

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY

TRANSITIONS AND ADJUSTMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT-ATHLETES

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Spring 2010

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Finance with
honors in Kinesiology

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Abstract

The adjustment experiences of thirteen international student-athletes at Penn State University were examined through semi-structured qualitative interviews held with these students. Five intercollegiate head coaches with experience recruiting and coaching international student-athletes were also interviewed to gain their perspective. Theory triangulation was used to examine the data which revealed that their experience required adjustment in three areas: to new culture, to the overall college experience, and to their new athletic environment. The findings are discussed relative to current literature on international student-athletes. This study may benefit international-student athletes beginning their experience in the United States as well as coaches, teammates, and administrators whose interests are furthered by the retention and successful adjustment of these athletes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to Dr. Dave Yukelson for his time, patience, support, and invaluable insight in contribution to this effort. I offer my thanks to Dr. Steve Piazza for his valued input. I am grateful to the international student-athletes who volunteered their time and shared their experiences with me. I extend my thanks to Katie Mahoney and Maureen McMahan for their assistance on the project.

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Introduction/Background Information/Literature Review

I came to Penn State in August of 2006 to begin pre-season training as a member of Penn State's field hockey squad. Our program was always a well respected and successful one with a highly regarded strength of schedule. In addition to facing the Big Ten teams, we competed against many of the nation's field hockey powerhouses. Their team rosters were dotted with foreign players who were commonly announced as starters. Throughout my four year athletic career, I became increasingly aware of the presence of foreign athletes, not only in field hockey, but on other teams with whom I had interaction as an athlete. Although our coach had always expressed the belief that she could and should build strong teams with domestic talent, we witnessed the contributions these foreigners made to the success of their teams, many times at our expense. Other coaches looked abroad to improve the strength of their teams and offer opportunities to foreign athletes to study here. Our team was always proud of our "made in America" heritage, but I wondered what it would be like to play alongside one of these athletes. Next fall as the field hockey season begins anew, two Canadian players will join the Penn State field hockey team.

My experience competing against these athletes furthered my interest and led to my thesis topic. I wanted to learn of the personal experiences of international student-athletes as they pursue their sport on our college teams here at Happy Valley. To that end, I investigated studies and theories concerning the transitions to college by international students and domestic athletes and the literature on international student-athletes. I then conducted my own interviews of thirteen international student-athletes and five inter-collegiate coaches. My intent was to answer the following questions:

What are the academic, athletic, and social challenges they face as “strangers in a strange land?” How do they function in an environment with which they are unfamiliar and how do they adjust? What recommendations would they give to others that follow in their footsteps to optimize their college experience?

Very little has been written about the experience these athletes have in the U.S. Occasionally a human interest piece focuses on an athlete’s personal story. However the media is far more likely to cover their athletic accomplishments either on behalf of their college teams or as they reach the pinnacle of amateur sport and make headlines during Olympic competition. When we watch the PGA tour compete and see Columbian Camillo Villegas make a putt, the broadcaster may remind us that he played collegiate golf at the University of Florida. Some of these athletes do make the professional ranks and continue to compete here in the United States.

The presence of non-resident aliens (the NCAA's term for international athletes) on U.S. intercollegiate teams elicits both positive and negative discussion from a variety of audiences here in the U.S. Coaches of U.S. college teams, pressured to turn out winning seasons, look globally to recruit the most talented players from countries that excel in their sport. Coaches comment that in some cases it is easier to recruit a foreign player than a domestic one that is deciding among popular schools in the U.S.

Domestic players and fans alike hold varied opinions on the influx of internationals. Some object to the fact that international athletes are able to train and practice here, and then compete for their respective nations in the Olympic Games. Others take the position that foreign athletes are awarded playing spots that U.S. athletes could and should fill. In addition, some feel that state taxes should not fund foreign

athletic scholarships. This argument has advanced to proposed legislation by two Minnesota lawmakers, Representative Bob Dettmer and Senator Ray Vandever (Hosick, 2009).

Violations of amateur status also contribute to negative press regarding foreign athletes. Most international players compete on club teams because their countries have no high school athletics. These club teams commonly include professional athletes who can jeopardize a prospect's amateur status. Those prospects that played on a team which included professionals may face sitting out games or may be denied NCAA eligibility altogether. In addition, prospective student-athletes must give extensive proof that they have not received payment from their club teams beyond expense reimbursement. The complex NCAA guidelines for academic and amateur certification led to the NCAA taking over the process in 2007, a process previously handled at the individual schools.

A prevalent positive argument supporting the inclusion of foreign players on U.S. rosters concerns the topic of cultural diversity. Today, cultural diversity in student populations is prized and institutions of higher learning publicize culturally diverse environments integral to a complete learning experience. A quote from Penn State's Schreyer Honors College Student Handbook reads,

The SHC views diversity experiences in classroom pedagogy, in the curriculum, and in the community as essential to a quality undergraduate education and central to the college's mission. ... The SHC believes that achieving academic excellence, building a global perspective, and participating in leadership and civic engagement are impossible without valuing and understanding diversity. Undoubtedly one of the most important experiences you will have as an undergraduate is the opportunity to meet other students whose culture, life experiences, leisure activities, family background, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation are different from your own, and possibly different from that of the majority of students you have known in the past. Encountering this diversity is a tremendous opportunity for personal growth.

(Schreyer, 2010)

The value of culturally diverse experience extends to the athletic field as well. Megan Coyne, a former Florida Atlantic soccer player was very positive about her experience playing with international student athletes, "Competing with international student athletes offered me an opportunity to learn about different culture, not just personally, not just how they viewed certain things and their language, but the way they played soccer" (Hosick, 2009, p.54)

It is estimated that over 16,000 foreign student-athletes participated in college sports in the United States in 2008. In an article headlined "Division I sees unprecedented foreign influx", USA Today reported the number of Division I foreign athletes nearly tripled in an eight year span and they now account for more than 6% of all athletes in the NCAA's top tier Division I" (USA Today, Oct. 1, 2008). Even as the numbers of international student-athletes have risen dramatically over the last ten years, there exists a dearth of literature on their experiences.

Most of what is known about the unique challenges facing international student-athletes is based upon the work examining the experiences of international students and other groups of individuals spending time amidst a foreign culture. Church (1982) referred to these individuals as "sojourners". He identified language problems, adjusting to a new educational system, homesickness, adjusting to social customs and norms, and for some, discrimination, as some of the most commonly referenced issues. A number of behaviors of host nationals involving ethnocentric attitudes, cultural ignorance, the use of stereotypes, and judgmental behavior were experienced as well. These behaviors served as barriers to positive communication among members of different cultures. Confusion over slang, non-verbal body movements, posture, eye movements, gestures, and the use

of space inhibited effective communication. Fear of rejection, threats to self-esteem, and anxiety over their social encounters with host students were some of the emotions identified.

International students experience greater difficulty making new social contacts and have more restricted access to their base of support from families and friends in their home countries. Often, they form groups of fellow nationals with whom they socialize. They gravitate to those who share their culture, language, values, and belief systems. The support received from co-nationals may reduce social stress and can aid in the adjustment process by providing a much needed social network for these students. The formation of co-national groups was found to be most typical of Indians and Asians (Church, 1982; Constantine, Anderson, Caldwell, Berkel, and Utsey, 2005; Hechanova-Alampay, Beerhr, Christiansen & Van Horn, 2002).

Studies which focus on the adjustment of international students reveal a number of factors that influence success. Among these, positive social interaction with U.S. students is considered a critical factor. “The number, variety, and depth of social encounters with host nationals may be the most important yet complex variables related to sojourner adjustment” (Church, 1982, p. 551). The work of Chapdelaine and Alextich (2004) supported the rationale that through meaningful interaction with host students, international students learn and develop cultural specific social skills necessary for effective social interaction. International students experience social difficulty when they are not aware of the social rules and behaviors that are considered appropriate in the host country. Abe, Talbot, and Geelhoed (1998) tested a peer program pairing international students with domestic students and found that ongoing cross-cultural interactions

improved the international students' social skills which are deemed critical to adaptation in the campus environment.

Language proficiency and cultural distance are also major factors that impact the adjustment of international students. Students confident in their language skills were found to be more open to interaction with U.S. nationals. Gullahorn and Gullahorn noted that greater language confidence results in greater social participation, which in turn leads to improved command of the host language (as cited in Church, 1982, p. 546). Not only do students with weak English language skills have more difficulty communicating with Americans, but they fail to gain important cultural insights that come about through extensive knowledge of the language.

Cultural distance has also been identified as a key factor in the adjustment of international students as it influences levels of social interaction with host nationals. The components of cultural distance include cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors. In studies that considered cultural distance as a variable, it was found that students whose nations had the most cultural distance from the United States experienced more difficulty adjusting. Canadians and Western Europeans were found to experience greater social interaction and fewer adjustment issues while students from the Asia were least involved socially and had greater adjustment issues (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Church, 1982; Trice, 2004).

Colleges and universities have responded to the needs of international students with resources to assist them in their adjustment. Many universities utilize websites to direct these students to advising and counseling centers. They advertise social and cultural events which encourage greater social interaction and campus involvement.

University websites also offer advice to these students on acclimating to American culture. One International Student Handbook from the University of Minnesota introduces these students to American cultural values, friendship norms, appropriate dress, personal hygiene, and legal issues. It covers the symptoms of culture shock, adaptation patterns, and appropriate reactions. International student orientation programs are held regularly on campuses and many offer peer mentoring programs. Faculty and counselors are also focused on the needs of this population. Faculty are advised on how they can best assist these students in the classroom with attention to language issues, test taking, participation, and reading and writing skills. Counselors are educated to respond to the needs of students taking into account their cultural values and views.

Like the international student, the student-athlete comes to campus facing a unique set of challenges that can threaten their successful adjustment. Most obvious of the factors that set this population apart are the rigorous physical demands on an athlete's body that collegiate athletics requires. Athletes must condition regularly in addition to practice. Many suffer from fatigue associated with their training and report difficulty recovering from their physical challenges. As a result of competition and the increased conditioning demands, some will suffer injury and these injuries can also have "great psychosocial impact on those who are struggling to adjust" (Tunick, Etzel, & Leard, 1991, p.202).

The demand on a student-athlete's time is another factor that will require adjustment. Currently the NCAA guidelines permit twenty hours per week of practice time. Additional time is devoted to reviewing game tapes, travel, and competition. Wolverton estimated that athletes participating in Division I football, softball, baseball,

and golf can spend almost 45 hours per week devoted to their sport (as cited in Tull, 2009, p. 211). Often their classes are lumped into a morning time slot to accommodate to practice and conditioning. Many freshmen in Division I schools must spend 8 hours per week in mandatory study halls.

Student-athletes experience stressors related to their athletic role as they transition to college. Yukelson and Carlson (1996) examined these stressors (including those in the academic and social arenas) from a developmental perspective over the course of the college athlete's career. Initially, in the athletic realm, an athlete may need to adjust to a new role on the team and alter his or her expectations of performance. Increasing levels of competition may mean coming to terms with a transition from high school star status to "little fish in a big pond". Performance related pressures include fear of failure and inadequacy. These pressures may escalate over the course of an athlete's career with greater expectations for performance not only on the part of the athlete, but from coaches, teammates, families, and fans. Team roles also evolve over time as leadership, increased contributions, and setting an example for younger teammates are expected of older more experienced players (Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Yukelson & Carlson, 1996).

Yukelson and Carlson (1996) also noted that freshman athletes require adjustment to their teammates and coaches. New players must successfully integrate into the team, but team dynamics will remain a factor throughout the athlete's career. Despite intra-team competition for starting roles and playing time, pressure exists to create team chemistry and cohesiveness. These factors are considered so important to team success that formal team building exercises are now common in the experience of student-athletes. These programs focus on the development of task cohesion, a commitment to

common team goals and objectives, as well as efforts to create synergistic teamwork and collaboration. Social cohesion is another goal of such programs as harmonious relationships, open and honest communication, and social support contribute to a team atmosphere that is more conducive to goal attainment (Yukelson, 1997).

The role of the coach in the college athlete's experience cannot be understated. Duda's work indicated that a coach's interpersonal style and behavior are linked to an athlete's psychological, emotional, and physical reaction to their overall athletic experience (as cited in Kissinger & Watson, 2009, p.103). Many athletes base their choice of school on the coach's philosophy, commitment to the program, and the relationship that was developed with the coach during recruitment. Coaches make an effort to establish personal relationships with recruits, but once on campus, the athlete may find that this relationship has changed. Adler and Adler (1991) witnessed the change in a basketball coach during the course of the season that began with the coach's serious attention to his athletes' personal welfare including school performance, social lives, and their adjustment to college. Over the course of the season, the pressure to win mounted and all else became peripheral. The athletes saw this change in their coach and felt the added pressure. Coaches wield tremendous power over their athletes and their expectations and behavior may, at times, constitute emotional abuse (Deaner, 2009).

