EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT-ATHLETES AT DIVISION 1 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

by

CHENELLE KRUGER GOYEN

(Under the Direction of Rose Jepkorir Chepyator-Thomson)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation research investigates the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division I schools in the Southeastern United States. The study explores the challenges and successes these athletes encounter as they navigate academic and athletic pursuits in a new environment.

The purpose of this dissertation research study was to research the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division 1 schools across the Southeastern United States. A particular focus is placed on the impact of varying English language proficiency on their academic experiences, as well as the broader influence of language and cultural differences on their overall integration. The unique cultural and historical context of the Southeast, with its complex history and potential for social tensions, may present additional challenges for international student-athletes. By examining how these factors affect athletic performance, social participation, and cultural acclimation, the study aims to inform college and university leaders and coaches on how to better support the well-being and success of international student-athletes within the

NCAA Division I system. The research posed two questions. First, how did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division I schools in the Southeastern United States? Second, what are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social life? The research questions address how international student-athletes acclimate to schooling and athletics and what their lived experiences are shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and academic, athletic, and social life.

The findings and qualitative data suggest international student-athletes face heightened challenges, potentially hindering their acclimation process. Findings emphasize the need for a holistic support ecosystem addressing English proficiency, cultural needs, financial constraints, and overall well-being. Recommendations include culturally competent support services, financial aid programs, and opportunities for social integration. By fostering a more welcoming environment, institutions can empower international students to thrive academically, culturally, and personally.

INDEX WORDS: International Student-Athletes; NCAA Division I; Southeastern United States; Language Barriers; Cultural Adjustment; Academic and Athletic Performance; Social Integration; Support Services

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, either within a country or across international borders. Migration patterns comprise complex ways in which people migrate, which are influenced by a variety of factors that include economic, political, historical, geographical, social, as well as cultural factors. People who are forced to flee their homes often face violence, discrimination, and exploitation. They may also lose their livelihoods, their homes, and their belongings. Unforced migration is a more voluntary process than forced migration. However, it is important to note that even unforced migration can be challenging and difficult. Migrants often face discrimination, language barriers, and other obstacles in their new homes.

Highly skilled migration and unforced migration are distinct types of migration driven by disparate factors and yielding distinct consequences for both origin and destination nations (Pedó Lopes et al., 2024; Nauright & Maguire, 2020; Maguire, 2020). Highly skilled migration refers to the movement of individuals possessing advanced education and/or skills from one country to another. Several factors incentivize skilled sports labor migrants to relocate abroad. Some may seek superior educational prospects, such as the opportunity to attend a renowned sports academy or university (Nauright & Maguire, 2020). Others may be seeking better professional opportunities, such as the chance to play for a top-tier club or league (Maguire, 2020).

The main drivers of highly skilled migration are economic opportunities, career advancement, and a better quality of life. It is a global phenomenon that has been increasing in

recent decades (Pedó Lopes et al., 2024). Overall, the impact of highly skilled migration and unforced migration on destination countries is mixed, and there are both potential benefits and challenges.

Peter Haggett's seminal work on migration patterns, language, religion, and cultural values has provided a foundational framework for understanding human movement. His push-pull theory remains a valuable tool, though contemporary scholars have expanded upon and refined it to account for the increasingly complex and interconnected nature of migration in the 21st century. For instance**,** recent research has highlighted the role of social networks and diasporas in facilitating migration (e.g., Massey et al., 2005; De Haas, 2010). These networks provide migrants with information, support, and opportunities, often shaping their migration decisions and experiences. Additionally, globalization and economic integration have created new pathways for migration, such as labor migration programs and skilled worker visas (e.g., Castles & Miller, 2018). While Haggett's push-pull theory remains relevant, it's essential to acknowledge the multifaceted and dynamic nature of culture in migration. Cultural factors can influence migration decisions in various ways, from shaping perceptions of opportunities and risks to determining the social and economic integration of migrants (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Waters, 2002). Haggett's legacy in migration studies endures. However, contemporary research, informed by the evolving global landscape, necessitates a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the factors driving human movement.

Culture is an important factor that can influence both push and pull factors. For example, people may migrate to a new country to be closer to family and friends who live there, or to join a community that shares their language, religion, or other cultural values. Culture can also play a role in pushing people away from their home communities. For example, people may migrate to

escape persecution or discrimination based on their cultural identity. Culture can also shape the migration experience itself because migrants from different cultural backgrounds may face different challenges and opportunities as they integrate into new societies.

Skilled sport labor migrants have migrated the globe in large numbers to seek better educational and professional opportunities abroad, aided by advances in information technology and communication (Bauman, 2010). Byron (2014) explains that globalization has had a significant impact on the sport landscape, leading to the rise of global sports leagues and tournaments, the increased movement of athletes, coaches, and other sport professionals across borders, and changes in the way that sports are consumed and marketed (Byron, 2014). Darby (2011) argues that elite sports migrants represent another transnational social field. This means that they are part of a group of people who move across borders and are connected by shared interests and experiences. In sports labor research, Maguire (1993) proposed the original typologies that classify the motivations of elite sport migrants into three categories, the mercenary, the exile, the ambitionist. Maguire's typology has been influential in sports labor research, and it has been used to study the motivations of elite sport migrants from a variety of countries and sports. It is important to note that these typologies are just a way of understanding the motivations of elite sport migrants.

Darby's argument that elite sports migrants represent another transnational social field is important because it highlights the complex and interconnected nature of the world we live in. Elite sports migrants are not just individuals who are moving from one country to another; they are part of a global network of people who are connected by their shared interests and experiences. Elite sports migrants share interests and experiences that include their participation in high-level sports and their desire to compete at the highest level possible. These sport migrants

often face several challenges, including cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination, and the difficulty of integrating into new societies. However, they also have several opportunities, such as the chance to compete at the highest level, travel the world, and earn a good living. There are several factors that motivate skilled sport labor migrants to move abroad. Some may be seeking better educational opportunities, such as the chance to attend a prestigious sports academy or university. Others may be seeking better professional opportunities, such as the chance to play for a top-tier club or league. In Chepyator-Thomson's (2003), "the Kenyan scholar-runners' chief aim for leaving the continent is the desire to pursue post-secondary education through running, using it as a means to an end" (p. 37).

The last several decades have seen considerable growth in the study of international sport labor migration. Bale (1982), Arbena (1988), Maguire (1988), Bale and Maguire (1994), and Maguire and Stead (1996) were some of the early contributors to this field of research. Their work helped to lay the foundation for our understanding of the factors that motivate athletes to migrate, the challenges they face, and the impact of their migration on both origin and destination countries. Bale (1982) was one of the first scholars to examine the international movement of athletes. He argued that athletes migrate for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunity, career advancement, and a desire to compete at the highest level. Arbena (1988) focused on the migration of Latin American athletes to the United States. She found that many Latin American athletes migrated to the United States in search of better training and coaching facilities, as well as the opportunity to compete in more competitive leagues. Maguire (1988) examined the international movement of soccer players. He found that soccer players migrated for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunity, career advancement, and a desire to play for a top club. The field of international sport migration research is still relatively

young, but it has grown rapidly in recent years. This is due in part to the increasing globalization of sport and the growing number of athletes who are migrating to different countries to compete and pursue their careers. The increasing globalization of sport has also made it easier for athletes to migrate to the United States to compete in collegiate sports, and this increase may have the potential to bring new dynamics to the athlete migration discussion.

Sport has been a part of human existence for centuries. It is a way for people to express themselves, can be a source of great joy and pride, and they can bring people together from all walks of life. People of all ages and backgrounds participate in sports, from casual recreational activities to organized competitive leagues. Sport, games, and associated activities "served as an instrument of socialization, cultural preservation, and as recorders of changes occurring in societies" (Chepyator-Thomson, 2012, p. 380). Sport can provide us with physical, mental, and social benefits, and can help us build character, find purpose, and promote peace and understanding. The great Nelson Mandela once said "sports have the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sports can create hope, where there was once only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination" (Mandela, p. 378).

The United States is home to some of the most prestigious and competitive college sport or athletics programs in the world. These programs offer a variety of sport scholarships to talented student-athletes. The first college athletic scholarship in the United States was awarded in 1852 to a student at the University of Pennsylvania who excelled in both academics and athletics. However, it wasn't until the early 1900s that sport scholarships began to become more common. This was due in part to the rise of intercollegiate athletics, which led to increased

competition for top athletes. In 1919, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was founded. The NCAA established rules governing college athletics, including rules governing sport scholarships (NCAA, 2022). These rules were designed to ensure that sport scholarships were awarded based on athletic ability, not on financial need. There are a few reasons why it was important to award scholarships based on athletic ability and not financial need. The first reason is for US universities to attract the best athletes. Colleges and universities want to recruit the best athletes possible to compete at a high level, and offering scholarships is one way to attract them to the school. Scholarships allow colleges and universities to recruit athletes who would not otherwise be able to afford to attend the school. This can improve the quality of athletics at the school, as the athletes will be more skilled and dedicated. In the 2021-2022 school year, there were over 24,000 international student-athletes competing at NCAA schools (NCAA, 2022). International student-athletes come from all over the world, but the top five countries of origin are Canada, China, Germany, Kenya, and the United Kingdom (NCAA, 2022). International student-athletes compete in a wide variety of sports, but the most popular sports are basketball, soccer, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. International student-athletes play an important role in NCAA athletics (NCAA, 2022). They bring a high level of competition and diversity to the table. They also help to promote cultural understanding and cooperation. However, international student-athletes also face some challenges. They may have to deal with visa issues, cultural and linguistic barriers, and the academic demands of U.S. universities.

Human migration is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors. No single theoretical perspective or empirical study can fully explain the causes and consequences of migration. However, by drawing on a variety of perspectives and studies, we can gain a better understanding of this important social phenomenon. As interest in migration research has grown

in recent years, theoretical approaches have multiplied, leading to a more complex understanding of migration, with links to the broader processes of change (Castles, 2009). There is a considerable body of research that supports neoclassical theory. For example, a study by Chiswick (2000) found that immigrants in the United States earn higher wages than native-born workers. This finding is consistent with the neoclassical prediction that individuals migrate to countries where they can expect to earn higher wages. The new economics of labor migration theory views migration as a social process in which individuals and households make decisions about migration based on their social networks and networks of kinship. Migrants are more likely to migrate to places where they have friends or family members who can help them to settle in. For example, a study by Massey et al. (1999) found that Mexican immigrants in the United States are more likely to migrate to places where they have friends or family members. Migration theories have also revolved around development and networks (Castles, 2009). Each of these theoretical perspectives has its own strengths and weaknesses, and no single perspective is able to fully explain the complex phenomenon of human migration. However, by drawing on a variety of perspectives, we can gain a better understanding of this important social phenomenon.

The migration of athletes can be approached from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including those drawn from geographical studies of migration patterns, as well as historical and sociological studies using modernity theory, the theory of imperialism, development theory, and systems theory (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Transnationalism is a complex phenomenon that has been studied by scholars from a variety of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, geography, and political science. It is difficult to say definitively who founded transnationalism, as it is a product of complex historical and social processes. However, some scholars credit the following individuals with making significant contributions to our understanding of

transnationalism. Levitt is a sociologist who has conducted extensive research on transnational migration and families. She is known for her work on the concept of "social remittances," which refers to the skills, knowledge, and ideas that migrants transfer back to their home countries (Levitt, 2001). Appadurai is an anthropologist who has written extensively on globalization and culture. He is known for his concept of "disjuncture," which refers to the fact that different aspects of globalization, such as culture, technology, and economics, move at different speeds and in different directions (Appadurai, 2013). Transnationalism is a theoretical perspective that can be used to study a wide range of phenomena, including migration, identity, and culture. It focuses on the ways in which people maintain social, economic, and cultural ties across national borders. By using a transnationalism perspective, one can gain a deeper understanding of the complex experiences of athletes who migrate to new countries including the United States and discover ways to contribute to the growing body of research on transnationalism and its impact on sport.

Cross-cultural adjustment theory can be used to examine the cultural experiences that international students have in the United States, including their experiences on college campuses. Cross-cultural adjustment theory posits that individuals go through a process of adjustment when they move to a new culture. Cross-cultural adjustment theory remains a valuable framework for understanding the experiences of international students, including student-athletes, adapting to a new cultural environment like college campuses in the United States. This theory posits that individuals undergo a process of adjustment while navigating a new culture (Amiggan et al., 2023). Pioneering research in the field includes Lysgaard's (1954) study of Norwegian students in the US, identifying a four-stage adjustment process: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and adaptation. Oberg's (1960) research on American immigrants in Chile proposed a similar

four-stage model: euphoria, culture shock, recovery, and adjustment. While these works laid the groundwork, further research has expanded our understanding. Adler's (1975) emphasis on social support and coping mechanisms highlights their importance for successful adjustment (Amiggan et al., 2023). Contemporary studies delve deeper into the specific experiences of international students, such as Amiggan et al.'s (2023) exploration of the "acorn to oak tree" metaphor, highlighting the gradual growth and challenges faced by international students in the US.

The theoretical perspectives used in this dissertation study are transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment. While transnationalism will be used to understand student-athlete experiences, social practices and feelings of belonging while involved in the sport in the U.S. intercollegiate athletic system, cross-cultural adjustment theory will be utilized to assess participants experiences of “culture shock” while adjusting to the United States.

Problem Statement

International student-athletes (ISA’s) in NCAA Division I schools in the United States often face higher dropout and transfer rates compared to domestic student-athletes (DSA’s). The NCAA has witnessed a significant increase in ISA enrollment and participation across its member institutions. However, these athletes encounter unique challenges such as language barriers, cultural adjustment, increased travel demands, and separation from family and home, which DSA’s typically do not experience.

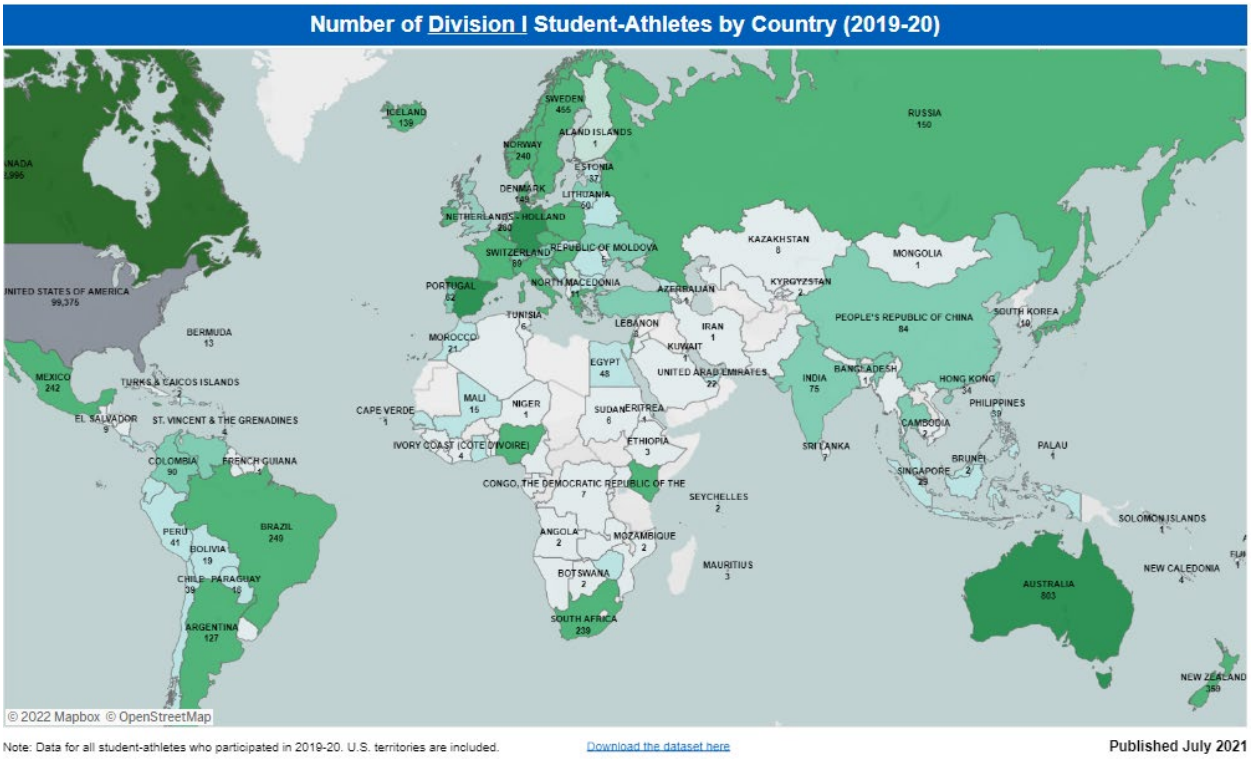
These challenges, particularly during the critical first year, can have profound psychological and emotional effects, potentially negatively impacting their overall collegiate experience. Additionally, some ISA’s report experiencing marginalization, discrimination, and negative stereotypes based on their race and region of origin (Lee & Opio, 2011; Sato, Hodge, & Burge-Hall, 2011). Research indicates that international students exhibit lower feelings of

belonging and have a higher propensity to transfer, with over 25% transferring during their first year, compared to the 13% rate among domestic athletes (NCAA Research, 2023).

The provided map in figure 1 below illustrates the global reach of NCAA Division I athletics, showcasing the diverse range of countries represented by its student-athletes during the 2019-20 academic year. The United States, unsurprisingly, dominates the map, reflecting the sheer scale of its collegiate sports system. However, the presence of student-athletes from numerous other countries underscores the increasing internationalization of US higher education and its athletic programs.

Figure 1

Number of Division 1 Student Athletes by Country



International students, including student-athletes, contribute significantly to the US economy. In 2020, over one million international students enrolled in US higher education institutions,

injecting approximately $44 billion into the economy. This influx of international talent enriches the academic and cultural landscape of US campuses.

NCAA Division I institutions play a pivotal role in attracting and supporting international student-athletes. Twelve percent of Division I student-athletes receiving athletic aid hail from countries outside the United States. This highlights the appeal of US college sports to athletes worldwide, who are drawn to the high level of competition, rigorous academic standards, and unique opportunities for personal and professional development. The availability of athletic scholarships is a key factor differentiating US higher education from systems in other countries. While Canada offers some scholarship opportunities, the majority of countries do not provide such support for student-athletes. This unique advantage positions US institutions as highly attractive destinations for aspiring athletes from around the globe.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation research study was to research the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division 1 schools across the Southeastern United States. This dissertation study examines the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division I schools in the Southeastern United States. The research aims to understand the challenges and successes these athletes face as they navigate academic and athletic pursuits in a new environment. By exploring the impact of language proficiency, cultural background, and academic, athletic, and social life on their experiences, this study seeks to inform college and university leaders and coaches on how to better support the well-being and success of international student-athletes.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

A. How did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division 1 schools in the Southeast United States?

B. What are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social life?

Significance of Study

This research is significant because it addresses a critical gap in understanding the experiences of international student-athletes in NCAA Division I. By shedding light on the challenges they face, such as language barriers, cultural adjustments, and academic pressures, this study can inform policy changes and support services to improve their overall well-being and academic success. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more inclusive and supportive environment for international student-athletes, enhancing their athletic and academic experiences while fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Delimitation of the Study

Delimitation is an important part of the research process. The researcher delimits the study to focus on a specific topic to avoid broad emphasis on the dissertation. Delimitation helps to ensure that the research is manageable and that the results are interpreted accurately. The current study documents the impact of English proficiency and culture on international student-athletes at NCAA D1 higher education institutions in the Southeast USA and determines how

culture and cultural acclimation processes impact athlete and non-athlete populations. The role of culture and cultural acclimation processes in US higher education is complex, with many factors affecting the way that international students experience US higher education, comparing home culture and host culture, as well as specifics of the university or college they attend.

