

“THE BASKETBALL WORLD IS SMALL”: PUSH-PULL FACTORS AND CROSS-  
CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS IN NCAA (DIVISION I)  
BASKETBALL

by

RYAN JAMES TURCOTT

(Under the Direction of Rose Jepkorir Chepyator-Thomson)

ABSTRACT

The movement of sport labor migrants dates to the period of industrialization in the 1860s (Magee & Sugden, 2002) and they continue to traverse the globe in contemporary times. Among the sport migrants are highly skilled population that include international student-athletes who migrate to the United States to compete in intercollegiate athletics. The purpose of this study was to understand influential migration factors and experiences of former international male basketball student-athletes who attended colleges and universities in NCAA (Division I). Data collection methods included semi-structured, open-ended, and qualitative interviews. Sixteen participants participated in this study. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used in the data analysis. They were interviewed in depth to gain insights into their experiences and to understand factors that influenced their decision-making processes to migrate to the United States. The findings of this study include: a) contrasting educational and sport systems (U.S. versus the country of origin), b) factors that influenced migration decision-making processes, c) adjustment strategies, d) the challenges international basketball players faced in their new

environment, and e) life after basketball. Each of these major themes includes several sub-themes.

INDEX WORDS: sport labor migration; intercollegiate athletics; cross-cultural adjustment;  
international basketball

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who have supported me throughout my life. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother (Kathleen McDermott), my father (Gary Turcott), my step-mother (Donna Turcott), my sisters (Julie Turcott, Angela Priest, Julie Johnson), and my brother (Greg Turcott). If not for the unconditional love and support from these people, my doctorate would not have been possible.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Millions of people have been on the move throughout human history. People move for a variety of reasons, including searching for economic opportunities or pursuing different lifestyles (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). Often, people from various diverse groups, move to many different countries to escape from war or poverty situations, looking for better opportunities abroad (Williams & Graham, 2014). They may move away from their homelands as forced or voluntary migrants, which makes migration a critical element in global human migration. According to *National Geographic* magazine (2005), human migration occurs when individual or groups of people move from one place or location to another to stay temporarily or permanently beyond their original place of residence. Migration occurs on varying scales: between continents (intercontinental), between countries on a given continent (intracontinental), or within countries (interregional) (National Geographic Society, 2005; Castles & Miller, 1993). People on the move continentally or intercontinentally use different migration patterns and they are implicated in the interplay of economic, political, historical, geographical, social, and cultural factors (Maguire & Pearton, 2000).

According to the World Health Organization (2015), about one billion people are migrants today, with approximately 214 million of these being international migrants and 740 million being internal migrants. They include a diverse population comprising workers, refugees and students. Based on UNDESA's (2013) study, about 232 million of the world's population resides outside their country of birth. Between 1960 and 2000, international migrants rose in

number from 92 million to 165 million, with most of the people moving primarily from developing to developed countries (Davis, D’Odorica, Laio, & Ridolfi, 2013). Scholars have conducted research studies on migrants using typologies. A clear typology lays a foundation for further analysis and provides direction for both theorizing and conducting empirical studies (Bailey & Boyle, 2004). According to Martin (2003), a typology can be defined as “a systematic classification of phenomena into groups that have common characteristics” (p. 9). A typology results from making distinctions that create separated groups in a range of related phenomena, making it easier to analyze and understand the complex realities of migration. Essentially, “the most general statement that one can make concerning migration must be in the form of a typology, rather than a law” (Petersen et al., 1975, p. 229).

People move as forced or unforced migrants. Forced migrants (involuntary) include a variety of groups that consist of both internally and internationally displaced peoples, among them refugees, exiled or asylum seekers (Castles, 2003); in contrast, unforced (voluntary) migrants comprise relatively well educated, skilled, productive, and highly motivated individuals, who purposefully move away from their home communities to advance their livelihoods and live better lives. David and Barwinska-Malajowisz (2015) explained that those involved in migration as unforced migrants, particularly in the 1990s consist of mostly highly skilled migrants. The movement of highly skilled human capital has increased significantly in terms of scale, pattern and composition (Castells, 2003). Most highly skilled migrants tend to be financial experts, engineers, computing and IT specialists, technicians, health professionals, and researchers (Meyer, 2001). With advances in technological communications and travel, skilled people transverse the globe for better services and opportunities.

Although opinions vary on the overall impact of highly skilled migration on hosting nations' workforces, consensus exists that the movement of the highly skilled workers is now a key feature of increasingly globalized education and labor markets (Gribble, 2008). Increasingly student or academic migration has become one of the major forms of contemporary international mobility (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2009). Nunn and Prince (2005) explained that academic migration is a form of skilled migration, helping to highlight the critical role that academics and students play in enhancing research and innovation in host nations and translating that innovation into commercial ideas and products, as well as promoting organizational development and planning. Much of the research specific to international students deals with adjustment to the host country and a new education system (Bystydzienski & ResNathan, 1994; Harris & McNamara, 2002; Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Scheyvens et al., 2003). More recently, scholars that conducted research on highly skilled migrants have focused on the processes that involve the development of what has been termed "brawn-exchange." Brawn exchange occurs when sport migrants are deliberately recruited to improve the performance of indigenous players by educating them about specific dimensions of the game (Elliot & Weedon, 2010). The development of this concept has occurred as the composition of highly skilled migrants has come to reflect the emergence of capital and skills circulating across the globe. As highly skilled workers move around the globe with increasing regularity, and as an increasing transnationalism of the global highly skilled labor market occurs, knowledge within a role or industry is circulated and exchanged (Carter, 2011).

In the 1960s, prior to "brawn exchange," research into the concept of "brain drain" sought to examine the problems donor nations face when members of their highly skilled workforce relocate (Iredale, 2001). These workers were seen to be taking advantage of positive



wage disparities available outside of their homelands, and researchers were principally concerned with determining the losses that could justifiably be sustained by developing nations when such migrations occurred (Bohning, 1984). Studies concluded that under these conditions, donor nations often faced a systematic “deskilling” of their highly skilled population. In recent years among unforced or voluntary migrants, skilled sport labor migrants have traversed the globe in large numbers to seek better educational and professional opportunities abroad, aided by advances in information technology and communication (Bauman, 2010) that have elevated global human migration, thus benefitting sports labor migrants in the process. Although the migration of sports labor migrants dates to the period of industrialization in the 1860s (Magee & Sugden, 2002), these migrants continue to traverse the globe in contemporary times, encountering varying circumstances, barriers, and incentives. The idea of globalization has been used to understand why sports migrants transverse the globe. As Byron (2014) explains, globalization has altered not only the sport landscape, but it has also increased interaction and levels of human communication across many different industries. Increasingly, globalization influences sports labor migration, becoming a major force in the movement of sports labor from developing to developed countries. Botelho and Agergaard (2011) acknowledged the massive impact globalization has had on sport migration. In fact, according to Giulianotti and Robertson (2004), “sport participation in the global context makes for “sociologically illuminating domains of globalization” (p. 545). Further, they point out that the voluntary nature of sports organizations tends to mirror social connectedness brought about by globalization, as seen in border crossings, and as aided by technological advancements that have come to characterize worldwide communications and development.

Globalization and sports labor are complexly intermingled or intertwined with a series of power struggles characterizing the global sports system (Carter, 2011). Hence when sports migrants move, they encounter differing pressures, rewards, and interdependencies. For instance, the last century and a half has witnessed the emergence and diffusion of sport, the establishment of international sport organizations, the global standardization of rules governing sports, the growth of competition among individuals and club teams from different countries and the national sides of such countries (Maguire, 1999). The sports labor brought about by international migration is encouraged and facilitated by the social and economic undercurrents of globalization, making sport labor migration a critical area of research (Carter, 2011). Research studies examine and explain how migration impacts international labor, global demographic variables and the interdependency of world countries in sports labor.

The increasing globalization and professionalization of the sports industry has made sports labor migrants highly sought-after skilled workers, who move beyond their homelands from many continents and countries across the globe to look for better opportunities (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). According to Agergaard and Tiesler (2014) and Elliot and Maguire (2008), sports labor migrants are a highly skilled and privileged group. Darby (2011) argues that elite sports migrants represent another example of highly skilled workers and are enmeshed in local, national, political and economic states of affairs, as well as transnational policies, and that their movement is reflective of reinforcing the changes and realigning the nation state. When the conceptualization of highly skilled sports migrants is used in relation to developing countries, the aspect of “brawn drain” in the case of sports labor migration becomes apparent (Bale, 1991). “Brawn drain” was first used by Bale (1991) to describe skilled international migrants or foreign student-athletes going to U.S. universities and colleges. Scholars understand the term “brawn

drain” in various ways. For example, in Klein’s (1989) analyses of Dominican baseball, the meaning of the term is easily identified as some of the best and most talented prospects taking their talents to more profitable leagues, such as that of the Major League Baseball system in the United States. Klein’s (1989) work shows how consistent outward migrations along determinable “talent pipelines” can give rise to problems, which can be likened to a sporting equivalent of the “brain drain.”

As opposed to the concept of brawn drain, scholars have used brawn exchange to describe sports labor migration. Elliott and Maguire (2008) and Maguire (1996), for example, have shown how *pioneer* migrants can be seen to educate indigenous populations with respect to particular elements of their sport, and they identify this process in British professional ice hockey. In this sport, Canadian migrants have been deliberately recruited to improve the performance of indigenous players by educating them about specific dimensions of the game. The “brawn exchange” of this particular process allows for a foreign migrant athlete to play professionally while raising the overall performance level of the team or league. It is argued that by working daily with players of greater technical ability and experience, indigenous players are challenged to perform at a higher level. On this basis, the involvement of Canadian players has been seen to improve overall standards of performance for indigenous players (Elliott & Maguire, 2008; Maguire, 1996).

In the last several decades, the study of international sport labor migration gained considerable momentum. Bale (1982), Arbena (1988), Maguire (1988), Bale and Maguire (1994), and Maguire and Stead (1996) were the early contributors to international sport migration research. In contemporary times, several authors have expanded on this earlier work, including Stead and Maguire (2000), Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001), Magee and Sugden (2002),

Maguire and Stead (2005), and Maguire and Falcous (2010). Most of this recent research has focused on the structural aspects of sport labor, activities on the court, on the field, and on the impact on domestic/national skilled performers (Galily & Sheard, 2002). These studies have raised issues related to the following aspects of athletes' lives: personal adjustment by migrating athletes, the rights of athletes as workers, the impact of talent migration on the donating nations and the countries to which athletes migrate, and the impact of athlete migration on the identities of athletes and fans (Bradbury, 2011; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Evans & Stead, 2012). More recently, Carter (2011) and Roderick (2012) emphasized the importance of understanding not only the structural aspects of labor migration but also the lived experiences of international student-athletes.

The unique characteristics of collegiate sport in the United States have the potential to bring new dynamics to the athlete migration discussion. According to the NCAA Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report, nearly 15,000 international (non-U.S.-national) "student-athletes" competed at NCAA schools during the 2012-2013 school year (Zgonc, 2013). Studies on the topic of athletes migrating to be involved in the U.S. collegiate sport system can be grouped into two broad categories: (a) those focusing on the experiences of international athletes on U.S. college and university campuses (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Popp, Love, Kim, & Hums, 2010) and (b) those focusing on the motivations of international athletes coming to U.S. universities (Berry, 1999; Garant-Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, & Hardin, 2009). With regards to international athletes' experiences on U.S. campuses, Ridinger and Pastore (2000) analyzed the adjustment of international athletes to U.S. colleges, comparing the experiences of international student-athletes with domestic student-athletes. Later, Popp (2010) further refined the initial model of student-athletes' adjustment developed by Ridinger and Pastore (2000). Chepyator-Thomson

(2003) explored the experiences of Kenyan scholar-runners in U.S. colleges and universities. The motivations of non-U.S.-national students migrating to a U.S. universities and colleges have been examined by Berry (1999), Jones et al. (2008), and additionally by Ridinger and Pastore (2000), who have studied international student-athletes' adjustment to college. Key findings from these studies indicate that most international student-athletes migrated because scholarships offered them an opportunity to attend a U.S. college, to engage in the strong competitive atmosphere of U.S. college sports, and to access the high-level training opportunities at the college and university level in the United States (Seungmo & Love, 2011, p. 92).

In sports labor research, Maguire proposed the original typologies that scholars have used to understand motivational factors that prompt international athletes to leave their places of residence. Maguire's (1999) migrant athlete typology was developed from interviews with athletes in such sports as soccer, basketball, cricket, and rugby. The emergent typologies included the categories of *mercenaries*, *settlers*, *nomadic cosmopolitans*, *pioneers*, and *returnees*. Magee and Sugden's (2002) typology, developed from interviews with professional soccer players in England, also included the categories of *ambitionist*, *exile*, and *expelled* athletes. Love and Kim (2011) revised the extant typology to reflect the diversity of factors and experiences associated with the migration of athletes in U.S. collegiate sports. As Maguire (2004) pointed out, "it is important that typologies continue to be checked against new data to ensure their adequacy" (p. 479). These typologies have not been used specifically in the context of collegiate basketball.

To understand human migration, several theoretical perspectives have been used. As interest in migration research has grown in recent years, theoretical approaches have proliferated, leading to a more complex understanding of migration, with linked with the broader processes of

change (Castles, 2009). While pertaining to economics, *neoclassical theory*, in which people decide to invest in migration based on the expected rate of return in the destination country being greater than the costs incurred through migrating, remains the dominant paradigm in migration studies (Chiswick, 2000). Additionally, *new economics of labor migration theory* argues that migration decisions are made by families, households or even communities rather than isolated individuals (Taylor, 1987). Migration theories have also revolved around development and networks (Castles, 2009).

The migration of athletes can be approached from different theoretical perspectives extending from geographical studies of migration patterns to historical and sociological studies using modernity theory, the theory of imperialism, development theory, and systems theory (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Based on Marxist and systems-theoretical approaches, athletes are viewed as a labor force that is exploited by international capitalism or as part of a global system that they cannot influence (Bale, 1991). In the context of this dissertation research, transnationalism is used as the theoretical perspective to guide this study. Transnationalism has been used to analyze people's cross-border activities and the sense of belonging that occurs as economic, political and social transactions across borders intensify (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Transnationalism in social sciences is rooted in post-structural and post-colonial thinking, specifically aimed at bringing migrant agency back into migration studies (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). Understanding sports labor migrants as trans-migrants directs attention towards their transnational social practices (such as Skype and Facebook), as well as subjective feelings of transnational belonging (Carter, 2011).

Viewed from a transnational perspective, migration may lead to fluctuations in finances, influential relations, knowledge and skills, and social and cultural remittances (Al-Ali & Koser,

2002) returning to developing countries as has been described in the case of soccer academies in the United Kingdom (Elliot & Weedon, 2011). The agency of migrants is considered as they hold motives and create cross-border links with other relevant individuals and organizations to obtain recruitment and referral, while also being influenced in their mobility and immobility by transnational power relations of race, class, gender, etc. (McCormack & Walseth, 2013). An additional theoretical perspective used to guide this study is Wallerstein's (1974) *world-systems theory*, which allowed for an understanding of global basketball player migration using the concepts of *core* states, *peripheral* states and *semi-peripheral* states. Chiba (2012) conceptualized the NBA with respect to the world-system theory such that North America is the core, Europe is semi-peripheral, Central/South America and Africa are peripheral, and Asia and Oceania are considered part of the external world. Lastly, cross-cultural adjustment theory was used to examine the cultural experiences that the participants had in the United States and, more specifically, within their college campus and basketball environments.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Firstly, the United States is the only country that offers significant scholarship support for intercollegiate sports. The combined academic-athletic package is extremely attractive to basketball players seeking to attend college, including international student-athletes. Secondly, U.S. college coaches are facing pressure to produce winning teams; and by recruiting international student-athletes they attempt to build the best team possible (Weston, 2006). Additionally, the U.S. functions as a core area of talent production, producing players who feed the National Basketball Association (NBA) labor market (Falcous & Maguire, 2005; Lee, 2010; Chiba, 2012). For these reasons, the number of *non-resident aliens* has grown tenfold in the past

decade, reaching as high as 8% of all Men's Division I Basketball players in the 2006-2007 season and fluctuating between 4% and 8% in the 2004-05 and the 2013-14 seasons.

While the NBA has garnered the attention of researchers examining the growth of foreign (non-U.S.) players, (Araton, 2007; Larmer, 2005; Means & Nauright, 2007), studies on the large numbers of young basketball athletes crossing the globe to compete in NCAA basketball are nonexistent. Qualitative studies on non-U.S.-national basketball migrants in intercollegiate athletics, especially concerning their experiences and influences to migrate also do not exist. While the NCAA has been mentioned as “the global migration push-factor for basketball player development” (Lee, 2010, p. 9), little is known about the ways in which these migratory processes have developed. No qualitative studies have inquired into the specifications of men's basketball migration in comparison to related area studies such as soccer migration, baseball migration and the migration of highly skilled persons. Using qualitative research tools, this study applies existing knowledge of sports labor migration and migration theory more broadly to assess the migration influences of international collegiate basketball players and the overall experiences as “student-athletes” while at U.S. colleges and universities.

The theoretical perspectives used in this dissertation study are: world-systems theory, transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment. While world-systems theory was used to examine the influences pushing international student-athletes' to migrate to participate in NCAA Division I colleges and universities, transnationalism was used to understand student-athlete experiences, social practices and feelings of belonging while involved in the sport of basketball the U.S. intercollegiate athletic system. Lastly, cross-cultural adjustment theory was utilized to assess participants experiences of “culture shock” while adjusting to the United States as well to life on a college or university campus.



**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand factors that influenced former international student-athletes to migrate to play in NCAA Division I basketball, and to comprehend their cross-cultural experiences and adjustments to playing basketball while attending college in the United States.

**Research Questions**

- 1.) What influenced former international male basketball student-athletes to pursue an education and participate in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
- 2.) How did former international male basketball student-athletes make meaning of their experiences as student-athletes in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
- 3.) What recommendations do former international basketball student-athletes have for future international sport labor migrants in NCAA Division I Basketball?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in the following: (a) provision of new insights and suggestions to inform international student-athlete migration, and to offering of new knowledge to modify existing recruiting strategies used to attract the best international athletes to pursue NCAA intercollegiate athletics; (b) indication of specific characteristics that international male basketball student-athletes have as a group, helping develop better understanding of challenges and adjustment coping strategies; and (c) examination of the underlying relationship between U.S. collegiate basketball and the global professional basketball market. The addition of a study on basketball migration promises to reveal new perspectives on athlete migration. Moreover, this study adds to the knowledge of the importance of international student-athletes on university college campuses and for higher education institutions to better accommodate this population.

Knowing the influences of migration and experiences of international student-athletes on college and university campuses will help administrators provide improved services to student-athletes thereby minimizing their challenges.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Federation of International Basketball Association (FIBA)**

The world governing body for basketball, is an independent association formed by 215 National Federations of basketball throughout the world and recognized as the sole competent authority in basketball by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (International Basketball Federation, 2003).

#### **Student-Athlete**

This refers to a student who participates in an NCAA-sponsored varsity intercollegiate athletic team (NCAA, 2013).

#### **International Student-Athlete**

This refers to someone who has completed secondary education in a country other than the United States. In order to meet the criteria, all participants in this study were former international student-athletes, and had their last year of competition taking place in the past 2 years (dating back to the 2013-2014 season) to meet the criteria.

#### **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)**

This is the governing body of intercollegiate athletics for approximately 1200 member colleges and universities. The NCAA establishes policies and procedures related to student-athletes' eligibility, recruitment, financial aid, and other issues related to the membership (NCAA, 2013).

The NCAA consists of three Divisions (Division I, II, and III). According to NCAA rules and

regulations, Division I and II institutions offer athletic scholarships to student-athletes, and Division III institutions may occasionally offer athletic scholarships (NCAA, 2010).

### **NCAA Division I**

In general, larger colleges or universities participate in Division I, and smaller colleges participate in Division II and III. The current study has focused exclusively on Division I because according to the NCAA (2008), nearly 70% of international student-athletes are enrolled at NCAA Division I institutions.

### **NBA (National Basketball Association)**

The National Basketball Association is considered by most to be the top professional league in the world. The league is made up of 30 teams all located in North America. NBA players are the world's highest paid professional athletes per average salary per player (Gaines, 2015).

### **U.S. College or University**

Postsecondary schools in the United States that offer at least one of the following: associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, education specialist degree, or doctor of philosophy degree or their equivalents.

### **High School (Secondary School)**

High school is a secondary school during the last four years of formal education that usually includes grades 9 or 10 through 12. High school is generally used in the United States, while Secondary School is used in most other countries.

### **Prep School**

A high school in North America, either private or public, designed to prepare students aged 14–18 for higher education at a university or college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

### **Junior College**

In the United States, a junior college is a two-year college providing academic, vocational, and professional education. Students and student-athletes work towards earning an Associates Degree, the highest certificate offered. Junior college students may continue their education and athletics at a four-year university or college, transferring some or all credits earned at the junior college toward the degree requirements of the four-year school (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

### **Push-Pull Factors**

Push-pull factors are forces that can be economic, political, cultural, and environmentally based that can induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences (Li & Brey, 2007). The lack of opportunities in the home country can be referred to as “push” factors, while the greater opportunities afforded by industrialized nations can be viewed as “pull” factors (Menon & Carspecken, 1990).

### **Sport Labor Migration**

Athletes, coaches, and sports administrative personnel are also, to an increasing extent, moving across national and continental borders to work (Carter, 2011a; Maguire & Falcous, 2010).

### **Brain Drain**

Represents the emigration of highly trained individuals from a specific country or world region to another for over an extended period.

### **Brawn Drain**

The conceptualization of highly skilled sports migrants is used in relation to developing countries, where the aspect of “brawn drain” in the case of sports labor migration becomes apparent (Bale, 1991).

### **“March Madness”**

The annual NCAA Division I Men’s and Women’s National Tournament, also known as *March Madness*, takes place every spring and broadcasts the tournament to countries around the world.

### **Dual-Career**

Refers to the “challenge of combining a sporting career with studies or work, which remains a source of concern for most high-performance athletes” (Ryba et al., 2014, p. 125).

### **Pipeline**

As a migrant pathway between the importing and exporting country becomes solidified over time, “pipeline/s” has been the terminology that Bale (1991) used to define such processes in international sports migration.

### **Bridgehead**

Earlier migrants that ease the migration process by providing information about significant migratory procedures for potential migrants while in residence in their home countries (Meyer, 2001, p. 93).

### **Amateurism**

Specifies that "student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professionals and commercial enterprises" (NCAA, 2010).

## **Assumptions**

The researcher assumed that self-reported measures would be accurate regarding the semi-structured interview questions and the responses to the interview questions. Therefore, it was assumed that the student-athletes responded truthfully to the interview questions. It was also assumed that the hometown and home country on the official university team roster were

accurate. Lastly, it was assumed that interview questions successfully elicited fair representation of the student-athletes' experiences on their influences to migrate to a U.S. university.

### **Limitations**

The study is qualitative, and as such there are no intentions to generalize information gathered to other non-U.S.-national student-athletes at other universities or in other sports. Another limitation of the study is that student-athletes self-reported their home country and town. A methodological limitation is that the participants were interviewed only once; therefore, elaboration and follow-up questions on specific topics were not possible beyond the one interview. The researcher also will not analyze any other data besides the interviews, so no further analysis was conducted on instruction or student experiences.

### **Subjectivities**

As Maxwell (2005) states, the subjectivity statement's purpose is to "identify those goals and experiences, and the beliefs and emotions that connect to these, that are most relevant to your planned research, and reflect on how these have informed and influenced your research" (pp. 27-28). The researcher is a former collegiate basketball player who had teammates from both the United States and outside the U.S. The researcher has also coached basketball on other continents and in other countries, such as Rwanda, New Zealand, Israel, Turkey, Romania, and Germany. The experiences of living and coaching in these different contexts framed the data collection in that some of the interview questions were developed from previous experience. Knowing that many athletes outside of the U.S. are interested in and attracted to playing college basketball in the U.S. framed part of the interview guide to focus on things central to this specific type of athlete migrant. However, the researcher used an open-ended interview format, whereby questions could be asked or omitted, in which the interviewer did not have to follow a

regimented interview protocol. The researcher is guided by the data into new areas of understanding. The researcher will monitor the data throughout the study and will follow up if anything becomes significant. The data will be analyzed inductively from the ground up, and therefore the researcher's main goal is to have the participants inform the study and use their own voice to guide the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on the review of the literature and consists of four different areas: (a) international migration, (b) intercollegiate athletics in the United States, (c) international student-athletes in the NCAA, and (d) popular theories of migration and theoretical perspective of the study.

#### **International Migration**

Migrations have occurred throughout human history, beginning with the movements of the first human groups from their origins in East Africa to their current location in the world. In 2013 there were 232 million international migrants, with Europe and Asia combined hosting nearly two-thirds of all international migrants worldwide—72 million and 71 million respectively. According to a United Nations (2013) study, the largest number of international migrants per country resided in the United States of America, numbering 46 million. With this rise in scope, complexity and impact, international migration has evolved into a global phenomenon. Along with the flow of capital and goods, international migration represents an important feature of globalization (Ertekin & Dural, 2013). It can be viewed that the migration has continuously existed because people wish to obtain a better life with expectations of employment, higher income, improved living conditions, or even connection with friends and family. Migration could be considered a fundamental feature of development in an increasingly globalizing world, and migration, supported by the right set of policies, can complement a country's growth in labor production and capital accumulation.



Migration occurs at a variety of scales: intercontinental (between continents), intracontinental (between countries on a given continent), and interregional (within countries) (National Geographic Society, 2007) and can be classified in several ways: the reasons for the migration, the social class and education of the migrating people, the duration of relocation, and the geographic distribution of the resettlement (Bhugra, 2004). Migrants are of two types—immigrants and sojourners—and can travel either voluntarily or involuntarily to associate with host cultures for potential economic gains and/or educational advancement (Berry, 1992). Refugee migrants are deemed to change their location and encounter the “majority” population involuntarily to escape persecution (Berry, 1992). Globalization has given new shape to migration by increasing the pressure and the opportunities for people to move between countries (Ciarnienė & Kumpikaitė, 2008). While the first impact of migration can be felt on the economic level, it can also affect social relations, culture, national policies and international relations (Castles, 1998). The need for immigration has also become an economic need rather than a choice for many people, based on the increase of fiscal inequality amongst countries (Wellink, 2004).

International migration represents an issue that is deeply embedded in legal, social and political levels of global governance. The term “global governance” has been established as a way of describing and understanding international relations in what Rosenau (1990) has named a post-international era. The term also refers to a shift from an international to a global level of analysis on the one hand, and from international relations to complex global networks of interactions among different types of state as well as non-state actors on the other hand (Hamchi & Rebiai, 2014). International migration governance does not and should not imply a “one size fits all” approach. Different areas of migration vary in their type of governance. For refugees, there is a strong multilateral framework, but for highly skilled labor migration, costs and benefits are exclusively

to the sending state, the receiving state and the migrant (Betts, 2011). While states have long recognized that they cannot address the challenge of migration without international cooperation, the extent of international or global governance includes a range of rules, principles, and decision-making procedures that exists over and above the level of a single nation-state (Hamchi & Rebiai, 2014).

According to Aras and Mencutek (2015), migration policies are closely linked to international relations and foreign policies. The foreign policy for an individual country can have greater influence on the migration directions, number of people moving, and diverse characteristics separating the different migrations taking place (Mitchell, 1989). The multidirectional global forms of migration and policies developed have influenced foreign policy decisions and interactions (Castles, 2014). Foreign policy-making in relation to migration may relate to the creation of more efficient border regimes, stricter asylum procedures, the reduction of irregular immigrants, or their repatriation and denial of their asylum-granting status (Aras & Mencutek, 2015). According to Teitelbaum (1984) both sending and receiving countries may use mass migration movements as opportunities to their foreign policies, particularly to destabilize or antagonize foreign policy oppositions. International migration encompasses several areas, including highly skilled migration, international student migration, international sports labor migration, and differentiation of migrant athletes by typologies.

### **Highly Skilled Migration**

Migration is a selective process that tends, initially at least, to draw relatively skilled, well educated, and highly motivated people away from sending communities. In the 1960s, social science research addressed the concept of “brain-drain,” in which researchers started to examine the movement of migrants who could be categorized as highly skilled in order to

determine the losses that could justifiably be sustained by developing countries when their highly skilled workers migrated to more developed nations (Iredale, 2001). Thrift (1996) contends that the development of epistemic communities constitutes the changing composition of highly skilled global migration. The development of these communities, in which capital and skills circulate with both physical and technological connections, reflects the increasing flexibility of the transnational labor market, the global restructuring of business practices, and the development of information technology (Castells, 2000). Meyer (2001) argues that migrant networks are developed over time, while temporal networks provide potential migrants with resources built on the earlier migrations of individuals within specific contexts. Earlier migrants, Meyer suggests, act as “bridgeheads” (p. 93) for potential migrants and ease the migration process by providing information about significant migratory procedures. Meyer’s (2001) approach demonstrates how migrants gain access to employment in a host nation through a series of social relationships that result in mutually beneficial recruitments.

Studies in highly skilled global migration are reflective of the increasing numbers of workers who migrate to more developed nations so they can take advantage of positive wage disparities (Bohning, 1984). Researchers in the field of highly skilled migration, for example, have argued that the increasing flexibility of the global labor market has resulted in a shift in migration patterns from traditional settler migration to more transient forms of temporary migration for highly skilled workers (Beaverstock, 2005). In relation to sport, coaches not only develop local connections with other coaches and players, they can also strengthen a series of transnational bonds with regular telephone or email contact with coaching colleagues and players around the globe (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). In this respect, the development of recruiting practices can be seen to reflect the developing “network society” that has previously been

identified for the recruitment of migrant workers in the highly skilled sphere (Castells, 2000).