Student-athletes are also faced with the challenge of balancing academic success and athletic demands. Time constrained and physically fatigued, some struggle to maintain academic eligibility or face loss of playing time, eligibility, or their scholarships (Wolcott & Gore-Mann, 2009). As time progresses, academic related stressors can escalate. Typically in the sophomore year, a student must choose a major and in the

junior year, the future may loom larger as students compete for summer internships and pay more attention to career choices. In senior year the athlete experiences the stressors of completing coursework required for graduation, interviewing for jobs, or applying to graduate school while attempting to finish out their career on a high note (Yukelson and Carlson, 1996).

The adjustment of student-athletes to college has been widely studied. The demands and issues facing student-athletes have been well documented and institutions have responded with the adoption of formal programs and specialized personnel to meet these needs. Sanders, Gardner, and Jones (2009) suggested that improving retention rates motivate many of these efforts. Institutions typically retain academic advisors specifically charged with the responsibility of providing student-athletes assistance with course selection, choice of major, and the monitoring eligibility status. Student-athletes are often provided tutors to assist with course work. Life skills classes which focus on the athlete's personal choices, eligibility, academic planning, study techniques, and time management are often mandatory for student-athletes.

A final note on the experience of student-athletes concerns the concept of athletic isolation. Beginning with their arrival on campus, the student-athlete is immersed in team activity. They are housed with their teammates, often share meals, and socialize with their teammates. The amount of time spent pursuing their sport leaves these athletes little opportunity to socialize with other than team members or to engage in other student organizations and other extracurricular activities which may better assist them in preparing for the future (Tull, 2009). Even the programs designed to help them deal with

the combined demands of athletics and academics segregate these students from the rest of the student population.

As expected, literature focusing on the adjustment issues facing international student-athletes does include many of the challenges facing international students. Included are the difficulties establishing social relationships, language difficulties, isolating behaviors, cultural distance, coaching styles, adjustment to American cuisine, learning styles and engagement styles in the classroom (Kissinger, 2009), relationships with teammates and coaches, new training methods and climate (Bale, 1991).

Bale (1991) explored foreign student-athletes' motivations for coming to the United States. He found that international students were interested in better training facilities, better coaching, and greater depth of competition, education, scholarships, American culture, and climate. In later work, Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, and Hardin, (2008) found that the primary reason foreign athletes come to the U.S. was for the opportunity to obtain a degree and at the same time, to continue play their sport at a high level. Other motivations included the opportunity to experience a new culture, learn the English language, and "grow up" or become more mature.

Although the experience of international student-athletes has much in common with that of domestic athletes and international students, there are important differences. It has been discussed that lack of socialization with American students can negatively impact the adaptation of international students. For international student-athletes, teammates, coaches, and other athletic department personnel represent an immediate source of socialization which may ease their adjustment. This peer subculture plays an

important role in the adaptation process described by Bale (1991). He includes four aspects of this process which included:

- Cultural Adjustment; feeling “at home”, socially interacting with the host group
- Identification; formal membership of a group, a feeling of belonging
- Cultural Competence; acquiring new cultural knowledge and skills
- Role Acculturation; active use of the host language, the desire to conform to culturally defined modes of behavior

The peer subculture fosters a sense of belonging, provides a source of social interaction, and assists the athletes in improving their language skills and acquiring new cultural knowledge (Bale, 1991).

International athletes also differ from their domestic counterparts in the way they have developed their skills prior to the university experience. Domestic athletes have learned their sport primarily in the high school arena, one that does not exist in foreign countries. International athletes play elite sport in club-based systems in their home countries. Popp (2009) considered this factor in explaining the different perspective on the purpose of sport participation found between the two groups. He found that domestic athletes considered sport to be more about competition than international student-athletes. He theorized that the difference might be attributable to the fact that for many domestic athletes, college competition is the final opportunity for elite sport competition while in foreign countries the club-based system allows for elite competition well beyond the college years. A second theory of justification for the difference is that domestic athletes are raised in a system that values competition. Sport systems from other countries emphasize participation and health benefits.

Kissinger (2009) discussed several adjustment issues facing international student athletes as mentioned above. He pointed out that although adjusting to American cuisine is an issue that all international students may encounter, it is a more important one for international student-athletes. Proper nutritional levels for these athletes are necessary to support their athletic demands. He also urged attention to potential isolating behaviors among this population due to factors discussed previously that affect international students. These included the communication barriers of language and cultural distance. These issues may also impact the students' ability to effectively articulate their concerns. In the athletic realm, Kissinger (2009) noted that cultural differences may bring an added dimension to the adjustment to new coaching styles that all student-athletes may face. The leadership styles and focus on personal relationships may differ between domestic and international coaches. In addition, he suggested that the athletic department could be an important resource assisting in the transition for these athletes, working in conjunction with the multicultural offices to ensure that the international student-athletes meet other students from their home countries and in the surrounding community which might facilitate their adjustment. Kissinger (2009) also furthered the argument of other researchers that the issues faced by international students are generally attributed to adjustment issues, rather than real or perceived biases in American culture.

One of the first studies to examine international student-athlete adjustment was that of Ridinger and Pastore (2000a). Their study utilized the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire developed by Baker and Siryk (1989). This tool provides a score for respondents in four areas: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment. The study examined how well

international student-athletes adjusted in comparison to domestic student-athletes and the rest of the student body which included international students. The results of the study indicated that the international student-athletes were the most well adjusted group based on their highest mean scores in the categories of academic and overall adjustment to college. The international students were the least well adjusted and the researchers reasoned that the disparity may have been due to differences in cultural distance. The international student-athletes were primarily from North America or Europe and the international students were primarily from Asia. In addition, the international student-athletes scored higher on the social adjustment score than the non-athlete internationals. This difference was attributed to the strong social bonds with teammates that may facilitate adjustment for the international student-athletes. The researchers acknowledged the relatively low number of international student-athletes involved in the study and on this basis, urged caution in interpreting the results. In addition, they recommended the development of a survey tool that would more accurately reflect athlete adjustment including factors such as adjustments to coaches, teammates, workouts, competition, media exposure, and team travel as well as university life (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000a).

Ridinger and Pastore (2000b) also developed a framework of factors associated with international student-athlete adjustment. Four dimensions of the international student-athlete are predictors of adjustment: the personal, interpersonal, perceptual, and cultural distance. The personal dimension deals with the athlete's self-assuredness and technical competencies, both academic and athletic. Language proficiency is considered one of the technical competencies. The interpersonal dimension concerns the athlete's ability to interact effectively with coaches, teammates, members of the athletic

department, faculty and administration. The perceptual dimension pertains to the athlete's views of the university and athletic environment with realistic expectations being the goal. The culture distance dimension refers how different the international student-athlete's home culture is compared to U.S. culture. These factors are inputs to the five areas of adjustment in the model: academic, social, athletic, personal-emotional, institutional attachment. The outcomes in the model, defining successful adjustment, are satisfaction and performance in both the athletic and academic realms.

Coaches and the Recruiting of International Student-Athletes

“Coaches view recruiting foreign student-athletes as an expedient way of maintaining or in some cases, creating a winning team” (Bale, 1991, p.122).

Although this quote was written almost twenty years ago, it is still the case today.

Coaches are obliged to recruit the best available athletes to strengthen their programs and may be pressured to do so by athletic directors. Especially at the Division I level, a winning team generates funds for the university but can also result in increased interest in admission to the school (Sanders, Gardner, & Jones, 2009).

What has changed in recent years is the ease of recruiting foreign players. Some coaches will still travel overseas to recruit, but now have other options. Other coaches use scouting services and the Internet has allowed instant communication with international recruits. In addition, sports academies located in the U.S. offer foreign students the opportunity to gain a high school diploma, acclimate to the culture, and train in their sport. Coaches look to these academies as recruiting sources (Wilson & Wolverton, 2008).

Coaches claim that the elite talent pool of domestic athletes does not support the need. Many coaches whose programs cannot attract the best players due to competition with more popular programs, look to foreign talent to fill their needs. In some sports the most talented domestic players are turning professional right after completing high school and thus are lost to the university coaching staffs. Not all coaches support the recruitment of foreign athletes or the extent to which some teams incorporate them. Some, coaching in state institutions disagree with spending taxpayer monies to fund foreign athletic scholarships (Wilson & Wolverson, 2008).

Adding to the ease of recruiting is the fact that international athletes are eager to play in the U.S. Many have no options for college in their home countries and in coming to the U.S., they are able to obtain a degree and continue to play their sport. Among coaches, the perceptions of international athletes are that they are better skilled, work hard, are focused, and have a greater appreciation for the opportunity to compete (Kissinger, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

This study was undertaken to further the knowledge on the experiences of international student-athletes. Specifically the study sought to identify the challenges and issues related to academic, athletic and social adjustment. Efforts were made as well as to reveal their means of adjustment; who and what facilitated their adjustment.

Methodology

Qualitative interviews were conducted with thirteen international student-athletes and five coaches by this researcher.

Researcher Background and Bias

As a former student-athlete at Penn State, my experience adjusting to college and the athletic environment may have had much in common with those of the interviewees. As I interpreted the data, I may have been more focused on the differences that this population experienced and less inclined to identify shared issues.

The primary researcher is currently completing a degree in Finance. One Penn State graduate student is pursuing a Master's degree in Higher Education, and has completed an undergraduate Bachelor's Secondary Education degree in English. The other Penn State graduate student is pursuing a Masters degree in College Student Affairs, and has completed an undergraduate Bachelor's Secondary Education degree in Biology.

Participants: International Student-Athletes

Thirteen international student-athletes attending Penn State University's main campus participated in the study. Potential participants were identified using team rosters on the university's athletic web-site which included the athlete's country of origin. Six of the participants spent time in the United States prior to their arrival at Penn State. Two were transfer students, one from a college in New Jersey, and the other from a junior college in Nebraska. Two other students attended high school at boarding schools in

Florida; another attended high school in Missouri. One student spent time in the U.S. previously, returned to her native country and came back to the U.S. to attend college.

Table 1: Participants: International Student-Athletes

Sport	Year
Women's Golf	Freshman
Women's Lacrosse	Freshman
Men's Tennis	Junior
Men's Track	Senior
Men's Volleyball	Junior
Men's Soccer	Senior
Men's Tennis	Freshman
Women's Soccer	Sophomore
Women's Fencing	Senior
Women's Golf	Junior
Women's Golf	Freshman
Women's Tennis	Sophomore
Women's Volleyball	Junior

Participants: Coaches

Five intercollegiate head coaches at Penn State University's main campus participated in the study. Coaches were selected based on the inclusion of international students in their programs. The chart below includes the teams and the current number of international student-athletes on their rosters. All of the coaches may have coached international student-athletes who have since graduated or left their programs.

Table 2: Participants: Coaches

Sport	Number of ISAs on Roster
Women's Golf	3
Women's Tennis	4
Women's Soccer	4
Men's Volleyball	3
Men's Soccer	3

*ISAs – International Student-Athletes

Participant Solicitation

The international student-athletes were initially invited to participate in the study via email. Coaches were contacted via telephone. Positive responses to the invitation were followed up with email or via phone to establish meeting times, dates and locations. (Appendix A)

Interview Construct

An attempt was made to construct the interview for the international student-athletes to elicit responses in the following categories: background information, barriers to adjustment, adjustment facilitators, team chemistry, coaching styles and advice to other international student-athletes. The coaches' interviews focused on recruiting practices, adjustment support for the international student-athletes and advice to others regarding their experience with international student athletes. (Appendix B)

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct this study was granted by Penn State's IRB. Participants gave informed consent and agreed to audio recording of their interviews. (Appendix B)

Data Analysis: International Student-Athletes

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by this researcher. To ensure validity of the data two Penn State graduate students were enlisted to independently analyze the data. Copies of the transcriptions were distributed. Each researcher utilized their own approach to the data.

The primary researcher re-read each of the interviews and prepared a separate document for each which identified important points made. These documents were used to identify potential higher order themes. The researcher then returned to the original interviews to extract raw data themes and categorized them based on topic consistency to identify first order themes. First Order themes were then grouped into Second Order themes and Second Order themes grouped into the General Dimension categories. A data theme chart was prepared to facilitate conceptualizing the relationships.

The second researcher read the interviews to gain an initial perspective regarding the data. Using the original interviews, the researcher extracted raw data themes unique to the experience of an international student-athlete, as well as themes that all student-athletes might experience due to the unique nature of this group. Patterns in cultural views (both views of American culture and views of Sports culture), patterns in how students adjusted (with the help of teammates, etc.) and the quality of students' adjustment (i.e. mostly positive or mostly negative) were identified.

The third researcher read the interviews to gain an initial perspective regarding the data. Using the original interviews, the researcher identified recurring topics. The topics were then narrowed down to three main categories. The researcher identified areas in the original interviews pertaining to the three categories. Returning to the original interviews, the researcher extracted quotes pertaining to the three categories and further identified the nature of the quotes with a sub-category description.

Data Analysis: Coaches

The primary researcher re-read each of the interviews and prepared a separate document for each which identified important points made. These documents were then compiled into a single document which provided the categories covered in the discussion section.