The delimitation of my study will affect the role of culture and cultural acclimation processes in US higher education in a few ways. First, by limiting my study to a specific group of students, the research will be able to focus on the specific cultural factors that impact their experiences in higher education. This will allow for opportunities to have a deeper understanding of how culture affects students' academic success, social interactions, and overall well-being. Second, by limiting the study to a specific time period, the researcher will be able to track how cultural acclimation processes have changed over time. This will allow for identification of the factors that contribute to the acclimation processes and development of predictions about how cultural acclimation processes may continue to change in the future. Finally, by limiting my study to NCAA Division I institutions, the researcher will be able to control other factors that may impact students' experiences, such as socioeconomic status, academic preparation, and institutional resources, allowing for isolation of the effects of culture on students' experiences in higher education. Overall, the delimitation of my study will allow the researcher to conduct a more focused and rigorous analysis of the role of culture and cultural acclimation processes in US higher education, which will contribute to a better understanding of how culture affects students' experiences in higher education, thus helping inform future efforts to improve the success of all students.

Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation is organized and designed to ensure that the researchers' thoughts are clear and easy to follow, helping readers to understand the dissertation research study hence appreciating the significance of the findings. This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the dissertation. It introduces the topic of the research, the research questions, and the methods, the statement of the problem, the statement of purpose, rationale of the study, the significance of the study, as well as researcher subjectivities.

Chapter 2's purpose is to conduct a review of extant literature related to the dissertation topic, presenting the information in thematic forms comprising factors that impact sport labor migration that push international student-athletes from their home countries and those that pull them to host country, United States, border-crossing policies, experiences and cross-adjustments made in host country, which would demonstrate a deep understanding of the existing research, and explain how this dissertation study contributes to extant body of literature. Essentially Chapter 2 provides a review of related research, and a literature review that discusses the previous research that has been done on this topic, which is followed by a summary with identification of gaps in the literature.

Chapter 3 describes the rationale of the study and provides research context and describes the methods to be used to conduct the research. This includes a description of the research design, the data collection methods, and the data analysis methods.

Definition of terms

- International students: International students are defined as non-immigrant visitors on non-immigrant visas who come to the United States temporarily to take classes, and do not have US citizenship or a legal permanent resident status (Green Card status).

- NCAA: The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a governing body for college athletics in the United States and sets rules and regulations for all NCAA member schools, including rules governing international student-athletes (NCAA, 2023).
- NCAA Eligibility Center: The NCAA Eligibility Center is a division of the NCAA that is responsible for determining the eligibility of prospective student-athletes to compete in NCAA sports (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2023).
- Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse: The Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse is a process that prospective student-athletes must complete to be eligible to compete in NCAA sports (NCAA Eligibility Center, 2023).
- Academic Progress Rate (APR): The APR is a measure of a team's academic performance. It is calculated by dividing the number of points earned by the number of points possible. Teams must meet a certain APR threshold to be eligible for NCAA postseason competition (NCAA, 2023).
- Visa: International student-athletes must have a visa to study in the United States. There are different types of visas available for international student-athletes, depending on their circumstances (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2022).
- "Homestay": A homestay is an arrangement where an international student lives with a host family. This can be a great way for international students to learn about American culture and to improve their English skills (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2022)
- "Redshirt": A redshirt is an athlete who does not compete during their first year of college. This can be a good option for international student-athletes who need time to adjust to the academic and athletic demands of college (NCAA, 2023)

- "Walk-on": A walk-on is an athlete who tries out for a team without being recruited. This can be a good option for international student-athletes who are not offered a scholarship (NCAA, 2023).
- Division I: Division I is the highest level of college athletics in the United States. There are over 350 Division I schools (NCAA, 2023).
- Division II: Division II is the second-highest level of college athletics in the United States. There are over 300 Division II schools (NCAA, 2023).
- Division III: Division III is the third-highest level of college athletics in the United States. There are over 450 Division III schools (NCAA, 2023).
- Scholarship: A scholarship is a financial award that is given to a student-athlete to help them pay for college. Scholarships can be full or partial, and they can be based on academic merit, athletic ability, or a combination of both (NCAA, 2023).
- National Letter of Intent (NLI): The NLI is a binding contract between a student-athlete and a college or university. The NLI commits the student-athlete to attend the college or university for one year of athletic competition (NCAA, 2023).
- Student-athlete: A student-athlete is a student who participates in intercollegiate athletics. Student-athletes must meet certain academic and athletic requirements to be eligible to compete (NCAA, 2023).
- Transfer: A transfer is a student who leaves one college or university to attend another. Transfers must meet certain academic and athletic requirements to be eligible to compete at their new school (NCAA, 2023).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Global Immigration Mobility

Paula Caligiuri's definition of global mobility is precise and comprehensive. It captures the essential elements of global mobility and highlights the fact that global mobility is often a complex and challenging experience for both the individuals involved and their families. It requires them to adapt to a new culture, language, and way of life (Caligiuri, P, 2017). Global immigration mobility may be understood as the movement of people across international borders permanently for the purpose of living, working, or studying in countries that accommodate their needs. There is no single theorist who can be credited with theorizing global immigration. Instead, there is a body of work from a variety of disciplines that contribute to our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Stephen Castles has written a large body of work on the globalization of migration. He argues that migration is now a global phenomenon, driven by economic, social, and political forces. Castles' work has been influential in shaping our understanding of the globalization of migration. He has shown that migration is not simply a local or regional phenomenon, but a global one that is driven by a complex set of factors. Global immigration and the globalization of migration are two closely related concepts. Global immigration is the movement of people from one country to another to live permanently. The globalization of migration refers to the increasing interconnectedness of migration flows around the world.

Global immigration mobility is complex with a long and varied history. In recent decades, there has been a dramatic increase in global immigrant mobility, with millions of people moving each year in search of better opportunities. The dramatic increase in global immigrant mobility has had several important consequences. First, it has led to an increase in the number of international migrants. Second, it has led to a diversification of the origins and destinations of international migrants. Third, it has led to a more complex and dynamic global migration system. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2023), there were 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, accounting for 3.6% of the global population. This number has been steadily increasing since the 1990s and is expected to continue to grow in the coming years (IOM, 2023). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. It works to promote humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. Non-immigrants are people who are in a country temporarily, for reasons such as work, study, or tourism. They are not citizens or permanent residents of the country where they are living. There are large numbers of immigrants and non-immigrants that migrate to the United States. The United States has been a country of immigrants since its founding. In 2020, there were an estimated 11.8 million non-immigrants living in the United States, accounting for 3.6% of the population (IOM, 2023).

The United States is a major destination for immigrants and non-immigrants around the world. In 2021, there were an estimated 44.7 million immigrants living in the United States, accounting for 13.6% of the total population (IOM, 2023). This makes the United States the third most populous country in the world with a foreign-born population, after Germany and India. The impact of immigration on the United States is significant. Immigrants and non-immigrants make up a significant portion of the workforce and contribute to the economy in many ways.

They also bring new cultures and ideas to the country, which helps to make the United States a more diverse and vibrant place. Overall, immigrants and non-immigrants make significant contributions to the US economy. They start businesses, create jobs, pay taxes, and contribute to the diversity and richness of American culture.

Forced and Unforced Migration

Forced migration is the movement of people across international borders who are fleeing war, conflict, persecution, human rights violations (UNHCR, 2020) or other forms of violence. People also exit their homeland due to environmental disasters natural disasters such as earthquakes or earthly calamities like hurricanes and tsunamis (Miller & Vu, 2021). This is often the case in countries that are experiencing war or civil conflict. Natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, can also force people to migrate, and some people migrate to pursue educational opportunities that are not available in their home country.

Unforced migration, on the other hand, concerns the movement of people across international borders who move because of their own free will and could be related to family ties, and opportunities for social or economic advancement. Unforced migration concerns people moving from their birthplaces to make new home-bases in the host country. The United States has become a host country to millions of immigrants starting with Europeans in the 7th century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), and they have been an increasing number of immigrants from other continents. Many factors drive immigrants to come to the United States, with most common reasons being such for better economic opportunities, particularly true in countries with high unemployment rates or low wages.

The United States has become a major destination for these types of immigrants, who have considered the country new homeland. In fact, in 2020, there were an estimated 4.2 million

forced migrants living in the country and an estimated 12.2 million unforced migrants living in the country (IOM, 2023). The reasons why people choose to migrate to the United States vary. Some people migrate in search of better economic opportunities, which is especially true in countries where high levels of unemployment or poverty are present. Yet, others migrate to advance their education given availability of opportunities. Still others migrate to reunite with family members who have already settled in the United States. The impact of forced and unforced migration on the United States vary, but according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), immigrants bring, for the part, a positive impact on the United States economy because they fill in labor shortages, start new businesses, and contribute to the U.S. economy in paying taxes, despite that they may put a strain on public services.

Upon arrival immigrants often face significant challenges, including language barriers–oral and written communication–which prevents them from having comprehensive cross-cultural communication. Many immigrants do not speak the language of their new country, which can make it difficult to find jobs, communicate with others, and have access to services. Immigrants may have to adjust to a new culture and way of life, which can be challenging and stressful. Some face discrimination in their new country, which can make it difficult to integrate into society and they may not have the same social support networks as native-born workers, making it difficult to adjust to the host country. Despite these challenges, immigrants are provided with many opportunities in the United States, they can contribute to the US economy, through enriching the cultural fabric of society, and building a better life for themselves and their families.

Most of the immigrants that cross international boundaries to inter the United States are Asian immigrants, mainly Chinese, Indians and Koreans. Asian immigrants first arrived in the United States in the 1800s and today, there are over 20 million Asian Americans (Pew Research Center, 2021). In fact, Asians now make up the largest portion of recent immigrants in the US and are now one of the fastest growing racial groups (Pew Research Center, 2021). In 2020, for the first time, Asians made up the largest portion of recent immigrants, accounting for 35% of all new arrivals. This is up from 28% in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2021). The rise of Asian immigration to the US is a significant demographic trend that is having a major impact on the country. Asians are a highly educated and skilled group of immigrants, and they have contributed significantly to the U.S. economy. There are several factors that have contributed to this shift. One factor is the increasing number of highly skilled Asian workers who are coming to the United States. These workers are attracted to the United States' strong economy and its opportunities for education and advancement. They have also helped to make the US a more diverse and vibrant country.

However, the rise of Asian immigration has also led to some challenges. One challenge is the language barrier. Asian immigrants tend to have limited knowledge of the English language both spoken and written, making it difficult for them to find jobs or achieve meaningful integration into the U.S society. Another challenge is discrimination. Asians have been the target of discrimination in the US, both historically and in recent years. This discrimination can make it difficult for Asians to find jobs, housing, and education. Despite these challenges, the rise of Asian immigration to the US has been a positive development for the country.

When it comes to Indian Americans, they outpace every ethnic group in the area of education, reaching the highest educational levels of all ethnic groups in North America. (Pew

Research Center, 2020). Research shows that 71% of all Indians have a bachelor's or higher degree, that is compared to 28% nationally and 44% average for all Asian American groups (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014). Almost 40% of all Indians in the US have a master's, doctorate, or other professional degree, which is five times the national average. The theory is that the best and brightest academic candidates in India emigrate to the US in order to seek better financial opportunities (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014). According to a 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center, 74% of Indian Americans ages 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 60% of all Americans. This is the highest educational attainment of any ethnic group in the United States. Indian Americans are also more likely to pursue postgraduate degrees than other ethnic groups. According to the same Pew Research Center survey, 40% of Indian Americans ages 25 and older have a postgraduate degree, compared to 25% of all Americans. These figures are slightly higher than the ones you cited from the 2014 study by Chua and Rubenfeld. This suggests that the educational attainment of Indian Americans continues to increase over time. There are several factors that contribute to the high educational attainment of Indian Americans. One factor is that Indian culture places a high value on education.

Many Indian American families emphasize the importance of academic achievement, and they invest heavily in their children's education. Another factor is that Indian Americans are more likely to immigrate to the United States for educational opportunities. Many Indian immigrants come to the United States to attend college or graduate school. They are often drawn to the high-quality education system in the United States, and they are willing to make sacrifices to achieve their educational goals. Indian Americans are also more likely to work in high-skilled occupations, which require higher levels of education. For example, Indian Americans are overrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The

high educational attainment of Indian Americans has several benefits for both individuals and society. Indian Americans are more likely to be employed, and they earn higher incomes on average than other ethnic groups. This helps to boost the economy and create jobs. Indian Americans are also more likely to be civically engaged and to volunteer their time to their communities. Overall, the educational attainment of Indian Americans is extremely impressive. They have the highest educational attainment of any ethnic group in the United States, and their educational attainment continues to increase over time. This is a testament to the strong value that Indian Americans place on education and their commitment to academic achievement.

Immigrant mobility to the US is a complex phenomenon with a variety of causes and consequences. Asian and Indian immigrants have made significant contributions to American culture and society and Indian immigrants began arriving in large numbers in the early 1900s, and today there are over 4 million Indian Americans living in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2021). Asian and Indian immigrant cultures are diverse and varied, but they share some common characteristics. Both cultures emphasize family, community, and hard work. They also place a high value on education and achievement. Asian and Indian immigrants are also known for their entrepreneurial spirit and their contributions to the arts, sciences, and business. These are just some of the common characteristics of Asian and Indian immigrant cultures. It is important to note that these cultures are diverse and varied, and there is a great deal of variation within each culture. Additionally, it is important to remember that Asian and Indian immigrants are not a monolithic group, and they have their own unique experiences and perspectives.

Chinese Immigrant Cultures in the United States

Chinese is the largest group of immigrants coming to the United States, happening for centuries, and their cultures have had a significant impact on U.S. society. Chinese immigrants

have brought their own languages, foods, customs, and traditions to the United States, and they have helped to make the country a more diverse and vibrant place to live. For instance, the Chinese style parenting has been researched extensively and research studies have postulated that the most academically successful parenting style for academic success is Chinese style. This parenting style is doctrinaire and known as the “tiger mom” methodology, which implements a tough love strategy and an example of this is that Chinese children do homework and practice piano rigorously (Chua & Rubenfeld, 2014). Tiger parenting is a parenting style that is characterized by strictness, high expectations, and a focus on academic achievement. Tiger parents often push their children to succeed in school and extracurricular activities, and they may use harsh methods to do so. Through this parenting style the only activities children are permitted to do are those in which they can win an award or medal, of which that medal must be gold. Some studies have been done to find out why on average children of Chinese origin, whether they are rich or poor, do extraordinarily well in school, and most studies found that Chinese parents tend to push their children extensively, and have really high expectations.

A problematic phenomenon occurs with increased spending power within the family and the parents' desire for the child to experience the benefits they themselves were deprived of. From an early age parents push their children to educational extremes and put immense pressure on these children to succeed and compete academically. Private English lessons, music lessons, even boarding school is innate within this culture, and an additional range of extracurricular activities are considered normal, showing that this group seemed to be singularly successful in achieving that goal of academic success everywhere. According to Mansell (2021), Chinese students have done well in international exams, and have outperformed domestic students, performing better than the national average for all students. Chinese parents expect their children

to achieve the best possible grade in class, and most times if the student does not achieve an A, then the parents will continuously ask the child to do better. If a child receives a B grade in a class, then the parent will not be satisfied with that grade. There is an emphasis on practice, and children are told that if you want to learn something, then they will have to practice it repeatedly. Mansell (2021) continued to explain that the method of learning motivates students to succeed in their academic studies. (Mansell, 2011). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 5.4 million Chinese immigrants living in the United States in 2021, and the Chinese immigrant population is growing rapidly (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Between 2010 and 2021, the Chinese immigrant population grew by 46% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Chinese immigrants make significant contributions to the US economy. In 2021, Chinese-owned businesses generated over $1 trillion in revenue and employed over 1 million people. These are just a few examples of the many different aspects of Chinese immigrant cultures in the United States. Chinese immigrants have made significant contributions to American society in all areas of life, and their cultures continue to enrich the country. From an early age parents push their children to educational extremes and put immense pressure on these children to succeed and compete academically. Private English lessons, music lessons, even boarding school is innate within this culture, and an additional range of extracurricular activities are considered normal. Not only in the US but also in Great Britain does the statistics relate to the academic success of the Chinese ethnicity. This showed that this group seemed to be singularly successful in achieving that goal of academic success everywhere.

In 2011, Warwick Mansell wrote an article for The Guardian titled "Why Chinese students do so well at school." In the article, Mansell discusses several factors that contribute to the success of Chinese students. He states “Further evidence of the success of Chinese students

came through the world's most well-known international testing study, Pisa. This found 15-year-olds from Shanghai, China, easily outperforming those of all other nationalities". He also writes "the domestic statistics show that children of Chinese ethnicity who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) perform better than the national average for all students, rich and poor. Not only that, FSM Chinese students do better than those of most other ethnic backgrounds, even when compared with children from better-off homes (those not eligible for free school meals)" (Mansell, The Guardian, 2011). Chinese parents interviewed for research, said their children were also being educated at a Chinese supplementary school in addition to their weekday schooling, and parents also said they paid for extra tutoring. Chinese parents expect their children to achieve the best possible grade in class, and most times if the student does not achieve an A, then the parents will continuously ask the child to do better. If a child receives a B grade in a class, then the parent will not be satisfied with that grade, and will basically ask why the child didn't receive an A. Within Chinese society, there is an emphasis on practice, and children are told that if you want to learn something, then they will have to practice it over and over again. This method of learning could help to motivate students when the rewards seem distant (Mansell, The Guardian, 2011). The main resurfacing factor for Chinese student academic success is that the family commitment to education is particularly strong, and that families of Chinese heritage see taking education seriously as an essential unit of their Chinese identity, and a way of differentiating themselves not just within their own group, but also from other ethnic groups.

Elements of Culture

Culture is the term which encompasses the social behaviors and norms founded within human societies. Culture is the overarching umbrella that encapsulates individuals' habits,

customs, knowledge, beliefs, laws, sports and arts and can be attributed to a specific region or location. Anthropologists have been the main drivers in the study of culture. Hughes (1990) argues that the term "culture" is broad and encompassing thus it is difficult to define, but states that it can refer to “high culture, popular culture, mass culture, alternate culture, underground culture, drug culture, yob culture, the culture of violence, and the culture of nonpayment" (p. 236). Ultimately, culture is a matter of perspective as what one person considers to be "culture" may not be considered to be "culture" by another person. As Rieger (2022) explains that “while culture has hundreds of definitions, there are commonalities between them, share beliefs, values and thinking” (Rieger, 2020, p. 1). Despite the fact that culture (Rieger, 2022), is complex and nuanced topic, while there is no single universally accepted definition of culture, there are some commonalities between different definitions. One commonality is that culture is shared. It is something that is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next. Another commonality is that culture is dynamic. It is constantly changing and evolving. Rieger's (2022) definition of culture is consistent with these commonalities. He emphasizes that culture is shared and that it includes beliefs, values, and thinking. These are all things that are learned and transmitted from one generation to the next. Additionally, Rieger acknowledges that culture has hundreds of definitions, which suggests that it is a complex and multifaceted concept.

