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International Student-Athletes in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS): Motivations and Experiences

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Kinesiology

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT-ATHLETES IN CANADIAN INTERUNIVERSITY SPORT
(CIS): MOTIVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

Daniel Grbac

Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the landscape of international student-athletes participating in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) with respect to number, sport, and gender breakdown, and to determine the motivations of these athletes for migrating to a Canadian academic institution as well as their experiences. Of the over 10,000 CIS student-athletes, approximately 5% are international student-athletes. In addition, the sports with the highest number of international student-athletes were soccer and basketball for males, and basketball and soccer for females. Semi-structured interviews with 16 international student-athletes from the four regional associations determined that the majority of participants were motivated to attend a Canadian university for the opportunity to combine academics and athletics. This study may benefit university institutions, their athletics programs, as well as the CIS by providing knowledge of the motives of international student-athletes as well as ways to enrich the international student-athlete experience.

Keywords: intercollegiate sport, international student-athletes

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Intercollegiate sport, commonly referred to as interuniversity sport in Canada, has provided competitive opportunities for student-athletes for over one hundred years. An organization with extensive breadth and scope, Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), which is the governing body for university sport in Canada, currently has 56 member universities and over 11,000 student-athletes across Canada who “participate in 12 sport disciplines with a schedule of close to 3,000 events” running from September to March (Ilacqua, n.d.). Characterized as having the best athletic facilities in Canada, quality services, as well as superior coaching, having student-athletes in the CIS play “for national honours represents an exciting vibrant dimension of Canadian society” (Ilacqua, n.d.). The CIS is composed of four regional conferences: Atlantic University Sport (AUS), Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), Ontario University Athletics (OUA), and Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA).

Intercollegiate athletics is essentially a North American phenomenon that exists in Canada and the United States. That being said, the organizational model adopted by the CIS, and the organization as a whole, is different from the United States intercollegiate governing bodies, namely, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The NCAA is a three-tier divisional classification based on the “size of the financial base, the number and types of sports offered, the focus of the program, and the existence of athletics grants-in-aid” (Staurowsky & Abney, 2007, p.68). Unlike the NCAA, the NAIA is focused on “small athletic programs that are dedicated to character-driven intercollegiate athletic programs” (NAIA, n.d.). Although the CIS, NCAA, and NAIA are different with regards to location, student-athlete involvement, number of teams and

championships offered, as well as their respective size and depth, they share commonalities that extend beyond the focus on student-athleticism, amateurism, and sport in general. One major commonality lies in the presence of international student-athletes. The international student-athlete represents a diverse population, who “bring with them an entirely different background in sport, and are products of different development systems” (Popp, Hums, & Greenwell, 2009, p.94). With respect to international student-athletes in the NCAA, for the 2011-2012 academic year, there were 14,455 “non-resident aliens” competing in all sports across all divisions in the NCAA (NCAA, 2011), which represented 3.14% of the total student-athlete population. Thus, international sporting competition has become a pervasive phenomenon, which has consequently led to the “internationalization of domestic sports activity...throughout the modern Western world” (Bale, 1991, p.3).

Informing the presence of international student-athletes in intercollegiate athletics are the processes of globalization and internationalization. These processes not only underpin the increase in the number of international students as well as international student-athletes traveling to and from countries to study and play intercollegiate athletics abroad, but have also served to normalize the movement of international student-athletes. With today’s globalized and knowledge-based economy, geographical and cultural boundaries are continuously being transcended. This transcendence of geographical and cultural boundaries denotes or alludes to the movement of people, ideas, and goods. The 21st century world is ultimately characterized by ‘objects in motion’ and is alternatively regarded as a ‘world of flows’ (Appadurai, 2003). These objects “include ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques” (Appadurai, 2003, p.5). Such a description of the nature of the 21st century leads Hannerz (1990) to call it a ‘world culture’ of diversity, a lack of homogenization,

and most notably, a “network of social relationships” characterized by a “flow of meanings as well as of people and goods” (p.237). Thus, the influence and effect of the processes of globalization and internationalization are pervasive throughout all major aspects of the 21st century world, including the areas of higher education and sport. That being said, a relevant example that illustrates not only the dynamic forces that shape the globalization and internationalization of sport, but also combines both higher education and sport together, is the presence of international student-athletes competing in intercollegiate athletics.

Although there is a presence of international student-athletes in the CIS, there is an absence of literature surrounding these international student-athletes, specifically their motivations and experiences. In addition, there is no data available to document the number of international student-athletes and their sports in which they appear in the CIS. In order to address this gap, an overview of the landscape of these international student-athletes, as well as an analysis of the factors that influence student-athletes to attend Canadian academic institutions coupled with their subsequent experiences, is warranted.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

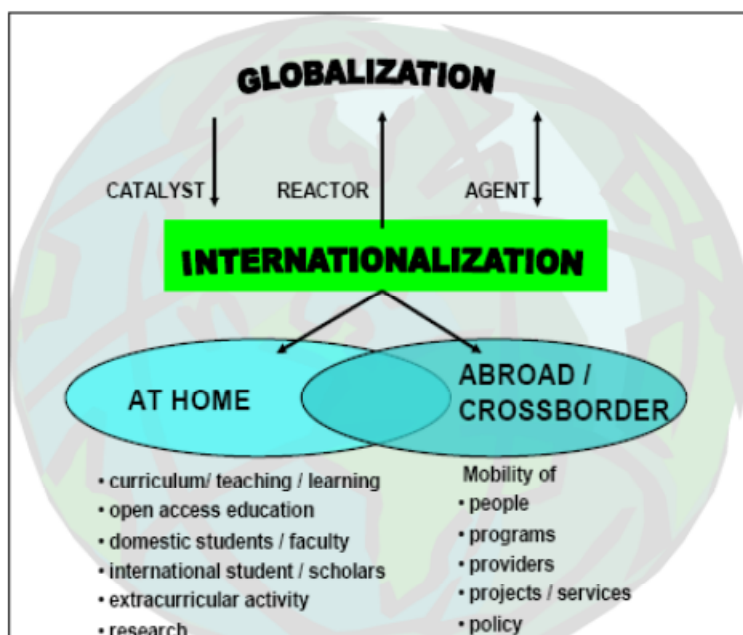
The literature review begins with an overview of the process of globalization and internationalization, as well as their impact on higher education. Secondly, a discussion on the current nature, demographics, and importance of the international student population in Canada as well as their subsequent importance follows. Thirdly, the impact of globalization and internationalization on sport, in general, and the Canadian interuniversity sport system, is discussed. Finally, given the absence of international student-athlete literature within Canada, a brief review of the literature on NCAA international student-athletes, particularly their motivations, are addressed. Despite not being representative of the Canadian scene, the NCAA literature serves to contextualize the status of international student-athletes in the CIS.

2.1 Globalization, Internationalization and Higher Education

One cannot dispel the notion that we live in a global era no longer defined by nations and borders (Danylchuk, 2012). In fact, as noted by Danylchuk (2012), “the phrase “the world is getting smaller” has become a cliché to suggest that globalization has affected every dimension of life, including sport” (p.1). According to Knight and de Wit (1997), globalization is the “flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, value, ideas...across borders” (as cited in Knight, 1999, p.14). Knight (1999) argues that the effects of globalization, created by the aforementioned ‘flow’, are subjective and specific to a country or region because of their unique history and culture. Rather than focusing on the ‘flow’ of objects, globalization for Robertson (1992) is a recent phenomenon that can be defined as the “compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p.8). Although Robertson (1990) argues for globalization as being characterized by accelerated ‘global interdependence’, he specifically

believes that it should not be “equated with or seen as a direct consequence of an amorphously created modernity” (p.8). Alternatively, globalization should be viewed as that which continues beyond modernization processes (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2002). These commonly held definitions allude to and are a result of the fact that globalization has not only become an important topic for discussion, but also an important phenomenon in recent years. A related process of interest, particularly within the area of higher education and sport, is the process of internationalization. Similar to the process of globalization, the concept and nature of internationalization has been well-documented, especially within the areas of higher education and sport. Before exploring the concept of internationalization, it is important to distinguish between internationalization from globalization and vice versa. Despite the fact that both phenomena originated from the same ‘social dynamic’, “they are different in terms of scale and intensity. Moreover, they exhibit opposite and contradictory tendencies” (Gacel-Avila, 2005, p.124). Knight (2012) believes that both globalization and internationalization are processes and are different in that globalization “addresses the idea of worldwide or global not the notion of relations among countries” (p.4). The phenomena of globalization and internationalization share a commonality in that they are dynamically linked, but ultimately differ in that “globalisation can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalisation is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way” (Knight, 1999, p.14). Thus, internationalization, particularly the internationalization of higher education in a country such as Canada, is an example of the consequences, albeit positive, of the impact of globalization. Although used to depict the two pillars of internationalization, Figure 1 also provides a simplified version of the dynamic relationship between both globalization and internationalization.

**Figure 1: Two pillars of Internationalization:
At home and crossborder**



Knight 2010

As is evident in the top half of Figure 1, as referenced by Knight (2012), globalization is regarded as the catalyst which essentially produces or leads to the process of internationalization. While both globalization and internationalization are deemed ‘agents’ in this global condition, internationalization is outlined as the reactor of globalization. This figure also perpetuates the notion of globalization as an overarching process from which stem all other related processes. As mentioned, in addition to differentiating globalization from internationalization, Figure 1, by outlining the two pillars of internationalization in relation to higher education, serves as a segue into the varied meanings and interpretations of internationalization as well as its confusion and evolution over the years.

One of the main reasons for the increased emphasis and centrality of internationalization is because of its positive influence on the reputations of universities as well as its ability to moderate the “relationship between the institution’s reputation and its institutional performance with regard to research quality, teaching quality, and graduate employability” (Delgado-

Marquez, Escudero-Torres & Hurtado-Torres, 2013, p.619). The positive influence of the internationalization of higher education on university reputation is ultimately a form of university branding and profile. The growth of a university's reputation or profile influences other factors such as university rankings as well as international student recruitment, which is regarded as a way to increase university revenue (Svensson & Wihlborg, 2010). Therefore, having a positive reputation and subsequently, a higher university ranking, is being sought after by universities because it is an effective and strategic method to brand as well as market themselves worldwide. According to Delgado-Marquez et al. (2013), internationalization contributes to "accruing funds or raising the university's profile and visibility on national and international levels" (p.623). Moreover, a university's ranking is an indication of the quality of its education which is a desirable characteristic to possess in order to remain competitive as well as to recruit international students (Morrish and Lee, 2011). Given that students now have a wide range of choices to consider "before making decisions about where to study" (Williams and Van Dyke, 2008, p.1), a positive image and profile of universities is of vital importance.

In addition to the international branding and profile image, the recent focus of the internationalization of higher education as it pertains to knowledge production is also of great importance. Jiang (2008) believes that the recent trend towards regarding higher education as a rich commodity and the subsequent acceleration of its internationalization, stems from the fact that 'knowledge' is now being associated as an industry with higher education serving as a "knowledge carrier and agent" (p.349). Moreover, globalization processes have facilitated the acceleration of the internationalization of higher education thereby creating a 'knowledge economy' which subsequently justifies "the importance of knowledge for increasing individual and national competitiveness in the global marketplace" (Jiang, 2008, p.349). The intensification

of the internationalization of higher education has led Knight (2012) to describe this recent phenomenon as the 'brain drain-gain-train'. In describing the internationalization of higher education as the 'brain drain-gain-train', Knight (2012) points to the obsession of university institutions to attract the "best and brightest talent to study and work in their institutions in order to supply the 'brain power' for innovation and research agendas" (p.15). The original goal of the internationalization of higher education was to help international students obtain a degree and acquire skills to take back to their respective countries. Such a goal has not only faded, but has essentially been replaced by the latest race, so to speak, to attract and retain students, commonly referred to now as human resources (Knight, 2012).

Within the field of higher education, Knight (2003) provides a comprehensive and applicable working definition of internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education" (p.2). While serving as a working definition to describe the process of internationalization within the field of higher education, Knight's (2003) definition specifically pertains to the institutional and national level of higher education and not the individual level.

2.2 The Status of International Students in Canadian Higher Education

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'international students', considered to be a subgroup of foreign students, is a term that refers to students who have essentially "crossed borders expressly with the intention to study" (OECD, 2012, p.63) or who are "not permanent or usual residents of their country of study" (OECD, 2012, p.37). With the accelerated transformation of educational and economic landscapes coupled with the ascent of the 'knowledge economy', international students, and students in

general, are receiving more opportunities than ever before to develop themselves and their skills through education (OECD, 2012). Moreover, participating in higher or tertiary education, specifically in other countries, is now being regarded as the means by which students can not only expand their knowledge of societies, cultures, and languages, but can also “improve their prospectus in globalised sectors of the labour market” (OECD, 2012, p.360).

Statistics from the OECD reveal that between 2000 and 2010, the number of foreign university students enrolled outside their countries of origin has increased by 99%, leading to an annual average growth rate of 7.1% (OECD, 2012). Moreover, over the last three decades, the number of students enrolled outside their country of origin has risen from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010, resulting in a fivefold increase (OECD, 2012). Given these global statistics on international student mobility, it is interesting to note that in 2012, Canada ranked 7th worldwide as the most popular destination for international students with a 94% increase in international enrollment from 2001 to 2012 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, n.d.). In 2012 there were a total of 265,377 international students in Canada. Furthermore, international students in Canada represented 6.5% of all students enrolled in post-secondary education (CBIE, n.d.). Of the 265,377 international students, 55% were enrolled in university institutions. The most popular provinces were Ontario with 42%, British Columbia with 26%, and Quebec with 14% of the total international student population (CBIE, n.d.). This comes as no surprise as 79% of all post-secondary students (domestic and international) reside within Ontario (39%), Quebec (26%), and British Columbia (14%). Despite representing 173 different countries from around the world, 60% of the international students in Canada are from China, India, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United States (CBIE, n.d.). Moreover, since 2001, the number of Chinese students in Canada has increased by 296% from 20,371 to 80,627 (CBIE, n.d.).

2.3 The Importance of International Education in Canada

The aforementioned global and Canadian statistics on international student mobility allude to the increasing significance and value that countries and individual persons themselves are placing on the role and importance of post-secondary education. According to Knight (2012), as the “21st century progresses, the international dimension of postsecondary education is becoming increasingly important and at the same time, more and more complex” (p.1). The complexity of and need to include an international dimension into postsecondary education is a result of an increasing ‘obsession’ that university institutions possess (Knight, 2012). An example of the complexity and importance placed on international education involves Canada’s International Education Strategy. In 2011, an advisory panel was formed with the support of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada to assess the status of international education in Canada and to propose recommendations and strategies. The advisory panel concluded their final report with the vision that Canada was to become the “21st century leader in international education in order to attract top talent...thereby providing key building blocks for our future prosperity” (Advisory Panel, 2012, p.viii). Not only was international education regarded as a key ‘driver’ for Canada’s prosperity, but it has also been synonymous with being a “driver of the Canadian economy” as well as a “pipeline to the Canadian labour market”. In accordance with the aforementioned advisory panel, Knight (2004) believes that such ‘key drivers’ of change also include “increased labour mobility, more emphasis on the market economy...focus on the knowledge society...and lifelong learning” (p.7).

The economic rationale for the internationalization of higher education is a function of the globalization of the economy and the need for countries to remain competitive by “developing a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce and through investing in applied research” (Knight,

1999, p.18). Moreover, with the current economic situation, many countries and their markets are placing value on the “export of products and services as an important revenue generating activity” (Knight, 1999, p.19). The value of international students from a Canadian economic perspective is evident in the fact that in 2010, international students in Canada spent “in excess of \$7.7 billion on tuition, accommodation, and discretionary spending”, ultimately resulting in the production of 86,570 jobs and \$455 million in government tax revenue. With respect to study abroad programs, in 2007-2008, 32 academic programs by 16 universities generated \$29.72 million in tuition revenue. In the same year, 57 Canadian colleges generated \$22.52 million in tuition revenue through 64 academic programs and 52 educational services (Advisory Panel, 2012, p.11).

Canadian education has become the country’s 11th largest export, in addition to being the largest export to China. Providing education for international students in Canada has the potential to advance and create “trade and foreign policy relationships” with other countries (Advisory Panel, 2012, p.x). Such ‘knowledge export’, noted by Danylchuk (2011) as the “provision of products and services overseas” (p.5) is an essential component of universities worldwide. The use of education as an export is also reiterated by Knight (1999) who claims that the ‘massification’ of higher education has led to a “strong interest on the part of large and small countries to make the export of education products and services a major part of their foreign policy” (p.18).

In addition to sustaining the Canadian economy through their expenditures, international students are now regarded as commodities in that obtaining an education from Canadian university institutions will allow them to become qualified and skilled enough to fill ‘skilled labour’ shortages prevalent in the country (Advisory Panel, 2012, p.x). Finally, in addition to educating and training international students, the internationalization of Canadian education is also

instrumental in allowing Canadian students to develop a global perspective in a ‘knowledge-driven economy’ (Advisory Panel, 2012, p.viii).

2.4 Globalization, Internationalization, and Sport

Although the processes of globalization and internationalization have and are currently affecting the field of higher education, it is important to realize that these processes transcend the higher education realm. Thus, the area of sport, particularly intercollegiate sport, is not immune to the effects of globalization and internationalization.

The evolution and transformation of common folk activities to modern sport created a process known as ‘sportification’ (Sage, 2010). ‘Sportification’ is essentially a “universal hegemonic shift toward competitive, rationalized, and standardized organization of sport practices and organization” (Sage, 2010, p.7). The birth of ‘sportification’ began in the 17th and 18th centuries in Britain when activities such as cricket and horse racing became organized and regulated. The 19th century saw the rapid increase in the number of new sports such as rugby and soccer, as well as the modernization of old sports such as tennis and athletics. In addition, the late 19th century represented a “take-off phase, an important period in which international competitions, tournaments and tours began to occur with increasing frequency” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p.7). The increase in sport was also prevalent and pervasive throughout North America and Europe and was ultimately a reflection of the “diffusion of British sport throughout the British Empire and then the world” (Sage, 2010, p.7).

