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Research Study

Part A-Cover Letter:

Roller-coaster rides have many highs and many lows. Those highs promote excitements, and you feel as if you're on top of the world while those lows make you feel as if you hit rock bottom. My process has been roller-coaster; a fun exciting ride with highs and lows.

For me, this project has taken many turns in many different directions. I started out in my observation focusing on game scouts and how they correlate with reading and writing. I finished with my research focusing on International first year student-athletes transition into college and their struggles and adjustments on and off the field. This huge jump was not planned or even promoted, but once I did a little research and got down into what I wanted to focus on I realized how little information there was on first-year international student athletes and their personal adjustment. This felt like a perfect avenue to explore because one of my good friends here is from Japan-talk about a culture change. So, I felt in many ways this research spoke to me as after this project I find myself catching times when I think like I ran this experience, and my teammates are my data!

I had a major low in trying to write my research questions. There were either too broad, not broad enough, or not worded in a way that I saw fit for my research. I struggled finding that happy medium with each question taking their own path. To the point where I met with MB. Going into this meeting I had no clue how my questions were going solve themselves, but after my meeting I found so much clarity in the direction I wanted to take. My questions were specific

and had my twist with the open-ended direction I wanted. It took me a while to really reach out and get that help and going forward that is something I would have done differently. I would encourage myself and others to use all the resources we have available because those conversations and resources make life so much easier than just guessing or being in a standstill trying to figure it out by yourself. I had a lot of success when it came to conducting my study. I knew exactly what direction I wanted to go down and how I wanted to find my research. I felt confident using a survey and interview to get the best results with my population. That part I found “the high”. I also did not have a ton of trouble finding sources. I think once I realized that these sources are not going to lead me to find my answers but instead serve varying roles in certain parts of my research, I was able to turn that low in my project into a high. I found this project fun, beneficial, and relatable to me in my everyday life. This roller-coaster is something I would ride over and over again!

Part B-Observation Notes:

The discourse community I chose to research is the Louisville Women’s Lacrosse team that I am currently on and a part of. This team consists of a little less than 40 athletes, three coaches, two fitness trainers and one medical trainer. The setting takes place on our own lacrosse stadium 11am-2pm six days a week. Then we can use the field further outside of that time slot every day for extra work.

Reading and Writing in this community is not the typical reading and writing most would think we use day in and out. Although this lacrosse community is not reading books or in a room filled with books, we use reading to further our performance on the field. For example, film is a big part of the game. Watching our competitors before we play them gives us a bigger advantage. Before every game we have a scout. This scout is anywhere between 5-7 pages of information about the other team, their best players at every position, their tendencies, and what we need to do to be successful against them. It is vital that we read this, understand it, and know it like the back of our hand. This reading is almost more stressful sometimes because you have a whole team that you are playing for, and you never want the scout to be your downfall. Now while doing scout, I observed many players including myself that take additional notes or comments added by the coaches and write it down. Some use paper and pen, while others use Mac books or iPhones. These additional writing strategies help to further instill the game plan while also putting it into language that one might comprehend better. It almost reminds me of doing a summary after reading a short book to highlight the key points. It is in your words therefore you comprehend it faster and more efficient.

My observation really focused on my scout because I found that so interesting how it organized reading and writing into everyday tasks to further success on and off the field. However, my study starts with the same community though did not end up being about the scout. What ended up being very important to me was noticing how new members on the team fit into the culture or change the culture with the existing members. How freshman actions may differ than senior actions. For example, a freshman has a pen and paper out for scout re-watching four or five times trying to write down every word afraid to mess up, while a senior has the pen and paper out, but only picks up the pen once to write something down. Or a freshman staying after to do extra reps of going over film, while the seniors pack up and leave. But then, hours later you see those freshmen stressing out about that one test they have, while the seniors are chill as a cucumber because they know it is just one text. Through my observations, it has been eye-opening to see the ways in which reading, and writing has impacted the Women's lacrosse team, but it has also been interesting to notice the trends in how freshman students' athletes act compared to senior student athletes. And domestic freshman athletes compared to international freshman student athletes. It just shows how everyone's transition and journey is different when entering into a new setting for the first time.

Part C: Research Articles:

Huml, M. R. (2016). *Examining the motivations and benefifits of student-athletes performing community service*. Retrieved from <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3405&context=etd>.