According to Reeves-Ellington, E. A., & Yammarino, F. J. (2010) there are two main processes through which humans acquire culture: enculturation and socialization, evident by the diversity of cultures across societies globally. Reeves-Ellington, and Yammarino (2010) explains that enculturation is the process of learning the cultural norms and values of one's society. It begins at birth and continues throughout one's life. Enculturation takes place through a variety of channels, including family, school, religious institutions, and the media. They also

discuss that socialization is the process of learning the social skills and roles that are necessary for functioning in society. It also involves learning about the different social groups that exist in society and one's place within those groups. Socialization begins in early childhood and continues throughout one's life. It takes place through a variety of channels, including family, school, peer groups, and the workplace. However, while socialization begins in childhood, enculturation provides a foundation for socialization, hence enculturation and socialization are interrelated processes. For example, a child learns the cultural norms and values of their society through enculturation, which then helps them to learn the social skills and roles that are necessary for functioning in that society through socialization.

In Fisher's (2007) understanding, culture is the anthropological form of knowledge that grounds human beings' self-understandings logically and analytically and goes on to discuss the aspect that culture is a form of knowledge gained through engagement with people, and it is characterized as ever evolving. Culture is constantly changing, and it is constantly being shaped by the interactions between individuals and groups. Fisher (2007) defines culture as "a set of shared beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are transmitted from one generation to the next". He also emphasizes that culture is dynamic and constantly evolving, and this definition is consistent with the commonalities between different definitions of culture. It highlights the importance of shared beliefs, values, customs, and traditions, as well as the fact that culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. Fisher's definition also acknowledges that culture is dynamic and constantly evolving.

Culture comprises cognitive elements such as symbols, language, values, beliefs, and norms, aesthetics, education, material culture, and religion, customs and traditions (Reeves-Ellington & Yammarino, 2010, p. 24). These elements are the building blocks of culture, and

they provide the foundation for the way that people in a particular culture think, behave, and interact with each other. Culture is the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a particular group of people. It is the way of life of a group of people, including their customs, arts, and social institutions. Culture is learned and passed down from generation to generation. It is constantly evolving and changing, as it is influenced by new ideas, technologies, and experiences.

The common elements of culture include:

- Language: Language is the system of communication that is used by a group of people. It is used to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Language is also used to transmit culture from one generation to the next.
- Values: Values are the beliefs that a group of people hold to be important. They guide people's behavior and help them to make decisions. Some common values include honesty, respect, and cooperation.
- Beliefs: Beliefs are the ideas that a group of people hold to be true. They can be about the nature of the world, the meaning of life, or anything else that is important to the group. Some common beliefs include the belief in a higher power, the belief in the importance of education, and the belief in the importance of family.
- Norms: Norms are the rules of behavior that are followed by a group of people. They are the expectations that people have about how others should behave. Norms can be formal, such as laws, or informal, such as social customs.
- Artifacts: Artifacts are the material objects that are created by a group of people. They can include anything from tools and weapons to art and music. Artifacts can be used to learn about the history and culture of a group of people.

These are just some of the main and major elements of culture. There are many other elements that could be included, but these are some of the most important. Culture is an important part of our lives, and it shapes us in many ways. By understanding the elements of culture, we can better understand ourselves and the world around us. By understanding the interplay between cultural elements and culture shock, individuals can better anticipate and manage the challenges associated with cultural adaptation.

Culture Shock

Culture shock of immigrants. Kalervo Oberg (1960) was an anthropologist who studied the effects of culture shock on people who were living in a new culture. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock is "the emotional and psychological distress that people experience when they are suddenly immersed in a culture that is very different from their own" (p. 177). His research on culture shock is still relevant today, and it has helped people to understand and cope with this experience.

Culture shock may be understood as a feeling experienced by many international students, as it is the onset of adjustment to an unfamiliar new culture or way of life. Oberg proposed a model of cultural adjustment that has four stages, and there are 4 main phases related to culture shock, of which the honeymoon phase is the initial phase, followed by frustration, adjustment, and acceptance (Oberg, 1960). Oberg was the first person who proposed this model of cultural adjustment. Oberg's model of cultural adjustment is a useful tool for understanding the challenges of adjusting to a new culture. It can help people to anticipate the different stages of adjustment, and it can help them to develop coping mechanisms for dealing with the challenges of cultural shock.

Kunst and Sam (2013) argue that the four main phases of culture shock proposed by Oberg (1960) are too elementary to have predictive validity or outcome. They argue that the phases are not linear, and that people may experience them in different orders or not at all. They also argue that the phases are not mutually exclusive, and that people may experience more than one phase at the same time (Kunst, Jonas R.; Sam, David L. 2013). Kunst and Sam's (2013) model of culture shock is more complex than Oberg's (1960) model, and it considers a wider range of factors that can affect the experience of culture shock. This makes it a more useful tool for understanding and predicting the experience of culture shock.

The 4-fold models of culture shock have been criticized for being too simplistic and for not considering the individual differences that people experience. Some people may not experience all four stages, and some people may experience them in different orders. Additionally, the four stages are not mutually exclusive, and people may experience more than one stage at the same time.

Some of the most prominent criticisms of these 4-fold models include the fact that people don't often fall perfectly into any of these designated 4 categories. International students experience these stages differently, however, these 4 phases can provide a guideline of how international students adapt and cope with US culture. All international students experience culture shock at some point, and to varying degrees, while attending a US higher education institution. For some international students, if English is not your first language, then the acclimation and acculturation process to US higher education institutions could be even more treacherous. Ultimately, international students undergo additional language and academic culture shock when they enroll at US higher education institutions.

Imperialism can have a devastating impact on the subject of culture. It can lead to the loss of language, culture, and identity. It can also lead to social and economic inequality. Smith (1990) argues that imperialism is a form of acculturation in which one culture is imposed on another culture through military conquest or political control. He provides examples from the Iberian and British empires to support his argument. Imperialism is a form of acculturation in which one culture is imposed on another culture through military conquest or political control. The dominant culture then seeks to change the values, beliefs, and customs of the subordinate culture to conform to its own. Imperialism has been a major force in shaping the world's cultures. For example, the British Empire imposed its culture on many of the countries it colonized, including India, Pakistan, and Nigeria. As a result, these countries have adopted many aspects of British culture, such as the English language, the legal system, and the educational system. Imperialism can have both positive and negative effects on the cultures it encounters. On the one hand, it can lead to the spread of new ideas and technologies, which can improve the lives of people in the subordinate culture. On the other hand, it can also lead to the suppression of local cultures and the loss of traditional ways of life. The effects of imperialism on culture are complex and varied. However, there is no doubt that it is a major force in shaping the world's cultures. With the historical aspect of Europe and the United States, shaped by Western civilization, one of the most notable forms of acculturation is imperialism.

Anthropologists and sociologists have studied acculturation, primarily in the context of colonialism. Boas (1940) conducted one of the earliest studies on acculturation, which focused on Native American cultures on the effects of European. He found that Native American cultures were changing in many ways, including the adoption of European languages, dress, and technology. Sapir (1931) conducted a study on acculturation, focusing on the Navajo Indians

and discovered that effects of European contact on their language. This helps in the understanding of the challenges that minority languages face when there is a dominant-minority contact. It was discovered that Navajo language was changing in many ways, including the adoption of new words and grammatical structures. The two scholars' studies (Boas, 1931; Boas, 1940) helped to establish the field of acculturation studies in providing a foundation for understanding the complex process of cultural change. Their work also helped to raise awareness of the challenges that minority cultures face in the face of globalization. Since then, anthropologists and sociologists have continued to study acculturation in a variety of contexts, including colonialism, immigration, and globalization. Acculturation is the process of cultural change that occurs when people from different cultures come into contact with each other (Berry, 2015). It can be a voluntary or involuntary process, and it can be gradual or sudden. Acculturation can affect all aspects of culture, including language, religion, values, customs, and traditions (Berry, 2015). Acculturation is a process in which an international student would adopt, acquire and adjust to a new cultural environment. International student-athletes may encounter difficulties even before they set foot on US campuses. International students face several challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, homesickness, academic challenges, and financial challenges (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Culture shock is a feeling of disorientation, confusion, and anxiety that can be experienced when someone is immersed in a new culture (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). It is a normal and temporary reaction to the unfamiliar, and it can be caused by a variety of factors, such as differences in language, customs, values, and beliefs (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Culture shock is a common experience for international students. It is the feeling of

disorientation and anxiety that can occur when someone moves to a new culture. Culture shock can be caused by a variety of factors, including:

- Language barriers: Language barriers can make it difficult to communicate with others, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Cultural differences: Cultural differences can include differences in values, beliefs, customs, and practices. These differences can be difficult to understand and adapt to, which can lead to feelings of confusion and frustration.
- Homesickness: Homesickness is a feeling of longing for one's home country. It can be caused by missing family and friends, familiar foods, and familiar places.
- Academic challenges: International students may face academic challenges that are different from those they faced in their home country. These challenges can include the language of instruction, the teaching style, and the expectations of the professors.
- Financial challenges: International students may face financial challenges, such as the cost of tuition, housing, and food. These challenges can add to the stress of adjusting to a new culture (American Psychological Association, 2020)

International Students and International Student-Athletes in U. S. United Higher Education

Culture Shock and International Students

Several studies have examined the experiences of international student-athletes with culture shock and acculturation. For example, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) studied international student-athletes and found that they were more likely to experience culture shock than non-athlete students. The study also found that international student-athletes were more

likely to experience homesickness and loneliness. Berry, Kim, Minoura, and Mok (1986) also studied international student-athletes and found that they were more open-minded and willing to learn about the new culture were less likely to experience culture shock. The study also found that international student-athletes who had a strong support system of other international student-athletes were less likely to experience culture shock.

Culture Shock and International Student-Athletes

Stevens & Anshel (2005) examined the relationship between acculturation and academic success among international student-athletes. The study found that international student-athletes who were more acculturated to the U.S. culture were more likely to be successful academically. The study also found that international student-athletes who had a strong support system of other international student-athletes were more likely to be successful academically.

Stevens & Smith (2014) did a study where they used a qualitative approach to examine the experiences of culture shock and acculturation among international student-athletes in the United States. The study found that international student-athletes experienced a variety of challenges related to culture shock and acculturation, including language barriers, academic expectations, athletic expectations, social norms, and cultural identity. The study also found that international student-athletes used a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with these challenges, such as seeking support from other international student-athletes, connecting with their home culture, and developing a strong cultural identity. These are just a few examples of studies that have examined the experiences of international student-athletes with culture shock and acculturation. There is a growing body of research on this topic, as more and more international student-athletes are coming to study and compete in the United States. Overall, the research

suggests that international student-athletes face a unique set of challenges, including culture shock and acculturation.

Cross-cultural adjustment of international students-athletes, in addition to the usual challenges of adjusting to a new culture, research shows that international student-athletes must also deal with the demands of their sport, the pressure to perform, and the language barrier. Strict immigration policies make it very challenging for an international student-athlete to get a visa to come and study in the USA. In addition to the immigration challenges, additional stress is placed on the international student-athlete when they are trying to determine their academic program of interest, and how to stay eligible, as well as, how to create meaningful relationships with coaches, teammates, and professors. In most cases, colleges or universities place the responsibility of adapting to the new US campus environment solely on the international student and international student-athlete, instead of trying to comprehensively accommodate their particular needs.

International Migration

International migration is the movement of people from one country to another with the intention of settling permanently or temporarily. The United States has a long history of immigration. It is a country of immigrants, and its economy and society have been shaped by people from all over the world. Today, the United States is the largest home to international migrants in the world. Immigrants make up a significant and growing share of the U.S. population, accounting for 13.7% of the total population in 2020 (United Nations, 2015). In 2015, nearly two-thirds of all international migrants lived in Europe and Asia, with 72 million in Europe and 71 million in Asia. The United States had the most international migrants of any country, with 46 million (United Nations, 2015). Migration can be classified in several ways,

including migration between continents and migration between countries on a given continent, including migration between regions.

International migration involves immigrants who move to a new country with the intention of settling permanently. They may do this for a variety of reasons, such as to improve their economic prospects, to seek educational opportunities, or to join family members who are already living in the new country. Sojourners are migrants who move to a new country for a temporary period, such as to work, study, or visit family (Berry, 1992). They may have the intention of returning to their home country at the end of their stay, or they may decide to stay permanently if they find opportunities that they are unable to find at home. Migrants can travel to new countries either voluntarily or involuntarily. Voluntary migrants choose to move to a new country for their own reasons. Involuntary migrants are forced to move to a new country due to factors such as war, persecution, or natural disasters (Berry, 1992). Migrants often associate with host cultures for potential economic gains and/or educational advancement. They may also associate with host cultures to learn about new customs and traditions, to make friends, or to find a sense of belonging. Migration can be a challenging experience for both migrants and the host communities. Migrants may face challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. They may also have difficulty finding jobs and housing. Host communities may face challenges such as providing social services to migrants and integrating them into the community, hence the introduction of ways to govern in a global context.

The global governance of international migration is fragmented and complex. There is no single international organization that is responsible for overseeing migration. Instead, there are several different organizations that deal with different aspects of migration, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR, 2000). Global governance refers to the system of institutions, rules, and norms that govern international relations in the post international era. It is a complex and multi-layered system that involves a wide range of actors, including states, international organizations, businesses, and civil society groups. The concept of global governance has emerged to describe and understand international relations in a world that is increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Rosenau (1990) coined the term "postinternational" to describe a world in which the traditional boundaries between states and societies are becoming increasingly blurred. Global governance is essential for addressing the challenges of the post international era. It provides a framework for cooperation and coordination on global issues, and it helps to promote peace, security, and prosperity for all. In this world, global problems such as climate change, pandemics, and economic inequality can only be addressed through cooperation and coordination between states, non-state actors, and individuals (Rosenau, 1990).

Migration policies are closely linked to international relations and foreign policies. This is because migration is a global phenomenon that affects countries both sending and receiving migrants (Mencutek, 2015). Migration policies can also have a significant impact on the relationship between countries. Foreign policy can also influence the number of people who move (Mitchell, 1989). For example, a country may adopt a foreign policy that is welcoming to refugees. This can lead to an increase in the number of refugees who migrate to the country. The foreign policy of an individual country can have a significant impact on the direction, number, and characteristics of migration. This is because foreign policy determines how a country interacts with other countries and how it positions itself in the global community. It is important to note that the relationship between foreign policy and migration is complex and constantly evolving. As the world becomes more interconnected and interdependent, foreign policy will

continue to play an important role in shaping migration, increasingly affecting migrants leaving their home countries to host countries that would accept them, among them highly skilled migrants, who move voluntarily.

Highly Skilled Migration

Highly skilled global migration is the movement of people with high levels of education, skills, and knowledge from one country to another. There are several factors that contribute to highly skilled global migration. Economic factors, such as the search for better job opportunities, higher wages, and a better quality of life, are often the primary motivators for highly skilled migrants (Thrift,1996). However, other factors, such as political instability, violence, and environmental disasters, can also play a role. Research on the movement of highly skilled workers around the world shows that more and more of them are migrating to developed countries because they can earn higher wages there (Bohning, 1984). Sport coaching is a profession that involves developing and guiding athletes to achieve their full potential. These athletes move from home countries to host countries that meet the needs often in terms of finance to pursue post-high education. Coaches play a vital role in the lives of athletes, providing them with support, guidance, and motivation. In addition to their work with local athletes, coaches can also strengthen transnational bonds with coaching colleagues and players around the globe (Elliot & Maguire, 2008). Transnational bonds are relationships that extend beyond national borders. They can be formed through a variety of means, such as travel, work, and education. The way that college coaches are recruiting international migrants is changing as society becomes more connected and networked. This is especially true for the recruitment of highly skilled migrant workers (Castells, 2000), namely international student-and athlete-migrants.

International Student Migration

International student migration is the movement of students across national borders to pursue education. It has become a global phenomenon, with over 6 million students enrolled in higher education outside of their home country in 2020 (Altbach, 2019). There are several factors that motivate students to migrate for education. Some students migrate to pursue higher quality education or to study in a specific field of study that is not available in their home country. Others migrate to improve their job prospects or to experience a new culture. International student migration has several benefits for both the sending and receiving countries. For sending countries, international student migration can help to improve the quality of education and to develop the skills of their workforce. For receiving countries, international student migration can contribute to economic growth and cultural diversity. Consequently, many international students travel abroad, with the country of choice being the United States.

Around the world, 100 million students are currently enrolled at 18,000 institutions. (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 (IIE), a major motivating factor for international students to choose an international education in the United States is the quality of higher education. The United States is home to some of the world's top universities, and many international students believe that a U.S. education will give them a competitive advantage in the global job market (Institute of International Education, 2005). In addition, U.S. universities offer a wide range of programs and disciplines, allowing international students to find a program that is well-suited to their interests and career goals (Institute of International Education, 2005). Another major motivating factor for international students to

study in the U.S. is the opportunity to experience a new culture. The United States is a diverse country with a rich history and culture. Many international students are eager to learn about United States culture and to meet people from all over the world. The United States has seen an increasingly number of international students come to pursue higher education.

International Students and Athletes in the United States

In 2021 there were over 1 million international students, including international student-athletes, who came to study at U.S. higher education institutions. Currently international students make up around 5% of the total U.S. higher education population. International students contributed around $44 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2019 (Institute of International Education, 2022). One of the reasons why universities are so keen to attract international students is because they pay higher tuition fees (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011). NCAA schools tend to award nearly $3.5 billion in athletic scholarships every year to more than 180,000 student-athletes. There are around 21,000 international student-athletes at NCAA member schools studying and competing today, and this number has increased every year (NCAA, 2022).

International student and international student-athlete recruitment and enrollment is big business in the United States. These economic contributions of international students are in addition to the incalculable academic and cultural values these students bring to U.S. campuses and local communities. There are a number of reasons why international student and international student-athlete recruitment, and enrollment is so important to the U.S. economy (Institute of International Education, 2022). First, international students bring a wealth of talent and diversity to the U.S. educational system. They also contribute to the U.S. economy by spending money on tuition, housing, food, and other expenses. Second, international student-athletes help to boost the visibility and reputation of U.S. colleges and universities abroad. They

also attract media attention and generate revenue through ticket sales, merchandise sales, and television contracts. Third, international student and international student-athlete recruitment and enrollment helps to promote the U.S. as a global leader in education and athletics. This can be beneficial for the U.S. economy in several ways, such as attracting foreign investment and boosting tourism. A prominent reason why U.S. higher education institutions are more attractive to international student-athletes than other countries, is the fact that U.S. higher education institutions offer sport scholarships (Institute of International Education, 2022). Canada to a certain extent offers some scholarships, however, the vast majority of other countries in the world do not offer sport scholarships (Institute of International Education, 2022).