The realm of sport is a reflection of an advanced globalization due to “fewer cultural and political obstacles to the development of trade and international power in sport” (Allison, 2005, p.i). Since the beginning, sport has always had an inherent global dimension, which has intensified in recent years (Thibault, 2009). Sport not only has the unique capacity to transcend

political, geographic, and cultural boundaries, but also serves as a communal realm within which countries, cultures, and individuals can come together to celebrate. Thus, sport is a global phenomenon that represents these countries, individuals, and cultures and in so doing, allows itself to be “used by different groups...to represent, maintain and/or challenge identities” (Maguire, 1999, p.176). Sport allows individuals and cultures to express and celebrate on a local level but within the “context of a global sport process” (Maguire, 1999, p.2). In a time period characterized by the compression of time and space, caused by globalization, countries and cultures are using sport to find meaning and to make sense of the world (Maguire, 1999). The significance of sport on a local and global level is outlined by Maguire (1999):

[Sport] moves people emotionally; as a multi-billion-pound enterprise it employs, directly or indirectly, large numbers of people; in so doing it uses significant amounts of scarce resources and leaves its footprint on the environment. It also has a major political impact in terms of national prestige, and also through education, health and voluntary sector, it plays a part in the internal socialization and the external migration of citizens and is viewed, by some, as potentially developing international fellowship (p.2)

Thus, in addition to possessing an inherent global dimension, sport in and of itself can be used as a medium through which one can consider the creation and establishment of global connections, which have been “mediated by contemporary and emerging communication technologies; again, what we might also call globalization” (Palmer, 2013, p.7). In light of current globalization processes, the characterization of sport as a “multi-billion-pound enterprise” by Maguire (1999) alludes to the commodification of sport. The origins of the relationship between sport, corporate interest, sponsorship, and the consumer culture ultimately began during the aforementioned ‘take-off’ phase which were premature signs of an “emerging culture of sporting celebrity, as well as the growth in media interest” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p.7)

The aforementioned diffusion of British sport, culminated in the beginning and late 20th century with the creation of sport federations, sport organizations, and global sport events as well as the diffusion of sport into educational, political, and economic systems (Sage, 2010). The international growth of sport in the late 20th century was seen through unprecedented changes to the Olympic Games, the integration of corporate sponsorship into international sport, and finally, the growth of international sport as seen through the commodification and recruitment of international athletes (Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2007). With respect to the recruitment of international athletes, Lee (2010) argues that there exists a heated competition for the recruitment of highly skilled athletes on an international stage and thus, “resource access becomes absolutely crucial” (p.158). Commercial and media corporations during this time realized the insurmountable potential of sport arguing that “few if any cultural forms have as much potential to be cosmopolitan as modern sports” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p.7). According to Lee (2010), the commodification of sport stems from the increase and value placed on the monetary investments in sports teams by transnational corporations. In light of the interest in sport by major businesses, Hargreaves (2002) believes that sport itself has become intertwined in the economic market as transnational corporations “move into, associate themselves with and increasingly impinge on major sports in search of profits and image enhancement” (p.32). The internationalization of sport has also rapidly increased, such as the introduction of a sport into new countries where the sport has not been traditionally played, players competing with individuals from various countries in organized leagues, team travel to sport tournaments in different countries, as well as teams traveling to different countries for the purposes of raising awareness of their leagues and sports (Danylchuk, 2012). Other examples of the internationalization of sport include tracking international competitions on online forums and

other media outlets, the sponsoring of international competitions by global companies, and finally, the “use of sport as a social and political tool” (Danylchuk, 2012, p.5). The varied, unique, and pervasive aspects and examples associated with the globalization and internationalization of sport leads Hargreaves (2002) to argue that it is “the product of interaction between interdependent economic, political, and cultural forces” (p.33).

2.5 The Status of International Student-Athletes in the NCAA

The metaphor and slogan, ‘all the world’s a stadium’ was coined by Bale (1991, p.xi) to describe a ‘frantic’ sense of internationalization that “has been associated with the world of sport in recent years”. According to Weston (2006), an achievement-style sport ideology which has characterized American sport has led to the emergence of an ‘arms race’ in American collegiate sport “to recruit top talent internationally, therefore increasing competition among schools to search worldwide for talented players” (p.835).

Often regarded as the primary activity of U.S. athletic coaches, recruiting quality student-athletes not only determines the success of a particular team, but is also often regarded as “both intense and expensive as coaches must recognize talent at an early age and from a broad geographic range” (Popp, Pierce, & Hums, 2011, p.176). Not only are NCAA coaches ‘compelled’ to recruit internationally in order to create a competitive team, but few coaches and athletic administrators would “dispute that recruiting international student-athlete talent can bring greater success to college programs” (Weston, 2006, p.834). As previously mentioned, this achievement-style ideology not only reflects a set of values in “winning, record-breaking, and quantification irrespective of global location” (Bale, 1991, p.7), but is also a “product of the individuals whose activities perpetuate or modify it” (Bale, 1991, p.7). Thus, the achievement-style ideology is ultimately a direct by-product of ‘boosterism’. According to Bale (1991), the culture of

American sports is unique and distinct in that the use of sports serves to foster the 'boosting of place'. The culture of American sports is rich which is due in part to the strong connection communities have with colleges and their athletic teams. Thus, the "symbiotic booster relations between them were focal points of the desire of one college to defeat another on the sports field (Bale, 1991, p.15). Boosterism, which served to create the achievement-style sport ideology, created an overwhelming pressure to identify and recruit high-performance talent, regardless of geographical location.

In support of Weston's (2006) claim, Popp et al. (2011) have stated that recruiting top international student-athletes "is a growing trend in collegiate athletics" (p.177). As a reflection of this ideology, in 2010, the NCAA published a student-athlete ethnicity report, which investigated "recent historical student-athlete race and ethnicity trends by gender, sport, and division" (Zgonc, 2010, p.5). The NCAA found that across all athletic divisions, the percentage of male and female 'non-resident alien student-athletes' (international student-athletes) had increased, with male representation increasing from 1.8% in 2000 to 3.8% in 2010, while female percentage increased from 1.5% in 2000 to 4.3% in 2010. More specifically, in Division I, the NCAA found an increase in male international student-athletes from 2.4% in 2000 to 5.5% in 2010 while female representation also increased from 2.4% in 2000 to 6.9% in 2010. In Division II, male representation increased from 2.4% to 4.5% while female representation increased from 1.6% to 4.5%. The 'slight' increase in non-resident alien student-athletes reported in Division III was attributed to a change in methodology, which occurred between 2005-2007 (Zgonc, 2010, p.10). The increase in the number of international student-athletes is predominantly seen at the Division I level rather than at Division II or III levels, where athletic scholarships are not given (Weston, 2006). Weston's (2006) claim of international student-athlete Division I dominance is

supported by Popp et al. (2009) who found that “nearly 70% of international student-athletes are enrolled at NCAA Division I institutions” (p.95). According to Popp et al. (2009), these international athletes have not only been successful for their respective teams, but they often “represent their home nation’s elite athletes as well” (p.95), having developed their skills in a club-based system as opposed to the American school-based system. The athletic structure in international countries differs in that it is predominantly club-based with a national sport federation as the governing body. In addition, club-based programs are separate from the educational system and are “not demarcated by amateur and professional player status” (Weston, 2006, p.832).

Given the literature on the imperativeness of American institutions to recruit international student-athletes for the purposes of winning and ultimate success, international student-athletes have been “shown to look at university sport participation from a different perspective” (Popp et al., 2009, p.96). Not only are international student-athletes well prepared both academically and athletically, but also, international student-athletes place more emphasis on academic achievement as opposed to athletic achievement (Popp, 2006). International student-athletes are also faced with conflicting choices between a professional career and the opportunity for higher education, wherein choosing a professional career means foregoing higher education because of time commitment and vice-versa. The decision to attend American academic institutions ultimately allows the international student-athlete “to continue elite training in hopes of a future professional career, while also allowing them to secure a university degree” (Popp, Love, Kim, & Hums, 2010, p.169). Ridinger and Pastore (2000) also support Popp (2006)’s claim by stating that “obtaining an education is of prime importance to most international student-athletes and they are usually academically well-prepared” (p.6). From the perspective of the coaches,

however, international athletes are needed to stay competitive and have been described as “impact players and may help establish instant credibility for a program” (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000, p.6).

Given the nature and dynamics of intercollegiate athletics, the high demand for international student-athletes warrants an analysis of the factors that influence international student-athletes to attend academic institutions. As a backdrop to international student-athletes, Mazzarol (1998) outlines the ‘push-pull factors’ of international exchange students as involving three major stages: the decision to leave the country (push factors), the decision to look abroad (pull factors) and study in a specific country, and finally, the decision to select a specific academic institution based on other pull factors (as cited in Popp, Pierce, & Hums, 2011). In contrast to domestic student-athletes, the pull factors for international student-athletes, in order of priority, involve the value of an athletic scholarship, coach relationship, post-academic career opportunities, level of competition, and finally, the academic reputation of the school (Popp, Pierce, & Hums, 2011, p.181). On the other hand, the top factors for domestic student-athletes consist of: degree-applicability for career opportunities, reputation of the academic institution, level of athletic competition, team cohesion, and finally, personality of the head coach (Popp, Pierce, & Hums, 2011, p.181).

Despite the high demand for the recruitment of international student-athletes, the aforementioned achievement-style ideology coupled with the ambiguous, professional nature of the club-based system in different international countries ultimately becomes problematic given the NCAA’s mandate and focus on amateurism as opposed to professionalism. Weston (2006) argues that the overwhelming need to recruit international student-athletes leads to “controversial eligibility determinations” (p.832) and ultimately eliminates opportunities for domestic student-athletes.

While there has been a plethora of literature written on international student-athletes in the NCAA and reasons for their increase in participation, the same cannot be said about international student-athletes participating in the CIS. While there is information about the number of international students in Canada, there is currently no system in place to track the number of international student-athletes in Canada. Furthermore, there is also a lack of literature on the motivations and experiences of such athletes. Thus, this study functions to fill a gap in the literature and to explore the landscape of international student-athletes in the CIS along with their motivations and experiences.

2.6 Purpose of Study

With the growing interest towards internationalization on university campuses and the focus on providing students with an international perspective, this study sought to provide an overview of the landscape of international student-athletes in the CIS, along with their motivations and experiences. The study was carried out in two phases. Phase one provided a detailed quantitative portrayal of the current status of international student-athletes playing in the CIS. Phase two examined the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes in the CIS. The study was guided by the following four research questions:

RQ1: What is the status (i.e., number, sport, and gender breakdown) of international student-athletes in the CIS?

RQ2: What are the motivations of international student-athletes participating in the CIS?

RQ3: What are the experiences of international student-athletes participating in the CIS?

RQ4: Do these motivations and experiences vary across the regional conferences?

RQ5: Do these motivations and experiences vary across gender?

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter begins with an outline of the research methodology that guided this study, as well as a self-reflection on the inherent subjectivities of the researcher and how such subjectivities can affect the study under investigation. Following this section, an overview of the research design, participants (including a participant profile), and interview guide is discussed. The procedures undertaken to complete all aspects of the study are also outlined. Finally, this chapter concludes with the methods of data analysis employed to uncover prevalent themes throughout the interview transcripts.

3.1 Research Context

This study involved establishing relationships and drawing conclusions about the shared experiences of international student-athletes as well as how and why these international student-athletes construct their meanings and actions of their experiences playing in a foreign country. Thus, grounded theory with a social constructivist approach was deemed an appropriate methodology. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the “inquirer generates a general explanation of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p.63). Using the grounded theory approach, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows relevant material to emerge. Thus, it is “inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23). Furthermore, the theory is “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis” (Strauss & Corbin,

1990, p.23). Rather than consisting of numbers or loose themes, the research findings generated from a grounded theory approach “constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.24). The use of a social constructivist approach as outlined by Charmaz advocates for the emphasis on “diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions” (Creswell, 2007, p.65). In addition, the social constructivist variant of grounded theory places less emphasis on methods of research and focuses more on the “views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p.65). For Charmaz (2006), constructive grounded theorists take a “reflexive stance toward the research process and consider how their theories evolve” (p.131).

Before beginning the process of undertaking a qualitative research study, self-examination of one’s own background is needed in order to effectively “guide the research questions and methods in a coherent and consistent fashion” (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p.7). Peshkin (1988) noted the necessity of exploring one’s own subjectivity in order to raise awareness of how such subjectivity may be shaping the study’s inquiry as well as its outcomes. Given that a researcher’s subjectivity is an ‘invariable’ or inevitable aspect of the research, engaging with one’s own subjectivity allows for the awareness of personal qualities that interact with the research (Peshkin, 1988). Such personal qualities can serve to “filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project” (Peshkin, 1988, p.17). According to Weed (2009), theoretical sensitivity will allow the researcher not only to recognize his/her awareness of the area within which they are conducting research, but will also allow one to minimize any “preconceived notions” (p.505) about what they might discover. By positioning myself through my past experiences as a student-athlete, I am ultimately raising awareness of potential subjectivities, assumptions, and biases that I may possess. In addition, as

suggested by Charmaz (2006), I am becoming aware not only of any “presuppositions that may affect the research but also any preconceived ideas that occur because of a lack of an awareness of starting assumptions” (p.131).

As a son to Croatian parents, one of whom was born in Croatia and immigrated to Canada, I grew up and was immersed in all aspects of the Croatian culture in Toronto, Ontario. Apart from the customary traditions associated with being Croatian, sport, specifically soccer, was one aspect of the Croatian culture that I quickly came to love. Watching and emulating the likes of Davor Suker, Zvonimir Boban, and the rest of the Bronze medal 1998 World Cup squad at the age of 9, inspired me to dedicate my time to hopefully one day become a professional soccer player and dawn the red and white checkered jersey.

Despite playing numerous sports growing up, I made the decision to solely focus on soccer at the age of 13. As a provincial level player, I was enrolled in a scholarship program at the age of 15 through the soccer academy of which I was a member for the sole purpose of obtaining a soccer scholarship in the NCAA. I was fascinated with the NCAA as a feeder system to professional sport and believed that getting a full scholarship or ‘full-ride’ would be instrumental in not only obtaining a degree, but more importantly, advancing my athletic career. I had aspirations of playing soccer professionally after my undergraduate degree and believed that playing in the NCAA was the only way to achieve such a goal. I believed that being considered an ‘international student-athlete’ was an accomplishment, a novelty, and something to be desired. Finally, I wanted to participate in the international student-athlete experience at an American institution and the adventures that came with such an experience. After receiving offers from both NCAA and CIS universities I realized that my ultimate priority revolved around attending a

strong academic institution and thus, I decided to stay in Canada and attend the University of Toronto.

Despite not having considered Canadian intercollegiate athletics as an option, I played two years in the CIS followed by one year as a semi-professional player in the Canadian Soccer League (CSL). During my time in the scholarship program, I was exposed to and participated in the recruiting experience of choosing specific American college institutions, attending showcase tournaments in the United States and in Europe, creating promotional videos for American coaches and scouts, adhering to NCAA eligibility requirements, and finally, attending scouting camps in the United States. As a former intercollegiate and semi-professional athlete, I have played alongside, engaged with, and have come to a greater awareness as to the experiences of international student-athletes in adjusting to school, soccer, and the culture of a new city and country. My prior experiences as a student-athlete and my strong desire to solely focus on playing soccer in the NCAA, and thus, becoming an international student-athlete, ultimately led me to explore my own decision-making process as well as my motivations during that time. My aforementioned desire to become an international student-athlete, coupled with my experiences and interactions with international student-athletes in the CIS, led me to develop a keen interest in exploring the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes participating in Canadian intercollegiate athletics.

3.2 Research Design

This study consisted of two phases. Due to the fact that the CIS does not monitor the number of international student-athletes competing in a given year across all sports, phase one involved a determination of this number for the 2012-2013 as well as the 2013-2014 academic years. Data

collection over the two-year period was conducted to provide a more comprehensive overview of the demographics of international student-athletes in Canada. This process involved manually navigating through every female and male roster on every university intercollegiate athletic website that was a member of the CIS. If the hometown of a university student-athlete was outside Canada, the international student-athlete's full name, gender, sport, university, and hometown were recorded and organized into an Excel spreadsheet. All four regional conferences were included in identifying the international student-athletes.

Phase two of the study incorporated a qualitative research approach through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted by telephone or Skype given the diverse geographical location of all participants. Interviews were considered an appropriate method as they seek to comprehend the "world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Kvale, 1996, p.1). Moreover, the study used a semi-structured interview to draw descriptive and meaningful information from the participants. The semi-structured interview is characterized as consisting of a combination of structured and less structured questions, which ultimately allows the researcher to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1998, p.74).

3.3 Participants

The participants for the research study interviews involved a cross-section of international male and female student-athletes from the four regional athletic conferences within the CIS (i.e., CWUAA, OUA, RSEQ, and AUS) (N=16). Purposeful sampling, particularly, unique sampling, was used to identify and recruit the participants for this study. According to Merriam (1998),

purposeful sampling involves the selection of a sample based on “unique, atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences” (p.62). Participants were 18 years of age or older, who were currently enrolled in a Canadian university and who were participating in the CIS. Specifically, the study was delimited to male and female student-athletes from the sports that had the highest number of international student-athletes at the time of roster analysis for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years (i.e., soccer and basketball for males and females). Preference was given to third, fourth, or fifth year international undergraduate student-athletes because of their experience. That being said, first year international student-athletes were not excluded if they wished to participate in the study. Equal gender representation as well as equal representation from the four CIS conferences was emphasized during the process. The inclusion of gender and conference representation stemmed from the research questions that involved determining whether the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes differed across gender as well as across conference.

Finally, determining whether an international student-athlete was, in fact, ‘international’, was based on whether he/she paid international student fees. Figure 2 provides an overview of all the participants, including their hometown, sport, current academic year, regional conference, and degree. Pseudonyms were ascribed to each participant.

