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A Qualitative Examination of Sport Transitions in First Year Collegiate Female Athletes

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A Qualitative Examination of Sport Transitions in First Year Collegiate Female Athletes

by

Carolyn McEwen

Bachelor of Arts Kinesiology and Physical Education, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2008

THESIS

Submitted to the Department/Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Master of Science Kinesiology and Physical Education

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Abstract

First year student athletes transitioning from high school to university experience simultaneous transitions in athletics, academics, social lives, family structures, support systems, and peer sport groups. These changes in their personal, social and occupational lives, can impact them cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994). The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the multi-dimensional transition experience of first-year collegiate athletes transitioning to higher level sports. A sample of eleven female varsity hockey, basketball, or volleyball athletes participated in two semi-structured interviews at beginning of the season and midseason. The first series of interviews were conducted face-to-face, with the subsequent follow-up interview performed either over MSN Messenger or face-to-face based on the preference of the participant. Participants believed they had transitioned successfully into athletics, academics, and their new social environment. Support was found for successful transitions into the athletic and social domains. However, only two of the eleven participants appeared to have successfully transitioned academically. Future directions and recommendations based on these findings are addressed.

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Introduction

Transitioning into university is an emotional process for first year students (Christie, 2009). Schlossberg (1981, p. 5) defined a transition as “an event or non-event that results in changes in assumptions regarding oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior and relationships.” It is important to note that a transition is a fluid process and involves a series of different states. Russell, McCann, Matthews, and Nordstrom (2009) suggested that the process of adapting to university isn’t exclusively based on academic ability, but rather an individual’s capacity to adjust quickly to an independent learning environment. Furthermore, students who were able to create social ties among their peers, who provided social support, experienced a smoother adjustment within their first semester (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Yet participants, in a study that examined first year students, reported difficulties associated with meeting and forming a connection with other students who had similar interests as them (Baruch-Runyon, VanZandt & Elliot, 2009). In addition, first year students found it challenging to balance competing demands such as school work, employment, and social activities (Baruch-Runyon et al., 2009). Collegiate athletes entering their first year of university had significant athletic commitments and unlike their peers had to transition not only academically and socially, but athletically as well.

Athletes experience sport and life transitions frequently and, often, simultaneously. When progressing from high school and club athletics to university sport, a transition is experienced as athletes move into the new role of becoming a varsity athlete. In addition, these individuals experience transitions in their academic and social lives, family structures, support systems, and peer support groups (Pittman & Richmond,

2008). Thus, student athletes entering their first year of university are in the unique position of experiencing significant simultaneous transitions. These remarkable changes in their personal, social and occupational lives, can impact individuals cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally (Taylor & Ogilvie, 1994) and affect many aspects of social, emotional, and athletic adjustment.

Transition Models

The multi-dimensional nature of a transition encompasses all aspects of the athlete and their environment. For instance, Warriner and Lavalley (2008) proposed that the outcome of a transition is dependent on three factors: characteristics of the individual (such as age and health), perceptions of the transition (which include the source and onset of the transition), and the characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environments including institutional support. These factors interact to determine a healthy versus distressing transition (Warriner & Lavalley, 2008). A successful transition is dependent on an individual's ability to adapt to changes.

The Human Adaptation to a Transition Model (HATM) (Schlossberg, 1981) suggests a holistic approach when studying sport transitions (see Figure 1). Four sets of factors including self, situation, support, and strategies interact to explain the processes and outcomes of a transition. Self refers to individual characteristics that the person possesses including personality and athletic identity. The situation describes contributing environmental factors such as whether it was an event or non-event that caused the transition, a forced retirement versus a planned retirement, or a normative transition as opposed to a non-normative transition. Support describes the structures athletes have

available to assist them through a transition which includes social, institutional, and financial supports. Individual approaches to coping are referred to as strategies and are seen as the key point within the model with self, situation, and support all interacting to influence an athlete's ability to use these coping strategies. Thus, the HATM model focuses on the interaction between the individual and their environment to explain the course of a transition.

Figure 1. The Human Adaptation to a Transition Model (Schlossberg, 1981).

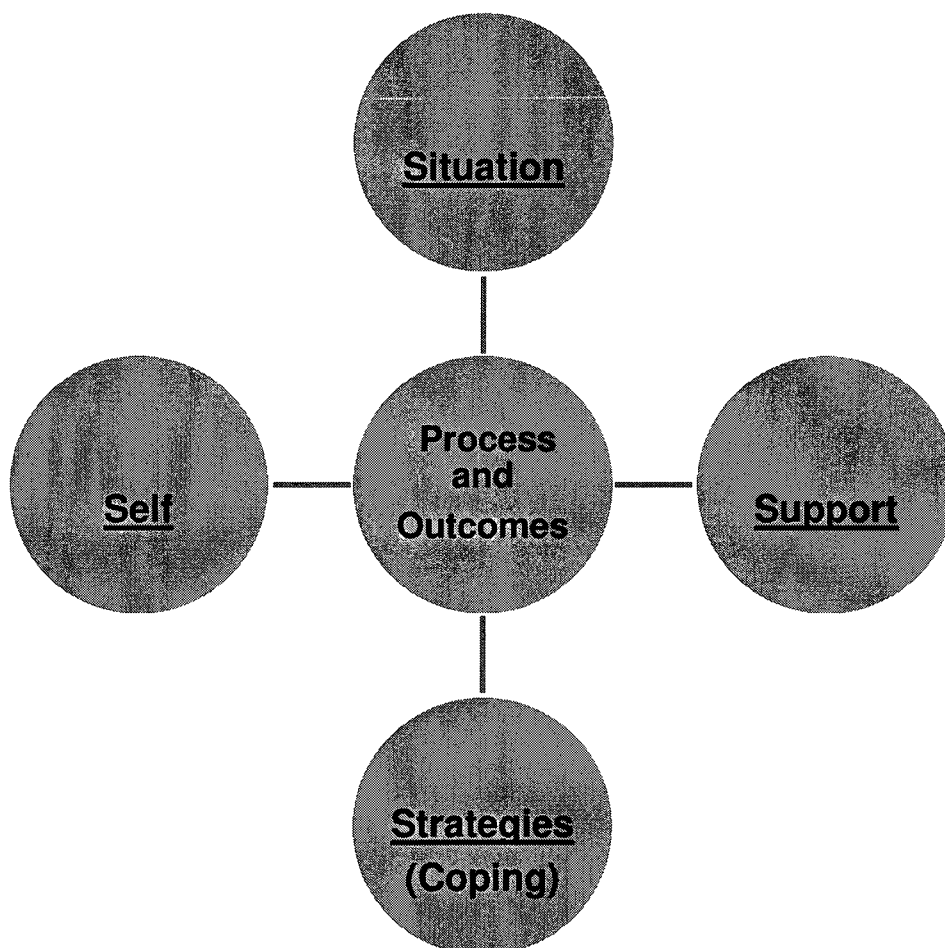


Figure 1. The Human Adaptation to a Transition Model (HATM) describes the process and outcome of a transition through the interaction of four sets of factors: self, situation, support, and strategies (ability to cope).

In contrast, the Developmental Model (DM) (see Figure 2) proposed by Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) allows specific insight into what kinds of transitions a student athlete may be experiencing. It consists of four interacting layers which are

athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and academic-vocational. The first layer constitutes the athletic development or the progression of athletes through their sports' careers. It is composed of four different stages: initiation (prior to age 13), development (approx. age 13-19), mastery (approx. age 19-27) (Bloom, 1985) and discontinuation (Taylor & Oglivie, 2001). The second layer, or psychological layer, examines psychological stages and transitions including childhood (birth to 12 years of age), adolescence (13-18 years), and adulthood (from 19 years forward).

Figure 2. The Developmental Model (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

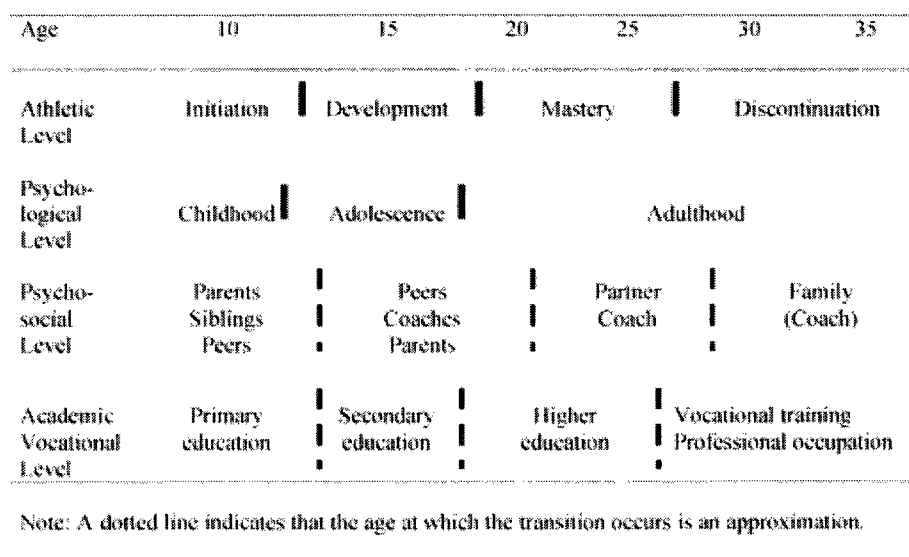


Figure 2. The Developmental Model (DM) describes what kind of transition an athlete may be experiencing based on age. It consists of four different layers of transitions including athletic, psychological, psycho-social and academic vocational, with several stages of development within each layer.

Considering the social development of the athlete in relation to their athletic development, the psychosocial layer (the third layer) provides insight into the evolving importance of various interpersonal relationships including peers, coaches, and parents. For example, before the age of approximately 13, the athlete is reliant primarily on parents, siblings and peers for social support during their athletic ventures. In contrast, when the athlete is approximately between the ages of 14 and 21 they are reliant on peers, parents and coaches who start to play a greater role instead of siblings. Finally, the fourth layer represents academic and vocational training, with approximate ages correlating with the transitions between primary education, secondary education, higher education, and vocational training/professional occupation. The DM clearly demonstrates that it is common for athletes to experience multiple simultaneous transitions throughout their sport career.

The dynamic cycle of continuously transitioning through different phases of an athletic career can be predictable or unanticipated depending on external factors. It is inevitable that athletes will experience transitioning to a higher level of sport and competition than they had participated in previously. The DM helps to determine timing of these transitions, while the HATM and DM permit insight into the process and eventual outcome of the transition. Specifically the DM allows for this insight through characteristics of the individual and pre- and post-transition environments (Warriner & Lavalley, 2008).

Sport Transition Literature

Traditionally, existing research in sport transitions has focused on the impact of career termination (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007) with minimal attention being devoted to within-career transitions. However, recent studies by Giacobbi et al., (2004), Bruner, Munroe-Chandler and Spink (2008), and Pummell, Harwood and Lavalley (2008), examined the complexities of within-career transitions from the athlete perspective. All three studies were qualitative in nature and evaluated adolescent aged athletes.

Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavalee (2004) contend that understanding the demands of a particular transition is essential in order to make the necessary resources available to the student athlete and assist him or her through the transition. Findings from the Giacobbi et al. (2004) study focused specifically on the stress and coping strategies of first year university swimmers. They found that social support from parents and teammates was often discussed by the athletes as an important coping strategy. This is consistent with the DM at the psychosocial level (Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004). They also determined that the quality of social support from teammates varied from the beginning to the end of the season. The impact of social support was cumulative and progressed through the season as the athletes developed trusting relationships within the athletic context.

Humor and fun were also used as coping mechanisms to develop social relationships and as well as a form of avoidance coping. Athletes reported using humor and fun in order to “break the ice” with their fellow teammates and acted as a portal to developing deeper dependable relationships. Avoidance coping, where individuals used

humor and fun to distract them from a stressful encounter, was also reported. The authors suggested that first year swimmers learned coping responses based on the demands of their experience. For instance, at the beginning of the season, the athletes appraised performance challenges and the coaches' criticism as a negative source of stress. However, by the end of the season, those same athletes had learned to cope with criticism and challenges by positively appraising scenarios and viewing them as essential to their athletic development. Athletes experiencing stress from the transition found it helpful to receive support and advice from a mentoring older student, both academically and athletically. Finally, they determined that many student athletes experienced stress from missing their home, family and old friends.

Bruner et al. (2008) evaluated eight adolescent male rookie hockey players in the Ontario Hockey League. Their findings supported Giacobbi et al.'s (2004) claim that teammates provide social support in the form of emotional coping and self-esteem enhancement. On ice, it was found that players experienced a decrease in confidence in their abilities due to a reduction in playing time upon moving into an elite level of hockey. Athletes used to being the stars on their previous teams, who had high statistics and playing time, struggled with feelings of incompetence as they were no longer considered one of the top players on the team (Bruner et al., 2008). Self-confidence is important as it is linked to performance, personal growth and future adherence to the sport (Bruner et al., 2008). A lack of self-confidence is detrimental to the athletes' transition. Compounding the problem is that rookie athletes tend to evaluate their performance in terms of outcome goals such as total points scored or assists (Bruner et al., 2008). If the athletes, as rookies, are not receiving the same amount of playing time

as they were in their previous league, it is unlikely they will be able to achieve the same point production as prior to the transition. They may also not have acquired the skill level in order to be as productive point-wise in the league, thus the emphasis on the outcome may account for low self-esteem.

Pummell et al. (2008) examined the relationship between athletic identity and self-esteem when transitioning to a higher level of sport. According to Pummell et al. (2008), athletic identity plays a key role in the amount of stress an athlete experiences during the transition. In interviewing 10 adolescent event horseback riders transitioning from the club to regional level of sport, it was found that athletes with a strong athletic identity perceived greater stress during a normative transition. This was due to the fact that their performance was closely linked with their self-identity (Pummell et al., 2008). A poor performance or placement among an elite group of athletes threatened athletic identity, which, in turn, damaged their self-esteem.

While these studies provide a beginning point to understand the process of transitioning to a higher level of sport, they also emphasize the need for further research in this domain in order to assist athletes in maximizing their potential when taking the next step. There has been minimal research completed on collegiate sport transitions. The majority of research in this domain has been conducted with elite athletes, mainly of the international and Olympic standard who are retiring from competitive sport. Only one study completed by Giacobbi et al. (2004) focused specifically on collegiate athletes as they transitioned from high school to university.

Due to the relevance of the Giacobbi et al. study to the present study, it will be revisited in more detail. Giacobbi et al. (2004) conducted a qualitative 6 month study.

Two focus groups, followed by individual interviews, were used to assess the rookie transition of five first year female collegiate athletes participating in swimming at an N.C.A.A. Division I school. Grounded theory data procedures were used to analyze results. Five general dimensions of stress were found including training intensity, high performance expectations, interpersonal relationships, absence from home, and academics. In addition, four general dimensions were found for coping responses. Social support yielded two subcategories of coping; advice/support from family and advice/support from team. Also, active cognitive coping efforts yielded the two subcategories of task focus and positive interpretation, whereas two categories of emotional release were venting and humor or fun. Religion was also used as a form of coping by one participant. Social based forms of coping were primarily used at the beginning of the year while cognitive strategies such as positive reinterpretation and task focus emerged later in the season. Positive reinterpretation of stress was heavily influenced by important stake holders in the athletes' environment. The authors emphasized the dynamic process between stress and coping as being reflective of this stage of athletic transition.