Within such a society, where their flows are facilitated by access to scholarships and reciprocal student exchange schemes, international students constitute a major potential source of highly skilled labor (Ziguras & Law, 2006).

### **International Student Migration**

The globalization of higher education is contributing to the increasingly diverse groups of students attending colleges and universities. Across the world, transnational academic mobility is growing, with academic members of staff (or “academics”) increasingly seeking educational settings in which to advance their educational credentials. Some may be seeking to liberate themselves from unfavorable working conditions in their home country, but all are aspiring to advance their careers by acquiring graduate teaching or research assistantships in new and stimulating learning environments. Indications are that this global movement is trending upward (Walker, 2015). In 2014, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicated that international students are individuals who are registered for credits at an institution of higher education in the host country where they are admitted on a temporary visa and therefore are not legal or undocumented immigrants or refugees. These individuals are also known as “international students,” defined by Gilder (2014) as “students who have crossed a national border to study or are enrolled in a distance-learning program abroad. These students are not residents or citizens of the country where they study internationally” (p. 2).

At the moment, about 100 million students study at 18,000 institutions around the world (Institute of International Education, 2013). International students have various motivations and criteria for choosing to pursue an education in a country other than their home country.

According to a study conducted in 2005 by the Institute of International Education, a major

motivating factor for international students to choose an international education in the United States is for the purposes of enhancing career opportunities and gaining experience for future employment, whether at home or internationally. Approximately 44% of international students choose one of the following three fields as their area of interest: business and management (18%), engineering (17%), mathematics and computer science (9%) (Institute of International Education, 2005, p. 4). The selection process for each international student and an institution of higher education has tended to be based on particular factors, such as the reputation of the college or university, specific programs or courses in their area of specialization, personal safety on campus, and the reputation of the country's academic proficiency (Institute of International Education, 2005). International student migrants are also attracted to specific countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada, in order to acquire English language capital, which can open up global employment prospects because of the prevalence of English as language of international business (Williams & Baláž, 2005).

Receiving countries stand to benefit considerably from international student migration, primarily through fee-paying international students. Furthermore, once they graduate, there is the potential that they will remain in the host country as qualified skilled migrants. International student migrants often go on to make considerable contributions to their new country. A U.S.-national Science Board study noted increased competition for the best graduate students and scholars worldwide, indicating intense global competition for international students (National Science Board, 2014). Numerous factors have contributed to the recent growth in the number of students studying abroad. In many developing countries, there has been an under-supply of university places, largely the result of emerging economies being unable to satisfy the demand for higher education, leaving many students with no choice but to study abroad. In addition,

families and students in many developing countries expect that foreign study will confer professional and business advantages. According to recent OECD data, in 2004, 2.7 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship, and projections indicate that this number may double by 2015 (Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007). Studies have shown that the experience of studying abroad significantly increases the likelihood of being a skilled migrant at some stage in the future (Vertovec, 2002). Globalization has also encouraged academic migration flows because immigration rules have become tailored to people with high skill levels, and as universities themselves become more open to hiring the best talent worldwide, the global marketplace will expand (Altbach, 2015).

**Academic migration.** Although most of the literature focuses broadly on skilled migration, the discussion of academic migration highlights its particular importance because of the critical role that academics and students play in enhancing research and innovation and translating that innovation into commercial ideas and products, as well as promoting organizational development and planning (Nunn & Price, 2005). Academic labor is essential if a country is to successfully train vital professionals who will go on to contribute to building institutions and developing social and human capacity for development (Nunn & Price, 2005). An increasingly robust international migration of academic talent exists, predominantly moving from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere, with large numbers of the most talented academics from developing countries migrating to work in the global north (Altbach, 2015). Consequently the migration of significant numbers of students and scholars represents a potentially significant loss to the sending country. In terms of faculty, the most significant “pull” factors for migration include better salaries and working conditions, along with the opportunity to be at the center of the world in regard to science and scholarship (Altbach, 2015). Among the

many “push” factors, the limited extent of academic freedom in many developing countries means that academics are sometimes subject to restrictions and even arrest if they stray from officially approved research (Altbach, 2015). The USA, the UK and Australia lead the way in the provision of international higher education (Hatakenaka, 2004). General agreement exists that the movement of the highly skilled is now a key feature of the increasingly globalized education and labor markets (Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007). In the United States, international students have been pivotal to the advancement of research and education, as evidenced by the numbers of patents, publications and Nobel prizes, and have become integral to the U.S. science and engineering enterprise through their research and academic work in universities, as well as in industry and government (Altbach, 2015).

**International students in the United States.** The United States and Europe attract the vast majority of international students and are considered leaders in both research and prestige (Li & Bray, 2007). The number of international students in the United States is at a record high of more than 4% of the total number of students at institutions of higher education. In the academic year 1972-1973, there were approximately 146,000 international students studying in the United States, and that number grew to nearly 820,000 by 2012-2013 (Institute of International Education, 2013). International students contributed more than \$15 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006, which is significant, given most of these non-U.S.-national students are financed by their families or their home-country governments (Institute of International Education, 2013). In 2012, the U.S. Department of Commerce ranked international education as the sixth-largest service sector export. However, international education within the United States post-September 11, 2001, has also been caught up in geopolitical issues surrounding the global war on terror, where tensions and divisions are continually escalated between those who are

accepted in U.S. society versus those who are not (Lee & Rice, 2007). Immigration policies such as lengthy visa delays and discriminatory practices at U.S. borders have arguably caused unwelcoming and exclusionary effects for international students (Lee & Rice, 2007). On the other hand, international students are viewed as major sources of revenue because most U.S. universities require international students to pay higher tuition rates (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011). The majority of research that has been done on international students in the United States has focused on providing statistical accounts of the number of students (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011) or on issues surrounding adjustment problems, discrimination, and educational efforts (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). Falling under the umbrella of international students in the United States are international student-athletes who migrate to both enroll as students and participate in intercollegiate sport as student-athletes. Prior to discussing relevant literature on these international student-athletes, the next section covers the vast research on sports labor migration relative to this dissertation.

### **Sport Labor Migration**

Globalization has changed the nature of sports labor migration. A defining feature of globalization is “internationalization,” which refers to the international migration of people (McGovern, 2002). In the sports world, athletes moving from one country to another to search for better financial benefits, or in some cases better coaching or other services, can be referred to as sports labor migration (Harvey, Rail, & Thibault, 1996). Sports have become a form of commoditization by virtue of intensified globalization and have been enhanced by transnational corporations’ lucrative investments in sports teams (Lee, 2010). As the sports industry has become commercialized and, thus, globalized, more and more athletes and coaches freely transcend national borders, representing a vivid signal of globalization in sport (Wheeler, 2004).



The development of specific sports within particular societies depends upon the status of that “sports system” in the international rank order (Bale, 1991). Sports in less-developed nations tend to under-utilize their talent and performers or lose them to more powerful nations in the global sports figuration. Additionally, these global sports processes are shaped and contoured by a range of global flows, particularly of people, technology, capital, mediated images and ideologies (Maguire, 1999). Achievement sports focuses on winning, record-breaking, and quantification irrespective of global location, and in order for the global sports system to function, particular sports must be the same all over the world (Bale & Maguire, 1994).

The migration of athlete sports labor is a phenomenon that goes back to the modernization of sport with rules, competition, and a governing body developing in the wake of industrialization in the 1860s (Magee & Sugden, 2002). The sport of football, also known as soccer in the United States, rapidly diffused throughout Europe in the late 19th century and traveled around the globe with workers, tradesmen, engineers and railway men, who helped to establish industrial capitalism worldwide (Agergaard, 2008). In many sports, athletes are migrating within nation-states, between nation-states on the same continent, and beyond their own continents, resulting in a contemporary sporting culture in which athletic labor flows increasingly across geographical, political, cultural, ethnic, and economic boundaries (Elliott & Weedon, 2010). Sports labor migration raises issues related to personal adjustment by migrating athletes, the rights of athletes as workers, the impact of talent migration on the nations from and to which athletes migrate, and the impact of athlete migration on the identities of athletes and fans (Bradbury, 2011; Carter, 2011; Elliot & Maguire, 2008; Evans & Stead, 2012; Roderick, 2012). Even more so, sports labor migration is arguably having a significant impact on indigenous player development, recruitment and retention and upon the viability and success of

national teams (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Scholars have discussed the question of sports labor migration within the frameworks of globalization, imperialism, cultural identity and nationalism, dependent development, core and peripheral notions of development, among others (Horne, 2005). The next section will highlight research within sports labor migration more specifically.

### **Research Studies on Sports Labor Migration**

At the forefront of studying this phenomenon were sports geographers, who may have been the first to monitor the geographical variations in migratory flows of athletes and the “brawn drain” followed by sociologists and social historians, among others, who now consider the implications of sports labor migration for sports and society (Horne, 2005). The pioneers of studies in sports migration, Joseph Maguire and John Bale, noted that the migration of sports labor was gathering speed and occurring over a widespread geographical area and within a greater number of sports subcultures (Bale & Maguire, 1994). The study of international sports labor migration has gained considerable momentum over the last few decades. Earlier contributions included Bale (1982), Arbena (1988), Maguire (1988), Bale and Maguire (1994), and Maguire and Stead (1996). Recently, several authors have expanded on this earlier work, including Stead and Maguire (2000), Lanfranchi and Taylor (2001), Magee and Sugden (2002), Maguire and Stead (2005), and Maguire and Falcous (2010). Most of this research has focused on configurations within each sport, such as activities on the field or court, as well as implications for developing domestic talent (Galily & Sheard, 2002). More recently, Carter (2011) and Roderick (2012) have emphasized the importance of understanding not only configurations of labor migration but also lived experiences. Within the sport migrant landscape, scholars have investigated a variety of sports to examine sports labor migration, including baseball (Chiba, 2004; Takahashi & Horne, 2006), basketball (Maguire, 1988), and, most

notably, football or soccer (Darby, 2000; Darby, 2007; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Maguire & Pearton, 2000; Maguire & Stead, 1998). Analyzing sports migration literature, Horne (2005) identified the following weaknesses: (1) much of the literature has focused on the cultural rather than the economic significance of labor mobility; (2) data used in the various analyses have been derived uncritically from the print or mass media; and (3) researchers have done less sustained academic analysis of the mobility of non-Western sports stars, including those from Asia and Africa. By stepping outside of the athlete migrant lens, and drawing on concepts derived from the sociology of highly skilled migration, Elliott and Maguire (2008) argue that an understanding of the global migrations of athletic workers could be enhanced. Few sociologists of sport have broadened their vision to include concepts derived from studies examining the movement of highly skilled workers (Millar & Salt, 1997).

Athlete migration or sports labor migration at a global level initially revolved around professional football (or soccer, in American usage) in Europe. Soccer has shown evidence of sports labor migration since its initial stage of competition. For example, Scottish soccer players were the earliest international migrants, as they were lured to play in England by lucrative professional contracts in 1885 (Horne, 2005). However, during soccer's more recent history, intensification in the globalization of labor has become more evident (Poli, 2014). Today, the game is increasingly commercialized at the elite level. This increase is driven, in part, by the developing of relationships between sponsors, advertisers and the media, and results in exponential growth in salaries for elite players plying their trade in one of Europe's core economies (Millar & Salt, 1997). Darby (2007) examined African players' migration to soccer academies in Europe from a neocolonial exploitation perspective. Darby (2007) contends that

African soccer players' migration to Europe is an explicit message of continuous exploitation based on economic imperialism, which started in the colonization period.

Researchers have identified that the North American migration of ice hockey players into European leagues is expressive of a blend of economic, cultural, ethnic, and political factors that structure seemingly contradictory migratory dynamics when considered through the lens of typologies of sports labor migration (Bale & Maguire, 1994). It is also possible to argue that cultural factors such as language similarity affect evident migration patterns, such as that of the migration of French-Canadian ice hockey players to French-speaking countries, due more to cultural similarity than the more commonly associated economic factors (Maguire, 1996). Klein (1989) examined the underdevelopment of Dominican baseball within systemic Dominican Republic–United States economic relations. The migration of labor is integral to this. Klein notes, “following the trajectory of other multinationals, major league [baseball] teams are duplicating the process that has come to be called the internationalization of the division of labor” (1989, p. 95). In this manner, he notes, “the [U.S.] academy is the baseball counterpart of the colonial outpost, locating resources (talent) and refining them (training) for consumption abroad” (p. 103). Overall, motivations of recruiting coaches, the process for identifying and recruiting athletic migrants, and the effects of migrant involvement on donor and host-sports cultures remain largely under researched. Reflective of the vast amount of research in sport labor migration over the past twenty years, typologies of athlete migrants became popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a way to thematically categorize migrants based on the reasons given by athletes to migrate. These typologies are laid out and discussed in the following section.

## Typologies of Migrant Athletes

Maguire (1996) contributed a crucial piece to sport migrant research by developing a typology for sports migrants that consists of five different categories: pioneers, settlers, mercenaries, returnees and nomadic cosmopolitans. Maguire's (1999) typology, developed through interviews with athletes in such sports as soccer, basketball, cricket, and rugby, included the categories of *mercenaries*, *settlers*, *nomadic cosmopolitans*, *pioneers*, and *returnees*. Magee and Sugden's (2002) typology, developed through interviews with professional soccer players in England, also included the categories of *mercenary*, *settler*, and *nomadic cosmopolitan*, but added to those the categories of *ambitionist*, *exile*, and *expelled*. Below is a brief description of each typology.

- a. *Mercenary*: Magee and Sugden (2002, p. 429) describe the mercenary as one "who is motivated, above all else, by earning capacity," and who migrates for reasons of economic reward. Maguire (1999) employs a similar definition, adding that mercenaries are often motivated by "short-term gains" (p. 105).
- b. *Nomadic Cosmopolitan*: Magee and Sugden's (2002) description of the nomadic cosmopolitan includes individuals who are "motivated by a desire to experience different nations and cultures" (p. 432). Maguire (1999), meanwhile, describes "nomads" who are "motivated by a cosmopolitan engagement with migration" (p. 105). Such athletes "embark on a quest in which they seek the experiences of the 'other' and indeed of being the 'other'" (Maguire, 1999, pp. 105-106).
- c. *Settler*: Magee and Sugden (2002) describe the settler as "someone who has moved to English football and remained in England for a sustained period, of four or five seasons or more," and that "the most advanced settlers stay in England beyond the finish of their

playing careers” (p. 431). Maguire (1999) simply describes settlers as “sport migrants who subsequently stay and settle in the society where they perform their labor” (p. 105).

- d. *Returnee*: As Maguire (1999) explains, “some cosmopolitans, along with pioneers, mercenaries and even long term settlers, act as ‘returnees’ in the global process. The lure of ‘home soil’ can prove too strong” (p. 106).
- e. *Exile and Expelled*: Magee and Sugden (2002) describe the exile as “someone who, for football-related, personal, or political reasons (either voluntarily or through domestic threats to his career, his liberty, or his life), opts to leave his country of origin to play abroad” (p. 432), whereas the expelled is one who is “forced” to leave his/her country of origin.
- f. *Ambitionist*: Magee and Sugden (2002) describe three dimensions of the ambitionist category: (a) the desire to achieve a sports career anywhere, (b) the preference for playing in a certain location as compared to elsewhere, and (c) the desire to improve one’s career by moving to a higher-quality league. In response to Magee and Sugden’s typology, Maguire (2004) noted that although research by himself and colleagues had found the ambition to play at a high level is an important part of athletes’ explanations for migrating, they believed that such ambition transcended several of the categories, rather than composing a category of its own.
- g. *Pioneers*: Maguire (1991) describes pioneers as individuals who possess “an almost evangelical zeal in extolling the virtues of ‘their’ sport” (p. 105). Further, the words and actions of pioneers “can be seen as a form of proselytizing by which they seek to convert the natives to their body habitus and sport culture” (p. 105).

The typology identifies a combination of overlapping categories surrounding a central sphere (Magee & Sugden, 2002). Maguire's (1999) initial study has drawn criticism for including a wide range of sports on which to base his classifications of typologies rather than focusing on migrant athletes within one specific sport. Another critique in response to Maguire's (1999) approach is his tendency to group migrant athletes into one exclusive category rather than examining potential overlaps between typologies (Magee & Sugden, 2002). Nevertheless, it is also important to remember that the athlete migrant typologies created thus far are preliminary and the categories are open to further analysis. Lastly, Magee & Sugden (2002) recommend the individual categories be used to frame the migrant athlete experience while seeking further explanation and justification before compartmentalizing into an existing typology. With research into athletic labor migration becoming an increasingly fascinating element of the contemporary global sporting world, most attention has been put toward professional or club-level migration rather than U.S. collegiate sport. The athlete migrant typologies have also been adopted within the U.S. intercollegiate ranks concerning international student-athletes and will be addressed in the international student-athlete section. The main governing body overseeing intercollegiate athletics in the United States is the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which will be the focus of the subsequent section.

### **Intercollegiate Athletics in the United States**

College athletics in the United States began as a recreational activity organized by students to meet their desire for both physical and social activities and did not experience its first intercollegiate competition until a crew race was organized between Harvard and Yale in 1852 (Davenport, 1985). The evolution of the NCAA marked a major milestone in 1921 with the first national championship held in track and field (NCAA, 2012). By 1973, its membership was

divided into three legislative and competitive divisions (Division I, II and III) based on institutional size. However, other organizations, such as the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), also govern intercollegiate athletics in the United States. NAIA comprises about 300 mostly small-size institutions, many of which emphasize the link between education and athletics rather than revenue generation (Hums & MacLean, 2009). The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and the National Small College Athletic Association (NSCAA) each exist to oversee the athletic programs of junior and small colleges, respectively. The National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) oversees intercollegiate competition for Christian schools. These different governing bodies, each of which fosters their own eligibility rules and competition policies, constitute intercollegiate athletics in the United States. This dissertation will focus on former student-athletes who participated in the NCAA at the Division I; hence, the remainder of this section will focus on the NCAA in the United States, including NCAA governance, NCAA international policies, NCAA basketball and beyond, and current trends and challenges of NCAA. The next section following this section will spotlight international student-athletes.

### **NCAA Governance**

According to Hums and MacLean (2009), the NCAA has grown in both events and membership, constituting a power shift toward the centralized authority of the NCAA and away from athletic conferences or individual institutions. Today, the NCAA staffs more than 320 full-time employees from its headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana and offers 38 national championships (19 for men and 19 for women) in 22 sports (NCAA, 2012). The core purpose of the NCAA “is to govern competition in a fair, safe, equitable and sportsmanlike manner, and to integrate intercollegiate athletics into higher education so that the educational experience of the



student-athlete is paramount” (NCAA, 2012). According to the NCAA (2012), the goals of the organization are specific to the student-athlete: to promote college athletics, to prepare the athlete for a lifetime of leadership, and to provide funding to help accomplish these goals. The association supplies a governance structure to provide rules and establish consistent policy through which all NCAA member institutions operate. Institutions are afforded membership by their mission in higher education, along with other membership criteria (Hums & MacLean, 2009). All sizes and types of institutions are eligible for membership, provided they are accredited by the recognized agency within their academic region, they offer at least one sport for both men and women in each of the three traditional sport seasons, they abide by the rules and regulations set forth by the NCAA, and they agree to cooperate fully with NCAA enforcement programs (NCAA, 2012). NCAA member institutions belong to one of three divisions, labeled Division I, II, or III. The main criteria used for establishing an institution’s divisional classification are its size, number of sports offered, financial base and sport-sponsorship minimums, focus of programming, football and basketball scheduling requirements, and availability of athletic grants-in-aid (Staurowsky, 2007). Division I football institutions are further subdivided into I-FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) and I-FCS (Football Championship Subdivision). Division I sports other than football are categorized simply as Division I. Overall, 1,079 active institutional members are divided among each division: Division I has 335, Division II has 302, and Division III has 442 (NCAA, 2012).

A student-athlete participating in intercollegiate athletics in the United States must meet specific educational academic standards, be classified as an “amateur,” and comply with the numerous regulations of the NCAA (NCAA, 2010). From an academic standpoint, post-secondary student-athletes seeking to play intercollegiate athletics at the Division I, II, or III

levels must follow NCAA procedures in order to meet academic standards. The NCAA has four basic initial academic eligibility requirements for student-athletes seeking to qualify for participation in intercollegiate athletics: (1) graduation from high school; (2) successful completion of a required core curriculum, including a minimum of thirteen courses in specified subjects; (3) a minimum grade-point average in the core curriculum; and (4) a standardized test score (NCAA, 2014). Prospective student-athletes must register with, and send official educational records and test scores to, the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse, the entity under contract with the NCAA to determine the academic eligibility of incoming college freshman athletes (Weston, 2006).

The NCAA also strictly enforces policies pertaining to the concept of amateurism, as only amateur student-athletes are eligible to participate in intercollegiate athletics. Circumstances in which a player does not receive “amateur” status include: designation where the athlete has signed a professional contract, receiving compensation exceeding actual sport expenses, or competing with other professionals after enrolling in college (Pickle, 2003). Amateurism in the NCAA specifies that “student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professionals and commercial enterprises” (NCAA, 2010, p. 60). Additionally, the NCAA manual (2014) states that “an individual who pursues sport as a vocation, even if the individual fails at that pursuit, shall not be permitted to compete in intercollegiate athletics” (p. 4). According to Glader (1978), the major purposes of amateurism are (a) the social distinction, which separates the so-called gentleman amateur from the lower classes of the society; (b) the special advantage distinction, which separates people who developed skills and strengths in their regular occupations from the people who participate in amateur sports without earning money or having training during their

occupation; and (c) the motivational distinction, which refers to the motive that someone has to participate in athletic competition. The NCAA also prohibits the use of any individual, agency or organization that represents a prospective student-athlete for compensation in placing the prospect in a collegiate institution as a recipient of institutional financial aid (NCAA, 2014).

While agents are not allowed, “a prospect may allow a scouting service or agent to distribute personal information to member institutions without jeopardizing his or her eligibility, provided the fee paid to such an agent is not based on placing the prospect in a collegiate institution as a recipient of institutional financial aid” (NCAA, 2014, p. 66). In addition to sponsoring championships and maintaining rulebooks for its sports, the NCAA mandates an extensive system of rules and regulations governing the ethics and conduct for athletes, coaches, athletics administrators, and institutions (Lapchick, 2006).

#### **NCAA Policy: International Student-Athletes**

The NCAA establishes and enforces extensive rules concerning the recruitment of prospective student-athletes, the awarding of athletic scholarships, and the declaration of eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics at member schools (NCAA, 2014). The NCAA requires that student-athletes meet a minimum standard of academic achievement and be classified as amateurs (NCAA, 2014). The NCAA bylaws also prohibit the use of agents, the provision of any extra benefits beyond those permitted by the rules, and the student’s use of his or her name or reputation for endorsements or commercial purposes. Measuring academic standards for structuring and sponsoring sport activities presents difficulties when seeking to ensure academic eligibility and amateur athletic standing for both international and domestic students when taking into account the varying sport and academic systems across the world. The NCAA has set out to make sure it is consistently addressing domestic and international student-

athletes in complying with regulations (Brown, 2001). However, the varied structures for administering and sponsoring sports in the United States compared to most other foreign countries present challenges when determining eligibility for participation in U.S. intercollegiate athletics, including educational transcripts and diplomas, which may be difficult to confirm and translate (Brown, 2001). According to Kaburakis (2006), there are fundamental problems in the application of NCAA regulations. For example, a potential international student-athlete could be considered ineligible by one institution and classified as eligible by another school. The NCAA has attempted to address these difficulties by providing guidance to evaluate the secondary educational programs of most foreign countries by way of publications such as the *NCAA Guide to International Academic Standards for Athletics Eligibility*. Nevertheless, the different international education programs and athletic systems, coupled with language barriers, varied standards, and inconsistent record-keeping, can lead to uncertain assessments of an international student-athlete's eligibility (Miller, 2006).

The athletic structures in many other regions, such as Europe, are primarily club-based and are overseen by national sports federations separate from the educational system and not classified by amateur or professional player status. Unlike U.S. applicants, international student-athletes are subjected to an extensive examination to determine their NCAA eligibility based on academics, amateurism, and immigration status. Academic eligibility of an international student-athlete is based on four requirements: graduation from high school, successful completion of the required core curriculum, minimum grade-point average, standardized test scores (SAT or ACT and the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL), and the number of advanced placement hours accepted by the certifying institution (NCAA, 2014-2015, p. 163). According to Trendafilova et al. (2010), amateurism status in intercollegiate athletics is directly linked with

money, and only those who participate without financial benefits maintain their amateur status. In a landscape very different from the U.S. sports system, international sporting clubs and league structures often include highly paid athletes with substantial experience playing alongside junior members still attending secondary school. To further complicate the matter, according to the NCAA manual (2014), elite junior players may be under contract with a club team and receive payments for “educational expenses, housing accommodations, per diem, stipends, allowances, equipment, facilities, coaching and transportation” (p. 12). Potential international student-athletes involved in a club team may even face a suspension of up to one game in the NCAA for each game participated on a foreign club team (Weston, 2006). NCAA member institutions, who are required to inspect and report any amateur infractions of their recruits, use several different investigative methods to determine eligibility: structure of sports programs in countries where athletes are recruited, make-up of team/individual sporting events, team rosters, standings, results, expenses and benefits athletes may have received (NCAA, 2014). According to Weston (2006), the primary controversy involving the recruitment of international student-athletes is “the reliability of determinations in deciding whether international student-athletes meet all NCAA academic and amateurism eligibility requirements” (p. 844). Even upon arrival, schools may be deemed in violation by obtaining food, housing, and necessities for their international student-athletes, which per NCAA rules is not permitted until official enrollment (NCAA, 2014). The combination of professionalization circumstances in the international sports system and the gaps in knowledge regarding amateurism in the United States lead many to believe that international student-athletes are not able to pursue higher education and sports in NCAA DI institutions (Lazaroff, 2007). Due to the complexity involved with NCAA amateurism regulations,

Kaburakis (2006) calls for “educating future international student-athletes, their families, school or club team administrators, teachers, coaches, and advisors” (p. 80).

**NCAA basketball and beyond.** Basketball is one of the most popular sports across the world. Global basketball structures are characterized by differing interest groups at the global, regional, and national level: governing bodies, commercial investors, consumers, sponsors, officials, and players (Falcous & Maguire, 2005). In terms of global governance, the Switzerland-based International Basketball Federation (FIBA) oversees the game. FIBA can be broken down regionally into five zones or regions: Pan-American, Asian, African, Oceanic, and Europe. Moreover, the global population of basketball players is estimated to be about 450 million (FIBA, 2015). According to Brooks and McKail (2008), non-U.S.-national basketball players are the new labor group in U.S. collegiate sports and have expanded a global revenue stream by igniting the world’s interest in basketball. The National Basketball Association (NBA), located in North America, is the most famous and competitive professional basketball league. Basketball in the United States, led by the NBA, has invaded smaller basketball markets in countries around the world to increase its fan base and modified its practices to have a bigger impact globally (Brooks & McKail, 2008). The United States is a competitive market in which there are many high-level basketball players with the NCAA Division I alone, with over 6,000 male basketball student-athletes in the 2010–11 academic year (NCAA, 2011). Falcous and Maguire (2005) have documented the political economy of global basketball and labor migration:

The NBA acts as the apex of the hierarchy of global men’s basketball leagues, overwhelmingly recruiting from the US college system, but also increasingly taking talent from other donor countries. Other national organizations are the recipient of

surplus players from the collegiate system, but they also suffer deskilling as a result of their best players gravitating to the NBA or NCAA. (Falcous & Maguire, 2005, p. 141). What this passage makes clear is that the NBA is situated at the center of global basketball and the NCAA is positioned as the unofficial NBA minor league, given that 80% of players drafted in the NBA have competed at least one year in the NCAA (Berri, Brook & Fenn, 2011). The NBA's infiltration of overseas markets and collectively maintaining a monopoly on global talent has also facilitated the recognition of the NCAA on a global stage (Euchner, 2008). However, at the Division I level, player recruitment is both intense and expensive, as coaches must recognize talent at an early age and from a broad geographic range (Trendafilova, Hardin, Seungmo, 2010). Basketball in the United States occupies a pivotal position, revolving as it does, around the NBA and its unofficial minor league, the NCAA which, in recent years, has attracted elite players from around the world. This flow is known as "in-migration" (Arbena, 1994). On the other hand, the U.S. players to move to European and Asian leagues and this flow is known as "out-migration" (Arbena, 1994). The present study focuses on "in-migration" from other countries into the United States intercollegiate athletic system. The next section will illuminate the current trends and challenges within the NCAA not just in basketball, but also across all intercollegiate sports in the United States.

### **International Student-Athletes in the NCAA**

This section will outline the research focusing on international student-athletes in the NCAA as a whole and includes sections formulated around two general categories: research on international student-athlete experiences and typologies of international student-athletes.

## **Research on International Student-Athlete Experiences**

With international migrants changing the labor force landscape within a variety of sectors, U.S. collegiate sport has not been excluded from this “age of migration” (Castles & Miller, 1993). According to the NCAA Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report, nearly 15,000 international student-athletes competed at NCAA schools during the 2012-2013 school year (NCAA, 2013). Research on international student-athletes can be grouped into two general categories: (a) those focusing on the lived experiences of international athletes on American university campuses (Chepyator-Thomson, 2003; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Popp, Love, Kim & Hums, 2010) and those focusing on the motivations of international athletes in coming to American universities (Berry, 1999; Garant-Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, & Hardin, 2009). While these studies have provided some important insight, research is still necessary to improve our understanding of issues raised by the increasing number of migrant athletes coming to United States universities in the sport of basketball and beyond.