Figure 2. Participant Profile

Participant	Hometown	Sport	Academic Year	Regional Conference	Degree
Elena	United States	Basketball	1st	CWUAA	Political Science
Kathy	United States	Basketball	2nd	CWUAA	Arts/Engineering
Suzanne	France	Basketball	Graduate Student	OUA	Human Kinetics
Veronica	Germany	Basketball	4th	CWUAA	Arts, Politics and History
Mandy	United States	Soccer	4th	CWUAA	Psychology, Minor in History
Stephanie	France	Soccer	2nd	RSEQ	Business Administration
Bobby	United States	Basketball	3rd	OUA	Liberal Arts/Professional Studies
Karlo	The Netherlands	Basketball	1st	AUS	Business
Ky	Australia	Basketball	4th	AUS	Management
Mick	Australia	Basketball	4th	AUS	Business Administration
Peter	Cameroon	Basketball	5th	CWUAA	Management
John	England	Soccer	2nd	OUA	Communications, Film and Media
Joseph	Mexico	Soccer	2nd	CWUAA	Business
Mark	Egypt	Soccer	2nd	RSEQ	Biology
Martin	Brazil	Soccer	1st	CWUAA	Business
Oscar	Jamaica	Soccer	4th	OUA	Business Technology Management

3.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide consisted of questions pertaining to the international student-athletes' motivations for participation and reasons for enrolment in a Canadian university (i.e., how they were made aware of the Canadian university programs and the determining factors that solidified their decision to attend), their experiences as an international student-athlete in the CIS (i.e., any challenges that were associated with the transitional process of coming to Canada), and finally, current perceptions of the CIS (i.e., thoughts on Canadian universities and suggestions for the CIS). The interviews began with introductory comments in order to contextualize the interview and were followed by personal background questions for the purpose of obtaining the participant's current university, current academic year, current year of eligibility, degree, and hometown. Following the personal background questions, the participants were asked about their

athletic and academic background as well as their competitive level that they were playing at before coming to university. Sample questions included: Can you tell me what life was like for you growing up in [country] as well as what sports you played? And, what was the level of competition? Following these athletic and academic background questions, participants were asked about their motivations for attending a Canadian academic institution. Examples of questions pertaining to the motivations of international student-athletes included: What motivated you to play [basketball or soccer] at [university]? And, why did you decide to come to this university? Questions that involved the international student-athletes' experiences included: What was the transition like coming from your hometown to Canada? What was the transition like when you started playing for the school [soccer or basketball] team? Finally, questions relevant to uncovering international student-athlete perceptions of the CIS included: Did you have any thoughts or expectations about Canada, [basketball or soccer], or the student life? And, what are your thoughts on the CIS? Refer to Appendix A for the interview guide.

3.5 Procedures

Approval was granted by the Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (REB) at Western University (refer to Appendix B). All relevant application guidelines were followed and forms were completed. The ethics application included an email script for the recruitment of CIS athletic directors and head coaches as well as an interview guide for the international student-athletes. Email scripts for the CIS athletic directors and head coaches can be found in Appendixes C and D, respectively. A Letter of Information, which was also included for the international student-athletes, outlined the nature and purpose of the study, the study procedures, possible benefits, notes on compensation, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, as well as contact

information should the participant have any questions or concerns. The Letter of Information can be found in Appendix E.

Due to privacy constraints and restrictions, student-athletes' emails and contact information were not publicly available, and thus, the athletic directors of the universities that had international student-athletes as well as their head coaches were contacted via telephone and email. Prior to contacting the athletic directors and head coaches, a comprehensive contact list was created. This contact list included the conference and university name followed by the name, telephone number, and email address of all the athletic directors and head coaches who had international student-athletes on their male and female basketball and soccer teams. The quantity and sport of the international student-athletes were written next to each university. The names and contact information of these individuals were generated from the university athletic websites. A Letter of Information was attached to emails sent to the athletic directors, which outlined the nature of the study.

Following contact with the athletic directors, the head coaches of the teams that the international student-athletes were playing on were also contacted via telephone and email. The Letter of Information that was sent to the athletic directors was also sent to the head coaches. Once the athletic directors and head coaches agreed to approve the request to interview their respective international student-athletes, a participation request via email was sent to the international student-athletes by either the athletic director or the head coach. The Letter of Information was also attached in this email so that the participants had knowledge regarding the nature of the study. Once the international student-athletes confirmed their interest and participation in the study with the researcher via email, an appropriate date, time, and method (i.e., telephone or Skype) was agreed upon. Prior to the interview, the participants were asked to confirm their

‘international’ status. International student-athletes who were paying international student fees were considered to be ‘international’. Interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes in length and were audio-recorded with the participant’s permission. During the interviews, the researcher took detailed notes in order to capture important statements, ideas, and points made by the participant as well as to summarize major themes or aspects about the interview.

3.6 Data Analysis

Once each interview was completed, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and pseudonyms were ascribed to each participant. The first stage of the coding procedure involved initial coding, specifically line-by-line coding in order to remain open to different and emerging theoretical choices or possibilities. These initial codes were “provisional, comparative, and grounded in data” in order to explore areas lacking data (Charmaz, 2006, p.48). The acquisition of detailed data of empirical processes from the interviews renders line-by-line coding to be the most suitable practice of initial coding. In addition, constant comparative analysis was used to compare data from interviews with the intent of generating similarities and differences within the interviews and between interviews (Charmaz, 2006).

Following initial coding, focused coding was used in order to “synthesize and explain larger segments of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.57) by determining which aspects of initial coding were the most significant. Focused coding allowed the researcher to move from interview to interview and compare experiences of various international student-athletes. Consequently, comparing data to the initial codes led to a more refined and focused code.

The final stage in the coding process involved theoretical coding. Theoretical coding was used to establish relationships between the categories that had been established in focused coding.

Theoretical coding made the analysis more “coherent and comprehensive” (Charmaz, 2006, p.63). The final codes established at the theoretical coding stage not only allowed for a greater sense of direction but also had the potential to “clarify the general context and specific conditions” (Charmaz, 2006, p.63) with regards to the phenomenon of international student-athletes’ decisions for playing in the CIS.

Chapter 4

Findings

Chapter 4 begins with an overview and analysis of the findings of phase one with respect to the demographics and landscape of international student-athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. Following this section, an analysis of the findings from phase two are presented. This section includes findings on the international student-athletes' background and perceptions of the CIS, their motivations for participating in the CIS, as well as their experiences as international student-athletes.

4.1 Phase 1: 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Findings

As previously noted, phase one of this study involved determining the scope and breadth of the demographics of international student-athletes in the CIS for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. Figures 3 and 4 provide an overview of the number of international student-athletes (male and female) throughout all four CIS conferences for the two years. For the 2012-13 academic year, it is evident that the majority of male and female international student-athletes reside within the RSEQ conference with 142 male and 44 female athletes. This is closely followed by the CWUAA with 116 male and 38 female international student-athletes.

Figure 3. Total Number of Male vs. Female International Student-Athletes in the CIS (2012-2013)

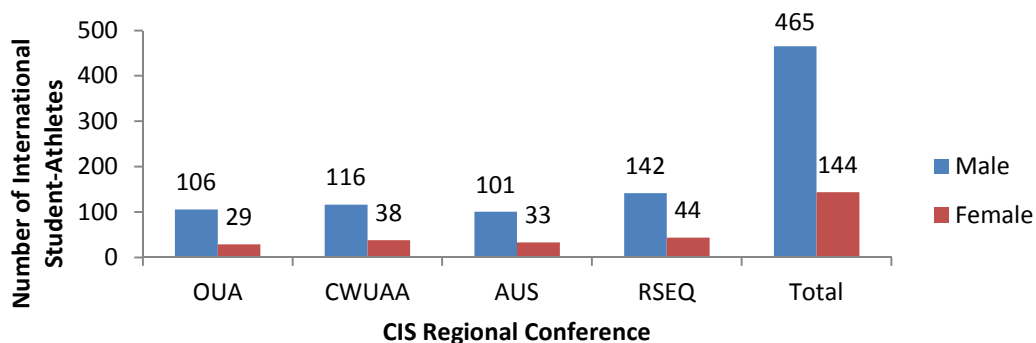
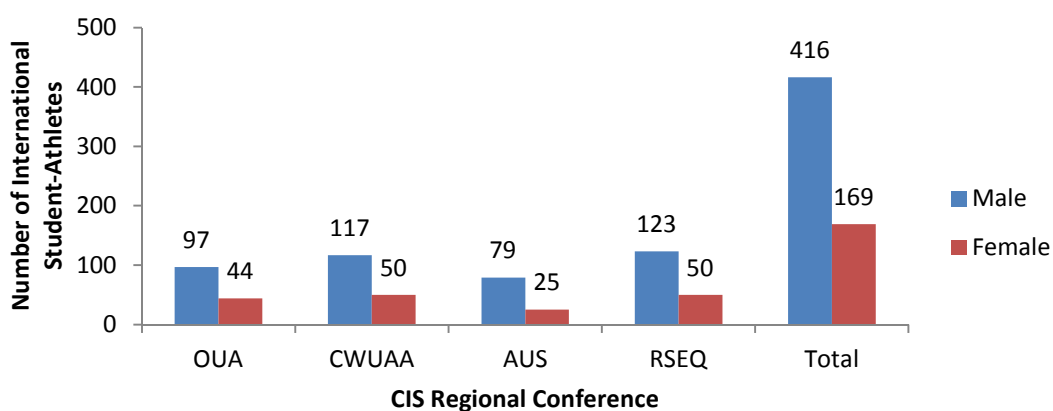


Figure 4. Total Number of Male vs. Female International Student-Athletes in the CIS (2013-2014)

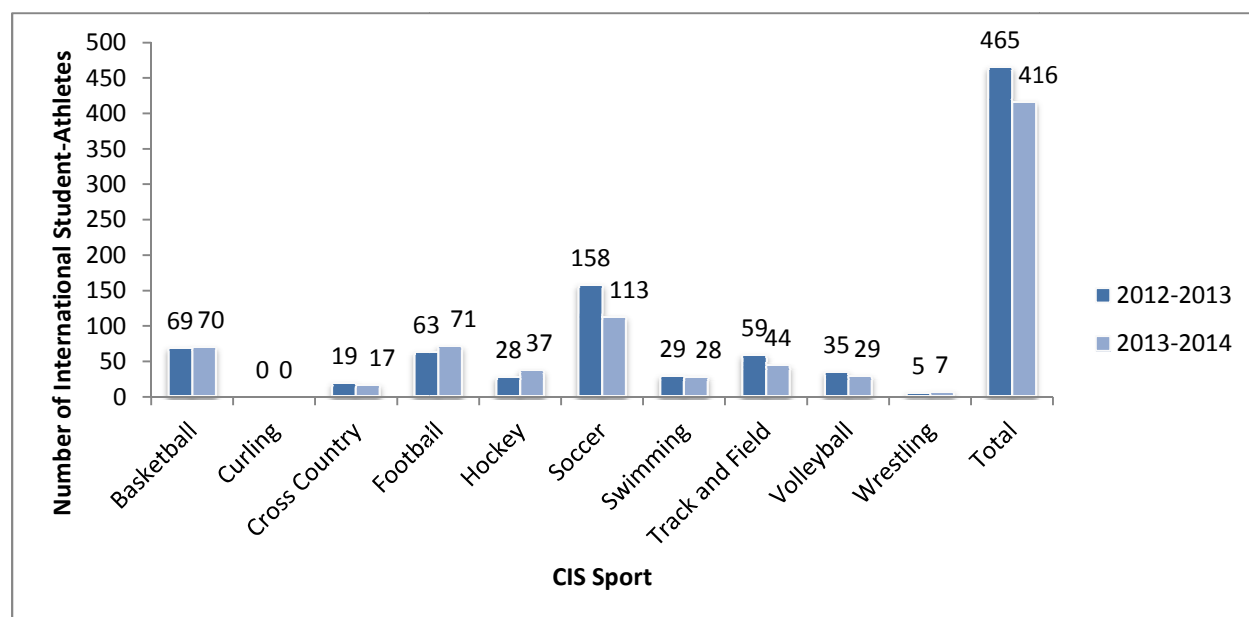


For the 2013-14 academic year, the RSEQ conference continued to provide the highest number of male and female international student-athletes with 123 and 50 athletes, respectively. The CWUAA conference, once again, fell closely behind the RSEQ conference with 117 male and 50 female international student-athletes. The AUS conference provided the least number of male and female international student-athletes overall. In 2012-2013, the AUS conference also provided the least number of male international student-athletes overall. In comparison to

statistics from the 2012-2013 academic year, the number of male international student-athletes decreased by 49 athletes while the number of female international student-athletes increased by 25 athletes. In continuation of trends consistent with the 2012-2013 academic year, the number of male international student-athletes remained higher than the female international student-athlete population in every individual regional association as well as in the total population for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Figures 5 and 6 provide a more specific representation and layout of the number of male and female international student-athletes per sport across all four regional conferences, respectively, across both academic years.

Figure 5. Total Number of Male International Student-Athletes per Sport in the CIS (2012-2014)



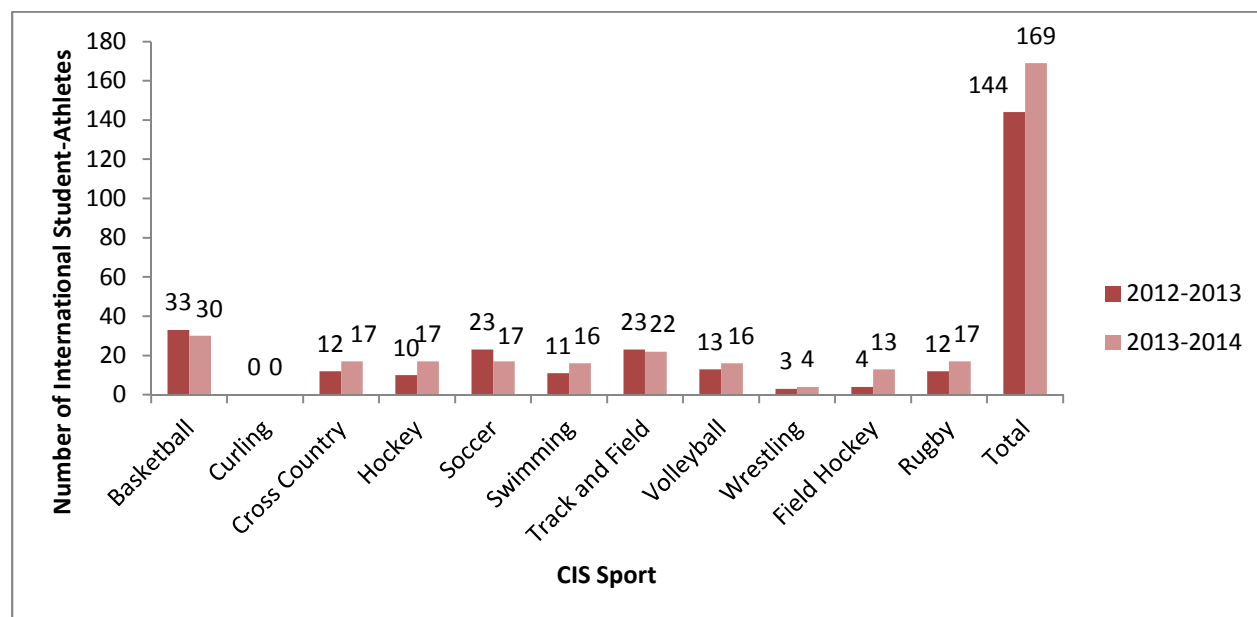
The findings from Figure 5 reveal that, in 2012-2013, the three most popular sports in terms of international male student-athlete participation, in descending order, were soccer with 158 athletes, basketball with 69 athletes, and finally, football with 63 athletes. It is interesting to note that of the 158 male international student-athlete soccer players in the CIS, 65 players were from the RSEQ conference and 46 players were from the AUS conference. With respect to basketball, of the 69 athletes, 28 players were from the CWUAA conference. The representation for football was equally distributed across all four regional conferences.

For the 2013-2014 academic year, the three most popular sports for male international student-athletes were soccer with 113 athletes, football with 71 athletes, and basketball with 70 athletes. It is interesting to note that of the 113 international student-athlete soccer players, the majority (43 players) were from the RSEQ conference. Furthermore, of the 70 international student-athlete basketball players, the majority (33 players) were from the CWUAA conference. The overarching representation of international student-athletes from RSEQ and CWUAA with respect to soccer and basketball, respectively, is a noticeable trend that has continued on from the 2012-2013 academic year. In comparison to 2012-2013, while some sports saw marginal improvements to their numbers, both men's soccer and track and field saw a roughly 3% decrease in their respective international student-athlete populations.

With respect to Figure 6, in 2012-2013, the three most popular sports in terms of international student-athlete participation, in descending order, were basketball with 33 athletes, soccer and track and field with 23 athletes each, and finally, volleyball with 13 athletes. In keeping with soccer and basketball statistics outlined in Figure 5, the RSEQ conference, once again, had the highest number of female soccer players with nine international student-athletes, while the

CWUAA conference had the highest number of female basketball players with 11 international student-athletes.

Figure 6. Total Number of Female International Student-Athletes per Sport in the CIS (2012-2014)



The three most popular female sports for 2013-2014 were basketball with 30 athletes and track and field with 22 athletes. Soccer, hockey, and cross country were all tied for third with 17 athletes. The RSEQ conference, once again, provided the highest number of female international student-athlete soccer athletes, while the CWUAA conference provided the highest number of female basketball players amongst all conferences. In comparison to the 2012-2013 academic year, basketball, soccer, and track and field were the only sports to record a decrease in international student-athlete population. All other sports (except for curling which remained at zero athletes) reported an increase. Of all sports across both the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years, curling was the only sport that consistently had no international student-athletes

participating. Overall, in comparison to the 2012-2013 academic year, the CWUAA conference saw an increase in both male and female international student-athlete population while the AUS conference saw a decline in both. Moreover, both the OUA and RSEQ conferences saw a decrease in their respective male populations but an increase in their female populations in comparison to the 2012-2013 academic year. The changes in the number of international student-athletes per division and per year are reflected in percentages as seen in Table 1. Overall, it is evident that the number of male international student-athletes dropped by 10.5% from 2012 to 2013 with the female international student-athlete population also decreasing by 3.9%. Aside from the CWUAA conference, all other conferences saw a decrease in the male international student-athlete population. In contrast, the female international student-athlete population increased in all conferences except for the AUS conference, which reported a 24.2% decrease in numbers.