Rationale

In Canada, 10,000 collegiate student athletes compete each year in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport league representing 51 institutions (Canadian Interuniversity Sport, 2010). With such a large quantity of students competing in university athletics it is necessary to further scrutinize the transitional processes of collegiate athletes entering their first year of university as the success of this pivotal transition can affect their current

and future personal, academic, and athletic development. With minimal research previously conducted to study first year student athletes, it is necessary to understand this transition in greater depth. As stated previously, the majority of research on transitions has been conducted on career termination (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000; Stambulova, Stephan & Japhag, 2007). In contrast to previous studies, where only uni-dimensional athletic transitions (i.e. sport changes only) were considered, the current study considered student athletes from a multi-dimensional perspective with acknowledgement given to the interaction between sport, academia, social structure, and personal differences. The primary purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the transitional experience of the first year varsity collegiate athletes.

Instant Messaging

The secondary purpose of the present study was to evaluate two distinct modes of qualitative information gathering – traditional face-to-face interviews and MSN Messenger. The participants are members of a generation who have learned to communicate through technology. One of these technologies is instant messaging. Instant messaging is an internet based technology where text messages are sent between users of the same instant messaging program (Stieger & Reips, 2008). MSN Messenger was the instant messaging program used in the current study because of its prevalence. The advantages to conducting interviews through instant messaging are access to participants despite their geographical location, cost effectiveness, time saved and decreased risk of errors during the transcription process, and the researcher's ability to respond instantaneously (Stieger & Goritz, 2006).

To date, only two studies have been conducted using instant messaging (Stieger & Goritz, 2006; Stieger & Reips, 2008). Stieger and Reips (2008) used ICQ (instant messaging program) to conduct automated structured interviews with participants who were randomly recruited from an online ICQ address book. Stieger & Goritz (2006) conducted one-on-one interviews that examined the accuracy of demographic information given over instant messaging, as well as participants' willingness and motivation to participate in an instant messaging interview. Neither study probed in-depth answers from the respondents. Both focused on yes no responses. The interviews were also short (nine questions; Stieger & Goritz, 2006) and one to two minutes in length (Stieger & Reips, 2008).

The effectiveness of using MSN Messenger or other instant messaging programs for conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews has yet to be empirically evaluated in the current research. Thus, the secondary purpose of the current study was to examine the usefulness of MSN Messenger as an alternative interview medium.

Purpose

This qualitative study examined the multi-dimensional transition experience of first-year collegiate athletes transitioning to a higher level of competitive sport. By understanding the experiences of this unique population, universities and athletic departments alike will be able to develop programs to help assist athletes through the rookie transition into thriving student athletes. A secondary purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of using MSN Messenger as a medium for gathering qualitative information.

Method

A phenomenological methodology was utilized to determine the experiences of the first year student athlete population. According to Patton (2002) the foundational question of phenomenology is “What are the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?” (p. 104). With a greater understanding of the first year student-athlete experience, appropriate programs and resources may be adopted by the University to assist with a successful transition into a higher level of education and athletics. As such, a phenomenological approach was best suited to capture the transition, as it examines how the individual perceived their experience (Patton, 2002). It is the students’ perception of the transition that will determine a successful outcome or not. A phenomenological theoretical view, while taking into account the individual’s reality, also obtains a general experience, of these athletes as a group (Patton, 2002). The goal of using a phenomenological method was to capture and describe how athletes experienced the phenomenon.

Sampling and Procedure

Two purposeful sampling strategies were used to ensure selected participants were information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). A homogenous sample of participants with similar characteristics was taken such that the subgroup, of first year varsity athletes, was described in depth (Patton, 2002). Minimal variability in participant characteristics allows for a greater potential of data saturation across themes. Additionally, criterion sampling was used as the criteria for selection was clearly stated and outlined (Patton, 2002). The sampling criterion for this study included only first year female university

students trying out for a Wilfrid Laurier University varsity team. Female student athletes represented 174 of 483 incoming athletes at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2009 and were examined for two reasons. First, low physical activity patterns established during adolescence can continue into adulthood (Gordon-Larsen, Nelson & Popkin, 2004) increasing the long term risk of chronic disease (Quintiliani, Allen, Marino, Kelly-Weeder & Li, 2010). Female student athletes transitioning into university also transition into adulthood (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) highlighting the importance of continued sport participation to assist in establishing life-long health behaviours, including physical activity (Quintiliani et al., 2010). Second, only female participants were examined as it was hypothesized prior to sample selection that males and females could experience the transition into university differently. Thus, only females were selected in order to ensure that data saturation of themes occurred in the results. By selecting from these criteria, participants were followed and assessed for one academic year in order to discover the fluid transition process. Subjects were recruited from the Wilfrid Laurier University's women's hockey, women's basketball, and women's volleyball teams.

Participants were first contacted during their respective teams' open tryout period in September of 2009. The researcher was present in order to build trust and rapport with the athletes and to gather initial participant consent. A demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A for demographic questionnaire) was also completed. Individuals who completed this information but who were not selected for the team were eliminated from the study at this point. Only individuals who made the team were selected for the study.

Each participant ($n = 11$) completed two assessments (see Figure 3) with the first occurring after the tryout period. More detail regarding participants is provided later in

the participants section. Thus, the first assessments were completed between September 13, 2009 and October 6, 2009. The timing of the second assessments was in the middle of their athletic season and occurred between November 17, 2009 and January 8, 2010. Each evaluation consisted of a semi-structured interview. This format allowed participants to provide full open-ended answers regarding their experiences.

Figure 3. Timeline.

September 2009 - March 2010

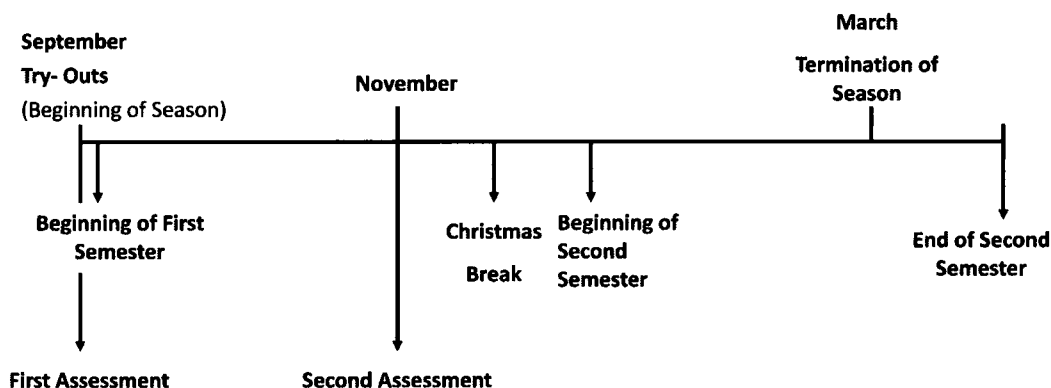


Figure 3. A qualitative examination of sport transitions in first year collegiate athletes study time line.

Initial demographic information was used to personalize the first assessment, which was comprised of a face-to-face interview. The traditional face-to-face interview allowed the researcher to build rapport with the participants and promote quality in-depth responses. When scheduling the second assessment, participants were given the opportunity to proceed with the follow-up assessment in either the same format or by using MSN Messenger. Participants were informed that if they chose to use MSN

Messenger, response expectations would be the same as the traditional face-to-face assessment.

Questions in the interview guides (see Appendix B & C for interview guides) were derived from the previously reviewed literature and based on the HATM. The HATM was used only as a framework to guide the question structure of the interviews and consequently support for or refute of the HATM was not sought in the study. Consequently, questions focused on the general components of the model and included items involving self, situation, support, and coping strategies. The questions centered on past athletic experience, the recruitment process, identity, self-confidence, emotional reactions, goals, coach situation, perception of transition, support, social support, stress, coping, and behaviour changes. For instance, the question “When you are feeling stressed out who do you turn to, to discuss your feelings?” is an example of a question to determine coping and support strategies. A member check, in which the data was returned to the participant (Rolfe, 2006), was conducted after each assessment. The transcript of the interview was emailed to the participant to complete the member check. Each individual was asked to review the data and encouraged to make changes where they saw fit. The member check allowed the participants to have increased control over the data and enhanced the credibility of the study.

Interview guides were piloted prior to the start of the study using both face-to-face and MSN Messenger interview styles. This ensured that the questions were appropriate, meaningful and produced insightful in-depth responses. Two individuals not connected with the study, but similar to study participant characteristics, assisted in the piloting of the interview guides. The first participant participated in a face-to-face

interview and a MSN Messenger follow-up interview as she transitioned from high school into university. Both served as reliable interview sources to pilot questions.

The participants' grades were obtained at the end of the second semester and were used as one indication of academic and overall adjustment to university. Institutional ethics approval was gained prior to the beginning of the study. Name and contact information was incorporated into the initial consent form with the following sources of data (e.g. background questionnaire, interview transcripts etc.) being identified by a participant number to maximize the confidentiality of participants. A master list was compiled with matching names and participant numbers and was secured safely and separately from the data. Upon completion of an assessment, themes were derived from the data until saturation had been completed. Investigator triangulation was used to "reduce systemic bias and distortion during data analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 563). Thus the validity of the study was strengthened by reducing the bias that could occur from a single researcher (Patton, 2002). Investigator triangulation was achieved by the primary researcher classifying the data into domains, themes, and sub-themes. The second researcher then reviewed the categorization. The researchers discussed any investigator discrepancy in categorization until a consensus was found.

Participants

Eleven Caucasian female athletes were recruited from the Wilfrid Laurier women's varsity basketball ($n = 2$), volleyball ($n = 2$), and hockey teams ($n = 7$). Participants were in their first academic and athletic year at Wilfrid Laurier. All participants were recruited by members of their team's coaching staff and were

guaranteed a spot on the team. The participants ranged in age from 17-19 years old at the beginning of the study.

The participants playing volleyball started the 2009-2010 season during orientation week in September and concluded in the middle of February. The women's volleyball team had a losing season with 6 wins and 13 losses out of 19 games and failed to make the playoffs. Participants playing basketball and hockey began the 2009-2010 season following orientation week when classes began and concluded their seasons at the end of February (basketball) and the middle of March (hockey) respectively. The women's basketball team totaled 10 wins and 12 losses in the regular season making the playoffs. However, they were eliminated within the first round. The women's hockey team at Wilfrid Laurier has had a long winning tradition claiming seven consecutive Ontario University Athletics (OUA) championships over the past many seasons. During the 2009-2010 season, the team won 26 games, had 1 overtime loss in conference play and placed third at the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) championships.

Participant Profiles

Participant A.

Participant A was majoring in Global Studies, was 18 years old entering university and was recruited to the women's volleyball team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and took four courses in the fall semester and three courses in the winter semester.

Participant B.

Participant B was 17 years old entering university majoring in Communication Studies and was recruited to the women's volleyball team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and took four courses in the fall semester and three courses in the winter semester.

Participant C.

Participant C was 17 years old entering university double majoring in Honours Biology & Math and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and received scholarships from RBC and a scholarship from her home town. She completed five courses in the fall and winter semesters and had previously lived away from home.

Participant D.

Participant D was 18 years old entering university majoring in Sociology and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She received Quest for Gold funding coming into her first varsity season. She completed three courses in the fall and winter semesters.

Participant E.

Participant E was 18 years old entering university, was an undeclared Honours Arts student and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She considered playing for Wilfrid Laurier her greatest athletic accomplishment. She completed four courses in the fall and winter semesters.

Participant F.

Participant F was 18 years old entering university majoring in BA Kinesiology and Physical Education and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She received an

Academic Entrance Scholarship and an Athletic Financial Award. She completed five courses in the fall semester and four courses in the winter semester and had previously lived away from home.

Participant G.

Participant G was 19 years old entering university majoring in BA Kinesiology and Physical Education and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and completed five courses in the fall and winter semesters.

Participant H.

Participant H was 17 years old entering university majoring in BSc Kinesiology and Physical Education and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and completed four courses in the fall semester and five courses in the winter semester.

Participant I.

Participant I was 18 years old entering university majoring in psychology and was recruited to the women's hockey team. She took a year off between high school and university and worked for a year. She completed four courses in the fall semester and five courses in the winter semester.

Participant J.

Participant J was 19 years old entering university majoring in BA Kinesiology and Physical Education and was recruited to the women's basketball team. She received an Athletic Financial Award and completed four courses in the fall and winter semesters.

Participant K.

Participant K was 19 years old entering university majoring in Sociology and was recruited to the women's basketball and volleyball teams but chose to play basketball. She received an Athletic Financial Award. She lived at her family home at the beginning of the year but moved in with her boyfriend in the middle of the fall semester. She completed four courses in the fall and winter semesters.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Interviews from the first and second assessment were analyzed with assistance of NVivo 8 (QSR International, 2010), a qualitative analysis software program. The first and second interview assessments were analyzed separately by coding individual participant data into category levels. The data was first classified into *domains*: social, sport, or academic. The secondary level of analysis evaluated specific *themes*, (e.g. stress, coping, support etc.). Identifying *sub-themes* within the data was the third level of analysis. This process occurred independently for the first (see Figure 4) and second assessments (see Figure 5). Finally, an evaluation across time (from beginning to halfway through the school year) occurred by comparing group themes and sub-themes from the first assessment to those of the second assessment, to determine if changes had occurred. Some themes within the domains appear at both time points (e.g. support and coping) while others emerged at only one assessment point (e.g. playing time). While internal homogeneity was demonstrated by data grouping together meaningfully, external heterogeneity (Patton, 2002) within the data was not achieved for the categorization of some data. Themes in

the data were not necessarily mutually exclusive due to the participants discussing multiple aspects of their transition simultaneously. Results pertaining to the evaluation of the effectiveness of MSN Messenger as an interview medium were derived from the researcher's field notes and interview data.