Intercollegiate sports in the United States is based on the identification and development of talent, its production on a global stage in a single or multi-sport event, and its consumption by live spectators or through the media complex, which is a global audience (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Bale (1991) explains that recruiting can be regarded as an “explanation” or proof of the interactions of the ideological structures that pervade the spheres of sport and education in the world of US intercollegiate sports a realm that must be distinguished clearly from recreational sports activity. The US universities allow athletes to play sports and study at high levels. In other countries, athletes have reported feeling forced to decide between training for a sports career and studying for a traditional occupation (Popp et al., 2011). Global connection through sports and the increasing presence of international athletes are generally considered beneficial, given that



the expanded market of talent increases the quality of competition for the consumer fan and elevates the strength of athletic programs at colleges and universities (Kontaxakis, 2011). Individual players benefit from the educational, career, and economic opportunities (Bale, 1991). At the collegiate level, many coaches report that international student-athletes generally perform well in the classroom and can provide a valuable sense of diversity that enriches the team environment and educational experience (Brown, 2004).

Despite competing at an equally high level as their U.S. counterparts, international student-athletes have been shown to look at university sport participation from a different perspective (Popp et al., 2010). Stidwell (1984) examined differences in athletic motivation between domestic and international university track and field athletes and found a significant difference in perceived athletic confidence, with international student-athletes demonstrating higher levels of confidence in their ability to achieve success. Popp, Hums, and Greenwell (2009) found international student-athletes reported placing higher importance on academic achievement and a lower emphasis on mental preparation and the competitive aspect of university competition than domestic teammates. The stated purpose of competitive intercollegiate athletic programs is to develop educational leadership and athletics participation as a recreational pursuit (Weston, 2006). The presence of international students is particularly distinct in certain sports, where international student-athletes are achieving great success in both men and women's sports. According to the 2012 *Student-Athlete Ethnicity Report*, the highest international student-athlete representations were in tennis (33%), ice hockey (22.6%), soccer (12.5%), and basketball (8%). Comparatively, among NCAA Divisions I, II and III, 60% of international student-athletes are enrolled at NCAA Division I institutions (NCAA, 2013).

The movement of athletic labor from a donor to a host country varies depending on the sport, with some sports having targeted and specific regions of destination facilitated through a series of “pipelines” (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Several professional players in the National Basketball Association, in the National Hockey League, and in professional golf are former NCAA Division I international student-athletes (Popp et al., 2009). The recruitment of international student-athletes has propelled some teams from relative insignificance to championship caliber status. Current NCAA Division I men’s basketball coach at Baylor University, Scott Drew, was recently quoted as saying, “If you do not recruit overseas, you are taking yourself out of a major market” (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). Due to the sport club-based sponsorship structure, international student-athletes are at a greater risk of losing amateur status by virtue of having belonged to a team full of professional players. In club-based sport systems, agents are not regulated and may have relationships with club teams and procure players for teams (NCAA, 2010). International recruits are also responsible for providing detailed written proof that they did not receive benefits in excess of their expenses while playing for club teams (NCAA, 2010). International student-athletes are ineligible if they have either: (a) signed a professional contract; (b) received compensation exceeding expenses; or (c) competed with professionals after their first opportunity to enroll in college (NCAA, 2010). In addition, the NCAA recently implemented a rule providing that “any athlete who does not take the first opportunity to enroll in a collegiate institution and instead participates on a professional team will forfeit all of his or her NCAA eligibility” (NCAA, 2010). While this rule may have been targeting men’s and women’s tennis, it also carries heavy implications for other internationalized collegiate sports, such as soccer, track and field and, more importantly for this study, basketball. On the other end, institutions must be prepared to commit to delivering appropriate support,

services and education within the context of NCAA by-laws. Schools must also be realistic in disclosing the possibility that financial support is not available until enrollment, that athletic scholarships are one-year commitments only, and that they may become unavailable where and when ineligibility is determined. These institutions must also provide support for the cultural adjustments necessary for an international student-athlete's success.

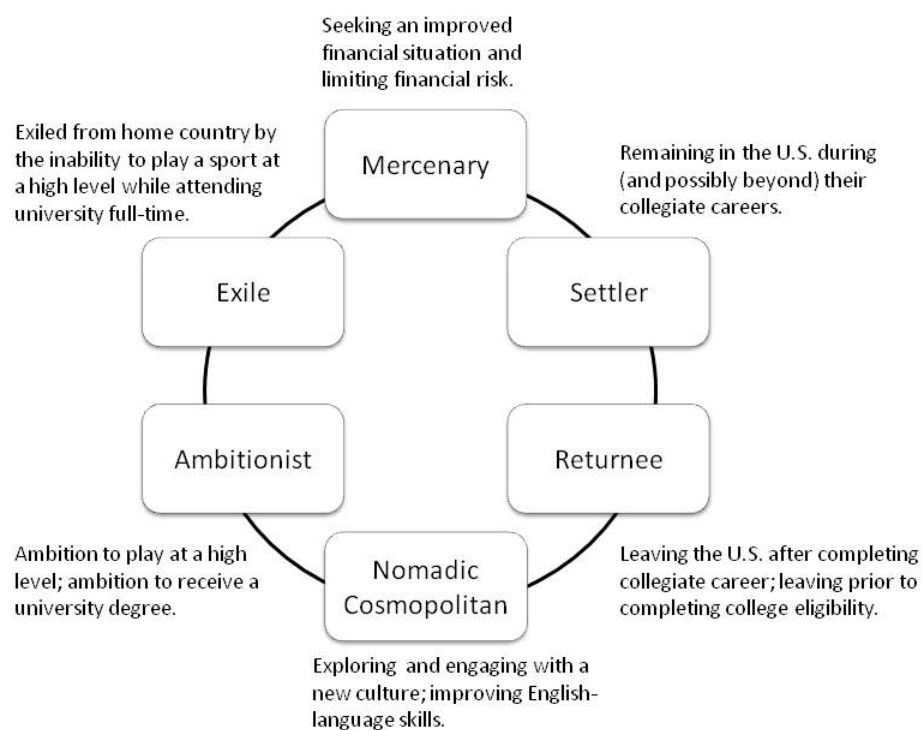
Bale and Sang (1994) suggest athlete migration in collegiate athletics can be a form of cultural imperialism and the underdevelopment of local sporting resources, where competing for a university in a United States 'college town' becomes more important than representing one's own country. John Bale (1991) states that "the foreign-athlete situation remains one of the most complex, covert and least understood problem areas of intercollegiate athletics" (p. xii). The exploitation of specific athletic skills needs to be seen in the context of an international division of sporting labor, whereas for U.S. colleges, Kenya supplies the distance runners, the Caribbean and the West Africa the sprinters and Scandinavia the throwers (Bale, 1991). In the case of Kenyan athletes, the first migration to colleges in the United States did not occur until the late 1960s, by which time Kenya was already establishing itself as an emerging athletic power. While U.S. coaches and administrators were quick to compliment the NCAA for developing international student-athletes into stardom, Bale (1991) found that U.S. colleges exploited existing talent, contrary to the belief that the U.S. collegiate system is where athletes are developed (Bale, 1991). Much of this pioneering research on international student-athletes in collegiate athletics was initiated in a book titled *The Brawn Drain* by John Bale, which will be discussed in the next section.

**The brawn drain concept.** One of the first major works focusing on the presence of migrant athletes in U.S. collegiate sport was a book-length study by Bale (1991) called *The*

*Brawn Drain*. John Bale's work on migrant athletes to U.S. colleges concentrated on questions such as what numbers of international athletes were participating in college sports, where these athletes were from, how the athletes were recruited in the first place, and how easy it was for them to adjust to American way of living. Some key findings from these studies were that most athletes were attracted to the idea of receiving a scholarship to the college, the fact that the competitive atmosphere college sports was something special, the appeal of high-level training opportunities, and the strong motivation to move to the United States (Seungmo & Love, 2011). Bale (1991) explains that recruiting can be regarded as an "explanation" or proof of the interactions between the ideological structures that pervade the spheres of sport and education in the world of American intercollegiate sports, a realm which must be distinguished clearly from the recreational sports activity that tends to characterize British universities and the institutions of higher education in most countries. Bale (1991) also found that for foreign recruits who can subsequently cash in on their sports success, an economic motive for coming to the United States clearly exists. Elite sports leagues such as intercollegiate athletics in the United States also host athletes from a broad spectrum of regions, with an increasingly identifiable series of "talent-pipelines" becoming observable in some sports (Maguire, 2002). The character of American college sports is unique, its distinctiveness lying in the great stress that Americans place on the use of sports in the boosting of place (Rooney, 1974). While general athlete migrant typologies were laid out earlier in this chapter, the next section examines the application of athlete migrant typologies of international student-athletes in the NCAA.

**Typologies of international student-athletes.** Based on Maguire's (1996) study, Love and Kim (2011) created a revised typology, seen in Figure 2.1 below, to help understand the diversity of factors and experiences associated with the migration of athletes in the context of US

collegiate sports. While this study only interviewed 12 participants from 9 different countries, it gives an idea of the vastly diversified athlete migration population in U.S. collegiate athletics. The first of Maguire's (1996) typology, mercenary, is described as the athlete that is motivated first and foremost by money. Unlike the professional soccer players in Maguire's (1996) study, who may receive quite large salaries, US college athletes are only allowed to receive a scholarship that provides tuition and a stipend designed to cover living expenses. For example, in Love and Kim's (2011) study, a tennis athlete from England described how attempting to play tennis at a high level in their home country was a financial risk, and they desired to experience different nations and cultures. Additionally, an individual from Slovakia explained that a part of her excitement in coming to the United States was that she "knew about America only from movies," and that she would now be able to experience it for herself (Love & Kim, 2011).



*Figure 2.1.* Typology of international migrant college athletes (Love & Kim, 2011).

Typologies represent the idea that the motivation driving migrant college athletes' decisions to come to the United States involves a complex and individually varying combination of factors. These factors vary from the desire for a university degree to the desire to play a sport at a high level or just to experience the unique opportunity provided by the U.S. college sport system to simultaneously obtain a university education and compete in a sport at a high level. Furthermore, Maguire (1996) included factors such as the desire to achieve a better financial situation for themselves, the desire to experience another culture and interact with others from different cultural backgrounds, the specific desire to experience American culture, the desire to improve English skills, and the desire to grow up in another country.

As Maguire (2004) further explains, "typologies are ideal type representations of the real world," and "it would be foolish to see their categories as either mutually exclusive or set in stone" (p. 480). Exploring this typology could further illustrate the vast differences among world regions or countries regarding student-athlete experiences and motivations. While these studies have provided some important insight, research is still necessary to improve our understanding of issues raised by the increasing number of migrant athletes coming to American universities. The current study takes basketball under consideration and explores the phenomena of how former international male basketball student-athletes in NCAA basketball made the decisions to come to the United States. By documenting the stories of international basketball student-athletes studying in the United States, this study hopes to understand former international basketball student-athletes' influential factors to migrate and their overall experiences at colleges and universities in NCAA basketball. The subsequent and final section of the literature review

features common theoretical perspectives used in both migration studies in general and sport labor migration studies more specifically.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Migration**

This section provides a literature review of different theories of studies involving migration and the theoretical perspective used to guide this study including: migration theories, sports labor migration theories, world-systems theory, transnationalism, and cross-cultural adjustment. While these theories were used to provide background information in understanding the migration of athletes to the NCAA, further ahead, Chapter 3 will lay out information on the research design and research methods used for the application of this dissertation.

### **Migration Theory**

Theorizing is simply the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). A useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon, one that gives new insights and perspectives into that phenomenon. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, passport and visa systems developed and borders were increasingly closed to non-nationals, especially those deemed to be hostile to the nation-state (Bhugra, 2004). Migration is a process of social change where an individual, alone or accompanied by others, due to economic betterment, political upheaval, education or other purposes, leaves one geographical area for prolonged stay or permanent settlement in another geographical area (Bhugra, 2004). The process of migration occurs broadly in three stages: pre-migration (involving the decision and preparation to move), migration (the physical relocation of individuals from one place to another), and post-migration (defined as the “absorption of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new society”) (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Migration can be classified in several ways: reasons for the migration, the social class and education of the migrating people, the duration of relocation, and the geographic distribution of the resettlement (Bhugra, 2004). Migration theories have revolved around development and networks while including broad implications for social and cultural change, most notably by Portes (1997). Curran et al. (2006) suggest the need for a more complete theory of migration that incorporates notions of cultural dynamics as they relate to behavior and societal outcomes. From a sociology perspective, Heisler (2000) emphasizes the central questions on migration: Why does migration occur? And how it is sustained over time? Both sociology and anthropology share a common theoretical framework in that both are grounded in the classic works of social theory and emphasizing social relations as central to understanding the processes of migration and immigrant incorporation (Brettell & Hollifield, 2014). However, sociologists have been more concerned with the receiving society, while anthropologists have often focused on the sending society (Bhugra, 2004).

Migration theory and research have a long history in sociology compared to other social sciences. Dating back to the beginnings of sociology as an academic discipline in the United States, migration and its implications were among the central themes pursued by the Chicago School of Sociology (Heisler, 2000). Resulting from migration, the assimilation perspective pioneered by members of the Chicago School could not explain the “resurgence” of ethnicity and the persistence of racial inequality and conflict that were becoming increasingly apparent in the late 1960s. Rejecting the assimilation model as ideologically rooted in Anglo conformity, having naïve images of the melting pot and being out of touch with contemporary realities, sociologists responded by developing several more models, which focused less on the immigrants themselves and more on the process of interaction between host society institutions and their structures and



the characteristics of newcomers (Alba & Nee, 1997). Sociological theory in relation to migration has moved from postulating a single outcome, such as assimilation or adjustment, to include more of a focus on institutional structures (Heisler, 2000).

Economic migrants are those who move from one place of work and residence to another, either within a country or across international boundaries, primarily because of their economic opportunities; this is a major distinction between refugees and those who move because of the migration decisions of others. One of the standard propositions in migration literature is that economic migrants are described as more ambitious, aggressive, entrepreneurial, or otherwise more favorably selected than similar individuals who choose to remain in their place of origin. The more highly favorable selected migrants are, the more successful their adjustment will be, and the more favorable their impact on the destinations economy and society will be. In a study of internal migration in the United States using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Bailey (2004) finds a larger positive effect of a college education on initial migration than on return migration. He interprets this as implying that those with higher levels of education not only have higher rates of migration but also make fewer errors in their initial migration, suggesting greater efficiency in migration. This is an important factor within this study, given the fact that the subjects are migrating for a college education and could be susceptible to efficiency errors in terms of their decision-making if they have not been properly prepared (Bailey, 2004).

Portes (1995) developed a more inclusive and systematic model of immigrant incorporation that identifies twelve distinct outcomes, depending on the interaction of host society and immigrant characteristics. The model identifies three levels of immigrant reception: the level of government policy, the level of civil society and public opinion, and the level of the immigrant community. The first level identifies three possible policy responses, labeled

“receptive,” “indifferent,” and “hostile.” The receptive category applies to refugees who receive resettlement assistance, legal immigrants fall into the indifferent category and the hostile category applies to populations whose entry and residence meets active opposition. At the second level, each of the three government reception categories are divided into “prejudiced” and “non-prejudiced” reception, where prejudiced reception is accorded to nonwhite groups while white immigrants enjoy no prejudiced reception. At the third level, Portes (1995) distinguishes between strong and weak ethnic communities. Strong communities are characterized by geographic concentrations and more diversified occupational structures, including significant numbers of entrepreneurs, whereas weak ethnic communities are either small or composed predominantly of manual workers. The location of an immigrant group in a specific context shapes the limits and possibilities of individual and group action. To illustrate the structural factors more vividly, the next section will introduce push-pull migration factors in relation to migration, international students, and international student-athletes.

### **Push-Pull Migration**

In the neoclassical economic migration models, labor migration has been explained as the response to the existing differences between economic income and the level of social development of various migration areas (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius, 2006). Push-pull factors are forces that can be economic, political, cultural, and environmentally based that can induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences (Li & Brey, 2007). For a general definition, the lack of opportunities in the home country can be referred to as “push” factors, while the greater opportunities afforded by industrialized nations can be viewed as “pull” factors (Menon & Carspecken, 1990). Push factors in relation to migration could include insufficient quantity of jobs in a country, loss of wealth, political persecution, or even natural

disasters (Krishnakumar & Indumathi, 2014). Examples of pull factors may include better job opportunities and living conditions, political or religious freedom and education (Krishnakumar & Indumathi, 2014). Brandi (2003) has discovered that push factors are more common to unskilled mass migration, and the pull factors are likely to affect more highly skilled migration. Viewed critically, the push–pull model also brings with it some limitations. Both push and pull factors are external forces that impact participants’ behaviors and choices, while socio-economic status, academic ability, gender, age, and motivation are not as much examined or accounted for (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius, 2006). This present dissertation will examine the characteristics of each unique case and participant to examine the push-pull factors revealed in U.S. collegiate basketball migrations.

**Push-pull factors: international students.** Altbach (1998, p. 240) presented what he called the push-pull model for international student mobility. It was found that some students were pushed by unfavorable conditions in their home countries, while others were pulled by scholarships and other opportunities in host countries. While some host societies have been ambivalent about nonlocal students, particularly when the host governments have subsidized those students, other societies have actively welcomed non-local students both as an economic investment and as a way to broaden the horizons of domestic students (Albach, 1998). The pull factors of the host countries have included advanced research facilities, congenial socio-economic and political environments, and the prospect of multinational classmates (Li & Brey, 2007). The push factors create a generalized interest in overseas education but do not give specific direction to individuals, whereas the pull factors are specific to potential host countries and institutions (Davis, 1995).

**Push-pull factors: international student-athletes.** Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, and Hardin (2009) explored the motives of international student-athletes who came to the United States to participate in intercollegiate sports. The researchers surveyed 212 international student-athletes who had migrated from Europe, America, Oceania, Africa, and Asia. The responses not only varied based on the sport played and home country, but also revealed athletic attractiveness, institution attractiveness, desire for independency, and environmental attractiveness as the main reasons for migrating. Berry (1999) also found the importance of academic and athletic achievement as important factors for international student-athletes to come to the United States. Some international student-athletes have claimed that they had limited access to higher education in their home countries and were forced to explore alternative solutions in the United States (Kontaxakis, 2011). Among research on international student-athletes' push-pull factors, Bale (1991) found several factors pushing international student-athletes to migrate to the NCAA, such as lack of facilities, lack of time, and lack of coaching. The next section deals with common theoretical frameworks used within sport labor migration research.

### **Theoretical Perspectives: Sports Labor Migration**

Scholars have used different theoretical perspectives to understand human migration and its relation to adapting to new cultures and environments. The migration of athletes can be approached from different theoretical perspectives extending from geographical studies of migration patterns to historical and sociological studies using modernity theory, theory of imperialism, development theory, or systems theory (Bale & Maguire, 1994). There is a tendency in the existing literature to apply Marxist and systems-theoretical approaches in which athletes are seen as a labor force that is exploited by international capitalism or as part of a global system that they cannot influence (Bale, 1991). According to neoclassic economic theory

(Borjas, 1989), global migration is based on a migrant's voluntary pursuit of higher income, depending on the global supply and demand process in the labor market. Sports labor markets resemble a clear process of supply and demand and global migration. Research within migration points to the importance of comprehending the ways in which migrants may maintain and develop transnational relations in various communities and countries (Agergaard & Tiesler, 2014).

World-systems theory sees immigration as a natural consequence of economic globalization and market penetration across national boundaries. Probably the oldest and best-known theory of international migration was originally developed to explain labor migration in the process of economic development (Lewis, 1954; Ranis & Fei, 1961; Harris & Todaro, 1970). According to this theory and its extensions, international migration, like its internal counterpart, is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor. Countries with a large endowment of labor relative to capital have a low equilibrium market wage, while countries with a limited endowment of labor relative to capital are characterized by a high market wage, as depicted graphically by the familiar interaction of labor supply and demand curves. The movement of capital also includes human capital, with highly skilled workers moving from capital-rich to capital-poor countries in order to reap high returns on their skills in a human capital-scarce environment, leading to a parallel movement of managers, technicians, and other skilled workers (Harris & Todaro, 1970). The international flow of labor, therefore, must be kept conceptually distinct from the associated international flow of human capital. According to world-systems theory, migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development. As capitalism has expanded outward from its core in Western Europe, North America, Oceania, and Japan, ever-larger portions of the

globe and growing shares of the human population have been incorporated into the world market economy (Harris & Todaro, 1970). As land, raw materials, and labor within peripheral regions come under the influence and control of markets, migration flows are inevitably generated, some of which have always moved abroad (Massey & España, 1987).

Migration theories have generally revolved around development and networks, most notably those by Portes (1997), Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993), Massey et al. (1993), and Stark (1991). These compelling theories have broad implications for social and cultural change. They point to mechanisms inherent in migration that create momentum and lead to the augmentation of migration over time. They also show how patterns of migration and networks transform internal economies, for instance, when remittances result in greater inequality in the community of origin (Massey et al., 1993). Finally, and most importantly, they show how social structures and individual positions within structures such as migrant enclaves can influence individual identity and behavior (for better or worse) (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Curran and Saguy (2013) suggest the need for a more complete theory of migration that incorporates notions of cultural dynamics as they relate to behavior and societal outcomes. The earliest psychological research of this type was undertaken by Chataway and Berry (1989), who examined the relationship between coping style, academic satisfaction, and psychological adjustment with Hong Kong Chinese undergraduates studying at a Canadian university. They employed the Ways of Coping Scale (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985), which comprises eight subscales (problem solving, wishful thinking, detachment, seeking social support, positive thinking, self-blame, tension reduction, and withdrawal). International students were asked to consider their coping strategies in response to problems associated with life in Canada, such as homesickness, prejudice, and communication difficulties. Chataway and Berry (1989) found that students who indulged in

self-blame, wishful thinking, and withdrawal reported lower levels of academic satisfaction and that those who employed a detached coping style experienced greater psychological distress. The stress and coping framework currently represents the most popular theoretical approach to examining acculturation and adaptation (Berry, 1999). This theory suggests that it is the fulfillment of expectations about the migration that leads to positive evaluations and ultimately to satisfactory sojourner adaptation (Furnham, 1988).

### **Theoretical Perspectives of This Study**

The theoretical perspectives guiding this study are world-systems theory, transnationalism, and cross-cultural adjustment. The following section lays out from whence these theories derive, where they have been used within research, and how they will inform this study. The conceptual framework (Figure 2.2) informs the reader how the theories and constructs were used for the purpose of this study

#### **World-Systems Theory**

Not all migration movements can be explained theoretically through economic models. For instance, Mixon and Hsing (1994) provided further support for human capital theory through the development of a micro-model of college student migration, which views the benefits of education from an investment and consumption perspective. More interestingly, McCormack and Walseth (2013) used the theories of Bourdieu as a framework for discussing the production of physical, cultural, and social capital by female Norwegian soccer players' migration to NCAA soccer in determining their post-professional careers. The conversion of physical capital to cultural (educational) capital occurs within the U.S. sport and education structure, as the American university sports scholarship system subsidizes elite athletes and forms a key

component in the development of sporting talent in the United States (McCormack & Walseth, 2013).

World-systems theory sees immigration as a natural consequence of economic globalization and market penetration across national boundaries. Probably the oldest and best-known theory of international migration was originally developed to explain labor migration in the process of economic development (Lewis, 1954; Ranis & Fei, 1961; Harris & Todaro, 1970; Todaro, 1976). Theoretically, there is a need to understand the economic dimensions of the way in which migration is entwined with broader processes of the commodification of global sports. Insights from within a World-Systems framework (Wallerstein, 1974) are built around four sectors (global areas), namely: (a) the core, (b) the semi-periphery, (c) the periphery, and (d) the external arena, arranged concentrically from the economically most powerful core to the most impoverished and dependent periphery.

This study applies the world-systems theory for interpreting the structure of global basketball player migration. Wallerstein (2004) argues for the alteration of the analytical unit from nation-state to world-system and assumes that we now exist in a world-economy, which is mutually dependent but has centered on parts of Europe and North America since the 16th century. Furthermore, Wallerstein (2004) indicated how the concepts of “core states,” “peripheral states,” “semi-peripheral states” are to be used as follows:

We can talk of core states and peripheral states, so long as we remember that we are really talking of a relationship between production processes. Some states have a near even mix of core-like and peripheral products. We may call them semi peripheral states.

(p. 28)



In short, Wallerstein used these concepts to focus on the relationships between the manufacturing processes among countries and explained that roles such as core states and peripheral states change according to industries such as semiconductors and aviation. For example, he called South Korea, Brazil and India semi-peripheral states as of the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**World-systems theory and global basketball.** Drawing upon world-systems theory, Chiba (2012) focused on international player migration as it is related to the global strategies of the NBA since the 1980s and conceptualizes North America as the center, Europe as semi-periphery, Central/South America and Africa as periphery, and Asia and Oceania as part of the external world. Unmentioned was the U.S. collegiate system or NCAA and where it fits within this structure. As mentioned earlier, the NBA is positioned at the center of global basketball and its infiltration of overseas markets and collective maintenance of a monopoly on global talent has facilitated the recognition of the NCAA on a global stage (Euchner, 2008) into what Lee (2010) refers to as “the global migration push-factor for basketball player development” (p. 158). Understanding the meanings these migrant athletes give toward their migration and collegiate athletic experiences provides for deeper insight into where NCAA basketball fits within the structure of global basketball labor migration.

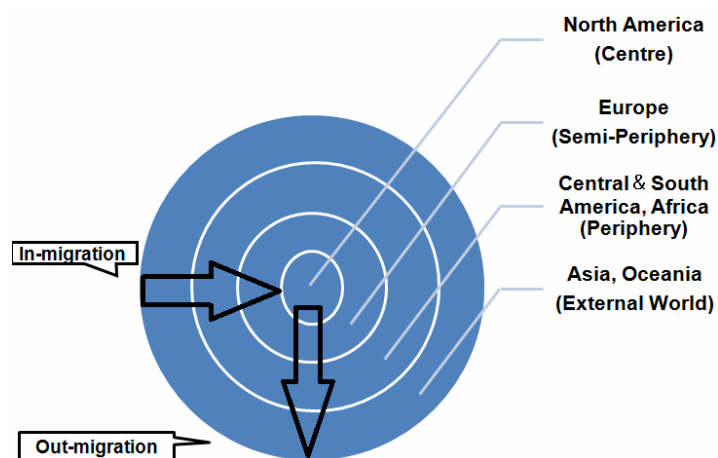


Figure 2.2. World-systems theory and international basketball player migration (Chiba, 2012).

## **Transnationalism**

Transnationalism served as an additional theoretical perspective to guide this study. The concept of transnationalism was developed to analyze people's cross-border activities and the sense of belonging that occurs as economic, political and social transactions occur across borders (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). The transnational turn in social sciences also had roots in post-structural and post-colonial thinking, as it aimed to bring migrant agency back into migration studies (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). Transnationalism refers to a social process whereby people forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that transverse geographic, political, and cultural borders (Basch et al., 1994). In a sense, transnational migrants live across political borders and find themselves confronted with deeply embedded hegemonic categories entangled in dynamic sociopolitical processes of two or more specific localities (Carter, 2011). This process is carried out through cross-border ties, in which events and processes occur across the borders of several national states (Faist, 2010). Using the concept of transnationalism, therefore, calls attention to the cultural and political projections of power by various forms of governance, each of which asserts jurisdiction over a populace in a particular space (Carter, 2011). Transnationalism thus moves away from bounded units of analysis and toward a more theoretically problematized conceptualization of space and place (Smith, 2001). According to Basch (1994), transnational migrants are inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism and must be analyzed within the dialectic contexts between capital and labor. Understanding sports labor migrants as transnational migrants can direct attention toward their transnational social practices, such as establishing transnational networks and communicating through international media (like Skype and Facebook), as well as their subjective feelings of transnational belonging (Schiller, 2003). For this study, the researcher

will try to understand what has influenced international male basketball student-athletes to migrate, as well as their overall college experiences at U.S. universities. Adopting a transnational perspective positions both the scholar and migrants somewhere beyond the space of the “global” even while engaging with the ideological and political agendas of globalization projects (Carter, 2011).

### **Cross-cultural Adjustment Theory**

Migration at any level involves not only leaving social networks behind but also initially experiencing a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation, which will lead to processes of acculturation (Bhugra, 2004). Culture is learned and passed through generations, including the beliefs and value system of a society, and has been described as features that are shared and bind people together into a community (Keum et al., 2004). The difficulty with research on culture contact and change has been the lack of clarity about what constitutes “adjustment” (Brein & David, 1971) and how it changes over time. There are broad terms in the conceptualization and definition of adaptive outcomes of cross-cultural transitions, such as “adjustment, adaptation, assimilation, and acculturation,” which are often used in the examination of sojourners, international students, refugees, immigrants, and native people (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, p. 130).