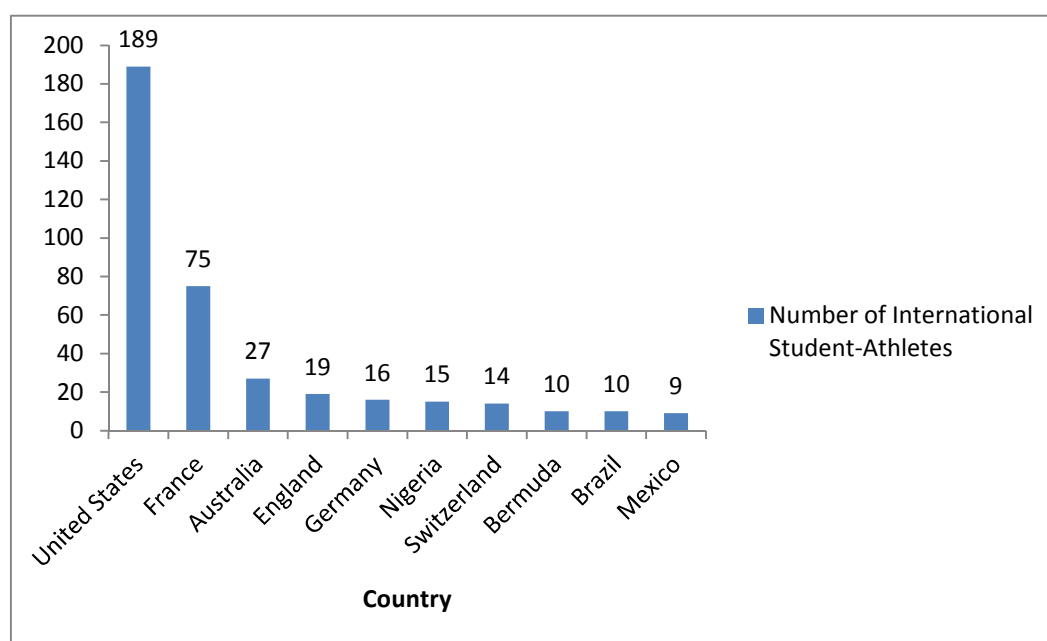
Table 1. Percent Changes of International Student-Athlete Numbers (2012-2014)

Year	Male				Total
	RSEQ	CWUAA	OUA	AUS	
2012-13	142	116	106	101	465
2013-14	123	117	97	79	416
Change	-19	1	-9	-22	-49
%	-13.40%	0.90%	-8.50%	-21.80%	-10.50%

Year	Female				Total	SUM
	RSEQ	CWUAA	OUA	AUS		
2012-13	44	38	29	33	144	609
2013-14	50	50	44	25	169	585
Change	6	12	15	-8	25	-24
%	13.60%	31.60%	51.7%	-24.2%	17.40%	-3.90%

In addition to providing an overview of the total number of international student-athletes in each conference and in each sport as well as the percent changes of international student-athlete numbers, Figure 7 provides an overview of the top 10 countries from which the international student-athletes come from for the 2013-2014 year. Overall, the international student-athletes, for the 2013-2014 year, represented a total of 89 different countries.

Figure 7. Top 10 International Student-Athlete Countries of Origin (2013-2014)



4.2 Phase 2 Findings

Data was collected from 16 participants (10 male and 6 female) who represented 11 different countries, 13 different universities across all four CIS regional conferences, and two sports (basketball and soccer). Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to reflect on their experiences thus far. The findings reveal interesting and important information on the international student-athletes' athletic, academic, and overall university experiences, their varied

motivations for playing in the NCAA, NAIA, and in the CIS, any transitional challenges, as well as their thoughts and/or preconceived notions of Canada and the Canadian school-sports system.

4.2.1 Background.

Of the 16 participants interviewed, all 16 international student-athletes, in addition to playing numerous sports, had played their respective sports during their childhood years and throughout their high school education. The variety of sports played at an early age was explained by Mandy, "...since I can remember I've been playing sports and playing lots of sports, I started off I think playing just about everything like softball, swimming, soccer, track, basketball, just the whole gamut." In analyzing the information provided by the participants, it became apparent that the ability to play multiple sports as a child was not only a product of parental and family influences, but was also a product of the participants' social and cultural environment growing up. Mandy described the beginning of her athletic career as a "family affair type deal" which was reiterated by Elena, "I'm like from a very athletic family, like, everyone in my family has played sports. My dad played basketball and my mom was like a tennis and swimmer and so like they always encouraged sports." The effect of parental and family influences on the participants' early sports participation was prevalent irrespective of culture. For example, unlike Mandy and Elena, who were born in the United States, Mark, who was born in Egypt, reiterated the role of his parents, particularly his father, in introducing him to sport as well as encouraging him to continually be active in any form. The social and cultural environment, within which the international student-athletes were born, not only influenced the number of sports played but also which particular sports were played. For example, Joseph, who was born and raised in Mexico, explained his predominant focus on one sport stating that "the culture of soccer in Mexico is just like you're born pretty much with a soccer ball. Like, here in Canada you're born with a hockey

stick...so we play soccer since...we can like run...so you grew up with that culture.” For Mark, “it’s a national thing...more of like an African tradition that soccer...is the dominant sport in Africa and especially in Egypt, it’s our pride and joy...so it’s a big cultural thing that Egypt comes with futbol.”

Furthermore, of the 16 participants who had played at a competitive level (i.e., high school level, club level and higher), eight international student-athletes had played either at the provincial (or equivalent), national, or semi-professional levels in their respective sports. Not only did their competitive level force them to specialize at a relatively early age, but the competition was regarded as tough and intense. Veronica, a provincial level player, explained that, “by the time I was 12 or 13...I got scouted for the provincial team and at that point they were really like encourage you in Germany to not do two sports...so they encourage you up until then for athletic development but afterwards it’s just one focus.” Ky, who was part of state teams in Australia and competed at national championships explained his situation, “I started to sort of drop off on my other sports because basketball was taking up more time.” In addition to specializing and dedicating their time to practices and games, all eight international student-athletes reiterated the intense competitive nature, even at a young age. For example, Veronica at the age of 13, described the level of competition as being, “pretty intense, it was daily practice like all year round and our seasons are pretty long, plus when you’re like the talented player you usually play on two or three teams.”

Finally, of these eight international student-athletes, two had played in professional soccer academies before coming to Canada. John, born in England, played for several major professional soccer academies in his youth. For John, “the level of soccer at academies...was very high...you had more accountability as a professional soccer player even from like the ages

of 6 or 7". Overall, it was evident that despite coming from different backgrounds, cultures, and countries, sport participation was encouraged or self-discovered at a young age. Through the interviews it became apparent that the participants' various backgrounds and cultures not only affected the sports that were indirectly encouraged and played by the participants, but also influenced them to pursue sport at various levels and at various ages.

From an academic perspective, of the 16 participants, four international student-athletes were originally enrolled in universities in their respective hometowns before moving either to the NCAA or NAIA and then to the CIS. Furthermore, five out of the 16 international student-athletes were studying and playing intercollegiate athletics in the United States either at an NCAA, NAIA, or junior college institution before transferring to a Canadian university. Finally, two international student-athletes had previously studied at a Canadian college or university institution other than their current Canadian university.

4.2.2 International Student-Athlete Perceptions.

4.2.2.1 Where is Canada and what is the CIS? An analysis of the interviews revealed that out of the 16 participants, 11 had applied to the United States before even considering applying to any Canadian academic institutions. Even more interesting was the fact that nine out of 16 international student-athletes had never heard of the CIS or that Canada had a university sport system. Furthermore, of those nine international student-athletes, eight had knowledge of the NCAA system. Such a lack of knowledge of the CIS was echoed by Karlo, "Before I came to Canada, I never heard of the CIS before, but I heard of NCAA." The knowledge of the NCAA for the purposes of playing sport and the subsequent lack of knowledge regarding the CIS was explicitly highlighted by Ky:

I was looking for somewhere to play overseas so I wanted to, you know, obviously everyone wants to go to the States...I didn't know they had like the same sort of system that they had in the States and what not... like for me, I had no idea that Canadian universities had, I didn't know what the CIS was, I had no idea about Canadian university sport.

Other international student-athletes reported not knowing that the Canadian interuniversity sport system was on a similar level to the collegiate sport system in the United States. This was supported by Veronica, "I had no idea like I didn't know...I didn't know it compared to the States at all." Overall, the interviews ultimately revealed a lack of awareness of the Canadian interuniversity sport system and of Canada, in general. Furthermore, in some circumstances, the interviews also alluded to the knowledge of the United States and their collegiate sport system as being synonymous with elite sport.

Given the fact that nine out of 16 international student-athletes interviewed reported having minimal knowledge of Canada and its university sport system, it comes as no surprise that these same international student-athletes did not have any perceptions or expectations about Canada, the CIS, or about what life as an international student-athlete was going to be like. More importantly, the findings from the interviews showed that eight international student-athletes already had perceptions about the United States and their university sport system. As an example, prior to coming to Canada, Peter, in speaking about the NCAA, said, "I knew about it because I watched, I followed it on, back in Rome...it's the number one in the States...just for basketball purposes cause I know the States is known for basketball so I wanted to go there and play ball." The desire to play in the United States based on the student-athletes' perceptions was also echoed by John who remarked, "I always wanted to go to like America and play and Canada was probably the next best thing to it." Furthermore, perceptions of the United States, for Oscar, were formed because of the predominant social norm. According to Oscar, "in the Caribbean,

there's a lot of emphasis on the States, so I mean that's normal because...we have a lot of partnerships with the States."

When asked for their perceptions of Canada, several of those same international student-athletes constructed their perceptions of Canada based on their knowledge and perceptions of the United States, leading to the assumption that the United States was synonymous with Canada. This was explained by Ky, "yeah I mean, yeah, pretty much sort of met expectations...I thought it maybe might have been a bit crazier like, you know, some comparison to college in the States, I was expecting just like crazy people running around at orientation week." Perceptions of Canada were also shaped by portrayals of Canada from American media channels. According to Oscar:

We get State TV, like most of the States television shows so anything I knew about Canada was basically what the States had thought about Canada. So I thought it would have been a lot about maple syrup, you know, Mounties, you know, stuff like that.

Aside from the lack of perceptions of Canada and university, nine out of 16 international student-athletes also reported not having perceptions of the CIS and the level of competition. According to Suzanne, "concerning basketball, I didn't really know what to expect for the level of the CIS and even the level of the OUA so I really didn't know. I don't even think I'd seen any video before I came here." Despite having little previous knowledge of the CIS, Mark was surprised to see such high quality, commenting, "I definitely didn't expect anything in terms of soccer...I was surprised to see that the soccer level is high here." Even though there was a predominant lack of knowledge about the CIS and its standard, after having played in the CIS, the international student-athletes were quick to praise the CIS for the level of competitiveness and quality it offers to its players. In commenting on the quality of soccer, Martin went as far as equating the level to that found in the United States, "When I came to Canada, [I] was surprised

when I see the players here. Because I was expecting it'd be... not as good as the United States, and I honestly think that it's almost the same."

The nature of the responses by the international student-athletes indicated a lack of an awareness of Canada and the CIS, a subsequent lack of perceptions, and, in some cases, the perpetuation of stereotypical social and cultural norms through media. It is interesting to note that several international student-athletes had knowledge of the United States and the NCAA, and thus, had already constructed their perceptions. That being said, the majority of international student-athletes were positively surprised with the quality of competition in the CIS as well as the standard of their individual teams.

4.2.2.2 Student-athlete or athlete-student? A major theme that emerged out of the interviews was the tendency for the international student-athletes to talk about their experiences or to answer the questions in light of or in comparison/contrast to the university sport system in the United States. As previously indicated, 11 out of 16 international student-athletes had initially contemplated attending a university in the States, had received scholarships from universities in the States, or had actually attended a university or college in the States. Thus, it comes as no surprise that comparisons were made between the two. The nature of the differences between the two university sport systems varied from dealing with scholarships to the respective levels of skill and competition. With respect to financial differences, Stephanie explained:

Well financially, just the simple fact that they can't pay for your housing and books and food, that kind of takes away from like what you can get in the States. Like in the States I didn't have to pay for anything at all. I think financially it's harder here.

Kathy also shed light on the financial issue by comparing her current situation to that of her sisters who had played in the NCAA:

In the US you can get a full scholarship so that sort of was a downer because my sister goes to school at a Division 2 school and she gets her tuition paid for, her room and board paid for, her food paid for, and her books paid for and so...that sort of is a downfall I'd say or a disadvantage to playing basketball there I guess as opposed to the US

Aside from the scholarship dilemma, from a purely athletic standpoint, the international student-athletes were divided in their responses. For example, the aforementioned international student-athletes who were trying to use the student-athlete pathway to advance their athletic careers tended to regard the NCAA as superior to the CIS. According to Oscar, "why would you want to go to Canada when you could go to a D1 [Division] and probably play in the MLS [Major League Soccer]." In talking about offering advice to other potential international student-athletes Martin indicated that he would tell them to go to the United States:

In the United States they're gonna offer you a better opportunity in terms of money and showcases as well, like coaches come watch you, like the games, professional coaches, right, and if you're in a good university in the United States it's easier to make pro.

In talking about the American system, Martin explained that they were more serious about athletics. Furthermore, in commenting on the CIS, Martin suggested that the CIS was a recreational league and concluded by stating that university athletics were more for fun. From an athletic standpoint, Veronica also alluded to the fact that the NCAA was superior to the CIS stating that her initial dream and priority was the NCAA while Canada was regarded as a secondary option for her. Thus, for these international student-athletes, the NCAA route was superior to that of the CIS because of the perception that the American university sport system was designed to give the athlete a better chance to become professional or advance their athletic career after the academic degree was complete.

In analyzing the two university sport systems, six out of 16 international student-athletes believed that the NCAA and the CIS, aside from the financial discrepancies and professional

opportunities, were on par with each other. According to Mandy, who played in the United States:

There weren't really much differences. I think the only difference I could say is that, back in [university]...we definitely practiced a lot more and we ran a lot more like did a lot more fitness, but that was about it other than that...it was pretty much the same.

Such sentiments were reiterated by John who played against several NCAA teams. For John, "it's still a decent standard and I still think that in comparison to the States it's not that much different at all and I think it is a good competitive high standard and at first I was surprised."

In addition to the emergence of athletic comparisons made between the two university sport systems, the notion and nature of being a 'student-athlete' was also discussed and contrasted. According to Mandy, "when you play a sport like in schools down south you're an athletic student, you're not a student-athlete so I definitely feel like here the balance is much more attainable." In comparing his time in the NCAA versus in the CIS, Martin also concluded that, "you're an athlete-student in the United States and in Canada you're a student-athlete." In the opinions of the international student-athletes, the differences between being a 'student-athlete' versus an 'athlete-student' solely revolved around the primary focus of the university sport systems. Thus, there was a major consensus that the American university sport system was predominantly athletically focused, hence the term 'athlete-student', while the CIS was more academically focused in their mission, hence the term 'student-athlete'. The use of the terms 'student-athlete' versus the 'athlete-student' also alluded to the respective academic rigour and degree of difficulty associated with each term. For example, in commenting on the 'athlete-student' predominantly found in the United States, Elena explained that university was easier for student-athletes in that it was harder for them to fail out of university. In speaking to the United States, John suggested:

they seem to be more lenient towards the student-athletes than over here in Canada...if you have star players struggling in school I think that sort of gets pushed under the carpet a little bit and there's ways around staying in school and playing...whereas over here in Canada it's like you are a student and you are an athlete but at the end of the day you've got your main focus is you're here to get a degree.

Ky also reiterated the sentiments of both John and Elena with respect to the leniency of being a student-athlete in the United States as well as the amount of work and dedication that is required in order to maintain student-athlete eligibility in the CIS:

I think being a student athlete in the CIS... your education isn't given to you...here, you got to work for your education...if you have a scholarship you gotta keep your GPA at a certain point...you gotta go to class and you gotta do it yourself...the advantage of CIS is you actually got to, you gotta work for it.

While Elena, John, and Ky depicted the life of a 'student-athlete' in the United States, to a certain extent, as being easy and lenient, Martin, who had played in the NCAA, believes that the treatment received by those 'student-athletes' was necessary, especially for the international student-athletes. Martin regarded the 'special treatment', reported by Elena, John, and Ky, as necessary to help integrate the international student-athlete into a new country, city, and university:

here in Canada, I had to deal with everything by myself... in the United States, like the coach, he set up who we were gonna be with...it's kind of like baby-sitting but it's important for an international student to have this...because you don't know anybody right, like, you're by yourself so...[they] make sure you're in a good place and all this kind of stuff like little things that makes a big difference.

Overall, it is clear that in comparing the Canadian and American university sport systems, the international student-athletes were divided in their responses. Given the design and nature of the two university sport systems, it is virtually impossible to determine which university sport system is 'better'. However, the responses from these international student-athletes reveal

important insights, truths, and perceptions about the life as a student-athlete from both perspectives.

