

Competition, Cooperation and Communication: International and Minority Student – Athletes

Sherilene Gelderblom* & Aixa Perez-Prado

This exploratory qualitative research project will focus on how diverse international and minority student-athletes face communication and identity challenges at home, in classes, and on teams. Research addressed the academic and identity formation challenges of student-athletes and explained that educators' involvement in student-athletes' athletic world might assist them to accommodate student athletes better (Jolly, 2008). Further research states that cross-cultural interpersonal conflict affect sport-team cohesiveness (Stura & Johnson, 2017) and that student-athletes might encounter a higher degree of stress (Rodriquez, 2014). The negotiation process of the athletic culture with the non-athletic academic culture will be analyzed. Communication challenges between peer-athletes as well as with coaches will be examined. Findings will be gathered by distributing surveys to international and minority student-athletes at FIU, followed by face-to-face interviews with a subset of surveyed athletes. Additionally, secondary literature sources are being reviewed. I hope to determine how the home, athletic, and academic environment plays into the overall identity formation of international and minority student-athletes. I aspire to pose strategies to bridge the gap between diverse athletes within their teams and between the athletic and academic environment; and to aid student-athletes to form a multi-faceted identity. I anticipate that international and minority student athletes construct and understand identity through overlapping spheres of influence including language, culture and athleticism that are all manifested and apparent in classes, on teams and within families. I further anticipate that there exists a communication barrier between peer-athletes, and between athletes and coaches due to different cultures and languages, as well as between athletes and non-athletic academic individuals due to biased views of each other's groups. The project findings might assist all stakeholders, including coaches, advisors, and educators to integrate methods within their teaching and training to better engage student athletes and assist them to establish a sense of belonging.