

### **Methods: Assigning the Routes**

To discern each participant’s route through higher education, I created a questionnaire to standardize the responses and create groups. I then synthesized 300 codes from the second phase interviews into 56 key characteristics that influenced how participants moved from one route to the other. I used a three point Likert scale and assigned a score for each person along the 56 criteria.<sup>44</sup> The 56 characteristics were grouped into the nine defining experiences that shaped the route student athletes pursued including: 1) family view towards sport, 2) scholarship status, 3) major selection process, 4) time allocation, 5) bodily experiences, 6) academic performance, 7) athletic performance, 8) community, and 9) future goals. Each question was linked to a route. If a participant scored high on a question associated with a route, they were more likely to be on that route. For instance, if a participant scored high on questions like: a) experienced academic rejection, b) high athletic rank on team, region, or nation, and c) chose major based on sport commitments, they were more likely to be on the *Athlete-Student* route. Once each participant

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<sup>44</sup> The questionnaire and a detailed description of the quantitative methodology can be found in Appendices M, N.

had a total score associated to all 56 characteristics, they were ranked in relationship to one another on their likelihood of being on a certain route.

Based on this initial quantitative sort, all but seven participants fell into a category. This was due to either scoring high across all three categories or moving through routes at multiple points in their career. I went back through their quantitative measure, life history, college-athlete interview, time diaries and institutional routes to assign them to the route that best fit their experience. The scoring system and assignment process did not yield strict linear outcomes in which an “Athlete-Student” embodied the exact definition for all nine experiences. Rather those who used the “Athlete-Student” route most closely adhered to this path over other routes. Once all participants were assigned to a route, I added in background characteristics to see what larger social forces may have influenced the tracks (see Appendix N). Like the sports-track-to-college, the routes through University are inherently influenced and maintain unequal race, gender, and class relations. Even though I employed a quantitative tactic to initially sort participants into routes through college, the methodology remains qualitative in nature. The ultimate choice of using quantitative measures is to help the reader visualize, in charts, graphs, and ratios, the evidence. The mixed-methods approach allowed for a triangulation of the data and a more robust explanation for how universities sort and limit the future outcomes for athletes.

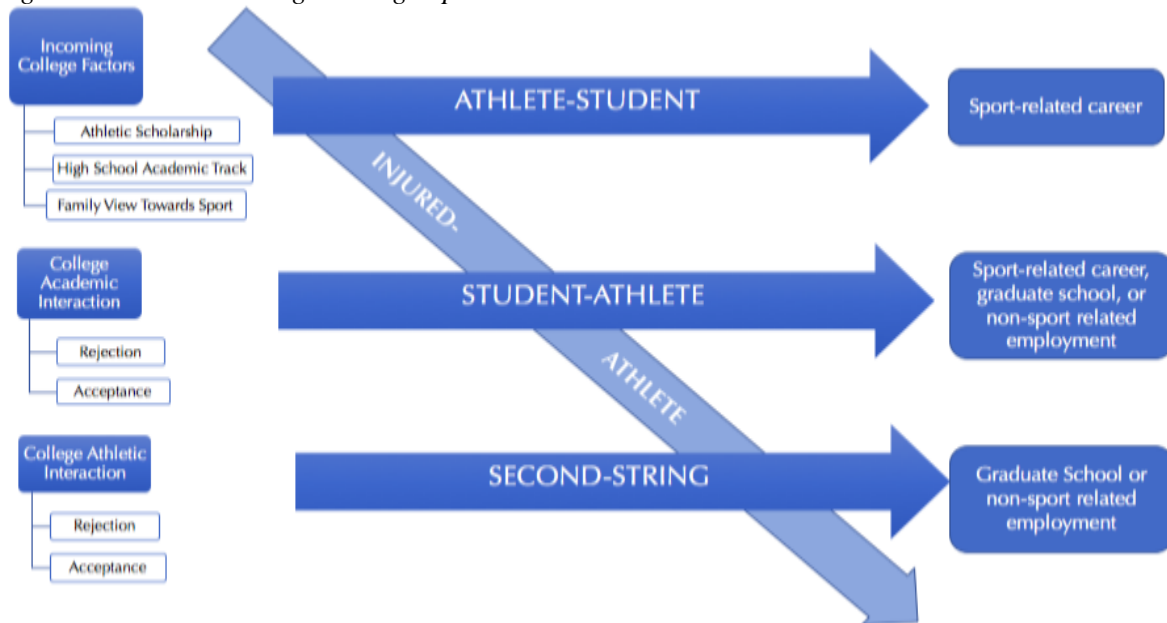
### **Findings**

I observed at least four interlocking and institutionally sponsored routes that emerge through sorting practices. The routes included: *Athlete-Student*, *Student-Athlete*, *Second-String*, and *Injured-Athlete*. These routes do not reflect a “commitment” to sports over school, or vice versa. Rather they indicate how individuals *experienced* the institution. Those on the sports-track-to-college entered Coastal U with a desire to succeed athletically and academically, yet

they endured hurdles and rejections that shifted them from one route to another.

All four routes (*Athlete-Student*, *Student-Athlete*, *Second-String*, and *Injured-Athlete*) shared constant themes that defined participants' journeys through higher education. First, all participants remained students in every sense of the term. They were enrolled in school full time, expected to pass their classes, had strong ambitions to succeed in school, and believed that the college degree was culturally and economically significant. Second, participants on all routes internalized the institutional conflict. Participants believed in the cult of time management, or that they could be better student athletes if they allocated their limited time effectively. Third, by adopting the cult of time management, people across all routes believed they must be efficient with their school commitments and intentionally opted out of the immersive educational experience students at Coastal U are offered. Finally, their body as an object defined the student athlete perception of themselves and others' perceptions of them. While the *Injured-Athlete* group most explicitly personifies the bodily routes, student athletes are separate from their undergraduate peers in their bodily experiences in higher education.

Figure 8.1. Routes Through College Sport





## **Athlete-Student Route**

The *Athlete-Student* route was the most common discrete route, with seventeen or 39.5% of participants functioning as Athlete-Students. This route is defined as a “sports-first” approach to education. The *Athlete-Student* route is the default route through college because of the conflict that emerges between school and sport (as laid out in Chapter 6). The requirements, availability and legibility required of college athletes forces a sports-first approach to education. Those on the *Athlete-Student* route through higher education were more likely to experience numerous academic rejections related to admission standards, failing a course, major selection, and more likely to feel disconnected from their academic peers. The *Athlete-Student* route is forged through a combination of educational rejections and athletic acceptance. Athlete-Students were more likely to have athletic successes and to feel more accepted within the athletic community. Athlete-Students embraced the cult of time management perceiving that they could be more successful in sport *and* school if they better managed their time regardless of the validity of this statement in actual outcomes.

The primary institutional support for the *Athlete-Student* route is sponsored by the sports-track-to-college, which is described in Part II. Seventy-five percent of study participants who were on a sports-focused journey to higher education, remained in the *Athlete-Student* track in college. For example, at Coastal U the admission standards for students is high while the athletic admission standards are respectively low. This led athletes to feel isolated as “special admits” that were separate from and less capable of competing with their classmates. Malcolm, a Black male, Track and Field long jumper saw his classmates through the lens of SAT scores.

I don't feel like I'm a typical [Coastal U] student. A [Coastal U] student is the cream of the crop academically. Now I was good. I had good grades. But I wasn't cream of the crop academically. So, you constantly feel like, ‘damn.’ You're in your classroom and you're like, ‘Damn, I wonder what this person scored on their SATs? This person is just

killing it. They're just getting it like that.' And I'm just like, 'How are you getting it so fast?' So you naturally feel like you're not in your environment (Interview Two).

The admission standards that reward athletes' bodily pursuits reinforce Malcolm's status as an *embodied* subject within higher education, as discussed in Chapter 6. Malcolm, who was admitted on his athletic merits, assumes he is less capable than his academic peers who were admitted on their academic merits. The admission differences lead Malcolm to conclude that his peers can simply "get" the academic material easier than he can. The differences Malcolm perceives between himself and his fellow students are institutionally supported and reinforced as Athlete-Students navigate the academic bureaucracy.

Athlete-Students were more likely to face an academic setback in their first year at Coastal U. This ranged from tangible rejections such as failing a course, going on academic probation, or being steered away from a major. Participants in the *Athlete-Student* route often avoided their top choice major for fear they could not complete the academic curriculum. Anthony, a Black male track athlete, wanted to be a Biology major and settled for Public Health after he twice failed a pre-calculus class which is a requirement for Biology Majors. Captain America, a White woman on the Women's Crew team, wanted to follow her parents' path and become a physician. When she saw the pre-medical curriculum at Coastal U as incompatible with her goals of being a top-national collegiate athlete, she chose sport.

It would be ideally great, if I could get it all in at once, focusing on majoring in bio and doing well in rowing. I don't think that those are the best match for each other. I feel like you can either do good in one and bad in the other. You can't really succeed at both. Because you have to focus so much time and effort to studying, and then, same thing for rowing... So, I'm just going to focus on rowing, and then, go back to school later, when I can--basically, academics will be my sport (Interview Two).

Upon arriving to campus as athletes, these interviewees commented that the athletic schedules, demands, and their personal goals to be top level athletes were incompatible with being students. In this way, it is institutional mechanisms that lead to a narrow route of possible education and

athletic outcomes for college level athletes.

Academic rejections were half of the institutional constraints for the *Athlete-Student* route. Athlete-Students received positive material and social benefits from athletic participation. The athlete-admission process financially bonds college admits through athletic performance. Fifteen of the 17 Athlete-Students had some form of athletic financial support. The two that did not were both male rowers who viewed admission into Coastal U alone as a material benefit. These two men, along with the fifteen scholarship athletes described how they felt obligated to prove their athletic ability was worth entry into and financial backing through Coastal U. In this way, they were primed entering college with a sports-first mentality.

The concrete athletic victories within the *Athlete-Student* route furthered the sports-first approach. Malcolm became an All-American his first year at Coastal U and Captain America won two national championships. In the summers, Captain America competed in and won multiple rowing World Championships. Malcolm took up a second sport, joining the football team. They made it clear that they prioritized sleep, rest, recovery, rehabilitation, over doing all the reading, attending professors' office hours, making friends with the student body, attending optional lectures, or having a campus job or internship.

The positive experiences within sport make those on the *Athlete-Student Route* more susceptible to messages from their athletic community. Malcolm's coach told incoming recruits and current athletes that "C's get degrees" or "a degree from [Coastal U]" not GPA or major, should be the goal. Coaches' commentary that athletes should simply *survive* school is in large part why students like Malcolm and Captain America opted-out of certain majors. They received the message from their athletic community (peers and leaders) that sports are *the* priority and space for risk, growth, development, and challenges. Malcolm translated this mandate into a set

of educational and athletic habits where sports became the area for extra time and effort, not school. “Academically, there's few things that I have structure wise. You just do what you got to do.” In contrast, he implemented structure in sports, because, “I feel like you have to have those things athletically in order to be successful” (Malcolm, Interview Two). Malcolm felt this way because of how the institutions are designed. Athletics is a system with mandatory daily workouts, constant interaction with peers and authority figures, explicit goals and opportunities which contrasts with what Malcolm sees as the nebulous schooling environment. He tries to read the material before lecture but it does not always happen. He tries to go to office hours with little success on attendance. He tries to get a tutor, but used the services only once. If he put the same effort into school, he would excel. But there is not enough time or commitment to do both.

Rather than seeing the system as flawed, Athlete-Students learned it was their choice to put in more time towards sports than academics. They adopted the cult of time management and believed they failed by not managing their time efficiently. Malcolm explained how each day he faced a choice of where to dedicate his time, and often, athletics won.

You got to pick and choose... You don't have enough hours in the day to give 100% commitment to everything. You've got to spread yourself out. You have to pick like, 'OK, right now I'm going to do school, I got this hour, what am I going to use it as? Am going to do some extra workout at home?' In order to be great, when you get home, you got to do some extra pushups, and sit-ups, and planks, you got to stretch. You got to take care of your body... You really need to work out your core but you really need to study. I mean it's a constant battle everyday to pick what you want to give time to (Interview Two).

Along the *Athlete-Student* route a binary choice, sport or academics, emerges. Malcolm approached each day considering: “What's the lesser of two evils? Do I really need to do this?” (Malcolm, Interview Two). In evaluating the “lesser of two evils” Malcolm sees school as something to “get by in” whereas sports are the purpose of his existence at Coastal U. He asks himself: “Am I doing poorly in school? I'm getting by. I'm not doing as great as I know I can. But I'm getting by” (Malcolm, Interview, Two). He went on to state that he simply does not have

the time or energy to put in what is required of him academically to do more than “get by.”

The *Athlete-Student* route that promotes school as something to “survive” rather than improve within limits the post-collegiate options for Athlete-Students. Malcolm, a Black male, gave up his dream of becoming a doctor like his father. He hopes to graduate within a year, earn a professional track contract, and compete in the 2020 Olympics. He acknowledges this is not enough of a life-plan and hopes that after his stint as a professional athlete he will become a real estate investor or property manager. Rather than sport leading to a deeper educational commitment as promised by the NCAA, the *Athlete-Student* route forces athletes like Malcolm to elevate their sport to the detriment of academic curriculum and post-college options. His future goals originally required a specific knowledge set, or pre-medical curriculum. While on the *Athlete-Student* route he readjusted his post-college goals to a pathway with sport at the center and a secondary career in an area that does not require a specific disciplinary degree. In these ways, the reproductive elements of the route become evident.

#### **Reproduction Effects of the *Athlete-Student* Route.**

Race and gender shape who is on which route. Women were 59% of all athlete-students. White women were 35% of Athlete-Students, on par with their representation in the study. People of color were overrepresented in this route, as they were 41.2% of Athlete-Students, but 23% of the study population. Women of Color were overrepresented in this route, making up 23% of all Athlete-Students. More troubling, 100% of Black men in the study were on this route through higher education. At Coastal U, Black males were less than two-percent of the overall population but were close to forty percent of the male athlete population (NCAA Graduation Rates, 2016).

Black male athletes in the study perceived that as Black men they existed on the campus only as athletes. The lack of Black male student role models made it harder for Malcolm to break

away from the *Athlete-Student* route. “I am always, always the only Black man in my class” (Malcolm, Interview Two). Malcolm described how he knows he reaffirms the connection between Blackness and athleticism as he is viewed as a “Black Athlete” rather than a “Black Student” while on campus. He believes people see him and think: “‘Oh, there he is, another one, that's how he got in [through sports]” (Malcolm, Interview Three). But, Malcolm hopes that if he can graduate he can “prove people wrong” about the notion that Black men are only athletes.

The only option Malcolm is afforded to “prove people wrong” through the *Athlete-Student* route is to pursue his second choice major and become a professional track athlete. The sports-first approach to higher education, combined with the *Athlete-Student* traits, leave little room for Malcolm, a Black man, to imagine greater possibilities beyond sport. All the Black men on this path hoped to pursue professional sport for a career. Less than ten percent of their White male peers wanted to pursue professional sports. The overrepresentation of Black men in the public discourse and media as professional athlete shapes their future aspirations (Coakley, 2007; Eitzen, 2012; Cooky, et al, 2015). The *Athlete-Student* route fundamentally influences all participants and creates a veil of free choice toward one outcome or the other.

Erwin, a White male on the *Athlete-Student* Route, explained why the sports-first approach leads to such a narrow view of future possible outcomes. He deemed it the “Rowing Trap” or how in the pursuit of becoming a top-level rower, athletes must put in increasing amounts of time in their sport, to the detriment of other activities.

We spend all this time rowing, when the rest of the world is living. The way I look at it is I see a lot of people who spent a lot of time in the sport... Like someone spends a lot of time working at computers, they're going to know a lot about computers. But if you spend a lot of time rowing, you're going to know about rowing. And then, your skills are going to be in rowing. So what are you going to do? You're going to coach (Interview One).

Erwin summarizes the drawbacks of the *Athlete-Student* route. College athletes become experts in their field, refining their technical skills, physical aptitude, and extending the bounds of their

physical and mental limits. Coaching opportunities remain limited and are often volunteer or low paid (Heckman, 2003; Lapchick et al, 2014). The *Athlete-Student* group was more likely to see coaching as their future job as this was the most direct application of the skills they developed.

While seventeen participants spent most of college on the *Athlete-Student* route, another eighteen identified as “Athlete-Students” at some point during the study. Students moved freely between these routes, which means at least 35 were impacted by the sports-first approach to education. Participants felt like “Athlete-Students” during training camps, during competition season, and during exam seasons. For instance, Goose who was classified as a Second-Stringer, felt most like an Athlete-Student during finals week as his peers attended extra study sessions, office hours, or crammed for exams, while he went to *volandatory* practices. Erwin felt most like an “Athlete-Student” during the Spring racing season. Come January he explicitly put school second, enrolling in minimal coursework, two major courses and one elective, and putting in extra workouts in his free time. During the fall, Erwin attempted to be a Student-Athlete as he loaded up on courses, taking upwards of 17 units, allowing his athletic performance to decline as he stayed up late studying and writing history papers. Erwin’s strategy to be a student at least part of the year, created a boom and bust cycle of athletics, where he felt inadequate at both, never quite good enough of a student and never quite good enough of an athlete. In the end, the elusive status of being a top student and athlete evaded Erwin. The next section reviews why the *Student-Athlete* route is not the default route through college and eludes most athletes.

### **Student-Athlete Route**

The *Student-Athlete* route refers to those who try to be top athletes and top students. They had yet to face a major athletic or academic rejection. A total of 35% of the participants traversed this route. While Captain America and Malcolm accepted it was impossible to be a strong

student and a strong athlete, Student-Athletes are true believers or those who see themselves as the exceptions that could pursue two rigorous, and incompatible, commitments simultaneously. This route is aspirational, transitional, and oppositional. Student-Athletes are aspirational because they aspire to be top in both areas, rather than achieving success in sport *or* school. The aspirational nature of the route made it transitional in that it became a stopping point as participants moved from one route to another. Moreover, participants often felt like they were the worst at both, never fully being a successful student and athlete. As Student-Athletes attempted to be the best at both, they also experienced the greatest degree of conflict between pursuing top-level athletics and academics. The Student-Athlete appeared to be the most difficult category to exist within but is the one espoused by the NCAA and Colleges, and assumed by the public.

Institutionally, the *Student-Athlete* route is considered the default for all collegiate athletes. The NCAA and member institutions have a multi-billion-dollar legal stake in ensuring the *Student-Athlete* route since it publicly represents athletes as students instead of employees. One way the institution supports the *Student-Athlete* route is through the admission and scholarship process. Student-Athletes were more likely to come from sports-committed families or those who value sports for its moral features. These students did not enter high school assuming sports could help with college access. An example of this in the study is Sanya. Sanya applied through the regular admission process and accepted a spot at a private school. But her stand-out performance at the State high school track meet in May of her senior year earned her athletic offers to top programs. As late as June she switched her plans, choosing to be a Coastal U athlete over a private school student.

Sanya and her fellow Student-Athletes were also more likely to be on an Advanced Placement track through high school than Athlete-Students. Whereas three of seventeen Athlete-



Students took three or more AP courses in high school, eleven of fifteen Student-Athletes did. In turn, Student-Athletes came to Coastal U with nearly a semester of college units that could apply to degree progress, university requirements, and inform their course selection. This culminated in a striking difference in how Athlete-Students versus Student-Athletes approached selecting a major. Whereas all Athlete-Students saw sports impacting their academic curriculum, only four Student-Athletes believed sports commitments influenced their decision on a major.

Once at the University, institutional support for the *Student-Athlete* route came through community membership. Twelve of the fifteen Student-Athletes felt included in the academic community, either through having a positive interaction with faculty, forming study groups with non-athletes, or being admitted into their top choice major. As a result, they felt tied to both their sport and school community. Student-athletes were less likely than Athlete-Students to be direct recipients of an athlete stereotype or slur. They were more likely than Athlete-Students to have NARP friends or join other campus organizations. This dual-membership came from their ability to blend into both spaces. To balance their athletic and academic obligations, student-athletes described possessing a “secret identity.”

As one of the few athletes admitted to the Engineering School, Amanda, a White woman on the crew team, initially hid her athletic ties from her classmates and professors and her rigorous major from her teammates. To be successful in both school and sport, her strategy was to keep her worlds separate. To her, she thought it would help to “focus on one thing at a time. So this semester, it really was, Athlete-Student-Athlete-Student. When I’m at practice, class, practice, studying. Repeat” (Amanda, Interview Two). Representing the aspirational nature of this route, Amanda could not maintain the segmentation. “But then it kinda just all got muddled together, recently, towards the end of the semester” (Interview One). By “muddled together”

what Amanda meant was she performed poorly that semester. Her GPA dropped below a 2.0, the lowest it had ever been. She feared she would be thrown out of school and off the team. She spent the winter break considering quitting her sport, but decided to give it one more semester. In choosing to stay on the *Student-Athlete* route, Amanda extended her degree timeline, and became a lower-performing engineering student.