4.2.2.3 International student-athlete thoughts on the CIS. A major trend that emerged from the data analysis was the overwhelmingly positive evaluation (15/16 international student-athletes) the CIS received from the international student-athletes. More specifically, the international student-athletes praised the level of competition and the standards of the league, claiming, in some cases, that the CIS was a more quality league than what they had experienced in their hometowns (4/16 international student-athletes). In talking about the level of competitiveness of the CIS, Karlo explained that, “the level of competition at [university] and in the CIS is definitely higher than some of the competition in back home, in Holland that I’ve seen so far.” Coming from a European perspective, Veronica also found the CIS to be quite professional in several aspects such as the facilities and travel arrangements for her team:

I’m almost a little bit regretting that I didn’t go to [university] right away... I think it’s pretty professional... Canadians always make it sound like it’s not very professional but... people will tell you that when they play in North America, anywhere in Canada or the U.S. and then they go back to Europe and they see the gyms there, they’re just like shocked and the way we like travel to games and so I think like the facilities here are amazing, the way we like fly to games that’s pretty incredible.

One of the most appealing aspects about the CIS system, among other things for John, is requiring that all student-athletes have a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) in order to remain eligible. The number of years that a student-athlete can participate in the CIS was also cited as an advantage by Ky, “I think five years of eligibility is good... the States is four years... I think just especially because there’s not really much to do after university sport. I think giving athletes five years to play out... their sport is definitely a good thing.”

In addition to the advantages cited by the international student-athletes, there were also some areas where the international student-athletes thought the CIS could improve. One major drawback, according to the international student-athletes, revolved around the scholarship issue and the inability to receive more funding. When asked about any drawbacks, both Kathy and Mark both expressed the need for the CIS to improve their scholarship program stating that, "...the scholarship thing [is] big" (Kathy) and "I think it can be well, better funded" (Mark).

4.2.2.4 Perceived reasons for lack of international student-athletes in the CIS. A number of international student-athletes reported a lack of international student-athletes on their teams as well as throughout the other intercollegiate teams at the university. When asked why that was the case, the international student-athletes cited the fact that the CIS is relatively unknown in most countries, the attraction of the NCAA, and the lack of scholarships available in Canada as possible reasons. Karlo believed that "it's hard for people to know about Canadian universities if they don't have somebody like people telling him something like that and I think coaches aren't really looking for international students since there's so much talent in Canada already for the sports." When talking about the CIS' international presence and general perceptions surrounding the CIS, Peter argued:

I don't think a lot of people know about it to be honest...people don't know about Canada as much as they know about the States so everyone who plays ball wants to go to the States because they feel like they'll have a lot more opportunities over there and so I feel like that's probably one of the reasons why people like decide not to come to Canada.

Peter's remarks were also supported by Suzanne who reiterated, "most of the people who are... competing in intercollegiate athletics, I think they're first option is the NCAA, because...that's what we hear about the most." The tendency to relate sport with the NCAA and not the CIS was

explained by Ky who stated that in addition to not knowing about the CIS, when potential international student-athletes think of sport, they often times associated it with the United States.

As evident by the response of Peter, the attraction and allure of the NCAA and the United States university sport system was another reason reported by the international student-athletes as serving to deter potential student-athletes from committing to attend a Canadian university. In speaking about the lack of international student-athletes as well as common perceptions with regards to the NCAA, John pointed out, "I think maybe just because of the attraction of the States and also I think in North America a way of turning pro is going through university." It is clear then that there exists the common and debateable perception that going to the United States for sport will increase the chances of turning professional. Particularly with respect to soccer, Oscar believed that the emergence of the MLS coupled with the nature of NCAA soccer as serving as a feeder system to the MLS attracts more foreign talent. Furthermore, like several international student-athletes, Oscar believes "Canada isn't that promoted well in the world in terms of like, being an interesting place to go at times." In Oscar's mind, international student-athletes have two options: "you can go to Canada and probably not make it to the MLS most likely or you can go to the States and play for a D1 school where you'll be more recognized and, you know, more broadcasted." Kathy, who has seen firsthand the nature of NCAA sport, explained the difficulty the CIS has in trying to compete with the NCAA:

I think that for basketball...the ratio of people leaving Canada to go play in the U.S. is a lot higher than the amount of people coming up here to play so I think there's so much focus on sports in the U.S. and like these huge things that are going on down there, it sort of is hard for Canada to compete with that.

A final reason to explain the perceived lack of international student-athletes in the CIS involves the issue of scholarships. Based on the fact that several international student-athletes had

discussed the importance of financial aid in motivating them to attend Canadian universities, it comes as no surprise that the inability for Canadian institutions to offer full scholarships would be a deterring factor for potential international student-athletes. In speaking about the scholarship issue, Kathy believed that “if someone got a full ride to go play football in the U.S. or they could stay at a CIS school, I think that they’re gonna take that full ride.” Thus, part of the allure associated with the United States is not only its global appeal coupled its association with professional sport, but also its ability to offer ‘full’ scholarships to international student-athletes.

4.2.3 Motivations of International Student-Athletes.

4.2.3.1 Academic and athletic opportunities. Interviews with the participants revealed that the majority (14/16 international student-athletes) of international student-athletes were motivated to attend a Canadian university because of the academic quality of Canadian universities coupled with the desire to continue playing their sport at a competitive level. For example, Ky affirmed that by coming to Canada, instead of the United States, he could play basketball at a very competitive level while still completing his degree:

My major motivation was probably to improve my basketball and I chose Canada over the States because I felt like I was able to improve my basketball whilst having the advantages of going to a good school and getting a good degree. I thought I could kill more birds with one stone in Canada than in the States.

In explaining his motivations for coming to Canada, Ky evidently compared Canada to the United States, alluding to the academic strength and quality of Canadian universities over those in the United States. In talking about her motivations, for Suzanne, “it was the fact that I could combine both and still do both at the best level possible.” While some international student-athletes reported being motivated to attend a Canadian university strictly to continue playing their sport at a high level or to advance their athletic careers, they later revealed that as they

progressed through their degrees, the strength of the academic programs was an invaluable asset and an indirect motivation. For example, Joseph, who was strictly motivated to advance his soccer career, acknowledged that over the years his focus had shifted, “right now, I’m seeing school as a really important part of my life. Like what am I going to do when I’m done?” Joseph’s sentiment was also reiterated by four other international student-athletes, whose focus was originally athletically-related. Like Joseph, over time such international student-athletes acknowledged that their athletic careers would eventually end, and thus, a good education was often regarded as a necessary “plan B”. According to Suzanne, the importance of education was “crucial”:

Even if you play professional, you know, you’re not gonna make that much money... and I know that an injury can happen in no time so I’m gonna play professional and enjoy for as long as I can, but I know that I really need to have a plan B and that, I’m gonna keep that in mind.

The emphasis on education as ultimately the overarching purpose of attending a Canadian university was echoed by John who stated that education for him was always the main priority and focus. On the other hand, there were some international student-athletes who reported that the academic quality and reputation of Canadian universities was their sole motivation and subsequently viewed playing an intercollegiate sport in Canada as strictly recreational. For example, Mark suggested, “my main focus was definitely education but I also wanted to continue playing soccer but obviously not to become professional, just to play for my own, like, because of the love of sport.” Karlo had a different opinion of the role of sport arguing, “I was seeing it as, I’m going to school anyways and I thought basketball would be a nice way to balance out the stress from having to study a lot and getting a degree.” Finally, Elena’s love of basketball stemmed from her ability to utilize it as an outlet, so to speak, and valued sport for its social appeal as a way to relax as well as to socialize and bond with her teammates. Aside from the

subjective role that intercollegiate sport served for each international student-athlete, the importance of a strong academic university was strongly emphasized. For Bobby, a university “education, you know, is still the key...my thoughts on coming to [university] was actually education, I knew Canadian schools have great education systems...so I wanted to get a better education.” In comparing the education to that in the United States, Kathy explained, “I think that academically there’s a lot of worth put in that here and I think that in a lot of Canadian universities, their sort of approach is a bit different...it’s like a little bit more focused on the academics and sort of realizing the importance of that.” Kathy’s remarks regarding the quality of education in Canada was also supported by Elena who explained, “...the academics at [school] are like way higher...they’re like ranked internationally and I was like, I want to go to a good academic school where that’s gonna help me in my future.”

Aside from the academic quality of the Canadian universities mentioned, the global reputation these Canadian universities had and the subsequent ‘worthiness’ of the degree was a major factor in influencing the decisions of international student-athletes not only to attend a Canadian university, but also, in some cases, to turn down offers from the United States. Ky recounted his experience with his decision:

...at the time, I was being recruited by some other schools in the States and in Canada...I sort of weighed all my options and I decided sort of the Canadian option was a good way to go.... I know, an advantage of coming to Canada, like academically, is that a lot of the schools are, you know, pretty well renowned...I know my mom worked at a few universities and you know, [the university]’s pretty well known as are a lot of Canadian schools so I knew that my, sort of degree would be worth something.

Karlo believed that the reputation of the university had long-term benefits that extended beyond the degree itself arguing that, “...it definitely helps when looking for a job because [the university]’s pretty well known in Canada and other places around the world so having a degree

from [university] helps when looking into the future.” When asked his opinion on the nature of his degree and what it meant to him and to his parents, John was very outspoken about his thoughts on the reality of an academic degree:

There’s so many like little Division 1 or Division 2 colleges in the States where you can get a degree and it’s not worth the paper it’s written on. So I think that coming from a reputable university and it’s a degree that’s recognized back home as well as in Canada and the States that does put them at ease because if I was to go to the States and get a mickey-mouse degree and go home with it and it’s not worth anything, I’ve wasted their time then and I think that having a degree that’s definitely transferable to back home that definitely makes them feel happier, me being here than back home.

The opinions and thoughts of the international student-athletes with respect to their academic motivations shed light on the importance and value placed on receiving an education as well as the applicability of their academic degrees. As evident in some circumstances, the decision to attend a Canadian university over a university in the United States was predominantly based on the value and applicability of the degree, with some international student-athletes ultimately criticizing the value of an American university education.

The combination of completing their studies and playing at a competitive level was also a result of the international student-athlete’s inability to do so in their respective hometowns, bringing to attention the difference in sport and education systems in various countries. Aside from the American-born international student-athletes, all other international student-athletes expressed the difficulty in trying to play a competitive sport while completing their studies. Furthermore, in some countries, the university system did not incorporate an athletic or intercollegiate dimension and thus, these athletes had no choice but to leave their countries. On the other hand, those international student-athletes who were playing at a provincial or national level found it very difficult to enrol in a university in their hometown given the time commitment to their sport. One of Stephanie’s main motivations for attending a Canadian university was the fact that “in France

university sports is not really developed...the program was very intense and I didn't have time to train." According to John, "the school system is a lot different over here in Canada because if you play for a professional academy at a young age you're not allowed to play for your school." Suzanne, who attended university in France, said that the concept of a competitive university sport system in France did not exist. The difficulty of doing school and sports was also supported by Martin who went to university in Brazil and tried to play soccer as well. When asked about the challenge of combining school and soccer, Martin indicated that, "it's almost impossible...in Brazil, you either go to school or you play soccer, and it's tough to combine both." For Martin, the appeal of 'North America' was its ability to offer a higher education system that combined both education and competitive sport with the opportunity to receive scholarships:

Soccer in Brazil, like...they don't offer scholarships for people in university...you either play professionally or you just play for fun. They don't have the budget to offer students scholarships...when I heard about the opportunity to combine study and playing soccer...that's what I'm looking for.

In interviewing both Ky and Mick it was evident that a difference in sport systems was also prevalent in their home country of Australia and thus, the ability to incorporate sport into a university setting was definitely advantageous for them. According to Ky, "the sport system in Australia is a bit different. Like, here in Canada and the States, it's all done in the schools, right, like the high school and the universities but in Australia it's all sort of leagues and like state programs." The responses by these international student-athletes sheds light on the diversity and uniqueness of university and sport systems from various countries as well as the inherent challenges and obstacles they pose for students. The ability to simultaneously combine both competitive athletics and quality academics was a major motivation expressed by the international student-athletes in attending Canadian academic institutions.

4.2.3.2 Challenging U.S. intercollegiate experiences. As previously noted, five out of the 16 international student-athletes had attended an NCAA, NAIA, or a junior college institution before arriving in Canada. Of those five international student-athletes, three international student-athletes had reported a negative student-athlete experience. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the negative experiences encountered in the United States by these international student-athletes were cited as a major factor for transferring to a Canadian university. Veronica, who had accepted an offer from a junior college, had high expectations of advancing herself in the United States but found it, “a little bit disappointing.” Her perceptions and expectations of life as a student in the United States were contrary to what she experienced in reality. According to Veronica, “I always thought I’d like it but once I went to the States I actually hated the American way of playing.” When asked what her prime motivation for transferring to Canada, Veronica replied, “I was fed up with American culture to be honest, yeah.” In looking back at some of the differences between her current university and the junior college she had transferred from, Veronica had said, “I just liked the people, culture felt more at home, they felt like really interested, they were really interested in getting me so...that’s why I committed to come here.” Unlike Veronica, Martin’s decision to transfer out of his university was primarily due to the realization that he could further his athletic career at a bigger university but was prevented from doing so because of his coach and NCAA rules. For Martin:

I wanted to transfer to a different university. But...to transfer the rules are very strict and you need to get a release from the coach, so...the coach was like [Martin] I’m the one that brought you here, I want you to play for me and you don’t need to be playing against me or for a different university. So he kind of made it difficult for me to go somewhere else and I really didn’t want to stay.

In commenting on his experience, Martin exclaimed that his negative experience was the reason he went back home. Aside from the three aforementioned international student-athletes who had

difficult experiences in the United States, there was only one international student-athlete who had reported a negative experience in Canada, which forced him to transfer to another Canadian university. Joseph's decision to leave his previous university revolved entirely around the 'politics' associated with the university soccer team. Not only was Joseph's scholarship removed in his third year for no apparent reason, but he was also being replaced by less experienced players and, thus, was not receiving any playing time.

Aside from the on-field troubles and scholarship frustrations, it was made aware to Joseph by players on his team that the coaching staff were, to some extent, discriminatory towards foreign players. This sense of discrimination was explained by Joseph, "the athletes were telling me how the coaches didn't like Mexicans...they didn't like me even though I went to every practice, I always did my best, I never said anything to them..." These findings show that not all international student-athlete experiences were positive, even within Canada. Moreover, these experiences highlight the fact that the perceptions and expectations that international student-athletes had about their experiences were not always satisfied or fulfilled.

4.2.3.3 College visits. Out of the 16 participants, six international student-athletes reported the importance of college visits in motivating them and solidifying their decisions to attend a Canadian university. Even more interesting is the fact that all six international student-athletes had offers to universities in the United States but chose Canadian universities, citing their university visits as a major factor. According to Karlo, "I just fell in love with the campus and decided that that this was the school I wanted to try and play for." Karlo also found that having the opportunity to meet the coaching staff and some of the players had a big impact in solidifying his decision to come to Canada:

We met with the coach and I met some of the guys on the team when I came here for my visit and the coach was just super friendly, which is one thing I really liked about [university] as well. Just having a coach who will look after you if you need anything and then the players were also very friendly so that definitely impacted my decision to come here. It was how friendly everyone was.

Veronica also had the opportunity to attend visits in both the United States and Canada and concluded that her visit to Canada solidified her decision. In drawing comparisons between her visits, Veronica explained:

They flew me in and L.A. flew me in, a school in L.A. and I went to the school in L.A. and I just didn't have the feeling like, I wasn't wanted as much as I was wanted here and then I came here and I just liked the people, culture felt more at home, they felt like really interested.

Elena reported that her decision to attend a university, whether in the United States or in Canada, was partly dependent on whether she was able to attend a college visit and meet the team. When asked about her decision to come to Canada, Elena cited the benefit of visiting the university stating, "when I took my visit I took it like the week before I was supposed to decide where I was going. And so, it just turned out to be perfect and I loved it." Finally, Kathy reported that from her perspective, college visits allowed her to determine what she was looking for and what she wanted to get out of her university experience. The degree of recruitment by CIS coaches was also reported as a form of motivation in convincing the international student-athletes to attend Canadian universities. It was found that the utilization of university visits, a form of recruitment, were employed by CIS head coaches and athletic directors and were reported as an effective recruiting tactic. The findings on the importance of college visits highlights the fact that in some cases, a university or college visit is the only tangible or physical encounter that international student-athletes have on which to base their decision. Having the opportunity to

meet the coaching staff and players as well to get a feel for the university goes a long way for these international student-athletes in making their decisions.

4.2.3.4 Recruitment and financial incentives. In addition to university visits, other forms of recruitment included constant communication between the head coaches and the international student-athletes via email or telephone as well as head coaches travelling to the countries of the international student-athletes to talk with, and watch them play. Coaches traveling to different countries was also reported by Ky whose coach had travelled to Canberra to scout a fellow teammate and in the process, recruited Ky as well. In retrospect, Ky also acknowledged the tactics employed by coaches to make it more attractive and enticing for players to commit to Canadian schools by adding pressure as well as downplaying the academic and athletic standard of the American colleges that were interested in him. Other players expressed that having a personable spin on the way coaches went about recruiting was also effective. Kathy, in talking about her coach, said, “she was very thorough so whenever I’d email her, we’d correspond, she was always very thorough with me and very timely and she made the effort to talk to me on the phone a lot.” The use of financial incentives or scholarships, as expressed by John, was also a major factor reported by the international student-athletes for considering not only to come to the United States/Canada but also to specifically choose a university to go to. According to Martin:

It comes down to how much money I can get, it comes down to if I can afford right, so I talked to the different coaches and they offered me different scholarships and the best deal that I got was in Edmonton and that is why I went to Edmonton.

Of the 16 participants, 12 international student-athletes were currently on some form of a scholarship to subsidize the cost of paying international student fees. It was made known that without some form of a scholarship, it was unlikely that the international student-athletes would have considered coming to Canada. Though the international student-athletes had varying

degrees of financial aid from scholarships, the issue of high costs associated with being an international student-athlete was an issue of contention. As an example, John was on the verge of leaving his university in Canada after his first year because he had an offer from an NCAA university which was willing to offer him a more lucrative scholarship. According to John, the main factor in his decision-making process surrounded issues of cost and having to pay international student fees and thus, the degree of his scholarship was very important. Aside from the American participants, six out of 16 international student-athletes stated that attending university in their respective hometowns was either free or heavily subsidized. Veronica, who was originally from Germany, claimed that university for German residents was not only free, but also that attending university in North America would mean a heavy dependence on financial scholarship aid. Thus, not only were these international student-athletes making enormous sacrifices to pursue their goals and dreams, but they were doing so in the hope that they would receive a scholarship.