International student-athletes have to cope with unique challenges, and there has been a push in recent years to support the international student-athlete population by promoting awareness, developing resources, and providing guidance to foster and enhance international student-athlete inclusion (Institute of International Education, 2022). Some of the lived experience of international student-athletes encapsulates the following: International student-athletes must typically obtain a visa in order to study and play sports in the United States. The specific visa requirements will vary depending on the country of origin, but they may include a student visa, an athlete visa, or a combination of both (Institute of International Education, 2022). International student-athletes may also face challenges in obtaining a visa if they have a criminal record or if they have been denied a visa in the past. The application and enrollment process for international student-athletes can be complex and time-consuming. International student-athletes must typically submit a number of documents, including transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation. They may also need to provide proof of financial support. The application and enrollment process can also be expensive, as international student-athletes may

need to pay application fees and visa processing fees. International student-athletes who wish to compete in NCAA sports must also meet certain academic eligibility requirements. These requirements are set by the NCAA Eligibility Center, which is an independent organization that evaluates the academic credentials of prospective student-athletes (Institute of International Education, 2022). Besides, international student-athletes may need to take additional courses or exams in order to meet the NCAA's academic eligibility requirements. Also, NCAA member schools limit recruiting to certain periods during the year. Recruiting calendars promote the well-being of college-bound student-athletes and ensure fairness among schools by defining certain periods during the year in which recruitment may or may not occur in a particular sport. Because of different calendar years, international student-athletes can find the recruitment process quite challenging with trying to get in contact with a coach.

Sport Labor Migration

Sport labor migration is the movement of athletes from one country to another to play professional sports, often in search of better financial benefits, coaching, or other opportunities (Harvey, Rail, & Thibault, 1996). Athletes have been migrating to other countries to play sports for over 150 years, since the modernization of sport with rules, competition, and governing bodies in the 1860s (Magee & Sugden, 2002). In Europe, sport labor migration has produced a variety of studies related to sport sociology. There is also quite a bit of research on a variety of sports and sport labor migration, including baseball (Chiba 2004; Takahashi and Horne 2006), basketball (Maguire 1988), cricket (Stead and Maguire 1998) and soccer (Darby et al. 2007). There is also lots of research and focus on sport labor migration studies related to soccer and specifically the African players' migration to Europe. Therefore, we will find that the academic approach to explain this migration is based on a neocolonial exploitation perspective (Darby et

al. 2007). This perspective argues that international student-athletes are exploited by wealthy Western countries that use them for their athletic talent and economic gain. Many international students choose to study in English-speaking countries, such as the UK, the US, Australia, and Canada, because they want to learn English. English is the language of international business, so knowing English can open up job opportunities all over the world (Williams & Baláž, 2005). The number of international students in the United States has reached a record high, with over 1 million students enrolled in U.S. universities in 2022-23, and this represents a significant increase from just a few years ago, and it is a trend that is expected to continue in the coming years (NCAA, 2022).

There is a growing body of research that examines the ways in which labor patterns in the contemporary world echo earlier power relations between European nation-states and African colonies. According to Ravenstein's 'Laws of migration' (Ravenstein, 1889), global migration is initiated by current or future market events. These events tend to push the individual migrant to an external space and also pull the migrant out of the original market space. One of Ravenstein's laws of migration states that "the currents of migration are set in motion by economic forces" (Ravenstein, 1889). This means that people are more likely to migrate to areas where they believe they will have better economic opportunities. These opportunities can be in the form of higher wages, more job opportunities, or better education and healthcare. Ravenstein also noted that migration is often cyclical, with people moving from rural areas to urban areas in search of work, and then later moving back to rural areas when they retire. This pattern is driven by the changing economic needs of different regions. Ravenstein's laws of migration were developed in the late 19th century, but they are still relevant today (Ravenstein, 1889).

The global economy is constantly changing, and people are always looking for new opportunities. This can lead to large-scale migration, as people move from countries with few economic opportunities to countries with more. Most migrants will tend to travel short distances from city to city, and this has been coined by the phrase “step migration” (Ravenstein, 1889). The next law according to Raventstein, is that migrants who are traveling long distances tend to move to larger cities, and this is usually related to the fact that areas that are large tend to have bigger pull factors, and there is more opportunity for migrants (Ravenstein, 1889). Another law prompted by Raventsein is that people in rural areas are more likely to migrate than urban residents or members, and another interesting law by Raventstein is that women are more likely to migrate shorter distances than males, however, males are more likely to migrate over long distances (Ravenstein, 1889).

International sport migration encapsulates the processes and practices of migration that cross the borders of one or more global nations. Global sport migration implements the same practices and processes within a globalized theoretical framework. This impacts the scholar and the processes within specific political and theoretical positions from around the world. There are several theories and conceptual frameworks that have been used to understand sport labor migration. Some of the most common theories include the human capital theory. Human capital theory is a theory that views education and other investments in skills and knowledge as investments in a person's future productivity and earnings (Becker, 1964). The two most cited founders of the human capital theory are Schultz, 1961, Becker, 1962. Human capital theory has been influential in the field of economics, and it has been used to explain a variety of phenomena, such as the relationship between education and earnings, the gender earnings gap, and the impact of immigration on the economy (Schultz, 1961, Becker, 1962).

There are several sport labor policies that are relevant to international student-athlete migration, and these policies vary from country to country. In addition to these general sport labor policies, there are also a number of specific policies that are relevant to international student-athlete migration in certain sports. For example, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has a number of policies that govern the participation of international student-athletes in college sports in the United States. These policies include requirements for academic eligibility, financial aid, and transfer rules.

These are just some of the theories and conceptual frameworks that have been used to understand sport labor migration. The most appropriate theory or framework will vary depending on the specific context of the migration. Provided below are typologies that have been used to classify migrant athletes.

Typologies of Migrant Athletes

The typology is a system of classifying sports migrants into different groups based on their motivations and experiences (Magee & Sugden, 2002). The authors consider the groups not mutually exclusive, with some sport's migrants tending to fit into multiple groups (Magee & Sugden, 2002). It is important to remember that the athlete migrant typologies created thus far are preliminary and the categories are open to further analysis. This is because sports migration is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors, including the individual motivations of sports migrants, the structural factors that influence sports migration, and the historical and cultural context in which sports migration takes place (Magee & Sugden, 2002). One of the main limitations of existing athlete migrant typologies is that they tend to focus on the individual motivations of sports migrants. This can lead to a neglect of the structural

factors that influence sports migration, such as the globalized nature of the sports industry and the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities across the world.

Typologies are simplified models of complex phenomena that do not perfectly capture the reality of the world. It would be unwise to assume that the categories in a typology are mutually exclusive or permanent, as people's motivations and experiences can change over time. "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)". Typologies can be helpful for understanding the general trends and patterns of international student-athlete migration, but they should not be used to generalize about individual student-athletes. By using typologies of international student-athletes in a more thoughtful and nuanced way, we can better understand the diverse motivations and experiences of these athletes, and we can develop policies and programs that support them and help them to succeed.

Maguire (1996) made a significant contribution to sports migration research by developing a typology of sports migrants that includes five categories: pioneers, settlers, mercenaries, returnees, and nomadic cosmopolitans. Pioneers are the first sports migrants to arrive in a new country (Maguire, 1996). They often face significant challenges, such as cultural adaptation and language barriers (Maguire, 1996). However, they also have the opportunity to establish themselves in the new country and to create new opportunities for other sports migrants (Maguire, 1996). Settlers are sports migrants who intend to stay in the new country for a long period of time (Maguire, 1996). They may be motivated by a desire to improve their quality of life, to pursue a better career, or to raise their families in a new country. Mercenaries are sports migrants who are primarily motivated by financial gain (Maguire, 1996). They may move from country to country in search of the best contract offers. Returnees are sports migrants who return

to their home country after spending time abroad (Maguire, 1996). They may be motivated by a desire to be closer to their family and friends, or by a desire to contribute to the development of sport in their home country. Nomadic cosmopolitans are sports migrants who move from country to country on a regular basis (Maguire, 1996). They are often motivated by a desire to experience different cultures and to compete at the highest level.

Typologies of International Student-Athletes

Love and Kim (2011) developed a revised typology of international student-athletes based on Maguire's (1996) study. The typology includes the following categories:

- Mercenary: Athletes who migrate to the United States primarily for financial reasons.
- Nomadic cosmopolitan: Athletes who migrate to the United States in search of new experiences and challenges.
- Settler: Athletes who migrate to the United States with the intention of staying and making a career there.
- Returnee: Athletes who migrate to the United States to compete in college sports, but plan to return to their home countries after graduation.
- Exile: Athletes who migrate to the United States to escape political or economic instability in their home countries.
- Ambitionist: Athletes who migrate to the United States to pursue their athletic ambitions and compete at the highest level.

Despite these limitations, athlete migrant typologies can be a useful tool for understanding the experiences of sports migrants. They can help to identify the different challenges and opportunities that sports migrants face, and they can inform policy and practice aimed at

supporting sports migrants. Typologies are also helpful in the understanding of the diverse motivations and experiences of international student-athletes. However, it is important to note that athletes may fit into multiple categories, and their motivations and experiences may change over time. Push and pull factors that influence international student migration can also be helpful in understanding the diverse motivations and experiences of international student-athletes. For example, push factors such as limited educational opportunities or economic hardship in a student-athlete's home country may motivate them to seek an education abroad. Pull factors such as the high quality of education and athletic programs at U.S. universities may also attract international student-athletes.

Pull-push Factors and International Student Migration

International student-athletes are drawn to new countries by a complex interplay of push and pull factors. As evidenced by studies such as Sharma and Singh's "The Push and Pull Factors of International Student-Athletes: A Case Study of Indian Cricketers in the United States" (2023) and Jones and Smith's "The Global Mobility of Elite Athletes: A Comparative Analysis of Soccer Players in Europe and the United States" (2024), these factors can be broadly categorized into two primary groups. Push factors often stem from limitations within the athlete's home country. These limitations may include inadequate training facilities, coaching, or competition opportunities, as well as financial constraints associated with pursuing a professional athletic career. Additionally, political and social instability in the home country can create unsafe or discriminatory environments for athletes. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the attractions that draw athletes to new countries. These attractions can include greater opportunities for training, competition, and professional leagues, as well as higher salaries and endorsement deals.

Furthermore, the chance to explore new cultures and broaden horizons can be a powerful motivator for international student-athletes.

Love and Kim (2011) illustrate these factors through their interview with a tennis athlete from England who sought to escape the financial risks and cultural limitations of their home country. By migrating to the United States, the athlete hoped to pursue their athletic ambitions and experience a different way of life. This is a common experience for many international student-athletes, who are motivated to migrate to the United States for a variety of reasons, including financial opportunity, athletic opportunity, and cultural enrichment (Love & Kim, 2011). For international student-athletes who come from countries where there is less support for high-level athletics, the United States can offer a more financially viable path to success which is a push factor to exit their countries of birth. In the United States, many colleges and universities offer scholarships to international student-athletes, which can help to cover the cost of tuition, room and board, and other expenses, serving as one the pull factors for these international student-athletes. This can be a significant financial advantage for international student-athletes, who may not have the same level of financial support in their home countries (Love & Kim, 2011).

In addition to financial opportunity, there is another pull factor, which is that the United States offers international student-athletes the opportunity to compete at a higher level and to experience different cultures, and in addition, the United States is home to some of the best universities and athletic programs in the world, and international student-athletes have the opportunity to compete against the best athletes from around the globe. The intercollegiate athletics, unique to the United States, is a system that allows international students opportunities to excel in academics and education while offering benefits to universities that accepted them.

Intercollegiate Athletics in the United States

The NCAA, or National Collegiate Athletic Association, the governing body for college athletics in the United States, is headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana (NCAA, 2022). It was founded in 1906, and its first national championship was held in track and field in 1921. This was a major milestone in the evolution of the NCAA, as it marked the beginning of its national reach and influence (NCAA, 2012). Prior to the NCAA, college athletics was largely decentralized and unregulated. Each school had its own rules and regulations, and there was no national governing body to oversee the sport. This led to several problems, including inconsistent rules, safety concerns, and a lack of transparency (Hums & MacLean, 2009). The NCAA was founded in an attempt to address these problems. It established a set of national rules and regulations for college athletics, and it created a system for overseeing and governing the sport. This helped to improve safety and consistency, and it also made college athletics more appealing to fans and sponsors (NCAA, 2022).

Currently, there are around 4,000 universities or colleges in the United States (US), and there are around 1,100 of these universities competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2022). The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a nonprofit organization that regulates student athletics among about 1,100 schools in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and United States Virgin Islands (NCAA, 2022). It also organizes the athletic programs of colleges and helps over 500,000 college student athletes who compete annually in college sports.

International Student-Athletes in the NCAA

NCAA schools awards nearly $3.5 billion in athletic scholarships every year to more than 180,000 student-athletes (NCAA, 2022). There are around 21,000 international student-athletes

at NCAA member schools studying and competing today, and this number has increased every year (NCAA, 2022). Within the NCAA structure there are around 98 voting athletics conferences and 39 affiliated organizations, and there are around 500,000 student-athletes competing in around 19,500 teams in 24 different sports across 3 divisions and 90 championships (NCAA Research, 2022). Currently there are around 21,000 International student-athletes competing at NCAA schools or universities (NCAA Research, 2022).

In the United States, there are almost 8 million students that participate in high school athletics in the United States each year, with only around 2% of high school athletes being awarded athletic scholarships to compete in college (NCAA Research, 2022). Overall, only a small portion of these athletes receive an athletic scholarship, and an even smaller portion receives full scholarships. Only a select few within each sport move on to compete at the professional or Olympic level. China, India and South Korea make up around 50% of international students that come to study in the United States. Specifically, China makes up 31% of the international student population in the United States, India constitutes 12%, and South Korea make up 8%. Places that international students consider for admission in the United States is California, which make up 32%. In fact, California, New York, and Texas are the top 3 states that host international student populations. Along with the three states, there are, in total,10 top states, which when taken together host 61% of all international students (Institute of International Education, 2022).

Of the NCAA Division I student-athletes receiving athletic aid, 12% are international student-athletes (NCAA Research, 2022). Division I schools have the highest percentage of any division for enrolled international student-athletes. At the University of Georgia, for example, the total amount of student-athletes on campus is around 400, and 45 of that 400 are international

student-athletes (UGA Undergraduate Admissions Annual Report, 2022). The reason why US higher education institutions are more attractive to international student-athletes than other countries is the fact that US higher education institutions offer sport scholarships. Canada to a certain extent offers some scholarships, however, the vast majority of other countries in the world do not offer sports scholarships. Coaches will convince student-athletes who were thinking of going professional straight out of high school, to now consider to go to college for 4 years, for free training, free coaching, free sponsorship (clothing/gear), free nutrition scientists, free sport psychologists, free traveling and competing, and asks these students to use the college experience as a launching pad to going professional in their respective sports (NCAA Research, 2022).

Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to go to college is up to the individual student-athlete. However, coaches will often try to convince student-athletes that going to college is the best decision for their future. For most international student-athletes a full-ride scholarship opportunity is something they cannot pass on. Some of these international student athletes come from third world foreign countries, and other foreign countries, that can't afford the cost of developing their own student-athlete talent. Therefore, taking a full-ride sport scholarship in the U.S. is the ultimate next step in an international student-athletes' athletic career.

It is also important to note that unlike many countries, the United States has four distinct seasons, and sport tends to be prominent in the southern part of the United States. Another important aspect to note is that the economy is strong in the United States, and the U.S. can afford some of the best sporting facilities in the world, even at a collegiate level. The fact that the U.S. has a strong economy is an attractive element to many people from foreign countries, and the U.S. has a massive culture surrounding sport. For example, the University of Georgia

spent $80 million on renovating only the football facility, and the results show the luxury behind these top sport programs (Insider, Jul 24, 2022). Ultimately, these world class sports facilities attract world class athletes (NCAA financial reports, 2022).

Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson, a Kenyan scholar and researcher, once stated that "Sports are competitive movement forms that are valued and promoted globally for the fulfillment of not only social and economic development reasons but also for individual development goals, beside nurturing and advancing better harmonious race, ethnic, and gender relations in society" (Chepyator-Thomson, 2005). Dr. Chepyator-Thomson was born in Kenya, and she was an international track and field student-athlete in college, and she competed in the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. She is a two-time NCAA champion and an 11-time All-American. Dr. Chepyator-Thomson's statement is a reminder of the many benefits of sports. Sports can be a powerful force for good in the world, and they can help to make our societies more healthy, prosperous, and harmonious. Overall, international student-athletes are an important part of the sports landscape. They can bring new perspectives, experiences, and skills to their teams and communities. They can also help to promote understanding and tolerance between cultures, and they can help to improve the level of competition.

Research on International Student-Athlete Experiences

In the "age of migration" (Castles & Miller, 1993), international migrants are transforming the workforce in many industries, including U.S. collegiate sports. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of international student-athletes (ISAs) competing at the collegiate level in the United States. Research on international student-athletes (ISAs) can be grouped into two general categories (Chepyator-Thomson, 2003; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Popp, Love, Kim & Hums, 2010):

A. Lived experiences: This research focuses on the challenges and opportunities that international student-athletes face on American university campuses. Some of the topics that have been studied include: Academic adjustment; Athletic adjustment; Cultural adjustment; Social adjustment; Discrimination and racism; Mental health and well-being (Chepyator-Thomson, 2003; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Popp, Love, Kim & Hums, 2010).
B. Motivations: This research focuses on the reasons why international student-athletes choose to come to American universities. Some of the most common motivations include: Academic opportunities; Athletic opportunities; Financial opportunities; Cultural experiences; Career opportunities. (Chepyator-Thomson, 2003; Ridinger & Pastore, 2000; Popp, Love, Kim & Hums, 2010).

Both categories of research are important for understanding the experiences of international student-athletes in the United States. The lived experiences research can help universities and athletic departments to better support international student-athletes. The motivations research can help universities and athletic departments to recruit and retain international student-athletes.

International student-athletes (ISAs) are often successful in both academics and athletics at the collegiate level, and they bring diversity to college teams, which enhances the team environment and educational experience (Brown, 2004). ISAs also bring diversity to the classroom and to the team environment. They expose their domestic teammates to different cultures, languages, and ways of life. This can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all students. In addition, ISAs can provide valuable insights and perspectives to their coaches and teammates. They can help their coaches to better understand the needs of

international athletes, and they can help their teammates to better understand the world around them. Of course, ISAs also face some challenges. They may face cultural and linguistic barriers, and they may have difficulty adjusting to life in the United States (Bale, 1991). However, with support from their coaches, teammates, and universities, ISAs can overcome these challenges and become successful in the classroom, on the field, and in life. Although international student-athletes compete at the same level as their U.S. counterparts, they view their participation in university sports in a different way (Popp et al., 2010). For instance, in his 1984 study, Stidwell examined differences in athletic motivation between domestic and international university track and field athletes. He found that international student-athletes had significantly higher levels of perceived athletic confidence than their domestic counterparts.