Another downside to the secret-identity approach is that Student-Athletes can feel excluded from both worlds. Monique, like her teammate Amanda, segmented herself, trying to be a full “student” in class and a full “athlete” in sports. When I asked about her support system, she said her main confidant was her mom. She did not go to classmates or professors if she struggled in school for fear of reaffirming the dumb jock stereotype. And, she did not confide in her teammates or coaches if she struggled in sports because:

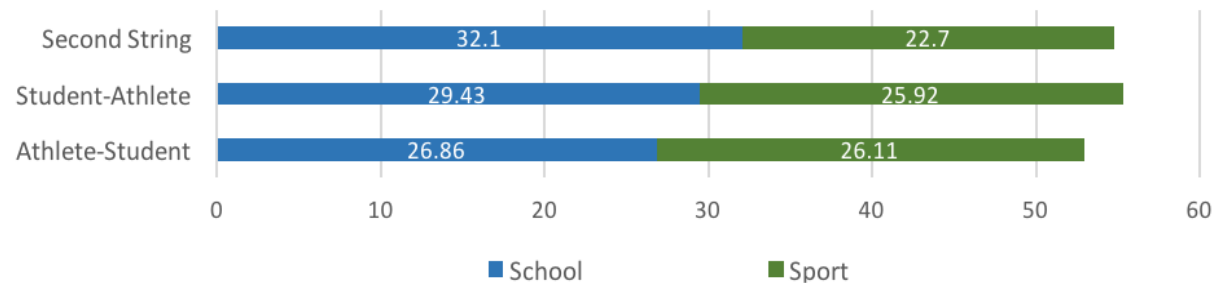
In rowing you have to pretend like you're always mentally strong...you have to pretend that you're super strong and nothing is wrong with your life... You can't have a problem or people are like, 'Oh my God? Is she OK? If she's not OK, then I don't want her in my boat.' So you don't want that to be spread around (Interview Two).

What Monique describes is how athletic success is tied to building trust amongst teams. But trust is breached, as Monique explained, if someone shows mental or physical weakness. Monique’s coping skill was to hide her full self from her teammates to avoid an athletic rejection.

How Student-Athletes spent their time separated them from their athletic and academic communities. Student-Athletes were more consistent in their homework patterns than their peers. The *Student-Athlete* route is the middle approach between two habitual poles. Athlete-Students spent more time on sports and less time on school than their counterparts. Second-Stringers reflect the other approach, spending more time on school and less time on sport. Because school allows more discretion for time spent, the time towards sport is more consistent across routes. There is a 3.4 hour difference in time spent per week for sports between the *Second-String* and

*Athlete-Student* routes. But a 5.3 hour time difference towards school. This difference translates to *Second-Stringers* putting in ninety more hours over the course of a seventeen-week semester, and 180 hours in one school year. As the middle-road between academic and athletic poles, student-athletes spent more time on both throughout the week, and not without drawbacks. Student-athletes were more likely to feel inadequate in both areas.

Figure 8.2. Average Weekly Hourly Time Commitment for Routes Through Higher Education



Amanda tried to keep up a rigorous studying routine alongside her engineering classmates. Her department recommends students put in at least fifty hours per week into school. Amanda reported the academic habits of a second-stringer, logging upwards of thirty hours per week on her studies. Amanda felt behind her classmates. To keep up, she would study between classes when it was easy for her to assume her “student” role. Transitioning back into her student role after practice was more difficult.

It’s always super easy to switch from school mode to practice mode. But it was really hard for me to switch the other way around. I think because after practice mode, you’re just so drained. It’s hard to start six hours of studying [after practice] (Interview Two).

Amanda thought the quality of her studying declined at night. Exhausted from practice, and in a technical major where the answers to problem sets were always available, she too often relied on the solutions manual rather than trying to struggle through and learn the material.

Participants like Amanda coped with the school and sport conflict by being efficient with school while allowing sport to be the space for growth and development. The Physicist, a White male distance runner, was an often-cited role model by his teammates as someone who could

“have it all.” But the Physicist still felt inadequate compared to his physics peers who could attend talks, conduct research with faculty, or complete assignments properly.

I have a hard time sustaining a really good work ethic in terms of my studying. I do. I find it's extremely exhausting to study every single night. There are days that I won't do any school work outside of class... Usually three maybe four days out of the week, I'm really working hard on my physics (Interview Two).

To maintain school and sports the Physicist confesses he can do school three or four days, compared to his seven-day-a-week sport endeavor. He attends required practices six-days-per week, adds in recovery workouts on his days off, and has a nightly physical therapy routine to survive his lingering injuries. He can develop and improve as an athlete, putting in time and energy daily, he cannot do the same for school.

Seamus, another White male distance runner, calls his approach finding “shortcuts” through school. Like Amanda and the Physicist, he did not want to compromise his major. As the child of immigrants and the first in his family to go to college, he was determined to pursue a major in business school and later a career in finance. Seamus recounted that the main skill he learned at Coastal U was to be efficient with his school commitments. This included learning the structure of a class, calculating the percentage of each assignment on the syllabus, and determining where to put his effort. He noticed that NARPs do not have to make these educational compromises, but Student-Athletes do.

The best thing that I've found [is] understanding what gets you a good grade. Which is, ideally not the best academic, but figuring out, 'Hey if you're spending four hours reading, and it's not really helping that much don't do that.' Stuff like that. You have to find the shortcuts. Which is big. You don't have all day... [Also,] knowing yourself. Instead I take a nap, I feel better during the week. When I do study, I'm able to study. Where like, if you're really tired, and you need to study, you just might not be able to. So when you do study, making sure that hour or two hours is really efficient. And, to do that, make sure you have energy (Interview Two).

Compared to his teammates Seamus is a Student-Athlete. He chose a competitive major, though members of his athletic community discouraged this path. But he is focused less on learning the

material than getting through the material.

Even with being efficient in school, Student-Athletes felt their sport commitments suffer. Andrew was a professional athlete before coming to the University. Transitioning back to college, he spent one summer being a full-time student. In reflecting on these different positions, he found it is impossible to be a top student and top athlete at the same time.

I'm not running to my potential, taking the classes I'm taking this semester. Didn't necessarily feel like I lost that in previous years. But this semester, I can definitely say it's impossible to do... Obviously, if you're doing anything else, you're not getting full-recovery. When I was skiing, it was just, wake-up, train, eat, sleep, take a nap, wake up. Do that again. Get a good night's sleep. Mentally stay refreshed. Physically stay refreshed. So obviously if you're adding stresses outside of that, you're going to have some negative impact (Interview Two).

Andrew describes necessary components—rest, recovery, and rehabilitation—of an elite athlete's lifestyle that the NCAA's time requirements exclude. Instead, athletes must incorporate these habits into their schedule. The institution of higher education expects that students put in at least three times the amount of out-of-class-time work into their education. These individualized expectations place the onus on participants to carve out the time and energy into their schedules. This exacerbates the cult of time management for student-athletes who internalize their lack of educational or athletic performance as their own fault.

While all participants spoke to some degree about the importance of time management, Student-Athletes believed this was the *central* skill to their success, or failure. Taylor recalled how throughout the day she considers if she is maximizing her time efficiently:

The time I spend studying I'm like, 'OK is this worth losing sleep over?' I try to be as diligent with my time. But it's hard to be like, 'OK, when I'm not practicing I should be studying!' And that's how I feel a lot. Like every hour is precious. I should be studying, practicing, or recovering (Interview Two).

But efficiency itself ends up being yet another layer of stress and anxiety, ultimately adding to her fatigue. "Thinking about time management" she said, "I think that's fatiguing" (Taylor,

Interview One). In the end, Taylor admitted that these micro decisions favor sports.

Across the sport and gender spectrum, Steve, a White male rower, confirmed Taylor's sentiment. Though I placed Steve in the *Student-Athlete* route, he thought differently of himself. By the Spring of his first year, he felt as if he already failed his initial college goals.

At the moment I definitely consider myself an Athlete-Student because rowing consumes so much time. You're always trying to fit things around rowing, rather than trying to fit things around school. Which is how I think it should be. I feel like I'm here to get a degree, rather than row, and then get my degree. So I feel like I should, probably do more, to try and take the emphasis away from rowing. I'm not sure how I'd do that, just because there's no leeway to do it. There are these blocks of time that I know are just gone from my day. And you can't really get them back (Interview Two).

Steve and Taylor's feeling that they must simply resign themselves to the large athletic time commitments did not come by accident. The way sport and school commitments are designed in higher education individualize the problem by telling participants it is up to them to carve out the mental and physical energy to devote to becoming a high-level student *and* athlete.

### **Reproduction Effects of the *Student-Athlete* Route.**

The drive to be a successful student and athlete manifested in participants future career goals. Students on this route remained ambivalent, dreaming both of becoming a professional athlete and becoming a professional in anything but sports, post-college. The runners and rowers were interested in pursuing a national team or professional clubs. Some saw these goals as mutually exclusive. Amanda struggled to determine if she should spend a summer on the under-23 team or do an internship in her field. Seamus, saw the potential for a career as a runner as an asset in the business world. What they shared is a myriad of interests. The benefit of the *Student-Athlete* route is it did not seem to limit participant's future aspirations.

The lack of future aspirations for Athlete-Students in contrast to the breadth of options for Student-Athletes, is institutionally consequential when considering the demographics of each group. The *Student-Athlete* route was nearly exclusively White with one person of color, a Black

female. Of the Black men in the study, Duane came the closest to joining the Student-Athlete Route. He at times identified as such but knew it could not last. Faced with large athletic and academic commitments, and not enough hours in the day, he made the choice to elevate athletics. He found that compared to his Coastal U peers, he would never be the best student, but he could go on to become one of the track legends of the University.

The *Student-Athlete* route was more open to White males as they made up more than 50% of participants in this group. While this route is challenging or near impossible, it holds the most opportunities, particularly post-college. Participants here pursued their ideal major and, in turn, had a wide array of post-college goals. This is in stark contrast to Athlete-Students who could not pursue their ideal academic track and were pushed towards elevating sports above all else. With Black males exclusively represented in the *Athlete-Student* route, the institution signals that White males and females have greater in- and post-college opportunities. Further, with the NCAA supporting the *Student-Athlete* route as the default, but assuming that it is up to individuals to manage their time appropriately to get through this route, they are inherently discriminating against Black male athletes who are routed on a sports-track-through-college.

Finally, the fleeting nature of the *Student-Athlete* route makes it impossible to be a default course through college. None of the fifteen student-athletes maintained a true balance. Five started as Athlete-Students in their first years at college. Through both subtle and drastic sport rejections including injury, negative contact with coaches, and losing their starting spot, they drifted towards academics. Others, like the Physicist, became a Student-Athlete during certain points of the week. As the next section shows, the *Student-Athlete* route was also fleeting in that those on it had yet to suffer a major institutional set back. Second-Stringers like Camilla, started out as Student-Athletes, but changed course after failing to achieve athletic success.

## Second-String Route

Camilla, a child of physicians, began the pre-medical track in high school. She arrived at Coastal U with a semester of transferable AP units in math and sciences and a partial athletic scholarship. As a nationally ranked high school athlete, Camilla was sure she would maintain high levels in both sport and school. In combination, the rigorous pre-medical and athlete tracks tested her willingness to be a student and an athlete. She considered switching majors at times when she just “was not doing well” in school. She chose to stay in pre-med because, “I have a lot of support from my family. That helps a lot. And then, it’s just, a desire” (Interview Two).

Camilla’s journey through Coastal U exemplifies the *Second-String* route in that her educational preparation closely aligns with the general student body—her top choice major is highly selective with curved exams, competitive prerequisite requirements, and inflexible class scheduling times. Camilla’s “not doing well” in school earned her a 3.6 GPA. Her “not doing well” in sports slates her near the bottom of the team. While she represented Coastal U in races as a team participant her freshman year, by her final year of college she had yet to race at regional or national competition. She essentially just practiced with the team. Despite limited athletic participation in competitive cross school races, Camilla remained a college athlete for four years. Though she was not “the best” on her team, she still perceived her participation as being part of the best with the cost of reduced performance in academics.

The *Second-String Route* differed from the *Athlete-Student Route* in that athletes like Camilla elevated academics to the detriment of their athletic performance. She participated in the junior national team over the summers in high school, joined a competitive high school club, trained at will in her own single-scul, and was a sought-after recruit by top college programs. By college, she differed from her teammates in her academic interests. Camilla took classes that



conflicted with practice, she stayed up late to complete assignments, and she had long lab hours rather than naps before an afternoon workout. These academic demands hindered her athletic performance. As someone with ambitions to become a doctor, why did Camilla stay in sports particularly if her academic demands made it next to impossible to be a top-level athlete?

Economics cannot explain why Camilla and her fellow Second-Stringers remain athletes. Gary Becker's (1962) Human Capital Theory, a cornerstone of educational economics, assumes that individuals make the "rational choice" to invest in education and delay earning today for the long-term future earnings. Through education degrees and skills, individuals accrue human capital that can be exchanged in the labor market. This model would assume sub-par athletes with few to no career opportunities in sport would quit if it interfered with other career or long term goals. The *Second-String* route reveals the social hold sports have over athletes that extend beyond monetary or career interests.

Joy, a true walk-on is rare in Division I sports. She spent one year at Coastal U and then joined Women's Crew with no prior experience in the sport. Joy felt her academic performance decline and her possible internship and career opportunities diminish when she joined crew. In our second interview Joy repeated she needed rowing to have a human experience that would never again be available after she left college. Rowing to her required something not offered in school: "A lot of self-sacrifice, a lot of mutual suffering and understanding, and, I've said this phrase a hundred times, but a collective mission or collective goal that I've never experienced before" (Interview Two). Joy's response was reiterated by participants across routes. Sport brought an opportunity for a *collective* sense of achievement, or experience of collaborating with a large group to set, work towards, and achieve a high and explicit goal. The less material outcomes such as forming bonds with teammates through daily physical suffering, the

opportunity to test and extend one's own physical limits, and community acceptance, kept Second-Stringers part of sport despite limited individual achievement.

With a mixture of athletic rejections and academic acceptances, the *Second-String* route includes those who remain athletes but try to minimize sport's harm to their academic and career goals. Second-Stringers had clearer academic and career goals because they saw participation in sport as their goal, not their performance. Part of this came from their pre-college familial and educational involvements. With eleven participants on this route, only one came from a *sports-track-to-college* family. The rest were split between *committed* and *disinterested* views towards sport. They were more likely to be on the advanced placement educational track in high school. Seven took three or more AP classes in high school. Joy, the leader of the group, took a combination of 13 AP and International Baccalaureate (another track where units can transfer to college) classes. She transferred in 46.5 college units. Because most were not anticipating athletics as a route to college they secured other sources of financial funding. None in this group were on a full athletic scholarship. They were the opposite of the *Athlete-Student* route where eight received full athletic funding. Less than half of Second-Stringers received partial scholarships. They used some combination of financial and parental aid to pay for their educations. As a result, this route had a limited material tie to the athletic institution.

The lack of monetary obligation combined with the increased likelihood that they were accepted to Coastal U as students first appears to have made it palatable for Second-Stringers to elevate their academic pursuits—likely due to their large investment and commitment to school. The Second-Stringers' academic pursuits include features such: 1) a capped major with high requirements and standards for entry, 2) entry-level courses that are far from entry, and instead assume students learned the material in high school, 3) course policies intended to “weed out”

students such as regular, hierarchical assessments with curved exams and grades, and 4) longer in-class hours such as labs. All but three Second-Stringers were in capped majors that required these four criteria. Several Athlete-Students like Brittany and Anthony started out pursuing this batch of majors, but were “weeded out” after they failed prerequisite courses and went on academic probation. A key observation of this study is that those in the *Second-String* route have little experience with a significant academic setback that defines the Athlete-Student’s experience. Students like Camilla and Joy may feel a sense of failure—for Joy, it was her first ever B—but it is not severe enough to push them away from their first choice major. For the length of the study, it was not enough to force the binary choice of school or sport.

The lack of academic rejections allowed this group to feel accepted and included in the academic community. Second-Stringers were the least likely to be the direct victim of the student-athlete stereotype. They were more likely to form friendships and study groups with NARPs. Their confidence and historic learned success in the educational space increased the likelihood of forming connections with faculty. All but one second-stringer regularly visited office hours and believed it was important to form personal connections with their professors and graduate student instructors. This was both for grade-enhancement reasons and professional development. Imani, the one woman/person of color on this route used her connection to a professor to write an appeal letter that swayed the admission committee to let her into a capped major. Later she used this same professor to secure a summer internship. Inclusion in the academic community came through academic achievement. This group had the highest average GPA, a 3.36. All members had above a 3.0, allowing them to pursue internships and employment during school and graduate school after college.

Another institutional mechanism that leads to the *Second-String* route is the evaluation

process within athletics. Sports have weeding mechanisms in parallel with academics, like team and conference athletic minimum standards for participation, that punish those who do not participate fully in the sport. Consequently, this route went through some level of athletic rejection. Goose was a three-sport varsity level high school athlete. He went from being a state champion and top member of all three of his teams to the bottom of the college rowing program. His coach revoked his water privileges after an underwhelming athletic performance. Goose spent three months waking up before six am to travel with the team to the boathouse to then workout out alone on land. Only two Second-Stringers, both freshmen, represented Coastal U at regional and national competitions. The rest spent years training to be a legitimate athletic contributor. Thus, Second-Stringers are not participating to win, but participating for what appears to be a complicated system of social, body, moral, racial, and gendered reasons.<sup>45</sup>

The *Second-String* route, like the others, is formed by the individualistic nature of the University. Second-Stringers participated and internalized the cult of time management with better outcomes. They believed they needed proper academic and athletic balancing skills to succeed. Interestingly, Second-Stringers' lower-performing athletic prowess did not reduce the time Second-Stringers put towards their sport. Doing the "bare minimum" towards sport led this group to endure nearly 23 hours per week of physical conditioning. The difference between this route and others is how they used their discretionary athlete time, or that which falls into the category of rest, rehabilitation, and preparation for sport. This group exercised the least amount of rest and bodily preparation of any group, which may have been a strong contributor to their greater risk of injury and decreased athletic performance.

Another unified theme of Second-Stringers is that they are less likely than their

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<sup>45</sup> The motivations for why participants remained in sports exceeds the scope of this dissertation. The interview data did delve into why athletes stayed in sport. I intend to explore this question in more depth in future work.

teammates to modify their body beyond what was required in athletic practice. This meant they did fewer optional workouts (beyond the *volandatory* ones) and were less likely to use weight gain/loss routines. They sacrificed rest, recovery, and athletic preparation to complete academic assignments. In combination, these habits made the group more vulnerable to injury. Joy had yet to experience a major injury and did not participate in her team's culture of arriving to workouts an hour early to warm up. Instead, she used the time to study. Joy arrived with fifteen minutes to change, warm-up, and start the workout. She knew this habit meant some of her teammates judged her and it could compromise the trust she built amongst the team. Joy worried that her participation in a time-consuming campus group outside of her team would affect her team's perception of her commitment to rowing. The combined obligations of sport, school, and this extracurricular activity meant she sacrificed sleep.

I'm willing to sacrifice an hour of sleep and get like six and half instead of eight hours of sleep to fulfill the commitments of the [student club] because I think that what we're doing is really good for the University... I know that if I talked to some of the girls on the team and was like, 'oh yeah I get to bed at 11:30 instead of 10.' There are some girls on the team who would be like, 'I have a hard bed-time of 9:30 and you have to trust your teammates to get that amount of sleep.' And it's like, I'm not really on that level. And, I think there are somewhat limiting aspects of the trust (Interview Two).

Joy's time diaries reflected her habits. She put in 26.5 hours towards mandatory and *volandatory* workouts and 40.5 hours towards school and her campus club. To keep up with these commitments, she slept an average of 6.5 hours per night during the week, two to three hours less than her teammates. As she recounted, these habits were something she felt she had to hide from her teammates to remain fully connected to the team.

Joy's fellow Second-Stringers sacrificed rest and recovery as well. They spent 1.64 hours per week on rest and recovery, compared to the four hours their teammates put in. Instead of resting, they spent more time on academics. They studied an average of 21 hours and spent 33 hours per week of total school time, including attending class. They dedicated more time to

school compared to their teammates, but still felt behind the Coastal U NARPs. Like the *Student-Athlete* route, Second-Stringers felt they compromised their education for sport. In examining their academic syllabi, Second-Stringers required closer to 45 hours per week minimum.

Even with a greater time investment in school than the other routes, Second-Stringers still felt sports was for exploration and development, whereas school was something to get through. Morgan often missed optional and enriching course assignments, like attending guest lectures because they occurred during practice. London wanted to do an internship and join a club but could not fit both into her schedule. Stella, a theater major, wanted to star in a play or attend more local events. Sophia tells of her emotional energy, planning, and goals:

With athletics, it's kind of like, take it slow, you have to build up. Whereas with academics, I tend to rush it a little bit more than I should. I try and fix a problem the week before the final. Whereas if I had done a little more progressive build, it'd be better... my athletic side definitely hinders my academic side, more than my academic side hinders my athletic side...Athletics is much more emotionally taxing. I would never miss a practice for going to office hours. But I would always miss office hours to go to practice. I feel like athletics does trump some other extra curriculars that could benefit my academics. I'm more often thinking about a 2K test coming up than a quiz I'm going to have, later on in discussion. It's much more, long-term, focused (Interview Two).

Second-Stringers believed true achievement was always around the corner. They did not blame the institution but rather blamed themselves for not managing their time better.

Camilla echoed Sophia's concerns. Camilla did not think the institution needed to change and instead looked to time management. She felt grateful that compared to other teams, her sport allowed them to practice early in the morning and later in the afternoon, leaving the day free to take class and complete assignments.

There's only so much time in the day. I don't know how they could fix it--they can't. We can't have less practice. You want to be competitive as a school, and so you do as much training as you can (Interview Two).

Even for Second-Stringers, college sport creates a compromised educational experience by individualizing the conflict between the two institutions.