Aside from all the benefits of being an international student-athlete in Canada, the reality of being an international student-athlete is explicitly outlined by Martin:

I just wanted to say that it always comes down to money for me because it's very hard to be an international student in Canada, tuition is just like three, four times more. Even like the currency in Brazil, its undervalued compared to the Canadian currency so what I pay here I'm actually paying twice...I have to pay for living, food, so it's not easy.

4.2.3.5 *New life/college experience.* Aside from the athletic and academic motivations expressed by the international student-athletes, the ability to have a university experience, and subsequently, a new life experience was emphasized on numerous occasions. More specifically, the ability to travel, explore new cultures and cities, meet new people, and live an independent life was expressed throughout the interviews. In comparing the experience she would have got

had she stayed in the United States, Elena exclaimed, “I wouldn’t have probably have had the full college experience because they’re really small schools, like, the amount of students going there weren’t nearly as much as this...so that was the difference.” Having life experiences, traveling, and experiencing new cultures was realized by Martin early on and was a motivating factor for leaving his hometown. According to Martin:

I was finishing university and I felt like I haven’t traveled, I haven’t, like, I didn’t know English before and I kind of was looking for something more challenging in my life...you study you learn a different language, and that kind of interested me and that’s the main reason I came to Canada.

4.2.3.6 Personal connections. Eleven out of 16 international student-athletes were made aware of the Canadian university sport system through personal connections that either told them about a particular university in Canada or strongly encouraged them to attend a Canadian university. Personal connections cited by the international student-athletes consisted of family members, close friends, significant others, and/or former coaches. As an example, Karlo, who played in a men’s league with two former players from the university he currently attends, remarked that those two teammates were instrumental in convincing him to explore the option of going to that particular university, claiming that it was a good fit for Karlo as well as a good environment. Aside from Karlo, Bobby also had a cousin who had played at the same university that he now attends and who had strongly recommended attending a Canadian university. In speaking to what his cousin had told him leading up to his decision to attend the university, Bobby indicated that:

He said he loved it here. It was a good place...he said coach was a great coach to play for, he was a player coach...the education system is great...you’d be able to get your degree here and use it...it can be used all around the world, so that was another big part too that me getting a degree and me being able to actually use it as well...he just said that it just, it fits.

A similar example was cited by John whose cousin had completed a co-op placement as an exchange in the university's physiotherapy department and who had put John in touch with his current coach. John stated that his decision to attend his university came from the great deal of trust that he had in his cousin as well as the meetings and conversations he had with the head coach. In addition, having personal connections that live in the same area as the university or are currently attending the same university to which the international student-athletes are applying was also a major factor. According to Mark:

Well one of my best friends was the key reason...he was already studying here and I think he was the only person that I actually talked to beforehand...he convinced me because he said the place is great, the people are really nice...the university is very young and it's full of potential...he talked about the city and how there's many Arabs here and how it's easy to adapt in Canada because people are nice and people are welcoming.

These examples shed light on the power that personal connections and word-of-mouth have in influencing these international student-athletes to apply to and attend certain universities, especially considering the high number of universities in Canada, and subsequently, the vast number of options for the international student-athletes to consider.

4.2.3.7 *The role of sport in getting a degree.* In a study conducted by Popp, Love, Kim, and Hums (2010), it was found that international student-athletes who were elite athletes back in their respective hometowns, sojourned to the United States "to continue elite training in the hopes of a future professional career, while also allowing them to secure a university degree" (p.169). An analysis of the interviews on Canadian international student-athletes determined that the aforementioned finding was not as prevalent. Rather, the emphasis for these international student-athletes involved using their athletic abilities to get an education rather than become professionals in their respective sports. This was reiterated by Bobby who claimed, "I wanted to

get a better education and I'm using athletics as being an athlete, being a student-athlete to actually get my education because education is the key." Thus, the international student-athletes believed that their skill level and athletic background allowed them the opportunity to obtain a degree at a Canadian institution while still playing a competitive sport. Furthermore, the sentiment of using their athletic talents to obtain a degree was not a strong point of emphasis, but rather, was casually mentioned. According to Mick, "well I mean that was, ideally like probably the only way I thought of myself as going to university. It was if I was going to go it was when I was going to be playing basketball kind of thing." In talking about the benefits that his soccer ability afforded him, Martin argued:

...that's the only way I'm here and that's the main reason I came to Canada and the United States...the only way I could afford coming was through soccer I didn't become professional but...I learned a different language. I've lived in the United States, in Canada, all due to soccer...without soccer I would never be able to do it.

Based on the findings, it is clear that the international student-athletes placed more of a priority on obtaining an academic degree and subsequently viewed the purpose of sport from a different perspective as compared to the aforementioned study by Popp et al. (2010).

4.2.3.8 The university application process. Aside from the five international student-athletes who had previously played in the NCAA, NAIA, or junior college system, six other international student-athletes had offers or scholarships from American institutions, but ultimately decided to attend a Canadian university. Turning down scholarship offers from the NCAA to pursue an opportunity in Canada was most notably expressed by Bobby:

I had 11 offers from different, from various Division 2 universities and, my close friend who went to my junior college with me went to the Division 3 school... and he wanted me to go there with him and play and I was really highly considering it but

then I just, I don't think I could have passed this opportunity though so I had to check this opportunity and it worked out.

Other international student-athletes who had received scholarships were told that the extent of the scholarship received was based on athletic performance over the years as outlined by Martin:

In the United States, they have a lot of money so they offer me full tuition and part of my apartment paid for, for the first year...first year you get less, the second year you get a little bit more if you're doing well and then the third, and then when you go to fourth year you get full, like tuition and apartment and everything covered...in the United States, each player, they get a different scholarship. You sit down on the table and you have to negotiate and you see how good you are and that's how it works there.

It was evident throughout the interviews that most of the international student-athletes did very little research into Canadian schools and that the number of schools that international student-athletes had applied to was minimal. Of the 16 participants, nine international student-athletes had done very little research before applying to a Canadian university. Furthermore, these same nine international student-athletes had only applied or were only interested in applying to one Canadian university.

4.2.4 International Student-Athlete Experiences.

The transitional process and challenges faced by the international student-athletes are termed 'cross-cultural adjustments' and are defined as "the process of adaptation to living and working in a foreign culture" (Palthe, 2004, p.39). Based on the responses by the international student-athletes, it was determined that the majority of challenges and transitions revolved around academics and athletics.

4.2.4.1 Academic challenges. With respect to the academic challenges, some international student-athletes found that the task of managing their academic obligations coupled with adhering to their athletic commitments was overwhelming and at times, challenging. When

asked how the transition was in his first year at university, Peter indicated that, “it was tough [laughter]. It was very tough. I barely passed a lot of my classes.” The rigour of being a student-athlete was also echoed by Ky who explained that trying to balance and combine a full academic course load while playing basketball was a legitimate challenge that he faced as a student-athlete. When asked about any challenges or transitions he had to deal with once having arrived, John stated that there were some academic challenges given that he had been out of school trying to become a professional soccer player. John explained:

I'd say academically, because I was going from training full time every day, I left school at 15... and then sort of starting that transition again from playing every day and then going back into full time education, that was at first, probably a bit of a wake-up call.

4.2.4.2 'Style of play' challenges. Aside from the academic challenges associated with being an international student-athlete in university, some international student-athletes found it difficult to get used to the 'style' of play that predominated the CIS. The level of competition and the amount of training in order to be a student-athlete was also an aspect of the experience that some international student-athletes were not accustomed to. According to Karlo, “I had a feeling that basketball was going to be hard which it is. So I was definitely expecting to have to work hard every day in practice and try to balance school as well, so that's definitely been a challenge.” In speaking to their athletic transitions, several international student-athletes made comparisons to the style of play that was customary in their hometowns. In talking about the differences, Peter said that it was a “completely different way of play like in Europe it's a lot about technique and like finesse as opposed to here where it's about strength and explosive power. So I had to get used to that given I'm not... really that strong compared to everyone else.” Bobby, who had transferred from a NCAA Division 1 university, also acknowledged the challenges of having to adapt to a new system stating that, “at first it was kind of hard because it

was different...it's the same game but it's different words...different challenges, different rotations...the first month I was probably frustrated not getting it." In talking about her experience, Veronica shed light on the fact that her first year was plagued with injuries, a poor season, and the subsequent firing of the head coach that recruited her in the beginning. Veronica's situation in her first year was described as being awful, to the point where she was contemplating quitting after only having spent one year at her university. Aside from the academic and athletic challenges, non-native English speakers found that language was a major challenge that they had to overcome and, for some, is a challenge that they are still dealing with. The tough challenge of having to speak and understand English was reiterated by Suzanne, "the first three months felt like everyone was going so fast and I was missing half of the words that they were saying...it was still a challenge like the pace especially the pace."

Outside of the aforementioned academic, athletic, and language challenges reported by the international student-athletes, a lot of the international student-athletes reported not having lived on their own before coming to Canada. Thus, the challenges of living an independent life, with work, school, and athletic responsibilities was an aspect of the international student-athlete experience that required some adjustment. According to John, "it was different because at first there was a lot of things that I had to, sort of settle into...I was very homesick at first and I was sort of thrown into the deep end...I was in a residence building on my own and stuff like that." Other international student-athletes reported that experiencing a new culture and lifestyle, while interesting and positive, came with challenges including being homesick from friends and family. According to Stephanie, "school started in September, so that first month was just horrible. I'm shy, so I couldn't speak with the family...my first week, I was crying in my room." Despite some international student-athletes having a tough transitional process, those

international student-athletes used their sport not only to overcome their challenges, but also to keep themselves focused during their first year.

Aside from four international student-athletes, the international student-athletes reported having a smooth and easy transition as well as a positive experience during their first months at their Canadian universities. In looking back at her transition from the United States, Veronica explained that, “Canada’s more of a hybrid between like European and U.S. culture so...I felt more at home, I felt people were more welcome, they were more sincere in their kindness.” In speaking about his transition, Ky seemed overwhelmed with the amount of support he received upon arrival:

I feel like, coming from Australia to Canada, it’s not too much of a culture shock like, culturally we’re all pretty similar....Canadians are very friendly...especially out here on the East Coast...it’s been pretty good and especially at school, you know, everyone’s out there to help you...the transition was definitely good.

The cross-cultural adjustments and challenges faced by the international student-athletes were often alleviated by being part of and playing their intercollegiate sport. For 13 out of the 16 international student-athletes, the role played by the intercollegiate team was seen as a mechanism not only to combat homesickness and the stress of living in a new country, but it was also used to integrate the international student-athletes into university life. According to Stephanie, “I think if I was not in the soccer...I would have come back to France...soccer was my motivation to stay here and to continue.” For John, his perspective on the role of the team revolved around creating an easier sense of integration pointing out that, “it made the transition a lot easier knowing that you’re playing every week.” The role of the team in integrating the international student-athletes into university life was cited by all 16 international student-athletes, in particular Mark who explained that:

it's a very multicultural, there's so many guys from so many different countries, so many backgrounds so it's a very interesting mixture of players...I don't think it was hard to fit in with them they were very nice, very accepting...it definitely helped with moving to the country, to know so many people so quickly.

In the eyes of the international student-athletes, the intercollegiate teams at their universities embodied the role of a family, so to speak, wherein they all shared a common bond. This sense of family and camaraderie was echoed by Mick who explained that, "we're just a family like everybody, we're so close together I mean...so I mean we're very close and as one and we do a lot of things together and we hang out a lot together and it's definitely that sense of family and brotherhood."

All 16 international student-athletes reported overwhelming positive experiences with their current intercollegiate teams. Moreover, the female international student-athletes reported a very welcoming experience and that, in contrast to former teams, the chemistry and sense of friendship made for a great student-athlete experience. In talking about her athletic experience, Stephanie said that one of the main reasons she stayed in Canada was because of the team chemistry and overall atmosphere in the locker room, which was not only very positive and encouraging but also contrary to what she had experienced in France. Such comparisons were also made by Mandy, "this is actually one of the first teams that I've been on that has like the girls have like really gotten along and they're actually pretty cool and nice to each other [laughter]. I've been on some rough teams in the past but yeah they're really cool." Overall, the role of the team was instrumental in alleviating any of the difficult 'cross-cultural adjustments' or challenges that the international student-athletes initially faced upon arriving in Canada. Moreover, through their respective teams, the international student-athletes were able to integrate into the university and the student-life by meeting new people and attending social events. All 16 international student-athletes reported having excellent coaching staff who took a vested interest

in them and took an initiative into ensuring that the needs and concerns of the international student-athletes were met and addressed.

4.2.4.3 *The status of being an international student-athlete in Canada.* When asked about their thoughts on having been an international student-athlete up until now and having reflected on their experiences thus far, all 16 international student-athletes believed that being a student-athlete in Canada, overall, was a privilege as well as an advantage. Moreover, the international student-athletes expressed the amount of dedication and commitment involved and thus concluded that being a student-athlete not only denoted a sense of uniqueness, but also that the student-athletes were in some way distinct from the regular students at their university.

According to Elena:

I have a lot of respect for the people who can do it because here, I mean, yes you may receive some athletic scholarship but you're not receiving everything paid for and so, basically you're making the decision to put your body through this and like, putting the stress on you and...making that commitment...but I mean it takes a lot of maturity.

When asked what it meant for him to be an international student-athlete in Canada, having experienced being a student-athlete in the NCAA, Bobby indicated that, "it means a lot. This opportunity is not taken for granted at all, I think it's special to me, there's not that many people that can really say they are international student-athletes playing internationally at the collegiate level...it's wonderful." Other participants believed that being an international student-athlete in Canada was perceived as being both a novelty and a rarity. According to John, "over in Canada for an international student to come and choose to go to Canada to play a varsity sport, I think at first it does sound a little strange but like I think a lot more people are starting to do it now because it is a better way of getting an education and playing in a competitive setting compared to at home." Other participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity in allowing them to

pursue their goals and aspirations as well as having the chance to be exposed to new and diverse cultures. According to Suzanne, being an international student-athlete is “good, you know, I think it gives people an opportunity to really combine their passion and school and I think it’s a positive experience...for me...I think it’s a great opportunity.” Overall, the advantage of being an international student-athlete stemmed from the athlete’s ability to combine their sport with academics, the recognisability of their degree and the university, as well as the ability to gain new experiences with different individuals and cultures.

4.2.4.4 Suggestions for the CIS. In light of the proposed reasons for the lack of international student-athletes in the CIS, the suggestions offered by the international student-athletes for the CIS predominantly focused on advertising Canadian universities on a global scale, recruiting athletes overseas, as well as increasing the amount of scholarship money for incoming foreign student-athletes. With respect to advertising on an international scale, several international student-athletes believed that organizing marketing campaigns at major international youth tournaments or leagues would serve to increase the awareness of the CIS and hopefully stimulate its global appeal. Such a suggestion was proposed by Ky:

if the CIS could somehow have a presence at some big tournaments...I’m sure every other sport has their own big tournaments in every country, so the CIS just needs to be known. It needs to get some kind of presence and I guess that’s, yeah, gonna come from...being seen in big tournaments that people know about.

Aside from Ky, Karlo also expressed the need for the CIS to promote itself, “I think the CIS should try and advertise more so that people around the world would know what the CIS is because not a lot of people have heard of the CIS.”

In line with the need for an increase in international marketing strategies to promote the CIS and Canadian university, the international student-athletes also expressed the need for an increase in

the amount of coaches that recruit foreign athletes, stating that the presence of Canadian intercollegiate coaches overseas and in the United States is minimal. When talking about the recruiting aspect of being an international student-athlete, Oscar described that:

There's not that much recruiting I think...there's not that much international recruiting from the Canada side to my knowledge, you know, for the States, like I've seen a few scouts come down, I've seen them talk with my teammates.

Advocating for more financial aid and scholarship opportunities as suggestions for the CIS was expressed by a number of international student-athletes, including Elena who explained that the use of scholarships would make the CIS more appealing and attractive to foreign student-athletes. According to Elena:

I think the scholarships would have to start going up from the universities to get, to attract players and full rides are given and stuff like they are in the States. I think that's a big deal...I think that if they wanted to be more competitive like the States then they'll have to start offering out more incentives and stuff to get the athletes to come.

Kathy also believed that the implementation of 'full' scholarships could change the international student-athlete scene saying, "I think the financial, like, if you allow schools to actually give full rides that changes the whole game I think."

4.2.4.5 To stay or not to stay? An analysis of the responses from the participants revealed that out of the 16 participants, seven international student-athletes expressed that they plan on or will be staying in Canada upon completing their degree to pursue a career in their respective fields. In addition, only three international student-athletes had plans on moving back to their respective hometowns. Furthermore, four out of the 16 international student-athletes expressed an interest in pursuing further education such as a Master's degree, PhD, and/or medical school. Finally, three international student-athletes expressed an interest in pursuing a professional career in their respective sports; with all three having designated Europe as their destination of

choice (one international student-athlete who wanted to pursue further education also expressed a desire to play professionally). Findings reveal that the seven international student-athletes who planned on staying in Canada reported having more opportunities and connections to pursue careers in Canada rather than going back home. According to Peter, “I’m very blessed to be here. I really made a lot of connections here and so it’s, like I feel like it’s gonna be easier for me to find a job here and get settled here than if I had to move elsewhere.” The amount of opportunities available as a graduate from a Canadian university was also a reason John reported as motivating him to stay in Canada. For John, “I’d like to stay in Canada...there’s a lot more opportunities here, work wise that’s going to open up long-term.” Aside from the ability to capitalize on opportunities and connections, the positive experience of being an international student-athlete in Canada has also influenced their mindset with respect to their long-term plans after graduation.