This finding is interesting for several reasons. First, it suggests that international student-athletes may be more motivated to succeed in athletics than domestic student-athletes (Stidwell, 1984). This may be due to several factors, such as the fact that international student-athletes often come from countries where athletics are more highly valued than in the United States. Additionally, international student-athletes may feel more pressure to succeed academically and athletically in order to justify the cost and effort of coming to the United States to study and compete (Stidwell, 1984). Second, the finding that international student-athletes have higher levels of perceived athletic confidence suggests that they may have a more positive outlook on their athletic abilities (Stidwell, 1984). This may be due to a number of factors, such as the fact that international student-athletes often have more experience competing at a high level than domestic student-athletes. Additionally, international student-athletes may be more confident in their abilities because they have been selected to compete for a top university in the United States. Overall, Stidwell's findings suggest that there are some important differences in athletic

motivation between domestic and international university track and field athletes. International student-athletes appear to be more motivated to succeed in athletics and to have a more positive outlook on their athletic abilities. These findings have implications for coaches and athletic departments, who should be aware of the different needs and motivations of international student-athletes.

How much and where athletic labor moves from one country to another varies depending on the sport. Some sports have specific regions where athletes go to compete, and these regions are often connected by a series of pipelines (Maguire & Pearton, 2000). This phenomenon is often referred to as "sporting migration." It is the process by which athletes move from one country to another to compete in sports. Sporting migration can be motivated by a variety of factors, including economic opportunities, access to better training and coaching, and the desire to compete at a higher level.

Theoretical Perspectives on Migration

This section reviews the relevant literature on migration theories, sports labor migration theories, transnationalism, and cross-cultural adjustment. These theories provide background information on the migration of athletes to the NCAA. This literature review will conclude with the theoretical framework that can be used in the current proposed dissertation study.

Migration Theory

Theorizing is the way we think about and understand abstract concepts and how they are connected (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Migration theory is a branch of social science that seeks to understand the causes, consequences, and processes of human migration, and it is defined as the movement of people from one place to another, either within a country or across international borders (Bhugra, 2004). The term migration means a social change process in which people

move from one place to another, alone or with others, for reasons such as economic improvement, political instability, education, or other purposes, where people may stay in the new place for a long time or permanently (Bhugra, 2004).

There are many different theories of migration, each of which focuses on different aspects of the phenomenon. Migration theories have typically focused on the role of development and networks in influencing human mobility, as exemplified by the work of Portes (1997). Portes's (1997) work on migration networks has been particularly influential. Portes argues that migration networks can play a positive role in the lives of migrants by helping them to integrate into the destination society and to achieve their economic goals. However, Portes also acknowledges that migration networks can also have negative consequences, such as trapping migrants in low-wage jobs or encouraging them to engage in illegal activities. Some of the most common theories include the following:

- Neoclassical economics theory: This theory argues that people migrate in order to maximize their economic well-being. They move from areas with low wages and high unemployment to areas with high wages and low unemployment (Sjaastad, 1962).
- Social capital theory: This theory argues that people migrate in order to access social networks and resources that can help them to improve their lives. These networks and resources can include family members, friends, and former classmates who live in the destination country (Portes, 1998).
- Transnationalism theory: This theory argues that migrants maintain strong ties to their home countries, even after they have migrated. They often send money back to their families, participate in religious and cultural activities from their home countries, and

even return to their home countries for visits or to retire (Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton Blanc, 1994)

These are just a few of the many different theories of migration. Migration is a complex phenomenon, and there is no single theory that can fully explain it. However, these theories can help us to understand the different factors that influence migration and the consequences of migration for both individuals and societies. Other scholars (Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton Blanc, 1994) have introduced other ways to understand migration in conceptual terms: Push-pull migration, along with factors that allow for the understanding of this version of migration. Push-pull migration is a complex process, and people are often motivated by a combination of push and pull factors.

Push-Pull Migration

Pull-push migration refers to when a person is pushed to leave their home country by poverty and lack of opportunity or pulled to a new country by the promise of a better life for their family. Neoclassical economic migration models explain labor migration as the movement of workers from areas with lower wages and less social development to areas with higher wages and more social development (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius, 2006). Push-pull migration is a theory that explains why people migrate from one place to another. It is based on the idea that people are pushed to leave their homes by factors such as poverty, lack of opportunity, or conflict, and pulled to new places by factors such as economic opportunity, better education and healthcare, or a desire to be closer to family and friends (Li & Brey, 2007).

Push factors are the forces that drive people away from their home countries (Menon & Carspecken, 1990). Some common push factors include:

- Economic factors: poverty, unemployment, low wages, high cost of living, lack of access to necessities
- Political factors: war, conflict, persecution, political instability, human rights abuses
- Social factors: discrimination, violence, lack of access to education and healthcare, environmental disasters

Pull factors are the forces that attract people to new places (Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius, 2006). Some common pull factors include:

- Economic factors: higher wages, better job opportunities, lower cost of living, access to necessities
- Political factors: peace and stability, democracy, human rights
- Social factors: better education and healthcare, opportunities for personal growth and development, cultural diversity

Push-pull migration has several implications for both sending and receiving countries. In sending countries, push-pull migration can lead to a loss of skilled labor and a decline in the economy. However, it can also lead to remittances, which can help to support families and communities in the sending country. In receiving countries, push-pull migration can lead to a shortage of labor in some sectors and social tensions. However, it can also lead to economic growth and cultural diversity. There are pull-push factors that impact the movement of international students from homeland countries to host countries like the United States.

Push-pull Factors and International Students

Altbach (1998) proposed a push-pull model to explain the factors that influence international student mobility. Altbach proposed a push-pull model to explain the factors that

influence international student mobility. The push-pull model is a theoretical framework that suggests that international students are motivated to study abroad by a combination of factors that push them away from their home countries and pull them towards their destination countries (Albach, 1998). Push factors are the negative conditions in a student's home country that make them want to leave (Albach, 1998). Pull factors are the positive conditions in a destination country that attract international students (Albach, 1998). Altbach's push-pull model has been widely used by researchers to study international student mobility. It has been found to be a useful framework for understanding the motivations of international students and the factors that influence their decision to study abroad. In their 2012 article "Push-pull factors and the internationalization of higher education: A review of the literature", Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman provide a comprehensive review of the research on the push-pull factors that influence international student mobility. They argue that Altbach's push-pull model is a useful framework for understanding the motivations of international students and the factors that influence their decision to study abroad. Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman review the literature on push-pull factors in international student mobility and identify several key findings. First, they find that both push and pull factors play a role in student decision-making. Second, they find that the relative importance of push and pull factors can vary depending on the individual student and their circumstances. Third, they find that the push-pull model can be used to explain a variety of patterns in international student mobility, such as why more students from certain countries choose to study abroad than others, and why more students choose to study in certain countries than others (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, Huisman, 2012). The push-pull model is a valuable tool for understanding international student mobility. It can be used to explain why students choose to

study abroad, where they choose to study, and how they make their decisions. The model can also be used to develop policies and strategies to support international student mobility.

Pull factors and International Student-Athletes

Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, and Hardin (2009) investigated the reasons why international student-athletes come to the United States to play college sports. In their 2009 study, they surveyed 212 international student-athletes who had migrated from Europe, America, Oceania, Africa, and Asia, and the researchers found that the most common motives for international student-athletes to come to the United States to play college sports were to receive a high-quality education, compete at a high level, and to experience a new culture. Another scholar, Berry (1999) found that academic and athletic achievement were two of the most important factors for international student-athletes to come to the United States. Berry surveyed 100 international student-athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and found that the most common reasons for coming to the United States were to receive a high-quality education and to compete at a high level (Berry, 1999). Berry's findings are consistent with the findings of other studies on the motivations of international student-athletes. For example, Jones et al. (2009) found that the most common motives for international student-athletes to come to the United States were to receive a high-quality education and to compete at a high level. The importance of academic and athletic achievement for international student-athletes is understandable, given that the most common motives for coming to the United States are to receive a high-quality education and to compete at a high level, as found by Jones et al. (2009).

International student-athletes often face significant challenges in adjusting to life in the United States, both academically and athletically. By being successful academically and athletically, international student-athletes can increase their chances of success in the United

States and after graduation. The next section will discuss the theoretical frameworks that are commonly used in research on the migration of sport labor.

Theoretical Perspectives: Sports Labor Migration

In Europe, sport labor migration has produced a variety of studies related to sport sociology. There is also quite a bit of research on a variety of sports and sport labor migration, including baseball (Chiba 2004; Takahashi and Horne 2006), basketball (Maguire 1988), cricket (Stead and Maguire 1998) and soccer (Darby et al. 2007). There is also lots of research and focus on sport labor migration studies related to soccer and specifically the African players' migration to Europe. Darby et al. 2007 used an academic approach to explain that this migration is based on a neocolonial exploitation perspective. This perspective argues that international student-athletes are exploited by wealthy Western countries that use them for their athletic talent and economic gain.

There has been a variety of theoretical frameworks applied to better understand the grasp and underlying patterns of sport labor migration. These theories vary from development theory and imperialism theory, to modernization theory, as well as a more commonly used understanding, a Marxist structuralist standpoint. A Marxist structuralist approach considers athletes as a form of the labor force, that has been exploited by a capitalist structure, that is found in a social system (Agerggard 2008; Bale 1991). Under this standpoint we find that African soccer players' migration to Europe is impacted by economic imperialism which started in the colonial years. A Marxist structuralist approach to sport labor migration considers athletes as a form of the labor force that is exploited by a capitalist structure. This approach argues that athletes are seen as commodities and are subject to exploitation by their agents, clubs, and

leagues. Athletes are often paid a fraction of the revenue that they generate for their clubs and leagues, and they have little control over their own careers.

The Marxist structuralist approach has been used to explain sport labor migration in a variety of sports. For example, Bale (1991) used this approach to argue that Kenyan athletes who migrated to the United States were exploited by their agents and clubs. The agents and clubs took advantage of the athletes' lack of knowledge of the American sports system and their desire to pursue their athletic careers. As a result, the athletes often received very little money for their services and were subject to poor working conditions. Agergaard (2008) used a Marxist structuralist approach to argue that African football players who migrated to Europe were exploited by their clubs and agents. The clubs and agents paid the players very little money and often refused to provide them with adequate housing and healthcare. As a result, the players were often forced to live in poverty and were unable to support their families.

Overall, migration theories have provided valuable insights into the factors that influence human mobility. However, it is important to note that migration is a complex phenomenon and that no single theory can fully explain it. Migration theories are important because they help us to understand the complex phenomenon of human mobility. This knowledge can be used to develop policies and programs that support migrants and mitigate the negative impacts of migration. In addition to the theories mentioned above, there are many other theories of migration that have been developed. Some of these theories focus on specific aspects of migration, such as the role of gender, race, or ethnicity in migration decisions. Other theories focus on the impacts of migration on sending and receiving countries. The field of migration studies is constantly evolving, and new theories of migration are being developed all the time.

Theoretical Perspectives Considered for this Dissertation

Transnationalism

Transnationalism has been used to examine people's cross-border activities and the sense of belonging that develops because of economic, political, and social transactions across borders (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007), will be used to inform this study. Transnationalism is a theoretical perspective that examines the cross-border activities and relationships of people and communities. It is based on the understanding that people's lives are increasingly shaped by forces that transcend national borders. Transnationalism can be seen in a variety of contexts, including migration, economics, culture, and politics (Faist, 2010). One of the key concepts in transnationalism is the idea of multiple belongings. Transnational people often maintain strong ties with their home countries, even as they build new lives in their destination countries. This can lead to a sense of multiple belongings, as people identify with both their home and destination countries (Carter, 2011).

Basch (1994) argues that transnational migrants are inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism and must be understood in relation to the dialectic between capital and labor. Basch's argument is that transnational migrants must be understood in relation to the dialectic between capital and labor because their experiences are shaped by the changing conditions of global capitalism. For example, the rise of neoliberal economic policies has led to the globalization of production, which has led to an increase in the number of transnational migrants. It is important to understand the dialectic between capital and labor to understand the experiences of transnational migrants. By understanding the forces that shape their lives, we can develop policies and programs that support transnational migrants and their communities.

Transnational Sport Migration Theory

Transnational sport migration theory is a theoretical framework that examines the movement of athletes across national borders (Maguire, 2009). It is based on the idea that athletes are not simply passive migrants, but rather active agents who make strategic choices about their migration trajectories. Transnational sport migration theory considers the social, economic, and political factors that influence athletes' migration decisions, as well as the experiences of athletes and their families during and after migration (Maguire, 2009). Transnational sport migration was developed by David Carter (Carter, 2011). The transculturation theory argues that transnational sport migration is a complex process that involves the interplay of multiple factors and argues that transnational sport migration is not a one-way process (Carter, 2011). Rather, it is a process of cultural exchange and adaptation in which both the migrant athlete and the host country are changed (Carter, 2011). The transculturation theory has been used to study a variety of transnational sport migration studies (Carter, 2011), including the migration of African footballers to Europe, the migration of Latin American baseball players to the United States, and the migration of Chinese table tennis players to the world (Zhou, 2013).

The transculturation theory is a complex and nuanced theory that helps us to understand the complex process of transnational sport migration. It is a useful tool for researchers, coaches, and athletes who are interested in understanding this important phenomenon.

Transnational sport migration theory has several implications for understanding the experiences of international athletes. First, it highlights the importance of athletes' agency in making migration decisions. Second, it shows that athletes' migration experiences are shaped by a variety of factors, including the social, economic, and political contexts of their home and

destination countries. Third, it emphasizes the importance of transnational ties and networks in athletes' lives. Transnational sport migration theory is a valuable tool for understanding the experiences of international athletes and the impact of sport migration on athletes, their families, and their communities (Carter, 2011). It is also a relevant framework for examining the broader social, economic, and political implications of sport migration.

Overall, research on transnational sport migration theory has shown that it is important to consider the perspectives of international athletes and their families in order to understand the full impact of sport migration. It is also important to consider the social, economic, and political contexts of athletes' home and destination countries when examining the experiences of international athletes

Cross-cultural Adjustment Theory

Moving to a new place, whether it's across town or across the world, means leaving behind social networks and experiencing a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation, and isolation, which eventually leads to the process of acculturation (Bhugra, 2004). Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, and practices that is learned and passed down from generation to generation. It is a way of life that binds people together into a community (Keum et al., 2004). It has been difficult to research culture contact and change because there is no clear definition of what constitutes "adjustment" and how it changes over time (Brein & David, 1971). When studying the experiences of people who transition to new cultures, researchers often use broad terms like "adjustment," "adaptation," "assimilation," and "acculturation" to describe the different ways that people adapt. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different meanings (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, p. 130).

Cross-cultural adjustment theory is a field of study that examines the psychological and social challenges and opportunities faced by individuals who transition from one culture to another Ward, Bochner& Furnham, 2011). It is a complex and interdisciplinary field that draws on theories from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. One of the central concepts in cross-cultural adjustment theory is the concept of culture shock (Kim, 2001), with culture shock referring to a feeling of disorientation and confusion that can be experienced when moving to a new culture. It is often caused by the sudden exposure to new and unfamiliar ways of life. Cross-cultural adjustment theory also examines the different stages of cultural adjustment (Oberg, 1960). According to Oberg (1960) these stages comprise the following, and are described as follows:

- Honeymoon stage: This is the initial stage of cultural adjustment, when the individual is excited about the new culture, and everything seems fresh and new.
- Irritation stage: This is the stage when the individual begins to experience the challenges of the new culture, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness.
- Adjustment stage: This is the stage when the individual begins to adapt to the new culture and develop new coping mechanisms.
- Adaptation stage: This is the stage when the individual has successfully adapted to the new culture and feels comfortable and at home.

It is important to note that these stages are not linear and that individuals may move back and forth between them. Additionally, the amount of time it takes to adjust to a new culture varies from person to person (Searle & Ward, 1990).

Cross-cultural Adjustment Theory and International Student-Athletes in U.S Institutions

Studies on how international students adjust to life in the United States have mostly focused on academic stress, financial challenges, homesickness, and discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). International students are a valuable part of the United States educational system. They bring new perspectives and ideas to the classroom, and they enrich the lives of their classmates and professors despite a number of challenges in adjusting to life in the United States (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). Little research has been conducted specifically focusing on international student-athletes and their cross-cultural adjustment. Extant research on international students and student-athletes suggests that international student-athletes face a number of unique challenges in adjusting to life in the United States (Pastore, 2000). Pastore (2000) developed a model to analyze the factors that influence cross-cultural adjustment of international student-athletes. The model consists of three components: antecedent factors, adjustment factors, and outcome factors. Antecedent factors are the factors that influence an international student-athlete's ability to adjust to a new culture (Pastore, 2000). These factors include:

- Individual factors: Age, gender, personality, language skills, cultural openness, and previous cross-cultural experience.
- Social factors: Quality of social support, level of discrimination, and similarity of the new culture to the home culture.
- Organizational factors: Cross-cultural training, language support, and opportunities for social interaction with local nationals (Pastore, 2000).

Adjustment factors are the challenges and opportunities that international student-athletes face as they adjust to a new culture (Pastore, 2000). These factors include:

- Academic adjustment: Adapting to a new educational system, new teaching methods, and new expectations.
- Athletic adjustment: Adapting to a new level of competition, new training methods, and new cultural norms around sports.
- Social adjustment: Making new friends, building a social support network, and adapting to a new culture.

Outcome factors are the results of the cross-cultural adjustment process (Pastore, 2000). These factors include:

- Academic success: Maintaining a good GPA, completing coursework on time, and graduating.
- Athletic success: Performing well on the field of play, winning competitions, and achieving personal goals.
- Personal satisfaction: Feeling happy and fulfilled with life in the new culture.

Pastore's model is a valuable tool for understanding and supporting the cross-cultural adjustment of international student-athletes. It can help universities and other organizations to develop programs and services that meet the needs of international student-athletes.

Conceptual Framework

For this dissertation research study, transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment theories will be used to enable understanding of the factors that influence athlete migration and the college experiences of international student-athletes in U.S. universities and colleges.

Student-athletes migrate from their home countries for a variety of reasons, both positive and negative through push-pull factors. These reasons can be economic, social, educational, or sport related. Transnationalism theory and cross-cultural adjustment theory are the two theoretical lenses that can be used to study the factors that influence athlete migration and the college experiences of international student-athletes on a U.S. university campus. Transnationalism theory examines the ways in which people maintain ties to their home countries while living and working in other countries. This is particularly relevant to international student-athletes, who often have strong ties with their home countries and families. Transnationalism theory can help us to understand how international student-athletes maintain their cultural identities, stay connected to their families and friends, and contribute to their home countries while living in the United States.

Cross-cultural adjustment theory examines the challenges and opportunities that people face when they move to a new culture. This is also relevant to international student-athletes, who are moving to a new country with a different culture, language, and educational system. Cross-cultural adjustment theory can help us to understand the challenges that international student-athletes face, such as academic stress, language barriers, and culture shock. It can also help us to understand the factors that promote successful cross-cultural adjustment, such as social support and cultural openness.

By using these two theoretical lenses, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of international student-athletes and develop programs and services to support them. Hence provide valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and impact of international student migration to the United States. They can be used to inform policy decisions, develop

support services for international students, and promote understanding of international student migration.