### **Reproduction Effects of the *Second-String* Route.**

Second-Stringers did not imagine careers as coaches, professional athletes, or athletic administrators. Eight of the eleven intended to pursue graduate school and all had ambitions for a professional occupation that would require either prior work experience or additional school.

London saw this problem in her sport to career vision of herself. She along with other athletes could not pursue internships or employment opportunities while engaged in sport. She noted that once she and her teammates graduate they will be “competing with the other people in [our] grade in terms of career.” But, as athletes, they will have a shorter resume.

If you compare yourself to a normal student who was probably working during [college] and forming their future career network... And so that's something really important that you need to keep in mind because when sports are done, you need to make sure that you have, some experience other than just your sport (Interview Two).

London had this realization after she was admitted to the Business school. There, she saw NARPs actively pursuing work experience in their desired industry while still maintaining an academic course load. She realized she would be behind those peers while on the job market. Most Athlete-Students who are sport-focused did not have London's realization of risk that allowed her a course correction that will hopefully lead to a stronger post college exit.

The institutional controls that lead to disparate athletic routes create differing options based on race and gender. Like the *Student-Athlete* route, Second-Stringers were more likely to be White, but unlike Student-Athletes, female. Out of 11 Second-Stringers, two were White men, one was a mixed-race woman and the rest were White women. This demographic breakdown represents the impact of the academic rejections felt by people of color in their route to college and through college. Racially Black participants expressed greater acceptance in their sporting pursuits than academics. When you look at the same questions with gender in mind the disparity is less clear. Women of color were distributed through all routes and White women were the

most concentrated in the *Second-String* route. The concentration of women in the Second-String route is puzzling since as a group, women were no more likely than men to be rejected from sports. Gender sport scholars may see this result as a symptom of the lingering male origin and cultural dominance of men in sports (Carr, 2016; Cooky et al., 2015; Martin, 2016; Messner, 1995, 2002, 2007). Unlike male rowers, women in sports did not have a robust alumni network that could offer an insider track to a job out of college. By sensing their marginalization in both sports and careers, women may feel increased pressure to maximize their educational achievement to better their job prospects post-college.<sup>46</sup>

Institutional mechanisms exerted a temporal influence over Second-Stringers. A second-stringer is someone who enters college with a strong academic background, with a clear vision for their major, who can overcome extreme physical exhaustion and forego sleep, who can overcome social pressures from teammates, and all the while remain committed to a demanding athletic regime with little or no material rewards. To be expected, nobody from the *Athlete-Student* track moved to the *Second-String* track likely because of the lowering of the Academic track from their own perception of self-worth. Another interesting transition observed is that Second-Stringers reported they were on the *Athlete-Student* route during campus holidays when they stayed to train three to four times a day and during the time when competitive racing was underway. The key take away from the Second-Stringer is that this amazing group of moderate performers did this at a price to themselves. In trying to elevate their academic habits and forgoing physical recovery some paid the ultimate price: persistent and occasionally life long injury. They unfortunately joined the *Injured-Student* route.

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<sup>46</sup> Exploring the ways women are marginalized in sports, even in all-women spaces, is out of the scope of this dissertation. For additional reading in this area drawing on data from this project, see my upcoming book chapter, Hextrum, K. (In press). Segregated bodies: Gender reproduction within college sport. In Milner and Braddock II (Eds.) *Women in sport: Breaking barriers, facing obstacles*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.



## **Injured-Athlete Route**

CM began as a bonafide Athlete-Student with hopes of becoming a nationally ranked college runner and later a professional runner. Unfortunately, CM's repeated injuries and the corresponding dislocation from the athletic community blocked her dream. Before her freshman year even started, she was injured at the long-distance pre-season training camp. Her physical health not up to par, she committed to additional workouts and rehabilitation. The more time she put into the sport, the more damaging the recurring injury became. She also learned that injury begets injury as the human body is an interconnected machine. This paradoxically angered her coaches who invested a sizeable scholarship in her. Her repeated injuries combined with the coach's treatment left her feeling distant from her teammates who continued to train and travel together while she stayed on campus. CM struggled academically, recognizing that her Athlete-Student mindset in high school put her well behind the NARPs. After almost being placed on academic probation all while recovering from an injury CM shifted her focus and moderated her athletic goals. In her fifth year, her injuries led to permanent medical leave from the team. Injury, she recounted, moved her from an Athlete-Student to a Student-Athlete then an Injured Athlete and ultimately to a Second-Stringer which allowed her to focus on being a student. CM graduated with an interdisciplinary degree and proudly completed a 30-page undergraduate thesis. Beyond the fortitude CM showed, she also represents the many interconnecting transitions that take place over a five-year college career.

Twenty-three participants (almost half) were part of the *Injured-Athlete* route, meaning they could not compete in their sport for at least a month or more during their time at Coastal U.<sup>47</sup> This does not convey the certainty of injury as an athlete. Every student experienced some

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<sup>47</sup> The prevalence of injury in this study reflects national trends. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studied college athletes from 2009 – 2014, a five-year cohort that included 478,869 student-athletes across over 19,000 teams from 1,113

injury and everyone practiced and competed while nursing varying degrees of injury. Due to the large and recurring presence of injury, I made it a unique category with its own nuances. The *Injured-Athlete* route is distinct from the others in several ways. First, it leads to different social exclusions and habits. Second, this route intersected all other routes. Finally, the *Injured-Athlete* route is nondiscriminatory. It can strike any athlete regardless of their social position and/or which route they occupy.

Institutions are acutely aware of injury in student athletes as it can both economically and socially hurt their investments. The NCAA has won numerous lawsuits from the family members of scholarship football players killed or paralyzed while competing for their school. The courts affirm the NCAA's legal claim that so long as participants are amateur and not university employees, the schools and the governing bodies are not obligated to pay health insurance, benefits, or compensation for athletes injured during competition once they leave school (Byers, 1994; Branch, 2011; Smith, 2011). Further, the NCAA's own eligibility policies acknowledge that all athletes will be injured during their time in college. The NCAA grants athletes' a "redshirt" year<sup>48</sup> without appeal to the NCAA which is designed for athletes who are injured and need a year to recover. In practice, this is often used as an extension year to turn a four-year college stay into five years. Finally, the NCAA requires schools to provide medical coverage and access to sport medicine professionals only to *active* athletes. The NCAA has legally and through example shown injury as a normal and *normalized* part of college sport, institutional rules, and social relationships. The commitments of elite athletics in and of themselves create an environment for injury. The implications of this behavior and ideology are far reaching, but not

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schools. They found an estimated 1,053,370 injuries, meaning all athletes could be subject to injury and some experienced multiple injuries. (Zachary et al, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> If a student already took a redshirt year and they are re-injured, they can appeal to the NCAA for a "greyshirt" year, allowing them yet another year of rehabilitation and recovery. The greyshirt extends their athletic competition from five to six years.

the purpose of this work, though I will proceed to show some of the interview outcomes that came to light in my work.

Kayla, who suffered five stress fractures in two years, said her injuries were a direct result of her athletic training. “Sacral stress fractures are major overuse injuries, for female runners, for sure. A lot of times, you hear about, marathoners and people who run high mileage tend to get them” (Kayla, Interview Two). One of her more surprising and painful injuries was a fractured femur—the largest bone in the body—during practice. Even with this fracture she cross trained doing exercises like biking, aqua-jogging, and swimming. She found cross training to be inadequate and after each injury was eager to get back to running. “If you're not running, nothing matches running. That's what I've learned. So it's hard. Every time you get injured, [it's harder] to come back to running [with the same fitness level]” (Kayla, Interview Two).

For Kayla and other injured-athletes, prescription anti-inflammatory medicine was necessary for recovery and pain. Kayla's teammate Brittany developed chronic tendonitis in her knee. After two years as a college athlete she has a life-long condition she must endure if she remains physically active. She takes medicine to push through the pain.

I do have really bad tendonitis in my knee. And so that really, really plays a role. Especially once you get late into the season, it gets really, really bad. Some days at practice, you literally just can't. I was just like, ‘I'm sorry coach, but I can't do this. Its really bad.’... At the meets, we just take pills. Our trainer gives us this anti-inflammatory patch that we [the team] wear overnight, and then we take like five ibuprofens. To make sure--you don't want to take any chances, so you just take five (Interview One).

Why would college students like Brittany behave this way? Because of competition. The teams in the study had large rosters which meant that there was always another body to take their place. In Savannah's first year as a college athlete, she lived through both sides. She was elevated from third ranking to the second ranking boat when four of the top rowers could not compete all fall. When the Spring racing season started, Savannah developed a rib injury. She was afraid to lose

her spot on the team and rowed through the injury, but the injury was so severe she had trouble breathing during competition and practice. She was out for over a month and lost her spot in an NCAA racing boat. With more drugs, more pressure by coaches or financial obligations, where would this have stopped if she was able to push onward through the severe injury?

Sanya, suffered multiple injuries, and said she was, “fortunate, knock on wood” to never undergo a stress fracture. Her coach told her she could train and race through her minor injuries.

I've always had knee issues, I could see myself getting knee replacements, eventually in my life, unfortunately. It just is what it is. I had this sciatic thing last week. I still kind of have symptoms of it. There's always aches and pains. [Coach] always says that. He's like, 'There's not anyone in the NCAA who doesn't have a boo-boo here and there. No one lines up and is 100%.' So I don't expect to feel perfect all the time (Interview Two).

Coaches who push athletes to ignore pain and train through an injury understand they are not the ones who will endure the life-long consequences. Sanya’s knee pain is bad enough that she will have to have a major, life-changing surgery after college or live with the pain for the rest of her life. This is a surgery that will not be compensated by the institution she represented.

Athletes are taught to minimize and contextualize their injury by comparing themselves to teammates. Sanya’s roommate was Kayla, referenced above, who had five stress fractures. Sanya witnessed Kayla’s physical pain, emotional struggles, and attempt to recover from her bone breaks. In comparison, Sanya felt “lucky” that her injuries were not bad enough to demobilize her. She saw Kayla unable to walk without a cast or crutch for long periods of time.

Rowers, when describing their own precarious health situations, also invoked another teammate who was worse off. Will admitted he was stiff and had tendonitis but he was “fine.” “It’s just tightness and stiffness. So it’s nothing to complain about really. Some guys have a cyst in their spine” (Will, Interview Two). A spinal cyst can lead to permanent paralysis. Erwin, when describing his rib injury, said he was lucky he did not have bulging discs, a common injury in rowing. Yet again, a back injury that leads to lifelong pain, surgery and potential paralysis.

Witnessing a variety of severe injuries as a commonplace occurrence in sports distorted what participants viewed as a normal functioning body. Injuries in the study included bone fractures to the hip, ankle, foot, femur, fibula, ribs, vertebrae; muscle tears throughout the body; tendonitis in ankles, knees, and hips; and ligament tears in the knee, shoulder, and hip. Any one of these will require years of physical therapy and life-long lingering pain. The presence and persistence of injury on teams creates an artificial scale within their own group that normalizes personal injury in relation to others' injuries. It is a false comparison that should be reevaluated by school and sport alike. The comparison group should always be the uninjured.

An important reason athletes suffer through these injuries is for fear of losing their community. The most immediate institutional rejection that occurs with an injury is the loss of athletic participation. The dislocation from sports manifested in how participants viewed their role in the research study. Five participants who became injured asked if I wanted them to participate in all phases of the research. As a project designed to capture the lived experiences of student athletes, the five questioned whether their narratives and time diaries would be relevant to my project. They felt that they were no longer athletes because they were not part of the team and in parallel, no longer a voice for the athletic community.

As a freshman and full scholarship rower Victoria felt guilty that she was not earning her athletic aid while injured. She watched as her fellow freshmen integrated into the team culture.

I feel bad that I'm not being part of the team. I feel like I need to do more... The freshmen class bonds more with the upperclassmen at this point of the season because we're in boats with them racing and I feel like I don't bond that much with some of the people on the team, since I'm injured and not there for everything... The team is so fast. I just want to be part of it, because I want to be on the team this year. And I want to race for [Coastal U]. I want to get a uni [uniform] (Interview Two).

Victoria's year-long injury altered her transition into the Coastal U. Sitting idly, she felt an emotional and physical distance growing between her and her team. Due to the competitive

nature, large team, and socialization rituals (like clothing “uniforms” distribution), Victoria’s time as an Injured-Athlete isolated her.

During Morgan’s junior year she suffered a torn labrum in her hip joint. She had surgery and could not do any physical activity for over three months. When she returned, she had to switch sides in rowing—moving from a port to a starboard, “which was like rowing upside and backwards” (Morgan, Interview Two). She was in constant pain and she expressed loss in her confidence as she lost her athleticism. She was angered when people told her her injury was an important time in her development as an athlete:

I kinda just call bullshit on that. It really is, mentally, the most difficult thing, because I build a lot of my confidence off of being a student athlete, and being athletic. So, not being able to row, and then not being able to do certain workouts, made me feel like I was cheating a lot, in terms of not working as hard as my teammates (Interview Two).

As Morgan recounted, her sense of belonging within her team and the University was tied to her physical contributions to rowing, something to expect from an Athlete-Student.

The final impact of the *Injured-Athlete Route* is how it shaped participants’ habits. All injuries required athletes to spend more time going to doctor appointments, physical therapy, and in rehabbing their injuries. A physical therapy regime can take anywhere from 30 minutes to over an hour and may be prescribed to an athlete to complete every day before or after practice. Twenty-nine athletes reported spending three or more hours per week either in the training room or rehabbing at home, doing exercises to prevent, treat, or work through an injury. During Kayla’s multiple injuries, she spent upwards of fifteen hours a week rehabbing. Yet again, this additional time investment is not recognized by the NCAA as time towards sport. Instead, a student is expected to manage their own time properly to take care of their physical health.

### **Reproduction Effects of the *Injured-Athlete Route*.**

Repeated injuries also modified participant’s future aspirations. CM, Merlin, Erwin, Malcolm,

Duane, Seamus, Physicist, Brittany, Anthony Blue, Andrew, Victoria, Cooper, Kayla all aspired to be Olympic or professional athletes. All tempered their future goals, aware that their bodies has physical limitations and/or that their dream will require more effort and patience to achieve. They have come to realize that they cannot fully control their bodies, health, and athletic performance. Merlin, Physicist, Kayla, Cooper for example, lived through repetitive injuries. All the physical therapy, rest and recovery, and preventative exercises did not safeguard them from harming themselves again. Brandon explains that after five years and multiple injuries at Coastal U he watched too many aspiring athletes in his sport prematurely end their professional running career with life-long injuries. He modified his post-college athletic goals so he could save his health. In deciding what to do when he graduated he said:

I think I'll take two years off of running completely. To make sure my knees and hips aren't completely broken...I value my long-term body and health [more] than another two seconds I could squeeze off in a personal best in the next four years. It's just scary, I don't want to think about not being able to do stuff that I love at some point. Even when I feel sore, I imagine there are people who feel sore everyday because of stuff they did barely four years ago (Brandon, Interview Two).

Brandon sees sports as an important part of his future. After allowing his body to recover he wants to take up marathon running. In evaluating his future, Brandon can “value his health” because he leaves college with a degree as someone who had some work experience and developed his resume and with plans to pursue a career in the private sector.

Though the *Injured-Athlete* track did not discriminate (all athletes were harmed), the choices athletes made in relation to their injuries differed. All Black males in the study endured repeated injuries but reasoned that they are only pursuing professional and Olympic goals after Coastal U. This does not mean they value their long-term health any less than Brandon. It means that as college students who were routed on the *Athlete-Student* and *Injured-Athlete* route their post college career options are perceived as limited to sport-related fields, thus changing to a

Second-stringer or a Student-Athlete were not options. The one consistent theme is that being an Injured-Athlete often meant a permanent exit from sports.

### **Succumbing to Conflict**

The four routes through college sport assume participants remain both an athlete and a student. The student believes they could quit school or sport at any time, but are not provided enough information to evaluate that reasoning to its full extent. Quitting one most likely means losing the other. This final section explores how significant institutional rejections creates a false choice for students where quitting one causes a loss of the other thus removing any choice at all. In doing so, it considers how participants exercise the choice to quit school or sport over remaining on their route. The individual choices participants made remain highly contingent upon their pre-college and in-college interactions with bureaucracies and social actors. While these large-scale rejections did not occur for the majority, the threat of being ejected from school or sport was ever-present for all participants and informed their route through higher education.

The two major institutional rejections present in the study were 1) being dismissed from school and 2) medically retiring from sport. At Coastal U a student can be dismissed from school for a gross violation of any of the student conduct codes or if they do not successfully clear academic probation. Five participants went on academic probation when their cumulative GPA dropped below a 2.0 or their GPA in a single term dropped below 1.5. In four of the cases, the students took this as a sign to change their academic major, but not always. One male student continued a Business school track. After receiving below a 2.0 GPA after his first semester, he assumed it was because he took on an Athlete-Student lifestyle, rarely attending class or doing his assignments. He approached the Spring semester with diligence, signing up for extra tutors, upping his time spent on reading and assignments, and began visiting GSI office hours regularly.



That Spring while winning at first a conference and then National Championship for Coastal U, his grades still suffered. He was subject to dismissal from the University. He received a letter after the season ended from the Dean of the College of Letters and Science. He had one recourse: he could appeal the decision by submitting a letter stating he endured an unreasonable circumstance, such as a personal tragedy, that could account for his inability to clear probation. He submitted a letter, as did his coach and academic advisor, asking that he receive a second chance and the University extend his probation to the fall semester. They rejected his appeal. He was dismissed from the University and then, by reasonable logic, from the rowing team.

When an athlete or any student is dismissed from college they can reapply. If they can boost their GPA and show academic progress at a two-year university they can reapply. This was Iceman's plan. He trained on his own and attended a junior college. A year after the study, he applied for readmission to the University but as of yet has not been reenrolled.

The college sport system for Olympic as well as revenue sports like football, assumes that athletes will get top level athletic preparation while attending universities. If someone on the *Athlete-Student* route wants to become a professional athlete, the main way they achieve that goal in the U.S. is to be a college athlete. Being academically rejected *because* he attempted to do an authentic major *and* train as a high-level athlete is a logical outcome of a system that is designed to conflict at every level.

Some participants in this study were forced out of sports due to injury. The preferred term by participants was to "medically retire" from sports. In this case their injury was so severe it could not be mitigated through medical intervention. CM, Imani, and Noelle all medically retired during the study. When I interviewed CM and Imani they had already left their sport. Noelle had yet to retire from rowing but was already injured. She was exercising four hours per day through

cardiovascular and physical therapy routines and went to team practice at least once a day to cheer on her teammates. She continued to row until the pain was too great to ignore. Going into her sophomore year the doctors stopped her from any kind of rowing-related movements. When we first spoke, she was beginning to question whether she should remain on the team.

I'm on a rowing team, but I spin everyday. And then, I think, I'm working out by myself a lot. So I don't have that team thing. And so, sometimes, it's like, 'Why am I spinning for 90 minutes? What is the point?' Whereas on the erg sometimes, you're like, 'What am I doing this for?' But then you go out on the water and you're like, 'Right.' So I don't have that right now, so I think that's hard (Noelle, Interview Two).

To get her through the long hours of solo physical conditioning, Noelle kept her goal in mind. She would give her body one year of therapy to see if her back could improve. But her medical outlook was grim. "I know my body and I know that, I'm probably going to have, back issues for the rest of my life. I might not ever row again, on this team" (Interview Two). In January 2016 Noelle emailed me stating she had to medically retire from rowing. She was one of the five that asked if I needed to remove her from the study and apologized if she had wasted my time. As of this release, she added a minor, picked up a research opportunity, and pursued a part-time job, all of which may provide greater post-college career opportunities.

In addition to medically retiring from their sport, CM, Imani, and Noelle all had something else in common. None were on a full athletic scholarship. Instead their respective families supplemented the cost of education. Along with losing their physical health, community, and identity, for some, they lose their athletic scholarships and their spots in athletics.

These social and institutional ties to the University via sport further entrench the four routes through the college. When participants felt rejected by school or sport and were forced in a direction not of their choosing, they are told it is their *choice* to do college sport. Twenty-three, or half of all participants, acknowledged that they seriously considered quitting their sport due to an athletic or academic challenge they endured at Coastal U. "I think everyone knows that you

have the power to quit whenever you want to. And that would make it really easy. But no one's going to do that <Laughs.>“ (London, Interview Two). People considered quitting sport because of injury, athletic ranking on the team, conflicts with the coaching staff, and lack of time for school. Along with the three medically retired athletes, one person quit his sport.

Goose came to Coastal U with a semester of rowing experience. But the coaches and he remained optimistic that his athleticism would bring him success in the sport. Goose spent a year at the bottom of the team. He did extra workouts, asked more experienced rowers to mentor him, tried to gain extra help from the coaching staff but nothing worked. His poor performance meant he was “benched” or had to work out on land, disallowed from water practices. Despite these hazing attempts, Goose wanted to prove to himself and his team that he could overcome the athletic hurdles and become a contributor to the program.

Goose recognized that if he wanted to do well in school at Coastal U he needed more time and energy to dedicate to his major. As a mediocre high school student from a small Southwestern town, he said he felt way behind the NARPs. He sought out tutors and study groups, but had too little time for school. At the end of the study Goose quit in part because he did not have athletic success, but in part because he came to Coastal U to pursue his education. He recognized the pull and power of sport.

Last night, coming home from the banquet, I was like, 'yeah if I quit, I'd really miss this.' ...Toward the end of the fall, I was with the same guys in the van when the sun rose, and I was with the same guys in the van when the sun set. And there's something great about that. And last night, driving home, the sun set. I was with the boys. If I did quit, that would be something I would miss a lot (Interview Two).