Figure 4. First Assessment:

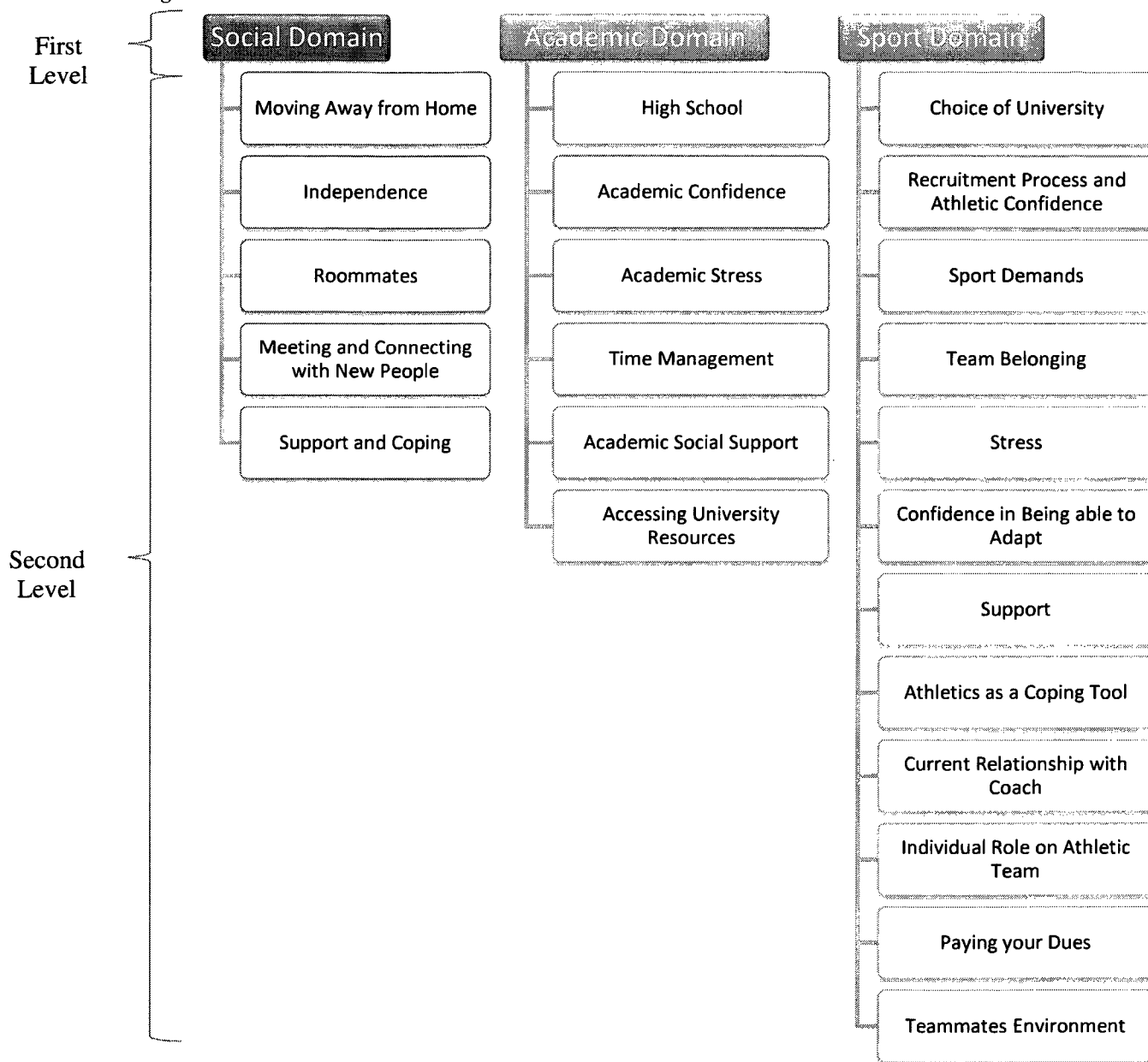


Figure 4. Results from assessment one were analyzed by categorizing the data into domains: social, academic, and sport. The second level of analysis categorized the data into themes. The third level of analysis (not pictured here) describes sub-themes within the data.

Figure 5. Second Assessment

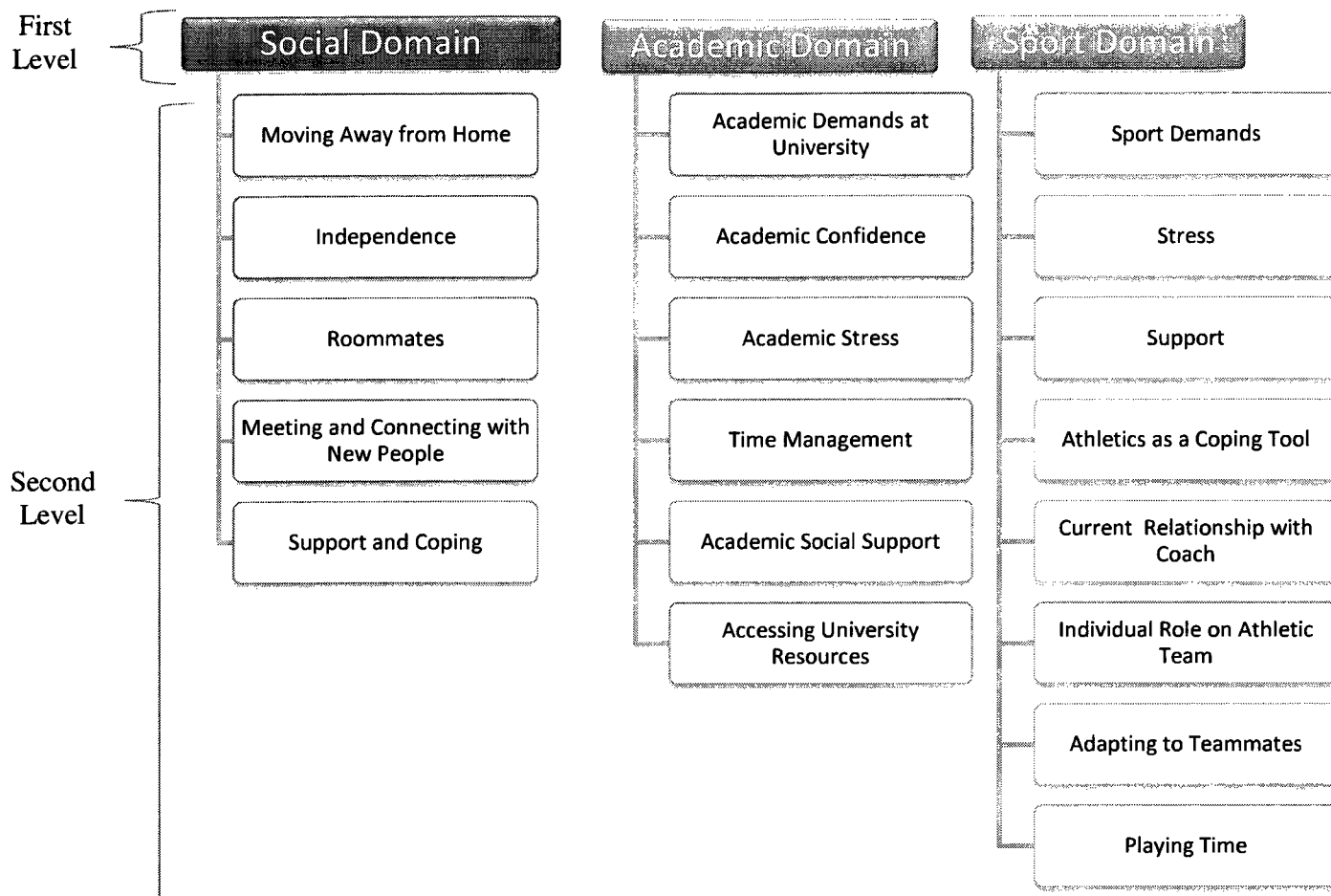


Figure 5. Results from assessment two were analyzed by categorizing the data into domains: social, academic, and sport. The second level of analysis categorized the data into themes. The third level of analysis (not pictured here) describes sub-themes within the data.

Results

The results from the study are presented in the following order: a) first assessment, b) second assessment, c) participant academic achievement, and d) reflections on MSN Messenger. For the first and second assessments, the label of the first level of analysis (domain) is underlined (e.g. Social, Academic, Sport). The second level (themes) is presented in italics (e.g. *Moving Away from Home*, *Independence*). Sub-themes (the third level of analysis) are described and direct quotations provided to support the emergent sub-themes. Throughout the second assessment results, a description of differences between the first and second assessment is provided.

First Assessment

Social

Moving Away from Home

10 of the 11 participants moved away from their home base to attend university. Moving into a new environment, the participants not only changed their physical location but also their immediate support system for the first time. One of the participants summarized the changes experienced when moving away from home:

Leaving my parents, my home all of that, leaving like the city just like, being content where you are and like the changes of everything and having to start a new life I guess was stressful and it freaked me out, but that was majorly it. Like being content my friends were there, I had like had it all going in and

then it all changes, everything disappears. You have to leave all of your friends and your family, so it's different.

Participants, who moved away from home, experienced a range of emotional reactions to initially living on their own; from excitement to homesickness. One participant lamented:

I miss my family and I want to go home sometimes.

Others missed the support they received from their family, as one of the participants highlighted in the following statement:

Mostly like depending on them and like having them for support all the time and having them there whenever I needed them and stuff like that. Just like going home and having everything there for you, that's about it.

It is important to note that reactions were varied depending on the participant. Several participants revealed that moving away from home was not a significant issue for them. One participant stated that:

I thought it would be a little harder than it is but actually I don't even care. I like being away from home, like I haven't even missed my family yet and I don't know if that was bad to say, but yeah.

Three of the participants who moved away from home had previously lived away from their families for an extended period of time. These participants believed that they had an advantage over other students who had not yet been exposed to living on their own. In addition, they also found it easier and not a “big deal” to move away again. One of the participants stated:

You know the second time around was a lot easier and I think it was easier on my parents to knowing that I am closer and it's not as like difficult to come see me and stuff.

Independence

Independence was an important issue when entering the university setting. Participants expressed a reliance on others, mainly parents, in the past to complete everyday tasks such as laundry, cooking, cleaning, or organization of time. Participants stated:

It does suck, I don't know, I relied on my parents a lot and now I have to do it myself kind of. My laundry, you know, and everything like that.

Well I thought I would love it, love to get away, but it's actually a lot harder than I thought and like yeah, being away from the parents you never realize

until you get away how much you rely on them and everything. So it's been hard adjusting.

Participants acknowledged that becoming independent, after moving away from home, was not a single event but rather a process. For example, a participant noted:

Independence, even though I can be a little bit on my own independent, but not fully there. The brain is still not ticking.

Reactions to the inherent responsibility posed by becoming independent varied among participants. For instance, participants reported being excited about the possibility of a new freedom they had not previously experienced, and the ability to demonstrate they were capable of caring for their daily needs. One participant demonstrated the importance to herself of not only being able to do daily living tasks independently, but also having the option to do so by stating:

I kind of chose to come away just because of I want to do my laundry, I want to cook my meals, even though I haven't cooked one meal since I came here.

In contrast, there were participants who found it difficult adjusting to doing things on their own. These participants generally were discovering, upon moving away from home (which provided a support system and structured environment), how much others had done for them. For example, a participant expressed:

Well I didn't have to balance my time or anything, because like outside of hockey and school sports and all that, but like yeah, just the work and like doing it on your own I think has been a lot harder.

Roommates

Upon moving to university, the majority of participants experienced having a roommate for the first time and found that they enjoyed the experience at the first assessment. For most of the participants, it was a positive experience as one participant stated:

It's a lot of fun, like we all get along really well, so that helps a lot and meet a lot of new people that they know, so.

In addition, a few participants also found that having roommates facilitated their transition into the university environment. Roommates, who were going through a similar transition themselves, provided social support and a sense of initial comfort as a participant expressed:

Yeah, it's been really good actually because like preparing meals for instance or like just somebody to talk to or somebody to go places with and I think knowing someone that you – in residence right away makes it so much easier,

because you can go places with them and if you are not enjoying that, you can leave with them and stuff like that.

Meeting and Connecting with New People

Establishing friendships as a primary social goal developed as a sub-theme. It was important for them to establish new and meaningful relationships with their peers at university. It was particularly important for them to connect with their teammates and individuals in their residences. Two of the participants highlighted these points:

Personal goals is to make friends, get more friends that have the same morals and values and beliefs that I do and I think I am going to find a lot of those girls on the basketball team, because they are there for the same reasons I am.

I would like to stay connected with my floor, even though as much, because I will be pretty busy, but definitely like stay in touch with them so that when I do have time I can hang out with them and stuff.

There was also significant weight placed on creating long-lasting relationships as evident by the statement:

Make friendships that last forever, because I always hear about everyone's always like "oh people in my wedding party were all people I met at

University and stuff like that.” Just have these people I meet, I want to be friends with them forever.

The emphasis placed on creating friendships likely influenced the amount of stress that participants experienced when meeting and connecting with new people. Half of the participants stated that they experienced anxiety before coming to university or in the first couple of weeks. This anxiety surrounded creating relationships and establishing a group of friends that they would be comfortable with. However, the anxiety dissipated upon being immersed in the university environment as one of the participants described:

Like the first week before I came I was like just freaked out of my mind about like being overwhelmed with meeting all of these new people, but then you kind of realize that they are in the same boat, so it’s not as bad.

Although participants experienced stress towards meeting new people, at the time of the first interview, almost all participants stated that they were confident in their ability to fit in with other students and create meaningful relationships. This was primarily due to the perception that other first year students were in the same position of trying to establish friendships and, therefore, were more likely to be receptive to getting to know each other. One participant explained:

Like a lot of people are just like more outgoing and are like “oh hey by the way I am so and so” because like everyone is kind of in the same position, so

it's kind of nice in that sense that people are a little more willing then they would have been in high school when they already have their groups to go to.

Orientation week provided an opportunity for the participants to meet other students who may or may not be athletes. Eight of the participants were able to partake in orientation week activities. They noted that the activities provided an opportunity to get to know people on their residence floor and other students who were not athletes. There were no orientation activities specifically geared toward athletes. Orientation week allowed the participants to become socially comfortable and develop new friendships. One of the participants described how orientation week was useful in developing friendships:

You get like automatic friends I guess. Like that whole floor you are like forced all through orientation week, you are forced to like be together so like it's friendship already and stuff. So it's good because like you feel comfortable with other people and they are always around you.

On the other hand two participants, due to their varsity team having a training camp during orientation week, were only able to be minimally engaged in orientation week. One of the participants summarized her feelings about missing out on an opportunity to meet a diversity of people by stating:

That was kind of crappy was during O-week we had practice twice a day and like it was sweet because we got to meet the team and everything, it just sucked because we didn't get to do as much meeting people as we could have, because we didn't get to go with like our ice breakers to like all of the events and stuff. So that's like the only thing that isn't sweet, because I think we would have met a lot more people.

Participants also expressed a desire to get to know their classmates for future academic support. For example, a participant stated:

I would kind of like to get to know people in my classes so that I can like study with them and I am not just completely lost on my own. That would be nice, but we will see.

Support and Coping

The participants reported receiving support pertaining to social issues from friends, significant others, roommates, parents, other family members, the residence don, and teammates. Parents, other family members, and friends were the most frequently cited sources of support. Friends were important to talk to as this participant said:

Like they are always there if I need to talk to them so that is good.

Parents provided emotional support through listening and encouragement. Participants depended on parents to always be available when needed. Parents also provided practical support through giving advice, assisting in organization, and by providing reminders for the participants. Other family members including grandparents, cousins, but primarily siblings also provided social support to the participants. Like parents, these individuals were described by the participants as “always being there” for them. For example, one participant described the kinds of support she received from her siblings in the following:

My brother and sister are always. My sister tries to give me advice and my brother is just my, again like a top friend of mine. I can call him up and be like “hey this happened, can you come and pick me up or something” and he’ll always be there.

Parents and family members played an integral role in providing social support at the first assessment point. They were considered important and a large part of the participants’ life even when they no longer resided at home.