The term “cross-cultural adaption” is used in a broad sense to refer to the complex process through which an individual acquires an increasing level of fitness and compatibility in the new culture, including adaptation to culture shock, psychological adaptation and interaction effectiveness (Kim, 2001). Young and Schartner (2014) use “adjustment” to refer to the dynamic, interactive processes involved in functioning in the new academic environment and “adaption” to refer to the outcomes of these adjustment processes. Scholars have become interested in understanding the experience of cross-cultural adaptation as it may predict not only

the success and satisfaction with the sojourn but also the quality of relations between members from different cultural groups (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Cross-cultural adaptation is best examined in terms of two different adjustment outcomes: psychological and sociocultural adjustments (Searle & Ward, 1990). A program of research on these outcomes has indicated that these two domains are interrelated but conceptually different, can be predicted by different variables, and show different patterns of development over time (Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Ward and Kennedy (1996) have also drawn on other conceptual frameworks to integrate supplemental literature on “culture shock” and argued for the distinction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. The first outcome, psychological adjustment, originated from the stress and coping framework and can be used to examine emotional well-being and satisfaction with migration experiences. Variables such as personality, life changes, coping styles, identification with co-nationals, and social support from host nationals can all affect psychological adjustment. Sociocultural adjustment is based on the ability to “fit in” and the skill to deal with interactive aspects of the host cultural context. Sociocultural adjustment is purportedly best predicted by length of residence in the new culture, language ability, cultural knowledge, cultural distance, and the quantity of contact with host nationals. Scholars have become interested in understanding the experience of cross-cultural adaptation because it may predict not only the success and satisfaction with the sojourn but also the quality of relations between members from different cultural groups (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

**Cross-cultural adjustment theory and international student-athletes in the United States.** Research on cross-cultural adjustment of international students in the United States has mainly related to academic stress (Abouserie, 1994), financial challenges (Chen, 1999),

homesickness (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007) and discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Research from higher educational institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia explain how international students from non-Western nations suffer language barriers, lack of support, confusing enrollment procedures, and higher tuition costs (Li & Kaye, 1998). Moreover, for international students, issues of loneliness and isolation are for most a difficult part of the cultural adjustment process (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). Curran and Saguy (2013) suggest the need for a more complete theory of migration that incorporates notions of cultural dynamics as they relate to behavior and societal outcomes. An important issue raised in this trend of growing internationalization at universities in the United States is the ability of these young individuals to adapt to their new environment on a university campus (Popp, Love, Kim, & Hums, 2010).

Little research has been conducted specifically focusing on international student-athletes and their cross-cultural adjustment. However, Ridinger and Pastore (2000) have created a model in order to analyze the factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment of international student-athletes. This model is featured in the theoretical framework of this study. Ridinger and Pastore's (2000) framework consists of three components: (a) antecedents of adjustment, (b) adjustment to college, and (c) outcomes that may be associated with the antecedents and/or adjustment to college. The outcomes and relationships among the antecedents fluctuate, depending on the variable demographics such as student-athlete's home nation, gender, athletic association, or type of sport. International student-athletes have also shown lower adjustment-to-college levels in the United States as compared to domestic student-athletes. They view the purpose of college sports differently than do domestic student-athletes (Popp, Hums, & Greenwell, 2009). In addition, Stidwell (1984) found differences in perceived athletic confidence between international and

domestic student-athletes. Further exploration on international student-athletes and cross-cultural adjustment is needed because international student-athletes view the purpose of the experience and their own abilities differently than do domestic student-athletes.

### **Conceptual Framework**

For the theoretical lens of the study, the researcher introduced world-systems theory, transnationalism theory, and cross-cultural adjustment theory to examine the key influences within this setting of athlete migration, as well as the college experiences of international student-athletes on a U.S. university campus. Figure 2.2 below illustrates the conceptual model of the theories and concepts as seen by the researcher. As such, the student-athlete leaves their home country due to a variety of influential or “push-pull” factors, which could relate to economic, social, or educational or sport-related reasons. The process of making the decision to migrate to the United States and NCAA basketball was viewed through the theoretical lens of world-systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004). Cross-cultural adjustment (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000) was used to better frame the athlete migrants’ personal, social and cultural experiences related to everyday life in the United States. Lastly, the relations and communication to the student-athlete’s home country or, more specifically, the cross-border activities of migrants (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007), were viewed using the theory of transnationalism. This entire conceptual model can be illustrated in the figure below.

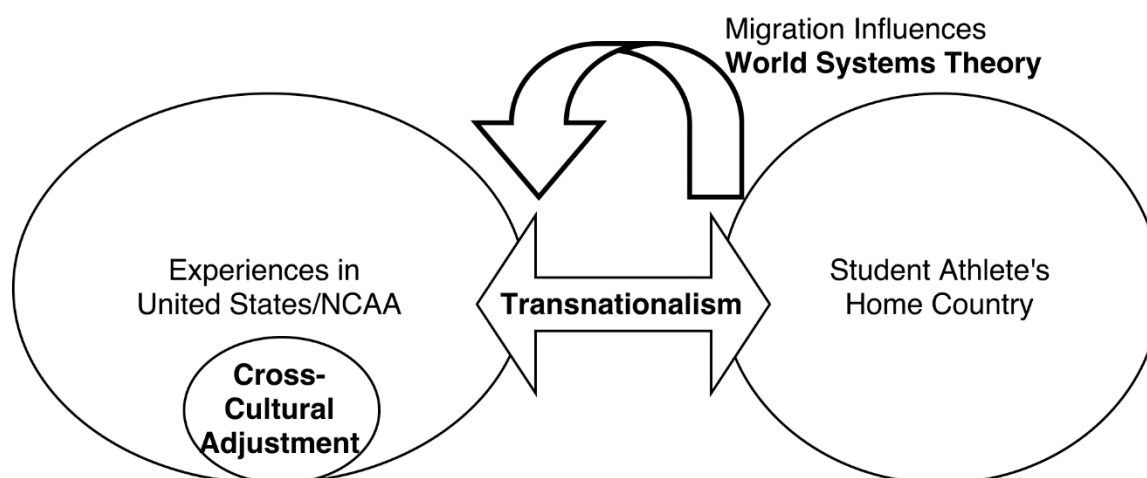


Figure 2.3. Researcher's conceptual framework for theory (**in bold**) and constructs.

## Chapter Two Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an historical background of (a) international migration, (b) intercollegiate athletics in the United States, (c) international student-athletes in the NCAA, and (d) popular theories relating to migration studies and theoretical perspectives of the study. From a macro perspective, international migration represents an issue that is deeply embedded within legal, social and political frameworks at a multitude of governance levels. Each individual country makes decisions and policies on how best to govern migration, which can also be closely linked to international relations and foreign policies (Aras & Mencutek, 2015). While the migration of athletes is a phenomenon that goes back to the modernization of sport in the wake of industrialization in the 1860s (Magee & Sugden, 2002), this chapter has also highlighted the limited research on international student-athletes, specifically within the sport of basketball. The collective findings from previous studies clearly indicate that the trend of international student-athletes migrating to the United States is ongoing, with population growths taking place across the board in a variety of both male and female intercollegiate sports. For the theoretical lens of the study, the researcher introduced world-systems theory, transnationalism theory, and

cross-cultural adjustment theory to examine the key influences within this setting of athlete migration as well as the college experiences of international student-athletes on a U.S. college or university campus.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The primary purpose of the study is to understand experiences of former international male basketball student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities. A secondary purpose of the study is to comprehend what influenced the student-athletes to leave their home countries to pursue U.S. collegiate athletics. This chapter presents the methodological approaches used to guide the study, research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Researchers who utilize interviews, in one form or another, want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences. Using interview questions and follow-up questions, or probes, based on what the participant has already described, the goal was to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant. Demarrais (2004) explained the interview process as a researcher and participant engaging in a conversation focused on questions to the participant pertaining to their thoughts, opinions, perspectives and descriptions of specific experiences

This study used a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. As outlined in the literature review, in this study, international collegiate basketball players in U.S. collegiate athletics are under investigation in this study due to the following reasons:

1. NCAA policies on amateurism place international student-athletes at great risk of meeting eligibility requirements;
2. No qualitative interview studies on record have focused exclusively on international basketball players in U.S. collegiate athletics;

3. NCAA Men's Basketball is one of only two "revenue-generating sports" across all intercollegiate sports in the United States (Zimbalist, 1999);
4. There is a demand for international basketball players in college athletics as coaches claim there are not enough elite American athletes (Wilson & Wolverton, 2008).

Furthermore, qualitative methods offered in-depth insight into individuals' experiences and perceptions of the motives and barriers to participation in sport (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005). Qualitative research methods have been frequently used to examine issues related to sports and related concepts, based on the growing interest among researchers to achieve a deeper level of analysis (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

### **Justifications for Using Qualitative Research Methods**

Qualitative research methods involve the use of non-numerical data, such as words or images, to focus on the qualities of the phenomenon under study (Denney et al., 2008). Qualitative research grew out of naturalistic inquiries conducted in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Most recently, this approach has been used across the social sciences. Diverse strands of qualitative research are influenced by different scholarly disciplines, as well as different ontological and epistemological assumptions that transcend disciplinary boundaries (Prasad, 2005). Qualitative research is best suited to this study because of the nature of questions used to conduct the study. Within a qualitative framework, researchers "study selected issues in depth and detail in the natural environment" (Patton, 1990, p. 13), and the researcher is acknowledged as the instrument in the interaction. Qualitative researchers typically choose to focus on understanding the phenomena for creating new knowledge rather than approaching a question with a hypothesis or a question to prove or disprove (Denney et al., 2008). Patton (1990) states, "the task of the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework

within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or the part of the world about which they are talking” (p. 24). In qualitative research, the collection of data is done in a natural environment as compared to a more controlled setting. Inductive data analysis is used to establish patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, qualitative research was used in this study because it was helpful in explaining the phenomena of interest, investigating the factors that influence international male basketball student-athletes to migrate, and comprehending their college experiences.

### **Qualitative Interviews**

Researchers who utilize interviews, in one form or another, want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences. Using interview questions and follow-up questions, or probes, based on what the participant has already described, the goal was to construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant. Demarrais (2004) explained the interview process as a researcher and participant engaging in a conversation focused on questions to the participant pertaining to their thoughts, opinions, perspectives and descriptions of specific experiences. This is extremely important because in qualitative inquiry the research is the instrument (Patton, 1990). Interviewing offers many advantages for the researcher to attain a greater understanding of the complexities of social reality from a number of perspectives (Henderson, 1991). Brookfield and Preskill (2012) advocated that raising quality questions through interviews to people in relation to their stories will make interviewees think intensely about their unique stories.

The goal of the researcher in this study was to keep the conversation focused on descriptions of the particular experience rather than abstract discussions about the experience (Roulston, 2010). As a result, interviewing was the best way to identify the experiences of international student-athletes related to their decision-making process and their adjustment in the United States. Qualitative interviews as a methodology can be categorized into the following: intensive interview, in-depth interview, open-ended interview, unstructured interview, long interview (McCracken, 1988), nondirective interview, focused interview (Merton & Kendall, 1946), the group depth interview (Goldman & McDonald, 1987), and focus groups interviews (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). Research interviews range across a spectrum from structured, tightly scripted interviews in which interviewers pose closed questions worded in particular ways in specific sequences, to open-ended, loosely guided interviews that have little or no pre-planned structure in terms of what questions and topics are discussed (Roulston, 2010). This study's methodological framework was centered on semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, as outlined in the next section

## **Methodological Framework**

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Henderson (1991) used the term “qualitative interviews” as an umbrella term for those methods in which researchers learn from participants through long, focused conversations. Interviewing is the best method for pursuing a subject in-depth, operating in a discovery mode, and creating interactions with individuals. Within structured interviews, interview researchers use a standardized format of interview and are advised not to deviate from the script. On the other hand, unstructured interviews are those in which interviewers proceed with no formal guide. Lofland and Lofland (1994) described an unstructured interview as a “guided

conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis” (p. 18). The individual interviews for this study were semi-structured and open-ended (Patton, 2002), which allowed the researcher to use an interview guide (Appendix D) in order to help hone in on the questions and also to ask for more clarity as the interview transpired. Semi-structured interviews include preparing an interview guide to help lead the study. While the researcher did develop an interview guide, it was not necessarily used as a standard protocol due to each participant being a unique case. Semi-structured questions are usually open-ended, and after posing each question to the research participant, the interviewer follows up with probes seeking further detail and description about what has been said (Roulston, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were used to give the opportunity to the participants to express their experiences. Open-ended questions were used within the framework of this study since the researcher wanted to understand the participants’ feelings, perceptions and understandings through answers in their own words.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis has been described as a “method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Data collection through this process meant putting the theory construction in place prior to comparing across the entire database including existing literature and theories within study to see what emerged (Grbich, 2013). In this study, the researcher did not use grounded theory; hence no theory was looking to be developed by the researcher that applied to why international collegiate basketball players decided to participate in NCAA Basketball. Using constant comparative method, the data were analyzed only to the level that eluded towards theory ideas, not to actually create a theory itself. The researcher used data to develop a thematic overview of important participant

perspectives on their overall experience as collegiate basketball players in the United States. Thematic analysis involves searching for identification of common threads that extend across an entire interview or set of interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In thematic analysis, the significance of a theme is not essentially dependent on quantifiable measures, rather on capturing something important in relation to the overall research questions (Spencer et al., 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the researcher, I coded the data into as many categories as possible, as data emerged to fit a category, or as categories emerged to fit the data. An important aspect of the data analysis was comparing codes with previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category (Glaser & Strauss, 1971). The researcher navigated through thematic analysis by examining the results through the frame of cross-cultural adjustment theory, transnationalism and world-systems theory. This was done in order to make further sense of the results and to lift the analytical discussion to a more abstract level (Grbich, 2013).

### **Research Design**

The overall design of this research was based on qualitative open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the data. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences that influenced basketball student-athletes to migrate and their overall experiences at their respective U.S. universities. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What influenced former international male basketball student-athletes to pursue an education and participate in NCAA intercollegiate athletics?
2. How did former international male basketball student-athletes make meaning of their experiences as student-athletes in NCAA intercollegiate athletics?

3. What recommendations do former international basketball student-athletes have for those who wish to be involved in NCAA intercollegiate athletics?

### **Participants**

The participants for the study were former international male basketball players who played at NCAA Division I institutions and who were globally dispersed; hence, no specific location was utilized to find them. Potential participants were identified through a data analysis of NCAA Men's Basketball rosters going back to the 2013-2014 season listed on university athletic websites. The home country of the potential participants was listed on the archived rosters on each university athletic website. To be considered a potential participant, the student-athlete must have participated in at least one year of NCAA Division I Men's Basketball within in the past three years and be older than 18 years of age. Although current migration trends also exist in women's basketball, this study will exclude females due to men's basketball being classified as a revenue-generating sport (Zimbalist, 1999) and due to male basketball players being more prevalent in a greater number of countries across the world (Chepyator-Thomson, Turcott, & Smith, 2016). This study excluded United States citizens, as this study is focused on non-U.S.-nationals. Table 3.1 shows a summary of the interviewees' demographics.

Table 3.1

*Summary of Interviewees*

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Attended U.S. Prep/High School or Junior College</b>	<b>NCAA Division I Athletic Conference</b>
Bernard	Netherlands	Junior College	ACC
Arthur	Senegal	Prep School	ACC
Matthew	Denmark	None	Northeast Conference
Mason	Canada	None	American East
Nathan	Australia	None	Big Sky
Tyler	France	Junior College	Big Sky
Terry	Sudan/Australia	Junior College	West Coast
Brian	Bosnia Herzegovina	Junior College	SEC
Eric	Nigeria	None	Big East
Chris	Romania	High School	SEC
Dylan	Turkey	Prep School	Big 12
Daniel	Lithuania	Prep School	ACC
Mark	Germany	Prep School	Big Sky
Jonathon	Ivory Coast	Prep School	Big Sky
Kyle	Croatia	Prep School	Northeast Conference
Adam	Norway	None	Mid-American

**Participant selection rationale.** The researcher focused on former international (non-U.S.) NCAA male basketball players because current collegiate athletes were difficult to access given the strict university and NCAA policies. NCAA Division I was targeted as this is the highest and most competitive level of collegiate basketball in the United States, thus attracting the best players both in the United States and outside the United States. The researcher felt that using the most elite players available would add richness to the data, given that the participants most likely had other options of playing basketball professionally in other countries. In addition, participants had to have been a part of an NCAA team in the past three seasons (beginning in the 2013-14 season) in order to keep their memories of experiences as recent as possible. In addition, reflecting on their previous experiences allowed the participants to explain how their time at a U.S. university impacted what they were currently doing when the interview took place.



## **Purposeful Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used to target the specific participants that met certain criteria for the study (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Patton, 2002). According to Maxwell (2005), purposeful sampling is “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). Roulston (2010) would call the selection of participants a cluster sampling, as the researcher obtained the participants from one naturally occurring group. The group of focus for this study was former international (non-United States) NCAA Division I men’s basketball players who have played in at least one of the past three seasons (2013-2016).

## **Semi-Structured Interview Participants**

**IRB approval.** The researcher gained IRB approval during the month of January of 2016 from the university’s IRB office.

**Approval from interviewees.** After IRB approval, potential participants were recruited through private message (Appendix A) using the social media websites of Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. Once the potential participant replied to the message with an email address and an expression of interest to hear more about the project, I asked for their email and sent them the recruitment letter followed by the informed consent document, which could be accessed through a web link.

**Informed Consent.** The consent document, which was accessed through a web link, describes the purpose of the study, the expected time required, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality and compensation information, and statements re-affirming that the participation would be voluntary and that the participants could withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequence. Each participant was given time to read the consent form and the

opportunity to ask questions or address concerns. The informed consent was obtained through the use of a web link being sent to each potential participant. Once the participant clicked the “consent” bubble and submitted, they were then contacted via email to schedule the time and videoconference system (Skype, FaceTime, Facebook, or other). The participant could choose not to be part of the interview at any time.

**Administering the interview.** After participants agreed to informed consent procedures, the researcher explained the interview protocol (See Appendix D). For the interview phase, the researcher asked open-ended interview questions. Each of the interview participants was involved in in-depth interviewing that elicited rich and detailed experiences and information.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection of the study involved three parts. The first part is a document analysis of archived men’s college basketball rosters for the past three years (beginning with the 2013-2014 season) listed on athletic team websites, in order to distinguish the number of eligible participants from each team (Chepyator-Thomson, Turcott, & Smith, 2016). The second part of the study involved contacting the eligible participants through either the social media websites of Facebook, Twitter or Instagram or directly through an email (if an email had already been obtained by the researcher) in order to see if they would like to receive an invitation to the study (Appendices A and B). After being given an email address from the potential participant, the letter of invitation was sent to the international student-athletes (Appendix B). For those who agreed to participate, I sent an informed consent explanation using a web link (Appendix C) and the interview was scheduled if the participant clicked the consent bubble and submitted the document. Once the potential participant signed the informed consent document, the third part of the study was the actual semi-structured open interviews with former international male

basketball student-athletes. Within this qualitative study, the units of analysis were former international student-athletes who participated in the sport of men's basketball at NCAA Division I universities in the past three seasons (beginning in 2012-2013). Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of participants and maintain the individuality of each case in their analyses, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations. The researcher followed the interview guide in Appendix D.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

The researcher used an empty, quiet, and safe conference room and used videoconferencing to communicate with the participants. It is important when interviewing to find a place that is private enough that the participant feels safe and secure in answering questions and that is free from off-putting background noise (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The interview room was welcoming and professional to let the participant know through the online video that it was a serious interview. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and the participants were allowed to stop the interview at any time, if they chose. All participants consented to the interview and all interviews were audio-recorded. The interview guide consisted of 13 questions across four sections, which included: background information, migration decision process, experiences as a foreign student-athlete, and reflection (Appendix D). The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and analyzed qualitatively for themes. The interviews provided the researcher with in-depth information due to their prolonged length, which enabled participants to share their thoughts and tell their stories. The focus of the interviews was specifically on former international male basketball student-athletes' influences to migrate and their overall experiences at colleges and universities in NCAA Division I. Early in

the interview, questions were asked about basic background information to develop comfort and trust. Questions were then asked about basketball and education experiences in their home country, about their first encounters with basketball and when they began to think about playing college basketball in the United States, what aspects of their student-athlete experiences had been enjoyable or difficult and what could have been done differently, recommendations for future basketball players from their home country wishing to play NCAA basketball, and what they did or are currently doing following completion of their NCAA basketball participation.

**Videoconferencing.** Videoconferencing is the use of telecommunication technologies, which allow two or more locations to communicate by simultaneous two-way video and audio transmissions (Sullivan, 2013). The researcher used videoconferencing, as telephones are not well-suited for qualitative interviews because they can restrict the development of rapport due to lack of face-to-face contact (Shuy, 2003). Sullivan (2013) suggests that videoconferencing interactions have the potential to mirror face-to-face interactions for those that are geographically dispersed.

Berg (2007, pp. 112- 113) discusses what he calls web-based in-depth interviews as taking place in two arenas:

1. Synchronous environments, which include real-time, threaded communications, where such environments provide the researcher and respondent an experience similar to face-to-face interaction.
2. Asynchronous environments, which include the use of e-mail, message boards, and privately hosted bulletin-posting areas.

This study would fall within the synchronous environment, where face-to-face video conferencing was the goal. The sampling pool greatly increases with the use of the communication technology due to videoconferencing being available nearly all over the world.

**Technical issues.** There are technical issues associated with using any type of technology, but it is important to consider this when planning and conducting research of any kind. Anyone who has used videoconferencing knows that there can be issues with sound quality, microphones, webcam malfunctions, and probably most common, a lag in the live feed (Sullivan, 2013). Things like Internet connection speeds and the quality of the computer for both the interviewer and interviewee can also be challenging factors. The researcher was aware of the risks while conducting this type of research. If video feed was not attainable after several attempts, the interviews were carried on through voice-only technology with no face-to face videoconferencing.

**Audio recording.** The researcher used an audio recording device separately from the computer laptop being used for the videoconference. Andrews et al. (1996) suggested audio recording as the preferred method for accurately recording interview conversations. The main benefit of audio recording interviews is to have an exact reproduction of the research data (Henderson, 1991). Handwritten note-taking can be selective when transcribing conversations, and researchers have oftentimes found written records to be incomplete (Andrews et al., 1996). However, taking notes in tandem with audio recording can be helpful in pointing out the main interview points.

**Transcribing.** For this study, the researcher transcribed all interviews verbatim using digital software and a foot pedal provided by the researcher's university. Verbatim transcription is the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact

replication of the words recorded (Poland, 1995). Once interviews were transcribed, the audio recordings were destroyed.

**Confidentiality.** The individual interviews were audio recorded and only heard by the researcher and dissertation committee. Pseudonyms were applied to participants prior to the third party receiving the audio-recorded interviews. During transcription and analysis, all interview recordings and paper transcriptions were kept in a locked filing cabinet in a private locked office. The audio-recorded interviews were kept in a file on my password-protected laptop computer. Following the analysis of the interviews, all interview audio recordings will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

During this phase, the researcher must make “sense” out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2007). The researcher focused heavily on the emergent data that came from the participants of the study, rather than any preconceived beliefs held prior to the study (Charmaz, 2006). For the data analysis phase, “the purpose of this process is to present the reader with the stories identified throughout the analytical process, the salient themes, recurring language, and patterns of belief linking people and settings together” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 31). Using this methodological framework, the researcher was able to better understand former international male basketball student-athletes’ influences to migrate and their overall experiences at NCAA Division I universities. The purpose of constructing these interviews, which were administered through videoconferencing online communication (Skype, FaceTime, etc.), was to generate responses that may be coded to a fixed set of categories and analyzed quantitatively (Roulston, 2010). These themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were

common among research participants (Kvale, 2007). How the researcher formulated themes or codes varied.

### **Coding**

To analyze the data, the researcher developed codes (see Appendix E for example codes). In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or “translates” data (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014, p. 13) and attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, and other analytic processes (Saldana, 2015). Codes allowed the researcher to organize the transcriptions for thematic analysis. The codebook kept a record of my emergent codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example for reference (Saldana, 2015). Friese (2014) prescribes that qualitative research projects should reach between 50 and 300 different codes total, are while combining these codes into five or six major themes (p. 92, 128). Maintaining this list provided an analytic opportunity to organize and reorganize the codes into major categories and subcategories. The next step was putting codes into categories (Appendix E). A category is defined as a “word or phrase describing some segment of the data that is explicit, whereas a theme is a phrase or sentence describing more subtle processes” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 282). As the data was coded, the responses were compared within categories and between categories, also called constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and emerging themes developed (See Appendix E). This process generated the findings of the study. The themes developed helped to answer the research questions and came directly from the data, not from the researcher’s pre-conceived notions or from previous theories.

In order to interpret the data, the researcher needed to become very familiar with the data and not become fixated on forcing certain themes or code associations, but rather let the data from the participants tell the story about the processes within this phenomenon. The researcher used the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in the analysis of the data. In the first cycle of coding, descriptive codes were created to initially separate the data. These included codes such as “influences” and “U. S culture” without going into further depth until all the data had been given a first cycle code. Codes were created both inductively and deductively. Deductive codes or pre-codes were created based off terminology and literature stemming from athlete labor migration, international student-athletes, and migration theories, specifically the three theories used in the framework of this study. Using a semi-structured interview format and the same interview guide for all participants allowed for participants to reflect on the same processes and decision-making that occur within this migration phenomenon. The interview guide gave the researcher the notion to deductively anticipate certain frames of reference or concepts that the participants would potentially address during the interviews. Overall, twelve deductive codes were created prior to the first cycle of coding, and ten of these pre-codes made appearances in the next several rounds of coding and categorizing. The ten pre-codes are included and marked as such in Appendix E.

The pre-codes used for the data analysis proved to be extremely beneficial for the direction of the analysis. By using deductive coding, the phrases, quotations and narratives shared by the participants could be easily identified based off the pertinent sport labor literature revealed in Chapter Two of this study. For instance, the typologies of international migrant college athletes from Love and Kim (2011) provided terminology and definitions that were easily implemented into the interview data. As participants described their experiences and their



reasoning for traveling to the United States, they categorized themselves into one or sometimes multiple typologies. These codes, along with the remaining codes, did not naturally fit into the fixed categories in which they now appear. This process required extended periods of re-reading the data, as well as listening over the audio of all the interviews that took place, to determine what exactly was being addressed and if it fit within its current labeled code or required a new code. Upon going through the second and third cycles of coding, the frequency of isolated random codes began to funnel into lesser categories and embodied a clearer story of what was happening across the board concerning these participants and their stories of sports labor migration. This stage was also important because it revealed the crossover that existed between many of the code definitions and forced the researcher to better clarify definitions, thus enhancing the validity of the study by reducing vague categories such as “influence” or “recruiting.” As examples, these terms served as codes for the initial cycle of coding but proved to be far too wide-reaching to give in-depth analysis of idiosyncrasies taking place within these phenomena.

Along with deductive codes, inductive codes were also included throughout the data analysis. These codes were created based off similarities and themes portrayed across the data. In-Vivo coding, which captures the specific words spoken by the participant, was used primarily for creating codes and enhanced the study by giving more voice and validity to the sport migrants. Initial coding was also used by the researcher to focus on the active processes in the participants’ responses and descriptions. Charmaz (2006) advises that detailed, line-by-line initial coding is suitable for interview transcripts comparatively to other qualitative data, such as research-generated field notes. The researcher took more of the role of a “splitter” compared to a “lumper” since every one or two lines of transcription text were coded based off what was found

to be important for this study. This process left the researcher with an abundance of both isolated codes and common codes to comb through after the first cycle of coding.

During the second cycle of coding, the inductive and deductive codes merged, and the researcher went through the quotation of each code one by one by going back to the initial quote within the transcripts. This process allowed for re-coding and marked the beginning of categorization based off codes that appeared to share common characteristics or fit under a particular theme that sufficiently epitomizes such thematic code relations. The constant comparative method was combined with memoing, leading to the development of several themes. The data were coded, then prearranged into categories, and then into themes. The data were coded using a constant comparative analysis, which permitted for comparisons between and within categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The themes function to give meaning to the participants' experiences as they relate with the theories of transnationalism, world-systems theory and cross-cultural adjustment.

**Memoing.** “Memos are the sites of conversation with ourselves about our data” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). Memoing usually occurs after the researcher has coded data from interview transcripts (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Memos were used as ideas and thoughts that the researcher has in regards to theory development and were utilized throughout the constant comparative method. Memos catch the researcher's thoughts and capture the comparisons with the codes, which tell the researcher the directions needed to pursue (Holton, 2007). These memos allowed the researcher to develop themes based in evidence in order to draw conclusions and answer the initial research questions.

### **Summary**

This chapter presents the methodological approaches used to guide the study, research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Researchers who utilize interviews, in one form or another, want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences. In this study, a qualitative research method was used that used semi-structured interviews using videoconferencing communication to ask questions to former international NCAA male college basketball players about their influences to migrate to the United States/NCAA and experiences as student-athletes at their respective university.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The focus of this dissertation was answering questions on sports migration. Specifically, influential migration factors and experiences of former international (non-U.S.-national) male basketball student-athletes at colleges and universities in NCAA Division I institutions were gathered and examined. The research questions used to guide this study were as follows:

1. What influenced former international male basketball student-athletes to pursue higher education in the United States and to participate in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
2. How did former international male basketball student-athletes make meaning of their experiences as student-athletes in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
3. What recommendations do former international basketball student-athletes have for future basketball migrant players in NCAA Division I Basketball?

Qualitative methods were utilized to gain in-depth insight into individuals' experiences and perceptions of the motives and barriers to participation in sport (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005). This study used a qualitative approach using open-ended, semi-structured interviews and constant comparative method. Semi-structured questions were open-ended, and after posing each question to the research participant, I followed up with probes seeking further detail and description about what had been said (Roulston, 2010). The researcher used data to develop a thematic overview of important participant perspectives on their overall experience as collegiate basketball players in the United States.