Of the forty-seven study athletes Goose was the only one who left his sport to improve his academic performance. He found the conflict between sport and school too great.

### **Conclusion**

The past two chapters demonstrates how the institutions of college school and sport

conflict. Larger social structures including race, class, and gender appear to shape the conflict within the institution in such significant ways that no one factor can be called causal. Though professors address the conflicts student athletes face during class, the larger institution is unaware or simply denies the presence of the conflict. This appears through actions that mitigate the symptoms not the illness itself. For instance, to appease growing time commitment concerns for student athletes, in January 2017 NCAA passed legislation that required a mandatory seven-day rest period at the end of the season for athletes, an additional fourteen days granted “off” throughout the school year, prohibiting travel days from counting as rest days, and a mandatory eight hour rest overnight in which practice cannot occur (Anderson, 2017). These changes were pitched as addressing the “loop holes” that lead to large sport time commitments (Berkowitz, 2016). Yet the real time creep for athletes as mentioned in this study like *voluntary* workouts, time towards rehabilitation, compliance meetings, mandatory fundraising events, and time towards warming up for practice are not addressed. It remains up to the individual student to navigate this conflict on their own. What emerges are four routes through college that are positioned as the student athletes’ “choice” to gain a degree. But each route includes educational, athletic, and bodily consequences to the participants, little of which are borne by the institution.

In traversing higher education, athletes face various institutional rejections that create four intersecting narrow routes. These rejections manifest in the body as athletic bodies are unwelcomed in places like Coastal U. Students options appear limited to the following:

- 1) the Athlete-Student Route or elevating sport to the determinant of school
- 2) the Student-Athlete Route or elevating neither and potentially failing at both
- 3) the Second-String Route or elevating school to the detriment of sport
- 4) the Injured-Athlete or harming their body, losing sport participation and the corresponding athletic community.

While the institutions assume the *Student-Athlete* route is the default route through higher education, I found the *Injured-Athlete* to be the most common path. Before participants are

physically harmed by sports, the *Athlete-Student* is the standard route through. The *Second-String Athlete* was the closest to the ideal “College Athlete” but the outcome was often a passionate and well educated “bench warmer.”

Across all routes, student athletes internalized the conflict as an individual-level problem, something they manifested in the cult of time management and its nefarious implications on health or academic performance. As a result, all participants developed a coping strategy that led to being efficient (“just enough to pass”) with their school work whereas sports remained the area for exploration, development, and enrichment. An interesting comment not evaluated here was that all participants compromised their education no matter which path they pursued, though it’s difficult to determine the career impact that has in today’s business world.

Lastly, by individualizing the conflict onto student athletes, the institution denies its own role in reproducing larger social structures. The students who could best mitigate the challenges, such as Camilla, the Physicist, and Amanda, were all White, middle to upper class, and had caregivers in professional occupations. They relied on their resource-rich upbringing even in college, seeking support from their families to maintain their ambitious athletic and academic careers. Participants like Malcolm, Brittany, and Anthony Blue, all of whom compromised their educational path by choosing secondary, non-professional track majors, see themselves as future professional track athletes were unable to break out of the *Athlete-Student* route. They were told it was their own individual failing for not living up to the student athlete ideal. By seeing the winnowing of possible educational outcomes within higher education for student athletes in low-profile sports (i.e. those that have yet to be major spectator sports), it is no great logical leap to assume the same, if not greater, educational, athletic, and health compromises occurring for low-income racially marginalized student athletes in high profile sports like football and basketball.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion: Quality Education?

While drafting the final chapters of my dissertation, the University of North Carolina won the 2017 March Madness Tournament and became that year's top Division I men's basketball program. Only four years had passed since whistleblower Mary Willingham revealed how for two decades the University supported a fraudulent major that allowed their school to have top athlete graduation rates and top athletic programs. Despite Willingham's repeated efforts to contact first her own university staff and later the NCAA, no real action occurred. The NCAA has yet to level sanctions against UNC (Powell, 2017).

With UNC held to no consequences it is easy to be cynical and assume change will never come to college sport particularly within the historical context that academic scandals like this have plagued college sport since its origin (Smith, 2011). Because publicity often targets men's basketball and football, it is also easy to assume that the remaining sports in the NCAA do function adequately. Much less public attention focuses on how Olympic sport athletes at UNC also benefited from the fake major and "paper classes" (Smith & Willingham, 2015).

Rather than adding to the chorus of criticism against the economic motives and corresponding educational corruption that can occur in lucrative men's college sport programs, this project turned to the experiences of the true scholar-athletes or those free from the lure of money and fame: Olympic sport athletes. I believed the truer test of whether college sport is a workable model would be if the NCAA and universities could provide a quality education to their lesser known athletes.

I found that even within Olympic sports the NCAA's student-hyphen-athlete is elusive. Instead I observed the *Student-Athlete* route to be aspirational, oppositional, and fleeting. All participants I spoke with wanted to be student athletes. But achieving the true balance often

seemed impossible. Those that did could only achieve top level school and sport performance for short periods of time, and often at great physical, personal, and educational costs. Further, those that were “student-athletes” were White and middle or upper class. This shows how the historical legacy of the institution which began as the purview of elite, white men in the Ivy League, still caters to this population.

In this final chapter I will briefly recap my findings and describe the elements I observed at both the high school and college level that would lead to a more feasible union between school and sport for student athletes.

Across the study, participants endured athletic and academic rejections. Athletically they endured repeated physical injury, loss of athletic status and playing time, and numerous personal and physical invasions by the athletic governing bodies. Academically, they faced stigma from the academic side of campus, limited class and major selection, limited engagement with faculty, limited socialization with NARPs, limited opportunities to pursue research or student organizations, and limited chances to develop an employment resume for future jobs beyond athletics. In combination, these findings present a negative picture of Division I Olympic sports.

Faced with sacrificing their educational, personal or future employment goals, athletes did question why they would stay within this system. Seamus said his friends from back home constantly ask him, “But why run? You don’t have to?” (Interview Two). He acknowledged that this a logical question especially considering that to him, being a student athlete boils down to “keep[ing] up with people [NARPs] who have three times as much free time as you. And, even more so, probably double the amount of energy” (Interview Two). Seamus knows that to reach his goals of being the first in his family to graduate from college, go on to business school, and pursue a career in finance that:

My best option would be to quit, and just focus on school. I'm getting no actual, monetary [support]. It's purely out of, I like the sport, I feel indebted to my coaches, I want to do well. So in that sense, for any rational person, it doesn't make sense. It is kinda irrational. It's kinda like 'Why are you doing this?' But it's brought success for me in the past, its good habits...a lot of it is intrinsic [value] (Seamus, Interview Two).

While Seamus cannot answer why he remains in a sport that can jeopardize his future goals, he does offer insight into the value of athletics in the lives of young people. Through his lifetime in sports, starting on his grammar school playground, Seamus engaged in an activity that brought him achievement, community, and improved his overall habits.

During our interviews, athletes had a wealth of positive stories to draw upon in their early development with sports. As youth, some joined, or had family members enroll them in sports, for a variety of reasons including: making friends, learning physical skills, using their bodies in new ways, developing a work ethic, learning how to cope with failure and loss, and accessing college. The values within sport are numerous. Elite athletes like Seamus showcased tremendous resilience, work ethics, and positive socialization skills once they arrived in college.

Through the positive experiences at the youth and high school levels a better union emerges between school and sports. At the high school level, sports must revolve around the school day. Even club sports like rowing with no connection to the high school, had to take place either before 8am or after 3pm. High school athletes had an entire day to attend class, to socialize with students not on their sports teams, and interact with adults who were not their coaches. In addition, the high school environment was structured in a way more similar to sports. Unlike college that maximizes independent-decision making, students had little choice over their curriculum or when to complete their assignments. Study participants recalled finding time during the school day to finish their "homework" during lunch, in between, or during class. In these breaks within the day, they could also seek out support from teachers or classmates if needed.



Another change from the high school to college level is the decentralized nature of athletic regulation. There is no centralized, nation-wide sport regulatory agency for high school athletics. Regulation varies nationally depending on the sport (USA Track and field vs. US Rowing), by the State, by the region, by the school district, and even by the school. This decentralized nature can be problematic for various reasons. One, explored in this paper, is how the decentralized nature can be exploited by families with ample geographic, cultural, and social resources. These resources create inherent advantages for certain youth, aiding them in becoming elite athletes and accessing higher education.

The decentralized nature of high school sports also allows for greater choice and flexibility with sports participation. On one measure, the time commitments at the high school level ranged from about 15 – 18 hours per week (Chapter 3, Table 3.3). By college, the time commitment ranged from 20 – 30 hours per week (Chapter 6, Figure 6.2). Moreover, only 36% of high school athletes had double-day workouts, whereas all college athletes had at least twice per week twice per day workouts. One reason for the greater investment in time is the regulation and oversight present within college sport. Interestingly with no regulation or time limits within the high school organizations—except that sports cannot happen between the hours of 8am and 3pm—the time commitments were far less. At the high school level, participants explained that putting in extra time to their sport, joining a travel team, or hiring a private coach were all truly voluntary choices. The concept of *voluntary* athletics, in response to skirting the nation-wide 20-hour weekly time limit—had yet to emerge.

Brandon, a White male fifth year middle-distance runner, explained the shift from high school to college athletics is felt through the looming presence of a regulatory body that was disconnected from preserving the best interests of the student athletes.

There's a lot of administrators that make a lot of money, and there's a lot of student athletes, that do go to bed hungry some nights because they work really hard and they don't get enough money, or they get poor grades because they're not getting the academic support they need. I just feel like, there could be better regulation, maybe at the league level...[Regional] organizations could better regulate their own, specific, member-schools and then still have inter-league competition. Rather than this kind of, all-powerful governing body...I don't have much direct contact with [the NCAA] as an organization, but I can feel their presence in a lot of statutes and rules like, 'We can't do this right now, sorry, we'd like to help you but we can't.' It's just, kinda a bummer [too] that so many of those regulations get implemented at such a low-level, by public employees at the University, who don't exactly have an academic or athletic interest in my success. That it just feels very distant and remote and the genuine concerns of student athletes are not actively addressed by the governing body (Interview Two).

One of the greatest concerns not heard by the NCAA is the unreasonable mandate that emerges for participants. The NCAA requires participants to be one-hundred percent students and one-hundred percent athletes, which translates to a two-hundred percent person. As Brandon noted, this mandate is disconnected from the reality of what student athletes experience. They do have academic and athletic ambitions, but instead, are left to their own devices to navigate a contradictory and oppositional system to achieve these goals.

Breaking up the regulatory power of the NCAA would be an important change for college sport. But alone it would not go far enough to address the conflict raised in Chapter 6. Higher education hosts college sport. The NCAA exists within the landscapes of colleges. Yet colleges like Coastal U must also change in at least four ways if high level sports will continue to reside on their campuses.

First, colleges are the ones, not the NCAA, who sponsor the sports-track-to-college pipeline. The NCAA simply sets a uniform floor for admissions and recruiting. Individual campuses determine how to identify and evaluate athletic talent in place of academic merit. In examining this process at Coastal U, the athletic admission system became a way for middle and upper class White families to have greater access to elite colleges. In this way, public schools participate in narrowing the upward mobility options via education for marginalized populations.

Second, the cult of individualism within higher education disguises the confusing and contradictory layers of bureaucracy. The bureaucratic accretion within higher education is magnified for student athletes who must navigate two large regulatory bodies at once. In this environment, the notion of individualism obscures how conflict emerges along three key areas of student life: *requirements*, *availability*, and *legibility*. *Requirements*, or what the institution expects of an individual to be successful within in it are oppositional with school and sport. Academia expects students to function independently whereas athletics expects athletes to function dependently. *Availability*, or how the institution anticipates individual's time commitments also conflict. Academia expects students to have flexible schedules that can accommodate the educational demands whereas athletics creates inflexible and time intensive schedules that limit academic engagement. Finally, *legibility*, or how an institution values and evaluates individuals also diverges within college sport. Schools assume students are disembodied by valuing and evaluating mental achievements. Sports assume athletes are embodied by valuing and evaluating physical contributions. College sport institutions assume individuals will mitigate the conflict along these three areas. Each facet—requirements, availability, legibility—reflects a terrain for compromise that would create a more feasible student athlete experience. Instead, both higher education and college sport deny the persistence of conflict and leave it up to the individual to navigate through.

The third area of change must be to create broader opportunities for athletes. Without addressing the conflict, higher education sponsors narrow and restrictive routes through college for athletes. Higher education supports a default route through the *Athlete-Student* route, that requires athletes to elevate their athletic commitments to the detriment of their academic commitments. By compromising their course selection, major, opportunities to engage with the

campus community, and to explore future employment options, the *Athlete-Student* route leaves participants with a narrow future in the sports world. In this study, one hundred percent of Black men, and seventy percent of people of color were Athlete-Students. Higher education thus limits the social opportunities to those who are not part of the normed White group to athletics.

Brittany's reflection on what role and purpose sports play in her life shows how college athletes can get trapped into seeing sports as their main future opportunity.

I actually sat back and I thought about all professional sports, and I was like, 'it's literally just games. Literally nothing at all of substance.' ...I could run, run, run all the way, just to get a medal. And then, after that, literally, what is it? I don't know what I'll gain from it other than just being physically fit and mentally tough. I mean that's it. I'm going to have my degree, so that's going to be nice. But other than that, I don't know. I just feel like I've put so much time into it, and I'm like, 'the Olympics, that's the pinnacle of athletics, right there, and I'm trying to get there.' I'm trying to be a part of that. That's history. I'm trying to be a part of that, and then after that, it is what it is (Brittany, Interview One).

Brittany sees the major benefits of high-level sports participation to be a college diploma (with little consideration to the major or educational experience it confers) and the physical and mental toughness she learned in sport. But she has less clarity about how to utilize her long history in sports. Her view of her future self is limited to becoming an Olympic athlete which she sees as the logical next step of her success in the sport. Even if she can make it to the Olympics, she has little else to envision. Her future is limited to "it is what it is" or simply life as an ex-athlete.

To even have a chance at the Olympics, Brittany will have to continue to manage her constant pain from chronic tendonitis in both knees, for which she must medicate regularly and invest countless hours of physical rehabilitation. In this fourth area, higher education must take greater responsibility for what occurs on college campuses. Forty-seven or one-hundred percent of study participants were injured while at Coastal U in some fashion. No such comparison exists in academia where incoming students have a certainty of harming their body. While the NCAA requires schools to provide medical treatment to athletes, this does little to prevent or minimize

physical harm. The study included bone fractures, muscle tears and ligament tears all of which will require years of physical therapy and life-long lingering pain. These physical injuries are denied by the disembodied nature of higher education which ignores harm to bodies.

The four implications for higher education all offer potential areas for future research. If higher education will keep high-level sport programs then more scholarship is necessary to determine how to: 1) create greater, more equitable access through the sports-track-to-college pipeline, 2) get universities to acknowledge conflict between school and sport and adopt policies that lead to great synergy between academia and athletics, 3) offer more equitable routes through higher education that allow athletes to pursue their ideal academic curriculum, pursue job preparation, and envision a greater variety of post-college options than simply as a professional athlete or a coach and 4) acknowledge, limit, and prevent the widespread phenomenon of injury within sports.

I, like the study participants, remain a true-believer in the ideal of the Student-Athlete. We had experiences where school and sport aligned to improve our social relationships and individual habits in all areas of our lives. The next wave of reform efforts should not settle on simply addressing the money that circulates within college sport. We should strive for a system in which school and sport are truly beneficial to one another instead of denying that conflict exists and assuming individuals will find their way through an oppositional institution. In this current climate it is no wonder that schools like UNC create fake degree programs in a misguided attempt to lessen the academic and athletic burden placed on their student athletes.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Author's Epistemology and Positionality

As a project grounded in the feminist and critical race traditions, I include here my epistemology, or orientation towards knowledge construction, and my positionality, or location within various power structures.

I chose the theoretical framework intersectionality because it would provide a lens to not replace the capitalist focus within college sport, but to enhance economic investigations. Intersectionality comes from feminist research and activism rejects additive approaches to research, or one that views race, class, and gender as discrete forces of domination (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1992; Glenn, 1992). Instead, intersectionality based projects examine how these structures interact or “interlock” (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1992). Intersectionality also contends that an individual's perspective is an important vantage point to explain how multiple forms of structural inequality interact (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1992). Drawing from the feminist tradition, intersectional projects must 1) expose how the researcher influences the entire intellectual process, 2) give voice to marginalized populations by either seeking out participants from these communities or interrogating structures of inequality in the research process and 3) offer humanizing methods that limit rather than reproduce power in the research process (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1992; Cuadraz & Udall, 1999).

The first lesson from intersectionality is to humanize, or reveal the researcher's role in the design, execution, and writing of the research project. My positionality influenced my proposal, interaction with participants, and findings. This project emerged from my time as a college athlete and later employee for the UC Berkeley's Athletic Study Center. I joined the UC Berkeley women's rowing team in Fall 2003 with no prior experience in the sport. I was swept into what would become the top women's program in the country. During my time, we won two NCAA Division I championships and three Pac-10 championships. I traveled each route described in the final chapter, beginning as a second-stringer, transitioning to a student-athlete, then athlete-student, and ultimately an injured-athlete. I stopped rowing part-way through my senior year after I was diagnosed with a heart condition.

Before embarking on my PhD, I admittedly, had little understanding of the complexities of power structures. But I was curious about the differences in my own experience as a former White female student athlete and those of the students I served, largely African American male student athletes. I chose a theoretically rigorous PhD program—Social and Cultural Studies of Education—one that interrogates systems of power to better understand the differences I observed and could not yet name. My advisor Prof. Lisa Garcia Bedolla, has spent her career researching political and educational inequalities affecting ethnoracial groups in the United States, with a particular focus on the intersection of race, class, and gender. In pursuing my interests in educational engagement for a diverse population of student athletes, Prof. Garcia Bedolla encouraged me to explore a wide-range of theoretical perspectives including: decolonialism, intersectionality, critical race theory, Marxism, and feminism.

The second lesson from intersectionality is how to interrogate the interlocking nature of power structures. This is where intersectionality relies heavily on its roots in feminism. Feminist research critiques positivism, or the dominant epistemology and method of research which assumes that research can be free from human bias, results can be predicted, and that findings can be reproduced in various settings (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). Feminists fault positivism for various reasons, but most agree that these methods cannot capture structures of

domination and the experiences of oppressed groups (Collins, 1986; Haraway, 1988; Smith, 1987). In turn, feminism assumes that research has a political agenda and therefore, it should be the goal of all research to craft a more humanizing and egalitarian society (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). Research that works for the betterment of all people must be inherently iterative, constantly re-evaluated, and adjusted depending on the researcher's subject position and project goals (Harding, 1991). Therefore, feminist projects often interrogate power structures such as race, class, and gender. In doing so, feminists advocate often given voice to and seek out previously silenced and marginalized groups (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). This process is complicated and messy and can bring up uncomfortable topics for the participants (Collins, 1986).

The final lesson from intersectionality is to offer humanizing methods. In interrogating their own positionality as marginalized researchers and attempting to reveal power structures, feminists have long noted there is no "one way" to eradicate the concerns inherent to academic research. Of most eminent concern is the power dynamics present between the researcher and the subject. Since this relationship cannot be eliminated, feminists highlight the potential ways to limit the comfortability in these topics and make the participants feel more humanized and comfortable. I utilized these strategies in my interview methods as these writers deeply influence the framing and methods of the study proposed.

One approach to bring about more humanizing methods is to limit the subject/object binary in research. Too often academic studies position the researcher as the "expert" on a given topic and in doing so limit the knowledge, voice, and humanity of the subject (Collins, 1986). This can occur if a researcher ascribes labels to the subject's identity, rather than allowing the subject the opportunity for self-definition, when the researcher imposes meaning onto the subject's responses, or when the researcher asks narrow and closed-ended questions (Collins, 1986). Instead a feminist project gives some freedom in responses to limit the power dynamics between the researcher and the participant. My interview protocols allowed participants to self-identify on their race/gender/class positions. This allowed the participant to name their own position in the world, rather than ascribe this position to them. While these questions are indeed delicate and can be uncomfortable, it is important to give participants the choice to self-identify and self-explain their experiences within unequal structures (Collins, 1986, 2000; Haraway, 1988; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2013). Another tactic to bring a more humanizing research projects is create a hospitable atmosphere for the participant. Oakley (1981) posits several suggestions such as offering the participant a variety of places to conduct the interview, offering the participant breaks, and reminding the interviewee they can decline to answer if the researcher observes any uncomfortable body language or silences. I built these three suggestions into my research protocol and methods.

Feminist epistemology does not end at the research review and design phase. They also offer suggestions for how to write up research data. Collectively, feminists call for a reiterative reflection and writing process. Feminist based research requires the researcher to constantly reconsider how a researcher's own position influences the entire project from the framing, interactions with the participants, and the final write-up (Choo, & Ferree, 2010; Fonow & Cook, 2005; MacKinnon, 2013). As all of the above authors state, there is no way to eliminate power dynamics in the research process. They are inevitable. The only solution is to remain explicit and vigilant. I did not pose questions about race, gender, and/or class lightly. Instead, I seek out socially marginalized subjects, and reflect upon my own socially marginalized position, to try and improve the educational conditions for student athletes.