Data Validity

Theory triangulation, (the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data), was used to interpret the interviews of the international student-athletes (Guion, 2002). Triangular consensus was used to validate the final selection of first order, second order and general dimension themes and categories.

Table 3: Data Theme Relationship Chart

Motives for Coming to the U.S.
Choice of School

Language Barriers
Language Confusion/Slang
Who/What helped adjust

Language Barriers

Adjusting to New Culture

Cultural Differences
Social Norms
Partying Themes
Feelings about Cultural Differences
American Reactions to Cultural Differences

Cultural Differences

Who/What they missed
Coping
Staying Connected with Family Members

Missed Most

Managing Multiple Demands
Initial Reactions to College Adjustment
Coach Support for Initial Adjustment
Teammate Support for Initial Adjustment

Initial Transitions

Adjusting to College

Academic Adjustment
Feelings about the Adjustment
Assistance

Academics

Training and Physical Demands
Team Roles
Skills Match Up

Organizational Standards/Expectations

Playing Style Differences
Team vs. Individual Mentality

Playing Style/Synergy

Athletic Adjustments

Coaching Style Differences

Coaching Style

Ongoing Team Socialization
Positive Team Cohesion
Negative Team Cohesion

Team Cohesion/Interpersonal Relations

Strategies for Adjustment
Advice

Best Practices

Reflections/Best Practices

Results

Content analysis of the interviews revealed that the international student-athletes adjusted in three major areas; to new culture, to the overall college experience, and their new athletic environment. These areas are identified as the General Dimensions. The raw data themes pertaining to the adjustment in each of the General Dimensions are grouped into like categories which comprise the First Order Categories. First Order categories coalesced into Second Order Categories.

Table 3, The Data Theme Relationship Chart illustrates the First Order, Second Order, and General Dimensions identified and their relationships. Within the general dimension of Cultural Adjustment, Second Order categories relate to their adjustment to the language and culture. Their adjustment to language included the First order categories of language barriers, language confusion, and what facilitated their adjustment. Their adjustment to culture included their identification of the differences of American culture including reactions to the use of alcohol inherent in the college campus culture. Included were differences in social norms, and their reported feelings in regard to these adjustments. These categories represented First Order themes as well.

Within the general dimension of College Adjustment the Second Order category of Missed Most included the First Order themes related to who and what they missed from home, and their reactions, including their feelings, coping strategies, and efforts to stay in contact with those at home. This General Dimension also included their initial transitions to college and their academic adjustment (identified as Second Order categories). Their initial transitions included the first order themes of adjustments to living on their own, related reactions, and the support of coaches and teammates in this

process. First Order themes pertaining to their academic adjustment included the challenges met, reactions, and assistance received.

The General Dimension of Athletic Adjustment included First Order themes of adjusting to new training methods, skill levels, and the increased physical demands of their programs, all included in the Second Order category of Organizational Standards and Expectations. The Second Order category of Playing Styles/Synergy includes the first order categories of playing styles and the adjustment to team mentality. Differences in coaching styles represent both First and Second Order categories. Ongoing team socialization and positive and negative team cohesion comprise the Second Order category of Team Cohesion/Interpersonal Relationships.

Table 3, The Data Theme Relationship Chart illustrates the First Order, Second Order, and General Dimensions identified and their relationships. Table 4 includes the raw data themes corresponding to the participants' motives for coming to the U.S. and their choice of school. Tables 5-8 represent the General Dimensions as described above.

The number of participants that responded in a First Order theme category is noted at the top of each grouping of raw data themes. Within each First Order category, if a sub-category theme emerged, (e.g., positive or negative reactions), the number of responses to that subcategory theme was examined for frequency and noted in the First Order column. A category was identified as general if voiced by 9-13 participants, typical if voiced by 5-8 participants, and variant if viewed by 1-4 participants.

It should be noted that the number of responses to a theme (placed in the First Order column) will not necessarily combine to equal the total number of participants that responded. A number of situations can result in this outcome:

1. A participant could have more than one response in a First Order category
2. A participant could have responded in multiple subcategories with in the First Order category
3. Redundant responses were removed.

Of note also is that throughout the results and discussion, in effort to protect the identities of the participants, world regions, rather than the country of origin was used when this information was needed to make a point. The exception to this case was in reference to Australia, as a number of the international student-athletes were from Australia and this is also commonly referred to a world region.

Table 4: Motives/Choice of School

Raw Data	General Dimension
<p>n=10 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Can go to school and play lacrosse Going to a university and the opportunity to play soccer One of my options was to go play college tennis over here Studies and volleyball team here has a solid program In my country, I didn't have a bright future; more choices here; can study and play tennis Can go overseas, and get a degree while playing golf, in case golf doesn't work out Track and Field is a minority sport back home- able to get something out of what I was doing Coaches asked me to come on a recruiting trip Coaches contacted me Coaches contacted my coach at Junior College Wanted to go somewhere if I could get a full scholarship Wanted to learn English I can come and be over here for a low cost</p>	<p>Motives for Coming to the U.S.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">n=7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">n=3</p>
<p>n=6 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Coach approached me with respect, I liked what he said Coaches thought I was a good fit for the program Coach recruited me when I was 14; knew since then I was going to go to Penn State Coach was really nice on recruiting trip Felt I could definitely contribute to building a team Everyone recommended PSU, its tradition and reputation Was a good compromise between athletics and academics Name of school is well-recognized in Europe Penn State is known for being one of the best schools, sports wise and academically Teammates from my club team went here, told me this</p>	<p>Choice of School</p> <p style="text-align: center;">n=3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">n=3</p>

<p>N=5 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>People helped me with the different words My coaches spoke my native language to me at first Friends took me under their wing Talking a lot to people and friends helped English got better- having friends who correct you Talking to my roommates gave me more confidence Asked roommates questions when didn't understand Watched the Disney channel, helped to understand</p>	<p>Who/What Helped Adjust n=5</p>	<p>Language Barriers</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>
<p>N=13 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>My people are happy, get along well with people, and are talkative People do everything really fast- don't take time during the day. Laid-back here – think it's because of the college culture My Australia has a real drinking culture, like to go home and have a beer People are more strict, afraid to get in trouble with the law, narrow-minded Europe more liberal on certain things Australians are more laid-back in the way they approach things -not as uptight and worried Clothing wise- a college thing, would never catch me at home looking like this– hair messed up, no make-up, in sweats- I feel like a bum Outdoorsy lifestyle- Australians spend more time outdoors Main thing I've noticed is how the people are different People are nicer, go out of their way to be nice, smile and open the door People do not try to cover it up if don't like someone More gossip here, more talking behind people's backs I say things to their faces, causes problems, hard for people to accept In my country- when meet someone, we shake hands, we kiss, and hug, when I got here, I did the same thing– people would freak out- I realized I should stop doing that- was something normal in my country People in the States are so quiet before class here- at home people are yelling across the room and talking In my country-when see someone for the first time and then see them again- say hi and try to establish a friendship- here, I have seen people many times and don't even say hi to them People in Asia are humble, polite, aren't strict. Here people say what's on their mind- if they want something, they will say it. The way people think, what's important to them is really different People in America have different mindsets and views on different issues You wouldn't prioritize your life based on jobs Being close to and supporting your family is first priority in my country People think differently American people are more relaxed and Asian people are more serious Americans are really patriotic- love their country a lot- they feel everything is the best here People are bit cockier here The food is different- I struggled with a lot of weight gain and still do Seen American culture in movies and TV- all in English First year was so hard- was using body language with everyone Many different nationalities here</p>	<p>Cultural Differences n=13 Lifestyle</p> <p>Interactions</p> <p>Attitudes</p> <p>Other</p>	<p>Cultural Differences</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>
<p>n=2 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>People are very huggy, feely, and touchy</p>	<p>Social Norms n=2</p>	<p>Cultural Differences</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>

<p>Personal space wise, my people are closer to each other I was invading people's space when talking to them In my country- when meet someone, we shake hands, we kiss, and hug, when I got here, I did the same thing- people would freak out- I realized I should stop doing that- was something normal in my country We use a lot of body language-moving our arms, talk in a loud voice at home People here are more quiet and don't use a lot of body language</p>			
<p>n=7 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>The drinking age back home is 18 Know I can't perform as well if I go out It's so weird that I have to pretend or can't go out I was shocked, as if I was doing something wrong drinking Australia has a real drinking culture; like to finish my day with a beer Alcohol is a common thing; everyone looks at it as a taboo Here not attracted to the bars at all; people getting hammered; hurting themselves People have fun in different ways- more immature here I want a different experience- socializing, talking about life, school, work Being in the gym all the time kept me from the stupid things people do in college The way people have fun here is not the way in which I have fun Here, fun means getting drunk I like to dance and talk to my friends and drink some too Socially, never seen so many parties before Partying- it's not the way we try to have fun</p>	<p>Partying Themes</p> <p>n=4</p> <p>n=4</p>	<p>Cultural Differences</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>
<p>n=13 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Wish teammates more accepting/sensitive to cultural differences No one can relate because I'm not from here, different habits At home, I don't have to try to fit in Don't feel like belong because international Times when you feel like you don't really fit in Times when people don't understand that you are coming from a different culture You look differently than other people, feel like there is a barrier Trying to open up was hard- Americans are a lot more outgoing Hard to make friends Trying to adapt but still staying true to what I believe Adapt some things, embrace new ways but don't lose your culture Cool to share differences Learn a different culture and meet new people Common ground of a sport Advantage being Australian, people find it a novelty thing Freshman from Poland had same views, was nice Always more comfortable with my Asian friends</p>	<p>Feelings about Cultural Differences</p> <p>n=7</p> <p>n=2</p> <p>n=2</p> <p>n=2</p>	<p>Cultural Differences</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>
<p>n=12 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>People always asked questions Asked what I eat, and do back home, how the city is People took an interest- more surface stuff Asked about school system, what I eat, how I hang out They asked questions but felt no need to learn about my culture Asked questions, but rarely in a serious sense Don't think made an attempt to understand the culture Team views internationals as a positive/Adds cultural</p>	<p>American Reactions to Cultural Differences</p> <p>n=9</p> <p>n=3</p> <p>n=2</p>	<p>Cultural Differences</p>	<p>Adjusting to New Culture</p>

experience to the team Team willing to learn and see different points of view Didn't really asked questions Think they like the country, are eager to learn about it View Australia as a joke, public portrayal in American media Sad for them being ignorant and not wanting to understand what I felt			
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Table 5: Adjusting to New Culture

Language

The participants generally reported issues in regard to their language skills, initially. Seven reported difficulty in being understood or holding conversation. They found it necessary to repeat what they said or to speak more slowly. Two of the participants reported feeling self conscious and one of these, shame, regarding their language skills initially. The coaches concurred that they found some of the athletes to be insecure about their language and quiet around the team as a result. Another coach added that the students struggle with the language piece. Another added that he felt the biggest problem was their ability to learn the lecture and street language.

Language Confusion

Six participants reported language confusion as a result of the use of slang or different words for the same item in their frame of reference (e.g. a sweatshirt is a jumper, sneakers are runners). One participant noted that he might not understand jokes, quotes from TV shows, and movie references the first time he heard them. Two of the coaches spoke of avoiding slang and colloquialisms as well as phrases ingrained in American culture when speaking to the students to avoid misunderstandings. One coach said he took care to ensure that these students understood what he was saying when relaying concepts during practice.

Who/What Helped

Five participants reported that talking with their friends, roommates, and teammates and being corrected by them led to an improvement in their English. One participant relayed that she watched the Disney channel, which helped her to better understand the language. One coach offered that attending the NCAA Summer Bridge program helps the students with their English skills and another added that within 3-5 weeks of being immersed in the language, their English improved greatly. One participant shared that her coaches spoke to her in her native language initially to ease her transition.

Cultural Differences

All of the participants discussed some aspect of American culture to which they were unaccustomed. Much of what the athletes identified as cultural differences involved contrasting lifestyles, interactions, and attitudes from those in their home countries. From a Middle Eastern point of view, Americans were considered to be polite to one's face, but gossiped behind people's backs whereas people from the Middle East didn't hide their feelings about people and were more direct. However, from the Asian point of view, Americans said what was on their minds whereas the Asians were more polite and humble. According to one European, Americans were considered more "narrow minded" and strict vs. the "more liberal" Europeans whereas the Asian student viewed American culture as more relaxed.

One student pointed out that in the some South American cultures, if one were to meet a person more than once, the two would begin to establish a relationship. In America, one can run into someone multiple times and not exchange a greeting. This

student also described South Americans as louder and more demonstrative. Another described his countrymen as happy and talkative. Americans were considered cockier by one participant and their patriotic behavior was noted by another.

One participant mentioned that his culture was much more “outdoorsy” and more “laid back” than American culture. Another described the pace of life in the U.S. as very hurried here and that no one takes time to pause throughout the day to relax. One student commented that the college environment was more relaxed and that dressing down (wearing sweats) and being out without makeup would never be acceptable in her home country. One participant referenced different values and related that one would never “prioritize their life based upon jobs” and that moving away from one’s family for employment would not be considered in her culture.