Academic

High School

The first sub-theme that emerged from the data in relation to education was that participants perceived high school as being easy. Participants believed that performing at

the high school level was not difficult and was relatively straight forward. As one of the participants described:

Whereas academics I have never felt that stress in the past, you always know in high school that you are going to pass, if you just do your work.

However, the participants also acknowledged that university held higher expectations for the completion and quality of work relative to their high school experience. One participant explained this difference:

In high school I knew that there was always a leeway, I could always just talk my way out of things in high school. I could talk to my teachers or tell them a little bit of a fib you know and be like “oh like I had practice so late last night that I couldn’t get this done, you know blah blah” when in university they don’t care.

Academic Confidence

A sub-theme that occurred in the data was that the first year student athletes lacked confidence in their ability to perform at the university level of academics at the beginning of their first semester of classes. Participants believed professors at university were looking for higher quality work than at previous levels of education. They worried they might not have the necessary skill set for essay writing and managing time effectively or the attention span required for studying. One participant explained that:

I am nervous about school. I can tell you right now I am not confident at all with school...I am not good at writing essays and that is pretty much what university is all about. I am slow reader, you know, it takes me a long time to understand concepts so I am going to have to read over things a lot more so I am going to try and get more confident with my school work and maybe the first year is kind of just like a tester of learning how to do things in university, but I am definitely not as confident as I could be with academics.

There is a dramatic change between high school and university in terms of teaching techniques, expectations of independent learning, and grade calculations. The participants expressed that they did not know what to expect in their academic experience and that this “not knowing” contributed to a lack of confidence in their ability to perform. A participant highlighted this point:

I don't even know what to expect, like I am going, I am just going to do my work and hope, well hope that I have the studying skills and the work habits down. I don't like because everyone says that it is such a big change I don't know what to expect.

Feelings of nervousness were the result of low academic confidence. An example of this connection was stated by a participant:

Because I am not, I have not always been a strong student. I have always just kind of slacked off and didn't pay attention in class and short attention span doesn't help either. So and I am not like the strongest student like I said before so I am really nervous and I am scared I am not going to do well.

Academic Stress

A re-occurring sub-theme in the data was that participants were concerned about their ability to be successful academically. This was demonstrated by the amount of stress they expected to experience, and were experiencing, in relation to the academic process. Several of the participants reported they expected to find taking exams stressful. One participant stated:

Exams, oh my god exams are going to be the most stressful thing I am ever going to do in my life.

Labs, parking around the university campus, signing up for classes, and not understanding material were also reported as causes of academic stress. Participants expected academics to be a source of stress throughout the year. Academics, in general, were reported as the primary source of stress in the lives of the student athletes. Stress caused by academics was highlighted in the following statement:

School, school, and school. Yeah, no three most stressful things definitely yeah, the work that's going to be involved how well I am going to do. Am I

going to be on academic probation that's stress, hopefully I never have to be on that. Like work, the tests, the exams, essays everything, that kind of thing like that well most definitely put a lot of stress on me. I don't know what they expect here, it's going to be really hard I think. I am scared about that.

The participants anticipated an increased academic work load in university compared to high school. Dealing with the volume of work required for academic success compared to the available amount of time, was a source of stress. Participants experienced feelings of being overwhelmed as participants stated:

Just yeah everything piling up and it just keeps coming and like never stops and you're just like constantly working and just want to do it to the best but you just have so much.

Just that there is so much to do, I don't know it's different, with five courses and four of them having labs. It's like a lot of time and then I don't know there is like little times in between that you can do stuff but not enough to really get into like say doing your assignment or anything or like really reading a chapter. I haven't had that much time and so that's hard.

Contributing to the amount of academic stress participants felt was the pressure to perform academically in order to maintain their Athletic Financial Award. In accordance with the Ontario University Athletics' policy, an athlete has to maintain a 70 percent

academic average in order to receive the scholarship the following season. Eight of the participants received an AFA. Participants also received academic scholarships, and needed to maintain the appropriate average to obtain future scholarships. One participant summarized:

Knowing that I have to maintain a 70 average to renew it for next year, if I am going to maintain playing varsity sports is a major stress because I have heard so many rumors that coming into university your freshman year that your marks are automatically going to drop because it is different and it is unique way of each prof marking and all that kind of stuff.

Time Management

Being able to manage time appropriately in order to fulfill academic and athletic commitments was viewed as the key to being successful in both domains. Athletes experienced a less structured university environment than previously experienced in high school. While at high school, and living at home, participants had structured routine days with school and academic commitments. University allowed for more unstructured time and volitional choices. Being able to successfully manage study time, practice, training, and social activities was acknowledged by the participants and reflected in the following quotation:

Like if I didn't have very good time management I wouldn't be able to get everything done and then that would be stressful, but just making sure that I

have good time management helps out a lot.

The ability to be able to manage time was viewed by participants as stressful and, difficult to master. Participants viewed not only being able to appropriately manage time as a cause of stress, but also anticipated stress if they did not manage their time appropriately (e.g. if a mismanagement of time led to cramming for an exam or rushing an assignment).

Academic Social Support

Participants reported receiving academic support from a variety of sources including their varsity team coach, residence don, family members, friends, the coordinator of interuniversity sport, classmates, teammates, and a student athlete academic mentor. Each participant was unique as to who they turned to for support and assistance. However, relative to social and athletic support, the participants looked to people who were in their immediate environment to provide academic support more frequently (e.g. coaches, residence dons, athletic department staff, and classmates).

Participants could identify sources of support (e.g. coach, friend etc.) but not what types of support they would receive (e.g. teach skills, time manage, etc.). They noted that these were the individuals who appeared interested in their academic success and, therefore, felt that they cared about their overall success. One participant explained:

Well like they're interested in your personal life like my coach asked me how things are going and they are interested in how your academics are going and

like just how everyday life is for you – like they want to show interest in you.

Student athletes who reported parents as a source of academic support believed they provided emotional support through encouragement and confidence in the participant's abilities, as demonstrated in the following statement:

Yeah definitely my parents to, like they knew coming into this that I was nervous for it, but they believed that I could do it and they know I can do it so and they will always support me, they have confidence.

It is important to note that three of the participants perceived that nobody was supporting them academically. They felt that they were away from people who had supported them in the past in this domain as a participant stated:

It's a big responsibility and so it's all by yourself, it's all on you, no one else, cause there is no one else here really, like your mom or dad.

Accessing University Resources

Two of the participants perceived that they would not be able to receive academic support from individuals associated with the university because they believed they were "just another number." Believing they were just another student at the university, they did not expect to receive academic assistance. One of the participants described this experience:

Like I am just another number in their book that hey I was picked to come here because I have good grades. They don't, me as a person, they don't know me you know personally, I feel like I am just another number in a huge book, you know just another page in their book.

Two contrasting sub-themes emerged from the data with regard to the participants' perceptions of being able to access academic resources that the university provided. Approximately half of the participants felt that they could approach their professor if they needed assistance with the class material. One of the participants summarized this perception by stating:

All of my profs have said that we want to help you succeed, we don't want to see you fail and I honestly expected them to come in, like I was going to go to class and they were going to be like if you don't work you are going to fail or like it's easy to fail something like that, but they all, they all sounded like they don't want anyone to fail. They made it very clear of all of the services available if you are having trouble and they recommend, they want you to come to their offices and I was not expecting that at all.

Feelings of being scared and embarrassed acted as a barrier for some participants who felt that they could not approach their professor. These participants felt embarrassed to let the professor know that they needed assistance. They were also intimidated by their

professors and thus did not feel that they could approach them. The following statements summarized these sentiments:

I don't want to look – sometimes I have feeling like I don't want to look stupid asking a question. Even though they always say no question is a stupid question you know, but there are some pretty stupid questions.

I am mostly scared of asking a professor. They are very intimidating, especially some people.

Other than the professor, participants were unaware of the resources and services that were available to them at the university (e.g. the writing center, peer support groups, and mentoring programs etc.). Thus, while academics were a primary source of stress, the participants were ignorant of resources that might help to alleviate this stress. Only two participants did seek out assistance. One contacted accessible learning due to a learning disability, while the other sought out additional math assistance. Both of these participants reported their experiences as positive and found the staff to be supportive and accommodating. It was also noted by one participant, in the following quote, that it was up to the individual to seek out assistance if required:

Yeah, I feel like the university has done a really good job of making it available but you have to be the one to go and use it, they are not going to make you go to math help but.

Sport

Choice of University

All student athletes in this study were recruited by the coaching staff of their respective teams. As such, participants made a commitment to come to Wilfrid Laurier earlier than their peers, often with the recruitment process starting over a year in advance of beginning their studies. Athletics was the primary reason that the participants chose to attend Wilfrid Laurier University. Being recruited for, and being able to play for, a specific varsity team, particularly the hockey team who has experienced previous success, significantly influenced the participants' decisions as to where they would attend university. The participants were influenced by the quality of team, potential for playing time, and organization and structure of the athletic program. The participants decided on Wilfrid Laurier University first and then found a program of study within Wilfrid Laurier University second. This sub-theme can be summarized in the following statements by participants:

Probably coming here and playing for Laurier because they are such a great team. Like that is the reason why I came, because they are so good.

I really liked the hockey program it seemed really like organized and stuff and it was cool they had like AFAs that they were willing to offer and stuff too.

Because of the how good their team is, pretty much. There was no academic

way of reason, just that the team was good and they were looking at – they wanted me so. I went to them.

Although the decision of where to attend university was largely based on athletic opportunities, there were secondary factors that impacted their Wilfrid Laurier University acceptance, such as the quality of the academic program, location close to home, and a sense of community due to campus size.

Recruitment Process and Athletic Confidence

Participants reported that the recruitment process increased their confidence in their athletic abilities. Having respected coaches watch them play and then actively recruit them to play on their team, increased their self-esteem. One participant explained:

It makes you feel good, important that you are wanted and that you can – they yourself – see you as a key player on their team, so therefore you must have some ability.

In addition, the recruitment process acted as a validation of their athletic ability. While they may have been confident in their ability to perform at the next level, it was reaffirming that others believed they were also capable. One participant stated:

It made me like pretty proud of myself to know that other people were recognizing my hard work and stuff and practice and that kind of thing,

yeah. Just to know that people were like “oh she is good we want her to come to our school kind of thing” it’s pretty cool.

Sport Demands

Participants perceived an increase in sport demands at the university level compared to previous experiences. They anticipated their peers to have the same amount of talent but to be more powerful, harder working, possess more speed, and have greater competence playing the game than they had experienced in the past. One participant described her expectations of what was required at the university level:

So very different, basically playing with women, before I was playing with like girls. I was the – speeds a lot different. Like maybe the other teams are bigger and faster or stronger.

As a result, participants felt that they needed to increase their athletic work ethic to be able to compete at the university level as highlighted by this participant:

The work ethic here is a lot harder then what I have experienced, so it’s pushing me to be a better player and become more improved and stuff.

The participants also felt that the games and practices were expected to be performed at a higher intensity than in the past as one participant described:

Well it's more intense I think definitely playing varsity hockey then, it's more serious and especially Laurier because they are such a good team. So they have to be like hard on you and stuff. So yeah, that's pretty much the biggest difference.

In addition, participants described an increase in required time commitment and dedication as participants discussed:

Like a lot of practice you know, whenever I am not coming I am sick, you can't do that anymore. You have to be like "okay well I am dedicated." You have to be so dedicated to the sport and that's tough again.

I feel stress right now with basketball and how much time it takes up in my life. I have basketball every day for two to four hours every day so that's stressful. Like it's just and it's exhausting to my body, like it's just grueling and exhausting to my body.

The participants felt the effects of increased athletic expectations during both games and practices. Over half of the participants reported experiencing anxiety during practices because they were afraid of making a mistake on a drill. They felt that there was minimal room for error in practice as they were now competing for playing time and positions on the team. Previously they had been the best players on their respective teams and playing time was guaranteed. The players also perceived an increase in performance

expectations from their coaches and teammates as one participant highlighted:

There is not a lot of room for error so in that sense even like practicing, you know if you make a mistake you are going to pay for it. If you don't listen to a drill, if you don't do it right there is going to be consequences and you can see that because in the drills that we can't make mistakes, we are normally the ones to do it because we just haven't been use to that kind of, like strict, kind of rules.

Team Belonging

Although all the participants in the study were recruited to play at the varsity level, they still felt pressure to prove their abilities. They recognized that just because they had been recruited to the team it did not guarantee them playing time and, in fact, almost all of their teammates had been recruited as well. The participants wanted to be accepted by the team and to demonstrate that they deserved to be playing at this level. One participant explained:

I kind of feel like, if I mess on a pass I don't know if this person will really like me after. It's kind of stressful that way like – I am rookie coming in what are they going to think of me if I screw up on a drill? Oh she is stupid, why did we recruit her.

Thus, while participants initially experienced increased confidence due to being

recruited, during the first week of practices, being recruited resulted in pressure to fulfill the expectations of self, coach, and other players. It was the coach who recruited the players and, therefore the participants felt a responsibility to “not let him down.” This sub-theme was highlighted by a participant who stated:

I feel pressure because I have been recruited and like these, the coaches expect certain things in me and kind of stressed when I can't like if I have a bad game and their yeah...Yeah just I don't live up to like what they perceive me to be as a player it kind of is stressful.

Stress

Overall the athletic domain was not perceived to be a stressful environment. However, not wanting to let the coach down, pressure to perform, and not playing well were the three most frequently reported causes of stress in relation to sport. These three items are related. The participants highly valued the coach because they recruited them to the team. The players experienced anxiety as a consequence of what was expected of them. This contributed to players placing significant value on their performance and, as a result, when they did not play well, they experienced stress. One player summarized this connection through the following statement:

I have had some bad games where I it is like really stressful and you know you can play better and it's just now coming and you want to play better to show that you deserve to be here and stuff.

Confidence in Being able to Adapt

While participants may have felt pressure to perform, they were also confident in their ability to adapt to the league and perform at a higher level. The participants were confident in their ability to adapt to the change of skill within the league, increased commitment and demands that were being placed on them. One participant stated:

Yeah, I know I can play and I like been able to show myself that I can play with this team, I can play with the teams that we have played against. I know I can play.

Even though the participants were transitioning to a higher level of academics and athletics, they noted that they were more confident in their athletic transition than in their academics. One participant stated:

Hockey wise yes, school wise no. I am terrified that I am not going to be successful in it scaring me so I don't know yeah.

Support

Both parents of the participants provided support for their daughters by attending games. Participants anticipated this to continue into their university careers even with longer travel times. The presence of their parents in the stands demonstrated to the participants that their parents still supported them. Parents provided support in the form

of encouragement, motivation, buying equipment, giving advice to improve their game, and by being a fan. One participant explained:

My dad is that hard like come on like get in gear, I know that they are always going to be there, they have never missed a game of my life. Like they are always there, always cheery, always happy. Seven minutes yesterday they were like great you got on the floor, what more could you ask for so.