## Appendix B: Table of Participants' Background Characteristics

Participant	Sport	Home	Home Median income	AP Units	Year	Race	Family View of Sport	Caregivers Highest Ed Level	Athletic Aid	Major *	GPA
<b>Primary Route through College, Athlete-Student N= 17</b>											
Anthony Blue	M. Track	CA	\$139,709	0	4th	Black	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Partial	ISF**	2.50
Boris	M. Crew	Holland	N/A	0	1st	White	Committed	Advanced	Partial	Business*	3.65
Brittany	W. Track	CA	\$74,869	8	2nd	Black	Committed	BA	Partial	Legal Studies	2.30
Captain America	W. Crew	CO	\$111,901	0	4th	White	Sports-track-to-college	Professional	Full	ISF	3.55
Casey	W. Crew	CA	\$167,561	23.9	1st	White	Disinterested	BA	Partial	Biology*	3.32
Chantae	W. Track	CA	\$60,665	0	3rd	Black	Sports-track-to-college	HS	Full	Urban Studies	2.48
CM	W. Track	CA	\$109,762	0	4th	White	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Partial	ISF	3.03
Cooper	W. Crew	WA	\$91,149	0	2nd	White	Committed	BA	Full	ISF	2.85
Duane	M. Track	CA	\$58,237	0	3rd	Black	Sports-track-to-college	Professional	Partial	Sociology	3.20
Erwin	M. Crew	NJ	\$132,440	0	3rd	White	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Partial	History	3.35
Iceman	M. Crew	NY	\$38,235	2.7	1st	White	Committed	BA	None	Business*	1.60
Kayla	W. Track	CA	\$97,628	0	5th	Chicana	Committed	HS	Full	Biology	3.22
Lisa	W. Crew	Germany	N/A	0	3rd	White	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Full	Env. Econ*	2.73
Malcolm	M. Track	CA	\$82,420	0	3rd	Black	Sports-track-to-college	Professional	Full	Sociology	2.49
Vera	W. Track	Germany	N/A	0	2nd	Black Haitian German	Sports-track-to-college	HS	Full	Media*	2.95
Victoria	W. Crew	Canada	N/A	0	1st	White	Committed	BA	Full	Undeclared	
Will	M. Crew	Australia	N/A	0	1st	White	Committed	Advanced	None	Urban Studies*	2.94
<b>Student-Athlete N= 15</b>											
Amanda	W. Crew	WA	\$99,597	21.2	2nd	White	Disinterested	Advanced	Partial	Civil Engineering	2.63
Andrew	M. Track	MN	\$68,513	0	3rd	White	Committed	BA	None	Chemical Engineering	2.91
Brandon	M. Track	IL	\$152,778	5.4	4th	White	Committed	BA	Partial	Philosophy	3.04
Ella	W. Crew	Germany	N/A	0	4th	White	Sports-track-to-college	Professional	Full	Political Economy	3.28
George	M. Track	CA	\$118,658	16	3rd	White	Committed	BA	Partial	Economics	3.02
Josephine	W. Track	CA	\$81,498	0	3rd	Black	Committed	BA	None	Anthro	2.86
Kalie	W. Crew	WA	\$99,597	5.3	3rd	White	Committed	BA	Partial	Biology*	2.73
Merlin	M. Track	CA	\$108,211	0	5th	White	Committed	BA	Partial	American Studies	3.40
Monique	W. Crew	CA	\$167,561	18.6	4th	White	Committed	HS	Partial	Political Economy & French	3.50
Physicist	M. Track	CA	\$135,578	26.8	3rd	White	Committed	Professional	Partial	Physics	3.36
Sanya	W. Track	CA	\$114,764	16	4th	White	Disinterested	BA	Full	Political Economy	3.41
Seamus	M. Track	CA	\$87,329	18.8	2nd	White	Committed	HS	Partial	Business*	3.27
Steve	M. Crew	UK	N/A	24	1st	White	Committed	Advanced	None	Economics*	2.77
Taylor	W. Track	CA	\$109,693	29.2	2nd	White	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Partial	Economics*	3.31

Participant	Sport	Home	Home Median income	AP Unit	Year	Race	Family View of Sport	Caregivers Highest Ed Level	Athletic Aid	Major *	GPA
Terrance	M. Track	NV	\$60,027	34.7	First	White	Committed	Advanced	Partial	Nutritional Science*	3.88
<b>Second-String N= 11</b>											
Camilla	W. Crew	CA	\$109,592	13.3	3rd	White	Committed	Professional	Partial	Biology	3.63
Goose	M. Crew	TX	\$88,702	0	1st	White	Committed	BA	None	Business*	3.12
Imani	W. Track	CA	\$81,498	0	2nd	Black Spanish Japanese	Sports-track-to-college	HS	None	Media	3.24
Joy	W. Crew	MI	\$96,210	46.5	2nd	White	Disinterested	Professional	None	Economics	3.81
London	W. Track	CA	\$136,150	21.2	2nd	White Middle Eastern	Committed	BA	None	Business	3.23
Morgan	W. Crew	NY	\$120,860	21.3	4th	White	Disinterested	Advanced	Partial	German	3.68
Noelle	W. Crew	CA	\$69,944	23.9	2nd	White	Committed	BA	None	English	3.13
Reggie	M. Crew	Australia	N/A	0	1st	White	Committed	Advanced	Partial	Business*	3.40
Savannah	W. Crew	CA	\$92,192	24	1st	White	Disinterested	HS	Partial	Business*	3.31
Sophia	W. Crew	NJ	\$117,727	18.6	3rd	White	Disinterested	Advanced	None	Biology	3.10
Stella	W. Crew	HI	\$85,837	0	3rd	White	Disinterested	Advanced	Partial	Theater	3.35
<b>Unassigned, did not complete Interview two N= 4</b>											
Chelsea	W. Crew	CA	N/A	0	2nd	White	Committed	BA	Full	Undeclared	2.94
Laura	W. Crew	CT	\$211,313	0	2nd	White	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Partial	Sociology*	2.93
LeVar	M. Track	CA	\$69,044	8	5th	Black	Sports-track-to-college	BA	Full	American Studies	2.59
Tyrell	M. Track	CA	\$92,433	34.6	2nd	White	Committed	HS	None	Business*	3.43

\*Represents intended major, has yet to be declared

\*\*Common Coastal U abbreviation for Interdisciplinary Studies

## Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

### Email to Coaches Informing Them About the Study

September 2015

Dear Coastal U Athletics Coaches,

Greetings! My name is Kirsten Hextrum and I am a researcher and former student athlete from UC Berkeley. I plan to conduct a study beginning in September 2015, concluding in May 2016 examining the educational experiences of Olympic sport student athletes. Since you coach an Olympic Sport team, I am reaching out to see if you would be interested in participating in the study. The study involves interviews with student athletes, academic support staff, and coaching staff. The purpose of the study is to better understand the institutional conflicts for student athletes and staff and uncover how to improve the educational outcomes within college sport. In a research field dominated with criticism, the study also hopes to present the overall benefits of sports participation in higher education.

Participation is completely voluntary. Your employment at the University will not be affected if you choose to be part of the study or if you decline. Further, the student athletes' athletic and academic participation and services will not be affected if you choose to participate or not to participate. Only I, the researcher, will know if you or any student athletes choose to participate or not. If you choose to participate, your responses will be kept as confidential as possible. If you or the student athletes choose to be part of the study, you can decline to answer any question(s) or to provide the researcher with any institutional materials and still remain part of the study. Results of the study will be presented to other researchers without individual identifiers.

With your permission, I would like to attend a team meeting and present this research opportunity to the student athletes. The presentation should take no more than 15 minutes and could occur at the beginning or end of a team meeting or practice. I've attached the materials I will bring to the meeting (a recruitment flyer and presentation script) in this email for your reference. As part of the study, I would also like to interview coaches to gain their perspective and insight on the educational conflicts and benefits of college sport participation.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email and indicate a day or time that would be appropriate for me to attend a team meeting or practice. If you are interested in being interviewed for the study, you can also provide me with your availability and we can set up a day and time for the interview. The interview should last about one hour.

Thank you so much for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [khextrum@berkeley.edu](mailto:khextrum@berkeley.edu).

Sincerely,

Kirsten Hextrum, M.A.  
PhD Candidate, UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education

## **Recruitment Script: Olympic Sport Student Athletes**

“I am a researcher from UC Berkeley. During the next year, I will be conducting a research study on experiences of Olympic sport student athletes. The study will include interviews, a brief questionnaire filled out by you at several points in the year, and the option to share with me some of your athletic/academic materials including: practice schedules, syllabi, degree progress academic report, and unofficial transcripts. Anyone who has been a member of the following Olympic sport teams: men’s and women’s track and field, cross country, or crew is eligible to participate.

Participation is completely voluntary; your athletic and academic participation and services will not be affected if you choose to participate or not to participate. You can choose to participate in one or all parts of the study. Only I, the researcher, will know if you choose to participate or not. If you choose to participate, your responses will be kept as confidential as possible. If you choose to be part of the study, you can decline to answer any question(s) or to provide the researcher with any institutional materials and still remain part of the study. Results of the study will be presented to other researchers without individual identifiers.

I am going to pass around a flyer with an overview of the study and my contact information. On the flyer it states how to contact me if you are interested in participating or if you have any additional questions. If you do express interest in being part of the study, I will use the contact information you provided to get in touch about scheduling our first interview.

Do you have any questions?”



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# RESEARCH STUDY: Racing to Class

## Graduate school of Education

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### Description of the Project

Much of the current college sport research positions sports as entertainment based and non-educational (Ingrassia, 2012; Sperber, 2000). Yet framing the conflict for student athletes and schools as education versus entertainment leads to a narrow set of proposed reforms such as paying athletes or eliminating sports (Bowen, 2014; Smith, 2011; Wilbon, 2011). Using participants who are relatively free from commercial pressures—male and female Olympic sport student athletes—this research asks: *How do social structures such as race, class, and gender shape student athletes' ability to negotiate the competing demands of sport and school?* To address this question, this study uses multiple sources of data including in-depth interviews and time diaries with student athletes; interviews with coaches, academic advisors, and tutors; and various institutional measures to map out the various structures, hierarchies, demands, and identities present within school and sport. It also considers how and under what conditions student athletes can successfully navigate said structures, hierarchies, demands, and identities.

### Who Is Eligible to participate

If you belong to one or more of these groups, please consider participating in this study

- Are you a Coastal U student athlete participating in men's or women's track and field, cross country, or crew teams?
- Are you a tutor, academic adviser or learning specialist for the SAASC?
- Are you a full time coach for one of the following Coastal U athletic teams: men's or women's track and field, cross country, or crew?

### What you will be asked to do

- All participants will spend 1-2 hours in an interview session with the researcher
- Student athletes have an option to participate in additional activities including:
  - Sharing their practice schedules, class schedules, syllabus, Degree Progress Reports, and unofficial transcripts with the researcher
  - A time diary of how much time they spent in one week on various activities. This should take no more than 15 minutes per one-week session.

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**If you're interested or have questions Contact the investigator:  
Kirsten M. Hextrum, M.A, PhD Candidate Graduate School of Education,**

**email: [khextrum@berkeley.edu](mailto:khextrum@berkeley.edu) cell: 415.987.7013**

*Please pass along this flyer or information to anyone who might be interested in participating!*

## Appendix D: Interview Protocols

### Student Athlete Interview #1 - Life History

1. What is your college sport? Your year in school? Your athletic scholarship status?
2. What is your earliest memory of sports? What types of sports did you participate in? Who encouraged or facilitated your sports participation?
3. (*If not previously mentioned*) How did you become involved in your current college sport?
4. What is your most vibrant memory of sports prior to coming to Coastal U?
5. What is your most vibrant memory of school prior to coming to Coastal U? What were your favorite subjects? In what areas did you feel most successful? What individuals helped facilitate these positive experiences? (e.g. parents, teachers, coaches, etc.).
6. Did your parents and/or caregivers attend college?
  - *If so*, did they participate in college sport or at a professional level? If so, what did they share with you about these experiences?
  - *If not*, did they ever speak to you about college? How would you describe their view towards education? How would you describe their view towards sports?
7. Growing up, can you recall a time when you faced a challenge in school? How did you overcome these challenges?
8. Growing up, can you recall a time when you faced a challenge in sport? How did you overcome these challenges?
9. Do you have any examples of anyone helping you through an athletic or academic related challenge?
10. What other activities, beyond sports, did you participate in growing up? Did anyone encourage you to pursue these activities? If so, who?
11. Did you ever have a job growing up? If so, what was it?
12. When did you first realize you wanted to become a college athlete? What factors and/or individuals helped you become a college-level athlete?
13. Can you describe the recruiting process? Did anyone help you with the recruiting process (i.e. from family members, teachers, a counselor, coaches, etc.)? When did coaches first start contacting you? How many official and unofficial visits did you attend? What do you recall most about these trips to Universities?
14. What were the key reasons you chose to come to Coastal U? Did any person or experiences influence this decision?
15. Prior to coming to Coastal U, did your family's financial status ever positively or negatively influence your sports participation?
16. How do you identify racially? Can you recall a time, prior to coming to Coastal U, when your race influenced your sports participation?
17. How do you gender identify? Can you recall a time, prior to coming to Coastal U, in which your family's gender influenced your sports participation?

### Student Athlete Interview #2 – Current Experiences

1. Can you describe a typical week in your life?
2. What is your athletic routine?
3. What is your academic routine?

4. Do these routines differ when you are in/out of season? What factors influence and/or limit the maintenance of these routines?
5. If you had to tell someone, who knows nothing about college sport, what the term “student athlete” means, how would you define it?
6. Can you tell me one striking or memorable experience you’ve had as a student athlete at Coastal U? How did this make you feel in the classroom? On the field/water? On campus?
7. What does your athletic uniform mean to you? What about Coastal U gear?
8. Can you give an example of a moment where you felt empowered in your athletic uniform? Do you ever wear your athletic uniform or practice gear to campus? If so, for what reasons?
9. In what situations do you see yourself as a successful “student athlete”? What would need to change for you to feel this way all the time?
10. When you’re not engaged in your sport, who are you most likely to spend time with?
11. What does being a coach mean to you? Do you think you could be a coach? What do you think are your current coaches strong points? Weak points? How much and what about your coach’s style would you change about your coach to make you a more successful athlete?
12. Overall, would you consider your coach an important figure in your life? How so?
13. If you were speaking to an incoming Coastal U recruit, how would you describe your experience here? Would you encourage them to attend the University and/or be part of your team?
14. What is your major or intended major? Do you know of any deadlines or restrictions to get into your major? Is this your first choice? If not, what are the reasons you decided to major in this discipline?
15. How does your status as a student athlete affect your class schedule? What do you think about priority course enrollment?
16. Can you describe a recent interaction you had with a campus community (i.e. GSI, Professor, classmate?) How would you characterize the interaction? Do you think your race/class/gender/ student athlete status influenced the interaction?
17. Is there a student athlete stereotype at Coastal U? If so, what is it? Is there any validity to it? Where do you think it comes from?
18. Do you feel you have a good work life balance? What parts of your work life balance make academic performance suffer? Athletic Performance?
19. Can you give an example of an athletic challenge you’ve recently faced? Can you give an example of an academic challenge you’ve recently faced? What strategies and/or resources did you use to overcome these challenges?
20. What work life balances do you think would need to change to make it easier to be a student athlete?
21. Would you say you know a lot or a little about the NCAA? Have you ever had an experience where the NCAA eligibility rules influenced your athletic participation? Major selection? GPA?
22. Can you recall a time or interaction in which your race, class, or gender *was an advantage* to you in either sport or school? How did this make you feel?
23. Can you recall a time or interaction in which your race, class, or gender *limited* you in either sport or school? How did this make you feel?
24. Can you recall a time when someone commented on your race while you were participating in your sport? Can you recall a time when someone commented on your race while participating in academic activities? How did either of these encounters make you feel?

25. Do you recall a time when you considered quitting your sport? What made you consider quitting?
26. Do you recall a time when you considered quitting your school? What made you consider quitting?
27. If you were not an athlete at this university, what sort of groups, majors, or activities would you pursue?
28. Knowing what you know now, would you recommend to your high school self to be a student athlete at Coastal U? What are the reasons you would or would not recommend someone to come to Coastal U as a student athlete?
29. What are your career goals or aspirations upon graduation? How do you see your current experiences as enhancing your chances of achieving these goals?
30. What do you think the chances are you will achieve your goals?

### **Interview with Academic Advisor**

1. Were you a college athlete? If so, where and what sport? How do you think your own experiences as an athlete shape your current advising strategies and connections with student athletes?
2. How would you describe your job and/or main responsibilities to someone who knows nothing about college sport?
3. What role (if any) do academic advisors play in the recruiting process?
  - *If you are involved in recruiting*, How do you communicate the Coastal U athletic and/or academic demands to incoming student athletes?
4. Can you describe the mission of the SAASC? How does this mission influence your interaction with student athletes?
5. Can you describe the timeline or frequency with which the NCAA requires eligibility checks? (i.e. how often and when do these checks happen). Are there moments where the eligibility timelines conflict with campus practices and procedures? If so, how do you mitigate or work through these conflicts?
6. How does NCAA eligibility affect the academic pursuits of a student athlete?
7. Can you describe your relationship with the athletic department. How often do you interact with coaches and/or athletic staff? How would you characterize the nature of these interactions?
8. What are the common faculty views towards athletic academic advisors? What are some of the myths or misconceptions they may have about your role?
9. What are some of the campus policies and/or university hurdles that make your job challenging?
10. How do university exceptional admission policies for student athletes influence the nature of your job and/or how you interact with student athletes?
11. How do athletic practice/travel schedules and academic ambitions conflict? Can you give an example of when this does happen? What advice do you offer to student athletes who feels they have to choose between pursuing a particular major and remaining on an athletic team?
12. What do you see as the biggest challenges for student athletes? How do you help them to overcome these challenges?

13. Do you see a difference in how scholarship student athletes approach their commitment to academics and/or major selection process? If so, can you describe the nature of this difference? Does your advice differ for scholarship vs. non-scholarship student athletes?
14. What are the unique positive attributes of the \_\_\_\_\_ (track & field or crew) team? What are some of the unique challenges this team may face? Can you give a specific scenario of how you helped a student athlete from this team overcome a challenge?

### **Interview with Tutor**

1. How did you find out about tutoring student athletes at Coastal U? What were the reasons you decide to tutor student athletes?
2. Can you describe your roles and responsibilities as a student athlete tutor? What are your daily and weekly tasks?
3. What were your initial impressions of the tutoring student athletes? Did these impressions change over time? How so?
4. What do you see as some of the advantages of being a student athlete at Coastal U? In what ways are their experiences different from yours?
5. What are some of the greatest successes you've had as a student athlete tutor? What factors influence these positive moments and/or successful experiences?
6. Have you heard the phrase "academic eligibility"? If so, does this ever influence the work you do with student athletes? How so?
7. What are some of the biggest challenges you face as a tutor?
8. In what ways do team practice and/or athletic practice schedules influence your job?
9. Can you describe the athletic and academic demands student athletes face? How do you help student athletes overcome these challenges?
10. Have any of the students you work with encountered negative interactions with the campus community? How did this impact their academic engagement?

## Appendix E: Student Athlete Time Diary

Instructions: *For one week please record the number of hours spent per day on each task. If you did not participate in a task that day leave the box blank. In addition, please answer the multiple-choice question below.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Time of Year:

- a.) Pre-season (before the start of Pac-12 competition)
- b.) In-season (Pac-12 competition)
- c.) Off-season (no practice or competition)

Record the number of hours spent on the following (if less than 1 hour, demark in ½ hour or ¼ hour increments).

**Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat. Sun.**

### Attending Class

**Completing assignments for a course** (*i.e. studying, reading, writing a paper, etc.*)

**Engaged in additional academic related activities**  
(*i.e. visiting a professor in office hours, meeting with a tutor or advisor, etc.*)

**Attending required athletic practice or competition**

### Completing optional additional work for your sport

(*i.e. training on your own*)

**Rest or recovery for your sport** (*i.e. attending the training room, doctors appointments, Icing/heating/directed physical therapy exercises*)

**Sleep** (*i.e. including naps*)

### Which of the following terms do you most strongly identify with this week?

- a.) Athlete
- b.) Student-athlete
- c.) Student
- d.) Athlete-student
- e.) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### Athletic Scholarship Status

- a.) No Scholarship
- b.) Full Scholarship
- c.) Partial Scholarship

### Do you receive any other form of aid? Please select all that apply.

- a.) Academic Merit Scholarship
- b.) General Financial aid
- c.) Loan
- d.) Work Study
- e.) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Field Notes Template

**Participant Pseudonym – NOTES INTERVIEW #1, Thursday, October 1, 3:30 – 5:00pm**

### **Interactional observations:**

**Respondents Dress** – *What did they wear to interview? What did they bring with them?*

**Informal conversation, pre/post interview** – *What did we discuss as small talk before the tape record began? What did we discuss afterwards?*

**Rapport** – *what sort of connection did we have? Was it hard to build trust? Did the interview feel forced, stifled, difficult, or was it easy, casual, etc.?*

**Gender Performance** – *any hegemonic masculinity displays by men (i.e. testing, exerting authority/control, sexualizing, minimizing/lack of response, lack of emotions, aggression, etc.)?*

*Gender conforming behavior by women – overly emotional, passive, deferent. Any atypical gender behavior? How did this differ by other identities markers – sport, age, class, race?*

### **Interviewer reflections:**

*Was it difficult? What would I do differently?*

*Any general themes or observations from the interview?*

*Questions/prompts from Schwalbe & Wolkomir (2002)*

- *What did I feel during the interview? Was the interview a ‘success’? If so, when did I start to feel this way?*
- *What kind of impression did the subject seem to be trying to create?*
- *What was said or not said that surprised me, and why was I surprised?*
- *About what did the subject seem to have mixed feelings?*
- *About what did the subject seem to be overly glib/casual/superficial?*
- *What did the subject seem to have trouble articulating?*
- *What would I want to ask if I could do the interview over?*

### **Connections to other interviews**

*Any common themes, narratives, experiences across interviews? Main differences?*

## Appendix G: Institutional Materials

To further corroborate the narratives presented by student athletes, I collected various institutional materials. These included: course syllabi, unofficial transcripts, degree progress reports, and practice and travel schedules. Participants had a choice of how they could submit these materials. They could bring them to me in person during our second interview, they could email them to me through a secure email server, or they could request their academic advisor provide me the materials directly. We went over these options in our first interview as part of the informed consent process. Most used some combination of the above strategies.