Two participants keyed on differences in social norms that they encountered. One participant observed that her countrymen were more “huggy, feely, and touchy” than Americans and that personal space was viewed differently as well. She clearly felt that she was invading others’ personal space as she interacted with others here, initially. Another participant related that she was “freaking out” people as she greeted them with hugs and kisses here until she realized that the behavior was not appropriate here.

The coaches added that they have observed that these athletes often struggle with the food choices available here, especially with what to have for breakfast . Another coach added that the South American athletes are accustomed to eating late at night.

Partying Themes

A common theme typically mentioned as culture was discussed was the use of alcohol on the university's campus. Four of the participants discussed the fact that the drinking age in their countries was 18 and that they had to adjust to the fact that they were "doing something wrong" here when drinking. However, an equally common reaction was a negative response to the alcohol abuse at parties on campus. They reacted negatively to "getting hammered", and "passing out". Two participants noted that they preferred more mature socialization; dancing, conversing, and some drinking. An Asian student stated that parties are not the way they have fun in his country.

Feelings about Cultural Differences

In regard to their adjustment to the cultural differences they encountered, all of the participants responded. Typically the reactions were negative. Seven had difficulty fitting in, never felt at home, always felt different. Two expressed a need to balance fitting in with staying true to their own cultural ways and beliefs. One participant commented that she wished her teammates were more accepting and sensitive to the cultural differences. Only an Asian student mentioned that he felt a barrier due to the fact that he looked different from others and that he always felt more comfortable among his Asian friends. Two expressed that it was difficult to make friends, one adding that Americans are more outgoing. One student sought a relationship with another teammate who shared her same views. Two students reacted favorably to the differences encountered, noting the opportunity to learn a new culture and the other reporting that he "slipped into culture quickly".

American Reactions to Cultural Differences

Commenting upon the American reactions to the cultural differences, the responses were again mixed, with twelve participants responding. Generally students mentioned that the Americans asked questions about their culture, but three added that this was not a real attempt to learn about their culture. Two students related that their teammates viewed the presence of internationals as a positive and that they were eager to learn of the culture. Another participant was offended by the portrayal of her culture in the media and felt that Americans viewed Australia as “stupid and a joke”.

Adjusting to College

Table 6: Adjusting to College

Raw Data	1st Order	2nd Order	General Dimension
<p>n=13 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Miss the weather, food, and being around family and friends Miss close support base Missing family is number one Miss family, friends, and lifestyle- more laid-back, not so hectic and busy Misses lifestyle in Europe - more relaxed Miss feeling a part of the culture and feeling like I belonged Miss the beach, sun, food, ocean, my brother Around six to eight weeks, novelty is gone, homesickness starts More homesick now than at first, because everything was new and exciting Once a month, have a day where get a little homesick Food was major problem; didn't get used to the food for a while I was lonely though</p>	<p>Who/What They Missed n=9</p> <p>n=3</p>	<p>Missed Most</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>
<p>n=8 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>If homesick, almost better not to talk to home – I deal with it myself If homesick- keep busy and you don't think about it as much When around people, you forget missing family Sleep- wake up feeling better Think as if you have a return ticket home anytime you want to leave Think of stay as a holiday- knowing I wasn't stuck here I think anyone in my position would do as well as I am because you just have to- it's like a survival instinct I listen to music from home and go on websites from home when homesick Closer to my friends here than ever was back home -have to share a lot more</p>	<p>Coping n=5</p> <p>n=3</p>	<p>Missed Most</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>
<p>n=13 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>I Skype a lot</p>	<p>Staying Connected with Family Members n=11</p>	<p>Missed Most</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>

<p>Teammates were all very nice to me One key thing was establishing relationships Stayed with a senior for 10 days when first got here Going out and practicing filled the emptiness of missing home Getting to know everyone on the team- we are a band of brothers In general, teammates were helpful and supportive Always invited to me to do things with them Calling and seeing if I wanted to go out- basic things like having lunch Our team is so close- it definitely helped me out Everyday interaction, talking, laughing- makes you feel more comfortable Helped move me into dorms Teammates always telling me to come hang out Being part of a team helped a lot Everyone was super open and welcoming In beginning, was with teammates- didn't feel alone Teammates welcoming, very helpful and supportive</p>	<p>for Initial Adjustment n=13</p>	<p>Transitions</p>	
<p>n=10 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Coaches were very welcoming At first, they were very personable – did not act like coaches Coaches made me comfortable, said not to be afraid to go to them to talk The first night I was here, the coach let me stay at her house Coaches definitely made a big difference before my teammates came In the beginning, coaches very helpful, you know they care for you Coaches always asked me how they could help, how I was doing, how classes were, if had any troubles, what I needed Coach here cares more about everything- academics, your life, not just tennis Coach took me around- showed me the golf course Coach drove me to senior's house on first day so she could show me around They made me feel at home, took father role for a little so I would adjust Coach took more care for me, more of a mother figure, because my parents far away It's a very family-oriented coaching staff, a big factor in helping the transition Like your friend and your coach, could call with a problem Relationship with coach has really developed over last 3-4 months</p>	<p>Coach Support for Initial Adjustment n=6</p> <p>n=2</p>	<p>Initial Transitions</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>
<p>n=7- Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Hard to understand what teachers were saying/take notes as fast Making sure I was doing the right assignments Must physically go to class, classes attendance-based Had to get used to the way classes are done Coming to college- thought would be easier/work load challenging Exams are scantron- used to essay exams instead Challenge getting in routine of studying Need communication skills with professors Academics are different- class sizes are huge</p>	<p>Academic Adjustment n=7</p>	<p>Academics</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>
<p>n=4 - Total # of participants that responded</p> <p>Overwhelmed with academics, making friends, and sports</p>	<p>Feelings about Academic Adjustment n=4</p>	<p>Academics</p>	<p>Adjusting to College</p>

You're tired and still have to study Didn't have school work with tennis before Biggest difficulty balancing academics, sports, and social life Balancing sports and academics hard For any freshman, you seem lost I think			
n=8- Total # of participants that responded Teammates helped with homework, proofread papers, typed assignments Teammates and upperclassmen advised academic issues Asked a lot of questions of teammates Teammates showed campus, told me classes to take Teammates took on mentor role Teammates told me where to study, how to schedule classes, and to get plenty of sleep Advisor helped with picking major and classes Tell every professor you are international Study hall helped with routine Biggest change was time management Tutors, BBH class, and academic advisors all helped	Assistance n=6 n=5	Academics	Adjusting to College

Table 6: Adjusting to College

Who/What They Missed

Nine participants reported missing their family. Others missed the lifestyle at home, the climate, the food, the ocean and sun. One participant said she missed feeling like she belonged. Two participants reported that their homesickness worsened after the novelty of their experience had waned and one noted that once a month she has a day when she really is really homesick.

Coping

The need to deal with homesickness as part of their adjustment process was typically reported by the participants. Two participants utilized coping behaviors that included looking at their cultural sojourn as a temporary experience that they could end at any time or gaining a perspective on the experience. Five others kept busy, socialized with friends and teammates, or slept to avoid their feelings. One student called on her characteristics as an athlete, her desire to succeed and her survival instinct to overcome her emotions. Two others mentioned dealing with their feelings on their own so as not to

burden their families with their feelings. A number of the coaches mentioned that homesickness is an issue to which they are more sensitive to in this group. One coach added that this is more of a problem due to the fact that these players often come from very close-knit families.

Staying Connected with Family Members

Communicating regularly with family and friends back home was reported by all of the participants. The most common means, cited by eleven of the athletes, was the use of Skype which allowed them to see their families. Six of the interviewees talked with their families on a regular basis, but time differences made this difficult in many cases. A number spoke about being unable to contact their families any time they feel the need. Communicating with friends and family via Facebook was mentioned by four of the participants. Two reported that the need to speak with their families as often has diminished over time.

Managing Multiple Demands

The participants typically reported adjusting to their independence and managing on their own as issues when first arriving in the U.S. Two participants noted the stress of dealing with the newly acquired responsibilities of living on their own. The duties included the management of their phone, bank, finances, and taking care of housing and food. They mentioned the challenge of having to deal with these responsibilities all at once and how these were things that their parents had always taken care of for them.

Initial Reactions to College Adjustment

Generally the participants relayed feelings associated with their adjustment to the college experience. Six of the participants responded with feeling lost or overwhelmed with the number of changes and the amount of information they needed to process. One participant referenced starting over and having to make new friends; another added that she was in season her first semester and the experience was “a little shock to the system”. Four participants expressed that they wished they had known more about what to expect in regard to academics, university life and their sport schedule. For instance, one participant wasn’t aware that there would be morning practices.

Coaches’ Support for Initial Adjustment

The participants generally felt that their coaches provided positive support in their initial adjustment. Six participants described their coaches as open, personable, helpful, supportive, and welcoming. Many recalled how their coaches would continuously check in, inquire about their adjustment, and offer their support if they needed anything. Two athletes recalled how their coaches took on parental roles initially, which allowed them to feel more comfortable. Another stayed at her coach’s house the first night she arrived because her teammates had not yet arrived to campus. One participant remembers that her coach dropped her off at a senior’s house when she first arrived so that she could begin acclimating with the team.

The coaches interviewed in this study did pay closer attention to these athletes initially. One coach commented that he roomed his foreign players with domestic athletes whose parents would visit often. He paired players that would play with each other to

avoid conflicts over playing time. The coaches pointed the students to all of the formal resources available on campus. They also asked the upperclassmen to play closer attention to these students. In the case of one team, the assistant coach, a former international student-athlete, assisted in their transition by helping with official administrative details and relating to their homesickness.

Teammate Support for Initial Adjustment

Teammates were also found to be instrumental in the athletes' adjustment by all of the participants. It was generally noted that being a part of a team, spending time with the team, and everyday interaction with team, were major factors in easing their adjustment. Teammates welcomed the students and made them feel comfortable. Being invited to eat and socialize with team members assisted in their adjustment process. Two participants felt that being with teammates helped them deal with missing home. One participant remembered staying with a senior teammate for 10 days when he first arrived.

Academic Adjustment

Typically the participants responded to adjustment to their new academic environment. They each identified a unique challenge associated with their academic adjustment. They included understanding and communicating effectively with their professors, difficulty taking notes due to the language, having to physically attend class, the workload, differences in the types of tests given, and the challenge of getting in the routine of studying.

<p>Program and athletic demands were a shock I didn't think we were going to have morning practices First few months was so tired, very energy-consuming 10 hours a week of lacrosse and conditioning on top of that</p>			
<p>n=6 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Am oldest player with most experience; others come to me for advice Will be helping younger players Made captain, role is valued Have leadership role as an older, experienced player Knew wasn't going to be the star- but would contribute to team Know my role is to push the starters Hard to adjust to mentality of team hierarchy Younger players pick up the balls- a cultural thing Contributing helped to solidify my place in team</p>	<p>Team Roles</p> <p>n=2</p> <p>n=2</p>	<p>Organizational Standards/Expectations</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>
<p>n=12 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Skills were on the same level- definitely helped me fit in Was training with Olympic athletes since age 15 Skills matched up, but not conditioning Contributing helped me solidify my place on the team Was one of the best straight up Started my freshman year My skills matched sometimes – I'm not a starter, but I know my role on the team Skills good enough, but I know I have to work harder to get better Not better than everyone- transition was okay Some seniors were better, had better scoring averages- but my skill set was more developed- especially in the area of mental preparation and sport psychology Some guys were just a whole level above me I don't think I'm as good; I am working on it and getting better In college, suddenly there were so many good players- all better than me Everyone had already been playing together for 2 years This team is a higher level than my level- my teammates play better tennis than me Whether skills would match up was my biggest concern coming here Hard not playing- Had different expectations Teammates were more confident in me as I started playing better- gained respect During my slump, I talked to sport psychologist Coaching staff investing in me- I brought what they were expecting So hard adjusting; at junior college, my game was slower- I need to be fast By end of the season, I had gained their respect Coaches took a risk on me- Had to prove myself I could lose scholarship with a bad round People from back home want you to succeed Treated more harshly if not performing You weren't included as much if not in the lineup</p>	<p>Skills Match Up</p> <p>n=4</p> <p>n=4</p> <p>n=3</p> <p>n=3</p>	<p>Organizational Standards/Expectations</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>
<p>n=5 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Taught from a younger age here – the technique Australians play more with a fluid style Cool to have different playing styles, makes you more well-rounded Game here is a lot faster, more physical</p>	<p>Playing Style Differences</p> <p>n=5</p>	<p>Playing Style/Synergy</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>