Summary

Chapter 2 has provided a comprehensive summary of previous research on the magnitude of international students and international student-athletes in US universities. The chapter also discusses the factors that are driving the growth of international student enrollment in the United States. These factors include the high quality of education in the United States, the diversity of the U.S. population, and the strong economy of the United States. The chapter also discusses the challenges that international students face when studying in the United States. These challenges include language barriers, cultural differences, and financial difficulties.

The significance of this chapter lies in identifying the gaps in the literature and establishing the basis to conduct this dissertation study. This chapter addressed the key issues related to international students and international student-athletes in U.S. universities and provides a summary of the findings from previous research studies, which revealed theories and frameworks that can be used in this dissertation.

Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research on international students and international student-athletes in U.S. universities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter provides descriptive information on the methods used in this study on the impact of English proficiency and culture on international students and international student-athletes who are enrolled at Division 1 (D1) schools in the Southeastern United States (US). This chapter describes the research methods used in this study, including the study design, participants, data collection, and data analysis. This chapter will begin by restating the purpose and research questions of this study. It will then introduce the theoretical frameworks that guided the qualitative research investigation. Finally, it will provide a detailed description of the case study, including the data collection methods and analysis techniques used to ensure the credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness of the results.

Purpose statement and research questions

The purpose of this dissertation research study was to research the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division 1 schools across the Southeastern United States.

The research questions are:

A. How did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division 1 schools in the Southeast United States?

B. What are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of

language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social life?

Researchers who conduct surveys aim to learn more about particular phenomena, experiences, or sets of experiences by gathering in-depth information from participants. Demarrais (2004) explained that the questionnaire or survey process is a qualitative research method that involves a researcher asking questions to a participant to learn about their experiences, perspectives, and understandings. Qualitative research methods have been used to explore a wide range of topics related to sports and related concepts, such as the motivations and barriers to sport participation, the experiences of athletes in different contexts, and the social and cultural significance of sport (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

Justifications for Using Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods focus on the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings of participants, and use non-numerical data, such as words or images, to capture these qualities (Denney et al., 2008). Qualitative research methods are concerned with the "why" and "how" of a phenomenon and use non-numerical data to explore these questions in depth (Denney et al., 2008). The diversity of qualitative research is reflected in the different strands of research that are influenced by different scholarly disciplines and ontological and epistemological assumptions (Prasad, 2005). Qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology for this study because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings. Qualitative researchers typically collect non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and field notes. This data is then analyzed to identify patterns and

themes, which can be used to generate new insights into the phenomenon under study (Patton, 1990, p. 13).

Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to understand the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings of participants. It is typically conducted in a natural environment, which means that the researcher does not create or control the setting in which the data is collected. This allows the researcher to observe and interact with participants in their everyday lives, and to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Questionnaires and surveys are two of the most common data collection methods in quantitative research. However, they can also be used in qualitative research, especially when the researcher is interested in collecting data from a large number of participants. When using questionnaires or surveys in qualitative research, it is important to design them in a way that allows participants to provide open-ended responses. This will allow the researcher to collect rich and detailed data about the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings.

There is no single founder of qualitative research with questionnaires or surveys. However, there are several researchers who have made significant contributions to the development of this field. One of the earliest pioneers of qualitative research with questionnaires was Paul Felix Lazarsfeld (1933). In the 1930s, Lazarsfeld (1933) conducted a study on the unemployed in Marienthal, Austria. He used a questionnaire to collect data on the participants' experiences, attitudes, and values. Lazarsfeld's (1933) study was one of the first to use a questionnaire to collect qualitative data. Another important figure in the development of qualitative research with questionnaires is Glaser and Strauss (1990). In the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss developed a theory of grounded theory, which is a qualitative research methodology that uses data collection and analysis to develop theories. Grounded theory often uses questionnaires

to collect data from participants. Grounded theory is “derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p 23). Through the use of this method, theory is generated, expanded, and corroborated through the collection and analysis of data that corresponds to the phenomenon of interest. In grounded theory, the researcher does not start with a theory in mind in order to prove it but starts with a particular area of research and whatever is relevant to that area of research is then used to develop theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that is used to develop theories from data. This method is often used in studies of human behavior, and it can be a useful tool for understanding the experiences of international students and international student-athletes. In grounded theory, data analysis involves inductive analysis, through which a researcher is interested in finding connections, patterns, themes, and categories in the data to explain what is discovered (Patton, 2002; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Roulston, 2010)

Today, some of the leading researchers in this field include Dr John Creswell (2018), who stated in his book "Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches": "Surveys can be used in qualitative research to collect data from large numbers of people and to generalize findings to a larger population. However, it is important to note that surveys are not a substitute for other qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews and observations. Surveys should be “used in conjunction with other data collection methods to provide a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied." (Creswell, 2018, p. 123). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in using questionnaires and surveys in qualitative research. This is due in part to the development of new technologies that make it easier to collect and analyze data from large numbers of participants.

When collecting qualitative data in a natural environment, it is important for researchers to be respectful of the participants and their privacy. Researchers should also be aware of their own biases and how they may influence the data collection process.

Methodological Framework

Qualitative Questionnaire or Survey

Dr. John Creswell is a leading expert in qualitative research methods. He has written extensively on the use of qualitative questionnaires or surveys in his research. In his book Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, Creswell argues that qualitative questionnaires or surveys can be a valuable tool for collecting data from large numbers of people and for generating new insights into their experiences, perspectives, and meanings. However, he emphasizes that qualitative questionnaires or surveys should be used in conjunction with other qualitative data collection methods. Creswell provides several examples of how he has used qualitative questionnaires or surveys in his own research. For example, in one study, he used a qualitative questionnaire to collect data from college students about their experiences with racism and discrimination. He used the data from the questionnaire to identify common themes and patterns in the students' experiences (Creswell, 2018). In addition to Dr. John Creswell, there are a number of other researchers who have used qualitative questionnaires or surveys in their research, such as Dr. Norman Denzin who is a leading expert in qualitative research methods, and he has written extensively on the use of qualitative questionnaires or surveys in his research. For example, he has used qualitative questionnaires or surveys to collect data on the experiences of people with disabilities, the experiences of people in poverty, and the experiences of people who have experienced trauma.

Dr Denzin wrote “Open-ended questions are essential in qualitative research because they allow participants to express their experiences, perspectives, and meanings in their own words. Open-ended questions also allow researchers to explore the nuances and complexities of the participants' experiences." (Denzin, 2017, p. 34). The researcher's goal is to collect specific and detailed accounts of the participants' experiences, rather than abstract or theoretical discussions about the experience (Roulston, 2010).

Qualitative surveys as a methodology can be categorized into the following categories. Semi-structured surveys: These surveys include a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions allow researchers to collect quantitative data, while the open-ended questions allow researchers to collect qualitative data on the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings.

Unstructured surveys: These surveys include only open-ended questions. This allows researchers to collect in-depth and detailed data on the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings. However, unstructured surveys can be difficult to analyze, as the data is often complex and nuanced.

Focus groups: Focus groups are a type of qualitative research that involves a moderator leading a discussion with a small group of participants about a particular topic. Focus groups can be used to collect data on a variety of topics, including the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings. Online surveys: Online surveys are a convenient and cost-effective way to collect data from many participants. However, it is important to note that online surveys are typically self-administered, which means that the researcher has less control over the data collection process. Research surveys can vary in their level of structure, from tightly scripted surveys with closed-ended questions to open-ended, loosely guided questionnaires. This study

used a qualitative questionnaire or survey and thematic analysis, as outlined in the next section. Creswell is a leading expert in qualitative research methods. In his book Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, he discusses the use of online surveys in qualitative research. Creswell provides several guidelines for designing and conducting online surveys for qualitative research. He emphasizes the importance of using open-ended questions. Piloting the survey with a small group of people before using it with a larger sample and using multiple data collection methods to provide a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2018).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a way to organize and interpret the data to identify common threads and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Grbich's (2013) data collection process involved developing a theory about the phenomenon being studied, collecting data from a variety of sources, and then comparing the data to the theory to identify patterns and insights. This process allowed Grbich to emerge new findings about the phenomenon and develop a more comprehensive understanding of it (Grbich, 2013). In other words, Grbich (2013) proposed a data collection process that is theory-driven and inductive. This means that the theory is used to guide the data collection process, and the data is then used to develop or refine the theory. When conducting a thematic analysis, researchers are interested in identifying themes that are important or meaningful, even if they are not common or frequently mentioned. This is because thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on understanding the nuances of human experience (Spencer et al., 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In thematic analysis, the importance of a theme is not necessarily determined by how often it occurs in the data, but rather by how well it captures something important about the phenomenon being studied in relation to

the research questions. In other words, a theme may be significant even if it is not mentioned by many participants or does not appear frequently in the data. This is because thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on understanding the meaning of people's experiences and perspectives. An important aspect of the data analysis was to compare codes with previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category. This is a process called constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1971). It is a core technique in grounded theory, a qualitative research approach that seeks to develop theories from data. In constant comparative analysis, researchers continuously compare new data to existing data to identify similarities and differences.

This process helps researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the data and to identify patterns and relationships that may not be immediately apparent. By comparing codes across incidents, researchers can identify patterns and relationships that can be used to develop theories about the phenomenon being studied.

Participant Selection

The rationale for conducting research on international student-athletes at NCAA Division I schools in the Southeastern United States is rooted in the following key points. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023), the number of international student-athletes in the U.S. has increased significantly from approximately 10,000 in 2000 to over 25,000 in recent years. This trend underscores the importance of studying their experiences to better understand the challenges and opportunities they face. Almarairi (2016) argues that international student-athletes face distinct challenges compared to domestic students, including language barriers, cultural adjustments, academic pressures, and the demands of high-level athletics. While several studies have focused on international student-athletes in NCAA Division I schools, such as

Swim, Lee, and Hums' (2023) exploration of the experiences of international student-athletes in Division I swimming and diving programs, and Otto et al.'s (2020) research on the challenges faced by international student-athletes in Division I swimming and diving, recent studies have also turned their attention to Midwestern schools. Manwell, Johnson, and Walker's (2021) qualitative exploration of the cultural experiences of international student-athletes at Midwestern NCAA Division I schools offers valuable insights into this specific population.

This research explores a relatively under-studied population, and pinpointing the exact date of the last study specifically focused on the experiences of international student-athletes in NCAA Division I schools in the Southeastern United States is difficult. Several factors contribute to this challenging landscape of higher education, including the demographics of student-athletes, is constantly changing. This means research on this topic can quickly become outdated. Research often concentrates on specific regions or countries, with the Southeastern U.S. being underrepresented. Wang and Han (2017) highlight the dynamic nature of the international student-athlete population and the need for ongoing research to keep pace with these changes. They also note that research on international student-athletes often focuses on specific regions or countries, with the Southeastern U.S. being underrepresented.

Subjectivities

Subjectivity is a term used in research to describe the influence of personal beliefs, values, and experiences on the research process (American Psychological Association, 2020). All researchers, regardless of their field, are subject to the influence of their own subjective biases. This is because research is a human endeavor, and human beings are not objective creatures. It is thus imperative for researchers to be aware of their own subjectivity and to take steps to mitigate its effects. Researchers need to be intentional about data interpretation because of the way

unconscious bias can impact the process of interpretation and skew data or findings. Tewolde (2023) argues that the concept of the "merged researcher" can help us to understand the complex and emergent nature of subjectivity in migration research (Tewolde, 2023). Tewolde proposes the concept of the "merged researcher" to capture the inextricability of the researcher from the research process. He argues that migration researchers who share social identities and experiences with their research informants are particularly likely to experience this merging of the researcher and the research subject (Tewolde, 2023). Peshkin's (1998) work is a valuable contribution to the field of qualitative research. It is a reminder that the observer-subject relationship is complex and that I must be aware of the power dynamics at play. By being aware of my own biases and experiences, I can conduct more ethical and responsible research. Peshkin (1988) provided us with a personal perspective of his research path and his findings on personal exploration and its impact on the research study. Peshkin helped me understand this realm better and he did a beautiful job explaining the complexities found within the relationship between the observer, the study subject, and the observer themselves. I specifically enjoyed learning about how my subjectivity statement would have an important purpose from the beginning of my research, all the way to the end. The following line resonated with me “These qualities have the capacity to filer, skew, shape, block, transfer, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the research project” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). It reminds me that my own subjectivity, my personal biases and beliefs, can have a profound impact on my research. I may not even be aware of how my own subjectivity is affecting my work, but it can still distort my findings.

Peshkin's line is a good reminder of the importance of this task, and Peshkin’s work highlights the importance of understanding subjectivity and its impact. Subjectivity can be both a positive and a negative influence on research. On the one hand, it can lead to researchers asking

questions that are important to them and that they are passionate about. It can also lead them to develop new and innovative research methods. On the other hand, subjectivity can lead to researchers overlooking or misinterpreting data that does not support their hypotheses. Subjectivity is a complex issue that cannot be completely eliminated from research. However, by being aware of its influence and taking steps to minimize it, researchers can produce more objective and reliable results.

Ruel D. Caricativo (2017) explores the challenges and opportunities of conducting migration research as a "merged researcher." He argues that while "merged researchers" may have a deeper understanding of their research informants, they must also be careful to avoid projecting their own experiences onto their informants (Caricativo, 2017). Marian C. Sanchez (2017) examines the ethical implications of conducting migration research as a "merged researcher." She argues that "merged researchers" have a responsibility to use their positions of privilege to advocate for the rights and well-being of their research informants. The concept of the "merged researcher" is a valuable tool for understanding the complex and emergent nature of subjectivity in migration research. By embracing the complexity and emergence of subjectivity, migration researchers can produce more rigorous and ethical research that is more reflective of the complex and lived experiences of migrants (Sanchez, 2017).

As a qualitative researcher I recognize and value the relationship between the researcher and the researched. This is critical to the consideration of my research on how culture influences the motivation for academic and athletic success at US higher education institutions. I draw inspiration from the work of scholars like Peshkin (1988, 1998) and Tewolde (2023), who emphasize the importance of the researcher-subject relationship and the complex interplay of subjectivity in qualitative research. Peshkin's insightful reflections on the personal journey of a

researcher resonate with my own experiences. His emphasis on the filtering and shaping influence of personal biases underscores the need for critical self-awareness and reflexivity. I recognize the significance of my own cultural background and experiences. My positionality as both an insider and outsider allow me to navigate the complexities of cultural identity and intercultural communication. By being mindful of my own biases and assumptions, I can approach my research with empathy and understanding, striving to capture the diverse perspectives of my participants.

Research Design

Qualitative questionnaires or surveys are a type of research instrument that is used to collect in-depth data about people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. They typically involve open-ended questions that allow participants to respond in their own words. The overall design of this research is based on qualitative questionnaire or surveys which will include open-ended questions, and thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data. Patton (2015) has written extensively on qualitative research methods, including a chapter on "Qualitative Questionnaires" in her book Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health. She stated that "Qualitative questionnaires are a valuable tool for collecting in-depth data about people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. They can be used to explore a wide range of topics, including sensitive or complex issues. Qualitative questionnaires typically include open-ended questions that allow participants to provide their own detailed responses." (Patton, 2015, p. 123). This highlights the versatility and power of qualitative questionnaires as a research tool. Qualitative questionnaires can be used to collect data on a wide range of topics, including sensitive or complex issues. They also allow participants to provide their own detailed responses, which can give researchers a deeper understanding of people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. Dr. Jane Ritchie (2014)

stated "Qualitative questionnaires are a valuable tool for gathering data on people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. They can be used to explore a wide range of topics, including sensitive or complex issues.

Qualitative questionnaires typically include open-ended questions that allow participants to provide their own detailed responses. This type of question allows researchers to collect rich and nuanced data that can help them to develop a deeper understanding of their research topic." (Ritchie, Lewis, & McNaughton, 2014, p. 112). This quote highlights the key advantages of using qualitative questionnaires in research. From Dr. James Lewis's (2014) book "Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Scientists", he states "Qualitative questionnaires can be a valuable tool for collecting data on people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. They can be used to explore a wide range of topics, including sensitive or complex issues. However, it is important to design and use qualitative questionnaires carefully in order to collect high-quality data." (Ritchie, Lewis, & McNaughton, 2014, p. 157). This highlights the importance of designing and using qualitative questionnaires carefully in order to collect high-quality data.

For this particular research study, the data will guide me toward inductive reasoning, and the best theoretical perspective is to conduct a content analysis of the international student experiences, and I will provide a descriptive analysis of my findings. Content analysis is a type of qualitative research that involves the systematic analysis of survey text. This type of analysis can be used to identify themes, patterns, and relationships in the text. Using inductive reasoning, content analysis, and descriptive analysis will be a great way to study the experiences of international students. These methods will allow me to gather rich data about the experiences of international students and to draw conclusions about the larger population of international students.

This research will employ an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the cultural acclimation experiences of international student-athletes in U.S. higher education institutions. These athletes frequently encounter significant challenges such as language barriers, academic adjustments, and cultural shock. To collect and analyze data, a Qualtrics survey will be administered to a sample of international students and student-athletes at several Southeastern universities, including those in the SEC region. The survey will delve into various facets of their experiences, including English language proficiency, cultural acclimation, mental health, financial challenges, immigration-related concerns, understanding of the U.S. academic structure, social and cultural acclimation efforts, cultural sensitivity awareness, and sense of belonging. A grounded theory approach will be used to analyze the qualitative data from the survey responses, enabling the development of emergent themes and hypotheses.

The Qualtrics survey questionnaire will comprise of questions on English proficiency, cultural acclimation, mental health, financial challenges, immigration laws, US academic structure, social and cultural acclimation efforts, cultural sensitivity awareness, and sense of belonging. The survey will be sent out in the Fall of 2023, specifically to international students and international student-athletes enrolled at several universities in the Southeastern US and will include universities in the SEC region of the United States. The Southeastern Conference (SEC) is a collegiate athletic conference in the United States. It consists of 14-member universities, all of which are located in the Southeastern United States. The SEC is one of the most prestigious and competitive athletic conferences in the country, and it is known for its strong football programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). SEC schools are typically large universities with enrollments of over 20,000 students. This gives students access to a wide range of academic programs and extracurricular activities (National Center for Education Statistics,

2022). In addition to these common characteristics, SEC schools also share a number of other similarities, such as their locations in the Southeastern United States, their commitment to academic excellence, and their commitment to diversity and inclusion. SEC schools are also known for their strong traditions and their sense of community.

Participants

This research study involves the participation of international student-athletes who are currently enrolled at four-year D1 universities (both undergraduate and graduate students) located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Data collection will involve around 1,136 international undergraduate students and international student-athletes who enrolled at Southeastern US, D1 schools starting in the Fall of 2023 through Spring 2025. This population will vary in age, sex, race, SES, and other demographics. It is important that these demographic variations will be considered when designing this research study. This is because of the importance of understanding how demographic variations can affect research. The qualitative questionnaire will comprise of 30 particular questions consisting of multiple choice as well as open-ended answer opportunities to around 50 international student-athletes enrolled at different universities situated all over the Southeast of the United States.