The advisor could access student records because of the SAASC's Student Athlete Database. This database stores athletic and academic information specific to student athletes and is used for a variety of purposes. The main administrator, built the database in Filemaker and oversees which staff members have access to which information. The data is used for recruiting purposes (certifying potential recruits as "NCAA qualifiers"), admission purposes (certifying potential Coastal U student athletes for admission to the university including their high school, home town, SAT or ACT test scores, and high school grades), NCAA eligibility purposes (tracking whether student athletes reach all the academic milestones to athletically compete), advising purposes (to track degree progress, student grades, create academic and learning plans), and tutoring purposes (to log tutor session reports). The database is linked to the office of the registrar, in that information is auto-populated as changes occur to a student transcript. Staff can also manually add information to the database such as tutor reports, practice schedules, course syllabi, or mock degree progress plans created with the advisor. Below, I reference to the student athlete database as well as other forms in which student data is available to university employees. The nature, public availability, and purpose of the documents are clarified below.

**Course Syllabi:** The availability of course syllabi differs by department and by instructor. University policy indicates that every instructor must create a syllabus to be distributed on the first day of the course to all potential students. The syllabus must indicate "an outline of the topics to be covered in the course (a week-by-week schedule or other detailed list that conveys how the course will be presented), a reading list or a summary of the sort of works to be used, a list of course requirements (e.g., papers, quizzes, exams), and the relative weight of each requirement toward the final grade (e.g., two ten-page papers, 20% each; two quizzes, 10% each; final exam, 40%)" (Coastal U Committee on Courses of Instruction Handbook, 2015, para. 6). The syllabus is submitted to the Academic Senate for course approval and the department chair. Some departments catalog past syllabi and make them publicly available. Similarly, some professors post their course syllabi on their faculty pages. The new Coastal U schedule of classes page now offers faculty an option to post a syllabus on the course description page. This is not required but many use it. Finally, it is standard practice at the University for faculty members to hand out a paper copy of the syllabus on the first day of the semester. Since it is a public university and members of the public can attend the first day of the semester and ask faculty members for permission to audit a course, it is reasonable to assume someone, with no official ties to the university, can gain a course syllabus. All of the above, indicates that syllabi can be acquired somewhat easily. If an academic advisor, tutor, or coach desires a student's course syllabus, they must ask the student for a copy. The SAASC recommends tutors request a copy of the student's syllabus as it will help the student and the tutor create individualized learning plans for the semester (Tutor Training Handbook, 2015).



**Unofficial Transcripts and Degree Audit Reports:** Coastal U Central is a university webportal for students, staff, and faculty to access a variety of information. Faculty can use Coastal U Central to review facts about their course such as number of students enrolled, wait-lists, and post student grades. Students use Coastal U Central to view their financial aid packages; current course grades; midterm grades; registration status, find out about their Telebears (day/time to enroll in courses) appointment; view their final exam schedule; update their personal and emergency contact information; and pay tuition. Coastal U Central also allows students to conduct a view their unofficial transcript and conduct a “Degree Audit Report”. An "official transcript" details every course a student enrolled in and their course grade. An official transcript also includes a university seal, signature from the office of the registrar, and are used for students wishing to transfer universities or apply to graduate school. In both instances—transferring or applying to another institution—universities will only accept an “official” transcript. Unofficial transcripts include the same information (a list of all courses a student enrolled in while at the university and the grade their received) but are not embossed with the university seal or signature from the office of the registrar. This type of transcript is also deemed “unofficial” because a student handled the transcript at a certain point. Unofficial transcripts are frequently used for applying to grants, fellowships, majors, or requested by faculty members writing letters of recommendation. Many academic advisors encourage students to frequently check their unofficial transcript at the end of each to semester for accuracy.

Figure A.1: Sample Student Transcript

<b>COLLEGE: L &amp; S</b>	<b>MAJOR: DOUBLE</b>
<b>COLLEGE: L &amp; S</b>	<b>MAJOR: POLITICAL ECONOMY</b>
<b>COLLEGE: L &amp; S</b>	<b>MAJOR: FRENCH</b>

UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS			
08-12	UC ENTRY LEVEL WRITING	REQT	SATISFIED
08-12	AMERICAN HISTORY	REQT	SATISFIED
08-12	AMERICAN INSTITUTION	REQT	SATISFIED
COASTAL U REQUIREMENTS			
08-12	AMERICAN CULTURES	REQUIRED	
	ADV PLACEMENART ST DWG, 05-11	5.3	
	ADV PLACEMENENGL C/L, 05-11	5.3	
	ADV PLACEMENART ST 2D, 05-12	0.0	
	ADV PLACEMENFRNCH LANG, 05-12	5.3	
	ADV PLACEMENMATH AB, 05-12	2.7	
FALL TERM 2012			
ENGLISH	R1A	READING AND COMP	4.0 A- 14.8
FRENCH	4	ADV INT FRENCH	5.0 A 20.0
MEC ENG	98	DIRECTED GROUP STDY	2.0 P PF
PHYS ED	12	PE ACTIVITIES	0.5 A 2.0
PHYS ED	12	PE ACTIVITIES	0.5 A 2.0
PHYS ED	12	PE ACTIVITIES	0.5 A 2.0
PHYS ED	12	PE ACTIVITIES	0.5 A 2.0
POL SCI	5	INTRO TO INTERN REL	4.0 B+ 13.2
<b>HONORS TO 12-12</b>			
<b>DEAN'S HONORS</b>			
SPRING TERM 2013			
ENGLISH	R1B	READING AND COMP	4.0 A- 14.8
FRENCH	102	READ, WR IN FRENCH	4.0 A 16.0
MATH	16A	ANAL GEO & CALCULUS	3.0 B 9.0
MCELLBI	61	BRAIN, MIND & BEHAV	3.0 P PN

SPRING TERM 2014			
FRENCH	183A	CONFIG OF CRISIS	4.0 A- 14.8
IAS	45	SURVY WORLD HISTORY	4.0 B+ 13.2
SPANISH	2	ELEM SPANISH	5.0 B+ 16.5
STAT	2	INTRO TO STAT*	4.0 I RZ
EDUCATION ABROAD -			
TURKEY/BOGAZICI U/SUMMER 2014			
ARTHS	103S	OTTOMAN MONUMENTS	3.0 A 12.0
ARTST	50	APPLIED ARTS	2.0 P PN
POL S	104S	INTL ORGANIZATIONS	3.0 A 12.0
FALL TERM 2014			
FRENCH	117A	17TH CENTURY LIT	4.0 A- 14.8
HISTORY	158C	EUROPE 1914-PRES	4.0 A- 14.8
POLECON	100	THEORY OF POL ECON	4.0 B+ 13.2
SOCIOL	180I	COMP PERSP-INEQUAL	4.0 A 16.0
SPRING TERM 2015			
STAT	2	05-14-15 I REMOVED	4.0 C- 6.8 JI
EPS	3	WATER PLANET	2.0 P PN
FRENCH	118A	18TH CENTURY LIT	4.0 A- 14.8
IAS	106	INTER MICRO THEORY	4.0 B+ 13.2
POL SCI	122A	EURO INTEGRATION	4.0 A- 14.8
- MEMORANDA -			
01-21-14 FIELD OF STUDY CHANGED FROM L & S UNDECLARED.			
08-28-14 FIELD OF STUDY CHANGED FROM L & S FRENCH.			
05-12-15 STAT 2 DATE OF COMPLETION EXTENDED TO 05-31-15			
TOTAL PASS/NOT PASS ATTM		11.0	PASSED 11.0
OTHER TRANSFER CREDIT		18.6	
SEMESTER CREDITS COMPLETED		121.6	GPA 3.539

Students can also conduct a Degree Audit Report or “DARS” through Coastal U Central. A DARS report examines the student’s transcript in relation to their college and major requirements. It then produces a report detailing what university, college, and major requirements the student has left to fulfill. The DARS report is a useful tool for students and

advisors alike. Coastal U Central is password protected and the campus encourages students to never share their login information. Students in this study could use Coastal U Central and print an unofficial transcripts and degree audit report to bring to the researcher. Or, the student could grant their academic advisor permission to share with me their unofficial transcript and degree audit report. Academic advisors also can conduct a DARS report on a student's behalf. University staff such as college major advisors, academic major advisors, and the office of the registrar, to name a few, also can access student academic records. Participants will be given the option to share the above institutional materials with the researcher. This is my preferred method to collect the data. But, student athletes will also have the option to allow the researcher to retrieved unofficial transcripts and DARS reports from their student athlete advisor. I included this option because this is a frequent process experienced by student athletes (as stated above) and in some sense is normalized. The student athlete may prefer the convenience of allowing their advisor to retrieve these materials. In either event, I will only solicit materials with the student athlete's permission and will ensure the confidentiality of these private student records.

Figure A.2 Sample DARS Report.

- OK Reading and Composition**
  - + One Course for First Half Reading and Composition  
SP15 COM LIT 001A 4.0 B ENGL COMP WORLD LIT
  - + One Course for Second Half Reading and Composition  
F 15 HISTART 001B 4.0 B VISUAL EXPERIENCE

- 
- OK Quantitative Reasoning**
    - + One Course (min 2 units), C- or better grade  
SP16 STAT 002 4.0 C INTRO TO STAT

- 
- NO Foreign Language Breadth**
    - Complete the Equivalent of the Second Semester of a Foreign Language with a Grade of C- or Better.

No more than two courses from any one dept; no exams.

- NO Seven-Course Breadth**
  - Take One Course from the Arts & Literature area
  - + Biological Science  
0000 BIOSCI 0.0 OK NTR 150
  - + Historical Studies  
F 14 ANTHRO 002AC 4.0 B+ INTRO ARCHAEOLOGY
  - + International Studies  
SP15 POL SCI 002 4.0 C INTRO COMPARAT POL
  - Take One Course from the Philosophy and Values area
  - + Physical Science  
0000 PHYSICI 0.0 OK ASTR 100
  - + Social & Behavioral Science  
0000 SOCBEHAV 0.0 OK PSYC 100

----- Unit and Residence Requirements -----

- 
- NO Total Units toward Graduation**  
EARNED: 66.3 UNITS  
Note: EARNED units includes IP (In Progress) units.

Shown above is page two or six of the DARs report. The first page includes the student's identifying information, and whether they have completed system wide requirements. Page two, as shown below outlines which college requirements have left to be fulfilled. The text in blue indicates that this requirement has been met. The text in red reflects the requirements that have yet to be included. The remaining pages include major requirements and conclude with an official transcript.

## Practice & Travel Schedules

Travel schedules are publicly available via the athletic department website. This website lists by team the schedule and location of competition. Practice schedules are not posted online, but are available to a variety of student athlete support staff. Within the Athletic Department, Compliance & student Services, Facilities personnel, Coaches, the Athletic Director's Leadership team, Sports Information, the Faculty Athletic Representative, and Sports Medicine personnel all have access to student athletes' practice schedules as a necessary component in completing their job. The athletic department gives the SAASC academic advisors team practice schedules to aid course selection. For instance, if the football team has practice between 2-5pm each day, an academic advisor for that team will look for classes that reside outside that time frame. Student athletes are encouraged to give their practice and travel schedules out to faculty, advisors, and tutors by both the academic senate university policy and SAASC Handbook. It is important for tutors to know an athlete's practice schedule so they can coordinate meeting times. In addition, student athletes may give their practice and travel schedule to faculty members and GSIs at the beginning of the semester in case there may be an athletic/academic conflict.

Below is a sample Cross country weekly practice schedule. This coach updated a google document that was shared with the team to communicate workouts. The document had individualized workouts per week per athlete. Below is a sample week practice schedule. The top two rows offer a broad overview of the twice per day practices. Then, each athlete is prescribed a certain mileage depending on their event and health.

Training October 19th - October 25th								
Week 1 of 5	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total Mileage:
6:00 AM	6AM HPC	Treadmill s- Sandoval	Recovery	Travel or XT/run Lift		8:00 AM		100% TWM
2:30PM:	Easy run + Drills and Strides	Off/On 800's	Recovery	Short run	Race Modeling	Med LR	easy run OYO	
<b>Athlete</b>								
Sam	AM:Run	8:30AM: Treadmill	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	1:20	easy run OYO	80
Bryan	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	10	easy run OYO	68
Physicist	AM:XT	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	9	easy run OYO	58
Eddie	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	12	easy run OYO	85
Willis	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	12	easy run OYO	85
Brandon	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	10	easy run OYO	70
Seamus	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	10	easy run OYO	72
Terrance	AM:Run	800's	OYO	AM: Run/ PM: Easy run	Race modeling	10	easy run OYO	70

Women's Rowing used a different strategy. The coach sent out a schedule every three weeks to the entire team via email. Notice the workouts are not individualized and instead all athletes complete the same training regime.

Figure A 3: Sample practice schedule, women's crew

**Coastal U Women's Crew March 2016**

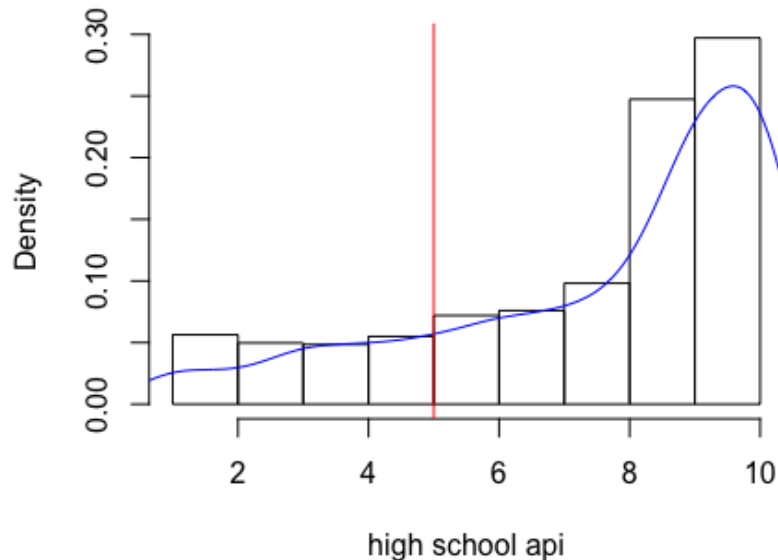
Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
29 20K  4 X 1K at 2K pace 6' rest	1 4 X 2K 20-24  Weights  Tue or Thur 2 X 5K 20-22 spm 154-165 HR +14ish	2 22K 10 K as you wish 5K of 4' on 1' off 20, 22, 24, 22 5K at +15 w/ 10 strokes at 2K pace every 7' 2K at +14/15	3 (90" on 30" off X 3) X 4 28-34 spm  Weights	4 Steady Starts  PM 4:00 Steady	5 3 X 4K mixed boats  Short break	6
7 20K  PM 4:00 4 X 1K at 2k pace 7' rest	8 3 X 10' 20-24 spm  Weights  Tue or Thur 2 X 5K 20-22 spm 154-165 HR +14ish	9 22K 10 K as you wish 5K of 4' on 1' off 20, 22, 24, 22 5K at +15 w/ 10 strokes at 2K pace @ 7' and 14' 2K at +14/15	10 1250's 30 spm Load trailer (two eights)  Weights	11 Two eights to TGR Steady Starts  PM 4:00 Steady	12 2K Celebration of fitness. Piece will start at 7:45  8:30 depart to TGR for alumni day row  Done by 11:30	13

## Appendix H: Quantitative Analysis of the Athletes' Hometown Stats Database

To examine macro-social processes, an original data set henceforth known as “Athletes’ Hometown Stats” database was used. The database consisted of ten years’ of Coastal U’s crew and track and field rosters totaling 1487 athletes with a near even representation across sport and gender. The rosters included student-athletes’ hometown, high school, sport, and gender. High school and hometown were used along with data from U.S. Census and Department of Education to create measures for income and high school rank. The database provided comparisons across social characteristics influencing educational attainment such as family income, neighborhood wealth, and school quality (Baker & Corcoran, 2012; Lareau, 2003; Nasir, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). Institutional reports were then used to compare how race, family income, and high school rank differ between three groups (1) rowers and track athletes at Coastal U, (2) Coastal U students, and (3) the students at Coastal U regional universities.

Measures for family incomes and secondary-education quality yielded stark differences between Coastal U athletes and general students’ backgrounds. Per state definitions of “low-income” only 0.43% student-athletes met this criteria compared to 25.8% general students population. Further, student-athletes were more likely to be represented in the middle or upper-middle income range, with 71.21% from communities whose income is higher than their state’s family median income. The wealthier communities also reflected better access to schools. The t-distribution of high school ranking showed the density of population increased steadily with a higher ranking high school score

Figure A.3. T-test of athletes’ high school API distribution

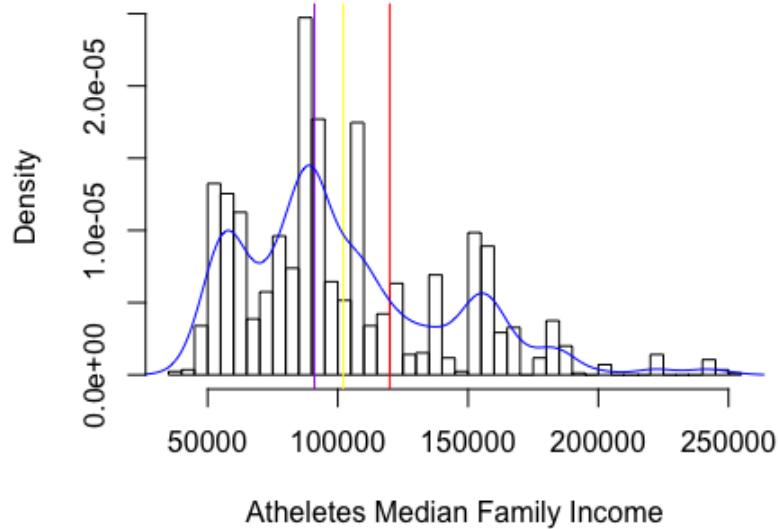


Sixty-four percent of athletes went to a high ranking high school<sup>49</sup> This suggests the athlete population comes from academically strong high schools. Compared with general undergraduate population, a smaller distribution of athletes attended low ranking high schools. While Coastal U athletes seemed more socially advantaged compared to the student population, differences across sport remained. Rowers went to better ranking, more often private, and most likely white-

<sup>49</sup> High school ranking determined by State educational ranking system. “High” is eight or above on a 10 point scale. Low ranking is a score of four or below.

majority high schools. Rowers also came from neighborhoods with greater median incomes than track and field athletes. But even track athletes, who are supposed to represent the most free, open sport with the greatest upward mobility potential were clustered in upper incomes. Less than three percent of track athletes came from communities where family incomes averaged less than \$50,000 per year. Instead, track athletes were most likely to be found in the communities ranging from \$80 – 124,999 per year.

Figure A.4. T-test of athletes' incoming distribution



The red line is the supposed position of low API population of general population, which is on the right of 4 position on athletes API distribution

From the T-distribution analysis on median family income, the income density peak for athletes ranges between 100,000 and 150,000 dollars. Further, the student-athletes population has a group of people at the high end with income above 200,000 dollars (Appendix, Figure 1). The median of athletes population family income is \$91,028 and the mean of athletes population family income is \$102,098, and the standard deviation is \$39,374 dollars, which could be used for a future research population. Compared with general student population, athletes have a larger population with family income beyond \$150,000 dollars. Further, the mean of family income for athletes is much higher than the median which suggests that there is population of athletes that come from very wealthy families that drags the mean higher than the median of population.

## Appendix I: Historical Context and Legal Backing of the NCAA's Amateur Principal

In the mid-1950s then NCAA President Walter Byers invented the term “student-athlete” was invented to safeguard the NCAA and universities from the legal obligation for workmen’s compensation and unemployment benefits (Byers, 1995). Despite the nefarious intentions, the term harkens to an idealized view of education, one in which students willingly pursue sport to enhance their intellectual engagement (Smith, 1988). Student athletes are defined as any participant on a team roster of a sport and/or university that is a NCAA member institution. By becoming a student athlete, an individual signs a large stack of paperwork, which includes an agreement to abide by an over 400 page NCAA manual. Most regulations target athletes not coaches. For instance, most of the rules include specifications on how college athletes must forgo the right to any compensation connected to athletic merit or ability beyond an athletic scholarship. Over the past 60 years student athletes have contested amateurism and the power accompanying it. Recent challenges to amateurism include: the March 2014 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruling that Northwestern’s football players are university employees and have a right to union representation if they so choose and two federal court cases challenging the NCAA’s monopoly status. Many of these challenges come from “revenue” student athletes or participants from men’s football and basketball. These sports bring in the most money for universities through ticket sales, endorsements deals, and sponsorships (Smith, 2011).