<p>In my country, game is more about technique, more skillful players in Brazil American style frustrated me- do not keep much possession, faster and more physical tennis is more mental- everyone is really good and can play Not about technique anymore; about strategy and thinking, handling pressure The pressure is a lot, didn't have a lot of pressure when I was playing junior tennis In college, suddenly there were so many good players- all better than me My skill set was more developed, especially mental preparation and sport psychology So hard adjusting to play- At junior college, my game was slower- need to be fast</p>			
<p>n=5 - Total # of responses</p> <p>All my life, whether I win or lose, it was going to be on me, I was the only one getting affected by it Hard for me to actually learn how to compete for a whole team and not only for myself- because fencing is an individual sport Main issue I had- integrating into the team No longer about yourself- adjusting to the team mentality The pressure- you have a huge responsibility to the team When you don't play well- you feel like you aren't doing your job, like you owe something to the team</p>	<p>Individual vs. Team Mentality n=5</p>	<p>Playing Style/Synergy</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>
<p>n=13- Total # of responses</p> <p>Wish had a better relationship with my coach- more supportive/understanding When I don't have confidence- need someone to lift me up; he's not really there to do that for you While you are being recruited- you are most important thing, when you get here- you are just dirt, need to start producing My coach at home was a thousand times better- knew how to motivate someone The amount of pressure I was under- could lose scholarship if had a bad round On paper, everyone says school work is more important- definitely not the case At point where I 100% trust coach- I don't question anything and he trusts me Three coaches are all different- It's cool to see different coaching styles Coach always tells me to stay positive, he believes in me Coach here is more motivating Here is more encouraging, more positive feedback At home, it was more nitpicking on everything- what made me a perfectionist Hard for me to accept good criticism on everything that I do Had to adjust to strictly professional/coach-student relationship Prefer Dad's way of coaching, more motivating I would definitely say that my level of fencing has decreased since I came here Coach at home was more of a yelling kid Coaches at home would spend time with you and get to know you better- made it personal for you Coaches here just push you and don't motivate you that much To me, relationship with my coach is the most important thing Felt like I had to prove myself because they were</p>	<p>Coaching Style Differences n=3</p> <p>n=3</p> <p>n=7</p>	<p>Coaching Style</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>

<p>taking a risk on me Took a bit to get used to softer approach Coach at home is harder on me on the course- something I never really got here Different people need a different coaching style- In my case, she didn't really change it He is not ever going to be your friend - more a business relationship Former coaches in were a lot more of the yelling style- definitely push us differently In U.S.- there's a lot of everyone's a winner- not the style I like- more soft here It doesn't help a team when a coach doesn't know how to motivate his players Soft here- would have preferred more harsh treatment and explosiveness from the coaches At home, coaches would yell at you and touch you, had a coach that loved to pull my hair Was hard for me to accept good job every time- good criticism and so much motivation I get down when I get beat badly, feel upset; just have to work hard and step up To be on his good side, must be producing results Coach here is about putting in hard work, hitting a lot of tennis balls, haven't gotten any technical instruction Coaches don't know what is best for you, have to practice like they wants</p>	<p>n=2</p>		
<p>n=11 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Generally we get a long- more like sisterly fights if we do fight Here friends are more like sisters, I trust them The guys I live with are a mini family Closer to my friends here than those back home; share more My teammates are my best friends Not only teammates, we are friends Teammates asked me to spend Thanksgiving and Easter at their homes Two teammates came to my house New Years in Brazil Traveling to Brazil in pre-season helped unite the group Trip to Florida for spring break bonded us together Had team dinners and tailgates in football season Traditions like the bus rides to the game Team reaches out to me; let me know if they are doing something Always hanging out together, a close-knit group Everyone on the team gets along really well Live in the girl's fencing house- we are definitely best friends Within first weeks, made so many friends Important to socialize and get to know each member of the team We are really supportive of each other- always there for each other A really good thing about the team, everyone eats together Always hang out as a team on the weekends</p>	<p>Ongoing Team Socialization n=4</p>	<p>Team Cohesion/ Interpersonal Relations</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>
<p>n=11- Total # of responses</p> <p>At initiation, first time I realized that we're all here for the right reasons Our team did a teambuilding program- team is a lot closer now and works harder for one another We definitely play as a team- no one is trying to be a hero</p>	<p>Positive Team Cohesion n=4</p>	<p>Team Cohesion/ Interpersonal Relations</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>

<p>Our goal is to win a national championship We all have common interest of lacrosse Never blamed each other or broke apart- always stayed together Traditions/Heritage makes you feel a part of the team Locker room- open place where can say whatever you want We are individuals, but are friends and help each other out Everyone cares and wants their teammates to do well Team chemistry definitely helps on the court We are a band of brothers Team synergy is one of our strengths I love the team- get along with 90% of the people Everyone looks out for one another All very friendly, encourage and push me. Sometimes they push too hard but they know what's best for me Was great to end fall ball beating Penn Great to win when you are an underdog</p>			
<p>n=8 - Total # of responses</p> <p>Many different personalities; get along with some, not others Small groups that are separate- Talk behind each other's backs On and off the field there's tension, it impacted the season Have our personal space, aren't together all the time We don't really hang out a lot- some of us live on campus and some live off campus Not friends with all teammates- some I keep a separation Worked hard to get friends off the team First couple years with teammates was hard Expected upperclassmen to be different/more open Got competitive in normal situations, doesn't have to be like that Upperclassmen were welcoming, but other people were so negative Off the court, we are not the best friends Don't hang out with the team, don't live with them Team works well now, now that we aren't forced to live together Hard to break into team- everyone is so tight and you're new</p>	<p>Negative Team Cohesion n=8</p>	<p>Team Cohesion/ Interpersonal Relations</p>	<p>Athletic Adjustment</p>

Table 7: Athletic Adjustment

Training and Physical Demands

Ten of the participants relayed reactions to the increased physical requirements of their programs. Comments such as, “the program and athletic demands were a shock”, and “trying to stay positive” conveyed their reactions. Four of the participants referenced the physical reactions to the demands. They noted that they were not used to training every day or being sore and fatigued going into games. Others students mentioned the challenge of studying when tired and the need to nap after conditioning. Eight of the

athletes offered that the conditioning requirement was new to their athletic experience. They felt they could not have adequately prepared for the running and weight-lifting requirements. One participant noted the amount time devoted to her sport; “ten hours a week of just lacrosse, and conditioning on top of that”.

The coaches also mentioned that these athletes were not used to training on a daily basis and would need at least a year to build their strength and endurance. One of the coaches offered that he needs to wait at least a year to assess these athletes as they need to catch up in size, speed, and overall athleticism. Many find the expectations of the programs are higher than they realized. One coach offered, “The structure in the athletic setting is a bit more involved than the club environment, where they play or train and then go home”.

Team Roles

Six players commented on their role on the team. Two felt that they had leadership roles as older, more experienced players or would be in that position next season. The younger players would turn to them for advice. Another commented that his contributions solidified his place on the team and that his performance was in part responsible for him being named captain. One other player’s adjustment concerned team hierarchy which she referred to as a “cultural thing”. The expectation for freshman to perform the menial tasks on the team was something she had never encountered.

Skills Match up

Twelve of the athletes commented on how their skills compared to their teammates or affected their initial experience. Four of the players felt that their skills were a match for their teammates. These players volunteered that they were starters as freshman or felt that their performance helped them “fit in” by proving their worth to their coaches and teammates. One expressed the difficulty with not playing much and another relayed that although he knew he would not start, his role was to challenge the starters to perform. Three others found that their skills were not equal to their teammates and commented, “some guys are a whole level above me” and “in college, suddenly, there were so many good players, all better than me”. Some players observed that their teammates did not feel included if they were not in the starting lineup or were treated differently by the coach if they were not performing.

Playing Style Differences

Five athletes noted differences in playing styles. The lacrosse player observed that her in her country they play with a more fluid style, adding that Americans are taught technique from a much younger age. Her reaction to the different styles was positive and offered that the experience made her a better-rounded player. The men’s soccer player related that he was frustrated by the style of play here, with Americans playing a faster, more physical game with not as much emphasis on ball possession. He contended that play in his country is more about technique and that their players are more skilled. One tennis player felt that he had to adjust to a new type of game, less about technique and more of a mental game employing strategy, thinking, and handling pressure. One golfer

thought her mental preparation for the game was stronger than her teammates. A fifth athlete needed to adapt to a faster paced game.

The coaches welcomed the different perspective these athletes brought to training. The international students are used to more training and development as a result of their club environment. They are not bored with monotonous training, as Americans typically are. One coach commented, “They know how to train themselves,” without the technology the Americans are used to.

Some comments alluded to the pressures the athletes felt to perform. One player felt the pressure to “work hard and step up” feeling a “huge responsibility to the team”. Another participant felt that her scholarship might be in jeopardy if she failed to perform. Even those at home could be the source of pressure as the one participant noted, “... so I am like the pride and joy of the town. ...Everyone is pushing you and encouraging you to do well”. When in a slump, one player turned to the sports psychologist for help and felt he earned the respect of his teammates when he was able to turn his season around.

Individual vs. Team Mentality

Five athletes found that they had to make an effort to adjust to the team mentality, never having competed as part of a team previously. One player felt a responsibility to perform well on behalf of the team. He felt as though he owed the team and was not “doing his job” if he did not perform well. Another athlete commented that “...all my life whether I win or lose it was going to be on me”.

Coaching Style Differences

The reactions to their coaches' styles, motivation, and relationships with players varied greatly among the participants. All the participants responded in this category and three players had distinctly negative responses. The first expressed that she felt pushed rather than motivated and wished that she had a more understanding coach with a different style of coaching. A second player related that his coach would never be a friend and that to be "on his good side" you had to be producing results. His coach did not boost his confidence when he felt he needed it and his coaching lacked technical instruction. A third participant felt that her scholarship could be in jeopardy based on her results and felt that her coach at home was "a thousand times better" at motivating her. She said that after she arrived, she was just "dirt" and needed to start producing. She also felt that the coaches only gave lip service to the importance of academics and that in reality, only athletic accomplishments were valued.

Three athletes had positive relationships with their coaches. One stated that he trusted his coach 100% and learned not to question the direction his coach gave him. He felt the coach trusted him as well, but he did have to adjust to a "softer" style of coaching. The second athlete felt that his coach believed in him, encouraged him to stay positive, and motivated him more than his previous coach. The third welcomed the varying coaching styles of her new coaches.

The other seven athletes were somewhat neutral in their reactions to their coaches. Most did have to adjust to what they all termed a "softer" coaching style which included more positive feedback than they were used to and less yelling. Three of the seven did not feel motivated by their coaches, one commenting that everyone needed a different

motivation style and her coach failed to adjust based on those needs. Two participants commented on the practice routines required by their coaches. One mentioned the lack of technical instruction with focus only on “hard work hitting balls” and the other participant resisted conforming to practicing the way everyone else on the team was required to. She resisted the coach’s direction claiming that the coaches “don’t know what is best for you”.

Ongoing Team Socialization

Generally the participants indicated that they socialized regularly with their teammates. Four referred to their team as more like a family. One noted that his closest friends were a few of his teammates and how the guys he lives with are a “mini family”. He went on to say that he is closer with his friends here than he ever was at home because he has to share more. Similarly, one player said her friends are more like sisters here, as they are the people she trusts and relies on. Other participants commented on how close-knit and supportive their teammates are, how often they hang out together, and how well they get along with one another. A number of the athletes commented that they had been asked to spend holidays with the families of teammates and that some teammates had visited them at home as well. Others commented that their teams were closer after trips taken together.

Positive Team Cohesion

Generally the participants felt that their teams were united. Four athletes noted team goals or experiences that served to unite the team. They felt that team traditions,

such as the bus rides, team dinners, initiation, and trips taken together bonded them. Four others spoke of how their teammates were there to help out, encourage, how everyone cared, and wanted their teammates to do well. One player noted that the team's chemistry off the court helped them perform well together in competition. Similarly, another player mentioned that team synergy was one of her team's strengths and "that the team stayed together and never placed blame on anybody."

Negative Team Cohesion

Typically the participants reported difficulty in relationships with other team members. Most of these comments involved socializing with the team. One participant remembered that there were small groups that were separate on his team that didn't get along with the entire team. Two players mentioned that although they got along with a majority of their teammates, there were always going to be individuals and personalities they weren't going to get along with. They expressed the difficulty in having to associate with people they didn't like. As a result, one made a point to make friends outside of his team. Two participants also mentioned that it was difficult breaking into the team, because they were new and everyone already had experience playing together. One participant recalled that she expected the upperclassmen to be different and more open. She commented that her upperclassmen weren't very social, and consequently that it was hard meeting new people. Two participants noted that off the court, they needed their personal space. One participant felt that team relations improved after the team was no longer forced to live together. Another felt that teammates were unnecessarily competitive off the field "in normal situations". One student mentioned that he pursued

friendships outside of the team and another had problems with some of her teammates initially. One student noted how the tension among team members negatively impacted their season.