Participants cited their parents as their greatest athletic supporters previously and anticipated this to continue. Interestingly, for the participants who played hockey, there was a trend that indicated the father provided support in the form of instruction and critiquing the participants' play, whereas the mother provided encouragement and emotional support. The participants believed their mothers had less hockey knowledge, as summarized by this participant:

Both of them, my dad being like he's in athletics a lot. Like that's his whole life so he relates to it a lot and like knows a lot more than my mom, but she will always come out and support me no matter what I am doing.

The student athletes anticipated that, in the future, their teammates would act as their support system. The participants felt that, because their teammates would be going through or had gone through the same experiences as them, they would be able to relate as stated by one participant:

Yeah, just like really good because they are both good friends of mine so having them there is again like the support. Just makes you feel comfortable knowing that they are going through the same things.

In addition, the participants expressed that their friends supported them by wishing them well, attending games, and by understanding their time commitments to sport.

Athletics as a Coping Tool

Four participants noted that playing, practicing, or training for their sport was a coping mechanism used to deal with stress in other life domains, particularly academics. One participant explained that sport allowed her to forget the stress of school and focus on playing:

I kind of think of that as like I go there and I don't have to think about school. I don't like, you just go and just play hockey like it, I have always like if I am stressed and I do like doing school for school and then I have practice, it's like when I am on the ice I don't have to think about school, I don't have to think about all the work I have to do, it's kind of like a stress reliever.

Current Relationship with Coach

The participants felt that their relationship with their coach was important to them. At the time of the first interview the participants had only known their coach for a few weeks and all participants had a positive perception of their coach. All coaches were male. The participants reported that their current relationship with their coach was centered around feelings of being comfortable with him and being able to communicate openly. Participants described their coach as being approachable which, in turn, elicited feelings of comfort as one participant expressed:

Yeah, like I said Coach Smith (pseudonym) is super approachable, I mean I had to go to talk to him today about something and you know he's just like "come on in" like and already like, you know, joking around.

Even though the participants had only known their coaches a short time, they reported feeling like there was an open communication with their coach. They expected to be able to approach their coach and, vice versa, if an issue occurred. For example, one participant explained:

I feel like I can call him and ask him for a question or anything like that. If I have a problem, I have already had a problem and I have already contacted him and he has already given me advice.

The participants also noted that the coach encouraged open communication with

their players. At the beginning of the season, the participants had positive perceptions of the coaches and did not make negative comments about the coach as an individual or as a person. As previously mentioned, the participants perceived their coach to be approachable and adequately competent in their knowledge of the game as one participant illustrated:

He's a really nice guy like I don't think that there is anything that I could say bad about him at all. He's just a great guy and he seems like he knows, clearly he knows stuff about hockey as the team has done really well for the past, I don't know five or six years. So no, he seems like a great guy.

While not fully developed as a sub-theme in the data, two participants stated that they perceived their coach as a father figure, particularly because they were away from home.

I kind of feel like Dave (pseudonym) is like your father in school. My feeling kind of like I have my own Dad but he is not here so I have to rely on Dave a little bit.

The participants anticipated their relationship to change over the course of the season. As they spent more time with their coach, they hoped that they would become closer and gain more knowledge about each other.

Individual Role on Athletic Team

On former teams, the basketball and volleyball athletes usually played the whole or most of the game, and the hockey players played approximately a third of the game and were on special teams (penalty kill and power play). All participants, with the exception of one participant, who expected to start, anticipated their playing time to be reduced from previous years due to being a first year player. One participant remarked:

No I don't foresee me being on any special teams like that I am a first year and there is like six or seven defense. So I know the older ones will get like first take and they have been here longer so seniority and stuff like that and they are more skilled and like know how to play it and everything. So right now no special teams.

While almost all of the participants acknowledged that they would receive less playing time, the hockey players were more willing to accept this role. The volleyball and basketball players were more likely to anticipate not being happy with the number of minutes they played as highlighted in this statement:

I hate sitting the bench. I can't stand it, so this is going to be definitely like a different adjustment. Also, because like I am not like the best indoor player compared to like what I am in beach, so I know that I will sit the bench.

In contrast, the hockey players were generally willing to accept their role because they were first year players. In volleyball and basketball, participants were not able to anticipate how much playing time they would receive by “coming off the bench.” Whereas in hockey, by its format, usually allows all players an opportunity to go out and prove they can achieve and make a difference in the game. The hockey team has historically been more successful and prestigious than the other two teams. It is plausible that the hockey participants were happy to just be affiliated with the team.

The participants felt at the beginning of the season that they had control over their playing time and had an opportunity to gain more. They cited that if they worked hard in practice and were playing well in games then they would receive playing time. This sub-theme was also demonstrated in their goals for the season which primarily included improving their strength, conditioning, and skill set such that they would be effective players at this level. One participant summarized this sub-theme:

So I am guessing depending on how hard I work in the next little while, it will depend on my playing time but I am hoping to maybe get five to ten minutes a game hopefully.

All participants, with the exception of one, stated that they played a leadership role on their previous team. However, on their current team, they experienced a lack of role clarity at the beginning of the season. The participants found it difficult to not know their role on the team and were in the process of trying to determine what was expected of them:

I think I am still trying to like feel it out and stuff and get my grounding to see what role I play like right now I am just a rookie.

But as of right now I feel like I am just another needle in the haystack, I just kind of have to work my way up and just earn my spot in varsity sports.

I don't know and I actually talked to one of the vets about that after one of games, I just said like "you know should I not like, you know be so vocal" and they are like "no we need that like we need more of that."

Paying your Dues

A sub-theme that emerged was that the participants perceived a hierarchal structure among teammates. The participants expected this inequality, regardless of whether they liked it or not, as one individual highlighted:

I feel bad, well like I just feel like could be some like favouring of vets, maybe. Like maybe if, if a vet has like an equally bad game as a rookie, it wouldn't stand out as much as if a rookie had a bad game. Just cause, just cause of the stage that we are at now, trying to get the rookies to the same level.

In addition, the participants expressed that the hierarchy on the team was a part of "paying your dues" and that doing "rookie tasks" was a part of the process of being

accepted onto the team. The idea of “rookie tasks” was summarized in the following statement:

Well so far it hasn't been like that noticeable it's just been like we set up the nets, we take them down, in our work outs we are the last ones to go. You know if there are only five stations and sixteen girls, we'll be like two hours after everybody else. If we ever need to like bring something, we are bringing that.

Teammates Environment

Participants perceived teammates as welcoming. They also felt that the team was accepting of them and wished to include them. In addition, all the participants had a high level of confidence in their ability to adapt to their new teammates. These sub-themes can be summarized in the following statement:

Well our team is really good, like they're really accepting and opening and everyone gets along and like yeah it's like a big new family. So the teammates like made it a lot easier and they're always talking to you, trying to get you involved in everything so it is good. It made the adjustment really easy.

Second Assessment

Second assessment results are presented similar to the first assessment. However, throughout the second assessment results, a description of differences and similarities between the first and second assessment is also provided. Some themes within the domains appear at both time points (e.g. support and coping) while others emerged at only one assessment point (e.g. playing time).

Social

Moving Away from Home

At the second assessment all the participants had moved away from their home base. One participant moved into her boyfriend's home between assessments. Initially, participants experienced a range of emotional reactions to moving away from home for the first time. However, by the second assessment, the participants had time to adjust to their new living situation and reported that they liked living away from home. One participant described:

Awesome. I really enjoy moving away from home and stuff. I have been stuck in my house ever since I was born so it's good to get away and be independent and make your own decisions and not have someone being on your ass the whole time about things and yelling at for your mistakes. Yell at yourself and stuff so.

Almost all of the participants noted that, while they were living away from home,

their home base was close enough to the university to go home regularly if they desired. This allowed them to see their parents and friends from home frequently. In addition, the participants' parents regularly attended their sporting games. This reduced the feelings of homesickness and maintained the integrity of their previous support network. One participant summarized:

I see my parents every weekend with basketball and stuff, but so I am not like, by the end of the semester I was kind of like ready just like be at home and hang out so like as soon basketball like the busy part of our basketball schedule ended, I was able to go home for a night and it was just nice to like be home. Even though, excuse me, I am not necessarily home sick but like sometimes you just kind of like need like a night at home and just relax and stuff so I was ready to, you know, be at home for that break.

One participant did experience a difficult transition moving away from home and noted feeling homesick:

I would say by coming back to res and not having a full house of my family and missing the environment and when I do go home for a few days than head back makes me miss it even more.

Independence

Similar to the first assessment, the participants articulated enjoying having their

new independence at university. The participants expressed feelings of freedom and increased control over their lives. One participant summarized her experience:

I like the independence, like I said the social time I guess, like the that. Like just having to be responsible for like time management, organizing myself at home, doing my laundry. As little as that sounds, like that was huge because I never had to do that at home. I like just planning my schedule here and not having like my parents trying to like interfere. Even they didn't at home that much. I haven't really gotten the whole cooking thing down because I have my ONECard so I just use it all the time, but like I am still responsible for eating and like you know I am not going to come and my Mom is going to have leftovers on the stove like I have to plan my day out, so I like that part.

While the majority of participants relished the responsibility of taking control of their lives, this independence caused a few participants to become stressed over being responsible for the organization of their daily living tasks and balancing their time between school, sport, and social activities. These participants stated:

Just that you are responsible for everything, like you are responsible to get everything done, there is no one there like helping you out and being like you need to do this at this time, this it's kind of harder just because you have to do it yourself and push yourself to do stuff.

Well yeah, it's kind of hard not having like someone there to be like okay you are not really, come on, like my mom would if I was at home just sitting around she would be like okay go do this, you don't really have someone there to say that so you have to take responsibility which is something I have learned.

Roommates

At the second assessment, reactions to having a roommate for the first time varied among participants. This is in contrast to the first assessment where the majority of participants reported having a positive experience with their roommate(s). Half of the participants reported still having a positive experience with their roommate(s). These participants reported establishing a close friendship with their roommate who, in turn, acted as a member of their social support network. The participants who had a positive experience with their roommate stated that they felt lucky to have a roommate that they got along with and shared their experiences with. One participant described:

So good, I am really really close with her and I am really close with couple of other girls on the floor but I like I really lucked out because we get along really well and you know we like actually like hang out. It's not like we never talk to each other and it just works it's like we hang out like we are able to just like come into each others room. I don't know it's just really nice like being close with someone like that.

Those participants who reported having a positive experience with their roommate(s) expressed that their roommates had facilitated their transition into university, as described by one participant:

No, if anything it's made it better, if I didn't have friends. If I didn't live with my best friends I think it would be harder.

In contrast, the remaining participants either expressed ambivalence towards or had expected a different relationship with their roommate. One participant summarized:

I had this image of all my friends, like all of my friends who went to school last year and they most of them the majority of them are like best friends with their roommates and they are like "yeah my roommate and I get we get along so well" so I was like "yes I can't wait to have a roommate who I am like best friends with" and I don't know I don't really. My roommate and I have nothing in common, we are complete opposites. So socially we don't really talk too much because we have nothing to talk about and it just sucks because like I actually get up at 5:30 twice a week and that is not fun, especially when I try to go to bed and she is doing homework or on her computer. I am not going to tell her to stop doing homework so, that's kind of hard to sleep with lights on. So I got to get use to it.

Meeting and Connecting with New People

Recall, during the first assessment results, the participants' primary social goal was to establish friendships. The participants continued to find this easy to accomplish, as summarized below:

Yeah obviously at the beginning of the year you are just trying to make friends, you just want friends, when you get here but like it was really easy for me well in the hockey team and stuff. But at the beginning of the year yeah it's just trying to get to know people and trying to set a relationship or set a friendship.

It's actually been really good because I feel like in university like a lot of people are in the same kind of boat like everyone is kind of looking to meet new people. So I think people are a little more outgoing or like trusting of other people, whereas in high school everyone had their own group so it was like I don't need to meet anyone else.

Between the first and second assessment a shift occurred from the participants' primary social goal of *establishing* to *maintaining* friendships. One participant stated:

Just like making it stronger now, like I have, I know who my friends are now and I am not going to look for anymore, well it's not like looking for them, I am not trying to make friends anymore I am just trying to build my

relationship with them.

Another sub-theme that developed was that the participants were connecting and socializing with athletes rather than students who were not involved in varsity sports. They felt that athletes understood their commitment to their sport and had more in common with them. One participant explained:

One of them is on the football team, so he is in athletics. And one of them is going to, he is going to try out for the soccer next year, he was going to go to Mac for soccer but I don't know what happened. But its good because I can relate to them, they know what it is like having a schedule to follow with athletics, like going to practice and stuff like that, because I feel like a lot of people who have never played sports before they don't understand. Like they just say "oh just skip practice" and I am like you can't just skip practice it doesn't work like that you know.

Support and Coping

Participants at the second assessment received social support from friends, roommates, significant others, parents, siblings, the residence don, and teammates. Similar to the first assessment, friends were the most frequently cited source of support, followed by parents and teammates. Participants placed an increased importance on friends to assist them with social situations. One participant explained how friends assisted her:

Just like when bad stuff is happening you can just talk about it and laugh with them and stuff and make jokes a bit so it's not that big of a deal and stuff like that.

It's kind of helpful when they are, when they have similar experiences so then they really know what's going on and then like they will listen I guess.

Academic

Academic Demands at University

At the beginning of the school year, the majority of participants perceived an increase in the amount of work required at the university level. This became a reality over time. Participants experienced an increase in quality and volume of academic work. A participant highlighted:

My hard work like I knew I had to do the work in order for the grades to come. Like they weren't just going to come like, if you didn't it or study just the night before like in high school and pull off a nice mark it wasn't going to happen here so like I knew I had to work hard and do my best in everything.

In contrast, a few participants perceived that the work load was easier than they anticipated because they had had more available time in order to complete it. One participant made this point:

Probably the classes, times like, high schools like six hours a day and it's very exhausting and you don't have that much time to do your work, especially at night because you are tired and sleep and stuff, but you have enough time to do work and go to class and it's just a lot more time on your hands I feel. It's a lot better and easier.

However, almost all of the participants expressed having some difficulties with adjusting to academics in university. Participants were having issues with time management, course material, low grades, not enjoying classes, adjusting to exam formats, assignments, readings, and the amount of course work assigned. It is important to note that there was a clear variation in just how much a participant experienced trouble adjusting academically. Most participants experienced the normal academic adjustments faced by all students, while four participants stated that they wanted to change their academic major. The following quotes were from participants who struggled to adjust academically:

Been tough.. its hard for me to stay on top of things and getting use to the workload. Not use to getting the marks I am recieving right now . so it has been difficult.

It's just so stressful because I hate it, I don't like it and if I don't like something I usually just don't give a shit, I just don't do it, but I have to

because I can't fail it. Well I could but I don't want to. It's bullshit it's a waste of money because I am not enjoying and it is so much memorization that I am never going to need and it was a friggen.

Academic Confidence

Although participants experienced difficulties adjusting to their new academic situation, their confidence in their ability to perform at this level increased from the first assessment. At the second assessment, the majority of participants were confident in their abilities academically. Participants also recognized that their confidence had increased from the beginning of the academic year. Two participants summarized these sentiments:

I don't know about other years but I found first year like I am able to cope with it pretty well and it is going really well so far so my confidence has gone up.