Amateurism as a governing principle ensures student athletes remain “non-professional” in their sport. Yet, amateurism only applies to the athletes and not the athletic staff or bureaucratic actors. Athletic conferences and departments define “non-professional” by regulating both the material benefits and personal behavior of student athletes. To maintain amateurism student athletes are not allowed to:

- *Enter into a current or future contract with, accept payment from, or compete in any way on a professional sport team*
- *Communicate in any way with, agree to work with, or be represented by an agent*
- *Own the rights to their own identity, image, or name*
- *Accept extra benefits from anyone associated with college sport*
- *Receive compensation beyond actual expenses*

While student athletes cannot use their name, image, or identity to raise money for themselves, the school certainly can on their behalf. Baked into amateurism is a clear exemption for how universities and the NCAA can profit from athletics. NCAA Bylaw 12.1.2.4.5 titled, “Exception for Institutional Fundraising Activities Involving the Athletics Ability of Student athletes” allows universities to require student athletes to participate in charity events to raise money for the University or other organizations. Coastal U rowing teams, for instance, are required to participate in two yearly events to raise money for a non-profit cancer organization, attend multiple alumni functions and donor event to raise money for the team, and participate in a yearly alumni race that to raise interest in the program. The NCAA permits student athletes to participate in events such as these, so long as “student-athletes receive no compensation or prizes for their participation” and all the proceeds go directly to the charity or university (p. 58).

Another way the NCAA substantiates amateurism is Bylaw 12.5.1. which bans student athletes from using their own image, likeness, or even name for any sort of monetary gain. But, athletic departments are able to use student athletes’ images to promote the school. There are nine sub-points to this bylaw, all of which affirm that the University or any affiliated charity, non-profit, or student group can use an athletes’ likeness to promote an event, sell a product, or

sell the agency, so long as the money goes directly back the university or educational activity. This even extends to any commercial partnerships the university has, which are allowed to use an athletes' image. In essence, the University can use an image of a student athlete on a billboard promoting the school and their commercial partnerships. While this behavior is allowed, the same student athlete could not create an internet posting with his name and image offering private training for high school recruits. Again, the academic equivalent of this, private tutoring, is a common behavior allowed for all university students with no restrictions.

Along with regulating how student athletes' identities are used, the NCAA monitors their material assets to ensure they receive no compensation beyond an athletic scholarship. These regulations are most extensively captured in the "Extra Benefit" regulations. An "extra benefit" is defined broadly by the NCAA to mean anything given to a student athlete or member of their family, not approved by the NCAA. The litmus test for this rule is any "benefit" that is not available to the general student body. Nina, a tutor in this study explained, she could only bring cookies to her student athletes students because they were left-over from a class potluck. The cookies in question, had been made available to general students first.

As large and extensive as the athletic bureaucracies are, they certainly cannot monitor every cookie exchange in college sport. Instead, they target essential areas of student athlete life requiring student athletes to document their living arrangements, register their vehicles, document their meal plans, and educational financial aid. If a student athlete wants to bring a family car to campus, they must register the vehicle with the NCAA and show a proof of purchase. This is to prevent boosters from buying cars for student athletes and compromising the core amateur principle of college sport; even though schools can purchase cars for coaches or administrators as part of their compensation. If a student athlete makes any change to these areas through the year, they must update the NCAA accordingly.

The athletic governing bodies also monitor student athletes' employment. This occurs in multiple ways. The first limitation is that student athletes are not automatically classified as university employees despite their contributions. In protecting student athletes' amateur status, the NCAA limits their ability to be a professional athlete on the side. Vera, a track athlete from Germany, noted her teammates on the German national team are able to go to university, be a part of the university track team, have a sponsorship deal that pays them to be a track athlete, and participate on the National team. In the U.S. student athletes must choose college or the professional route. For Malcolm, this was a huge decision. After leaving his football scholarship, he considered running track professionally. He spent two days training with his high school coach and he hit a long-jump score that would earn someone All-American status in the event. Malcolm figured he could use this mark to gain a professional contract and he could train full time with his coach and prepare for the upcoming Olympics. But this score also got the attention of universities, scrambling to fill their last roster spots before the August school year started. Coastal U called Malcolm and offered him a spot—with only a books scholarship. Malcolm's father, a Coastal U alum, said he couldn't turn down the offer. Malcolm had been at Coastal U almost two years when we spoke. And, he admitted, despite his college-level athletic success and the chance to earn a degree from a top university, he still had doubts about his decision.

But it's still so hard for me to think that I'd be over in Europe right now jumping. Or no, I would be in Portland right now at the indoor world championships, jumping probably 27 feet with my coach. With some Nike or Adidas deal. Which is hard. Because I hate college. You know college sucks. It sucks. I'm very bitter about it (Interview Three). Malcolm was forced to choose college or a professional deal because of the rules in the NCAA.



Malcolm also had to stop working with his high school coach because he works with professional athletes. And, the struggles Malcolm refers to here, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, emerge only because the wedding of athletic and academic institutions creates unnecessarily difficult conditions and forces participants to make difficult and consequential choices such as between employment or education.

The third way the NCAA regulates employment is by tracking the student athletes' paid work. An athlete must register even a short-term part-time job with the athletic compliance office. In doing so, the athletic bureaucracies ensure that student athletes are paid "(a) Only for work actually performed; and (b) At a rate commensurate with the going rate in that locality for similar services" (NCAA Bylaw 12.4, p. 64). In essence, a student athlete cannot be paid or employed based solely on their athletic talent or reputation. One exception to this rule is student athletes can offer private lessons in their sport for money but they cannot use university facilities to do so. If they do offer private lessons, another set of regulations kick in. They must also be paid by the individual or family receiving the lesson, file records of employment/payment with the athletic department and they must prove that they were paid the going-rate for these activities and, "The student-athlete does not use his or her name, picture or appearance to promote or advertise the availability of fee-for-lesson sessions" (NCAA Handbook, 2017, p. 64). But, student athletes can work university-sponsored camps during the off-season. Yet again, another way the University can make money off the student athletes' name or reputation but they cannot

Even if these rules were designed for revenue student athletes, do impact Olympic sports. In 2013, Minnesota Wrestler Joel Bauman lost his eligibility after posting a rap video, designed to send a positive message to at-risk youth, in which he shared his own story of becoming a college wrestler. The song became available for purchase on itunes, at which point Bauman violated NCAA rules. "Because Bauman performed under his own name and identified himself as a Minnesota wrestler, the N.C.A.A. ruled him ineligible for the remainder of the season. J. T. Bruett, Minnesota's compliance director, said Bauman violated an N.C.A.A. bylaw prohibiting student-athletes from using their name, image or status as an athlete to promote the sale of a commercial product" (Borzi, 2013, para 4). This story shows the breadth of the NCAA's reach. The NCAA allowed Bauman to retain his eligibility if he removed his name and image and used an alias and likeness. Bauman declined.

Three of the female track and field athletes, Vera, Brittany, and Josephine all were approached at some point in their college career to do part time modeling. Vera had been a model before she arrived at college. But all three immediately turned down the work for fear they, like Bauman would lose their eligibility. As Josephine explained she turned down the work because, "I am not about to take a risk about not being here" (Josephine, Interview Two). Athletes are not hyperbolic in the fear of losing their place in the University. By restricting the material conditions available to student athletes, the NCAA and universities wield enormous power over student athletes' educational trajectories. With one-year renewable athletic scholarships as the norm, for all student athletes, but for low-income students in particular, the coach's control over an athletic scholarship binds the athlete to the sport and the university in a way unseen in other parts of the university.

## Appendix J: Overview of Coastal U’s Curriculum Requirements and Hurdles

This Appendix supplements the discussion in Part III regarding Coastal U’s curriculum requirements. The major areas of curriculum include: unit minimums, system-wide requirements, university-wide requirements, college requirements and major requirement (listed in Table 1).

First there are unit requirements. To be considered a full-time student, and eligible for financial aid, all CLS students must enroll in 13 units per semester and complete 120 units to graduate. To graduate within four years, students take about four classes per semester, averaging 15 units. The campus also provides several requirements that help students choose their major. These requirements extend through multiple bureaucracies including the Coastal U system, the University, the college, and then the major. There is tremendous choice within each category designed to familiarize incoming college students with the various departments on campus. In Fall 2016, the campus offered 565 courses that fulfilled the Arts and Literature requirement.

*Table A.1. Curriculum requirements at varying Coastal U bureaucracies*

<b>Institutional Entity</b>	<b>Course Requirements</b>	<b>Student it applies to</b>
System-Wide	Entry Level Writing* American History & Institutions*	All students within the broader Coastal University System
Coastal U Requirements	American Cultures	All Coastal U students
College of Letters and Sciences	Reading & Composition* Quantitative Reasoning* Foreign Language* Arts and Literature Biological Science Historical Studies International Studies Philosophy and Values Physical Science Social and Behavioral Science	All Coastal U students enrolled in the College of Letters and Science
Major requirements	Designed by the respective department	Students declared for that major

\*Student can fulfill the requirement with high school level course work or Advanced Placement test scores.

Even with the campus requirements, the process of selecting a major reminds highly individualistic. Coastal U reminded students every step of the way that it is their responsibility to find, pursue, and navigate a course of study. This can be quite daunting after thirteen years in a K-12 system where curricula were forced upon students with little choice.

Once a student selects a major, they must meet the entry requirements to declare. At Coastal U, the tracks for major pathways can be as regimented and restrictive, if not more so, than at the high school level. Like other large, public institutions, the size of Coastal U means not all students can pursue their desired major. CLS has ten “high-demand” majors with steep entry requirements. Majors can require GPA minimums, set curriculum of prerequisite courses; and written essays and letters of recommendation. In one more extreme instance, the major of operations Research and Management requires that students be “invited” to apply by the faculty supervisor of the program. Even non-impact majors still included requirements. One such major, History, still has a minimum GPA rule and lower-division required course work.

College advisors encourage students to create “backup” plans in case they are rejected from the desired course of study. The College of Letters and Science lists back-up majors for each high demand major. Their website explicitly encourages students pursue a secondary track of study because: “Every year there are students who cannot get into their preferred major. (Hopefully this will not happen to you, but you need to be prepared.) (CLS, 2016). The advisors offer less competitive majors as alternatives. For instance, if a student is interested in computer science, advisors recommend less in demand majors such as cognitive science, applied math, or philosophy.

*Table A.2. High Demand Major and Entry Requirements*

Majors	Requirements to Declare
Computer Science	Receive a minimum 3.0 GPA in seven courses: Four semesters of computer programming (CS 61A, CS 61B, CS 61C, CS70), two semesters of calculus for engineers (Math 1A, Math 1B), and one semester of Linear Algebra/Differential Equations (Math 54)
Economics	Receive a minimum 3.0 GPA in five courses: One semester of introduction to Economics (Econ 1 or 2), two semesters of calculus (Math 16A/16B or Math 1A/1B), One semester of introductory statistics (Stat 20, 21), one semester of intermediate economic theory (Econ 100A, 101A, 100B, or 101B)
Environmental Economics & Policy	Receive a minimum 2.7 GPA in five courses: One semester of introduction to Economics (Envecon 1, Econ 1, 2, or 3), two semesters of calculus (Math 16A/16B or Math 1A/1B), One semester of introductory statistics (Stat 20, 21), one semester of intermediate economic theory (Econ 100A or 101A)
Media Studies	Must have completed 30 units of course work. Must receive a minimum 3.2 GPA in three prerequisite courses which can be selected from the following areas: Intro to Media Studies; American History (post-civil war); American institutions; American Institutions; and Intro to Social Science
Operations Research and Management Systems	Must be invited to apply to the major. Once you receive an invitation, students need a minimum 3.2 GPA in four courses: Multivariable Calculus (Math 53); Linear Algebra/Differential Equations (Math 54); Intro to Econ (Econ 1,2, or 3); and Intro to Business (UGBA 10)
Political Economy	Must have a cumulative GPA of 2.7; must attend a major declaration workshop; must meet with the major advisor, must receive a B- or better in Intro to World History (IAS 45); must receive a C or better in Intro to Econ (Econ 1,2, or 3); are encouraged, not required, to complete two semesters of a foreign language
Psychology	Must declare by the 5 <sup>th</sup> semester or what student reaches 80 units; must submit an application; and must have a 3.2 GPA in seven prerequisite courses: Intro to Psych (Psych 1); Biological science (Psych C61 or C64); Intro to Social Science (Soc 1, 3, or 3A; Philosophy 3, 4, 5, 12A, or 25B; Anthro 3 or 4AC, Linguistics 5); Psych 10; and two semesters of calculus (math 10A/10b; math 1A/1B, Math 54/55)
Public Health	Recommended 2.75 GPA in prerequisite courses: 7 units of biology (Bio 1A/1B; MCB 32, 50, 55, C61 or NutriSci 10); two math courses (Math 32, 1A,1B, 10A,10B, 16A, 16B), three social science courses in two different areas (Psych 1, 2; Soc 1, 3, 3A, 5; Econ 1, 2, C3; Antro 3, 3AC; Pol Sci 2, 4); and submit a written application.
Social Welfare	Must complete all of the following prerequisite courses with a C or better: Reading and Composition requirement; Intro to psychology; Intro to Sociology; Intro to Statistics.
Statistics	Must earn a 3.2 GPA and no lower than a C in the prerequisite courses: two semesters of calculus (Math 1A, 1B); Multivariable Calculus (Math 53); Linear Algebra and Differential Equations (Math 54); and the concepts of probability (Stat 134)

As Part III explored, these curriculum requirements combined with the institutional demands of sport, can lead student athletes to a narrower curriculum path.

## **Appendix K: NCAA Regulations Relevant to the Study**

### **Academic Regulations**

To safeguard the governing principal amateurism, the NCAA regulates the academic side of student athlete life. In this, the NCAA ensures that athletes are also “students.” The academic regulations are tied to eligibility, or what allows a student athlete to be a participant within the NCAA. If a student athlete breaches any of the following rules, they can lose their eligibility, scholarship, and affiliation with the NCAA or their university. There are four main rules outlined below that impact student athletes and cover enrollment, degree progress, and GPA minimums.

The first eligibility rule is that every athlete must enroll in the minimum units required to be a full-time student, as dictated by their college. At Coastal U, CLS requires all full-time students to be in 13 units. The second key academic regulation is known as “the 40-60-80 rule.” This rule requires athletes to complete 40% of their major coursework by the end of their second year, 60% by the end of their third year, and 80% by the end of their fourth year. In setting these standards, the NCAA assumes that student athletes will identify a major in their second year and remain committed to that major; a requirement not levied on the general student body. This rule also implies that athletes will take five years to graduate. The final 20% of their coursework will be completed in their fifth year. Further, these percentages must be met during the academic year to ensure athletes do not make the bulk of their degree progress through summer school. The third academic eligibility rule is that student athletes must pass six units (or hours) of course work in one semester and 18 per academic term to remain eligible. This rule can send contradictory messages to students and coaches. Students must make degree progress in the long-term, but in any given semester, they may only need to pass six units.

The final academic eligibility rule is a GPA minimum. The NCAA allows student athletes to remain eligible even if they do not meet the University’s minimum college GPA requirements. As the rule states: “Student-athletes must achieve 90 percent of the institution’s minimum overall grade-point average necessary to graduate (for example, 1.8) by the beginning of year two, 95 percent of the minimum GPA (1.9) by year three and 100 percent (2.0) by year four” (NCAA.org, 2015). To put that in context, at Coastal U, the University requires that all students maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 to remain in good standing. If at the end of the semester, a student’s GPA fall below 2.0, they are placed on academic probation and given one semester to raise their GPA back up to 2.0 to remain at the University. In the scenario set by the NCAA, a student athlete could be on academic probation their entire time at the University and remain eligible by the NCAA’s standards.

In 2003 the NCAA created the “Academic Progress Report” (APR) or a reform that evaluates the educational performance of teams and colleges. APR is a team-based metric that examines all the eligibility rules including graduation rates and degree progress and gives each team a score out of 1000. In 2005, then NCAA President Myles Brand noted the historic nature of this reform measure: “For the first time, the NCAA is holding teams and institutions accountable for the academic progress and success of their student-athletes ... The goal of the academic reform package is to reinforce good behavior. The new reforms are tough but fair” (Christianson, 2005, para.7). Teams with below a 925 APR score could face a range of penalties such as loss of scholarships or the opportunity to play post season. Teams with below a 900 APR can face a more extreme version of these same penalties.

As discussed in Part III, the academic regulations necessitate the public dissemination of information regarding academic performance. Athletes are held accountable to their teammates and to the public for their educational outcomes in a way that is not applied to any other student

population. As of 2017, no Coastal U Olympic sports were sanctioned for violating the APR rules. The teams in the study met the minimum criteria of a 50% graduation rate needed. But, as the table below shows, the total male athlete population just barely passes the APR standard.

*Table A.3. Publically available academic data for Coastal U athletes*

	Above 3.0	Below 3.0	Below 2.0	Population	5 Yr, Avg. GPA	4-yr Avg. Grad Rate*
Male Athletes	40% (N,199)	60% (N,292)	3.7% (N,18)	491	2.912	55%
Female Athletes	61% (N,217)	39% (N,137)	2.3% (N,8)	354	3.106	79%
All Athletes	49% (N, 416)	51% (N, 429)	3.1% (N, 28)	845	3.009	68%
Men's Crew	52% (N,25)	48% (N,32)	7% (N,5)	67	2.825	**
Women's Crew	56% (N,38)	44% (N,30)	0% (N,0)	68	3.146	89%
Men's Track	57% (N,31)	43% (N,23)	4% (N,2)	54	3.049	61%
Women's Track	52% (N,22)	48% (N,20)	5% (N,2)	42	3.049	78%
Men's CC	91% (N,21)	8% (N,2)	4% (N,1)	23	3.008	61%
Women's CC	65% (N,13)	35% (N,7)	0% (N,0)	20	3.006	78%
Male UG	75% (N,8920)	25% (N,3050)	1.7% (N,201)	11970	3.298	89%
Female UG	78% (N,10306)	22% (N,2862)	1.1% (N,148)	13168	3.314	92%
All UG	77% (N, 19459)	23% (N, 5977)	1.4% (N, 354)	25436	3.307	91%

\*Reflects the average graduation rate (FGR), six years to degree completion, for incoming cohorts 2005-08

\*\*Men's Crew is not required to (and therefore does not) publically report graduation rates

So far, the NCAA has mixed results enforcing APR. In 2008, 700 out of 6000 Division I athletic teams fell below the 925 mark, the majority of which were in men's football and basketball but only 218 of those teams faced sanctions such as losing scholarships, and 44 only received a "public warning" (Sander, 2008, para.3). Responding to the lack of enforcement, then NCAA President Myles Brand replied that "The reason is there are genuine signs of measurable improvement" (Sander, 2008, para.5). Two years later, little had changed. In 2010, 72 out of 327 Division I basketball teams failed to meet the 925 benchmark. Few were penalized (Palaima, 2011). After constant criticism from the lack of enforcement, including a scathing critique from the Knight Commission, in 2013 the NCAA eliminated the two tiered penalty system to a single score, 930, effective 2014-2015. But critics quickly point out this move is a bait in switch in which the NCAA raised the APR measure, but added additional exceptions to the GSR measure, a key component of the score. The new 930 measure still translates to a 50% graduation rate (Gurney & Southall, 2012).

### **NCAA Regulations on practice and competition**

The other major area of regulation impacting this study monitors the practice and competition days for sports. The NCAA handbook specifies the number of season days for each sport it oversees. During the "season" the 20-hour limit applies. For the study sports, women's rowing and track and field, had more in-season days than any other sport, totaling 156. Rowing has two seasons, fall and spring. Track and field, has multiple seasons and sports built within it. A distance runner could participate in three separate NCAA sports, or cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. This is part of why these sports have more practice days than any other. Since Coastal U has 136 instructional days per academic year and 40 days reserved for final exam preparation and administration, the total academic year is 176 days. This means there are 20 days during the academic year where they are not in season. The NCAA gives athletic departments the jurisdiction to determine when these non-season periods can occur. This is referred to "Eight-hour weeks" in which coaches cannot require more than eight-hour of practice time. For sports in the study, the eight hour weeks occurred the first and last two week of the Fall term, the first week of the Spring term.

### **NCAA Time Regulations**

Considering the importance of *Volandatory* time commitment to the simple arithmetic of

time availability, I'd like to drill down into the official stance of the NCAA. The NCAA rules state that if the student initiates the workout and does it on their own time, then it can be considered truly voluntary. There were six participants who described incorporating this kind of activity into their week. They all used a rest day, often Sundays if they were not traveling, to do something like a yoga class, light running, or extra weights. But *voluntary* workouts were not optional, as explained in Part III.

The first area of *Voluntary* time commitments is traveling to and from practice. This issue is certainly exacerbated for sports like rowing where few campuses have a body of water near by to train on. The women's rowing facility is located 12.4 miles from campus and is a 36-minute drive with no traffic. The men's rowing facility—the school had access to two different bodies of water on opposite sides of the campus—is 9.2 miles away and is a 27-minute drive without traffic. Both teams weekly travel was between five to eight hours per week, depending on the number of water sessions. Internalizing the need to be efficient at all points of the day, Kalie, a coxswain on the women's rowing team, explained that the time traveling is very unproductive. "It's a lot of time where you sit there and do nothing. You can't really bring school work with you, because your clothes are wet you don't want your notebooks to get soggy. And in the morning, it's super early, you're just sitting there, out of it" (Interview Two).