Qualitative Qualtrics Questionnaire

IRB approval: IRB approval is the process by which a research study is reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRBs are responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects who participate in research. Thus, in this study IRB approval is mandatory. This study will commence after IRB approval. IRB approval is an important step in any research study involving human subjects. It ensures that the study has been designed to protect the safety and well-being of the participants. Informed Consent: In the case of a

qualitative questionnaire, the informed consent document can be accessed through a web link. This is a convenient way for participants to read and review the document before deciding whether or not to participate in the study. The participant could choose not to take part of the qualitative questionnaire at any time.

Data Collection

In this phase, the researcher must interpret the data they have collected and organize it into meaningful categories or groups. This process is known as coding or thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007). In other words, the researcher needs to take the raw data that they have collected and make sense of it by identifying patterns and relationships. They can do this by coding the data, which involves assigning labels to different pieces of data based on their content. Once the data has been coded, the researcher can then organize the codes into themes, which are broader categories that represent the main ideas or findings of the research. Qualitative surveys, which will be administered through Qualtrics, will be used to collect data that could be coded into a fixed set of categories and analyzed quantitatively (Roulston, 2010).

International students and international student-athletes face several challenges while studying and competing in the United States. These challenges can be academic, social, and cultural. This research study will capture results spanning from the challenges international students face from being academically successful, migration challenges they might experience, as well as how international students are finding ways to address the lack of English proficiency. This information will be compiled and used to help University Administration, NCAA, and Athletic Departments address the challenges international students and international student-athletes might face while in the United States. This research study is important because it will provide valuable insights into the experiences of international students and international student-

athletes in the United States. The findings of the study can be used to develop new and improved support programs for these international student-athletes.

The data analysis will allow for the discovery of themes that will inform international student acclimation processes. By comparing and correlating themes from the GPA and English proficiency outcomes with the survey questionnaire outcomes, factors can be identified that are associated with acclimating challenges. After the identification of factors, supportive programs for international students and international student-athletes can be implemented.

Coding

In qualitative data analysis, a code is a label that a researcher assigns to a piece of data to represent its meaning (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014, p. 13). Codes can be used to organize and analyze data in a variety of ways. For example, a researcher might use codes to identify different themes in the data, to compare and contrast different groups of participants, or to track changes over time. The researcher used codes to organize the transcripts for thematic analysis. The codebook kept a record of the codes the researcher created what they meant, and a short example of the data that was coded as such (Saldana, 2015). In other words, the researcher used codes to label different pieces of data in the transcripts based on their content. This will help the researcher to organize the data and to identify patterns and themes. The codebook is a record of the codes that the researcher creates, as well as their definitions and examples. This will help the researcher to keep track of the coding process and to ensure that codes are used consistently.

According to Friese (2014), qualitative research projects should have between 50 and 300 different codes total, which can then be combined into five or six major themes (Friese, 2014, p. 92, 128). Friese recommends that qualitative researchers develop a set of codes that is large

enough to capture the nuances of the data, but small enough to be manageable. He also recommends that researchers combine these codes into a smaller number of major themes, which will help them to identify the most important findings from their study.

In this research study, both inductive and deductive reasoning will be used to create codes. Inductive coding involves developing codes from the data itself. Deductive coding involves using existing knowledge and theories to develop codes. Deductive coding can be very beneficial for qualitative data analysis, especially when the researcher has a good understanding of the topic area. By using pre-codes, the researcher can quickly and easily identify relevant data and organize it into meaningful categories. This can help to streamline the analysis process and ensure that the researcher is focusing on the most important aspects of the data. Deductive coding will be used to identify phrases, quotations, and narratives that were related to the migration theories indicated in the framework will be used in the study. However, it is important to note that deductive coding should not be used in isolation. It is important to also use inductive coding to allow new codes to emerge from the data. This is because the researcher may not be able to anticipate all of the themes that will be present in the data. By using both deductive and inductive coding, the researcher can ensure that they are capturing the richness and complexity of the data.

The typologies of international migrant college athletes developed by Love and Kim (2011) provided useful language and concepts that could be easily applied to the interview data. In other words, the researcher will be able to use the typologies developed by Love and Kim to help understand and analyze the data from their interviews. The typologies provided the researcher with a framework for interpreting the data and identifying patterns and themes. In-vivo coding can be a very effective way to capture the rich and complex experiences of

participants. It can also help to ensure that the study is more valid and credible. In-vivo coding is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves using the exact words of participants as codes. This allows researchers to capture the participants' own perspectives and to avoid imposing their own interpretations on the data.

In-vivo coding can be used with a variety of data types, including transcripts of interviews and focus groups, as well as field notes and other observational data. The founder of in-vivo coding is unknown. However, the technique has been used by researchers for many years and is now a widely accepted qualitative data analysis method. In-vivo coding, which involves using the exact words of the participants as codes, can be used to give the sport migrants a stronger voice and to make the study more valid. In other words, in-vivo coding ensures that the participants' perspectives are accurately reflected in the study. By using the participants' own words, the researcher will be able to avoid imposing her own interpretations on the data.

Charmaz (2006) argues that line-by-line initial coding is particularly well-suited for interview transcripts compared to other qualitative data, such as research-generated field notes. This is because interview transcripts are typically much more structured and organized than field notes. Field notes may contain a variety of different types of data, such as observational data, reflections, and analytical notes. This can make it more difficult to code field notes line-by-line. The three steps of coding, categorization, and theming are often used in conjunction with each other (Saldana, 2016). For example, a researcher might start by coding the data inductively. Then, they might group similar codes together into categories. Finally, they might develop themes based on the categories that they have identified. This process of coding, categorization, and theming helps researchers to make sense of the data and to identify patterns and trends. It can also help researchers to develop new insights into the data and to generate new theories.

Limitations

This research study will be conducted in a cultural context familiar to the researcher. As an international student who studied in the United States, the researchers' background is similar to that of the participants in this study. In this context, Sherif (2001) claimed that "the partial insiders who have background ties to the cultures being studied provide a certain insight into the dynamics that can occur in the research process" (Sherif, 2001, p. 438). Therefore, the researcher would be considered as partly an insider and partly an outsider in this research study, as she brings her own personal insight and expertise.

There are several limitations to studies on the impact of English proficiency and cultural acclimation processes on the adjustment of international students and international student-athletes to US higher education in the Southeast of the United States. Some of these limitations include the aspect that studies on this topic often rely on convenience sampling, which means that participants are selected based on their availability or willingness to participate. This can lead to a sample that is not representative of the population of international student-athletes as a whole. Studies on this topic often use self-report measures, which means that participants are asked to report their own experiences and perceptions.

This can be subjective and can lead to bias in the results. Studies on this topic are often conducted in a single university or college setting, which means that the results may not be generalizable to other settings, and studies on this topic often focus on the short-term adjustment of international students and international student-athletes, but the long-term effects of English proficiency and cultural acclimation on adjustment are not well understood. By being aware of these limitations, I can design a research study that is more likely to produce credible and trustworthy results.

Despite these limitations, studies on the impact of English proficiency and cultural acclimation processes on the adjustment of international students and international student-athletes to US higher education in the Southeast of the US can provide valuable insights into this complex issue. By understanding the factors that contribute to adjustment, universities and colleges can develop programs and services that support the success of international students and international student-athletes.

Summary

The chapter also provides a clear and concise description of the methods used in the research study. The methods are well suited for the research question and the research design. This chapter also provides a description of the research methods and the characteristics of the participants, and discusses how the research process happens, indicating a systematic way of gathering and analyzing information to answer a question or solve a problem.

The areas covered in this chapter include the purpose and research questions, rationale for using Qualitative Methods. This chapter also includes information about the participants, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, and limitations.

Overall, the chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the research methods that are used, and the chapter discussed the importance of English proficiency and cultural acclimation, as well as the limitations of studies on this topic. The chapter also discussed some of the challenges that international students and international student-athletes face in the United States, and how universities and colleges can support their international students' success.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this dissertation research study was to research the experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division 1 schools across the Southeastern United States. The study aims to understand the challenges and successes they encounter as they navigate both academic and athletic pursuits in new environments. A particular focus is placed on the impact of varying English language proficiency on their academic experiences. Additionally, the study explores the broader influence of language and cultural differences on their overall integration. This includes examining how these factors affect their performance in athletics and their ability to participate in social activities, ultimately shaping their journey of cultural acclimation. By gaining a deeper understanding of these complexities, college and universities leaders and coaches can better support the well-being and success of international student-athletes within the NCAA Division 1 system.

The research questions are:

A. How did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division 1 schools in the Southeast United States?
B. What are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social life?

Justification for Using Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study on international student-athletes in the Southeastern USA, following the guidance of prominent qualitative researchers such as Creswell (2018), and Corbin & Strauss (2015). Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and open-ended surveys, provided participants with a platform to share their unique narratives and perspectives, offering a deeper understanding of their cultural background, social context, and personal experiences. As Creswell (2018) highlights, open-ended questions are invaluable in qualitative research for eliciting rich and detailed responses. This study sought to explore the multifaceted experiences of international student-athletes, examining the intricate interplay of language, culture, academics, and athletics. This requires a nuanced and in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives, emotions, and behaviors, which are best captured through a qualitative approach, as advocated by Creswell (2018). Qualitative methods are well-suited for uncovering unanticipated challenges and successes that might not be identified in a strictly quantitative approach. The research aims to capture complex ways in which international students navigate lived experiences associated with but limited to cultural differences, language barriers, and academic pressures.

This study surveyed international student-athletes from Division I (D1) universities across the Southeastern United States. Participants included both undergraduate and graduate students. A total of 50 student-athletes participated, representing 39 different countries of origin (as indicated by their passport). The specific countries represented are listed in table 1 below.

Table 1

Summary of Countries Represented

Belgium	3
South Africa	3
Brazil	2
Canada	2
Italy	2
Jamaica	2
Sweden	2
Ukraine	2
United Kingdom	2
Argentina	1
Australia	1
Bermuda	1
China	1
Czech Republic	1
Ecuador	1
Egypt	1
Estonia	1
France	1
Greece	1
Grenada	1

Hong Kong	1
Israel	1
Lithuania	1
Morocco	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	2
Norway	1
Panama	1
Peru	1
Philippines	1
Poland	1
Russia	1
Spain	2
Taiwan	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
Uruguay	1

Research Context

This study explores the multifaceted experiences of international student-athletes as they navigate the challenges of culture, language, and high-level athletics at NCAA Division I institutions in the Southeastern United States. Smith (2020) found that the regional diversity of

the Southeastern United States can present unique challenges for international students, including accents, political leanings, and social norms that can vary greatly depending on the university's location. The Southeast boasts a high concentration of NCAA Division 1 schools with well-funded and nationally recognized athletic programs which often offer attractive scholarships to talented international student-athletes (NCAA, 2023).

The Southeast generally experiences a warm climate year-round, which can be attractive to athletes as this allows for more outdoor training and potentially more outdoor sporting events (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2023). By investigating the multifaceted experiences of international student-athletes, including the impact of varying English language proficiency on academics, this research aims to shed light on the challenges and successes they face. Scholarships and support systems provide a positive draw for these athletes, but a deeper understanding of their overall experiences is essential. Ultimately, this study will provide valuable insights into how D1 schools in the Southeast can better support international student-athletes, fostering a more inclusive and enriching environment for all. Given these factors, a qualitative methodology is the most appropriate tool to investigate the complexities of international student-athletes' experiences.

Southeastern Region in NCAA Division I Athletics: The NCAA doesn't have a pre-defined "Southeastern Region" for Division I athletics. There isn't an official map defining the southeastern region of the USA because the boundaries aren't universally agreed upon. However, the SEDAAG (Southeastern Division of American Association of Geographers) has claimed this is a regional subdivision of the American Association of Geographers, representing approximately 500 members in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North

Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia (SEDAAG, 2024), as indicated in the figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Southeastern Region in NCAA Division I Athletics

Several conferences are geographically concentrated in the Southeastern US, such as the SEC and ACC. Here's a list of these conferences and their member schools (March 19, 2024):

The Southeastern Conference (SEC) schools include the University of Alabama, University of Arkansas, Auburn University, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi (OLE Miss), University of Missouri, University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, and Texas A& M University. The Atlantic Coast Conference schools include the Boston College, Clemson University, Duke University, Florida State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Notre Dame, University of Pittsburg, University of Louisville, University of Miami, North Carolina State University (NC State), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Syracuse University, Virginia Cavaliers, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Wake Forest University, and the University of Virginia.

The Southeastern United States is a region that has a strong concentration of NCAA Division I athletic programs. While the NCAA doesn't officially define a "Southeastern Region" for Division I athletics, the Southeastern Division of the American Association of Geographers (SEDAAG) has claimed this area as a regional subdivision. Several conferences are geographically concentrated in the Southeast, including the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). These conferences feature numerous prestigious universities with highly competitive athletic programs. The SEC and ACC are among the most prominent conferences in NCAA Division I athletics, known for their strong football programs and overall athletic success.

This study examines the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern US, drawing on theoretical perspectives from Cross-Cultural Adjustment Theory (Berry, 1980) and Transnational Theory (Glick Schiller, 1994). International student-athletes often experience culture shock and difficulty connecting with Americans during the initial adjustment period. However, the use of social media and strong ties to home cultures can help mitigate these challenges. They actively engage in cultural exchange, sharing knowledge and practices. Additionally, they develop hybrid identities that incorporate elements of both their home and host cultures.

Cross-Cultural Adjustment Theory emphasizes the phases of adjustment experienced by international student-athletes, including culture shock and the development of adaptation strategies (Berry, 1980). Transnational Theory focuses on the interconnectedness of cultures and the importance of mobility and social ties across borders (Glick Schiller, 1994). The findings of this study align with existing research on the experiences of international student-athletes. They highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with cultural adjustment, transnational

connections, and hybrid identity development. Understanding these factors can inform policies and practices aimed at supporting international students in the Southeastern United States.

Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to analyze the data from the surveys completed by international student-athletes, following the guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach involved a coding process to identify categories and then compartmentalize them into themes. Researchers coded the data into as many categories as possible, following an iterative approach where data emerged to fit a category, or categories emerged to fit the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An important aspect of the coding process was comparing it with previous incidents with the same as well as different groups, coded in the same category (Charmaz, 2023). This comparative analysis ensured consistency and helped refine the coding scheme. The codes served to organize the transcriptions for thematic analysis. A codebook was maintained to keep a record of emergent codes, their content descriptions, and brief data examples for reference (Saldaña, 2020). This codebook provided an ongoing analytic opportunity to organize and reorganize the codes into major categories and subcategories. This iterative process of coding and code refinement is essential for ensuring a robust thematic analysis. By applying thematic analysis with a focus on rich description and comparison, the research aimed to gain valuable insights into the experiences of international student-athletes in the context of the research questions. Thematic analysis of the data is expected to yield valuable insights into the experiences of international student-athletes, informing how universities can enhance support services and cultural integration efforts to optimize the overall educational and athletic experience. This chapter explores the multifaceted experiences of international student-

athletes competing in NCAA Division I athletics in the Southeastern United States. It is divided into three primary themes.

Transnationalism, Migration, and Cultural Acclimation

This theme examines the role of transnationalism, migration, and cultural acclimation in shaping the experiences of international student-athletes. International student-athletes often maintained strong connections with their home cultures, utilizing social media, phone calls, and video conferencing to stay in touch with family and friends. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of cultures and the importance of transnational ties, even while living abroad. Transnational connections provided emotional support, cultural continuity, and a sense of belonging. The process of migration to the United States involved significant challenges, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness. Adapting to a new culture and lifestyle requires resilience and adaptability. International student-athletes often face feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly during the initial adjustment period. International student-athletes developed hybrid identities that incorporated elements of both their home and host cultures. This process involved code-switching, adapting to different cultural norms and expectations, and balancing cultural traditions. Cultural acclimation could be challenging but also rewarding, as it allowed international student-athletes to develop a unique sense of self.

Cultural Acclimation of International Student-Athletes

The Qualtrics survey delves into the specific challenges and triumphs faced by international student-athletes navigating the Southeastern landscape of the United States. The survey posed questions about navigating academic expectations within the unique structure of Southeastern universities, balancing academic demands with cultural differences, and accessing support systems. The research also explored how cultural sensitivity awareness on campus and

social integration efforts impact their sense of belonging. The online Qualtrics survey was launched in November of 2023, and the survey reached international student-athletes across several D1, Southeastern US universities, allowing this study to gather diverse perspectives and paint a nuanced picture of their experiences. By analyzing their responses, this research hopes to understand how these universities can better support their international student -athlete population and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment**.** The online survey prompted 30 thought-provoking questions, combining multiple choice options and open-ended prompts to capture the nuanced perspectives of around 50 participants. By focusing on this population enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate programs at various D1 universities in the Southeast, this study aims to uncover the specific challenges and triumphs they face in navigating cultural differences, academic pressures, and athletic demands. This research provides valuable insights for universities in the Southeast to better support and empower their international student and athlete communities.

Following outreach to D1 Southeastern universities and regional institutions and securing an approved extension from the IRB to gather responses, the online survey attracted a significant number of participants, with 86 surveys started out of 107 invites sent via email. This translates to a strong response rate of 80%, indicating a high level of interest in the topic among the student population. The survey also revealed a rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents selected a country of origin not included in the 39 listed options. The Qualtrics survey questionnaire delved into a comprehensive range of experiences facing international student-athletes studying in the United States.

The survey consisted of 30 questions, ranging from Likert-type scale statements to open-ended questions. There are 50 complete surveys by international student-athletes who indicated

which D1 university they were enrolled in. The study only incorporated international student-athletes considered to be enrolled at D1 universities in the Southeast of the United States. The figure and table below indicate a chart that shows a summary of responses to the question "What college or university are you enrolled in?" as indicated in Table 2 and 3 below and find the list of participating D1 universities in the Southeast where international student-athletes submitted their surveys from.