Yeah, its kind of better now, like after going through midterms and stuff, you are like "oh it's not really like." They try and make it really scary when you first get here but like midterms aren't that hard like, everyone doesn't fail them or anything. So like that's academically it doesn't seem nearly as scary as it did at the beginning. Yeah.

In comparison, four of the participants did not experience an increase in academic confidence from the first assessment, but rather remained low or decreased. One participant illustrated her decreased confidence with the following:

My confidence in the changes in school goes down bit by bit all the time.

Academic Stress

Consistent with the first assessment, a re-occurring sub-theme in the data was that the participants were concerned about their ability to perform academically. Their goals to achieve in academics led to high degrees of stress. Almost all of the participants cited a specific grade point average that they wanted to achieve. For many, it was related to the standards required to maintain an Athletic Financial Award (AFA).

Stress associated with academics was the most frequently stated source of stress related to their university experience. Participants cited not understanding course material, deadlines, underperformance, getting work done, exams, time management, assignments and writing/preparing for exams as triggers for stress. One participant described:

I definitely noticed it during midterms, like if I compared that with exams in high school there is no comparison and this is just midterms, it's a lot of work and it gets stressful like hockey doesn't stop. None of that stops for midterms, so yeah, it's a lot of overload.

Time Management

A re-occurring sub-theme within the data was the necessity for the participants to manage their time. This sub-theme was consistent with the first assessment, as participants deemed time management the key to being successful academically. One participant stated:

It's definitely made me more organized, especially like with all of the school work here and like a lot of the, you really have to focus on time management and all of that like, you are an athlete but like you have to weigh out your school work and your athletics and it's just an important role I guess.

While time management was recognized as a necessary skill to navigate the student athlete role, the participants also acknowledged that they needed to improve in this area. One participant summarized:

I don't think I have done the best job of like managing my time which is something I could work on, like I find myself just doing nothing sometimes and like okay what was I just doing, so that needs to change. I need to take advantage of when I am not busy because I feel like when I am not busy I am just like "oh I have nothing to do" and then I kind of waste time away.

The ability to be able to balance school, sport, and academics was important to the participants in order to maximize their university experience. The participants attempted

to try and find this balance. Two participants stated:

I think to really have a good balance so have a good social. If it's school work, and that could work either way like too much volleyball is a bad thing, so to really kind of put social and like, to have a good balance at all times.

Find a good balance so that I can like, kind of do everything even though its not really possible to do everything but as much as I can do everything and like everything like hockey plus school plus like hanging out plus like partying and like all of that and then being good at all of it. That would be nice.

Managing time appropriately in order to balance social, sport, and academic domains was also a source of stress for participants. The participants were unsure as to how much time they needed to devote to each domain. They found it particularly difficult to balance social activities in order to maximize academic success. One participant highlighted:

Getting all of the work done, like I guess it is kind of stressful to try and find the right balance and like not knowing if you should like go out and have fun for a night or if you really should have been studying and like never really knowing and always like being like I guess I'll go, just kind of on a whim and stuff like that but yeah, other than that.

Academic Social Support

The participants continued to receive academic support from a variety of sources including their coach, residence don, friends, members of the athletic department, parents, professors, and teammates. There was a pronounced shift in the parental role resulting in decreased instrumental academic support (e.g. organization, editing etc.), and increased emotional support. Two participants noted the type of support they currently received from their parents:

And then my family they just want me to do my best, that's all they really want, is for me to try my best here.

Well my parents do they always check up on me and make sure I am doing okay and make sure that if I am having trouble that I should talk to someone or they are helping me out with who I should talk to.

At the second assessment, friends and teammates now provided instrumental support to the individual. Older teammates played a mentoring role to their younger counterparts. A participant recalled this experience:

Even just like my teammates like there is a lot of girls on my team who are on my team who are on fourth year that have taken kin classes or biology and they are always there to help. Like when I was studying for bio my friend Sarah was like always there like she would answer any question I

would ask her. She would like research things if she didn't even know the answer so even just like having friends who have been through it before, they have been really supportive when it comes to that so.

Accessing University Resources

The participants at the second assessment were more aware of university resources than at the first assessment. Five of the participants had accessed resources that included either counseling services, professors, members of the athletic department, accessible learning, or the math center for assistance. In addition, two participants believed that, if they were having academic issues, they could speak to someone in the athletic department who would direct them towards the appropriate resource. One participant stated:

Talk to John Smith and he could set us up with someone. Like I am sure if we needed it, it would be there and like within seconds.

For two of the participants, their perception of being able to access their professors for assistance changed as a result of their experiences in school. As one participant commented:

Definitely obviously like professors and instructors and stuff like that. Like I thought coming here they just were always strict and mean and they didn't care about you, but they want you to do well and they are here for your

success, like they are here for you.

Sport

Sport Demands

It was evident that at the second assessment participants still perceived their new varsity university life to be more demanding than their previous high school sport experience. They perceived that their new sports leagues provided a game that was a faster tempo, had increased speed, provided challenging systems, was more competitive, and had players who were more physical, powerful, and stronger than they had previously encountered. As a result, half of the participants stated that they enjoyed the challenge of playing in a sport environment at the “next level.” One participant summarized:

I really really like it. I always like playing harder teams, harder people, and like we are not this amazing team that just killing everybody, like every game is really really good.

Another sub-theme that became evident was that the participants perceived an increase in the intensity and commitment levels of their respective teams. Two participants explained:

I feel like the passion for the game is, I don't know, I feel like the girls are a lot more intense here in like hard core like, they just, I feel like they care

more I guess, I don't know like, I don't want to say like my junior team didn't care, we obviously cared and stuff but I don't know I just feel like it's a lot more intense. The intensity is a lot more than it was in Junior, it might be just because of my junior team, I mean other junior teams were probably a lot more intense than my own, but yeah the intensity level is a lot higher and the expectation is a lot higher as well.

It's been like the hockey, from a hockey perspective it is really different like everyone is a lot more serious and like down to business like whereas when I played like junior it was more just a social thing for a lot of people so that's a pretty big change.

The participants perceived that they spent more time involved in sport, increased the amount of time doing dry land training, and increased the amount of individual preparation for a game (e.g. good sleep the night before, pre-game meal etc.).

It is important to note that four participants reported that the transition into higher level sport was difficult in the beginning but they had since adjusted. One participant described her experience:

And I just wasn't enjoying it and like no motivation and then one day it just kind of clicked like you're here and like if you want to play you actually have to work at it. So that transition has been hard because I didn't have to do that last year and it's taken like a lot of mental kind of, you know strength,

like just come on keep doing it. So that transition has been very hard but now I am loving it and it's it's been different but like it's been really good.

Stress

Consistent with the first assessment, participants did not report experiencing stress frequently in the athletic setting. Not wanting to let the coach down and pressure to perform were not cited as frequently as they were in the first assessment. Now, not playing well and lack of playing time emerged as the two central causes of stress. Participants placed significant value in receiving playing time as they had desired to contribute to the team and improve as players. Therefore, they found it stressful when they were not playing. One participant stated:

Playing time, I would say, just because I like playing and that is stressful when you don't.

As committed athletes, playing at the varsity level, they placed considerable importance on their performance. Thus for many of the participants, they experienced stress when they did not play well. One participant stated:

Hockey is stressful when, kind of when you are not playing well, it can be stressful because you just want to play well because it is so much more fun and so much better for the team and stuff but you don't really, you can't really I don't really know what to do about it when you are not playing well,

that is stressful a bit I guess.

Support

While participants reported receiving athletic support from their coach, mental skills consultant, siblings, members of the athletic department, friends, and significant others, the biggest providers of support were parents and teammates. Participants in the first assessment anticipated their parents being a primary provider of athletic support. All but one of the participants felt this way at the second assessment as well. Parents supported their daughters by attending games and providing encouragement and moral support with their presence. These participants indicated:

They actually, they have seen, I am used, I wasn't as used to it as much last year. Like they didn't make it out to as many games as they did last year, so it's a pretty weird concept but they have actually made it out to more games so kind of more support now than then in the past.

They are always coming to all of my games and they are always talking to me, asking me how I am doing, pushing me to do my best kind of thing and they are just always there behind no matter what. So it's really good.

Definitely my parents/family. coming out to games, cheering the team on even if im not playing. staying actively involved in my life.

Also as anticipated, the student athletes felt they were being supported by their teammates. Teammates provided support through assisting participants with athletic skills, providing an inclusive environment, establishing friendships, being available to listen to issues, and by providing encouragement. Participants described how their teammates supported them:

Everyone on the team is supportive. It's if they, if they see you having a rough shift or struggling with something, everyone just helps you and wants to get you to see you get through it.

It's kind of a different feeling when you make friends with the team though. It's more like a sisterhood though. It's fun like you can count on them and tell them stuff that you like maybe wouldn't tell just a normal friend that you party with or something like that but yeah, it's like a family so it's cool.

Like they if you don't understand a drill or something they will come and help you out or they will go first in line and step up and be like okay like this is how it is done so you don't get yelled at and stuff like that but yeah.

Athletics as a Coping Tool

Two participants continued to use sport as a coping mechanism for stressful academics and social situations. One participant commented:

But it is also something that relieves stress. It's like when you go in the gym nothing else matters, it's basketball, it's all we are going to focus on for two hours that's what you do, so it kind of like helps put everything else in perspective. So when you walk out you are like "oh" and if you had a good practice you are "oh I feel so much better" and like even though I had a crazy day it's like, you know I don't feel so crappy anymore so it helps kind of de-stress too.

Current Relationship with Coach

The participants continued to have a positive perception of their coach. The majority of participants stated that their relationship with their coach had developed through spending time together and getting to know them better. Only four of the participants stated that they did not feel close to their coach. This was either by their own choice or they felt that they had not known him long enough to develop a stronger relationship. One participant noted:

Its not really easy to talk about a relationship with my coach yet because he has only know me for a couple of months.

While some individuals may not have felt like they had developed a close relationship, all the participants felt like they could approach their coach if they had an issue that needed to be dealt with. The participants felt that their relationship with their coach continued to be centered around open communication and their coach continued to

encourage it. One participant stated:

But yeah I think it's a good relationship like I feel comfortable going up to him and talking to him about somethings or even stopping by his office and just having a chat about just random stuff and I feel like he, well he obviously can come up to me and stuff so it's a pretty good relationship I feel like.

The participants also described their coach as being approachable. One of the coaches actively encouraged his athletes to visit him outside of practice time to discuss any issues pertaining to sport or to just sit down and chat. In addition, individual meetings between the athlete and the coach were required to clarify a player's progress and identify their role on the team. From the participants' perspectives, this approach opened communication. The participants on this team described meeting with the coach as beneficial and having improved their relationship with him. This was highlighted by two participants:

Like he is accepting of anything like, you just feel more comfortable around him and any like you can just talk to him about anything like my other coaches if I had a problem on the ice I would tend to just keep it to myself or something. Or if like I had a question about why something was happening or why I wasn't playing or something I wouldn't ask him I would just keep going on playing, but here like you can talk to him and just you know he will

answer you and like you don't feel stupid going to talk to him.

But yeah I think it's a good relationship like I feel comfortable going up to him and talking to him about somethings or even stopping by his office and just having a chat about just random stuff and I feel like he, well he obviously can come up to me and stuff so it's a pretty good relationship I feel like.

Participants also expressed that they expected their relationship with their coach to continue to develop over the season and into future years, as they got to know each better. They were also confident in their ability to build this relationship. One participant explained:

Yeah, I think it will just continue to grow like as my years go on obviously as I am with him more more and more experiences happen like with us, it will just get better.

Individual Role on Athletic Team

A sub-theme that emerged from the data was that participants felt that they were contributing to the team. However, participants contributed in ways unique to the individual and included things such as providing social support to teammates, being prepared for games, bringing energy to the play, setting an example, leadership, motivation, personal skill, acting as a protector, and a reliable position player.

Participants started to develop their unique and specific role on their team with the assistance of the coach providing role clarity. At the second assessment, there were only four participants who reported being unaware of their role. One participant stated:

My role, I am never good with roles, it's because it's hard being a rookie right? Like you can't, you are trying to find your role this year right, you don't know it going in because it's such like there is other roles been taken and stuff but, I don't know.

The importance of playing time to the participants increased between the first and second assessment. While previously, the goals of the student athletes centered around developing skill, strength, and conditioning in order to improve and earn playing time, they shifted to specifically earning playing time as an outcome goal. One participant clearly stated that her goal was to:

Keep my position, keep my starting position.

Playing time varied among the participants. One individual was a starter while other individuals played on special teams or were asked not to dress for a specific game. Consistent with the first assessment, the participants continued to perceive that they had control over and an opportunity to receive playing time, by practicing and playing well. The participants felt that their performance in practices would determine how much playing time that they would receive. This is highlighted by the following participants:

You can't slack you have to do it and you have to actually do well in practice or you won't be starting.

Just I feel like you have more to prove in a practice because what you prove in a practice will determine your position in the game and then once you are in the game that's, I don't know, and since like the team of such like high caliber that they are actually like the best athletes in the league so when you are competing them in practice it is actually harder than in a game.

Fewer of the athletes were satisfied with the playing time that they received. The majority had difficulty adjusting to a reduced role from previous teams. The participants who were satisfied with their playing time were also able to accept their role on their team. One individual explained:

It takes a bit to like getting used to but again I have like accepted it and like figured out that it's part of being on a university team with 21 players like, your not going to start off as like a first line forward, you are going to have to work your way up.

One clear sub-theme was that the athletes had difficulty adjusting to their reduced role on the team. Participants were coming from teams where they received significant playing time. Receiving less playing time at university was an uneasy adjustment. The

following participants described:

So yeah and it was just hard because both my roommates, you know they start, so it was just like. Just so frustrating and I knew like to start playing like I would have to take out my captains position and like a fifth year, so it was just like so discouraging.

Like I knew coming in as a rookie I wasn't going to be playing a lot but like some games like we won't play for almost a whole period and that's just different. I am not used to that but you got to push through it I guess.

It's just like we played Waterloo and I thought I was having a good game and there was and the third period came around and just we were getting penalties and just didn't seem to see a lot of ice there and that was just frustrating because I thought I was. Like I did, I had legs that game, thought I was moving fast, making good decisions, getting chances and then just sitting on the bench for most of the third. It's kind of like oh well I am having a good game and I am not playing, like what's going to happen when I have a bad game you know? Just things like that.

The athletes who were having difficulty adjusting to their new playing time also evaluated their performance based on how much playing time they received. Thus, when they did not receive playing time, they reported that their confidence was reduced. The

following participants explained:

Because if u work hard to acheive soemthing and dont get rewarded u feel like u have failed and that stresses me out.

At first it was, you know, coming from high school where I would start and play all the time, if you know some games I didn't get as much playing time I would kind of be like "oh like maybe I am not doing well, maybe I am not doing, I am not as good as I think."

Adapting to Teammates

All of the participants felt that they were able to adapt to their new teammates. For the majority of participants, they found that their teammates were welcoming and tried to include them on the team. One participant highlighted:

Yeah, and like they just want to make you get used to it and like right away like blend you into the family kind of thing or to the team, so like you don't feel out of place or anything like that.