Thematic analysis was applied to the data by using coding to identify categories and then compartmentalizing them into themes. The data were coded into as many categories as possible, as data emerged to fit a category, or as categories emerged to fit the data. An important aspect of the coding process was comparing it with the previous incidents with the same as well as different groups, coded in the same category (Glaser & Strauss, 1971). Codes allowed for organizing transcriptions for thematic analysis. The codebook kept a record of emergent codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example for reference (Saldana, 2015). Maintaining this codebook provided an analytic opportunity to organize and reorganize the codes into major categories and subcategories. The last step was putting codes into categories (Appendix E), where words and phrases were created to describe segments of the data that are explicit, and then into themes, which described more subtle processes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Chapter Four details the results of this study. In section one, the emphasis is on participants' influences of migration. In section two, the focus is on the experiences of international basketball student-athletes in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics. In section three, the focus is placed on the goals of the participants during their time as student-athletes. Lastly, a summary of the results is provided.

### **Section I: International Basketball Student-Athletes' Influences of Migration**

This section details the factors impacting decisions to come to the United States as an international basketball student-athlete in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics. Participants in this study referenced a variety of factors in their decision-making processes. The themes include the following: (a) tripartite communication in player recruitment; (b) triple benefit offers: education, pro basketball development, and world-mindedness; and (c) yearning for the big stage of U.S. collegiate sports.

### **Tripartite Communication in Player Recruitment**

All participants experienced diverse forms of recruitment that were both direct and indirect. First was a direct connection, where the U.S. coaches traveled to the participants' home countries to see players and then followed up with emails, letters or phone calls to the participant or their coach or family. Second was another form of direct connection, where a third party connected the participant to a coach in the United States, with the two parties speaking over the phone and discussing what each was looking for. Third was an indirect form of communication, which was through a video exchange, where players constructed highlight videos that had clips to make initial contact with a coach or sent video clips following a phone conversation. The tactics falling under this major theme include: U.S. coaches travelling abroad for skilled players, third party contacts, and player-coach outreach.

**U.S. coaches travel abroad looking for skilled players.** The direct way to look for prospective players was through attending invitational camps. These camps included FIBA-run tournaments such as the European Championships, as well as camps that were put on by major transnational corporations such as Nike and Adidas. Other camps that the participants mentioned were the USA Select Camp, Adidas Nation Camp, NBA South Africa Exposure Camp, youth national tournaments, Under-18 European Championships, and the Australian Institute of Sport Identification Camp. The participants were quick to recognize the appearances of U. S. coaches at such events, as described by Matthew (Denmark):

Now American coaches are looking for Europeans, and showing up in small countries like Denmark looking for players like me who are tall and can shoot. I remember playing for the youth national tournament and having like seven or eight American coaches there to watch us play. It was crazy.

Despite certain NCAA policies that forbid coaches from speaking with players at summer tournaments, it appears U.S. coaches were using these off-season camps and tournaments to evaluate players and then reaching out to them at a later, either directly or indirectly through a third party.

**Third-party contacts.** The majority of the participants were introduced by a third party, who connected the participant or the participant's coach in the home country with a college or prep school coach in the United States. The third parties for this study included: former players, agents, U.S. coaches living abroad, business associates, friends on Facebook, professional coaches in nearby countries, and friends of the same nationality who played in the NCAA. Brian (Bosnia Herzegovina) described his third-party connection as follows:

I heard from my friends about this college thing, even though I had always seen it on TV and on movies, so I knew what it was. But I was never that interested in experiencing it. But later on, I was like why not go to college in the U.S.? So, my parents were able to find some recruiting service online that allowed me to get in touch with a few American coaches.

An interesting aspect of this process is that half of the participants attended high school or prep school in the US prior to joining their NCAA university. Kyle was set up with a third party who connected him to a prep school in Virginia. He stated:

My coach in Croatia knew a guy who works for a company or agency or something, and he takes young talent from the Balkan area and offers them scholarships in high school, which will then hopefully lead to a college scholarship.

However, some instances did not clearly have a third-party in the recruiting process. Arthur, who attended a U.S. prep school in Senegal, recalled coaches visiting his school and basketball court

beginning when he was 15 years old. He stated, “High school and college coaches from the States would show up at SEEDS Academy monthly, so it just became normal for us to meet and speak with them.” While someone may have invited the coaches to come visit the players for purposes of recruitment, it is unclear who exactly was connecting the players with coaches from the United States.

**Player-coach outreach.** Participants’ perspectives also discussed inverting the recruiting model, where players contact coaches in hopes of being offered a scholarship. Almost a third of the participants (31%) used this tactic to initiate contact with basketball coaches in the United States via emails, Facebook, hand-written letters, and summer tryout visits, as well as sending highlight videos or YouTube links. Players used technology such as mobile phones and the Internet to promote themselves and communicate with coaches in the United States. Eric (Nigeria) described his process as follows:

I looked up a few programs on the net and found a couple coaches who have recruited out of Africa before. So, I contact one of the coaches and told him I don’t know anything about how this works, but I would like to play for your team.

Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Matthew (Denmark) also sought out coaches in the U.S. to put themselves out there and let coaches know of their interest to play in the NCAA. Adam (Norway) was very determined and used several methods to seek out a coach. Adam stated:

At first it started out with getting my highlight tape together and sending it to my connections and coaches in my club and some former players my parents knew in the states. That coming summer, I took a trip to the U.S. with my head coach and four of my Norwegian teammates to visit schools around the country for two weeks. We went like around New York and then around Chicago and some other schools in Indiana and



Kansas. We played open gyms everywhere against current college players and basically held our own. Coaches showed some interest and I received a couple scholarship offers. While making a summer tour of different colleges to introduce himself to U.S. coaches, Adam used emails, video exchanges and a summer tryout tour to put himself on the market.

***Video Exchange.*** Participants used video exchange as a way to get U.S. coaches to recruit them, with the aim to participate in basketball for the institution. Given the long distances in international recruiting, prevalent methods included sending DVDs through the mail or using digital technology such as YouTube. Almost one third of the participants (31%) mentioned sending video in one fashion or another to a college coach or to a third-party member. Tyler explained the video exchange as,

My coach sent some video on my behalf to a Junior College coach in Utah and the American coach email [sic] me back and called me a couple times and I had to have my French coach translate for me.

Interestingly, some of the participants emailed their digital video links to several different coaches or third-parties in hopes of attracting attention to be recruited. As an example of sending video to a third-party member, Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) stated:

So I contacted this guy and told him I was interested in earning a scholarship and asked him how he could help me. So he said to give him a few days and he could see what he can do. So I gave him my basketball resume and some videos and he contacted a few people over there. And he was from Bosnia-Herzegovina, like me, which helped my trust in him.

Video exchange strategy was used after the invitation camp, where coaches used the video as another form of assessment following initial contact of seeing the participant play. Nathan (Australia) stated:

So after the identification camp, I heard from a couple different college coaches and had a couple bites. A couple of schools were willing to offer me a partial scholarship and all this stuff. So, my coach in Australia for America was like my ears for all this stuff. I was like getting all these emails, and I didn't know what to do. They wanted a bunch of different videos so I was scrambling on my end to make sure I had a highlight link and that it was sent to all the coaches who asked for it.

### **Triple Benefits: Education, Pro Basketball Development and World-mindedness**

The participants could reap benefits by migrating from their own home countries because their pursuit of higher education could not occur concurrently with sport participation. Of the participants interviewed, 75% specifically mentioned that the United States more easily offers dual-career opportunities (simultaneous high-level sport participation and university enrollment). Dual-career opportunities were mentioned by only two of the participants as being a viable option outside of the United States. Participants from Canada and Australia mentioned dual-career opportunities to both play basketball and attend university in their home countries, but these were minimal at best. Terry (Australia) best summarizes this dilemma:

We kind of have college sport on a very small scale in Australia but I would liken it more to intramural sport at U.S. colleges. It does not [have] the notoriety, funding or competition quite like the States because everything in sport is run through separate sport clubs. And there are [not] so many opportunities for athletic scholarships like there are in the States.

However, participants were quick to decipher that college sport in their countries is strongly overshadowed by the NCAA, receiving little funding as well as low support and interest from the student body and university communities. All other participants described how school and sport are very much separate entities in their home countries with their club basketball coaches having no concern for their academic standing since it has no bearing on their eligibility for basketball. Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina), stated that “It was an issue for me because I really liked school and I really liked basketball, and I was unwilling to give up either one of them.”

**Playing U.S. college basketball as a precursor to professional participation.** Overall, 81% of participants mentioned professional basketball development to be a main factor in their decision to come to the United States. These participants all specifically mentioned the NBA as a goal or something they considered before making their decision to migrate. Some participants such as Daniel (Lithuania), Mark (Germany), Chris (Romania) and Terry (Australia) were not so aware of the competition and unlikelihood of making it to the NBA until they arrived in the United States. Tyler (France) summarized this best, stating:

The biggest reason of me going to the States was the NBA. As I mentioned earlier, most of the French or European players who make it to the league (NBA) go through the NCAA. So I looked at this opportunity as a first step in making it. But (laughs) that was before I got there because once I arrived, you realize there are thousands of players just like you with the same dream. So it was a reality check and I had to re-think about my future.

Dylan (Turkey), who also had professional basketball dreams, viewed his probability of making it to the NBA as more reliant upon the reputation of the college team. He explained:

I wanted the NBA of course. But I also knew that would be determined on the school that I went to. Like if I went to Kentucky or UCLA or somewhere like that, I would have received more exposure from scouts and improved my game by playing with some of the more elite American players. It's still possible to make the NBA from a smaller or less known school, so I kind of came in knowing it was a long shot.

Some of the participants were aware prior to migrating of the ultra-competitive landscape of the NBA prior to migrating. Their understanding of the NBA did not prevent them from coming to the NCAA or the United States. However such participants still mentioned professional basketball as a viable goal to achieve upon finishing their college basketball careers. Mason (Canada) was more of a realist when he thought back to the motivations and influences that brought him to the NCAA. He expressed:

With the NBA in my hometown of Toronto, making an NBA team was always something I dreamed of growing up. But when it came down to it, I wasn't going to college in the States just so I could one day maybe make the NBA. I wanted to play professional basketball and I knew college ball was going to help me. And I wasn't opposed to the NBA but I just felt it was better to be honest with myself and have goals that are attainable to me.

Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Adam (Norway), and Nathan (Australia) viewed professional basketball in a similar light and were not solely focused on the NBA as major influences in migrating to the United States. Adam (Norway) summarized these notions when he stated:

My future plan has always been to see how far I could make it as a professional basketball player and that is why I really was interesting in coming to the NCAA was to develop my game and increase my exposure for the next level.

As an example of the crossover between codes and themes, Adam (Norway) also mentioned, “graduating with a university degree” as an important factor to him and his family because he wanted a “Plan B” for when his playing days were finished. This note led into the next sub-theme where participants were found to be less concerned with NBA or a professional basketball career and more focused on a college education as an alternative to such endeavors.

**Viewing a university education as a backup plan to a professional basketball career.**

Participants in this study viewed their university education through different lenses dependent on the types of goals they had after college and on their region of origin. Some participants, such as Daniel of Lithuania, described his quest of a college education as “wanting more than just a salary because I know I can’t play basketball forever.” This perspective was something that resonated with many the participants (63%), who stated the phrase “back-up plan” or something similar as a main factor in them deciding to attend a U.S. university and compete in NCAA Division I Basketball. Eric (Nigeria), Jonathon (Ivory Coast) and Arthur (Senegal), who all migrated from Africa, premised their basketball goals on earning a scholarship in the United States to attend a U.S. university, and not as a precursor towards a professional basketball career. These participants did not necessarily have professional basketball goals when leaving their countries of origin as they all were more focused on academics and the different career opportunities available to them following graduation. Arthur attended a U.S. college preparation school in his home country of Senegal that selects top athletes from West Africa for athletic training and academic preparation. This prep school uses U.S.-based curriculum and encourages their graduates to pursue sport and education opportunities in the United States. Arthur stated that: “my entire goal at SEEDS Prep School was to earn a scholarship in the States, my family and I were not interested in me going directly to Europe to play professionally.”

### **Developing world-mindedness through U.S. collegiate sport participation.**

Participants talked about wanting to see the world or experience different people and cultures outside of their home countries. While only 38% of the participants referred to such aspirations during the interviews, quotations were coded within this sub-theme when they spoke of “wanting to experience another culture” or “travel the world.” Nathan and Terry, who held dual citizenship in both Australia and Senegal, spoke of the worldliness mindset of Australians and how it factored into them wanting to travel more. Nathan stated:

I mean we do a lot of world travelling and exploring as Australians so a lot [of] my mates had taken trips to Europe or South America, North America and I hadn't done much up to that point. So this was kind of my chance to travel, and experience another culture using my favorite sport in the world (basketball).

Other participants, such as Kyle (Croatia), Chris (Romania), and Jonathon (Ivory Coast), spoke of their country's mentality as “less worldly,” where the citizens were less likely to migrate or travel to destinations outside of their country or region of origin, but still looked at the opportunity optimistically. Jonathon (Ivory Coast) spoke about his country and background before delving into his thought process:

Most of my friends and family friends in my home country (Ivory Coast) have never left West Africa. And us young people are becoming much more interested and travelling to different places in the world. So when the opportunity came, I did [not] hesitate even though most people had never been to the States.

Lastly, some participants referred to “seeing the world” concurrently with experiencing another culture and learning another language. Kyle (Croatia) stated:

Just seeing the other side of the world and learning a whole new language was a big thing for me. So, it was important to me to see that there is bigger and better things out there. We kind of hear a lot of bad things about America, but I wanted to go there and see things for myself.

### **Yearning for the Big Stage of U.S. College Sports**

Several of the participants (25%) did not mention school or university at all when describing their decision-making process to emigrate from their native countries to the United States, but rather referenced the “big game” atmosphere to be an important pull factor. All participants mentioned, in one way or another, the large amounts of attention that NCAA basketball received both within the United States and in their region of origin. The NCAA’s school-sport combination has allowed for an advantageous position in comparison to dual-career opportunities in other countries. Participants in this study found the environment surrounding college sport to be an important factor in bringing them to the United States. Dylan (Turkey) explains this theme in the following way:

I wanted the limelight of college sports in the States and everything that came with it. You know, like playing in front of massive student sections that are up standing and yelling the entire game. I wanted to play on television because back in Turkey a lot of these college games get broadcasted, so that gave me more incentive to really pursue this. Some of the participants even drew contrasts between the basketball environments in their native countries with that of the United States. Mark (Germany) paid particular attention to his relationship to the fans, as he stated:

We have club teams in Germany and we don’t have all those students being a fan of you. So, like if you go to a club game, you might have a couple fans that like you. But you

may not know them very well so you're trying to stay a little bit away from them. But as a student-athlete, there is connection that makes the environment so much better.

**“March Madness.”** One focal point of yearning to play in the NCAA collegiate sport was March Madness. March Madness was a common phrase used by the participants to describe the month-long NCAA Division I National Tournament that takes place every year during the month of March. This code, which became a category due to its frequent use, was used to describe the popular appeal of the NCAA basketball in the participant's homeland. This tournament gets massive amounts of attention not only in the United States but also in countries across the world through international television contracts, as provided in the participant's narratives. This theme centered more on how the participants observed NCAA Basketball through various channels of digital technology and word of mouth in their home country prior to migrating. Mason (Canada) stated:

More or less just the hype around Division I Basketball and the March Madness tournament. And if you were in the NCAA, you know, it was considered pretty cool. I guess that's the only way to describe it, people were impressed by it. Especially being Canadian, you know, we hear so much about the March Madness, so I was like, I'll take that challenge, and see how it works out.

March Madness and the presence of digital technology gave participants a real-life glimpse into the experience of college basketball in the United States was like, which embodies the massive audiences, cheerleaders, pep bands and most importantly, the success of non-U.S.-nationals under the brightly lit stage of this annual tournament. Eric (Nigeria) even mentioned some of the stereotypes about Africa and technology in describing the impact of March Madness on his decision to migrate:



People in America think we don't even have electricity in Africa but we have everything you guys have up there. We get sports from all over the world transmitted to us. We watch European soccer, NBA Basketball and even American football. But I think for me, watching March Madness back home in Nigeria with some of my friends, it gave us an idea how cool college basketball was. And we really loved it when a native African player like Joel Embiid from Cameroon would be playing for Kansas University and dominating everyone. That really inspired me.

Participants from all different global regions shared similar views. From a perspective of a more Western-based country, Nathan (Australia) stated:

We go nuts in Australia for the March Madness Tournament. Over the past couple of years there have been a lot of Australians playing, so me and my mates would wake up in all hours of the night to watch these games on television.

The excitement surrounding NCAA and March Madness emerged as an important pull-factor for international basketball migrants. Participants knew of the NCAA based off what they saw on TV or word of mouth from bridgehead migrants. Brian also mentioned watching *March Madness* on TV on his computer in his native Bosnia-Herzegovina. Adam (Norway), Mark (Germany) and Matthew (Denmark) spoke more about "Hollywood" and how U.S. movies helped them better understand NCAA Basketball or March Madness. Lastly, word-of-mouth from earlier basketball migrants and other friends who have travelled to the States were also ways that contributed to participants' understanding of *March Madness*. It is uncertain if the NCAA is actively using these marketing methods to grow their global brand and infiltrate talent in other countries or if other countries are covering the NCAA as sheer sporting entertainment and to attract viewers to their local TV networks that broadcast NCAA Division I basketball games.

## **Conclusion**

Participants were asked about their decision to migrate to the United States and brought up different influential factors that played a part in their decision to emigrate. There were found to be many different factors influencing basketball migrants to United States intercollegiate basketball. The major sub-themes discussed in this section under the theme of influences included the following: forms of communication, double benefits, precursor to professional participation, and world-mindedness. Forms of both direct and indirect communication were mentioned by all participants during the recruiting process. First was a direct connection, where the U.S. coaches traveled to the participant's home countries to see players and then followed up with phone calls and emails to the participant or the participant's coach or family. With the indirect connection, a third party connected the participant to a coach in the United States, with the two parties speaking over the phone and discussing the background of players on each end, trying to find the best fit for the player as well as the coach. Third was an indirect form of communication through a video exchange, where players constructed highlight clip videos to make initial contact with a coach or sent video clips following telephone conversations. The participants also found numerous benefits in the U.S. system of sport and higher education that were not concurrently attainable within their own home countries. Participants also mentioned professional basketball as a main factor in them deciding to come to the United States. Of these 13 participants, 10 of them specifically mentioned the NBA as a goal or something they considered before making their decision to migrate.

Participants also spoke about wanting to see the world or experience different people and cultures outside of what they grew up knowing. "Seeing the world" was viewed differently by participants depending on the culture and value placed on world travelling in the different

countries represented in this study. Lastly, participants experienced mixed emotions of both support and displeasure from their federations regarding their decision to emigrate from the basketball system in their homelands.

## **Section II: Experiences of Basketball Migrants in NCAA Division I**

### **Intercollegiate Athletics**

Within the parameters of this study, the researcher sought to understand participants' experiences as players in the U.S. intercollegiate system at their respective universities or colleges. Given that these participants were former student-athletes who had finished college or graduated within two years of when the interviews took place, participants were forced to think back and reflect on the experiences they had had during their time as international student-athletes. Themes that emerged were also connected to research question two and included:

1. Participants' adjustment to U.S. sport culture and education,
2. Basketball acclimatization
3. Strategies of acculturation and adjustment.

Each of these themes contains sub-themes, which were used to give examples of different aspects within each of the major themes.

### **Participants' Adjustment to U.S. Sport Culture and Education**

This theme captured participant experiences tied to moving to a new country, attending school and participating in basketball. Experiencing different new cultures, learning the rules, norms, customs, and travelling to a new country were all mentioned by the participants as they gave narratives on the experiences that encompassed their transition and adjustments to life as an international athlete and student in a foreign culture. Guided by the theoretical framework of cross-cultural adjustment, the sub-themes were created deductively and used to categorize

participant quotations during the coding process. The sub-themes that emerged included: (a) psychosocial adjustments, (b) sociocultural adjustments, and (c) antecedent adjustments.

**Psychosocial adjustments.** This sub-theme was used as a deductive code based off relevant cross-cultural adjustment literature. Adjusting to a new culture includes several different dimensions. Psychosocial adjustment included the participants' personality, life changes, coping styles, identification with co-nationals, and social support from hosting U.S.-nationals. Participants mentioned ways of thinking or their mentality as needing to adjust to culture and society in the United States. The themes falling under this minor sub-theme included: language, lifestyle changes, and personality adjustment.

Some participants had no English language skills upon arriving in the United States. Almost half (44%) of the participants had no English background or spoke English sparingly prior to coming to the United States. This turned out to be a major obstacle and adjustment for all non-English speaking participants. Participants immediately noticed issues that would play a role in their adjustment to their new home universities and described different strategies they used to overcome some of these challenges. Most notably these strategies revolved around language and the ability to communicate. Participants like Arthur (Senegal) used multiple resources in helping him cope with the English adjustment:

I didn't know going in that it was going to be so tough to learn English. At first I didn't even want to speak it and I would kind of isolate myself. But then I started studying movies, listening to random strangers talking, I took ESL classes, and listened to a lot of American music. But until I reached fluency, I had to find other ways to communicate. Sometimes I would show people photos on my phone of what I was trying to say to order

food or to find something in the grocery store. I also had to rely on fellow students and teammates to assist me in like day-to-day things

While language is a theme that resonates with many of the experiences the participants had in the United States and appears variously throughout this section and chapter, the psychosocial language was coded differently. The participants' quotes categorized in the language aspect of "psychosocial adjustment" by the researcher were quotes that mentioned a personal adjustment they had to change within themselves, which in turn would help them acclimate to both U.S. and university culture. An example of language in psychosocial adjustment was shown in Kyle's (Croatia) internal adjustments to better comprehend English. He stated:

When I first came to the States, I was with my best friend from Croatia, since the high school coach wanted both of us and he thought it would help us feel more comfortable. And it did help but it also hurt my English skills because we were always speaking Croatian to each other and I didn't have that independent time to learn English. So I had to find time to separate from him every day to go practice English. He ended up going home and I stayed for another five years. So I think I made a good decision even though I didn't want to do that.

This quote gives insight into the psychological decision he had to make, which in turn had social implications. Participants from non-English backgrounds had to make personal decisions to change their ways and find better opportunities to learn the language.

**Daily lifestyle adjustments.** Another theme found under the psychosocial sub-theme was that of lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes were categorized to be day-to-day tasks that were not language related. Within the quotes that were coded and compared under this topic, U.S. cultural norms were found to be related to the wastefulness of Americans. While only 13% of

participants mentioned this being an adjustment for them, Terry (Australia) was quoted as stating:

So some things that I noticed, liked silly things, was like food and water waste. Like in the cafeteria, ordering some food and just throwing it out like it's nothing was very different for me. Something I had never seen before and would never think to do. And water too. Like brushing your teeth and other students would have the water tap on full blast. And for us growing up, we learned to conserve food and water.

Instances such as these made participants aware of cultural norms that were perceived to be unflattering, or wasteful in this case, and forced them to compartmentalize or accept them as part of acculturation. For such quotes mentioned by the participants, they did not seek out to tell others how to carry themselves, but rather accepted frustrations, such as the excessive waste, as part of the adjustment process.

Aside from language and lifestyle changes, another aspect of psychosocial adjustment concerned personality and how self-adjustments resulted from participants being exposed to a new culture, as well as finding new ways to help you in a new culture that were within their control. Three of the 16 participants made referred to quotes fitting under this theme, after they had feelings of isolation or had difficulty making friends. Mark (Germany) took note of the introverted style when he became accustomed to in Germany and adjusted once he arrived in the United States. He felt he needed to learn more about U.S. culture to better relate to American students and become less introverted. He stated:

I just had to get out of my comfort zone because I was so shy when I first arrived because I have always kind of been a shy person and I didn't know how to talk with American students. What I did was learned more about American culture and sports in America,

this gave me something to talk about with people and allowed me to be more comfortable in my new environment.

Mark's experience was similar to Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Chris (Romania), who realized that sitting in their dorm rooms or apartments was contributing to their alienation and feelings of isolation. Becoming aware of their personality characteristics allowed them to make the necessary changes which in turn contributed to better overall experiences.

Sociocultural adjustment included the participants' ability to fit in with the culture of the United States as well as the region where they lived while attending university. Other instances included interactive aspects of host culture, the length of residence in the United States, language ability, cultural knowledge, cultural distance, and the quantity of contact with hosting U.S.-nationals. It is important to note that in terms of cross-cultural adjustment, participants are adjusting because the culture in the U.S. is different from that of their culture back home. Participants made cultural comparisons through the interviews by referencing cultural aspects in their homeland in connection with culture in the United States. In the context of sociocultural adjustments, language, segregation and racism in U.S. society, and U. S. sport culture were prevalent.

**Language adjustment.** About half of the participants (56%) referenced language as an adjustment factor. Interestingly, 33% of participants who referenced language as an adjustment factor, also stated that they were fluent in English prior to migrating. Nathan, who came to the United States from English-speaking Australia fit into this category in stating:

I think people didn't understand me well because the English terminology was different. People really didn't understand me so I had to learn American words and slang. And just the way you phrase sentences and stuff. It just made me shy. At the end of my time there,

I would talk to anyone, but at the start I would just talk with my teammates. I also wouldn't speak in class or raise my hand or anything because I felt embarrassed. Then I would have to make speeches and I felt like people were just listening to my accent and not what I was saying. I just realized that people are interested in different cultures.

As the researcher of this study, I took for granted that even though countries are classified as Anglophone does not mean that language will be a non-factor in how participants adjust due to the important linguistic differences that Nathan (Australia) pointed out. Bernard (Netherlands) also explained how he grew up studying British English throughout secondary school in the Netherlands, but when he arrived at his Junior College in Philadelphia, he could not understand any of his teammates. He stated:

Language was the biggest issues for me because two of the current basketball players picked me up at the airport and they were using so much slang that I wasn't even sure if they were speaking English. So I had to constantly ask what they were saying. But now when people talk to me in English on the phone, they think I'm African-American because all of my teammates were black and I learned American English from them.

Other participants such as Dylan (Turkey), claimed to have "a special talent for learning languages quickly" which allowed him to "easily pick up accents." All nine of the participants represented in this theme spoke about the first semester or first year as being the hardest and most frustrating since they were unable to communicate in simple daily interactions. This theme became very apparent for the three Francophone participants, Jonathon (Ivory Coast), Arthur (Senegal) and Tyler (France). Arthur stated: "we speak zero English in Senegal, so for that first year at my high school in Connecticut was a complete cultural language shock." Jonathon (Ivory



Coast) had a lot of resistance towards English and towards the United States until he was able to go through his first year. He stated:

You know English was painful for me so I didn't even consider moving to countries that speak English. I wanted to go to France to pursue a career in medicine because I want to become a doctor. But once the offer came, I realized it was too good of an opportunity to pass so I was confronted with having to learn a new language.

To reiterate an earlier point, all the participants who come from a non-Anglophone speaking country used the stepping stone of high school, prep school or junior college to get past the barrier of the TOEFL exam, which is required by all NCAA Division I institutions. Such avenues allowed players to take English classes and become more comfortable speaking, writing and reading English prior to taking the TOEFL and enrolling in an NCAA college or university.

**Segregation and racism in U.S. society.** Cultural references and comparisons were made across the board during the interviews. In addition to observing cultural differences on the basketball court and on their university campus, the participants also took note of larger macro-level differences in culture, comparing the United States to their native countries. One quarter of the participants mentioned racism or segregation when describing some of the noticeable differences during their time in the United States. The perspectives shared on racism in the United States compared to their native countries brought some unique cultural comparative insight to this study. Tyler (France) was one of the most out spoken participants to share some insight on what he noticed in the United States compared to his native France. On the topic of race, he stated:

The culture of France is much different. There is a lot of black people and white people, Caribbean, Arabs, Chinese and other races all mixed together. It's a really diverse place

like New York City or London. And on a day-to-day basis people don't have a problem with one another or you don't really experience racism or segregation like I noticed when I was living in Louisiana and Texas. When I moved to the U.S. I noticed a lot of people were excluded from each other—white, brown, yellow, black, whatever. Because France is full of foreigners and Africans, no one really cares what race a person is.

While Tyler (France) does not give a specific example of racism or exclusion, these were cultural observations he noticed and something he had to reckon with while living in the United States. Jonathon on the other hand, gave some more interesting insight on race in the United States compared to his native Ivory Coast. He stated:

So I played in Utah which is a majority Mormon population. And I am from a place that is basically all black people. And now I am hanging out in a town that is all white people. The only black people are either basketball or football players. So I was nervous at first because you hear of tension between whites and blacks in the states and how they don't get along but I quickly became comfortable because they were actually really nice people and they loved basketball so we had no problems.

Bernard (Netherlands), who identifies as white or Caucasian, also had perspectives of racism in the United States compared to his native Netherlands. Coming from a Western European country, Bernard attended Junior College in Philadelphia where he was the only white player on a team that had majority African-American players. As opposed to Tyler (France) who felt alienated in rural Utah as a minority black student and athlete on a campus and team that were primarily white. Bernard shared his experience as follows:

Coming to Philadelphia from Amsterdam was something I'll never forget. As you can see (Skype video), I am white or Caucasian or whatever you want to call it. And I played on a

team that had all black players. And I never thought anything of it and some of those guys are still my best friends today. Looking back, people ask me, “was that hard for you?” And I’m like “no, why would that be hard for me?” Those guys treated me like anybody else. It didn’t matter to them. But I am also European and not a white American, so maybe the dynamics were different. I’m not sure why, but I wouldn’t have changed it for anything.