The findings also reveal that when asked about their short-term goals, responses from the international student-athletes emphasized the need to improve their individual athletic talents. However, when asked about their long-term goals, few international student-athletes mentioned playing professionally or continuing on with their athletic career. Thus, there was a self-realization that, for the majority of the international student-athletes, their competitive athletic careers were finite. Such findings were reiterated by Mandy who described that, “for soccer I don’t really plan on really keeping that going at a serious level.” The long-term goals tended to focus on their career aspirations and using their academic degrees to find and take advantage of new opportunities. Even for those international student-athletes who reported wanting to pursue a professional athletic career, they all acknowledged the need to properly balance realistic career aspirations with their athletic ambitions, alluding to the fact that they would not be playing long-

term. According to Ky, “unless you can get a really good contract, you know right out of university, I wouldn’t want to...join an NBL team, get paid not that much money...so I guess I just want to get that balance between pursuing basketball and having, you know, a career path right as well.”

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, the primary objectives of this study were twofold: (a) to investigate the current status (i.e., number, sport, and gender breakdown) of international student-athletes participating in the CIS, and (b) to determine the motivations and experiences of these student-athletes for participating in a Canadian academic institution and whether there were any differences according to gender and regional conference. Given the lack of literature on the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes in Canada, this was an exploratory study that appropriated the phenomena of globalization and internationalization within higher education and sport, as well as the existing literature on international student-athletes in the NCAA to contextualize and inform this study. This chapter includes discussions related to the findings of phases one and two of this study. More specifically, the discussion on phase two examines the lived experiences of the international student-athletes and their motivations. Furthermore, the discussion with respect to the CIS versus the NCAA and the NAIA is also outlined. Following that subsection, the benefits of having international student-athletes in Canadian universities is explored. The chapter concludes with the study's implications, limitations, and finally, suggestions for future research in the area of higher education and intercollegiate-athletics.

5.1 The Status of International Student-Athletes in Canada

Phase one, and specifically RQ1, addressed the landscape of international student-athletes within the CIS during the 2012-2014 academic years. The findings revealed that the majority of international student-athletes were male. Moreover, across both academic years it was interesting to discover that the two most popular sports, by participation and at the time of data collection,

were soccer and basketball for both males and females, with track and field and football falling close behind. In addition, curling was the only intercollegiate sport to register zero participants across all four regional conferences over the two academic years. The lack of international student-athletes in the sport of curling could be attributed to curling's limited appeal in that it may or may not be a popular participation sport for youth outside of Canada. In addition, low participation rates in curling could also be due to the fact that it is a winter sport and thus, would be predominantly played by countries in the Northern Hemisphere. High participation rates in both soccer and basketball could be attributed to the global popularity of the two sports. As an example, Statistics Canada reported that soccer is the fourth most popular sport based on participation behind golf, ice hockey, and swimming (Ilfedi, n.d.). On a global scale, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) reported that there were 265 million people currently playing soccer (FIFA, 2014). The high participation rates could also be due to the attractive nature of the sports in being able to offer professional avenues to its participants in North America and abroad as a number of international student-athletes had expressed an interest in being able to play soccer or basketball professionally during their athletic careers.

An interesting observation in the data collection for phase one was also the dominance of the RSEQ regional conference in providing the most number of male and female international student-athletes for both academic years. When looking at the nature of the demographics of the international student-athletes within the RSEQ, it became apparent that the majority of the foreign student-athletes were from French-speaking countries. Given the fact that the RSEQ is the only regional conference in Canada to have the majority of its universities as French-speaking, it can be argued that the power of language is a major factor in influencing French-speaking international student-athletes to attend a university in the RSEQ conference.

Overall, when looking at the number of domestic and international student-athletes in Canada for 2012-2013 (10,992 domestic and 609 international student-athletes), the total numbers of male and female international student-athletes in both academic years represents a rather small percentage of the total number of student-athletes participating in interuniversity sport in Canada (approximately 5.2%) as well as the total number of post-secondary international students (0.4%). According to the international student-athletes that were interviewed, possible reasons for the lack of international student-athletes predominantly revolved around the lack of full athletic/academic scholarships offered as well as the fact that the CIS is not a globally recognized intercollegiate sport system. Aside from its lack of global appeal, it was found that many international student-athletes believed that competitive sport essentially stopped at the CIS level in Canada and that the CIS did not provide its players with any professional opportunities. This could be problematic for those international student-athletes who desire professional avenues after they graduate. It is even more interesting to note that in light of the opinions of these international student-athletes, the CIS has recently adopted a new five-year strategic plan that will take the sport organization to the year 2018. Within this new strategic plan, the CIS's main goal is to be a 'world leader in university sport'. Moreover, the CIS is committed to enhance its visibility and relevancy stating that by 2018, university sport will be a "vibrant and visible sport system" (Lafontaine, 2013, p.13). The strategies currently being employed by the CIS to make it vibrant and visible include the implementation of a national marketing and communication strategy. According to the CIS, these strategies will serve to not only elevate the organization's brand equity and viewership, but will also serve to increase media presence, and thus, make it more visible and prominent at the local and, more importantly, national level (Lafontaine, 2013). Interestingly, the implementation of these strategies and the goal to make the

CIS more visible was also an area of concern that the international student-athletes believed needed to improve. With regard to the international student-athletes belief that the CIS did not provide its players with any professional opportunities, as part of the strategic plan, the CIS is aiming to incorporate university sport within the Canadian sport system by identifying and developing “strategic relationships with Canadian sport organizations, including professional and national sport organizations” (Lafontaine, 2013, p.17). The CIS has also taken recent steps to address the issue of offering full athletic scholarships to incoming student-athletes by implementing a five-year pilot program that was endorsed by Hockey Canada to offer full scholarships in all 33 women’s hockey programs. While the individual team spending caps will remain the same, financial caps on individual players will be removed implying that coaches can now increase the scholarship offer to individual players if they wish. Despite being a five-year pilot program, one might suggest that these are positive steps being taken by the CIS in order to address retention of student-athletes and recruitment issues. Critics may argue that the use of this program will erode the value and importance placed on amateurism in the CIS, and moreover, will propose that the CIS is now beginning to slowly transition into another NCAA-style system in the way it offers athletic scholarships. Whether the implementation of a five-year pilot program of this nature infringes or contradicts notions of amateurism that are strongly upheld by the CIS is a separate issue and one that needs to be addressed on its own. That being said, the implementation of a pilot program by the CIS would seem to be a change in the right direction for the purposes of not only retaining quality domestic student-athletes from venturing south of the border, but also for attracting international student-athletes and the benefits that they bring to the table.

Based on the nature of the CIS's new strategic plan in addressing specific areas of improvement that were reiterated and supported by the international student-athletes, the aforementioned issues raised by the participants with respect to why there exists a lack of international student-athletes are not only true, but also warrant further investigation and research. Though this strategic plan has gone to great lengths to address areas for improvement, we are still another four years away from realizing the effectiveness of this plan.

5.2 Lived-Experiences of International Student-Athletes in Canada

As previously mentioned, phase two of this research study sought to determine the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes for participating in a Canadian academic institution (i.e., RQ2 and RQ3) and furthermore, to determine whether there were differences for both across gender and regional conference (i.e., RQ4 and RQ5). Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it was determined that the experiences of the international student-athletes were all positive, and therefore, did not vary across gender or regional conference.

In talking about their experiences, the international student-athletes cited the role of the team, teammates, and coaches as being influential in shaping their experiences as well as their thoughts and opinions on their university and the CIS, in general. Having a supportive, friendly, and caring coaching staff that took an interest in the international student-athletes and made an effort to ensure that their needs were met was instrumental in how the international student-athletes rated their experiences and how well they dealt with the challenges of their transition from their respective countries. A number of international student-athletes also expressed the initial challenges of meeting new people and having a social life given that they were new to Canada, the culture, and the people. Thus, the intercollegiate team and the fellow teammates became

increasingly important for the international student-athletes as a social network to establish new friendships and integrate them into Canadian society. It became apparent that the international student-athletes who had been at their universities for several years even regarded their teammates as ‘family’ having shared and spent so much time together. The role of the team played a significant role in alleviating the stress and challenge associated with moving and living in a new country and, in some cases, was a motivating factor for preventing certain international student-athletes from leaving the university. This finding is supported by Falls and Wilson (2012) who found that the bond and relationship established by the athletes “with their teammates and the shared identity they developed was crucial in their attempts to deal with the larger and smaller challenges they all faced during their transition” (p.584). In further support, Falls and Wilson (2012) found that being part of an intercollegiate team “mediated their feelings of homesickness, especially during pre-season and school breaks” (p.585).

In addition to the role that the teammates and coaching staff played, the role of playing the sport, in general, also had its benefits for the international student-athletes. For some international student-athletes, playing their sport served as an outlet to break from the demands and rigour of being a student at a Canadian university. Similar to what has already been written with regards to the role of the coaching staff and teammates, several international student-athletes found that physically playing the sport gave them solace from their transitional process to Canada.

Though the international student-athletes did not explicitly mention specific examples that led them to have a positive experience, the major focus of their experiences revolved around having the opportunity to travel to a new country, explore new cultures, meet new people from various backgrounds, as well as having the ability to receive a degree whilst playing a competitive intercollegiate sport. According to John:

This is probably the best thing I've ever done...moving to another country and experiencing everything and traveling around, playing, meeting new people and of course getting a degree out of it at the end, I think, I think once I moved here and once I realized...it's probably the best thing that I've ever done, I haven't looked back at it.

These international student-athlete experiences were also positive in the sense that they not only adequately prepared the students for a life after university but also fostered growth, development, and positive change within the students themselves.

5.3 Motivational Factors for International Student-Athletes

The motivational factors for these student-athletes in coming to Canada to attend a Canadian academic institution posed very interesting results. First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the motivational factors for these international student-athletes were multifaceted and unique as well as a reflection of their lived experiences. Despite being varied and diverse, there were patterns and themes that emerged out of the interviews with respect to the student-athletes' motivations for coming to Canada. A major theme that emerged involved having the opportunity to combine athletics with academics and vice versa. Some international student-athletes did prioritize one motivation over the other (i.e., the athletics over the academics), but inevitably realized that the main attraction of Canada was the ability to continue playing their sport at a very competitive level while getting an academic degree. In speaking to their academic degrees, the international student-athletes were attracted to Canadian universities because of the reputation they had with offering quality academic programs. Moreover, a major factor in their decision-making process was the global recognisability of the university as being a known 'good academic school' as well as having a degree that would be transferable. In that sense, many of the international student-athletes also felt that universities in Canada were superior to those in the United States as well as in their respective hometowns. Based on the

interviews conducted for this study, it was determined that the motivational factors of the international student-athletes did not vary significantly across regional conference and gender. Specifically, 14 out of 16 international student-athletes were motivated to attend a Canadian university because of the academic quality of Canadian universities coupled with the desire to continue playing their sport at a competitive level. The prime motivation of having the ability to combine athletics and academics was an overarching theme throughout the interviews, and thus, all other motivations seemed to stem from this theme or were portrayed as secondary motivations. While the prime and initial intention was to combine athletics and academics, other motivating factors such as college visits and recruitment as well as the role of personal connections were seen as ways in which the international student-athletes were able to solidify their decision. Overall, it became apparent that over the course of their degrees, the international student-athletes in Canada placed a major emphasis on their education. It is also evident that the majority of international student-athletes had secondary motivations aside from the academic-athletic dynamic in attending a university outside their hometown, emphasizing the demand for a holistic and multi-faceted international student-athlete experience.

The motivational factors for the international student-athletes coupled with their transitions and challenges that they underwent as well as their status as ‘international student-athletes’ are ultimately a function of issues of mobility and identities that are associated and inherent with the nature of being an international student-athlete. For example, the act of the international student-athlete moving from their home country to Canada is a form of geographical mobility. However, getting to that stage, whereby the international student-athlete decides to move to a new country, is a reflection of a series of conscious/subconscious processes whereby the athlete is “impacted by and interconnected with reflexively modern social conditions” (Falls & Wilson, 2012, p.573).

These processes are in effect once the individual begins his/her involvement in sport and furthermore, begins to identify themselves as being a participating member of an athlete or sport culture and the experiences associated with that particular membership (Falls & Wilson, 2012). This process was pervasive throughout all the interviews with the participants, whereby the international student-athletes, through their active participation in sport, identified themselves as being athletes and furthermore, went on to discuss their initial experiences of being a member of the sport culture. Moreover, upon arrival to their Canadian university, the participants not only identified themselves as being 'international student-athletes', but talked about their experiences associated with their identity and how these experiences, in effect, changed them. By 'change', the international student-athletes expressed the fact that their experience in Canada had positively influenced their behaviour, their maturity level, and their knowledge of the outside world. This change is ultimately a function of the physical transition from one country to another. The changing effects associated with a transition are supported by Schlossberg (1981) who states that a transition is an "event or non-event that results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships" (p.5).

As part of the transition process, several international student-athletes made reference to their family members, close friends, former coaches, or other personal connections as having a major influence not only on their motivations, but also with respect to handling the transition of moving to a new country. This is supported by Falls and Wilson (2012) who stressed the "importance that socializing agents, such as parents and siblings, as well as gender, social class, and culture have on athletes' experiences in and around sport" (p.575). Not only were the aforementioned socializing agents influential in introducing the international student-athletes to sport in

childhood, but they were also consulted by the athletes for advice and guidance in their decision-making process. In talking about mobility and identities and in light of the literature on globalization and internationalization processes, Hargreaves (2000) recognizes that athletes in sport “from all over the world have been affected by the increased interconnectedness between countries, the encountering of other cultures, and the growth and accelerated pace and complexity of informational and cultural exchanges” (as cited in Falls & Wilson, 2012, p.576). Once again, the mobility of these international student-athletes as well as how they construct their identities as athletes and their subsequent experiences all essentially stem from the phenomena of globalization and internationalization and the permeating effects that they have on sport and, in particular, intercollegiate Canadian sport.

5.4 CIS versus the NCAA, NAIA

One could perceive that just south of the border lies one of the most elite intercollegiate sport systems in North America. In using the term ‘perceive’, one is shedding light on the fact that it is rather difficult to determine which country has the best, most advanced, or better-rounded university sport system. The difficulty in doing so stems from their inherent nature and diverse backgrounds, as well as from their mission, goals, and the overall style of the organization. Thus, by using the term ‘perception’, one would be able to explain that what has emerged from the interviews, in terms of comparing and contrasting the two countries’ university sport-systems, is a result of how the international student-athletes organize and interpret the information they receive and subsequently, how they come to understand the world around them. Whether or not the international student-athletes’ perceptions are accurate or can be considered as fact is debatable. Nonetheless, it is evident through the interviews that the perceptions of the international student-athletes served to inform their decision-making process.

Consequently, a major theme that emanated from the interviews was the perpetual tendency by the international student-athletes to compare the CIS to the NCAA and NAIA, and furthermore, to describe the NCAA and NAIA as being superior to the CIS. As previously reported, 11 out of 16 had applied to the United States before even considering applying to any Canadian academic institutions. An even more interesting finding was that nine out of 16 international student-athletes had never heard of the CIS or that Canada had a university sport system when they made contact with American colleges. In a globalized world characterized by a rapid sense of connectivity and interconnectedness, it was interesting to find that over half of the international student-athletes in this research study had knowledge and perceptions of the NCAA and the United States University sport systems, but not of the CIS and Canada. The general consensus of the participants was that the United States was synonymous with the NCAA, and thus, there was a certain level of attraction or aura about the NCAA as being a 'big-time' league with ties to professional athletics. That same level of attraction and aura associated with the NCAA was not initially associated with the CIS. In comparing the two, the international student-athletes stated that the NCAA offered larger athletic scholarships, had a higher level of competition, offered more professional opportunities after graduation and a greater degree of exposure during their eligibility. In addition, the international student-athletes reported the vast amount of 'perks' that are afforded to the athletes by the universities and their athletic programs. For example, in describing the perks associated with being a soccer student-athlete in the United States, Oscar indicated, "there's like a boot room, right, you can just go in a room get boots, whatever you want. Here no, we get 40% off adidas or you know, that's whatever, you know." These findings are interesting in light of the fact that only five out of the 16 participants had participated either in the NCAA, NAIA, or junior college system and who had legitimate experience of being an

international student-athlete in the United States. For the remaining 11 participants, their knowledge and perceptions of the United States and their sport systems were formed through indirect means such as through friends, family members, teammates, or the media. Regardless, it became apparent that the NCAA was the destination for those international student-athletes who still had athletic aspirations of becoming a professional. This is in accordance with the literature on the NCAA, specifically the work of Popp, Love, Kim, and Hums (2010) who stated that coming to an American institution allowed the international student-athlete to continue training at a competitive level for the purpose of hopefully becoming a professional in their sport.

On the contrary, as previously mentioned, the academic motivation of coming to a Canadian university as well as the desire to have academic success while in Canada was also supported by NCAA literature, in particular, Popp (2006) who stated that international student-athletes placed more emphasis on academic achievement as opposed to athletic achievement. The findings that emphasize the international student-athlete's desire to acquire an education coupled with the lack of Canadian coaches actively recruiting international talent ultimately counter Weston's (2006) assertion of an achievement-style sport ideology as well as Bale's (1991) notion of 'boosterism'. It seems as if the Canadian university sport scene with respect to the international student-athlete dynamic can be regarded as a diluted form of Bale's (1991) notion of the 'brawn drain'. The lack of an achievement-style ideology also led some international student-athletes to believe that the NCAA was superior to the CIS and that the CIS was an alternative or considered to be a secondary option to the NCAA. That being said, while there may be some university coaches that recruit international student-athletes for the purpose of advancing the quality of their teams, based on the interviews, it appears as if that is not the case for the vast majority of university

coaches in Canada, particularly within soccer and basketball. Whether that is because of a lack of resources, funding, or interest, remains unknown.