The second area is competition days. Both home and away meets are very time intensive. Athletes estimated spending from 6am to 7pm at a given competition. But the NCAA only allots three hours towards the competition day. CM called the time commitment for meets "a slap in the face. If you have a meet, you're gone all day. Or, if it's a travel meet, you're gone all weekend" (Interview Two). It's not only the time commitment, but the mindset and physical appearance required when traveling that makes it difficult to focus on little else. CM explained:

I'm the type of person, I don't want to do homework before a race. So when I'd travel, I wouldn't do it, until the plane ride home. Because we'd leave right after races. Doing homework would stress me out. And I don't know if other athletes feel that way, but I'm assuming they do, because you're there for a purpose. When you get on the plane, you're told to wear a certain thing because you're representing the [Coastal U]. So that's the mindset that I'm coming in with. I'm representing them in an athletic way. So academics are almost put to the side until my athletics are done (CM, Interview Two).

Per CM's account, a travel weekend becomes a 48-hour experience in which athletes are told what to bring, what to wear, where to be, what to eat, and how to prepare for the competition. The third area for non-countable hours is during campus breaks. Each program did a camp, or a period, when no class is in session and there is no practice limit. Rowing required athletes to return to campus two weeks before the start of the spring semester, cutting their winter break in half, for a camp. They also required a spring break camp, where athletes practiced as much as four times per day for 14 days in a row. The first academic day back on campus, they had off but they still had to go to class/catch up with academic work.

Using holidays and academic recesses to catch up on training time begs the question, when do athletes have an off season? Josephine, a long-distance runner replied,

Off season? The longest off season we have is two weeks. We had one week completely off, in December. And then, the second week we cross train... That's our off season.

Especially for sports where you're on your feet all the time, you need to give your joints a break because if you don't, it's really dangerous (Josephine, Interview Two).

During summer and winter breaks some athletes either stay on campus or they return home to train on their own. Coaches gave detailed workout plans to athletes to maintain their strength and

fitness levels during holidays. In my interviews and something that surprised me George, Seamus, and the Physicist all went through mental stress and burnout during the off season. After one summer training alone, all three committed to staying on campus the next summer so they could have a support system to complete all the workouts with. One summer Seamus tried to fit in a job alongside training and he harmed both his health and mental stamina.

I had 75 miles a week to do...and worked from 8-4...I would wake up at 6:30am, take [public transit] downtown, work from 8-4. Leave immediately at 4 because I knew I had to get home. Had a coffee at 5pm, got out the door at 6. Then ran 11 miles at six, Monday to Friday, and then, the weekend do like a seventeen mile long run. And then Sunday do a ten mile long run. It was really hard. <Laughs.> And then, trying to squeeze--they give us workouts we have to do...By the end of the summer was exhausted. I was so depleted. I was eight pounds under weight. I didn't do it right (Interview Two).

Unfortunately, after two months at the start of the fall semester he injured himself and didn't compete in the fall season.

Seamus' account alludes to the final facet that is not covered in the NCAA manual. The NCAA does not consider the time needed for athletes to maintain their health as part of the weekly hourly commitment. Preparing one's body to participate in two rigorous and high-intensity practices per day requires an investment in time, resources, and energy. Athletes need the time both before and after a workout to ensure they are ready to exert the required physical force or "cooled down" enough to relax and recover properly. Athletes also needed to invest time in preventing, recovering from, or pushing through an injury. All forty-seven participants endured some sort of physical ailment throughout college that required time spent with sports medicine doctors, trainers, or physical therapists. A physical therapy regime can take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour and may be prescribed to an athlete to complete every single day before or after practice. Twenty-nine athletes reported spending three or more hours per week either in the training room or rehabbing at home, doing exercises to prevent, treat, or work through an injury. The time to prepare and recover from sports is critical to the athlete's health and performance. Excluding the physical prep would be akin to academic departments not including reading as part of the time to do well in a course.

## Appendix L: Overview of Athletic Scholarships

The NCAA restricts the athletic aid packages schools can offer athletes. The first this occurs is allowing schools to offer one-year renewable scholarships. In 2012, the NCAA adopted legislation that permitted schools to grant multi-year scholarships to student athletes. But, few schools adopted these packages prefer the one-year contracts (Solomon, 2014). Further, the language of the scholarships give athletic departments discretion. Students can lose a scholarship if they violate codes of conduct laid out in the handbook, test positive for any banned substance, if they are on academic probation, and/or if they break any NCAA eligibility rule.

The second way the NCAA restricts athletic aid is limiting how much can be offered. While the federal government allows general financial aid to cover the true cost of attendance the NCAA, prior to January 2015 did not. The NCAA restricted scholarships to only cover the tuition, books, and a basic housing and meal plan for athletes. At the start of 2015, the NCAA allowed the power-five conferences, or the large football schools, the autonomy to grant the full cost of tuition scholarships to athletes that would match the financial aid packages offered to general students (Hosick, 2015). Yet again, schools were slow on the uptake of this policy.

As long as schools follow the first two stipulations laid out above, then they can draft their own department policy for how aid is allocated and renewed. Coastal U’s policy included contingencies to the scholarship contracts included injury and eligibility. The department policy stated funding is not guaranteed if an athlete is injured, the scholarship “may” be continued, but ultimately it is up to the coach: “If you sustain a career-ending injury as a result of your athletic participation, your athletic aid *may* be continued until you graduate” (*Emphasis added*, Coastal U Athletics Handbook, pg. 150). Further, if an athlete participates in sports for four years, but has yet to graduate, they again need approval from their coach and the athletic department. If they receive funding for another semester or a year, then they must enroll in the athletic department’s, “post-eligibility work program” and put in a minimum 10 to 20 hours per week of unpaid work in the department. The post-eligibility program would not fund a student if they *chose* to delay graduation by adding a second major, a minor or to study abroad, or if they deficient grades (Coastal U Athletics Handbook, pg. 150).

Finally, an athletic scholarship is a misleading phrase. Participants relied on a variety of funding for college. Of the 28 women in rowing and track, 22 or 79% received some form of athletic aid: 10 received full scholarships and 12 received partial scholarships. Of the 19 men 13 or 68% were on some form of athletic aid: two on full scholarship, eleven on partial scholarships. Of the twelve people on a full scholarship, all relied on some form of parental financial aid, or part-time employment to support their way through school. The same could be said for those on a partial scholarship, who, as a group, cobbled together funds from six sources outside of the athletic department. As Table A.4 shows, Coastal U did not adjust its scholarships accordingly. One of the biggest complaints by athletes in the study is their basic scholarship packages or meal plans provided by the University did not cover the costs of food. Several took jobs to earn an extra few hundred dollars a month so they could fuel their bodies enough to physically compete.

*Table A.4. Paying for College: Combining Aid Packages*

	Parental Aid	Merit	Financial Aid	Loans	Work Study	Part-Time Job
Full Athletic Aid (N = 12)	8		2			3
Partial Aid (N = 24)	14	2	7	5	3	5
No Aid (N=12)	10		3	1		1

*\*Financial aid is money that students do not need to pay back. A loan is money for school to pay back.*



## Appendix M: Characteristics of Routes Through Higher Education

The qualitative analysis including over 100 interviews, dozens of memos, and a close review of over two-hundred pages of institutional records and reports, revealed that despite the deep level of conflict, college athletes were able to navigate along four routes through higher education: *Athlete-Student*, *Student-Athlete*, *Second-String*, and *Injured-Athlete*. The qualitative data were distilled into nine defining features that comprised each route described in Table A.5 below.

*Table A.5. Characteristics of Routes through College Sport*

Defining Experiences	Athlete-Student	Student-Athlete	Second-String	Injured-Athlete
Family view towards sport	Sports-track-to-college	Committed	Disinterested	Same as three other routes
Scholarship	Full or half scholarship	Full to no athletic funding	Little to no athletic funding	Same as three other routes
Major Selection process	Selects a major that is flexible, requires no prior knowledge necessary, and with few requirements.	Selects their first choice major. Has yet to face a major academic rejection or significant conflict in pursuing major based on athletic commitments.	Selects their first choice major, most likely to be inflexible, requires prior knowledge, and has curved exams	Same as three other routes
Time Allocation	Homework is not a regular part of their routine, will use time not at practice or class towards athletic needs such as rest, extra workouts, or rehabilitation. Sees school as harming athletic performance	Homework is a regular part of routine, but they feel as though it is not enough to keep up with classmates. Also finds a way to put in extra work for sport	Homework is a regular part of routine, but they feel as though it is not enough to keep up with classmates. Major requires student to miss practice to take course work.	Must attend all team-mandated practices and fit in anywhere from 1-2 extra hours per day of rehabilitation exercises. Also puts more time into school than before the injury
Body	Will modify body to improve sport ability through diet, extra condition, or supplements. Aware that to keep at top athletic performance they must put in additional time to maintain body. Likely to have sustained a major injury at some point and must do rehab as part of routine	Less consistent with their physical maintenance than athlete-students. Tries to keep a regular diet, extra fitness, or supplement routine with mixed results. More likely than second-stringers to prioritize rest and recovery over academic work.	Less likely than peers to put in the time to modify body beyond the required team practices. Aware they may compromise their health by not putting in the proper time to recover physically from practice, instead using their spare time on academic assignments	Body was harmed through sport. Leads to a different relationship with their body including a deeper understanding of its limits. Must do different workouts and modifications of the athletic routines.
Academic performance	Has below 3.0 GPA, went on academic probation, was mandated to use SAASC academic services, and/or switched to a different major in hope of an “easier” academic path. Aware their education is “compromised” by their athletic commitments.	Has a 3.0 GPA or higher, attempts to do majority of assignments as efficiently as possible. Aware their education is “compromised” by their athletic commitments. Has yet to experience a major academic rejection	Has a 3.0 GPA or higher, will complete all assignments even to the determinant of their athletic performance, is unwilling to compromise their academic degree for sport. Has yet to experience a major academic rejection	Same as three other routes
Athletic Performance	High ranking on team, in the conference, nationally and/or internationally, and has a leadership role on team.	Middle of the team, but a strong contributor. Ambitions to become high ranking on team, in the conference, nationally and/or internationally.	Bottom of the team, but still is mentally and physically committed athletically, showing up to all practices, trying to gain a higher rank on the team.	Experienced a major physical and athletic rejection through long-term injury. Unable to fully participate with team, does modified or on their own workouts, cannot compete
Community	Teammates and athletic program are main social bonds. Feels disconnected or rejected by academic community. Relies on teammates and athletic-academic advisor for educational support	Connects with academic community with mixed results. Strong social bonds with teammates	Forms social bonds with faculty and NARPs. Regularly visits office hours or forms study groups with classmates. Feels more connected to academic community. Still has strong social connections to teammates.	Feels isolated from the team and athletic community.
Future Goals	Attempt professional, national-level, or Olympic athletics post- college. Interested in a sports-focused career.	Attempt professional, national-level, or Olympic athletics after graduating. Once sport career ends, may pursue professional or graduate degree, and/or a non-sport focused career	Pursue professional or graduate degree, and/or a professional occupation post-college.	Same as three other routes

## Appendix N: Methodology for Categorizing Routes through Higher Education

The preceding appendix details the characteristics of each route through higher education. This appendix details how I used the qualitative interview data and institutional materials to assign participants to each route through higher education.

After a six-month period of qualitative coding, developing codebooks, iterative readings of memos, interviews, journals, and reflecting on the study, I developed a quantitative-inspired questionnaire to discern the routes through higher education. My goal was to use the questionnaire to discern how each of the 43 participants that completed all parts of the study navigated higher education. I synthesized over 300 codes for the Interview Two codebook into 56 characteristics that influenced how participants moved from one route to the other. I then wrote the characteristics as affirmative statements. The statements, listed in the A.5 below, included both closed and open-ended responses. The open-ended responses had a higher order ranking system that I assigned based on the context of their life history and college experience interviews and their survey responses in the solicited time diaries.

To evaluate the participant along the 56-criteria, I used a three point likert scale on how they would answer each statement. I used their coded interview responses to determine their answers to the likert scale. The three point likert scale meant each participant was assigned a value of 0 to 2 depending on how they would answer the response. Depending on the statement, the rankings were either:

- **0:** no, never, or low,
- **1:** maybe, sometimes, or middle
- **2:** yes, always, or high

The closed ended statements were easily assigned based on the data. For instance, the closed ended statement: *Had Above 3.0 Cumulative GPA*, was assigned a numerical value to each student, 0 for “no” and 2 for “yes” based on their transcripts. The opened ended statements required a reexamination of interview transcripts and time diaries. For instance, a sample opened ended statement was, *Difficultly balancing school and sport*. In this case, the participant was assigned 0 for “no,” 1 for “sometimes,” and 2 for “yes” or often. The middle category on the three point ranking system emerged as an important measure to capture the temporality of each criteria and in turn each route. For instance, Erwin in the fall, prioritized school before sport, sacrificing rest, recovery, and athletic performance so he can take up to 17 units and score high marks in his major requirements. In the spring, he reversed his priorities, scaling back to the minimum course load of 13 units, explicitly elevating athletics over academics, putting in extra workouts towards his sport, developing a leadership role, and earning his spot in the top boat. I assigned him a 1 or “sometimes” to the *difficulty balancing school* based on these habits.

Each question was also linked to a particular route. This meant if a participant scored high on this question they were more likely to be on that route through college. Table A.5 reflects the 56 criteria and how the criteria were assigned to particular pathways. Participants with a “high” (value 2) assigned to each score were more likely to be associated with the pathway marked with an “X”.

*Table A.6. Navigation Criteria that Define Each Route Through Higher Education*

Criteria	Route that scores high on these criteria			
	<i>Athlete-student</i>	<i>Student-Athlete</i>	<i>Second-String</i>	<i>Injured Athlete</i>
Above 3.0 GPA			X	
Academic probation	X			
Believe they would not be at Coastal U without sports	X	X		
Believes school harms athletic performance		X	X	
Believes sport harms academic major/course selection options		X		
Believes sport harms academic performance		X		
Believes they spend too much time on sports			X	
Chose major because of sports commitments	X			
Competed at Regionals/Nationals	X			
Considered quitting school	X			
Considered quitting sport			X	
Distrusts coach			X	
Distrusts teammates	X			
Easy academic transition		X	X	
Easy athletic transition	X			
Elevates rest/sleep/recovery over school work	X			
Engaged in non-athletic extracurricular (i.e. student club)			X	
Experienced academic rejection (i.e. could not pursue top major)	X			
Experienced athletic rejection (i.e., did not make team/boat)			X	
Feels part of community/connected to teammates	X		X	
First choice major		X	X	
Future goal: Attend grad school		X	X	
Future goal: To become a coach	X	X		
Has academic role models on campus		X	X	
Has academic role models on team		X	X	
Homework is a regular routine/part of schedule		X	X	
Identifies as: 24/7 athlete (at some point in time)	X	X		
Identifies as: athlete-student (at some point in time)	X	X	X	
Identifies as: injured athlete (at some point in time)	X	X	X	X
Identifies as: student-athlete (at some point in time)		X	X	
Listens to teammates for what classes to take	X	X		
Mandated to use SAASC tutoring services	X			
Modify body to improve sport performance	X	X		
NARP friends			X	
Not enough time for school		X	X	
Participated in a research project alongside faculty			X	
Participated on U-23 national team	X			
Priorities: school before sport			X	
Priorities: sport before school	X			
Professional/Olympic sport ambitions	X			
High athletic ranking on team, region, or nationally	X			
Regularly attends office hours			X	
Rehabilitation is a regular part of schedule	X			X
Studies with classmates			X	
Studies with teammates	X	X		
Team captain/leadership role	X			
Took three or more AP courses in high school		X	X	
Trouble balancing school/sport commitments		X	X	
Victim of SA stereotype	X	X		
View sports as a job	X	X		
Views NCAA as equitable, providing championships to students			X	
Views NCAA as exploitative	X			
Voluntary extra athletic training	X	X		
Voluntarily uses SAASC tutoring services			X	
Wears athletic gear to class or on campus	X			

Once I assigned the criteria to a weighted pathway, I ran each participant through the 56-criteria. This generated a score on each criteria and an overall score. I then used the scores to assign participants a route. The scoring worked as follows. Those on the *Student-Athlete* pathway scored “high” on all categories. This reflects the contradictory and aspirational nature of this pathway. In contrast, those on the *Second-String* and *Athlete-Student* paths, only scored high on those respective criteria, showing the dichotomous natures of those routes. I defined “high” by those who scored above the media in each category. Table A.6 below shows the initial results based on this first quantitative grouping.

Table A.7. Round 1 of Grouping: Participants Who Scored “high” in Each Category

<b>Student athlete</b>	<b>Second-string</b>	<b>Athlete-Student</b>
Amanda	Amanda	Amanda
Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
Camilla	Camilla	Anthony Blue
Captain America	Ella	Boris
Duane	George	Brittany
Ella	Goose	Captain America
Erwin	Imani	Casey
George	Joy	Chantae
Iceman	Kalie	CM
Joy	London	Cooper
Kalie	Merlin	Duane
Merlin	Monique	Ella
Monique	Morgan	Erwin
Morgan	Noelle	George
Noelle	Physicist	Iceman
Physicist	Reggie	Malcolm
Sanya	Savannah	Merlin
Seamus	Seamus	Monique
Sophia	Sophia	Taylor
Taylor	Stella	Vera
Vera	Terrance	Victoria

After this initial sort, I had several issues to address. First, six participants scored high on all three routes: Amanda, Andrew, Ella, George, Merlin, and Monique. I deemed these participants as mostly likely to be on the *Student-Athlete route*. Second, there were seven participants who emerged in no category, meaning they scored below the media on all criteria. I was not surprised at who emerged with no distinct grouping because these participants shared one thing in common: they had the most ambivalent experiences within the institutions. For these seven which included, Brandon, CM, Josephine, Kayla, Lisa, Steve, and Will, I read back through their qualitative materials and assigned them to a category. I assigned them to the closest representation that they spent the most time in. Third, I had a few participants who were border line cases or who scored high on two routes or low on two routes. Yet again, I used the qualitative materials to adjudicate which pathway they should reside on.

Once each participant was assigned a primary route through higher education, either on the *Athlete-Student*, *Student-Athlete*, or *Second-String* path, I determined whether or not they also spent significant time as on the *Injured-Athlete* route. Injured-Athlete were those who spent a month or more away from athletics at some point because of an injury. Using this measure, 46.5% of all participants spent time on the *Injured-Athlete* route. The final groupings of each participant are listed in Table A.7 below.

Appendix Table A.8. Final Composition of Each Route

Student athlete	Second-string	Athlete-Student		Injured athlete
Amanda	Camilla	Anthony Blue	Anthony Blue	George
Andrew	Goose	Boris	Brittany	Merlin
Brandon	Imani	Brittany	Captain America	Monique
Ella	Joy	Captain America	CM	Physicist
George	London	Casey	Cooper	Sanya
Josephine	Morgan	Chantae	Duane	Seamus
Kalie	Noelle	CM	Erwin	
Merlin	Reggie	Cooper	Kayla	
Monique	Savannah	Duane	Malcolm	
Physicist	Sophia	Erwin	Victoria	
Sanya	Stella	Iceman	Imani	
Seamus		Kayla	London	
Steve		Lisa	Morgan	
Taylor		Malcolm	Noelle	
Terrance		Vera	Savannah	
		Victoria	Andrew	
		Will	Brandon	

Once the participant composition of each route was finalized, I then could examine trends in along identity, social characteristics, and time allocation. For instance, I could analyze the identity characteristics such as sport, gender, scholarship status, residential status (international, in-state, or out-of-state student), race, and family view towards sport, and whether there were trends associated to each group. The first wave of analysis I did was to examine trends along race and gender, which showed a concentration of people of color (POC) in the *Athlete-Student* route.

Appendix Table A.9. Race and Gender Composition of Each Route

Routes	Women (n, 26)	Men (n, 17)	White (n, 33)	POC (n, 11)
Athlete-student	38.5%	41.2%	30.3%	70.0%
Second-String	34.6%	11.8%	27.3%	20.0%
Student-Athlete	26.9%	47.1%	42.4%	10.0%
Injured Athlete	50.0%	58.8%	48.5%	70.0%

Several benefits emerged from this approach to assigning routes. First, it allowed for some surprises in the research analysis. Several participants I had imagined to be more towards one route or the other, but the questionnaire proved otherwise. For instance, I imagined Savannah to be an *Athlete-Student* in many ways. She was a scholarship athlete, she allowed sports to influence her school commitments, she had ambitions to pursue national and Olympic team participation. But her continued athletic rejections including not making a top boat and constant injury, along with a strong desire to pursue a rigorous major, ended up with her ranking strongly as on the *Second-String* route. Similarly, the qualitative data allowed me to reexamine and adjudicate borderline cases that if this project had only been survey data and a respondent questionnaire, would not be possible. In a quantitative-only analysis, the borderline cases may have been removed altogether. Finally, the qualitative data allowed me to contextualize each participant's response within a wealth of personal experiences. For example, Seamus during our interviews, self-identified as an "athlete-student." But his family background characteristics, route to university, chosen academic route, habits while in college, and future aspirations, all placed him more as a "student-athlete" or someone who truly tries to be a 200% human, being the best at both school and sports. Because of the demanding, personal, embodied nature of athletics, Seamus likely felt as though sports consume most of his physical and mental capacity. But, in reading deeply into Seamus' interviews, institutional materials and time diaries, as well as across the data, by contextualizing Seamus alongside his peers, I assigned him to the "student-athlete" category.