The participants had pre-conceived notions and antecedents of racial relations and segregation prior to their migration. By following U.S. culture from their home countries, by way of television, movies, social media or textbooks, the participants could prepare themselves for such challenges and lessen the culture shock. Participants like Tyler (France), did not enjoy the modern-day segregation or different treatment people received because of their race and referred to his native France where he believes “race is not an issue.” More interestingly, Bernard’s (Netherlands) perception of race was not a factor in the friends he made or the people he felt comfortable around during his time in the United States, which showcased the different experiences participants had based on their background and antecedents of adjustment, which will be further discussed later in this section.

**U.S. sport culture.** Opinions varied on the perception of sport culture in the United States compared to the participants’ native countries. Some felt the U.S. sport system was a better model than the system they grew up in, while others saw the U.S. sport system was elitist. Overall, 44 percent of the participants spoke about U.S. sport culture during the interviews. Of the 44 percent of participants, 71% whose quotations were used in Terry (Australia) made an interesting contrast in comparing sport culture in the United States in comparison to his native Australia.

Honestly, one of the big differences I noticed when I came here is how inactive a lot of young athletes are. It's like a lot of Americans are finished playing sport after college or some even after high school. It seems like in Australia we have more opportunities through the club system because it's not so focused on the elite athletes and it's more about letting people of all levels to play footie (soccer), net ball, basketball, or even Aussie rules footie.

Terry(Australia) and several other participants found the U.S. sport culture to be much more focused on the best athletes and not necessarily for life long sports or sport for all. Further, his reference to American athletes being “finished” after their collegiate or high school careers brings into the discussion of sport policy in the U.S. and how it caters to the young and elite demographic compared to Australia, where Terry observed more opportunities outside the elite sport participants. In contrast, Arthur (Senegal) and Dylan (Turkey) felt the U.S. culture to be a “better fit” for them and “a better environment” for developing players. Arthur (Senegal) explained that:

Sports in the States is just a huge part of the culture. It's like everyone has their sport that they play, watch or that their kids play. There are so many facilities and weight rooms and fitness centers, so it's very much a part of everyday life. In Senegal, we don't have the facilities and the demand is not as high to become so sport obsessed. So I think the American way of really focusing on development is the best system in the world, especially because they combine it with education so they have everything.

This viewpoint can be viewed as contradicting to Terry's (Australia) statement on U.S. sport culture but it does shed some light on the varied backgrounds of the migrants coming to the

United States and indicates how their background impacts their experiences as international student-athletes.

**Antecedent adjustments.** The major cross-cultural adjustment antecedents found in this study mostly concerned American movies and music that helped better prepare international basketball migrants for adjusting culturally to the United States. Almost half (44%) of the participants mentioned either movies or music as helping them better understand U.S. culture prior to emigrating from their home countries. Referencing their understanding of American culture through television, movies, sports or music, participants felt they had experienced culture and society in the United States without physically having ever been there. Dylan grew up in Turkey while being introduced and acclimated to U.S. culture through his father who was a big fan of American classic rock bands. Dylan stated:

At my home in Turkey, my father was a huge 1970s classic rock freak so he played guitar and I was always kind of an outcast because these were not common hobbies in Turkey. So I grew up knowing a lot about U.S. culture through listening to music. And I knew that one day I wanted to be a part of this culture. And when I moved there and was able to talk about movies and music with my American classmates, they were shocked and thought it was funny that this big Turkish guy knew everything about Jimi Hendrix. And it helped make me feel more comfortable.

What this passage conveys is that enjoying aspects of American culture from afar was a major antecedent for Dylan (Turkey) in helping him understand the history of the United States and what the culture is like there without him physically visiting the U.S. This most likely played out as a key factor in his interest in migrating, as well as lessening the culture shock that most

international students or student-athletes experience. In terms of American movies, Adam (Norway) stated:

Even though we get our university basically for free in Norway, I wanted to experience a new part of the world with people who were my age. You see so much about the U.S. from news and movies and stuff like that, so I wanted to see it for myself.

International student-athletes had cross-cultural adjustment experience while engaging in intercollegiate sport, although 19% stated that it was of importance to them. Matthew and Nathan both took note of the bureaucracy that took place on their respective college campuses. Matthew expressed that:

There was just a lot of rules and bureaucracy, which I had a hard time with. Like if you wanted to register for classes, you have to go to like five different places and get all these different signatures from people. And even small tasks like getting textbooks, you had to go to the bookstore and order it and the professor had to confirm you were in that class.

So I got really frustrated with all that because in Denmark it's a much simpler system. Adjustment to college academically was easy to participants compared to their education back home. Jonathon (Ivory Coast), Terry (Australia), and Chris (Romania) all mentioned college being much easier compared to their education systems back home. Terry (Australia) made comparisons to his native Australia in stating that:

I found school a little bit easier. And I remember feeling well prepared compared to my teammates who would sometimes really struggle with writing papers and stuff. And I have had professors tell me the school systems are different and the system in Australia is a little better.

Chris (Romania) and Jonathon (Ivory Coast) had similar experiences in feeling more prepared academically compared to their U.S. peers. They both mentioned that their secondary schools in Romania and Ivory Coast respectively were very challenging and they anticipated more challenging academic work in U.S. universities. However, these perspectives may not be generalizable to all international college basketball players as perceptions of difficulty are also heavily dependent on the college majors that each of the participants selected.

### **Basketball Acclimatization**

Participants were also aware of cultural differences taking place on the basketball court. This theme was catered to on-court adjustments or participants acclimatizing to the nuances of college basketball compared to basketball in their home countries. This theme was not as prevalent compared to the other types of adjustments the participants faced. However, it is important to note that most college basketball migrants are mobilizing to the United States to play basketball on an elevated level. Despite all the off-court adjustment challenges they faced, on-court adjustments proved to be important for this study due to the prevalence placed on basketball as part of their identity, both in their homeland and in their new home in the United States. In terms of acclimatizing to the game (basketball), participants had to adjust to “blend in” with their teammates and better understand certain strategies to find success. Athletic scholarships are also offered on an annual basis, with no guarantees that the offer will remain during their time in the NCAA. This places pressure to acclimatize to the game and perform sufficiently to appease their teammates, coaches, and athletic administrators. For these reasons, this theme was found to be mentioned by all participants, to some degree. The sub-themes under this major theme include: Playing for the team or self-promotion, authoritarian coaching, and self-dependence development.

**Playing for the team or for self-promotion.** When the participants were asked about adjustments they faced during their time in the United States, 25% of the participants referenced specific experiences on the basketball court among their challenges as something they had to adjust to. The codes under this sub-theme were connected based off the individualistic and proud nature that some Americans possess, according to these participants. Participants again made comparisons of how both athletes and regular citizens in their native country were viewed as different from the way the participants perceived Americans to be. Participants demonstrated different cultural experiences and viewpoints in how they addressed on-court adjustments. While some of the basketball rules may be different from country to country, on a very minor level, participants felt the U.S. basketball experience to be much different in terms of how coaches communicated with players, as well as how the game is played by players. One of the clearest examples of this example was Matthew (Denmark) who talked about the recruiting process. Matthew was asked by a recruiting U.S. coach to compare himself to another player from his native Denmark. Matthew found himself in a difficult position based on the cultures of the United States compared to Denmark. Matthew best explained this observation below:

One of the most famous coaches in college basketball called me one day and asked me to compare my skills to another Danish player that he was looking at. And in Danish culture, you're not supposed to talk highly of yourself. It's kind of improper, you don't talk about yourself to brag. So, in American culture, you just say, "I am better than him" but I had a hard time saying this. I think it's because America is very individualistic society. It's about your own achievements and you have the American dream and strive to become the best, and Denmark is a socialist country so we see ourselves more a part of a group. It's frowned upon to put yourself in front of the group.



However, other participants such as Chris (Romania) experienced similar adjustments in contrasting U.S. basketball to European basketball. He stated:

I think the way the game is taught and played between the states and Europe is quite different and I actually have thought a lot about this. In the states, kids grow up playing AAU basketball which is predicated on individual skill where players look to isolate themselves and create opportunities for themselves. In Europe, everything taught within the parameters of the team and how to play together and we are much more concerned with the fundamentals whereas in the states, its more flash and finesse.

Adam (Norway) and Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) shared similar views but felt the style of play was more a reflection of the jump in competition as compared to their native countries. Terry (Australia) was more concerned with some of the more tangible differences between the United States and Australia. He stated:

I adjusted quickly but it wasn't until the second year when I was comfortable with the physicality and the speed and even the rules of the game. Like goaltending and travelling and even the lines on the court were different with the shape of key being smaller in the states. And the coaches in the states are very aggressive and yell a lot. But my coach in Australia was American so I was already kind of used to that.

For some of the participants, they thought that it was advantageous to have a U. S. coach in their homeland that helped prepare them for the ultra-competitive landscape of U.S. college athletics, as well as show how to adjust to coaching techniques.

**Authoritarian coaching.** One of the most noticeable differences that participants observed was their relationship with their U.S. basketball coach. Participants observed changes in how the coach spoke with them and treated them, comparing when they were recruited to the

time their first practice started. U.S. basketball coaches were found to be more aggressive and demanding regarding their expectations and attitude towards their players. In comparison, coaches in the participants' native countries were more relaxed, where participants could engage in friendly debates or conversations during games. In the end, half of the participants in this study mentioned their coaches being more authoritarian compared to their homeland coaches. Adam (Norway), was one of the participants, stated that:

Dealing with coaches was kind of hard for me. It's like comparing the coaches to my recruiting campus visit to the time practice started in my first year was a complete one-hundred and eighty degree turn. They became like army drill sergeants that you see in movies (laughs). Like getting in your face and yelling and making you go as hard as you can. I got used to it in the end, but in the beginning I was like, "what happened to those nice guys who recruited me? (laughs).

Mason (Canada) experienced similar shock and transitions, as he felt more comfortable with how Canadian basketball coaches would coach him. He felt coaches were very hard on him and even stated that:

The biggest adjustment for me was just adjusting to the style of basketball because it was different. It was a lot more physical and the coaches were really like more authoritarian. Like my way or the high way, which kind of bothered me at the time. But I guess playing in a whole new system where you are no longer the star player of the team, you have to find your role and do what's best for the team.

This example again shows the relationships participants had with their basketball coaches in their home countries being completely opposite when coming to the United States, which in turn required an adjustment period. As a Canadian national, Mason did not experience the major

language or cultural barriers that other participants in this study faced. Mason experienced similar issues in speaking with U.S. coaches by phone while back home in Toronto, Canada. He stated:

The thing with coaches in America is that they are kind of like used car salesmen. Like they gotta sell you when they recruit you. So they act like you're going to be the man no matter what. And they will say will say whatever it takes to get you there and I found that these guys were dishonest and full of shit. But I guess that's just how it is in the states.

Perhaps the on-court adjustments were the only noticeable differences that he could recall when posed the question, "What were your biggest adjustments in moving to the U.S. to play basketball and attend university?"

**Self-dependence development.** One aspect of adjustment was "acclimatizing to the game itself," which indicated participants as either being self-dependent or learning to become self-dependent. Almost all participants (94%) mentioned the resources offered to U.S. athletes such as equipment, coaching, and facilities, as being major pull-factors for migrating to the United States as athletes. However, learning how to develop their own skills and acquire new techniques required participants to learn how to coach themselves, and becoming more disciplined or putting in extra work were some of the codes highlighted under this sub-theme. Over all, a little less than half of the participants (38%) talked about being self-reliant or dependent on themselves to improve their basketball skills. Bernard (Netherlands) made comparisons between the facilities and correlated it to the development opportunities between the United States and the Netherlands:

With all the media today, you can go on YouTube and find how to improve your shooting or dribbling, even back home in Holland. But being in the U.S., you have facilities all the

time and you can call an assistant coach at two in the morning and go workout and shoot around. Back in Europe, you never would have access to facilities like that. At least in my experience.

Jonathon (Ivory Coast) also spoke about learning how to improve his skills and understanding the work and discipline involved, based off his observing his American teammates. Jonathon stated:

When I left Ivory Coast, I really felt like I was the best player that I can be. But when I got to America, I quickly learned that I had a lot of fundamentals and skills to learn just to survive and continue my scholarship. Some of my U.S. teammates would work so hard, they would come and play in the gym three or four times a day. So I learned how to be more obsessed (laughs) because I knew that people were going to out work me if I didn't put in the time. And if I didn't learn that, I wouldn't be playing professionally today.

Such statements bring to light the amount of time, energy and effort put in by elite college athletes in the United States. With multidirectional pressures coming from family, coaches from the native country, college coaches, teammates, and administrators, participants felt they needed to improve their skills, which in turn was perceived as something they needed to acquire through self-discipline.

### **Strategies of Acculturation and Assimilation**

Participants in this study were aware of some cultural challenges they would face while attending school and living in the United States prior to migrating from their home country. Their reflections highlight the different strategies used in their acculturation to the United States. Using both preemptive strategies (antecedents) and developing tactics upon their arrival,

participants used several different resources to manage cross-cultural adjustment. Such resources included basketball, which was used as a vehicle for socialization and translation, utilization of NCAA's development leagues in prep schools and junior colleges, as well as teammates and fellow students. The specific areas of acculturation and assimilation include the following: mitigating cultural barriers through basketball, high school and junior college as institutions of acculturation, and peer dependence.

**Mitigating cultural barriers through basketball.** Participants continuously made cultural comparisons between the adjustments that gave them the most difficulty in acculturating to life as a college student and as a "student-athlete" in the United States. The participants gave different cultural experiences and viewpoints on how they addressed on-court adjustments. While some of the basketball rules maybe different from country to country, on a very minor level, participants felt the basketball experience in the United States to be much different in terms of how coaches communicate with players, and how the players played game. Tyler, who grew up in Paris, France, referenced the "power of sport" to help him negotiate some cultural barriers. He stated:

We don't speak a lot of English in my neighborhood in Paris so it was something I had to learn when I got to the states. So I had to learn how to communicate with my Junior College teammates and coaches without knowing many English words. But you know basketball is universal, so if I could bounce the ball, pass the ball, shoot and stuff like that, I was able to relate to people. So, once I stepped on the basketball court, I was able to connect with my teammates and kind of express myself.

Other participants found basketball helped them become more social and meet new friends.

Coming into the United States as an international student-athlete, these participants felt it was

their duty to play basketball at a high level and perform well enough for the team to win and to retain their scholarship for another year. For instance, Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) shared:

That first month, I think I cried every night (laughs). Honestly, it was so difficult because I was so isolated and felt so out of place. But basketball season started soon after that and it just gave me an outlet to get my frustrations out. I also was able to really connect with my teammates and other athletes who were around the athletic training facility. And that changed everything because I had this group of friends who actually liked me and would joke around with me. But before basketball, I don't know if I would have had friends like that.

Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) pointed to some of the challenges international students face of meeting new students and in making friends with people from other backgrounds when they arrive to the United States. Based on some participants (19%) who mentioned basketball as a social vehicle to acculturate and to become socially connected, it appeared that the international athletes had an advantage over international students through their direct connection with their teammates

**Prep school, high school and junior college as institutions of acculturation.** As mentioned earlier, all the participants who hailed from non-Anglophone speaking countries (50%) attended either prep school, high school or junior college in the United States, or a combination of the three, prior to enrolling in an NCAA Division I university or college. Interestingly, the participants in this study who did not have fluent English prior to arriving in the United States gave insight into what could be an important strategy that future international college basketball migrants may want to replicate. NCAA policy requires that all international student-athletes must pass the English equivalency exam, called the TOEFL. However, high

schools, prep schools and junior colleges do not have such policies, at least from an organizational standpoint like the NCAA's. This loophole allowed these participants and other non-English speaking athletes to attend these schools and develop their English by taking ESL (English as Second Language) classes and become more enculturated before taking the TOEFL and enrolling in their respective college or university. Beginning with the theme of prep school, six of the 16 participants attended prep school in the United States for several different reasons. Dylan (Turkey) and Chris (Romania) both received international scholarships solely reserved for non-U.S.-national athletes. Chris (Romania) stated:

A coach from a prep school in North Carolina called me and starting speaking with me about my interest in attending school and playing basketball in the United States. This school would bring any kids to the states and give them scholarship money and a host family to stay with. I think this coach heard about me from a basketball coach at Davidson University. I guess it was Davidson's way to keep an eye on me and watch me play in the states to evaluate me further.

Chris (Romania) shared some very interesting information on how he arrived at playing basketball in the United States. Similar to stories from Daniel (Lithuania) and Dylan (Turkey), NCAA basketball programs are using prep schools as unofficial minor leagues and notifying prep schools about certain player, which they hope in turn will lead to the player attending that NCAA university. Comparable tactics were also utilized in U.S. high schools and Junior Colleges.

**Peer dependence.** The participants depended on friends and systems of support while participating in NCAA basketball Division I during their time in the United States. About fifty percent of the participants (43%) were very close to their fellow international students or

international student-athletes. The participants discussed about feeling more comfortable around non-U.S.-nationals because they shared similar backgrounds and had same challenges: trying to navigate sport, school and life in a new country and within their new university environment. However other participants (32%) indicated U. S. peers as being influential in helping them acculturate to the new country of residence. While the international population and domestic populations attended different universities and colleges across the United States, some of the participants were able to find peer groups regardless of whether they preferred more international or domestic friends. Some universities seemed to cater towards attracting international students to their institutions as reflected in Matthew's (Denmark) quotation below:

My university was a special place because there were a lot of international people. The school did a great job of recruiting students from around the world so I literally had friends from all over the world. All over Europe, Africa, Asia, South America. It was really great.

Other participants were able to attend universities that included other students or athletes from similar geographical regions or even the same country. Mason (Canada) explained:

Honestly at my school, at least 20 percent of the athletes were Canadian. It was pretty awesome. Especially the hockey team, they were more than half Canadian. So I was really close with those guys and it was kind of a hot bed for Canadian student-athletes to come to. So I guess I was lucky in that regard to have people with similar backgrounds as me trying to play college sports in the states.

Other participants gave credit to their U.S. students who helped them deal with adjustment issues. These were students who the participants met in class, study groups, at the cafeteria and even through the team managers. Dylan (Turkey) found the team manager, who was also an



undergraduate student at the time, to be very instrumental in helping him with small tasks such as grocery shopping or translating orders at restaurants, and even with bigger tasks such as tutoring him or helping him register for classes. Dylan (Turkey) stated:

I always made like these random friends and my coaches and teammates would always ask me where I found these people (laughs). But this little American guy was our team manager and he liked Led Zeppelin just like me so we instantly connected. He helped me with so much my first year and we ended up becoming roommates. They told me I cant live with a manager so he quit and said he would rather stay with me. And he is my best friend to this day.

To Dylan (Turkey), and other participants, this was an indirect strategy of adjustment that came through friendship. While some of the participants had more international than U. S. friends, these social connections allowed for comradery and assistance in acclimatizing to the U.S. culture.

### **Conclusion**

Participants were asked about any adjustments they faced while living in the United States, playing basketball, and attending school. This section provided analysis for research question number two, which was concerned with the participants' experiences throughout their stay in the United States. Themes that emerged were also connected to research question two and included the following: (a) Participants' adjustment to U.S. sport culture and education, (b) basketball acclimatization, and (c) Strategies of acculturation and adjustment. Each of these themes contain sub-themes, which were used to give examples of different aspects within each of the major themes.

“Participants’ adjustment to U.S. sport culture and education” captured participant experiences tied to moving to a new country, attending school and participating in basketball. Experiencing different new cultures, learning the rules, norms, customs, and travelling to a new country. The sub-themes that emerged under adjustments included: (a) psychosocial adjustments, (b) sociocultural adjustments, and (c) antecedent adjustments. *Psychosocial adjustment* was used as a deductive code based off relevant cross-cultural adjustment literature. Adjusting to a new culture includes several different dimensions. Psychosocial adjustment included the participant’s personality, life changes, coping styles, identification with co-nationals, and social support from hosting U.S.-nationals. Sociocultural adjustments guided the coding; also used as a deductive code, this sub-theme helped frame participants’ adjustment experiences more from a social standpoint. Sociocultural adjustment included the participants’ ability to fit in with the culture of the United States as well as the region in which they lived while attending university. Under this sub-theme, the major codes represented include: language adjustment, U.S. sport culture, and segregation and racism in U.S. society.

The major cross-cultural adjustment antecedents found in this study mostly revolved around American movies and music that helped better prepare international basketball migrants for adjusting culturally to the United States. Participants were also aware of cultural differences taking place on the basketball court. The theme of basketball acclimatization was catered to on-court adjustments or participants acclimatizing to the nuances of college basketball compared to basketball in their home countries. The sub-themes under this major theme include: Playing for the team or self-promotion?, authoritarian coaching, and self-dependence development.

Lastly, the sub-theme of strategies of acculturation and assimilation contained under this major theme included: mitigating cultural barriers through basketball, prep school, high school and junior college as institutions of acculturation, and adjusting through peers.

### **Section III: Basketball Migrants' Goals and Advice for Future Players**

The focus of this dissertation was answering questions on sports migration, specifically regarding influential migration factors and experiences of former international male basketball student-athletes at colleges and universities in NCAA Division I institutions. The final portion of the interview guide was focused on recommendations for future international players who are contemplating migrating to the United States to experience NCAA Division I Basketball. In this dissertation, the researcher was interested in both the migration influences and university experiences, but research question three guided the analysis of this section: What recommendations do former international basketball student-athletes have for future basketball migrants in NCAA Division I Basketball? The sub-themes of this section include: (a) Stay or Go?, (b) Utilizing technology for marketing and research, and (c) Life after basketball.

#### **“Stay or Go?”**

Participants were asked if they had any advice or recommendations for the next generation of international college basketball migrants based off their own experiences. The majority of the participants recommended that future basketball players thinking of migrating to the United States for the purpose of NCAA basketball should go, based off their own experiences. There were three main sub-themes that transpired: (a) U.S. NCAA basketball through participants' home countries federations; (b) Advocating basketball migration to the U.S.; and (c) Alternative basketball and education options.

**U.S NCAA basketball through participants' home countries' federations.** The participants expressed their thoughts on how the basketball federations in their home countries viewed their emigration to the United States and involvement in NCAA basketball. Many of the participants mentioned the basketball federation without any specific questions directed toward each respective participant's basketball federation. While only a quarter (four of 16) of the participants mentioned their basketball federation in some capacity, this theme brings in a bigger discussion happening within sport and migration that will be further addressed in Chapter Five. Participants experienced mixed emotions of both support and displeasure from their federations regarding their decision to emigrate from the basketball system in their homelands. Views of federations also focused on basketball promotion in their home countries, corruption and the lack of the federation support for players who move to the United States for NCAA basketball participation purposes. Daniel (Lithuania) summarized the latter and stated:

The basketball federation and coaches in Lithuania are not happy about that players are leaving. They are very judgmental and view players who return to Lithuania after playing in America as inferior to players who stayed in Lithuania and grew up playing basketball under a Lithuanian basketball school. Lithuanian coaches will tell you that they don't know how to coach or develop players in America.

This view resonated with Bernard who condoned his decision to go to the United States.

However, Dylan (Turkey) experienced more contrasting views from the Turkish Basketball Federation as he stated:

The federation wanted me to stay in Turkey and used the contract offer from my basketball club to incentivize me to stay. They asked me, 'why are you doing this? Are

you crazy? But eventually they came around and the Vice President said that Turkey will always be my home and I can come back and play anytime.

Lastly, Eric (Nigeria) spoke of the Nigerian Basketball Federation in terms of their support and promotion of basketball at the grassroots level. Eric stated:

The basketball federation was promoting the game country wide by going to secondary schools and speaking with children. They had sponsors like Sprite who would distribute equipment and build basketball courts and hoops in the remote areas of Nigeria. They would also bring players from the National Team and run skill camps for the kids who were interested. So this really fueled my excitement for the game.

While this may not have been an influential factor in Eric's decision to emigrate to the United States, it does provide some evidence that basketball federations in non-Western countries are investing in basketball and reaching out to the youth level to grow the game, which in the future could possibly lead Nigerians to oppose the migration pipeline to the NCAA system in the United States in favor of participating in club basketball leagues in their native country

**Advocating basketball migration to the U.S.** Most of the participants in the study (69%) thought basketball-related issues were more important when selecting a school. Although the researcher did not directly ask the participants if future international players should stay or go, these eleven participants felt compelled to state this when asked about advice for future generations. This tendency reflects that the participants had good experiences and feel that others from their country would also benefit from partaking in a university education and college basketball in the United States as international college basketball migrants. Arthur (Senegal), who dealt with issues of language and cultural adjustment encourage future Senegalese

basketball players who are considering NCAA basketball to make the move. Arthur (Senegal) stated:

I would tell them to go to the states as soon as they can. If they have the chance to go to prep school or high school over there, they should go because they will be exposed to better competition and they can also develop their English while preparing for TEOFL and applying to universities.

This perspective was also shared by Mark (Germany), Adam (Norway), and Dylan (Turkey) shared that future basketball players should move sooner to the United States if the options are available. Dylan's (Turkey) advice for future migrants to the United States from Turkey was to take more of the life after university approach as he spoke about different ways to remain in the United States following their college careers. He stated:

I would tell them to go to the states, finish college and don't come back to Turkey. Stay there, get married and get yourself a green card. Many Turks, not just athletes, have done this. It's a rare opportunity to get a scholarship as a foreigner so they should use that and start a life there.

Such examples show the contrast of basketball migrants with different backgrounds and from different regions of the world. Arthur's (Senegal) advice was more concerned with just the opportunity to learn English and to go to school. Dylan (Turkey) was looking more long term in anticipating future opportunities after college. Like Arthur (Senegal), Jonathon from neighboring Ivory Coast, also encouraged future players to emigrate from West Africa for an athletic scholarship in the United States. However, Jonathon's (Ivory Coast) advice was more centered around caution and potential risks. He stated:

I would tell them to go, go, go, it is very important to go learn something different. Like its going to help you. It will open your mind to new things. But they need to be careful over there with females and drugs. Life in America, it is easy to fall off your path because you have all these factors that can mess up your goals.

Adam (Norway) and Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) also gave similar recommendations. Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) briefly mentioned that: “some guys go over there and they develop bad drug habits or they get a woman pregnant.” Although three of the 16 participants mentioned “drug habits” and “getting a girl pregnant” as potential risks for future basketball migrants, they did not give insight into such risks in their native country or indicate and if there was more temptation or pressure in the United States to engage in such activities.

**Alternative basketball and/or education options.** The findings revolved around recommendations for future college basketball migrants. Participants considered other options before deciding to migrate to the United States. These options included attending university in their home country, or sometimes another country or continent, playing basketball at a professional club, or joining the work force in their home country and not attending a university or college. Some participants considered going pro right away or joining the workforce.

**Going professional right away.** Several of the participants considered signing professional contracts with basketball clubs both inside and outside their home countries. In the end, a more than half of the participants (56%) mentioned the option of going professional and explained how they would have most likely taken this route if they did not have with the NCAA as a viable alternative. The participants gave recommendations to future players who are considering similar pathways. Matthew (Denmark), Adam (Norway) and Daniel (Lithuania) all mentioned staying within their original basketball club to play on the senior professional team.

While such teams were considered professional and offered average competition and smaller salaries, it was something these participants gave thought to as young men in their home countries. Daniel (Lithuania) gave some perspective on the controlling and negative feedback he received from his federation. He stated that: “The club I grew up with and my basketball federation really wanted to lock me up there and basically pay me pennies on a youth salary.” This example also gives some insight to the “youth salary” that is offered in Europe as a way to compensate young players for their basketball labor. Daniel felt the NCAA was a better fit for him as he later described his decision to emigrate from Lithuania as follows: “I just needed it (the NCAA). I needed to get out and experience the world and develop my education. And not everyone back home agreed with me.” The decision to emigrate from their home countries left the participants with many similar stories of people or mentors in their communities condoning their decision to leave. Receiving multiple basketball playing offers in different countries was something the participants had to evaluate, especially when the home country offered lucrative long term contracts, as was the case with Dylan (Turkey). He stated: “My family and friends told me I should take the 5-year contract that was offered to me by the top basketball club in Turkey.” Dylan’s narrative points pressures of economics and nationalism inherent during their decision-making process.

**Joining the workforce.** Some of the participants (19%) considered the option of forgoing college and residing in their home country to join the labor force. In offering advice to future generations of basketball migrants, the participants in this theme looked back on their decision-making process and felt fortunate they did not join or stay in the workforce in their home countries. The participants mentioned jobs that were more labor-driven jobs in construction, manufacturing or warehouse packaging. Nathan (Australia) was already working in



a labor-intensive industry after he finished secondary school. He described this process as follows:

Honestly I was already working in factories and warehouses like 30 hours a week after I finished secondary school. I wasn't even planning on going to university at that point. So if my coach in the states wouldn't had offered me, I would probably be doing the same kind of work today.

All three of the participants were planning to play club or professional basketball on the side.

Bernard (Netherlands), who did not want to attend college in his home country, stated:

I didn't want to attend school in Holland (Netherlands) because there wasn't anything I was interested in. My father has his own business in Amsterdam that manufactures and constructs doors. So I was just going to work with him and play professionally for my club team. But my dad wasn't on board with that (laughs).

As represented throughout the chapter, the role of parents or guardians who advised and assisted participants in their decision process proved instrumental in helping them think more long-term.