Best Practices

Table 8: Best Practices

Raw Data	1st Order	2nd Order	General Dimension
<p>n=- Total # of responses</p> <p>Keep an open mind, take things as they go Positive outlook because it's a great school and I love our team and everything about it Think as if you have a return ticket for anytime you want to leave Think of stay as a holiday you are on until you want to come home- knowing I wasn't stuck here I tried to make friends with people in my classes and on other teams</p>	<p>Strategies</p>	<p>Best Practices</p>	<p>Reflections/Best Practices</p>
<p>n=- Total # of responses</p> <p>Use facilities and resources for student-athletes- tutors, counseling services Definitely recommend making trip to U.S. on your own Go up to every professor and tell them that you are international Ask for help, swallow your pride Try not to exclude yourself – don't separate yourself because you're international Within the team, it's important to socialize and get to know each member of the team Make the most of the opportunity to come to a different country to learn a different culture and meet new people while at the same time having common ground of a sport Appreciate the good aspects of American culture Have good relationships with coaches and teammates Don't be intimidated by size of campus- it will soon be like your hometown Get to know a lot of different of people- Get involved and ask lot of questions Would open up more to people and get involved more on campus Go out, talk to your teammates- Being shy is ok, but don't put a barrier up Don't be shy, talk to people- they really want to help. Speak up on everything you need Talk to teammates and coaches and let them get to know you</p>	<p>Advice</p>	<p>Best Practices</p>	<p>Reflections/Best Practices</p>

Table 8: Best Practices

Strategies for Adjustment/Advice

- Utilize all of the resources available to student athletes; tutors, counseling and advising services.

- Approach every professor to inform them that you are an international student-athlete. Don't be intimidated by the size of campus because you will know it soon enough.
- Get involved in campus activities.
- Appreciate the good aspects of American culture while staying true to your beliefs.
- Try not to exclude yourself or isolate yourself because you may not be comfortable. Before you get to campus, e-mail your teammates and begin a dialogue.
- Get to know each member of your team as well as your coach.
- Make friends outside of your team.
- Get to know a variety of different people.
- Learn to manage your time effectively.
- Keep a positive outlook. Realize that people want to help you.
- Swallow your pride and ask for help.

Discussion

Few studies have focused on the adjustment experiences of international student-athletes. The intent of this study was to explore the adjustment experiences of thirteen international student athletes. Five inter-collegiate head coaches were also interviewed to gain their perspective on the adjustment experiences of these athletes. As the data was analyzed, it was found that the students experienced adjusting in three major areas; to new culture, to the overall college experience, and their new athletic environment, referenced as General Dimensions in the results. Within the general dimension of Cultural Adjustment, the students experienced adjustment to the language and cultural differences of American culture and the college campus culture. The general dimension of College Adjustment included their initial transitions to college, academic adjustment and dealing with who and what they missed from home. The general dimension of Athletic Adjustment included their adjustment to the organizational standards and expectations of their sport programs, new playing styles and coaching styles and the interpersonal adjustments to their team environment.

Motives for Coming to the U.S.

The majority of the participants gave obtaining a degree while being able to pursue their sport as the primary motivation for coming to the U.S. Many of the students recognized the unique opportunity offered by the American educational system that provides the opportunity to become obtain a degree while still participating in sport activities through athletic scholarships.

Other motives referenced included the recruitment efforts of coaches, learning English, and the opportunity for scholarships. In some cases, the efforts of coaches were the deciding factor in the decision to come to the U.S. or influenced the participants' choice of school. One participant noted that her coach was in contact with her since the age of fourteen and that she knew she would always attend Penn State. Other participants pointed to relationships with their coaches formed during the recruitment process as reasons for their decisions. One student reacted to the coach's goal of building a team, saying that he wanted to be a part of that effort and felt he could contribute. Another referenced his coach's belief that he would be a good "fit for the program." Others related being treated with respect or to the coaches' efforts on their recruiting trips as influencing their choice of school.

Cultural Adjustment

The cultural adjustment challenges of the participants in this study included adapting to the language and to new social customs and norms. Initially, language issues impacted the participants' ability to converse with others effectively. Even those who spoke English needed to speak more slowly or repeat themselves to be understood. The use of slang, colloquialisms, and different words to identify the same item (e.g. sneakers as runners, sweatshirt as a jumper) created confusion during conversation. Coaches indicated that they took greater care in their choice of language when communicating with these athletes to both avoid misunderstandings and to ensure that the students understood important concepts related to their training.

A number of participants noted that their feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness in regard to their language proficiency impacted their confidence and willingness to interact with others. The participants reported that talking with their friends, roommates, and teammates led to an improvement in their language skills, as these individuals corrected their English.

All of the participants discussed some aspect of American culture to which they were unaccustomed. Much of what the athletes identified as cultural differences involved contrasting lifestyles, interactions, and attitudes from those in their home countries. Some of the perceptions of American social attitudes and lifestyles on the part of the participants varied according to their world region. One Middle Eastern participant considered Americans to be polite to one's face, but gossiped behind people's backs. The student offered that in her culture people didn't hide their feelings but were more direct. However, from the Asian point of view, Americans said what was on their minds whereas Asians were more polite and humble. According to a European participant, Americans were considered more "narrow minded" and strict vs. the "more liberal" Europeans and the Asian student viewed American culture as more relaxed than his home culture.

Through their interaction with teammates and coaches, the participants also learned culturally specific social skills appropriate in American culture. A number of participants recalled quickly adjusting to their culturally inappropriate forms of greeting others and their invasion of personal space when conversing with others.

Some of the participants described their reactions to their new cultural environment as not fitting in, not relating, never feeling at home or comfortable. Their comments indicated that these were not just initial reactions but rather persisted in their

ongoing experience. One Asian participant shared that he felt comfortable only in the presence of his other Asian friends. One of the coaches added that his South American and European players will “gravitate towards their own and feel comfortable in that environment.”

Other students with more positive reactions to American culture related that they transitioned without problems, commenting that they “slipped into culture quickly” and that they were “embracing new ways.” Other participants expressed that they were trying to adopt some aspects of American culture, but still wanted to stay true to their own ways and beliefs. This behavior was evident in their response to the partying culture encountered on campus. These participants reacted negatively to the socialization so centered on alcohol abuse and the goal of becoming intoxicated. One participant related,

Right now I am just trying to adapt. I need to understand that I am no longer in Venezuela and the culture is different. I am trying to enjoy what people do here in my own way. For example, if I go to party, I am going to drink and try to have fun with the games, but I am not going to get wasted. Adapting but still staying true to what I believe.

This participant and another found the social behavior on the part of others to be immature and adolescent. They preferred more mature forms of socializing which included conversation and dancing along with an occasional drink. One student’s reaction was based, in part, on her cultural predisposition as she related that alcohol is very much a part of her culture and not considered “taboo.” She, too, avoided the frequenting the bars on college campus where the abuse of alcohol led to people hurting themselves.

The participants offered mixed views on American efforts to understand their culture. Two Australians felt that their teammates were eager to learn of the culture. One

participant felt that that during a trip to his home county, his teammates had gained a deeper understanding of his culture. Not all of the comments were positive, however. Another student wished her teammates were more accepting and sensitive to the cultural differences. One student commented that Americans expected him to adapt and fit in to their culture. He also felt “sad for them... being ignorant and not wanting to understand what I felt”. In addition, one Australian participant was offended by the stereotypic portrayal of her culture in the media and felt that Americans viewed Australia as “stupid and a joke”. Generally the participants were asked questions about various aspects of their culture, but added that these were superficial shallow attempts to learn about their culture. Based on the input of the international student athletes in this study, it does not appear that there was a “cultural exchange” on the part of the American students.

The coaches expressed that the presence of the international players was a positive cultural experience for their domestic players. They form contacts for their futures in other parts of the world and some of them travel to the home countries of their teammates. One coach commented that she thought her team was open and welcoming to the international players, “no one is judging, everyone is from a different place and everybody is different.” However, this same coach did acknowledge that what the students have seen on TV is very different from the realities of the college campus. In coming to America she related, “It’s very different for them, they do have these expectations, it’s never quite right for whatever reason.”

Adjustment to College

The students' adjustment to college included their initial transition, academic adjustment and dealing with who and what they missed from home. Away at college, the students expressed missing their families, friends, and other aspects of their home culture such as climate, food, and lifestyle. The need to stay connected with family and friends, their support base back home, was mentioned by all of the participants. A number of the coaches added that they are more sensitive to homesickness with these players, one adding that they often come from very close knit families. The majority of participants utilized Skype, which allowed them to view their loved ones. In addition, many called home frequently, used Facebook, and e-mail to stay connected. One coach observed that the technology available today eases the transition for these students. Time differences and schedule restraints still impeded the efforts of the students to contact their families whenever they felt the need. Some of the participants related that the frequency of their calls had diminished over time, perhaps an indication that they were adjusting.

Staying connected to those at home helped the international students adjust, but most employed coping strategies to deal with missing their families, friends and the ensuing loneliness. Some used avoidance strategies; keeping busy, socializing with teammates and friends to take their minds off of their feelings and others slept. A number mentioned gaining control over their emotions by thinking of their sojourn as a temporary one, (in one case, even a "holiday") that they could terminate at any time. Another chose to keep the experience in perspective; if she "failed" and chose to go home, it was not a life or death situation. Another said she relied on her qualities as an athlete, using her survival instinct to pull her through the bad times.

In their adjustment to the new academic system, they spoke of some of the differences they experienced: having to physically attend class, different types of test taking, and class sizes. Initially, language issues affected the participants' ability to communicate effectively with faculty, take notes, and complete assignments. The students often cited a lack of preparedness for the academic experience.

The international student-athletes expressed a range of emotions and reactions to their initial adjustment to college and the academic environment. Some reported feeling lost initially. Others felt overwhelmed with the amount of information and the number of changes they dealt with all at once. Others expressed being tired, and feeling that the first months were "energy consuming" or "a little shock to the system". They related the stress involved in dealing with their new independence and adult responsibilities.

The challenge of balancing academic and athletic demands was mentioned by a number of participants. They also spoke about the stress involved in reaching academic milestones such as choosing a major, completing coursework in their major, and the pursuit of internships.

Academic advisors assisted the students with class selection and BBH (Bio Behavioral Health) classes were mentioned as helpful in the adjustment process. Teammates showed these students around campus, advised them on what classes to take, and helped them with how and where to study. One athlete mentioned that he did not take advantage of using a mentor because his teammates had already fulfilled that role.

Coaches and teammates were instrumental in helping the students' transition to college life. The participants noted that the coaches were very attentive to them during their initial adjustment period. Coaches took on primarily a supportive role welcoming

the athletes, offering to assist with any problems they encountered and taking an interest in their overall well-being. Some athletes described their coaches as parental-like figures initially and one participant stayed at her coach's home her first night because her teammates had yet to arrive on campus. Another participant recalled that her coaches spoke to her in her native language initially to ease her transition.

The coaches interviewed in this study did acknowledge paying closer attention to these athletes initially out of a concern for their favorable adjustment. They spent a little more time with these players and checked in with them more often to ensure that they knew they were welcome. They made sure they matched them with roommates whose parents might visit often and "major" players with "major" players to guard against conflicts over playing time. They made sure they pointed the students to all of the formal resources available on campus and mentioned that some will use the NCAA's Summer Bridge program to ease their adjustment. They asked the upperclassmen to pay closer attention to these students, and added that these students would turn to their teammates for support and would be best friends with many of them.

Teammates took a more active role in the transition and made a difference immediately upon the athletes' arrival. Some stayed with upperclassman during pre-season; they helped move the athletes into their dorms, asked them to dinner and to "hang out". Their comments indicated that they felt welcomed and supported. They related that they did not feel alone, that their teammates helped them adjust and "filled the emptiness of missing home".

Athletic Adjustment- Organizational Standards and Expectations

Some of the adjustments required to their new athletic environment included the adjustment to the organizational standards and expectations of their sport programs. One of the most frequently discussed adjustments reported was that to the physical demands of their programs. One participant commented that “the program and athletic demands were a shock.” These athletes were not used to training every day and being sore and fatigued going into games. The conditioning requirement was new to the athletic experience of eight of the athletes. They also spoke about the running and weight-lifting requirements for which they were unprepared. Others mentioned the challenge of studying when tired and that often they needed to nap after conditioning. One participant referenced the time devoted to their athletic commitment, “ten hours a week of just lacrosse, and conditioning on top of that”.

The coaches also offered their input in regard to the athletes’ adjustment to the expectations of their programs. One coach acknowledged that for many of these students, the athletic programs can be a little of an “athletic culture shock,” as many find the expectations of the programs are higher than they realized. One coach offered, “the structure in the athletic setting is a bit more involved than the club environment, where they play or train and then go home.’ All of the coaches observed that the international student athletes were not used to training every day and it could take up to a year for them to build endurance and strength and that their potential is not often revealed within the first year.

As the athletes offered their perceptions of their skill levels, they frequently spoke of their positions on the team and team roles. Some spoke about their skill levels in

terms of their initial adjustment. The starters and the outstanding performers commented that their performance helped solidify their role on the team. Their performance helped them integrate into the team, helped them transition, and gain the respect of their teammates. One comment by a coach supported this view;

I think that if you show them you can play, you are accepted.