The motivating factors for international exchange students, as outlined in the literature by Mazzarol (1998), were also found to be fairly similar to those of the international student-athletes in this research study. As noted in the literature review, the ‘push-pull factors’ of international exchange students, in order of priority, revolved around the value of an athletic scholarship, coach relationship, post-academic career opportunities, level of competition, and finally, the academic reputation of the school (Popp, Pierce, & Hums, 2011). While the international student-athletes in this research study would not necessarily prioritize the above factors in the exact same order, the aforementioned influencing factors outlined by Mazzarol (1998) were emphasized by the international student-athletes as playing a major role in their decision to come to Canada. The international student-athletes in this research study were primarily concerned with scholarships, the level of competition, as well as the academic reputation of their school as reasons for attending their university. Moreover, they cited post-academic career opportunities, which in their minds stemmed from the reputation of the school, as a major benefit of attending a Canadian university.

5.5 Are International Student-Athletes a Benefit to Canada?

Underpinning the orientation of this research study is the belief or assumption that having international students and international student-athletes at Canadian universities is advantageous and beneficial. One could pose counter arguments claiming that an increase in the international student and athlete population is a detriment to Canadian universities in that they are essentially occupying or taking positions away from domestic students and athletes. Based on the literature

on international student-athletes in the NCAA, it would seem as if having international student-athletes is advantageous, from an athletic perspective, in enhancing the quality of teams and subsequently to increase the number of winning championships. One should keep in mind that according to Barnes (2008), per year roughly “two thousand Canadian student-athletes cross the border to pursue their university in the United States (as cited in Falls & Wilson, 2012, p.572). Should the CIS consider or work towards keeping these two thousand student-athletes at Canadian universities?

The aforementioned advisory panel that was formed with the support of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada in 2011 ultimately advocated for the increase in international students at Canadian universities citing numerous and pervasive benefits that would affect all areas to sustain and improve Canada’s economy and longevity. Thus, from an international student perspective, having international student-athletes in Canada is ultimately contributing toward the advisory panel’s goal of doubling the number of international students by 2022. Whether or not the international student-athletes enhance the quality of sport in the CIS is still unknown and should be explored.

5.6 Implications

In the process of conducting phase one of this research study, it became apparent that the CIS does not monitor or keep track of the number of international student-athletes competing in a given year. Thus, a major implication of this research study suggests that there may be a role for the CIS to not only monitor how many legitimate international student-athletes are playing in the CIS every year, but also to keep track of their country of origin, gender, as well as what sports they are playing while in Canada. This is invaluable information that could assist the CIS in

targeting the nature of their niche market (if there exists one) for particular regional conferences and sports. Knowing their niche market could help the CIS target and design appropriate and efficient marketing strategies.

The findings from the participants in this research study reveal implications on both an individual level as well as on a more systemic level. On an individual level, the findings reveal the need for university institutions to focus on creating a smooth and more seamless transition for the international student-athletes coming to Canada. This could be accomplished by providing proper infrastructure at the university, such as the inclusion of peer mentors and academic councillors to oversee the well-being and academic affairs of the international student-athletes. It is also important that universities which offer programs for international students through their international student services offices recognize the international student-athlete population as well. University institutions, specifically international student services, could also collaborate with the coaching staff of their intercollegiate athletic teams to ensure that all the needs of the international student-athletes are met.

On a more systemic level, with the growing trend and interest towards internationalization on university campuses and the importance of providing students with an international perspective, this research study will hopefully provide university institutions and their interuniversity athletics programs with some insight into the motives of international student-athletes and perspectives of their experiences. This information could be useful for university institutions and their interuniversity athletic programs for the purposes of attracting more international students and student-athletes. Information generated by this research study may also assist athletic directors and coaches in attracting and recruiting international student-athletes by serving to educate them on aspects of university life that are desired by international student-athletes.

Having knowledge and insight into the motivations and interests of international student-athletes could be tailored by athletic directors and coaches based on what they can offer. Furthermore, this study may provide direction to the CIS regarding ways to enrich the international student-athlete experience and the post-secondary education experience in general. The CIS can use this information to address the issues that were raised by the international student-athletes such as offering more scholarships, marketing themselves on a more global scale, and offering more professional opportunities or avenues for student-athletes who wish to advance their athletic careers beyond the university walls. The new five-year strategic plan proposed by the CIS is a positive step in the right direction to ensure that Canadian universities and the CIS, in general, are not only recognized on a global level, but are regarded as *the* destination for international students and student-athletes to study and compete.

5.7 Limitations

Over the course of completing this study, there were a number of limitations that posed challenges, and thus, must be discussed. One major limitation was the absence of a database by the CIS that tracked and quantified the status of international student-athletes currently studying and playing in the CIS. Thus, I was forced to navigate through the rosters of every university athletic website that was a member of the CIS, which was an arduous process given that some university athletic websites had incomplete rosters. Having incomplete or missing data online was problematic in terms of accurately quantifying the number of international student-athletes for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 years. Moreover, as I began contacting athletic directors and head coaches to inquire about the international student-athletes, I was informed on multiple occasions that my information regarding the number of international student-athletes playing for specific universities and teams was incorrect. For example, I was informed in several instances

that the international student-athletes I was interested in interviewing had either recently left the university or that they had become permanent residents of Canada or had Canadian citizenship from birth and had spent the majority of their lives living in another country. This could have been a possible reason why the student-athletes may have written down an ‘international’ hometown. These specific cases, which were pervasive throughout the CIS rosters, were virtually impossible to determine based on looking at the websites themselves. I was also informed that there were additional international student-athletes on the roster aside from the athletes I had inquired about. In some cases, this was due to international student exchange programs whereby an international student had made the team on a ‘walk-on’ basis that year. Given that the websites were not updated on a regular basis, player changes on teams were not accounted for and reflected on the university athletic websites. It is my belief that the limitations associated with the nature of the university athletic websites coupled with the issues surrounding international student-athlete eligibility affected my ability to accurately quantify the number of international student-athletes playing in the CIS.

This unique limitation also affected the ranking of the most popular sports determined during phase one of this study. For example, before conducting phase two of this study, the three most popular male sports, in order were soccer, basketball, and football. During phase two, the basketball numbers declined, and subsequently, football emerged as the second most popular sport. This same decline was also prevalent in women’s soccer, which was originally the second most popular sport, but dropped to third along with hockey and cross-country. The decline in the numbers for women’s soccer subsequently made women’s track and field the second most popular sport. Based on the aforementioned limitations encountered with soccer and basketball, I would predict that these same limitations are also affecting the other sports in the CIS and their

respective rosters, in terms of the quantity of legitimate international student-athletes. Thus, the findings determined in my study regarding the quantity of international student-athletes are a reflection of the limitations previously outlined.

A second major limitation with the study involved the issue of language. In my attempt to provide equal representation across all CIS conferences, I was faced with the challenge of recruiting international student-athletes from the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ) conference. Despite having a large percentage of international student-athletes playing soccer and basketball, the RSEQ conference is predominantly French-speaking. My inability to speak or comprehend the French language made it difficult for me to communicate the nature of my study to the majority of athletic directors and coaches in this conference as well as my desire to interview their international student-athletes. In order to deal with this limitation, I contacted certain English-speaking universities within the RSEQ conference and had success with organizing interviews. In addition, and more importantly, the international student-athletes who resided in the RSEQ conference were themselves French-speaking. That being said, it was not only difficult to communicate my questions to the participant, but it was also difficult for the participant to communicate their answers and thoughts throughout the interviews. The language barrier ultimately hindered my ability to recruit more international student-athletes in the RSEQ conference and also may have affected the participants that were recruited to provide accurate and comprehensive answers during the interviews.

A third limitation of the study was the sample size of the international student-athletes.

Delimiting the focus of the study to include just soccer and basketball affected the sample size and the overall generalizability of the study. Also related to this limitation is the fact that athletic directors and head coaches were not included in this study. Including athletic directors and head

coaches could provide an in-depth perspective on their perceptions and knowledge on the international student-athlete population. This added dimension could allow researchers to come to a greater awareness as to if and how coaches actively pursue and recruit international athletic talent teams.

A fourth limitation was the use of Skype and telephone as mediums to conduct the interviews for this study. Given the diverse geographical location of all participants, person-to-person interviews were not feasible, which was, in and of itself, a limitation. By not conducting person-to-person interviews, the element of human reality or direct human interaction was sacrificed. According to Lechuga (2012), technological mediums to conducts interviews, such as using the telephone, are not only considered to be subordinate, but challenge “the extent to which qualitative research can be conducted at a distance” (p.251). Technological mediums are reported to lack visual cues and are thus unable to establish rapport and contextual information, ultimately resulting in a loss or distortion of data (Novick, 2008).

The last limitation involved the paucity of literature on international student-athletes in Canada. The lack of literature on this topic in the Canadian setting made it difficult to inform the study. Given that this is the first study of its kind, future research on this topic may or may not contradict the findings obtained through this study.

5.8 Suggestions for Future Research

Given that this is the first exploratory research study examining the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes, additional research is needed in the area of international student-athletes in Canada. In light of the fact that 16 participants from the sports of soccer and basketball were used for this research study, future studies could encompass more longitudinal

methods examining the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes from across various sports. Longitudinal studies may be instrumental in determining whether their motivations and experiences varied from those motivations and experiences found in this study. In addition, although I have provided an accurate overview of the numbers of international student-athletes currently playing intercollegiate sport in Canada, more quantitative research is necessary to track how many international student-athletes come to Canada every year and how many, if any, leave at any point during their studies.

Future research could also examine the perspectives of the athletic directors and head coaches of the intercollegiate athletic programs that have international student-athletes from an administrative and recruiting standpoint. Research on this particular population might hopefully provide insight into the thoughts of head coaches on recruiting international student-athletes and whether recruiting international student-athletes is beneficial for intercollegiate teams.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Background Information:

Date/time of interview:

Current Canadian university:

Current academic year:

Current year of eligibility:

Current sport:

Hometown:

Interview Questions:

1. What was life like back in your hometown?
2. What was soccer like for you back in your hometown? What level did you play?
3. At one point did you start thinking about doing more school after high school?
4. Who influenced you to do post-secondary education?
5. Why did you decide to come to Canada for school?
6. Were there any other opportunities to play or attend school in another province or country?
7. Why did you pick Mount Royal as the school that you wanted to attend?
8. What was the transition like coming from your hometown to Canada?
9. What was the transition like when you started playing for the school soccer team?
10. What is your background with playing the sport of soccer?
11. What motivated you to play soccer in the CIS?
12. Were you recruited to play for a CIS university?

13. If so, can you tell me more about how you were recruited?
14. What expectations did you have before you came to Canada and started playing soccer?
15. Have your expectations been met?
16. What are your short term goals for soccer and school?
17. What are your long-term goals for soccer and school?
18. For you, what does it mean to be an international student-athlete playing and studying in Canada?
19. If you could give advice to future international student-athletes, what would you tell them in relation to school and soccer?

Appendix B: Ethics Approval



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Initial Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Karen Danylchuk
File Number: 104634
Review Level: Delegated
Protocol Title: The Status of International Student-Athletes in Canadian Interuniversity Sport
Department & Institution: Health Sciences/Kinesiology, Western University
Sponsor:
Ethics Approval Date: December 19, 2013 **Expiry Date:** May 31, 2014

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Email script for recruitment of International Student-Athletes	2013/11/05
Letter of Information & Consent	Consent Form for International Student-Athletes	2013/11/05
Western University Protocol		
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Revised interview guide	2013/12/03
Recruitment Items	Email script for head coaches	2013/12/03
Recruitment Items	Email script for athletic directors	2013/12/03
Instruments	Revised Interview Guide	

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Appendix C: Email Script for CIS Athletic Directors

Hello,

My name is Daniel Grbac and I am a Master's student in Sport Management at Western University studying under the supervision of Dr. Karen Danylchuk. I am inviting you to participate in a study that is investigating the current status of international student-athletes participating in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS). The study seeks to determine the motivational factors and experiences of these student-athletes participating in a Canadian academic institution.

With the growing trend and interest towards internationalization on university campuses and the importance of providing students with an international perspective, this study will provide university institutions and their interuniversity athletics programs with in-depth knowledge on the motives of international student-athletes and perspectives of their experiences. This information may assist athletic directors and coaches in attracting and recruiting international student-athletes. Furthermore, this study will provide direction to the CIS regarding ways to enrich the international student-athlete experience and the post-secondary education experience in general.

Due to privacy constraints and restrictions, student-athletes' emails and contact information are not publicly accessible, and thus, this study's participation request must be sent to the head coach who will then forward the request to the student-athlete. That being said, I am contacting you because of the presence of international student-athletes on both the male and female soccer varsity teams in your athletic program. Specifically, I would like to interview international student-athletes from your men's and women's soccer teams. In order to interview the international student-athletes, I am requesting permission from you to contact the head coach of the athletes to which I am seeking access. If you agree to participate in this study and give me permission to contact the respective head coaches, please email me at your earliest convenience. Please find attached a Letter of Information for the student-athletes that outlines further details about the study.

This study has received the approval of the Western University Research Ethics Board. If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Karen Danylchuk.

Thank you,

Daniel Grbac
School of Kinesiology
Western University

Appendix D: Email Script for CIS Head Coaches

Hello,

My name is Daniel Grbac and I am a Master's student in Sport Management at Western University studying under the supervision of Dr. Karen Danylchuk. My current research is an investigation of the current status of international student-athletes participating in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS). The study seeks to determine the motivational factors and experiences of these athletes participating in a Canadian academic institution.

With the growing trend and interest towards internationalization on university campuses and the importance of providing students with an international perspective, this study will provide university institutions and their interuniversity athletics programs with in-depth knowledge on the motives of international student-athletes and perspectives of their experiences. This information may assist athletic directors and coaches in attracting and recruiting international student athletes. Furthermore, this study will provide direction to the CIS regarding ways to enrich the international student-athlete experience and the post-secondary education experience in general.

I am contacting you because of the presence of an international student-athlete on your team that you currently coach. Due to privacy constraints and restrictions, student-athletes' emails and contact information are not publicly accessible. In order to interview this student-athlete, I am requesting that you forward this participation request to the student-athlete. If you agree to forward the study's participation request to the student-athlete, please email me at your earliest convenience. Please find attached a Letter of Information that outlines further details about the study.

This study has received the approval of the Western University Research Ethics Board. If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Karen Danylchuk.

Thank you,

Daniel Grbac
School of Kinesiology
Western University

Appendix E: Letter of Information for International Student-Athletes

Project Title: The Status of International Student-Athletes in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS)

Principal Investigator: Dr. Karen Danylchuk, School of Kinesiology, Western University

Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “The Status of International Student-Athletes in the CIS”. You have been identified as a potential participant because of your current status as an international student-athlete in the CIS. Your email address was not obtained from your athletic director or head coach. This participation request was sent to your athletic director and head coach who have subsequently forwarded it to you.

Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research study.

2. Purpose of this Study

Although there is a presence of international student-athletes in Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), the governing body for interuniversity sport in Canada, the status and literature pertaining to international student-athletes do not currently exist. In order to address this gap, the purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to investigate the current status of international student-athletes participating in the CIS, and (b) to determine the motivational factors of these athletes for participating in a Canadian academic institution, as well as their experiences.

3. Inclusion Criteria

Individuals who are eligible to participate in this study include current international student-athletes in the CIS who are 18 years of age and older. They will be identified by the research team from the 2013-2014 rosters. International student-athletes will be selected from each of the four regional interuniversity athletic conferences. The sample will be delimited to international student-athletes who are currently playing soccer and basketball.

4. Exclusion Criteria

Only international student-athletes identified by the research team will be participants in this study.

5. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate in an interview, you will be asked to answer questions about your motivational factors for attending a Canadian academic institution, and your experience as a student-athlete to date. It is anticipated that the entire task will take approximately 30-40 minutes, over one session. The task(s) will be conducted over the telephone or Skype at a time that is convenient for you.

6. Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

7. Possible Benefits

The benefits to the participants include the ability to reflect on and share their experiences as international student-athletes in Canadian institutions. These experiences include the factors influencing their desire to move to another country, the decision to attend a Canadian university, the decision to play a CIS sport, current day-to-day living experiences as being a foreign student-athlete as well as the subsequent benefits and/or challenges that may be perceived. In providing such information and reflecting on their experiences, participants will ultimately have the privilege and the opportunity to contribute to an area of research and an area within Canadian intercollegiate sport system that has never been examined before.

With the growing trend and interest towards internationalization on university campuses and the importance of providing students with an international perspective, this study will provide university institutions and their interuniversity athletics programs with in-depth knowledge on the motives of international student-athletes and perspectives of their experiences. This information may assist athletic directors and coaches in attracting and recruiting international student athletes. Furthermore, this study will provide direction to the CIS regarding ways to enrich the international student-athlete experience and the post-secondary education experience in general.

8. Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

9. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future participation. The interview will be audio-recorded. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, handwritten notes of the interview will be taken by the researcher.

10. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. Although the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure that the information collected is accurate, the transcript will be coded by pseudonyms and all personal identifiers will be removed. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. A copy of the transcript will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked institutional office, accessible only to the researchers conducting the study. The study data will be kept for five years, after which time all files will be deleted and transcripts will be shredded. Upon your request, we will provide you with a copy of the transcript, as well as a final report highlighting summarized findings. Changes can be made to the transcript if you feel that your thoughts and opinions were not properly conveyed.

11. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Karen Danylchuk. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

12. Publication

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.

13. Consent Form

A consent form will be provided to you before the scheduling of the interview.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Daniel L. Grbac

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2007-2012 BPHE

Western University
London, Ontario, Canada
2012-2014 M.A.

Honours and Awards: Pre-B Certificate, Ontario Soccer Association (OSA)
2010

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (Bronze, Silver, and Gold)
2008

Related Work Experience: Technical Soccer Trainer
Bryst International Inc.
2009-Present

Teaching Assistant
Western University
2012-2014

Executive Marketing Coordinator
PwC Epic Tour Halton
2013

Athletic Experience: Semi-Professional Soccer Player
Canadian Soccer League (CSL)
2008-2009

Student-Athlete
University of Toronto Men's Varsity Soccer Team (CIS)
2007-2009