Adam (Norway) used the guidance of his mother, who advised him to attend college in the United States and return to Norway with more world experiences and more marketability in the work force. This was in opposition to Adam, who initially wanted a "job in sports" on top of playing basketball professionally

### **Research and networking through technology**

This section contains recommendations revolving around technology or digital tools for both networking opportunities and research on the academics and basketball programs at different NCAA institutions. In the end, 88% of participants mentioned using technology, such as the internet, YouTube or Facebook, as ways to better understand the different strengths and

weaknesses of academics and basketball programs. The participants elaborated on not settling for the first offer but trying to learn as much as possible about the process before deciding-making to move abroad, and centered on the following areas: digital tools, basketball networking, and finding the right program.

**Digital tools and basketball networking.** One quarter of the participants advised future basketball migrants to really make more of an effort to network more in order to help with the recruiting aspect. These participants all recommended future players to create online profiles where NCAA coaches often peruse for international players. Additionally, they recommended creating a digital highlight video that could be sent as a link to scouts, coaches and other third party connectors. Tyler (France), Adam (Norway), Matthew (Denmark) and Mark (Germany) all felt networking to be important advice to pass on to future players. Most notably, Tyler stated:

The basketball world is actually very small. Coaches, agents, and players all communicate and know one another even across borders. Players who want to come play in the states need to learn how to network so they can put themselves out there.

Adam (Norway) and Mark (Germany) felt it was more important to focus on networking domestically in their countries of origin to find coaches who have connections in the states.

Matthew on the other hand advised using the Internet to assist them with networking. He stated:

I would say to reach out to people. I wish I knew that you can find coaches emails and phone numbers online and write or call them directly. I just never thought of that as a possibility. And don't be afraid to sell yourself, there is nothing wrong with that."

Matthew (Denmark) laid out an important point for future players regarding the ease of contacting a basketball coach in the United States. Specifically, the ease of locating emails and

phone numbers and the ability to contact coaches directly are recommendations that Matthew wishes he would have known in order to better market himself.

**Find the right basketball program.** Technology was also a factor in that it served as a recommendation for future basketball migrants. The majority of participants (69%) felt basketball-related issues to be an important area of recommendation to pass on to the next generation of basketball migrants. Participants under this theme referenced coaches that are trustworthy and who care about more than just winning games. Navigating the recruiting process was proven to be difficult for most of the participants due to cultural barriers and trustworthiness of coaches, who were described by some of the participants as “dishonest” or “giving false promises.” Other participants recommended finding the right basketball program that has a good reputation and where future players will have the opportunity to play. Bernard (Netherlands) felt he made a poor decision in the university he selected because the coach wanted to “sit him on the bench” in the beginning. Bernard (Netherlands) stated:

Playing time should be something that those players should really consider. You really don't want to go to a program where you will be sitting behind people and not getting playing time. It really takes away from the experiences and your whole purpose of going to the NCAA.

Daniel (Lithuania) and Dylan (Turkey) expressed that playing time as an important factor to consider when players are weighing out their options. Adam (Norway) and Nathan (Australia) advised researching more about the program in order to figure out their style of play and how that particular system may or may not fit with the strength and weaknesses of their game. Adam (Norway) stated:

In the first school I attended, I quickly learned that it did not fit my style of play. It was more slow and methodical, kind of micro management from the coach about how we would play. I was more used to an up-tempo style of play with a lot for freedom. So that was something I wish I knew beforehand.

All of the participants who were categorized under this theme also recommended future players to better utilize the internet to research different U.S. college basketball programs. These participants thought it was important to see the kind of players that have played at each school as well as their history of hosting international players.

### **Life after Basketball**

Lastly, just under half of the participants (44%) recommended future players think past their short college basketball timeframe and prepare for a career after their basketball careers are over. The other participants (56%) were more focused on basketball-specific recommendations rather than academic-related advice. An additional category found in this sub-theme was participants advising future basketball migrants to settle in the United States following their college careers. Overall, the minor themes discussed under this sub-theme include: Prioritizing academics and Settling in the U.S.

**Prioritizing academics.** Several of the responses to the question regarding advice for future generations revolved around academics and finding the right school with the academic major that the players found interesting. Participants recommended future players to think more about their area of study and how it would guide them into another career when their basketball participation concluded. In this study, about 20% of participants thought that finding the right academic program was the most important piece of advice to pass on. These participants thought many student-athletes, both U.S. and international, wasted the opportunity to grow more

academically due to basketball being prioritized over everything else. Jonathon (Ivory Coast), Chris (Romania), Mason (Canada), and Eric (Nigeria) all felt the academic side to be much more important and that a sole focus on basketball can leave players missing out on the experience.

Chris (Romania) stated:

The academic side is much more important than the sport side. I was lucky to have a support staff that pushed me to study and to be solid academically. So living the whole experience and finding a balance between sports and school is key.

Mason (Canada) and Eric (Nigeria) thought future basketball migrants should focus more on their academic majors. They saw academics as the key component of their stay in the United States, as well as graduating and being prepared to do something else once basketball was over.

Eric (Nigeria) stated:

I think it is so easy for athletes to waste this opportunity because they are so consumed with sport. What incoming international student-athletes need to do is figure out what they want to study. You can literally pick any major that you are interested in. So my advice is to look at all the schools recruiting you and see what types of academic majors they offer. This should take priority over everything else in the decision process.

While all the participants in this section first mentioned players who had the opportunity to play, and were contemplating the migration to the NCAA, they then got into the importance of finding the right school and academic major.

**Settling in the United States.** A minority of the participants in this study (19%) recommended future players to “settle” or “find a job” in the United States following their college basketball careers. Despite this small representation among the participants this study, future international college athletes should consider this advice. Contrary to Dylan’s (Turkey)

advice earlier to “get married and get a green card,” which was also coded in this category, Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Jonathon (Ivory Coast) gave different perspectives for setting in the United States following graduation. Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) shed light on the alumni and boosters he met during his college basketball career. As a recommendation, he mentioned this group as a pathway to working opportunities in the United States. Brian (Bosnia-Herzegovina) stated:

If it's possible, I think looking more at different industries and jobs in the U.S. is a good idea. Because college basketball gives players a big platform in America to meet a lot of people. I met so many alumni and boosters who would ask me my plans after graduating. They told me to stay in contact if I wanted to find some work.

In contrast, Jonathon (Ivory Coast) took more into account the economic factors at play when recommending future players to find working opportunities in the United States following their basketball careers. Jonathon compared money and opportunities in the United States with that of his native Ivory Coast. He viewed the United States as a place where money is more readily available through vast employment opportunities than in Ivory Coast, causing him to recommend future players to look more seriously at this option. Jonathon stated:

I mean I love my country and I love Africa. That will always be my home. But there is a lot of money and job opportunities in the states that we don't really have back home. And if I work an American job, I can send money back and feed my whole family for months. So players coming from Africa should see what they can do and find people who may be able to help them work after college.

The other participants (81%) did not recommend settling in the United States or going back home for work opportunities for future basketball migrants. Most the participants in this study

migrated back to their home countries following their basketball careers, with most of them also playing professional basketball. Arthur (Senegal) was the only participant that was still in the United States during the interview. While he did not recommend future players to stay in the United States, he did mention that a college coaching position was offered to him shortly after two years of playing professionally in Germany and Argentina. Coaching could also be a recommendation for future basketball migrants contemplating ways to remain in the United States following their college careers.

### **Summary of Results**

In summary participants in this study were asked about their decision to migrate to the United States, and they brought up different influential factors that played a part in their decision to emigrate. There were found to be many different factors influencing basketball migrants to come to the States to pursue intercollegiate basketball. All participants used direct and indirect forms of communication during the recruiting process. First was a direct connection, where the U.S. coaches traveled to the participants' home countries to see players and then followed up with phone calls and emails to the participant or the participants' coach or family. With the indirect connection, a third party connected the participant to a coach in the United States, with the two parties speaking over the phone and discussing the background of players on each end, trying to find the best fit for the player as well as the coach. Third was an indirect form of communication, which was through a video exchange, where players constructed highlight clip videos to make initial contact with a coach or sent video clips following a phone conversation. Forms of both direct and indirect communication were mentioned by all participants during the recruiting process. This included direct connections with U.S. coaches in the participant's home country. Indirect connections were utilized through third-party members who connected the

participant to a coach in the United States through phone or email and video exchanges between coaches and players. The participants also found triple benefits in the U.S. collegiate system, including: education, professional basketball development and world-mindedness. “Seeing the world” was viewed differently by participants depending on the culture and value placed on world travelling in the different countries represented in this study.

Shifting to the participants’ experiences as players in the U.S. intercollegiate system at their respective universities or colleges. In the theme that concerned participants’ adjustment to U.S. sport culture and education, documented experiences were tied to moving to a new country, attending school and participating in basketball. Experiencing different new cultures, learning the rules, norms, customs, and travelling to a new country were categorized through the deductive codes of psychosocial adjustments, sociocultural adjustments and antecedent adjustments. Psychosocial adjustment included the participant’s personality, life changes, coping styles, identification with co-nationals, and social support from hosting U.S.-nationals. Sociocultural adjustment included the participants’ ability to fit in with the culture of the United States as well as the region in which they lived while attending university. The major cross-cultural adjustment antecedents found in this study mostly revolved around American movies and music, which helped better prepare international basketball migrants for adjusting culturally to the United States. Participants were also aware of cultural differences taking place on the basketball court. The theme of basketball acclimatization was catered to on-court adjustments or participants acclimatizing to the nuances of college basketball compared to basketball in their home countries. Lastly, the sub-theme of strategies of acculturation and assimilation contained under this major theme included: mitigating cultural barriers through basketball, prep school, high school and junior college as institutions of acculturation, and adjusting through peers.



The final portion of the interview guide was focused on recommendations for future international players who are contemplating migrating to the United States to experience NCAA Division I basketball. Most of the participants recommended that future basketball players thinking of migrating to the United States for the purpose of NCAA basketball should go, based on their experiences. Participants experienced mixed emotions of both support and displeasure from their federations regarding their decision to emigrate from the basketball system in their homelands. Most of the participants in the study felt basketball-related issues to be more important when selecting a school. Participants consistently mentioned using technology, such as the Internet, YouTube or Facebook, to better understand the different strengths and weaknesses of academics and basketball programs. Lastly, participants recommended future players think more about their area of study and how it will guide them into another career when their basketball participation has concluded.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **Discussion**

People have been on the move throughout human history for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunities or seeking refuge. Representing many diverse groups, people have moved from their native countries as both forced and unforced migrants, and settled in their new location either temporarily or permanently. Migration can take place within the same country, between countries on the same continent or between countries on different continents. While forced migrants (involuntary), including exiles and asylum-seekers include a variety of groups that include both internally and internationally displaced peoples, such as refugees (Castles, 2003), unforced (voluntary) migrants comprise relatively well-educated, skilled, productive, and highly motivated individuals, who purposefully move away from their home communities to advance their livelihoods and live better lives. The unforced migrant population has increasingly been characterized as “highly skilled” due to the mobility influx of certain professions, such as engineers, IT specialists and financial experts. Such highly skilled migrants have increasingly moved outside of their native countries to seek economic, social and educational opportunities. Highly skilled individuals are able to traverse the globe because of advances in technological communication and ease of travel. Among these individuals are academics and international students. These international students have included highly skilled athletes who seek both a higher education degree and to be part of the highly developed college sport environment in the United States. Using qualitative research methods, this study sought to

determine factors that influenced migration decision-making processes, and to document and understand the experiences of international student-athletes at U.S. colleges and universities, as well as to obtain their recommendations to inform migration of future basketball players. To date, there has been little research focused on international basketball migration in comparison to other related area studies, such as in soccer and baseball. The research questions guiding this study included the following:

1. What influenced former international male basketball student-athletes to pursue an education and participate in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
2. How did former international male basketball student-athletes make meaning of their experiences as student-athletes in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics?
3. What recommendations do former international basketball student-athletes have for future international sport labor migrants in NCAA Division I Basketball?

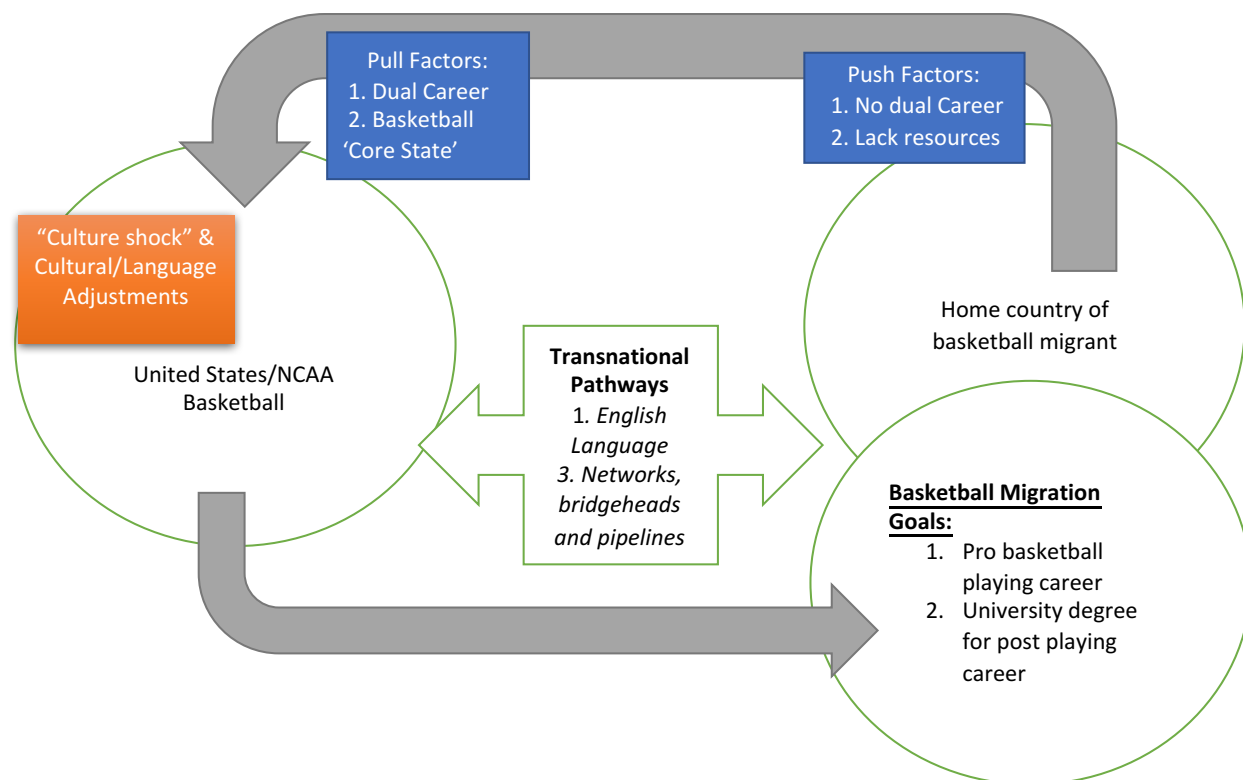
The significance of this study lies in the following: (a) provision of new insights and suggestions to inform international student-athlete migration and offering of new knowledge to modify existing recruiting strategies used to attract the best international athletes in their pursuit of NCAA intercollegiate athletics; (b) indication of specific characteristics that international male basketball student-athletes have as a group, helping develop better recruiting and adjustment coping strategies for administrators and coaches to use in targeting qualified athletes who wish to advance their academic and athletic skills; (c) pointing out the dichotomy between U.S. collegiate basketball and political economy of international basketball, and in revealing new perspectives on athlete migration. This study adds to the knowledge of the importance of international student-athletes on university college campuses and allows for higher education institutions to better accommodate this population. Knowing the influences of migration and

experiences of international student-athletes at U.S. college and university campuses will help administrators provide improved services to minimize students' challenges and to assist with students' day-to-day adjustments.

This chapter discusses the findings of this study in light of extant literature. The findings sought to understand factors that influenced former international student-athletes to migrate to play in NCAA Division I basketball and to comprehend their cross-cultural experiences and adjustments to playing basketball while attending college in the United States. The themes found in this study include: (a) contrasting educational and sport systems (U.S. versus the country of origin), (b) factors that influenced migration decision-making processes, (c) adjustment strategies, (d) the challenges international basketball players faced in their new environment, and (e) life after basketball. Each of these major themes includes several sub-themes. The major themes and sub-themes relate to the theories and models presented in extant literature including those described in Chapter Two. A model that describes international collegiate basketball migration is presented in this chapter.

### **Conceptual Map as Representation of Findings**

The influences to migrate and experiences of international basketball student-athletes can be described using the model created from this study (Figure 5.1). The model describes the international college basketball player influences in migration decision-making (push-pull factors), cross-cultural experiences in the United States, overall goals of participating in NCAA Division I basketball, and the transnational pathways, such as the English language and networks, bridgeheads and pipelines, that allowed for the migration to more readily take place.



*Figure 5.1.* Model related to international college basketball player migration decision-making and cross-cultural experiences in NCAA Division I basketball.

### Contrasting Educational and Sport Systems

Participants were asked about their decision to migrate to the United States and brought up different influential factors that played a part in their decision to migrate. This theme focused on the comparisons of the educational and sport systems as described by the participants. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe experiences within both basketball and educational systems in the United States and in their country of origin. Participants revealed a blend of push-pull factors that played a critical role in their migration. The main pull factors to which the participants consistently referred were the ability to pursue dual careers (simultaneous elite basketball and full-time university enrollment) and play at a high level in the core state (North America) of international basketball. The primary push factors for the participants in this

study were the inability to pursue a dual career and the lack of basketball resources (facilities, coaching, competition). This finding corroborates Maguire's (2008) study found that within sport labor migration, factors such as social, political, and economic factors impact athlete migrants' decision processes. There were two sub-themes that emerged under the major theme of contrasting educational and sports systems included: club based sport systems outside of the United States and dual career opportunity in the U.S. colleges and universities.

**Club based sport systems outside of the United States.** The athletic structures in many regions, such as Europe, are primarily club-based and are overseen by the national sports federation separate from the educational system, with the athletes are not classified by amateur or professional player status (Trendafilova et. al, 2010). The main debate engaged in by the participants was the difference between the school-based basketball system in the United States and the club-based basketball system in their country of origin. Laying out and describing the dichotomy between the club system and the U.S. based scholastic-sport system allowed participants to compare positives and negatives on both sides of the spectrum and to show how these comparisons came into play in their decision-making process to migrate or not. The findings of this study indicated major differences between these systems were basketball (connected to school) and basketball (not connected to school). Club-based basketball in the participants' home countries did not provide adequate development or participatory opportunities, especially for younger players. This finding corroborates scholars' (Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al, 2009; Bale, 1991) work that international student-athletes to be dissatisfied with the sporting opportunities available in their native countries following secondary school (high school) in comparison to U.S. student-athletes.

Another important finding was the preference for scholastic sport in the United States over club-based sport systems, given the importance the participants placed on education and high academic achievement. Outside of the United States, club-based sport systems have been notorious for disassociating a player's status or eligibility from academic performance. This contradicts the U.S. scholastic sport model where sport participant eligibility is heavily contingent on academic standing. The findings of this study point to the participants' preference for the U.S. model of combining sport and education, because participants felt more importance was placed on education in the United States compared to the club system where academics were not viewed as important to elite level athletes. This finding validates previous research where academic achievement was found to be a critical motivation factor for international student-athletes (McCormack & Walseth, 2013; Bale, 1987). In the end, participants in this study reaped the benefits of emigrating from their home countries to the United States, given that their pursuance of higher education could not occur concurrently with sport participation.

**Dual career in the U.S. college system.** The ability to be both a university student and an elite level basketball player was apparent as an influential migration factor across the duration of interviews with the participants of this study. Defined in the literature as “dual career,” this concept “refers to the challenge of combining a sporting career with studies or work, which remains a source of concern for most high-performance athletes” (Ryba et al., 2014, p. 125). In many countries across the world, pursuing a dual career in higher education institutions has not been a forthcoming opportunity. Young athletes between the age of 10 and 17 are increasingly quitting their sporting careers due to time consumption, affecting their other life choices, such as education and employment (EU Guidelines on Dual Career of Athletes, 2012). The United States has a unique system of making the dual-career option possible. In participants' home countries,

athletic scholarships were not available for university students seeking compensation for their athletic participation, indicating that the United States offers the desired combination of basketball and university education, whereas in their home countries sport and education were separate entities. Other than the participants from Canada and Australia (three participants total) did not mention school and sport participation as a viable option for them. All other participants described how school and sport are very much separate entities in their home countries, with their club basketball coaches having no concern for their academic standing because it has no bearing on their eligibility for basketball. In-depth participant stories elicited during the semi-structured interviews facilitated better understanding of how basketball migrants considered dual-career endeavors in their decision-making process. Participants in this study found dual-career opportunities in the United States to be a crucial factor in their decision to migrate and participate in collegiate basketball in here. Previous research findings suggest that the unique nature of collegiate sport system in the United States, where athletic scholarships are available to obtain a university degree while participating in sport at a high level, is very attractive to foreign student-athletes (Bale, 1991; Chepyator-Thomson, 2003; Love & Kim, 2011). Similar to Berry's research (1999), this study found that the concurrent importance of academic and athletic achievement to be a determining factor that influenced international student-athletes' migration to the United States.

### **Factors that Influenced Migration Decision-Making**

Participants discussed various factors that led to their decision to migrate to the United States. This theme includes the important factors that participants stated as influencing their decision to attend a U.S. college or university. Several sub-themes emerged within the major



theme that included: (a) Sport migrant typology, (b) High-level basketball, and (c) Coaching and facilities.

**Sport migrant typology.** Scholars have conducted research studies on migrants using typologies. According to Martin (2003), a typology can be defined as “a systematic classification of phenomena into groups that have common characteristics” (p.9). A typology results from making distinctions that create separated groups in a range of related phenomena, making it easier to analyze and understand the complex realities of migration. Essentially, “the most general statement that one can make concerning migration must be in the form of a typology, rather than a law” (Petersen et al., 1975, p. 229).

Within sports, typology represents a way to classify sport migrants. There are several typologies in sport. The first typology is *mercenary*. Magee and Sugden (2002) described a *mercenary* as one “who is motivated, above all else by earning capacity and who migrates for reasons of economic reward” (p. 429). Maguire (1999) employs a similar definition, adding that *mercenaries* are often motivated by “short-term gains” (p. 105). Unlike professional basketball mercenaries, who may have received large salaries, the participants in this study were only allowed to receive a scholarship that provided tuition and a stipend designed to cover living expenses. An important finding for this study is that the *mercenary* was the most highly represented typology (15 of 16 participants). Although “youth salaries” and “difficult long-term contracts” were offered to the participants by basketball clubs in their countries of origin, these offers were deemed inadequate because of the lack of development and exposure opportunities to reach higher-paying basketball leagues. *Mercenaries* in this study were lured into the NCAA by the development and exposure opportunities, which in turn were viewed as pathways to more lucrative and prestigious basketball leagues such as the NBA, Basketball Bundesliga League

(Germany), Turkish Basketball League, or Liga ACB (Spain). However, these benefits could only be received following their collegiate careers. This coincides with Falcous and Maguire's (2005) classification of NCAA Basketball as the unofficial NBA minor league, which is increasingly becoming a more serious pathway for players across the world to attain professional basketball stardom. This also relates to *ambitionist* category, or having the ambition to play at a high level and to receive a university degree, which was the other most frequent typology in the context of this study. Similar to Maguire's (2004) findings, the ambition to play at a high level was an important part of athletes' explanations for migrating, and such ambition transcended several of the categories, rather than comprising a category of its own. Maguire (2004) found the *ambitionist* category transcended several of the categories, rather than comprising a category of its own.

The participants in the *nomadic cosmopolitan* typology category were "motivated by a cosmopolitan engagement with migration to embark on a quest in which they seek the experiences of the 'other' and indeed of being the 'other'" (Maguire, 1999, p. 105-106). More than half of the participants in this study expressed either congruently or separately about the attractiveness of the opportunity to "travel the world" and to "experience different cultures" as well as "develop their English language skills." This is similar to Ryba's study (2014) that found participants combined "university studies with elite sport in the U.S.A., yet these athletes emphasized a zest for exploring the world, expanding their life choices beyond national borders, and having fun in and outside their sport" (p. 7). The participants in this study that came from non-Anglophone countries did not initially see English as an influential migration factor but rather as a consequence of their settlement. For example, the retention of English, which was something they felt to be important and that it encouraged future basketball migrants to consider

it as a major benefit when navigating their decision process. Within sport migrant typology research, this finding corroborates Love & Kim's (2011) research study, which found college sports migrants to be more influenced by exploration and engagement with a new culture, as well as by aspirations to improve their English language skills.

The typology of *exiled* was evident in this study. Four participants mentioned emigrating from their home country due to the inability to play basketball while attending university full-time. Interestingly, participants who fit this theme described very weak structures of higher education and of basketball leagues in their home countries. While attending school full-time was viewed as a full-time job in their home country, any other commitments, such as to a basketball team, were viewed as not being dually attainable. However, the participants categorized belonging to the *exiled* typology were most motivated by academics and viewed basketball as a way to receive a post-secondary education. This finding is similar to Popp et al.'s (2011) study, which found that the most important factor for international student-athletes in choosing an NCAA Division I university were the value of the athletic scholarship as "a degree from school leading to a good job" (p. 181). Love and Kim (2011) also found college athlete migrants to be *exiled* by the fact they could not attain a university education in their home country, rather than by the fact they would need to give up a competitive athletic career if they chose to seek a university degree.

The next migrant typology of *settler*, which was least represented among all athlete migrant typologies, is defined by Maguire (1999) as "sport migrants who subsequently stay and settle in the society where they perform their labor" (p. 105). Within this study, only two of the participants settled in the United States following their college basketball careers. However, the majority of participants mentioned "staying in the U.S." following graduation, but since the

participants were former athletes, only two had remained in the States at the time of the interviews. Both *settlers* in this study joined the professional basketball circuit following their university careers and played in various countries before returning to the United States for employment opportunities, specifically as college basketball coaches. This corroborates Love and Kim's (2011) study, where all participants mentioned remaining as *settlers* in the United States.

In contrast, several of the participants (six of 16) were classified as *returnees* due to their decision to return to their country of origin following their college basketball careers in the United States. The *returnees* within this study were found to return to their homeland for two specific reasons. The first, the participants experienced homesickness and the lure to reconnect with friends and family following their sojournment in the United States. Second, *returnee* migrants in this study did not receive attractive offers to play in a professional basketball league outside their native country. While one of the participants went back to his home country to play professionally, the rest of the participants did not play professional basketball upon returning home. Instead, the participants opted to focus on "new career paths" or to "take a break from basketball." This finding is slightly lower and inconsistent with Bale (1991), who found that 75% of migrant college athletes "definitely" or "probably" planned to return home after their collegiate careers. Another important finding from this study is the constant crossover between typologies, in which athlete migrants were categorized into several different typologies. This is consistent with Maguire (1999) who found "some *cosmopolitans*, along with *pioneers*, *mercenaries* and even long term *settlers*, act as *returnees* in the global process as the lure of 'home soil' can prove to be too strong" (p. 106). Aside from *settlers* and *returnees*, all other

participants ventured into the international professional basketball market and were competing in leagues in Greece, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Germany, and Australia when the interviews took place.

**High-level basketball.** On the basketball side, participants mentioned a future professional basketball career as a main factor in their decision-making process to pursue playing in NCAA Division I basketball. While this was also attainable by remaining in their home country, the participants viewed NCAA basketball as a chance to better develop and prepare themselves for a high-caliber professional basketball league. This confirms Chiba's (2012) world-systems conceptualization of international basketball migration classification: North America as the center, Europe as semi-periphery, Central/South America and Africa as periphery, and Asia and Oceania as part of the external world. The NBA is positioned at the center of global basketball, and its infiltration of overseas markets and collectively maintaining a monopoly on global talent has facilitated the recognition of the NCAA on a global stage (Euchner, 2008) into what Lee (2010) refers to as "the global migration push-factor for basketball player development" (p. 158). In this study, the participants sought involvement in higher-quality basketball competition, hoping to use it as a springboard after collegiate competition to engage in the world's best game of professional basketball. While professional basketball was also attainable in their home country, the participants viewed the NCAA as the best way to prepare for the NBA. Similar research on basketball migrants has found that the U.S. college basketball system is the most heavily desired for both U.S.-nationals and non-U.S.-national basketball players who hope to develop a successful professional basketball career (Chiba, 2012; Maguire, 2011; Falcous & Maguire, 2005).

Lastly, the annual NCAA Division I Men's and Women's National Tournament, also known as *March Madness*, takes place every spring and broadcasts to countries around the

world. The international interest in this tournament has only been amplified due to the growing international population among the players. *March Madness* and the presence of digital technology gave participants a real-life glimpse into college basketball in the United States. Participants mentioned the massive audiences, cheerleaders, pep bands and most importantly, the success of other international players under the bright lights of this annual tournament. The “big stage” of U.S. college sports was also found to be prevalent in other research on international student-athletes. Every participant in this study mentioned in some capacity the sizable amounts of attention NCAA basketball receives in their own countries, and they hoped they would play in front of the massive crowds or on television that is transmitted and broadcasted internationally. This finding is consistent with other research that found the U. S. image portrayed in media and movies to act as an important pull factor in persuading international college sport migrants to migrate (Love & Kim, 2011; Kontaxakis, 2011; Bale, 1991). In contrast, the allure of a sporting mega-event, such as *March Madness*, as a motivating factor for athlete migration has not been much recognized in the sports labor migration literature.