Another related that he knew his role on the team as a non-starter was to push the starters to perform. Still another expressed difficulty in accepting a changed role as he came to college and realized that “everyone can play” and found that his skills were not equal to those of his teammates or the competition.

Other team roles were generally discussed as the athletes examined their experience over the long term. One player, named captain for the season, felt the honor was recognition of his performance and valued role on the team. Some of the players shared that as they were now older and more experienced, that they were assuming leadership positions and serving as role models for younger players.

Athletic Adjustment- Playing Styles/Synergy

The athletes’ adjustment to playing styles and the team mentality were related to their previous athletic experience. One student reacted positively to the exposure to a more technical style of lacrosse and felt the experience made her a more well-rounded player. Another was frustrated, at first, by the more physical and less skilled soccer played in the U.S. The soccer coaches added that these players are tactically more aware and have a better sense of the game. For the soccer players, the game is so much more a part of their culture. One tennis player was challenged in adjusting to a more mental game of strategy.

Some of the athletes competing in golf, tennis, and fencing related having to adjust to playing on a team. One of the players recalled, “All my life whether I win or lose, it was always on me.” Although tennis, golf, and fencing are individual sports, in the United States, through high school athletics, domestic athletes have experienced team competition in these sports.

Athletic Adjustment- Coaching Styles

Coaching styles were addressed by all of the participants. Two of them described their relationship with their coach positively, one mentioning mutual trust and the other a feeling that the coach believed in him. The negative reactions involved their coaches’ inability to instill confidence and motivate them, or were related to being treated poorly when they failed to perform. One participant said she had to get used to a more professional relationship with her coach. Another commented that her coach at home would spend time with her and get to know her more; another mentioned that the coach would “never be your friend”. It is difficult to discern whether the differences identified by the international student-athletes have a cultural basis. An alternative explanation is that expressed by one of the participants,

But people are different, so people need different things, and I feel our coach didn’t really take the time to understand how she could have an impact on each one of us. Different people need different coaching styles and in my case, she didn’t really change it.

Other comments on coaching involved the practice routines required by their coaches which differed from their prior routines. One commented on the lack of technical instruction and focus on “hard work hitting balls” and the other participant resisted

conforming to the coach's direction, claiming that the coaches "don't know what is best for you."

The coaches found that these athletes brought a different perspective to training and welcomed their influence on the team. They observed that these athletes are not bored with training as Americans typically are. "They know how to train themselves," without the technology the Americans are used to. One coach indicated that in their club environment, more emphasis was placed on training and development and as a result, monotonous training here was not an issue for these athletes.

These athletes did experience stress due to their changed athletic environments. Some players indicated that the reactions of their coaches when they failed to perform induced stress. One participant felt that her scholarship might be in jeopardy if she failed to perform. When in a slump, and frustrated with the lack of support from his coach, one player turned to the sports psychologist for help. Another player felt the pressure to succeed on behalf of those back in her hometown. Some stress was a reaction to the transition to team competition and as in the case of one individual who felt the pressure to "work hard and step up", feeling a "huge responsibility to the team.

Athletic Adjustment- Team Cohesion/Interpersonal Relations

The athletes' adjustment also included their adjustment to interpersonal relationships with their teammates. Most of the athletes felt their teams worked well together. They related that they cared about their teammates and wanted them to do well, that there were no heroes, and that team chemistry helped them be successful on the court. They pushed one another to do well and looked out for each other. A number of

them mentioned themes that indicated that their teams were unified through task cohesion. One team focused on their goal of a national championship, another noted that after team initiation, she realized that they were all there for the right reasons, and committed to the team. The participants also bonded through trips taken during pre-season and spring break, the locker room environment, team bus rides, and their teams' long-standing heritage. One athlete related that after a formal team building experience, the team was a lot closer and worked harder for one another.

Most of the negative comments regarding team cohesion were related to the social cohesion of the teams. Participants noted that they did not get along with or associate with all of their teammates. Others acknowledged that there were small groups within their teams, friction, and talking behind each others backs. One participant felt that team relations improved after the team was no longer forced to live together. Another felt that teammates were unnecessarily competitive off the field. One student noted that the tension among team members negatively impacted their season.

Many of the participants related ongoing social interaction with their teammates. It appeared to be their primary source of socialization. They ate together, hung out together on the weekends, tailgated during football season and spent holidays with their teammates. They referred to their teammates as “mini” families, sisters, and “bands of brothers”.

Best Practices- Advice from the International Student-Athletes

The students offered the following advice to other international-student athletes to assist with their adjustment experiences:

- Utilize all of the resources available to student athletes; tutors, counseling and advising services.
- Approach every professor to inform them that you are international student-athlete.
- Don't be intimidated by size of campus because you will know it soon enough.
- Get involved in campus activities.
- Appreciate the good aspects of American culture while staying true to your beliefs.
- Try not to exclude yourself or isolate yourself because you may not be comfortable. Before you get to campus, e-mail your teammates and begin a dialogue.
- Get to know each member of your team and your coach.
- Make friends outside of your team.
- Get to know a variety of different of different people.
- Learn to manage your time effectively.
- Keep a positive outlook.
- Realize that people want to help you.
- Swallow your pride and ask for help.

In summary, it was found that in regard to cultural adjustment, the responses and reactions of the students were varied. Some seemed more open to the differences and others expressed greater difficulty in fitting in and feeling at home with American culture. They indicated that there was no genuine “cultural exchange” with Americans.

The team environment facilitated the initial adjustment of the international student-athletes. It provided a network of social support and fostered a sense of belonging that are deemed crucial in the adjustment process. It appeared that for most, the team was also the primary long term source of socialization and most of the participants expressed receiving ongoing of social support in the team environment.

The athletes demonstrated a resilience and perseverance in meeting the changes and multiple demands associated with their new academic environment and coping with missing families and their home cultures.

In the athletic environment, performance was correlated with ease of adjustment as superior skills and perceived talent assisted the athletes' integration into the team. A multitude of stressors were reported in relation to their expectations and realities of the athletic experience. Some of the adjustments made were common to both these athletes and their domestic counterparts. These included adjustment to the increasing physical demands of their programs as well as to the combined responsibilities of athletics and academics. Other adjustments that may have been more unique to their experience included coaching styles, motivational styles, practice routines, the team mentality and the structure of their athletic programs.

The multitude of adjustments described in this discussion has an implication beyond their identification and description. In coming to the United States these students were required to conform to the expectations of the academic institution and American culture. The athletic environment proved to be another area in which the students were required to conform. As one coach put it,

If you are willing to do whatever anyone else does, it doesn't matter if you are from Altoona or Brazil.

In examining how my data fit with relevant research in the review of the literature, the study by Jones, et al., (2004) on the motivations of international student-athletes to participate in intercollegiate athletics, found as did this study, that the primary motivation was to obtain a degree and pursue their sport.

The work of Church (1982) on the adjustment issues of international students was instrumental in understanding the adjustment process of international student-athletes. Of the issues he identified, language proficiency, adjustment to social norms and customs and homesickness pertained to the experience of the participants. The use of slang, stereotypes, judgmental behavior, and cultural ignorance on the part of host nationals identified in the adjustment experience of international students were also found to some degree in this study.

Church (1982) considered social interaction with host nationals as the single most important factor that affects the adjustment process for international students. This factor was a key variable in the adjustment of the international student-athletes, although their experience differed markedly from that of international students, as Bale (1991) predicted. Unlike the experience of international students who have difficulty making new social contacts, the international student-athlete's team serves as a source of instant social interaction. Church (1982) indicated that social interaction with host nationals results in increased language proficiency and language confidence. The work of Chapeldaine and Alextich (2004) concluded that meaningful interaction with host nationals led to the development of cultural specific social skills and norms on the part of international students. This study supported these findings as the international student-

athletes credited interaction with teammates and friends for both the improvement in their language skills and their adjustment to social norms.

The behavior of international students to seek social support and validation of their values and cultural beliefs from other co-nationals found in the work of Church (1982). Constantine et al., (2005), and Hechanova-Alampay et al., (2002) was also found on the part of international student-athletes in this study.

The four aspects of the cultural adaptation process proposed by Bale (1991) and listed below for international student-athletes was found applicable in this study.

Cultural Adjustment; feeling “at home”, socially interacting with the host group

Identification; formal membership of a group, a feeling of belonging

Cultural Competence; acquiring new cultural knowledge and skills

Role Acculturation; active use of the host language, the desire to conform to culturally defined modes of behavior

Formal membership of their teams provided a feeling of belonging and team interaction facilitated the acquisition of new cultural knowledge and skills and the use of the host language. However, the athletes varied in their desire to conform to culturally defined modes of behavior and to their levels of comfort in the host culture. The inclination to seek social support in co-nationals outside of the team environment indicated that all of their needs were not met within the team environment.

Many of the stressors, multiple role demands, transitions and adjustment issues identified in the work of Yukelson and Carlson (1996) in their developmental approach were noted by the athletes in this study. These stressors corresponded to the experiences of the international student-athletes in their overall adjustment to college, including their adjustment to the academic system and to their athletic adjustment. Some of the stressors

the researchers identified, including adjusting to a new environment, lifestyle and values can also be seen as applicable to the cultural adjustment of the international student-athletes as they made decisions on whether to adopt those of the American and campus culture. Most of the stressors relevant to this study were those corresponding to the freshman year as this study did not include a developmental examination of the adjustment experience.

Role conflict described in the work of Chartrand and Lent (1987) was found in the experience of these students as they sought to balance the demands of their academic and athletic responsibilities. Their coaches' interpersonal style and behavior, as predicted by Adler and Adler (1991), Daener (2009) and Kissinger and Watson (2009) were found to have both positive and negative impact on the psychological and emotional well-being of some of the athletes. As suggested by Kissinger (2009) the comments of some of the participants indicating a lack of personal relationship with the coach may be an indication of a cultural difference in coaching styles.

The conceptual model of Ridinger and Pastore (2000b) examined factors which predict the adjustment of international student-athletes. Some factors they identified including effective relationships with teammates and coaches, language proficiency, and realistic expectations of the athletic experience were found to impact the adjustment of the athletes in this study. Generally, the factors mentioned above were influential in the adjustment of the participants. Initial efforts by teammates and coaches were positive contributors to their adjustment. Language was initially a factor that affected communication and confidence in social situations. The athletes were required to adjust to the organizational standards and expectations of their sport programs. Cultural

distance was used in the model to predict cultural adjustment. The effect of cultural distance on adjustment was not considered in this study as the representation of world regions did not allow an interpretation of results with this factor as a variable. The researchers' model also considered personal attributes of the athletes such as academic competency, athletic competency and self-efficacy which this study did not attempt to examine.

Ridinger and Pastore (2000a) also conducted one of the few studies on the adjustment of international student-athletes, comparing their adjustment to international students and domestic student athletes and non-athletes. The researchers found that the international student athletes scored significantly higher than their non-athlete counterparts in the area of social adjustment. Their explanation of higher scores in the area of social adjustment was particularly relevant to the findings in this study. Their rationale for the disparity referenced both the work of Church (1982) and Bale (1991). They referenced relationships with teammates and their strong social bonds (Bale, 1991) as representing the depth of social encounters that Church (1982) deemed critical for adjustment.

The findings in this study do support their findings and rationale. Ridinger and Pastore (2000a) suggested that additional insight on the adjustment of this population would be gained through interviews with international student-athletes and coaches with experience with international recruits, as well as athletic counselors who assist in their adjustment needs. The data in this study found that the international student-athletes did credit the role played by their teammates in their initial adjustment. They indicated that spending time with their teammates eased their missing home. Constant invitations to

'hang out' and share meals with the team made them feel welcomed and supported.

Team practices were also referenced as assisting in the transition. The social support of the team was crucial to their adjustment.

Popp's (2009) study found that domestic student athletes view the purpose of sport to be more about competition in contrast to international student-athletes who value sport in terms of participation. The comments of the athletes in this study did not support this conclusion. One participant discussed her team's "losing mentality" when she first arrived and what turning that around meant to her. She related how great it felt to win as an underdog in one game and to end their fall ball season beating a highly ranked opponent in another competition. Other participants noted their resolve to improve their skills and contribute to their teams' success. The athletes' reference to personal and team goals of winning and their stresses reported in regard to their performance indicated that they were committed to competing and winning.

Coaches Perceptions and the Recruiting of International Student-Athletes

Most of the input from the coaches has already been discussed, but areas worth noting are their perceptions of these athletes and recruiting observations and advice. The coaches valued the benefits derived from the inclusion of these culturally diverse individuals. The athletes brought a culturally ingrained perspective and passion to their training and competition. The coaches spoke highly of their work ethic and their appreciation of the opportunity to study and compete in the U.S. These perceptions were also found in the work of Kissinger (2009).

The greater risk associated with the recruitment of foreign talent was mentioned by some of the coaches. Some athletes might have more difficulty adjusting or move on to the professional ranks before completing their eligibility. The coaches found, as did Wilson and Wolverton (2008) that the increased popularity of sports academies and tournaments showcasing foreign talent here in the United States facilitate their recruiting efforts.