In this article I read focused on the correlation between **community service and student-athletes performance**. Performance in their sport, in school, and the motivation that comes from doing community service. This article gives straight data from the NCAA and is a measurable model for the fact that surveys my population and gives an answer to what can help the transition from high school to college. They used the athletes- and their grades, performance, etc. to get the data to see if there was a correlation. What also came from this article was the correlation between The Astin's Student Involvement Theory and athletic academic experience. This was also beneficial for coaches and advisors. Athletes have to meet the National Collegiate Athletic Association eligibility requirements and so academic performance is a huge piece in the transition. While I know that this source might not show the findings or lead me to my data and answers, I think it helps to provide a baseline for the varying types of answers I could be getting as well as how to propose my questions.

Popp, N. (2007). *International student-athlete perception of college sport and its effect on adjustment to college*. Retrieved from <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2141&context=etd>.

In this next article it focuses on solving the issue of international students' adjustments to college. International student athletes are a very common thing in sports and is growing even more common. It talks about how their transition is different that American citizens. It talks about creating a positive and productive transition because it would enhance more recruitment of top international athletes. It gives insight of providing equal opportunities, equal treatment, and making it stress free. With them using the pool of all athletes both domestic and international

helped to collect data to answer these questions and could possibly help in understanding data I could see prior to my interviews. To see what the big factors are for many; native county being a big one. International students are immediately placed into a team structure and socialization with that team. Many like this article say it makes for a smoother transition because they have immediate friends. I want to see if my study upholds that theory. Now our studies will be different as they used 2 groups to test their theory; a peer-partnering program with host nationals compared to international students living on their own. This then measured if international students would do better academically if they were coupled with a host national student who would be a peer mentor/partner. This study hit on many different aspects of the transition for all people of varying levels of academic English ability. My study is more of the aftereffects of freshman college not comparing two groups.

Soderstrom, E., University, S., Chowdhury, E., Franz, M., Brennan, A., Farrell, R., . . . Lee, M. (2019, October 16). *The Struggles of Being a College Athlete*. Retrieved April 21, 2021, from <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/the-struggles-of-being-college-athlete>

This article focuses on the struggles and hardships that college athletes face. I think it would help to better my research for the fact that it is written by a female author who was a track and field athlete. She talks about the negativity her friends brought along with the judgement of her being in the library too much or being tired. This led to her putting more pressure on herself to fit this mold. Her focusing on females and their hardships as athletes brings a different side or outlook than general common struggles, because female relationships are very different than males to state one difference. Females might have different outlooks than males and this article helps to give my research versatility. It also brings about the female outlook on college and common themes I might come across in my research.

Part D-Study 1:

1. What do international student athletes on the University of Louisville Lacrosse team identify as their biggest adjustments in college?
2. How does a lacrosse environment ease the transition for first-year international students, and in what ways does it not ease the transition?
3. Other than lacrosse, what other things make the adjustment easier? How else do student athletes find resources or communities that help them adjust to life as an international college student?

I chose to focus on international students first year student athletes instead of just all first-year student athletes because they are understudied. There has not been a ton of work done on that population and they too have specific needs and struggles. With the increase in the number of student athletes that come to the United States to pursue a colligate sport, there is not much information about their experiences in that transition. That is also why I framed my research questions to be broad. This is initially because I want to hear people talk about what their struggles. I want their perspective without me assuming what those hardships might be or leading to any pressure to “say what they think I want to hear”. A more open-ended question leads to the responses being more creative with honest answers. Not only that but what I might think the hardest part of the transition might not be actually be the hardest part. With those open-ended questions I am open to hearing those answers and letting my population dictate the rest of

my research. My specific questions will change after my survey answers depending on what responses and information I receive. The purpose of my study is to find out the struggles and hardships first year international students face and what that might look like on and off the field. They are a different population and therefore they could have different struggles than domestic student athletes on the transition from high school to college aside being in a whole new country.

My first two questions focus on the lacrosse team and environment and those struggles because lacrosse does take up majority of a student athletes time. This can relay a lot of struggles depending on how that athlete adjustment goes. I asked those because being a student athlete is a huge part of the freshman college experience and that adjustment could make or break freshman year. Student-athlete life is legit. When you are not practicing or being an athlete, you are being a student. With this taking up ninety percent of college life, I focused two out of three of my questions to reflect that as being an international student can make that even more difficult. My third question relates to the ten percent out of the field and classroom. You can be succeeding on the lacrosse field but really struggling off the field and have a challenging freshman year with the language or getting to know people. I want to hear about social aspects going on, things like REACH, community service, or team events. I want to hear about the structural events that are being planned for the student athletes and how that does/doesn't help. Additionally, I want to hear about the informal ways of social aspects as well. How athletes form friend groups, or what they do outside of scheduled events for a community building atmosphere. I want to hear both sides for the fact that I want to hear their perspectives. If they are not using REACH, I want to know why? This goes along with my theme with this research project focusing on my population dictating the answers and being able to give honest perspectives on all areas of the college transition.