**Coaching and facilities.** Historically, many international student-athletes have claimed limited access to higher education in their home countries and have therefore been forced to seek alternative pathways in the United States (Bale, 1991; Kontaxakis, 2011). Most participants in this study mentioned the coaching and facilities to be of higher standards in colleges and universities in the United States compared to those of their home countries. Coaching was deemed to be an important factor when migrating to the United States, as participants felt they were not “getting the best instruction” to help them with training, development, and overall basketball career advancement. In other research, coaching was also found to be an important push factor for international student-athletes (Popp et al., 2010; Bale, 1991) and more generally

for athlete migrants in other global contexts (Maguire & Stead, 1998; Roderick, 2012).

Participants in this study expressed that having access to basketball gyms nearly any time of the day was something they found to be “very helpful.” Accessibility to basketball facilities was found to be “difficult” and “expensive” for the participants in their home countries. In the United States, participants found the weight rooms, medical training equipment, and overall basketball training facilities to be preferable at their universities compared to those in their home countries. Similarly, Norwegian female soccer migrants who went to the NCAA felt that there was a focus on strength and conditioning and physical therapy, which did not exist in their experience with their club teams in Norway, that they found extremely beneficial (McCormack & Walseth, 2013). This study confirms previous research that found international student-athletes migrated to the NCAA because of lack of facilities and lack of coaching in their home countries (Jones et al., 2008; Bale, 1991; Bale, 1987).

### **Adjustment Strategies**

Participants were aware of cultural challenges they would face while attending school and living in the United States prior to migrating from their home countries. They prepared for their U.S. sojournment by developing tactics before departing their home countries and then utilized different resources upon their arrival to better manage their cross-cultural adjustment. Participant adjustment strategies within this study included: using basketball as a vehicle for socialization and translation, using prep schools and junior colleges to slowly acculturate, and depending on teammates and fellow students for adjustment to the new culture. The participants’ understanding of U.S. culture through television, movies, sports or music was proven to be the main antecedent adjustment in this study. Using this strategy, participants felt more prepared for their U.S. excursion and better understood potential challenges before emigrating from their

home countries. Thus, use of media and digital technology as an antecedent adjustment strategy corroborates with findings from similar research on international student-athletes (Bale, 1991; Love & Kim, 2011; Popp et al., 2009).

After their arrival in the U.S., participants used different adjustment strategies to help them navigate life as student-athletes in a new country. Upon their arrival in the United States, the participants were most dependent on their peers to help them adjust and handle day-to-day tasks, both on and off their college campus, but more so with other international athletes or international classmates rather than their U.S. peers. Bochner et al.'s (1977) study found international students' social interactions correlate to adjustment more than any other dimension. The findings of this study show participants were drawn more toward other international students when seeking out friends due to their similar backgrounds and challenges of trying to navigate school and life in a new country and university environment. This relates to Chepyator-Thomson (2002), who found many Kenyan runners in her study experienced exclusion from their U.S. peers and validated Bochner's et al. (1977) research that found international students were more prone to make "good friends" with "individuals of the same culture who face similar challenges" (p. 278).

### **Challenges as College Basketball Migrants**

Participants in this study described challenges throughout their experience as migrant athletes and as student-athletes on U.S. college campuses. These challenges include: (a) issues of communication and (b) loneliness and isolation in the United States. The issues of communication and language were mentioned by participants as being the most important challenges throughout their sport and education experiences in the United States. The findings of this study corroborate with Ridinger and Pastore's (2000) inclusion of "language barrier" within



the framework of their international student-athlete cross-cultural adjustment model. More importantly, Church (1982) found that language competency is directly correlated with the adjustment of international athletes. Almost half of the participants in this study had little or no English background prior to coming to the United States. This turned out to be a major obstacle and adjustment nightmare for all non-English speaking participants. Participants immediately recognized that language would play a factor in their adjustment to their new home universities and described different strategies they used to overcome some of these challenges.

Communication issues were first apparent during the recruiting process when participants interacted with U.S. basketball coaches. Players who were not fluent in English or were not accustomed to the “wheeling and dealing” of U.S. college basketball coaches approached these challenges in several ways, information which in turn could be used by future college basketball migrants. The findings of this study were similar to previous research in which the main challenges of athlete migrants have been centered on language barriers and cultural differences (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010; Jones et al., 2008; Bale, 1987). The participants used a translator, such as a coach or family friend who “understood English and basketball,” for phone conversations with U.S. college basketball coaches. Participants discovered U.S. college coaches were susceptible to giving “false promises” and being “somewhat dishonest” during the recruiting process.

Participants struggled to initially comprehend this process and adjusted their decision-making process to look more critically at each coach and program that was recruiting them. Long-distance communication challenges between athlete migrants foreign sport coaches during the recruitment process have also been apparent in other studies on sports labor migration (Schinke et al., 2011; Carter, 2007; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007).

Aside from language issues, participants who experienced less recruitment from U.S. coaches ran into challenges in finding alternative solutions to better market themselves. Within this study, U.S. college coaches were found to attend basketball events and tournaments in different countries across the world. Basketball players who were not able to play in these events or were not initially targeted by a college coach had to find other pathways to attract college coaches. In this study, participants most frequently used video exchanges, either digitally or by mailing DVDs, to directly engage with basketball coaches, scouts, and recruiters. Given the long distances in international recruiting, sending DVDs through the mail or through digital technology was found to be very common. Participants also sent digital video links and emails to third-party members, such as scouts or agents, to receive more exposure and to better facilitate recruitment channels from the United States. This was found to be an effective way for participants to put themselves “out there” and give the participants different options in terms of location, university or basketball program. Corroborating with past research, advanced communication technology has been an important component in the recruiting process between U.S. coaches and international student-athletes (Ridinger & Pastore, 2010; Abbey-Pinegar, 2010; Lynn & Pastore, 2001).

### **Life After Basketball**

This theme centered around research question number three, which was focused on recommendations for future international basketball migrants in NCAA Division I Basketball. Participants in the current study noted that their experience in the U.S. was valuable not only because they received a university degree but also due to the personal growth attained from experiencing sport and education in a different country outside of their homeland. The participants recommended future players to “think bigger” about their futures and beyond their

short college basketball timeframe to better prepare themselves for a career after basketball. Participants also recommended future players think more about their area of study and how it “can guide them” into another career following their basketball career retirement. The majority of participants in this study felt regret for prioritizing basketball and not taking their academics more seriously. Moving forward, the participants felt the academic side to be much more important and encouraged future college basketball migrants to “find a better balance between school and basketball.” This finding contradicts recent research on international student-athletes, where international players were found to place more importance on academics rather than athletic performance, comparatively to U.S. student-athletes in the NCAA (Weston, 2006; Coakley, 1983).

According to Love and Kim (2011), the *settler* typology is described as remaining in the United States during (and possibly beyond) their collegiate careers. Most of the participants in this study migrated back to their native countries following their college basketball careers to either continue in their domestic professional leagues or pursue career endeavors outside of basketball. Only two of the participants in this study were currently living in the U.S. during the time of the interviews. The *settlers* in this study both accepted high school and college basketball coaching positions that facilitated their employment and residency status. Both *settled* and *returnee* participants in this study believed future basketball migrants should look more into “settlement” or “finding a job” in the U.S. following their college basketball careers. Participants mentioned using the connections made with fellow students, alumni and boosters as potential networks for future participants to explore if they are seeking employment opportunities in the United States. Unannounced to sports labor migration research, the *settler* has been found to be a common strategy, used by international sports migrants in many different sporting contexts, for

relocation and settlement purposes in the country that initially recruited them for performance purposes (Bale, 1991; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Pearton, 2000). Lastly, all of the participants in this study indicated they were pleased with their decision to come to the United States and with their specific choice of the university they attended. This coincides with Love and Kim's (2011) study. The participants in this study were quick to offer encouragement for future prospective international student-athletes who may be considering a collegiate student-athlete career in the United States.

### **Theoretical Applications**

The theoretical framework used for this study centered on following: world-systems theory, transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment. An additional application of push-pull factors is included under the world-systems theory section after being apparent in the findings of this study.

#### **World-Systems Theory**

World-systems theory was used as the theoretical framework to examine the influences pushing international student-athletes' to migrate to participate in NCAA Division I colleges and universities. According to world-systems theory, migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development. According to this theory and its extensions, international migration, like its internal counterpart, is caused by geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor. Wallerstein (1974) indicated the manner in which the concepts of "core states," "peripheral states," "semi-peripheral states" are to be used as follows:

We can talk of core states and peripheral states, so long as we remember that we are really talking of a relationship between production processes. Some states have a near

even mix of core-like and peripheral products. We may call them semi peripheral states.

(p.28)

The results of this study coincide with Chiba's (2012) research study that focused on international player migration using conceptualizing of global player movements based on consideration of North America as the center, Europe as semi-peripheral, Central/South America and Africa are peripheral, and Asia and Oceania as part of the external world. According to scholars (Lee, 2010; Euchner, 2008; Galily & Sheard, 2002), North America is positioned at the center of global basketball due to the infiltrations of organizations like the NBA and NCAA into overseas markets and global player talent.

World-systems theory immigration is seen as a natural consequence of economic globalization and market penetration across national boundaries (Todaro, 1976). In a similar study to this one, McCormack and Walseth's (2013) research used Bordieu's concept of cultural capital to discuss the production of educational capital for female soccer players in Norway who chose to pursue soccer at the NCAA level. McCormack and Malseth reported:

Players who went to the NCAA were able to acquire cultural capital in the form of their university degrees, directly because of their involvements in soccer. For the players who stayed in Norway to play soccer and go to school, there was no cultural capital received through their soccer careers due to the lack of connection between their club or national team and the university they went to. (p.894)

International student-athletes in the NCAA are thereby using the vehicle of sport to acquire inherent cultural capital in the form of a university degree and elite sport development. Under world-systems theory where migration decision-making is viewed to be economically incentivizing, the cultural capital received through a collegiate sporting career in the United

States. could be viewed as a preferable economic option compared to athletes who decided against NCAA participation and attempted to play professionally and attend university in their home countries. Sport has provided a means to convert physical capital into economic capital through entry into the professional sporting market (McCormack & Walseth, 2013).

Participants in this study did not specifically engage in discussions on larger economic and political structures when describing their decision to migrate to the United States. Rather, they spoke of the personal connections and relationships made with students, teammates, professors, and coaches and how that impacted their career decisions during and following their college careers. Participants were more focused on utilizing the available sport and education channels and networks to better prepare for their future careers in professional basketball, as well as life after their playing careers are finished, compared to instant economic capital. Similarly, the NCAA Norwegian female soccer players spoke about how soccer widened their networks of friends both inside and outside the soccer world and led to coaching opportunities (economic capital) in the United States following their soccer playing careers (McCormack & Walseth, 2013). A common critique of world-systems theory has been its central focus on the economic processes and its underplaying of the more cultural aspects of the social system (Pieterse, 1988). Moving more toward frameworks that center on culture and experiences, sport labor migration researchers have called for a shift in future studies “to move from spatially constructive theories that treat localities as discrete entities to one that centers on the experiences of people and the spaces through which they move” (Carter, 2011, p. 2).

Elite-level professional basketball development has also become visible at U.S. colleges and universities. Participants were drawn to the U.S. college sport system because it has historically been one of the top countries in the world to develop young athletes for Olympic and

other international competition (Kaburakis, 2006; Bale, 1991; Rooney, 1974). Participants in this study were allured to the basketball exposure and development in the United States and to the use of basketball to get a free university education. They were also able to recognize that they “can’t play basketball forever” and understood the importance of that education, or acquisition of forms of capital that would accrue given their involvement in career advancement following their basketball retirement. Studies have shown that athletes who plan for their retirement by venturing into other forms of capital (educational capital, social capital, etc.) during their playing careers experienced had “significantly better cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adaption to retirement” (Alfermann et al., 2004, p. 63). Player retirement is also apparent with international sporting migrants where preparing for post playing careers has been found to be a growing concern in many different sport and country contexts (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Richardson, 2009).

**Push-pull factors.** The first research question sought to determine what influenced international basketball players to migrate to NCAA Division I Basketball in the United States. Participants in this study indicated a combination of push-pull -factors that played a critical role their migration. Migration, of any type, whether documented or undocumented, forced or voluntary, can be explained in terms of push-pull factors (Datta, 1998). Within sport labor migration research, push-pull-factors can help better understand the factors that facilitate or hinder migratory processes, which at a later stage have an impact on migratory experiences (Molnar & Maguire, 2008). Pull-factors are the positive characteristics that favor choices of destination for migrants (Datta, 1998). The main pull-factors the participants consistently referred to was the ability to pursue dual career (simultaneous elite basketball and full time university) and play at a high level in the core state (North America) of international basketball.

Similar findings of dual career (Ryba et al., 2015; Nurmi, 2014; Bale, 1991) and high level sport participation (Christensen & Sorenson, 2014; Schneider & Messenger, 2012) have been documented in previous research on international student-athletes in the NCAA. Push-factors are the negative characteristics of the migrants' country of origin (Datta, 1998). The primary push-factors for the participants in this study were: the inability to pursue a dual career and the lack of basketball resources (facilities, coaching, competition). Maintaining a career path in professional basketball while being involved in the work or education in their respective home countries was proven to be difficult for the participants in this study. To better pursue dual career opportunities, participants in this study found the U.S. to be a better fit. Athletic scholarships were found to be important pull-factors from similar research studies focused on international student-athletes (Maguire & Stead, 1998; Bale, 1991).

### **Transnationalism**

Transnationalism was used to understand student-athletes' experiences, social practices and feelings of belonging while involved in the sport of basketball in the United States. This theory was present in connecting many of the processes that make up the basketball migrant phenomena as highlighted in Figure 5.1 below. These "cross-border" processes included all the participants' relationships, connections, and communications between their home country and the United States. Language was found to be an important factor as a motivation for the participants as well as an adjustment to living in a new country. International student-athletes who migrated to the United States are examined and required to have sufficient English language skills to be accepted by a university. In the modern sporting landscape, many athlete migrants were more concerned with upholding their transnational belonging, such as maintaining the English language rather than assimilating back to their native language and cultural norms (Ryba et al., 2015).



Participants in this study mentioned the importance of learning and maintaining their English fluency due to its frequent use in the international professional basketball market, such as in on-court communication with teammates and coaches of different nationalities and backgrounds. This study solidifies other sports migration research that finds the English language as the means of advancing professional development and career advancement (Genest, 2013; Carter, 2011; Stead & Maguire, 2000).

U.S. college sport coaches not only develop local connections with other coaches and players, they can also strengthen a series of transnational bonds through frequent communication with coaching colleagues and players in different locations across the world. Elliot and Maguire (2008) focused on the influence of Canadian players on the English Ice Hockey League hockey in terms of migration motives and relationships between players, coaches, agents and owners and indicated that they can best explain the transnational interdependence in modern day athlete migrations as “informal communicative friends of friends’ networks and bridgeheads contacts to explain player recruitment” (p.492). These transnational pathways were most apparent in what sports migration literature has termed *bridgeheads* and *pipelines*, which are further discussed and displayed in Figure 5.1 above.

**Bridgehead.** Earlier migrants, Meyer (2001) suggests, act as “bridgeheads” (p. 93) for potential migrants and ease the migration process by providing information about significant migratory procedures. Meyer’s (2001) approach demonstrates how migrants gain access to employment in a host nation through a series of social relationships that result in mutually beneficial recruitments. Older players or bridgeheads inspired participants in this study how came from the same country of origin that “blazed the trail” and found success in playing at the NCAA. Other participants mentioned how the lack of mentorship could be very difficult,

especially during the initial “culture shock” in the first semester or year. This sub-theme was demonstrated through the “knowledge circulation” that passed between future and former NCAA basketball migrants (Meyer, 2001, p. 93). This helped the participants get connected and prepare for life as an international student in the NCAA. Bridgeheads were also found in other sport migration studies to be important role in the transnational processes as well as helping in nourishing the established sport migration pipelines (Elliot, 2016; Elliot & Maguire. 2008; Crocket, 2012).

**Pipeline.** As a migrant pathway between the importing and exporting country becomes solidified over time, “talent pipelines” have been coined as the terminology that Bale (1991) used to define such processes in international sport migration in U.S. college athletics. Participants in this study described their decision as following established routes, which in turn had been solidified from countries on both sides of the migration. While earlier international student-athletes paved the way through their decision to participate in U.S. collegiate athletics, athlete migrants in the modern era have utilized these established channels to better their career advancements in basketball and beyond. Klein (1989) analyzes Dominican baseball, where the meaning of the term is easily identified as some of the best and most talented prospects taking their talents to more profitable leagues, such as that of Major League Baseball system in the United States. This concept also stems from migration literature and from the well-known concept of “brain drain,” which represents the emigration of highly trained individuals from a particular country over an extended period. Brain-drain narratives were derived from participants who viewed the basketball pipelines critically and thought that the solidified migration routes were taking all the best players out of the country at a relatively young age. However, the participants who spoke about established routes for elite sport development felt they should

follow these pathways because older players had found success. This also correlates with Klein's (1989) work showing how consistent outward migrations along determinable "talent pipelines" can give rise to problems, which can be likened to a sporting equivalent of the "brain drain."

### **Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

Ridinger and Pastore's (2000) framework consists of three components: (a) antecedents of adjustment, (b) adjustment to college, and (c) outcomes that may be associated with the antecedents and/or adjustment to college. The outcomes and relationships among the antecedents fluctuated, depending on the variable of demographics such as the participant's home nation, experience travelling and years playing basketball. Participants' adjustment in the current study was based on their background in language and knowledge of American culture. This corroborates other research on higher educational institutions, which found international students to suffer most frequently from language barriers and lack of support (Li & Kaye, 1998; Pennycook, 2008; Ryba et al., 2015). Aside from language and lifestyle changes, psychosocial adjustment, or how one fulfills self-adjustments resulted from exposure to a new culture, was also visible. Participants of this study spoke about experiencing "culture shock" the first semester or first year at their college or university in the United States. Some of the more difficult experiences were those of isolation and issues of daily communication. International students have been found to experience issues of loneliness and isolation during the cross-cultural adjustment process (Ryba et al., 2015; Sawir et al., 2008). Sociocultural adjustment is based on the ability to "fit in" and the skill to deal with interactive aspects of host cultural context. The results of this study proved the first semester and year in the U.S. to be the most challenging. International students experiencing culture shock is congruent with previous research on sociocultural adjustment and best predicted by the length of residence in the new culture,

language ability, cultural knowledge, cultural distance, and the quantity of contact with host nationals (Young & Schartner, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Searle & Ward, 1990).

### **Conclusion**

There are three conclusions attained from this study. Basketball federations across the world who are witnessing an influx of their country men and women migrating to the U.S. collegiate system need to implement better policies and practices to cater to their young athletes, whether finding options where players can be compensated with a university education while playing high-level basketball or adjusting the basketball migrant pipelines that already exist. The latter could be used to encourage players to play collegiately in the United States while finding new incentives for the basketball migrants to return following their college careers.

The study also concludes that high schools, prep schools, junior colleges and NCAA colleges and universities are all benefitting from having international student-athletes on campus. Historically, U.S. colleges and universities have long been hubs for hosting and educating international scholars and students while benefitting from their presence in return. Sport has a power unlike any other to bring countries and cultures together. It is important that athletes of all nationalities and sports are given outlets to exercise their goals and aspirations of combining sport with school, whether available in their country of origin or not. In the United States, academic and athletic administrators alike should take note of the important place that international communities have on college campuses and the role that international student-athletes play within them. Educating future international student-athletes, their families, their coaches in donor and host countries, and college administrators on the challenges that international student-athletes face on their U.S. college campuses could better inform and prepare individuals and communities for the complexity that athlete migration can entail.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

Currently there is minimal research on qualitative inquiry surrounding the influences and experiences of sport specific athlete migration. This study exemplifies basketball and adds to the existing literature on international student-athletes' experiences while participants in the U.S. collegiate system. This study provides unique perspectives of participants from around the world on their overall experiences and feedback of their journeys as foreigners in NCAA basketball. Another important addition to the literature is the new processes that are being utilized by coaches and players to find, recruit and communicate across long geographical distances, such digital video exchanges, attending international sporting events in other countries, third-party online recruiting connectors, as well as social media.

This study also highlights that despite the “pay for play” debate currently undertaken in NCAA Division I athletics, international student-athletes are not perturbed by the argument and are more attracted by the ability to play high-level basketball and attend university simultaneously. The economic incentives are similar to previous sport labor migration research on international student-athletes, where the migrant viewed U.S. college sports as an investment, that in turn would pay off, through a professional sport contract or employment outside of basketball participation.

The research questions in this study examined the migration influences and overall experiences of international male student-athletes who participated in the United States' NCAA Division I basketball. Future research studies could consider undertaking similar research questions in sport labor migration but focusing on prep schools/junior colleges, training administrative staff to assist international student-athletes and create better communication strategies between offices of international education and athletics departments.

Future researchers could focus on more qualitative studies with a greater number of interviews across U.S. institutions, spanning many geographical areas. Further prep schools, high schools, junior colleges, and smaller colleges need to be explored in order to see if there are any differences among the different levels. Future research could focus solely on women's sport labor migration and analyze trends and experiences in border crossings, especially women's basketball.

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## APPENDIX A

## LETTER OF RECRUITMENT TO PARTICIPANTS (SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGE)

Sent through personal account of researcher using Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Hi, my name is Ryan Turcott and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia doing research on international basketball players in the NCAA. Would you mind if I sent you an invitation to take part in an interview through Skype/Facetime or other online video communication about your experiences as an international collegiate basketball player in the U.S? If you are interested, please message me back your email address and I will send you a letter for invitation. Thanks for your time.

## APPENDIX B

## LETTER (E-MAIL) OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear (name of participant),

My name is Ryan Turcott and I am doctoral student at the University of Georgia working on my dissertation through the Department of Kinesiology. My topic focuses on international male basketball student-athletes who participated in NCAA Basketball. The purpose of this study is to explore their migration decision processes for coming to study in the United States and participating in intercollegiate athletics as well as to discuss their experiences.

I am writing to request your participation in the study. If you agree to participate in this study, I will provide you a consent form detailing your rights as a participant in this study for completion and signature at the start of the interview.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me so we can set up an interview. You can contact me [turcott@uga.edu](mailto:turcott@uga.edu) or by phone (406) 459-9405. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson, University of Georgia, by email: [jchepyat@uga.edu](mailto:jchepyat@uga.edu)

Should you agree to be a participant, I would like to schedule an interview with you over Skype or by telephone at a time of your convenience for about 60 to 90 minutes. I believe that your story will bring a unique perspective to my study, and also one that will assist in expanding the literature on an important topic. Thank you and I anticipate hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ryan J. Turcott  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Kinesiology  
Sport Management and Policy  
University of Georgia

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### **Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study focused on former international male basketball student-athletes in NCAA Division I and II athletics. The study is being conducted by Ryan Turcott, a doctoral candidate in the Kinesiology Department at the University of Georgia. Mr. Turcott is conducting this study for his doctoral dissertation. Dr. Chepyator-Thomson is the faculty supervisor of the project.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you fulfilled the following requirements:

1. You attended secondary education or high school in a country **besides** the United States.
2. You competed in the NCAA according to NCAA rules and regulations for participation in intercollegiate sports as an international student-athlete.
3. You last year playing in the NCAA was within the past 5 years

#### PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Suggest a time when I can visit you for an interview on Skype or the telephone.
2. Respond to a series of questions, sharing your thoughts for between 60-90 minutes.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Given that the questions focus on your reasons for coming to the U.S. for study and to play basketball and your experiences as a student-athlete, it is possible that a question or questions may stimulate emotional feelings for you. However, it is not expected that these would exceed those that are common in everyday life. However, you may choose to not answer any question and withdraw from the study at any time at no penalty to you.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS

The information that will be probed will not benefit you directly beyond those of simple reflection on a topic of relevance to you. However, you may request a copy of the study when completed, which may be of interest and benefit to you and is anticipated to be of benefit for advancing knowledge on an important topic.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

This interview is confidential. No one will be able to identify you, your answers, or your institution, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a pseudonym you choose before the interview as well as a pseudonym for the institution. Mr. Turcott will not use your name or the institution where you



enrolled in any descriptions of this study or reports generated from the research. The only people who will have access to the list of participants and the research data are the researcher and the dissertation committee. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board may also inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed. Audio recordings will not be shared with any other individual other than the dissertation committee members and will be destroyed 3 years after the study is completed.

#### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By giving the interview, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. Also, you have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence. If you do withdraw before completion of the study, research data collected until that time may be used in the study for the period of time you participated, unless you request that you do not wish to have your information used.

Also, there are no costs to you for participating in this study and no compensation will be provided.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Ryan Turcott, (406) 459-9405, [turcott@uga.edu](mailto:turcott@uga.edu) or Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson, University of Georgia, by email: [jchepyat@uga.edu](mailto:jchepyat@uga.edu).

#### RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or if you feel you've been placed at risk, you may contact University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Human Subjects Offices at 706-542-3199 or send an email to [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu). You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research participant with a member of the IRB. The IRB will review and approve this study prior to interviewing.

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and have received a copy of this informed consent form. My questions have also been answered to my satisfaction.

---

Print name of subject

---

Signature of Subject

---

Date

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## APPENDIX D

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### **Semi-structured Interview Protocol**

##### Background Information

1. Could you tell me about your background and where you grew up?
2. How did you first get involved with basketball?
3. Tell me about your experiences in (home country) with basketball training.

##### Migration decision process

4. When was the first time you actually thought about becoming a student-athlete in the United States/NCAA? How did that come about?
5. Can you explain your first interactions with a college coach or recruiters from the U.S.? What happened after that?
6. Can you walk me through your decision making process in deciding to come to the U.S.?
7. What other options did you consider?
8. What was the process like of actually leaving your home country and traveling to the U.S.?

##### Experiences as foreign student-athlete

9. If you think back to when you first arrived in the U.S. What was it to arrive and get settled in your school?
10. What were your biggest adjustments when you first arrived at your university?
11. Can you tell me about your community or circle of friends during your time as a student-athlete?
12. Tell me about your relationships with your teammates
13. Tell me about your experiences of being a student-athlete at your school
14. Tell me how the academics went for you at... Differences from academics at home?
15. How would you describe your overall experience at the university you attended?

##### Reflection

16. When you think back to when you were a student-athlete, what were your future plans and goals following your time at your university?
17. Do you have any advice for future basketball players from your country wishing to play NCAA Basketball?

## APPENDIX E

## ANALYTIC LIST (CODE BOOK)

1. **Origin:** Country of nationality
2. **1<sup>st</sup> sport:** sport participant began playing
3. **dual career:** sport and school together
4. **Prep School**
5. **Junior College**
6. **NCAA**
7. **ATT:** participant attitude (Dramaturgical)
8. **Decision:** how participant describes decision to migrate
9. **Video Exchange:** sending video to basketball coach in U.S.
10. **Adj:** Adjustment
11. **Friends:** peer group during years in U.S.
12. **U.S. Culture:** participant perceptions of culture in the USA
13. **Influence:** reasoning for migrating to NCAA
14. **NCAA:** characteristics or viewpoints on NCAA system
15. **NBA Dream:** came to NCAA to pursue career in NBA
16. **Advice:** feedback for next generation of basketball migrants from native country
17. **Country specific** (Senegal, etc.): perspective on culture or sports within native country
18. **Now:** current occupation
19. **Options:** options considered along with NCAA
20. **College:** perspective on going to college in U.S.
21. **NCAA Hype/March Madness:** awareness of NCAA marketing in native country
22. **TAC:** tactics and strategies of participant (Dramaturgical)
23. **Recruiting:** descriptions of a coach recruiting, evaluating or connecting to participant
24. **Club v. NCAA:** Versus comparison of two sport models
25. **Bridgehead:** person who connected/facilitated participant to coach or school in U.S.
26. **Basketball:** views on the game in any aspect
27. **Basketball heritage-** participant drawn into game due to older family members
28. **Goal:** what participant wanted during time as student-athlete
29. **Suspension:** suspension by school or NCAA surrounding eligibility issues
30. **Federation:** description of federation policies of views in participants native country
31. **Spirituality:** emotional reference describing process
32. **Acculturate:** describing assimilating to U.S. culture
33. **Enculturate:** describing non-assimilation to U.S. culture
34. **Brawn Drain:** best players leave or better development
35. **SES:** socio economic status
36. **Pipeline:** a historical mobility/migration of players from one country or place to another
37. **Recognizing Opportunity-** feeling lucky or fortunate for offer compared to peers
38. **Introduction to Game-** how the participant began playing
39. **Parental Influence-** participant referencing parent/guardian influence on decision

40. **Eligibility**- participant speaking of NCAA Eligibility; whether athletically or academically
41. **Attending invitation camp** - participant receiving invitation; playing in front of U.S. coaches
42. **Player seeking U.S. coach** – reverse recruiting; player emailing/sending video to coaches
43. **CCA: Psychological adjustment** - \*PRE CODE personality, life changes, coping styles, identification with co-nationals, and social support from host nationals
44. **CCA: Sociocultural adjustment**- \*PRE CODE – ability to ‘fit in’; interactive aspects of host culture; predicted by length of residence in the new culture, language ability, cultural knowledge, cultural distance, and the quantity of contact with host nationals
45. **Antecedent adjustment** PRE CODE Ridinger and Pastore’s (2000)
46. **Adjustment to college** PRE CODE Ridinger and Pastore’s (2000)
47. **Comparing systems of sports**- this code is referencing sport back home & how U.S. sport system differentiates
48. **Comparing cultures of sports**- participant referencing how people view sports in home country compared to U.S.
49. **Transnationlizing**- cross-border activities of migrants
50. **Comparing non-sport culture**- observations about home country or U.S. but not related to sports; more macro