The athletes established friendships with their teammates within and outside of the sport environment. Only one athlete was not satisfied with the connections that she made with her teammates:

Sometimes i am disappointed in myself for not getting involved in somethings but I do feel included in the team. I hope i come out of my shell soon.

The friendships that were established assisted the participants through their initial transition. One participant described:

The initial transition itself like I had like a lot of people that helped like make it a lot easier like. The girls on the team and being here in the summer and they were just really easy to like get along with and get to know so that obviously helped in already having that kind of stable like group of people.

Playing Time

Another sub-theme that developed at the second assessment was that the participants perceived they were competing against their teammates for ice time. While this did not create overt animosity between teammates, it did make them aware that they were auditioning for minutes during practice. A number of participants found this difficult, especially individuals on the hockey team as they reported that the competition between teammates was often greater than the competition against other teams. One participant highlighted:

No I feel like the most competition is in like within the team, like you are just trying to like not really compete, but try to keep up with the other girls on and get on their level and stuff like that, but I mean yeah, there is some teams

that are good competition but since we win all the time it's like you don't really notice it as much you know, like on a winning team, you are pretty much the competition so.

In particular, one participant struggled with competition for playing time with her teammate who was also her friend, roommate, and shared the same position on the team. This individual was struggling with body image and disordered eating concerns, which were exacerbated by the desire to gain playing time over her teammate. In the following she described her experience:

And so it's been really hard at times just because like you know if I started one day over her there would be that tension and like. I don't want to create that but, you know, everything I do is trying to take her spot basically in volleyball. Like I go to practice to play good to take her spot and I don't know. I have been like dealing with a couple of things with like not trying to have that mentality because it's really effecting my eating and stuff. So right now I am really struggling not with an eating disorder but like I am obsessed with like being the best right now and like I always try to eat really really healthy because I see her eating a tub of ice cream and like she gets to play over me. So it's been stressful in that respect because I see everything she does during the day having her as a roommate and like doing nothing translates into playing and it's so difficult to see because the coach doesn't see that.

Academic Achievement

Only two participants in the study completed a full five course load during the first and second semesters. In addition, these same participants were the only participants who met the 7.0 grade point average (GPA) necessary to renew their AFA scholarship for the following season. Six participants lost their eligibility for this award.

Four of the eleven participants did not achieve the required 5.0 GPA to continue in the honours program for their second academic year. Six of the participants were below the 7.0 study major GPA that is required to graduate with an honours degree after four years of study. Two of the participants failed courses. The participant's mean GPA dropped from 6.52 in the first semester to 6.19 in the second semester.

While these statistics are alarming, they are likely an overestimation of academic achievement. When one participant, who had an exceptional GPA of 11.65, was eliminated, the means of the remaining participants for the first and second semester were 6.02 and 5.64 respectively. In addition, four participants took sport activity courses (the equivalent of 1 regular course per semester) that were required as part of the Kinesiology and Physical Education curriculum. Traditionally, the majority of students are successful in these courses and grades achieved are not necessarily indicative of success in regular courses. Thus, these courses increased the four participant's GPA's causing a misrepresentation of overall academic adjustment in their GPA's.

Participants' grades dramatically declined from their high school academic averages. Seven participant's academic average dropped over 10 percent from their high school achievements. Oddly, participants' academic confidence increased as the year progressed, even after they received academic feedback. In summary, with the exception

of two participants who achieved an academic average over 70 percent, the group did not succeed in transitioning academically.

MSN Messenger

Three of the eleven participants chose to use MSN Messenger for their second interview. This mode of delivery has numerous advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of MSN Messenger surround the flexibility it provided. Providing the option of using MSN Messenger versus a face-to-face interview empowered the participants to choose the interview context in which they felt comfortable. This allowed the participant to have increased control over their interview environment. In addition, interviews could be conducted at a distance using MSN Messenger. For example, a participant participated in her second assessment when she was at home for Christmas holidays. Using MSN Messenger also provided the participants with additional scheduling options. It allowed for interviews to be conducted in the evening hours or when convenient for the participant. Finally, it is not necessary to transcribe the data when using MSN Messenger, thereby eliminating the transcription phase of the research study.

There were several disadvantages to using MSN Messenger which included quality of data produced, increased participant burden, lost sense of the participant's experience, participant distractions, technological failures, and issues reporting results. The MSN Messenger interviews did not provide the same detail about the transition process as the face-to-face interviews. These disadvantages are elaborated on below.

Increased participant burden likely reduced the data quality that was yielded from

the MSN Messenger interviews. Face-to-face interviews ranged in length from 40-75 minutes, whereas the MSN Messenger interviews almost doubled the amount of time required of the participant to conduct the interview with a range of 90-130 minutes. Participants were also required to type out their responses and thus longer answers resulted in increased interview length. As an interview progressed, participants typically provided less detailed responses.

Interacting through text reduces cues from body language or tone of voice that indicate the participant's understanding of the question, their level of comfort and motivation. The researcher was also not able to portray, through body language, interest in the participant's responses. This affected how much detail a participant was willing to share during the interview.

The researcher was not able to control the interview environment during MSN Messenger interviews. The researcher was blind to distractions in the participant's environment that could distract their attention from the interview. As a result, timing and delays were problematic during the interviews. The researcher was unable to control the speed of the participant's response to a question, and in turn, the length and the tempo of the interview. The participant's response time and typing speed made a significant impact on how many probes the researcher was able to ask.

Technological failures were also problematic. Interviews were dependent on a consistent internet connection, MSN Messenger functioning, and the reliability of the computers being used by both the participant and interviewer. One interview had to be rescheduled due to a failed internet connection.

Finally, while accuracy was increased and researcher burden was diminished

during the transcription process, quotes from MSN Messenger interviews were, at times, difficult to understand out of context from the original question. Minimal sentence structure, poor grammar, and spelling errors, often made quotes unusable in reporting the findings of the study.

All participants who selected MSN Messenger for the second assessment also chose it for their third assessment. Participants expressed mixed feelings about the interview. When asked if the participants preferred MSN Messenger their responses highlighted several advantages and disadvantages:

msn is decent but technology can be a problem sometimes haha face to face is good aswell cause you could see the persons reaction and stuff

uhm. either or really. doesnt really matter to me. face to face goes alot faster i guess. not having to type things. all depends if your pressed for time i guess.

no not really. i dont have a problem being interviewed one on one, or expressing my thoughts in words in person.

and i dont have to go anywhere. i can do the interview anywhere my computer is msn, because i can be at home, but the questions are very repetative and makes me looose interest very easily, the interview is quite long

In summary, results from using MSN Messenger provided preliminary insight into the effectiveness of conducting interviews through this medium. However, only three participants chose to use MSN Messenger and therefore further investigation is required to better understand this medium.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the study was to qualitatively examine the transitional process of first year student athletes based on their social situation, academic adjustment, and experiences in sport. Clear themes and sub-themes emerged regarding these domains. Student athletes who moved into the university setting experienced changes in their social, academic, and sport lives.

Similar to the Giacobbi et al. (2004) study, the present study, also found that social support from parents and teammates was important. The quality of social support from teammates developed as the year progressed in both studies. The current study also supported the usefulness of student athlete mentors. While Giacobbi et al. (2004) had 5 participants who participated in one sport, the present study, with 11 participants who participated in three sports, confirmed that teammates and parents are important social support mechanisms for first year collegiate athletes in the sport domain.

However, unlike the participants in the Giacobbi et al. (2004) study, the participants in the current study did not differentiate how they used these mechanisms of social support. In addition, the participants in the current study continued to use social based coping strategies throughout the season and a shift to cognitive strategies (Giacobbi et al., 2004) was not found.

In addition, participant use of social support in the current study supported findings from Pittman and Richmond (2008) suggesting that established peer relationships assisted in a smoother transition into university. Furthermore, akin to findings by Kimball and Freysinger (2010), inter-collegiate athletes reported connecting with teammates and other varsity athletes because they understood the experiences they

were going through. The present study supports findings that non-athletes were not sympathetic to the role of an athlete and therefore the participants sought out other athletes for sport related social support (Kimball & Freysinger, 2010).

In contrast to previous studies, where only uni-dimensional athletic transitions (i.e. sport changes only) were considered, the current study considered student athletes from a multi-dimensional perspective with acknowledgement given to the interaction between sport, academia, social structure, and personal differences. Findings from the present study were consistent with the Developmental Model (DM) (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

As seen with the DM, the participants began to transition from a developmental to a mastery athletic level of sport. Psychologically, as they entered university, they were transitioning from the developmental stages of adolescence into adulthood. Athletes transitioned to a higher level of education with greater demands. At the psycho-social level, peers, coaches, and parents were the most prominent forms of social support. However, while parents remained important, almost all of the participants moved away from home into residence creating an environment where everyone was new. For example, the students had to cope with new peer sport groups, in addition to new coaching staff, and professors. Based on the results of this study, it may be important to differentiate teammates from peers at the psycho-social level. Teammates and peers both supported the athlete socially but in different contexts. In addition, type of social support provided by parents changed as the year progressed, from tangible to more emotional.

A general overriding conclusion that may be drawn from this study is that sport was clearly the participant's first priority. Academic and social adjustments were a

necessary part of playing university varsity sports. Both were a means to fulfilling their ultimate goal of playing University sport. While academics and social change caused considerable stress for the participant, sport was a way of dealing with this stress. Sport was viewed as a positive environment. Sport became a concern half way through the year when lack of playing time became a reality.

Academically, the participants did not fair well during their first year. Wilfrid Laurier University granted 51 Athletic Financial Awards to female student athletes (regardless of academic year) in 2009. However, it is interesting to note that the athletic department does not track how many of those students achieve the 7.0 GPA minimum required to renew the award the following year. The importance of tracking academic development of student athletes was demonstrated in the present study by six participants losing eligibility to renew their Athletic Financial Awards even with a reduced academic work load, in addition to two participants who failed courses. This dramatic decline in academic performance from high school could be associated with poor time management skills and the increased demand of sport time. Also two Kinesiology and Physical Education participants received a presidential admission, which allowed student athletes to be admitted into their program of their choice five percent lower than the cut off for that program by the registrar's office or even lower if approved by the president of the university. This admittance policy did not serve them well in the long run. More participants could have received a presidential admission, however admittance averages to other academic programs were not be obtained to confirm. Similar to the Athletic Financial Award the athletic department could have benefited from tracking the number of Presidential admissions and the progress of these students.

In addition, almost all of the participants expected lower grades. While a few overtly stated this, others set goals at least ten percent lower than what their high school average was. Lower expectations of acceptable grades likely led to their university academic decline and contributed to their academic confidence. They deemed this decline as a successful academic transition.

A re-occurring sub-theme across both time points highlighted the need for independence as a result of living away from home. This forced the participants to take responsibility for their own time management. Previously, in high school, the participants' schedules were managed by teachers, parents, and coaches. With increased control over their time, participants acknowledged both the necessity for, and struggled with, time management. While athletic programs were scheduled and expectations clearly outlined, participants experienced difficulties balancing the academic workload with the social nature of living in residence. Time to complete academic work was insufficiently prioritized with social and athletic commitments.

Orientation week provided an unrealistic "camp like" impression of university life. The week focused on integrating students with their new roommates and fellow floor residences. Meeting and connecting with new people was important to them and took priority at the beginning of the year. Focusing solely on the social component of university during this week may have led participants to have unrealistic expectations of the rigors of balancing academics and sport with social activities. However, the benefits of attending orientation week cannot be disputed. Participants were confident in their ability to make new friends and adjusted socially to the university lifestyle. They reported orientation week as the primary mode of meeting and creating relationships with

other students outside of the athletic context. Overall, the participants transitioned successfully into the social domain, establishing meaningful lasting relationships with other students.

The newly established relationships proved to be invaluable to the participants as they navigated their new environment. Social based coping was used in the sport, academic, and social domains by the participants. Social support shifted from parents and friends from home, to people in their immediate environment such as teammates, new friends, and coaches. Parents provided emotional and moral support to the student athletes and provided less instrumental and instructional support as the year progressed. This is a logical shift as the participants used people in their environment that could relate to their experience (e.g. teammates) and assist them in adjusting and coping with their new situation.

The coach was instrumental in the participants' adjustment to their new athletic team. Coaches determine the athletes' playing time, and in turn, their success. Previously, the participants enjoyed being the best players on their former teams and had their playing time and role significantly reduced at the varsity level. By providing open communication and role clarity, by being approachable and meeting with their athletes, coaches assisted the players with constructive feedback and role development. This was particularly evident with the hockey players who felt supported by their coach even if they were not satisfied with their current playing time.

It is important to highlight that 7 of 11 participants in the study were members of the women's varsity hockey team at Wilfrid Laurier University. A highly successful reputation and season placed these participants and their team in a unique situation. For

example, it is plausible that the participants were more likely to accept their role on the team and their reduced playing time because they were playing for the Wilfrid Laurier University hockey team. They also received additional university resources, not offered to other varsity teams. The pure joy of playing for the Wilfrid Laurier team and the additional resources may have contributed to the overall adjustment of the hockey players. It is unlikely that the amount of support the hockey participants received is the norm among varsity teams.

In summary, participants believed they had transitioned successfully into athletics, academics, and their new social environment. While providing evidence that this was true for athletic and social domains, academic grades would suggest that they did not transition successfully academically. The specific trends that emerged were:

- A shift in support to friends but relied on parents emotionally and to attend games.
- New independence was enjoyed.
- New responsibilities of independence could lead to stress.
- Initially having roommates was a positive experience but became either positive or negative over time.
- Emphasis shifted from *meeting* friends at the first assessment to *establishing* and *maintaining* friendships at the second assessment.
- Academic expectations were the primary source of stress for student athletes.
- Time management was perceived as the key to academic achievement and an area the participants felt they needed to improve.

- Participants experienced stress resulting from difficulties when attempting to find balance between social, sport, and academics.
- Over time participants became more aware of, and utilized more, university resources (e.g. math center for assistance and accessibility of professors).
- University sport participation was more demanding (e.g. practice time, dry land training) than previously experienced.
- Participants felt comfortable and confident in the sport environment.
- Perceived teammates as supportive and helpful.
- Participants used sport as a coping mechanism for stressful academic and social situations.
- The coach was a prominent figure in their lives. Participants worked to establish a close relationship with them.
- Participants developed their own unique role on the team.
- Prior to university sport, participants had enjoyed key roles on their teams. They struggled with a reduced role on their current team.
- Teammates who became friends were instrumental in assisting athletes through the transition.
- Trouble with the paradox of teammates being both supporters and competitors for playing time.
- Student athletes did not do well academically after the first year, resulting in poor academic adjustment.

Limitations of the Study

The variability in timing (interviews conducted between September 13 and October 6) of the first assessments was a limitation of the study. The participants were in different stages of transitioning at the time of their first interview which had the potential to bias the data. For example, some participants were interviewed before classes had begun, while others had already written their first midterm. Conducting three of the interviews at the second assessment over MSN Messenger was another possible limitation of the study. While the quality of data was sufficient to access the overall transition process of these participants, it did not yield the same detail as interviews conducted face-to-face. Therefore it is plausible that there were undeveloped themes within the data.