In terms of a best practices approach to recruiting international student-athletes, the coaches found that it was important to ensure that education is important to these students; make sure they are students “first.” It was recommended that a coach meet them, talk with them and see them perform with their own eyes. Once the athlete is on campus, a coach must be patient and realize that their potential will not be realized within the first year. Finally, as coaches attempt to “pull together” increasingly culturally diverse groups, team-building and other activity which promotes unity, cohesion and teamwork is valuable.

Implications/Recommendations

The data in this study indicated that a true ‘cultural exchange’ did not take place between the American athletes and the international student athletes. A deeper understanding of their values and beliefs was neither sought nor achieved. It would seem that simply “encountering” diversity may not lead to the desired outcome. Kissinger’s (2009) suggests that viewing the adjustment issues found in this study should not be viewed solely in the context of problems on the part of the international student-athletes.

The reactions such as “never feeling at home” or “not relating” can be due in part to the perceived biases of Americans.

In the team environment it has been suggested that a shared sport ideology (Bale, 1991) and the competition-based norms of teamwork and cooperation (Kissinger, 2009) might diminish any cultural gap that might exist among teammates. With this theory in mind, the team environment might be a place to begin a cultural exchange among teammates and coaches. In their athletic adjustment, as per the comments of the international student-athletes and coaches, their performance facilitated their integration into the team and their acceptance. It is logical to assume that their athletic culture; their background and training methods, were, in part, responsible for their athletic success and subsequent recruitment. Yukelson (1997) offers a variety of communication and team building interventions that have direct application for helping teams integrate international student-athletes into team culture. For instance, getting athletes to share their core values may begin a cultural exchange of some value. Input from domestic players would be included as well to guard against exacerbating any existing resentment towards the international student-athletes. This exercise could serve as a starting point for further exchange and should be proposed as one in which the betterment of the team is the goal.

For the benefit of coaches, a workshop focusing on the challenges faced by these athletes in all aspects of their college experience; academic, athletic and social might be of value. A greater sensitivity to these issues may assist the coaches in becoming more adept at creating team environments that maximize the potential of their athletes in all areas of their college experience. The workshop would also allow an exchange among

the coaches on successful coaching styles and motivation efforts for culturally diverse teams.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study concerns the varying length of time the participants spent in the U.S. prior to commencement of the study. Six of the participants spent a prolonged period of time in the U.S. prior to arriving at Penn State. The other seven participants' time in the U.S. varied as well with their year of matriculation. This varying length of time could influence the intensity of feelings relayed as well as the accuracy of recalled experiences. A study including only freshman athletes with no prior time spent in the U.S. would offer a more detailed account of initial adjustment difficulties while one including only senior athletes would offer a retrospective view of their entire experience. A further limitation of the study involves the region of origin of the participants. A sample more representative of various world regions might have enabled an examination of adjustment in regard to cultural distance.

Future Research

Future research on international student-athletes can take so many directions as there is little literature that pertains directly to their experience. Research aimed at determining if there exists a retention issue with this population, adjustment based on world regions, and domestic athletes perceptions of international student-athletes would be of value.

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Appendix A

Solicitation Email

Dear (Name of International Student-Athlete),

My name is Gina Bartolacci. I am a senior at Penn State, University Park and am currently working on my Honor's thesis. My thesis will examine the challenges faced by international collegiate athletes as they transition to life in the United States both in their personal lives and as members of their athletic teams. In addition, I will explore the impact that the presence of international athletes has on team chemistry and synergy. As a member of Penn State's field hockey team, I can recall the difficulties I encountered adapting to college life, as well as added pressures that being an athlete brings, and I did not have to deal with cultural adjustments. Through my research, I hope to identify recommendations aimed at easing the adjustment for international athletes as they arrive to compete in the U.S.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study through an interview that focuses on your experience. Your input as international collegiate athletes and coaches is vital to my research. Please reply to my e-mail and let me know if you are interested in helping me so we can schedule an interview.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,
Gina Bartolacci

Appendix B

International Student-Athlete Questionnaire

In order to protect your confidentiality, please do not use your name or the names of others in the responses to these questions.

Transition Questions:

What brought you to the United States?

Why did you choose Penn State?

Thinking back to your first few weeks at Penn State, what helped you fit in and adjust to your new environment?

Did you experience any language/cultural barriers?

*Probe for “Perceptual Filters and cultural differences” including slang, nonverbal body language, and nuances

How is the culture in State College/Penn State different than your culture back home? (What do you miss the most?)

Can you tell me about some of the difficulties you had fitting and adjusting to your new environment?

Did these difficulties persist?

What helped you cope and become more comfortable during your adjustment to your new environment?

*Probe: Social support networks that helped you (teammates, friends, relatives, campus organizations)?

Did you communicate back home with family and friends?

How did you use them (call home, skype, facebook – how often)?

Team Chemistry Questions:

Let’s talk a little about your transition to your new athletic team (first few months)

Do you feel your skills matched up with those of your teammates? Explain.

Regarding your teammates, did they make you feel welcome and part of the team?

Did you feel included or isolated?

Were your teammates helpful and supportive or unhelpful?

Were they standoffish, hard to approach or accepting and welcoming?

Did you feel that you were accepted and part of the team?

Can you explain what your teammates did to help you adjust?

*Probe: What were the actions and behaviors of your teammates like?

What worked that helped you to feel accepted?

Did your teammates take the time to learn about your culture?

Did they ask you questions?

Coaching Style Questions:

What did your coaching staff do to help you feel comfortable in your transition to Penn State?

Was the coach's methods of motivation and style of communication similar or different to what you experienced back home? Explain (e.g., positive vs. in your face criticism)

Think in terms of the normative standards set down by the coach, the goals and expectations of the program, the commitment required from everyone on the team to do well and excel at a division one program such as the one you played for – was it easy or difficult to adjust to the multiple demands and style of coaching you received? Explain/elaborate your adjustment to the demands.

Probe: Was this easy or difficult?

Team Synergy Questions:

In terms of team synergy (how the team executes and comes together in training and competition), did you feel the team worked well together as a unit?

Probe: Task cohesion - What was the fit like for you? Was your role valued? Did you make positive contributions to the team?

Social Cohesion – off the field - what was the fit like for you? Did you get along with your teammates? Did you feel included? Accepted? Valued? Have a sense of belonging?

Did you feel or perceive any resentment?

Probe: Did you perceive any problems?

Did you feel like you were taking away a teammate's position?

Did you feel your presence took away scholarships of others?

How did you cope? How did the team cope?

What was the environment like?

Looking back, from when you first came here and over the long term, is there anything that could have made your transition smoother?

Sustainability Questions:

Let's talk about what you learned during your tenure here at Penn State ...

What strategies helped you adjust best over the long term?

Who specifically helped you acclimate over the long term?

*Probe: What worked for you? What helped you be comfortable?

Where did you find your support?

Were there specific experiences/situations that helped you?

What didn't help you?

Looking back over the long run was there a turning point or specific incident you can recall where your teammates felt more comfortable and confident in you and your ability to fit within the team. Explain and probe – this could be on or off the field/court.

Earlier you talked about the transitions and adjustments culturally you went through your first few months at Penn State. Reflecting back over the long run, were there other obstacles or problems you had to deal with adjusting to life here at Penn State as an international student-athlete (e.g., athletically, personally, socially). If so, please explain.

In terms of your team and coaching staff, were there any problems or issues that came up you had to deal with adjusting over the long term?

Overall, was your experience a positive or negative one?

Probe: Did you feel included?

Did you value the experience?

Are you glad you decided to come to the U.S./Penn State?

If you had a do over, would you do anything differently?

Are there any other issues regarding your transition to Penn State and/or fit within the team we have not discussed that you feel are important to talk about?

If you had any advice for an incoming international freshman student-athlete transitioning and adjusting to life at Penn State and new teammates, what would it be?

Coach Questionnaire

In order to protect your confidentiality, please do not use your name or the names of others in the responses to these questions.

I see that you have some international student-athletes on your roster. As a coach, what are some of the transitions you have noticed with international student-athletes fitting in with the new environment and team?

*Probe: Why do you feel it's important to bring in International Student Athletes?
Opportunity to increase the talent pool and productivity of your team?
Is it because their talent and training programs are better in another country?
Is it because of the experiences they bring to your team?
Probe: Were you proactive in finding resources to help them before they arrive at Penn State?

Did you have any concerns about team fit and team chemistry?

Probe: What did you and/or team do to help them adjust?

Probe: Where did international athletes get their support?

What roles did leaders/team captains play in helping international athletes adjust to both the team and State College?

From your perspective, were there any communication issues the athlete ran into? Slang?

Probe: Were there any problems in the way athletes internalized instruction?

Communicated with teammates? Processed constructive criticism? Fit in with the team?

Did you sense any resentment on the part of your American athletes by having International athletes as part of the team?

Probe: Why or why not?

If you had a do over, would you do anything differently?

Based on your experience recruiting foreign athletes and their first year transition, what "best-practices" would you recommend to help someone feel comfortable in their new environment?



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Transitions and Adjustments of International Student-Athletes

Principal Investigator: Gina Bartolacci, Schreyer Honors College Student
140 West Fairmount
University Park, PA 16801
(267) 733-2111; gmb5026@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. David Yukelson
Morgan Center
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-4396; y39@psu.edu

- Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to find what makes it hard for international athletes in college to get used to being in the United States and playing on teams here. It will also explore how they work together with their U.S. teammates.
- Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer X questions if you are an **International Collegiate Athlete** in an interview. The interview will be taped using a tape recorder.
- Duration:** The interview should take approximately 45 minutes.
- Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Yukelson’s office in 301 Bank of America Center. Dr. Yukelson and Gina Bartolacci are the only people that will have access to the recordings. The audio recordings will be transcribed. The tapes will be destroyed in June 2013. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
- Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Gina Bartolacci at (267) 733-2111 with questions or concerns about this study.
- Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent

Date



Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Transitions and Adjustments of International Student-Athletes

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Advisor: Dr. David Yukelson
301 Back of America Center
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-4396; y39@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to find what makes it hard for international athletes in college to get used to being in the United States and playing on teams here. It will also explore how they work together with their U.S. teammates.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer X questions if you are a **Collegiate Coach** in an interview. The interview will be taped using a tape recorder.
3. **Duration:** The interview should take approximately 45 minutes.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored in a secured and locked filing cabinet in Dr. Yukelson’s office in 301 Bank of America Center. Dr. Yukelson and Gina Bartolacci are the only people that will have access to the recordings. The audio recordings will be transcribed. The tapes will be destroyed in June 2013. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Gina Bartolacci at (267) 733-2111 with questions or concerns about this study.
6. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Schreyer Honors College

Academic Vita of Gina Bartolacci

Name: Gina Bartolacci

Address: 140 West Fairmount
State College, PA 18977

E-Mail Id: gmb5026

Education

The Pennsylvania State University, Smeal College of Business
The Schreyer Honors College
Honors in Kinesiology
Major: B.S.: Finance
Minor: Spanish

Honors

Dean's List: Every semester of enrollment
Big Ten Distinguished Scholar Award 2008-2009

Thesis Title: Transitions and Adjustments of International Student-Athletes
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Dave Yukelson

Work Experience

Dick's Sporting Goods

May 2009 – August 2009
Pittsburgh, PA
Corporate Intern

- Assisted in the day to day operations of the buying department of Kids Athletic Apparel
- Shadowed the assistant buyer and participated in business strategy development
- Completed a cross-industry competitive analysis of retailers to identify future opportunities for Dick's Girl's graphic tee assortment

Penn State Women's Field Hockey

Summer 2007, 2008
University Park, PA
Camp Counselor

- Trained 200 7th-12th grade field hockey players
- Supervised campers on a daily basis and was responsible for their safety during the nights while in the dormitories

Awards

Recipient of this year's Society of Industrial & Office Realtors (SIOR) scholarship

Professional Memberships

Omicron Delta Kappa, Spring 2009- Present

Member

- A national leadership honor society for college students, faculty, staff, administrators, and alumni

Beta Gamma Sigma, Spring 2009- Present

Member

- An international honor society that recognizes business excellence for collegiate schools of business

Community Service Involvement

Student-Athlete Advisory Board (SAAB)

University Park, PA

Treasurer

May 2009 - Present

Team Representative

September 2007- May 2009

- Participated in community service events including THON (Penn State Dance Marathon), THON Kick-off Carnival, and Second Mile
- Conducted raffle ticket sales for the Kevin Dare Scholarship Fund during Penn State football games and collectively earned over \$1,000 per game

“Penn” Pal Program

Fall 2006-Present

- Corresponded with local elementary school students on a monthly basis by letter
- Acted as a role-model by encouraging kids to be active by getting involved in extra-curricular activities, to set goals, and make healthy decisions regarding drugs and alcohol
- Attended the annual “Penn” Pal Carnival and had the opportunity to interact with the local children

Language Proficiency: Conversational in Spanish