Part E-Data Collection Methods: My first Method is using a survey where international Women's lacrosse student athletes identify the hardships of the freshman year transition. Then, I would conduct interviews that would go into further detail into why students identified those as their biggest struggle or strength and having conversations to further their answers. I did not choose their biggest struggle for the fact that I want athletes to identify what they see as their biggest struggle.

Survey:

- I would first use a survey to help me answer gauge common answers or trends within my population for all my questions. I would survey around 10 international student athletes with a survey that would take around 10-15 minutes at the most. This survey would include statements of potential struggles and I would ask the student athletes to rate on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the most challenging part of college and 1 being the easiest adjustment to college.
- Some of those survey questions might include
- Please rate this on a scale 1-5 with 5 being the most challenging and 1 being the easiest adjustment to college
 - 1. Having to time manage between lacrosse, classes, and social life.
 - 2. The commitment to lacrosse 6 days a week while missing school for travel.
 - 3. The adjustment to living away from family or loved ones
 - 4. Living in a new country and having to full speak English to communicate with others.

- 5. The social life and trying to make new friends or having trouble making new friends
- 6. Being on your own: having to make meals, manage money, do laundry among other independent college living examples.
- I would revise and edit my research my questions as well as my interview questions based on my survey answers
- A limitation with this is that one, I could get very little responses and two, they might not be accurate or try to act like everything is "perfect" or fill out what they think is the "right" or most normal answers that people want to hear.

Interview:

- Then I would conduct interviews to get perspectives on the viewpoints from different athletes. I would be able to develop trends and hear the stories and experiences that go along with it. I would be interviewing international student athletes that play on a lacrosse team. If I survey ten people, I will hope to get 8 of those surveys back. After looking at the responses and common themes and differences I would interview around 4-5 different people. These interviews would take anywhere from a half hour to an hour depending on how many stories or further details the interviewee shares in relation to their survey responses.
 - This could be trends, or maybe just questions about their specific survey or both.
- Depending on the responses some questions I would ask/modify something like this or anticipate talking about
 - 1. "Why did you put _____ question as the most challenging?"
 - 2. "Can you share some stories or explain why you put _____ as the most challenging?"
 - 3. "Can you tell me about a time when _____?"
 - 4. "What are some struggles that you had in the start of the semester and what did you do to adjust it?"
 - 5. "If you were entering your freshman year all over again what is something you knew before?"
 - 6. "Is there anything you thought you would struggle with in your freshman year that you ended up adjusting well to?"
 - 7. "Outside of lacrosse what did you find hard?" (this helps to answer question 3 in my study)
 - 8. "I noticed that many student athletes put _____ as a common struggle, why do you think that is?"
 - 9. Tell me about the formal things such as REACH, COMMUNITY SERVICE...?
 - 10. Tell me about the informal ways you make friends groups and socially interact?
- I put lacrosse first for the fact that feel that it is on everyone's mind first. Many times, that is the reason an individual chose a certain school and so talking about that leads to many being able to open up about that first. I decided to put adjustments last because I feel that sometimes it takes people some time to open up about that is not always something many students' athletes want to disclose the minute they sit down and talk about it as it can be a hard thing to discuss if the adjustments had been hard. As far as my

questions goes, I choose to hit on every area on my survey. Because I do not know the responses of my survey answers yet, I chose to focus on all areas so that I have questions prepared for whatever information I get. I left my interview questions more open ended so that I could elaborate on the stories and experiences that my population has faced leading to a more honest conversation instead of a cookie cutter textbook answer. My survey answers lead me to my interview questions as one affects the other. Together, they both solve the research questions I am trying to answer.

When using my interview to further my research a limitation could arise for little variation in personal for the fact that interviews do take a long time to conduct and so I might only have time to interview a handful of people. Interviews can take a long time especially when doing them individually. It is timely which means less personal but more information personally. It might now gage an entire population respectively. I do think for the purpose of my research it is worth it so I can really understand other viewpoints and hear stories even if it results in less people.