Future Directions

Future research should focus on assessing the influence of gender on the transition process. Also, differences between team and individual based sports should be examined. Teammates were found to be a source of social support that impacted the transitional process. How then do individual athletes deal with this lack of social support? In addition, it would be useful to examine the transition processes of student athletes who participate in fall sports. Athletes who participate in fall sports experience a short athletic season that only impacts one semester. A comparison of first year student athletes from successful and non-successful teams might yield different results than this study, as the majority of the participants were selected from a highly successful team.

Several advantages and disadvantages of MSN Messenger were discussed. Three

participants chose to continue with the MSN Messenger format for the third interview. While the quality of data was not of the same standard as interviews conducted face-to-face, MSN Messenger should not be dismissed as a viable interview alternative for young populations. It has the potential to eliminate barriers that often constrain studies. For example, a researcher could sample from a more diverse, larger population as geographical location would no longer limit an individual's participation. However, based on the current study, it is recommended that researchers establish a rapport and an initial relationship with participants before conducting an interview with them on MSN Messenger. Further research is required to better understand how best to utilize this technology.

Future studies may also explore the benefits of using internet based video interviews and focus groups. This would allow the researcher to know the participant's environment, access body language, reduce participant burden (no typing), increase data density, but still allow the participant to be in another location. It is important for researchers to investigate common modes of communication that may be applied to efficiently and accurately conduct research.

Recommendations for University Administrators

Five recommendations for universities, athletic departments, and coaches to improve the success of first year student athletes both academically and athletically are a) student athlete orientation, b) student athlete mentorship programs, c) admission requirements met, d) coaching support, and e) promotion of academics within athletic departments.

First, student athlete orientation sessions for first year athletes as a part of the general orientation week would be beneficial. The sessions could clearly outline the resources available, both academically and athletically, that are provided by the university and athletic department and how to specifically access them. As demonstrated in this study, student athletes entering university had minimal knowledge of the resources that were available to them. Sessions outlining the demands of being a student athlete, the skills necessary to succeed (e.g. time management), and promoting discussion among the athletes about their experience thus far would assist in preparing them for the increased expectations of being a student athlete at the university level. This would also open up dialogue among athletes from different teams and assist in expanding the athletes' support system to individuals who are going through similar experiences.

Participants in the Giacobbi et al. (2004) and the present study both noted that older student athletes assisted them with their transition both academically and athletically. Mentorship programs developed by the athletic department could encourage these relationships and provide incoming student athletes with advice and support from their peers.

Universities should examine their policies on admitting athletes into a program of study where they do not meet the same academic criteria as non-athletes. While this may be an effective means of recruiting an athlete to play for the university, it may not be in their best interest academically. A student athlete admitted with an average below their peers may not have developed the skills necessary to be successful in the program as demands increase academically and athletically. Therefore, the academic institution may, unwittingly, be "setting up" the student athlete to be unsuccessful academically.

Coaches who work with first year university athletes should be aware of the multiple transitions occurring and how they impact the athlete. It is suggested they be approachable and provide open communication with their athletes regarding expectations and their role on the team. Student athletes often find their new coach intimidating and will not approach them if they are having difficulties. Therefore, the coach meeting with a student athlete regularly provides a context for this dialogue to occur. In addition, as demonstrated in this study, coaches who are provided with support from a sport psychologist may understand and perhaps be better able to assist athletes through their first year transition.

Athletic departments within academic institutions should promote and reward academic success. Canadian university athletic departments usually claim the philosophy that the student comes before the athlete. However, university and league policies currently allow students to compete when they are on academic probation which is not consistent with these values and sends a mixed message to the student athletes. By creating minimum academic standards (beyond registration requirements) to play, coaches and administrators in athletic departments would be forced to take an interest in their student athletes' academic progress. This would have potential to create further resources specific to the student athlete situation. Athletic departments have the opportunity to create an environment that forces student athletes to focus on school, in addition to their sport.

Summary

This qualitative study examined the multi-dimensional transition experience of first-year collegiate female athletes transitioning to a higher level of competitive sport. Eleven participants transitioned socially, academically, and athletically. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted at the beginning and half way through the academic year. Results demonstrated that the participants perceived a successful transition in social, educational, and athletic domains. However, grades collected at the end of the second semester indicated that the participants did not transition well academically.

The secondary purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of MSN Messenger as an interview medium. Eight participants chose, at the second assessment, to conduct the interview in a face-to-face manner (same as the first assessment) and three participants chose to use MSN Messenger. Advantages to using MSN Messenger included a comfortable environment for the participant, geographical barriers eliminated, flexibility in interview times, and no transcription process. Disadvantages to using MSN Messenger included reduced quality of data produced relative to face-to-face interviews, increased participant burden, lost sense of the participant's experience, distractions in the participant's environment, technological failures, and issues reporting data in a results section.

Future studies should assess the influence of gender, team versus individual based sports, fall versus full school year sports, and successful and non-successful teams. In addition, the potential to eliminate geographical barriers and therefore access a potentially diverse sample justifies further evaluation of the effectiveness of MSN Messenger and other internet based technologies as a means of data collection.

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Appendix A

Background Questionnaire

A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF SPORT TRANSITIONS IN FIRST YEAR COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

Background Questionnaire

The following questionnaire deals with issues pertaining to your background, current situation and athletic experience. Personal information collected from this questionnaire will be kept confidential and you will not be identified personally in any reports resulting from this research. Participation in completing this questionnaire is voluntary and you may refrain from answering any questions. In advance, thank you for your time and help.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Participant's Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email (most often used): _____

Please check off the response that is most appropriate or complete your response on the designated line(s).

1. What is your date of birth? (Year/Month/Day): _____
2. What is your current academic program at Wilfrid Laurier University? _____

3. How many academic courses do you plan on taking in...
 - a. First semester? _____
 - b. Second semester? _____
4. Current place of residence:
 - ☐ On-campus residence
 - ☐ Off-campus house
 - ☐ Family home (local)
 - ☐ Family home (commute)
5. Overall academic average in last year of high school: _____%
6. How many hours per week do you anticipate committing to your academic studies outside of class time:
 - ☐ Less than 10
 - ☐ 10-15
 - ☐ 15-20
 - ☐ More than 20

7. How many hours per week do you anticipate committing to sport participation:

- ☐ Less than 10
☐ 10-15
☐ 15-20
☐ More than 20

8. List all previous sport involvement over the last five years, the number of years involved, level of participation and length of time at that level of participation for each sport.

| Sport | Length of involvement | Level of participation | Time spent at Level of Participation |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| e.g., Basketball | 2001-present | Club High School | 2007-present 2006 - 2008 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

9. Why did you decide to try-out for this varsity team?

10. Do you anticipate trying out for any other teams?

☐No ☐Yes If so, which team(s)? _____

11. What do you foresee your sport involvement to be for the coming year?

12. If you had to describe yourself using only three words, what would they be?

13. Describe your current typical weekday.

14. Describe your current typical weekend.

15. How do you anticipate the following behaviours to change as a result of being in university...

a. Sleep?

b. Studying?

c. Exercise?

d. Drinking?

e. Eating?

f. Other social activities?

16. For the purposes of conducting the follow-up interviews: Are you experienced in communicating through MSN Messenger?

☐ Yes —————> Email address for your account: _____
☐ No

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Appendix B

First Assessment Interview Guide

General

To start out with, could you please describe for me what your transition has been like moving from high school to university?

Probes:

- Moving away from home?
- Having a roommate?
- Living at home while you attend university?
- Commuting?
- Meeting and connecting with new people?

Please describe for me your transition from high school athletics to university varsity athletics specifically.

Probes:

- Impact this transition has had upon your life
- How has the change in level of competition impacted you?
- Adapting to new teammates

Self

Past athletic experience

Please describe for me your past athletic involvement.

Probes:

- Highest level of sport previously competed in
- Greatest athletic achievement. Why?
- Average playing time on last team you played for
- Role on previous athletic team (ex/ leader)

Please describe the recruitment process that led you to play for this team.

Current athletic experience

Please describe for me the role you anticipate playing on your current varsity team.

Probes:

- Will this role differ from past roles you've played on teams?
- How do you hope to contribute to the team's current level of success? Future level of success?
- Anticipated average playing time this year

Identity

In your background questionnaire, you described yourself as (insert participant's 3 terms here). Why did you choose those particular terms to describe your self?

Probes:

- If meeting someone for the first time, is this how you would describe yourself to them?
- How do you think others see you? Specifically...
 - a. Peers?
 - b. Parents?
 - c. Coach?
 - d. Teachers/professors?
- How do these perceptions of what others think of you, make you feel?

Self-esteem

Please describe how being recruited to the team has impacted how you view yourself.

Self-confidence

Please describe how confident you are in your ability to adapt with the upcoming changes in your life.

Probes:

- Confidence in your ability to perform at this level of...
 - Sport
 - Education (university)
- Ability to fit in with other...
 - Teammates
 - Students
- Ability to create a good relationship with your coach and other support staff

Emotional Reactions

Please describe for me what it was like being recruited for this sports team.

Probes:

- How does it make you feel about sport now...
 - In terms of your particular sport
 - In general
- When you consider all the changes you have gone through in the past little while, how does it make you feel?

Goals

Please describe for me the personal goals you hope to achieve this season/academic year.

Probes:

- Athletically?
- Academically?

- Socially?

Situation

Coach situation

Please describe for me your current relationship with your coach.

Probe:

- Does it mirror previous relationships you've had with past coaches?
- Do you anticipate this relationship changing? Why?

Selection

Please describe for me any plans you may have for next year in relation to your sport.

Probes:

- Do you plan on continuing to play?

Support

Please describe for me your support network (general).

Probes:

- Who does it consist of?
 - Coaches?
 - Peers?
 - Parents?
 - Institution? (University)
- What types of support do they offer you? In what situations?

Social support

Please describe for me your current level of social support.

Probes:

- Do you feel that people are supporting you...
 - Academically?
 - Athletically?
 - Socially?
- Who provides this social support?

Financial support

Please describe for me any financial support you currently receive.

Probes:

- Who is the support from?
- Do you feel well-supported financially?
- Does this cause you stress?

Strategies (Stress and Coping)

Stress

What would you consider the three most stressful things about coming to university?

Probes:

- What factors do you anticipate will cause you stress this year?
- Do you feel more stressed than you did in high school? Why?

Describe for me any situations in which you commonly feel stress.

Probes:

- What causes you to be stressed?
- Do you feel stress now?

Please describe for me any sources of stress related to your sport.

Probes:

- What is stressful for you about participating at this level of sport?
- What specific team situations cause you to feel stress?
 - Do you feel stressed when practicing? (selected)
 - Do you feel stressed when playing? (selected)
 - Why do you think these situations cause you stress?

Coping

Please describe for me how you commonly react to stress.

Probes:

- What do you do?
- How do you feel?

Social Based coping

When you are feeling stressed out who do you turn to, to discuss your feelings?

Probes:

- Why? What makes this/these person/people supportive?
- Does it differ for school? Sport? In general?

Please describe for me how you cope with stressors.

Probes:

- Differ depending on type of stressor? Extent of stressor?
- Does it differ depending on whether it is a stressor related to your life in general or specifically related to sport?

Appendix C

Second Assessment Interview Guide

General

To start out with, could you please describe for me what your transition has been like moving from high school to university?

Probes:

- Moving away from home?
- Having a roommate?
- Living at home while you attend university?
- Commuting?
- Meeting and connecting with new people?

Please describe for me your transition from high school athletics to university varsity athletics specifically.

Probes:

- Impact this transition has had upon your life
- How has the change in level of competition impacted you?
- Adapting to new teammates

Self

Current athletic experience

Please describe for me the current role you play on your present varsity team.

Probes:

- Does this role differ from past roles you've played on teams?
- Do you feel you are contributing to the team's current level of success? Future level of success?
- What is your current average playing time?

Identity

You initially described yourself in your background questionnaire as (insert participant's 3 terms here). Would you describe yourself differently now? Why or why not?

Probes:

- How would you describe yourself? Why?
- How do you think others see you? Specifically...
 - e. Peers?
 - f. Parents?
 - g. Coach?
 - h. Teachers/professors?
- How do these perceptions of what others think of you, make you feel?

Do you feel you have changed at all from the beginning of the year?

Self-esteem

Reflecting back please describe how being recruited to the team has impacted how you view yourself.

Self-confidence

Please describe your confidence level in being able to cope with the changes in your life.

Probes:

- How has your confidence in your ability to perform at this level of...changed?
 - Sport
 - Education (university)
- Ability to fit in with others...
 - Teammates
 - Students
- Ability to create a good relationship with your coach and other support staff

Emotional Reactions

Reflecting back describe for me what it was like being recruited.

Probes:

- When you consider all the changes you have gone through in the past little while, how does it make you feel?

Goal Type

Please describe for me the personal goals you hope to achieve this season/academic year.

Probes:

- Athletically?
- Academically?
- Socially?

Situation*Coach situation*

Please describe for me your current relationship with your coach.

Probe:

- Does it mirror previous relationships you've had with past coaches?
- Has your relationship changed?
- Do you anticipate this relationship changing? Why?

Selection

Have your plans changed for next year in relation to your sport.

Probes:

- Do you plan on continuing to play?

Support

Please describe for me your support network (general).

Probes:

- Who does it consist of?
 - Coaches?
 - Peers?
 - Parents?
 - Institution? (University)
- What types of support do they offer you? In what situations?

Social support

Please describe for me your current level of social support.

Probes:

- Do you feel that people are supporting you...
 - Academically?
 - Athletically?
 - Socially?
- Who provides this social support?

Financial support

Please describe for me any financial support you currently receive.

Probes:

- Who is the support from?
- Do you feel well-supported financially?
- Does this cause you stress?

Strategies (Stress and Coping)

Stress

What would you consider the three most stressful things about university?

Probes:

- What factors are causing you stress this year?
- Do you feel more stressed than you did in high school? Why?

Describe for me any situations in which you commonly feel stress.

Probes:

- What causes you to be stressed?
- Do you feel stress now?

Please describe for me any stressors you experience in relation to your varsity sport experience.

Probes:

- What is stressful for you about participating at this level of sport?
- What specific team situations cause you to feel stress?
 - Do you feel stressed when practicing?
 - Do you feel stressed when playing?
 - Why do you think these situations cause you stress?

Coping

Please describe for me how you commonly react to stress.

Probes:

- What do you do?
- How do you feel?

Social Based coping

When you are feeling stressed out who do you turn to, to discuss your feelings?

Probes:

- Why? What makes this/these person/people supportive?
- Does it differ for school? Sport? In general?

Please describe for me how you cope with stressors.

Probes:

- Differ depending on type of stressor? Extent of stressor?
- Does it differ depending on whether it is a stressor related to your life in general or specifically related to sport?

Behaviours

Describe your training for me.

Probes:

- How often?
- When?

What behaviour patterns have changed as a result of being in university?

Probes:

- Sleep?
- Studying?
- Exercising?

- Drinking?
- Other social activities?