Table 2

List of Participating D1 Universities in the Southeast

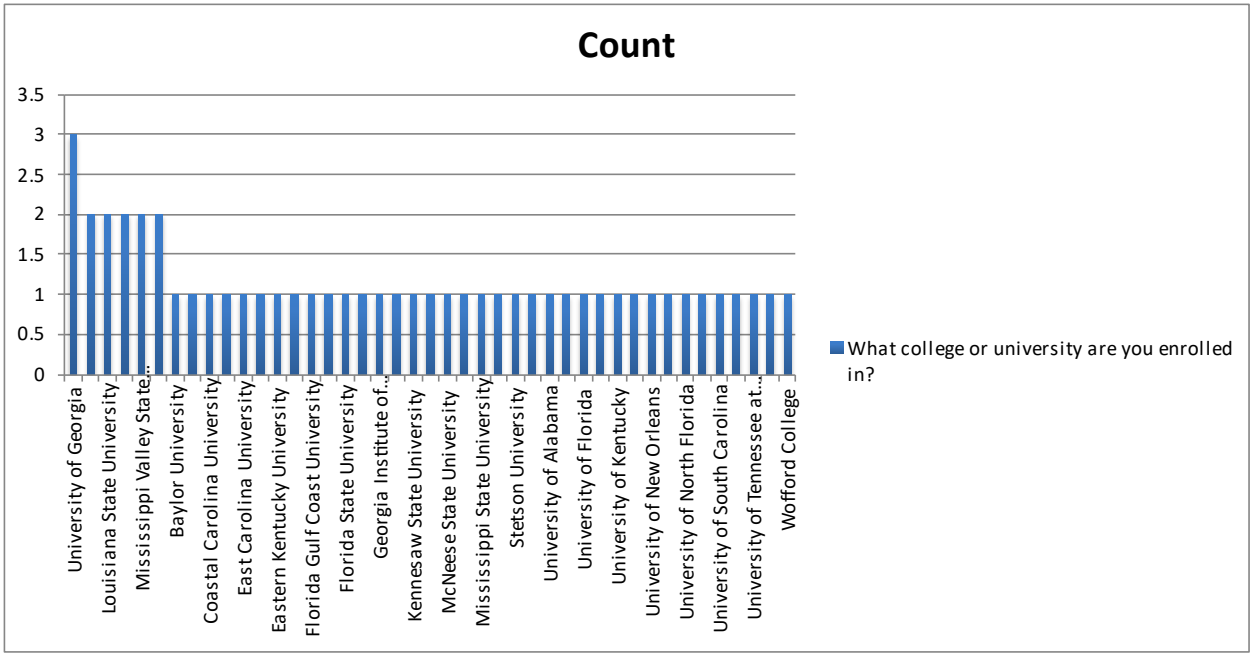


Table 3

List of Participating D1 Universities in the Southeast - Number of Distinct Categories

List of participating international student-athletes who completed the survey that are currently enrolled at D1 universities in the Southeast USA Sample Size	Number of Distinct Categories	
50 of 50	43	
What college or university are you enrolled in?	Count	Percent of Data
University of Georgia	3	6.0%
College of Charleston	2	4.0%
Louisiana State University	2	4.0%
Middle Tennessee State University	2	4.0%
Mississippi Valley State University	2	4.0%
University of Central Florida	2	4.0%
Baylor University	1	2.0%
Clemson University	1	2.0%
Coastal Carolina University	1	2.0%
Duke University	1	2.0%
East Carolina University	1	2.0%
East Tennessee State University	1	2.0%
Eastern Kentucky University	1	2.0%
Florida A&M University	1	2.0%
Florida Gulf Coast University	1	2.0%
Florida International University	1	2.0%

Florida State University	1	2.0%
Furman University	1	2.0%
Georgia Institute of Technology	1	2.0%
Georgia State University	1	2.0%
Kennesaw State University	1	2.0%
Louisiana Tech University	1	2.0%
McNeese State University	1	2.0%
Mercer University	1	2.0%
Mississippi State University	1	2.0%
Rice University	1	2.0%
Stetson University	1	2.0%
Troy University	1	2.0%
University of Alabama	1	2.0%
University of Alabama	1	2.0%
University of Florida	1	2.0%
University of Georgia	1	2.0%
University of Kentucky	1	2.0%
University of Louisville	1	2.0%
University of New Orleans	1	2.0%
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	1	2.0%
University of North Florida	1	2.0%
University of South Alabama	1	2.0%

University of South Carolina	1	2.0%
University of South Florida	1	2.0%
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	1	2.0%
University of Texas	1	2.0%
Wofford College	1	2.0%

This research study on the impact of English proficiency and culture on international student-athletes in D1 schools of the Southeastern US can be informed by several theoretical perspectives. Cross-Cultural Adjustment Theory focuses on the psychological and emotional challenges faced by individuals adapting to a new culture. It explores different phases of adjustment (honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, adaptation, and re-entry) and factors that influence successful adaptation. Transnational theory focuses on the interconnectedness of cultures and the ongoing social, economic, and political ties that people maintain across borders. International students often maintain strong connections to their home countries while living and studying abroad. This chapter explores the multifaceted experiences of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division I athletics in the Southeastern United States. It is divided into three primary themes.

Theme One: Navigating Cultural Challenges, Leveraging Technology, and Building Communities to Thrive in New Environments

Research Question A

The research had identified the Transnationalism and Cross-Cultural Adjustment theme, where this theme explores how international student-athletes navigate the complexities of living and competing in a foreign culture while maintaining connections to their home cultures. For

research question one: How did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division 1 schools in the Southeast United States? This study delves into the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States, highlighting the intersection of transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment theory. The research emphasizes the athletes' mobility and interconnectedness, showcasing how they traverse borders and carry their cultural influences.

The blending of cultures of where 72% of the students actively engage with new traditions (campus activities, events) and build relationships with both American, where 68% mentioned friendships with American classmates, and international students, where 85% reported connecting with other international students. This fosters cultural exchange and the potential incorporation of new practices into their cultural repertoire. Cross-cultural adjustment theory sheds light on the challenges these athletes face. Mobility and interconnectedness offer positive aspects like exploring new cultures, but also present hurdles. Demanding travel schedules can hinder deeper integration within the host community, particularly in the Southeast US. This region's unique cultural and historical context might pose additional challenges due to potential social tensions stemming from its racial history.

The study explores how athletes cope with being away from home. While technology bridges physical distance, the complexities of cultural adjustment are evident. Maintaining a cultural identity while adapting to a new environment can be a struggle. Technology fosters connections to home, yet the physical separation from family and friends remains a significant hurdle. This research highlights the dynamic interplay between transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment theory. International student-athletes experience both the benefits and challenges of mobility and interconnectedness, navigating cultural adjustment in a region with its

own unique historical context. Understanding these factors is crucial for universities and coaches in creating a more supportive environment that fosters well-being and success for these athletes. For this student from Argentina in particular:

> "While English is my second language, I actively participate in class discussions. English fluency is improving, but mastering academic writing styles and understanding professors with thick Southern accents has been a hurdle. But birthdays, or even a song that reminds me of Argentina can trigger homesickness"

This illuminates the complexities of cross-cultural adjustment experienced by international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. While globalization offers opportunities for mobility and interconnectedness, athletes face challenges such as demanding travel schedules and cultural differences. The Argentinian student's experience exemplifies these challenges, highlighting the difficulties of language acquisition, academic adaptation, and homesickness. Despite technological advancements bridging physical distances, the emotional impact of being away from family and friends remains significant. Understanding these multifaceted experiences is crucial for institutions to provide adequate support and foster a more inclusive environment for international student-athletes.

Research Question B

The research illuminates the complex interplay of transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment experienced by international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. These athletes navigate a globalized landscape, balancing their cultural identities with the demands of their new environment. For research question 2: What are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social

life? The study highlights the challenges they face, including language barriers, academic pressures, and homesickness .Maintaining a core identity where 65% of the students seek support from international peers as mentioned by 65% of respondents, to maintain a sense of belonging and shared experiences. Additionally, practicing English with classmates was mentioned by 58%, and may lead to code-switching, but data also shows students talking to roommates in their native language as mentioned by 33%, and suggesting a desire to preserve their linguistic heritage.

Transnationalism provides a framework for understanding how these athletes navigate a globalized world. The high degree of diversity (39 countries of origin with 78% having just one representative) reflects a globalized landscape. International student-athletes become diaspora communities, connected to their home cultures through technology (social media, video calls), food, and cultural events. They also build new connections within the university and local communities, forming social networks that transcend geographical boundaries. For this student from China she indicated:

> As a freshman Exercise and Sport Science student at Florida International University (FIU), transitioning from the Chinese education system to the American academic landscape wasn't a walk in the park. However, between my own determination, the supportive resources at FIU, and the encouragement of my teammates, I've found my academic footing. Being on the FIU golf team has been a game-changer. My teammates are my American family away from home. Social media help maintain connections, but there's a yearning to be physically present during these special occasions”

The research highlights the complex interplay of transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment experienced by international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. These

athletes navigate a globalized landscape, balancing their cultural identities with the demands of their new environment. The study underscores the importance of maintaining a core identity, as evidenced by the Chinese student's reliance on her teammates for support and her use of social media to stay connected with family and friends. Despite the challenges of language barriers and cultural differences, international student-athletes demonstrate resilience and adaptability, forging new connections and navigating their academic and athletic pursuits.

Cross-cultural adjustment theory sheds light on the challenges these athletes face. Mobility and interconnectedness offer positive aspects like exploring new cultures, but also present hurdles. Demanding travel schedules can hinder deeper integration within the host community, particularly in the Southeast US. This region's unique cultural and historical context might pose additional challenges due to potential social tensions stemming from its racial history.

The study explores how athletes cope with being away from home. While technology bridges physical distance, the complexities of cultural adjustment are evident. Maintaining a cultural identity while adapting to a new environment can be a struggle. Technology fosters connections to home, yet the physical separation from family and friends remains a significant hurdle. This research highlights the dynamic interplay between transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment theory. International student-athletes experience both the benefits and challenges of mobility and interconnectedness, navigating cultural adjustment in a region with its own unique historical context. Understanding these factors is crucial for universities and coaches in creating a more supportive environment that fosters well-being and success for these athletes. The study also highlights the mobility of international student-athletes, traversing borders and carrying cultural influences across national boundaries. This aligns with transnationalism's

emphasis on the increasing interconnectedness of individuals and societies. The survey reveals a high degree of diversity, with 39 distinct countries of origin represented among 50 respondents. This signifies a significant portion (78%) came from countries with no other representative, reflecting a globalized landscape where individuals from diverse backgrounds coexist.

Findings reveal that 48 distinct open-ended answers were provided to questions 23 “How did you cope with being away from home?” where international students frequently utilized social media platforms like WhatsApp to maintain close connections with family and friends back home, exemplifying this interconnectedness. However, athletes' demanding travel schedules often limited their physical interactions within the host community, posing a potential challenge to deeper integration. The data reveals a strong sense of interconnectedness among international student-athletes through shared experiences of cultural adjustment. The comments highlight the challenges of being away from home and family (“amigos”, “family”, “home”), but also the positive aspects of connecting with others and exploring a new culture (“exploring minority cultures in the US”, “cultural events”, “Jamaican food”), as described by a Jamaican student:

> “Being away from home, from family and friends, that's a real test, y'know? But there's a few things that keep me grounded. First ting (thing), technology is a blessing, mon! Video calls and messages help bridge the distance. Plus, mi momma's care packages – let me tell you, a taste of home can be a powerful ting”

This highlights the concept of diaspora communities – a transnational network of people from the same cultural background who are living in a different country. The data shows that these students connect with their home culture through things like food (“a taste of home”, “Jamaican food”, “exploring Florida’s diverse cuisine”), events (“cultural events related to my heritage”,

"Joining the Nigerian Students Association on campus"), and social media ("social media help maintain connections"). The data also highlights how international students build new connections in their host countries. This fosters a sense of belonging and a support system ("friends from the sports team", "a great group of friends", "teammates"). Participants mention the importance of the university community ("supportive team environment", "the Furman community"), as well as friendships with other international students ("connecting with other international students", "met new people and learned about a new culture", "Malaysian students"). This reinforces the transnational theory concept of social networks – the web of relationships that connect people across borders. The data shows that technology plays an important role in helping students stay connected with loved ones back home (technology is a blessing, mon! video calls and messages, social media). This allows them to maintain relationships despite the physical distance (staying connected with loved ones through technology, social media help maintain connections). This reflects the transnational theory concept of global flows – the movement of information and ideas across borders, as indicated by a Nigerian student:

> "Joining the Nigerian Students Association on campus has been fantastic. Celebrating cultural events with others who share my heritage feels like a little piece of home."

Fostering interconnectedness was showcased through the exchange of cultural knowledge and practices among student-athletes. This could involve participation in campus multicultural events, engagement with local communities, or utilization of technology to connect with diverse individuals. The study underscores the mobility of international student-athletes, traversing borders and carrying cultural influences across national boundaries. This aligns with transnationalism's emphasis on the increasing interconnectedness of individuals and societies.

Similarly, a student from Uruguay indicated:

> "Technology has been a lifesaver in staying connected with loved ones back in Uruguay. There are definitely times when I miss my family and friends back in Uruguay. To overcome challenges with accents and unfamiliar terminology, I've utilized university resources. While English might be proficient, there could be initial hurdles understanding professors"

The study highlights the role of technology in fostering interconnectedness among international student-athletes. The Uruguayan student's reliance on technology to maintain connections with family and friends underscores its significance in bridging geographical distances. Additionally, the utilization of university resources to overcome language barriers demonstrates the importance of institutional support in facilitating cultural adjustment. These findings emphasize the complex interplay between technology, language, and cultural identity in shaping the experiences of international student-athletes.

A student from Belgium indicated:

> "One critical incident that stands out from my college experience was during a heated moment in a team practice. There was a misunderstanding with a teammate due to a language barrier. We both got frustrated, and it escalated a bit. While frustrating at the time, it surprised me the most because it highlighted the importance of clear communication. The language barrier incident made me realize the importance of clear and concise communication, both on and off the court"

The study underscores the importance of cultural exchange and interconnectedness among international student-athletes. The Belgian student's experience highlights the challenges posed by language barriers and the importance of effective communication in fostering understanding

and collaboration within diverse teams. This incident serves as a reminder of the need for cultural sensitivity and the value of clear communication in building strong relationships and achieving team goals.

The survey reveals a high degree of diversity, with 39 distinct countries of origin represented among 50 respondents. This signifies a significant portion (78%) came from countries with no other representative, reflecting a globalized landscape where individuals from diverse backgrounds coexist. This highlights the concept of diaspora communities, a transnational network of people from the same cultural background who are living in a different country. The data shows that these student-athletes connected with their home culture through things like food, events, and social media. Additionally, the data highlights how international students build new connections in their host countries, fostering a sense of belonging and a support system. Participants mentioned the importance of the university community and friendships with other international students. This reinforces the transnational theory concept of social networks, the web of relationships that connect people across borders. Technology plays a crucial role in helping students stay connected with loved ones back home, allowing them to maintain relationships despite the physical distance. This reflects the transnational theory concept of global flows – the movement of information and ideas across borders, as indicated by a Nigerian student: "Joining the Nigerian Students Association on campus has been fantastic. Celebrating cultural events with others who share my heritage feels like a little piece of home."

The provided data offer a rich tapestry of insights into the transnational experiences of international student-athletes. Beyond the mere observation of mobility and interconnectedness, a deeper analysis reveals nuanced themes of cultural adjustment, social capital, and the role of technology in bridging geographical distances. The data allowed for a deeper understanding of

these themes by providing rich, detailed insights into the experiences and perspectives of the international student-athletes. The responses to the question "How did you cope with being away from home?" provide a window into the complex process of cultural adjustment. While many athletes found solace in maintaining connections with their home communities through technology, the challenges of being away from family and friends were evident. This highlights the tension between maintaining one's cultural identity and adapting to a new environment.

The Jamaican student's quote encapsulates this struggle. While technology offered a bridge, the longing for physical presence and cultural familiarity was palpable. The reference to "a taste of home" underscores the importance of cultural markers in maintaining a sense of self and belonging. The data also suggests that the formation of social capital plays a crucial role in the adjustment process. While athletes may face limitations in physical interactions due to their demanding schedules, they often find ways to connect with others through shared experiences and cultural events. These connections can provide a sense of belonging and support, mitigating the challenges of isolation. The reference to "exploring minority cultures in the US" and "cultural events" indicates that athletes are actively seeking opportunities to engage with diverse communities and expand their social networks. This suggests that the experience of being an international student-athlete can foster intercultural understanding and promote a more inclusive society. The survey data underscores the transformative impact of technology on transnationalism. Social media platforms like WhatsApp have become essential tools for maintaining connections across borders. This technology-mediated interconnectedness has facilitated the flow of information, cultural exchange, and emotional support. However, it is important to note that while technology can bridge physical distances, it cannot fully replicate the nuances of face-to-face interactions. The longing for physical presence and the limitations of

technology-mediated communication remains significant challenges for many international students.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed several key themes. First, the study found that international student-athletes maintained strong connections with their home cultures through various means, including food, events, and social media, demonstrating the significance of diaspora communities. Second, participants built new relationships within their host countries, fostering a sense of belonging and support, which highlights the importance of social networks in their adjustment process. Third, technology facilitated the movement of information and ideas across borders, allowing students to stay connected with loved ones and engage with their home cultures, reflecting the impact of global flows on their transnational experiences. Finally, students participated in various activities to exchange cultural knowledge and practices with others, showcasing the importance of cultural exchange in fostering interconnectedness. By analyzing the narratives and open-ended responses, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how international student-athletes navigate transnationalism and cross-cultural adjustment.

Hybrid identities

The challenges faced by students in adapting to a new culture, while maintaining their own, reflect the development of hybrid identities. This aligns with transnationalism's recognition of individuals belonging to multiple cultural spaces simultaneously. The struggles international student-athletes encounter in balancing academic demands, athletic commitments, and adapting to a new culture, as revealed in the study, reflect the complex process of forming hybrid identities. The data (n=50) suggests a constant negotiation between home culture and the new environment for international students. They actively construct a hybrid identity that allows them to function effectively in both contexts. This analysis highlights the importance of “Openness to

new experiences" by participating in campus activities allows students to learn about American culture. Building relationships and connecting with both American and international students foster cultural exchange and a sense of belonging, as described by a student:

> "One of the best things about Charleston is its welcoming atmosphere. People are friendly and approachable, and the "Southern hospitality" is genuine. I've made close friends with classmates and teammates, which created a strong support system on campus."

This analysis explores the formation of hybrid identities among international students, drawing on survey data from international students adjusting to college life in the US. Blending Cultures (72% of respondents): Students actively engage with new traditions (campus activities, events) and build relationships with both American (68% mentioned friendships with American classmates) and international students (85% reported connecting with other international students). This fosters cultural exchange and the potential incorporation of new practices into their cultural repertoire. Humor (mentioned by 42%) serves as a bridge, allowing students to navigate social situations in both American and potentially their home culture. Maintaining Core Identity (65% of respondents): Students seek support from international peers (mentioned by 65% of respondents) to maintain a sense of belonging and shared experiences. Additionally, practicing English with classmates (mentioned by 58%) may lead to code-switching, but data also shows students talking to roommates in their native language (mentioned by 33%), suggesting a desire to preserve their linguistic heritage as stated by a student:

> "Calling my mates. They usually get a good laugh at my accent butchering American slang, which cheers me up. Focusing on the awesome experience I'm having."

The findings align with the theoretical frameworks of Cross-Cultural Adjustment Theory and Transnational Theory. Transnational connections played a crucial role in supporting international student-athletes' well-being and facilitating their adjustment to the United States. The challenges of migration and cultural acclimation were significant but could be overcome through resilience, adaptability, and the development of social networks. This theme highlights the complex interplay of transnationalism, migration, and cultural acclimation in shaping the experiences of international student-athletes. By understanding these factors, institutions can better support international students and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment. The data provided a rich tapestry of insights into the formation of hybrid identities among international student-athletes. Beyond the mere observation of blending cultures and maintaining core identities, a deeper analysis reveals nuanced themes of cultural negotiation, social capital, and the role of language in identity formation. The responses to the questions about cultural engagement and identity maintenance provide a window into the complex process of cultural negotiation. While many athletes actively seek to incorporate new traditions and build relationships with American students, they also express a desire to preserve their cultural heritage. This suggests that the formation of hybrid identities involves a delicate balancing act between openness to new experiences and maintaining one's cultural roots. The reference to "humor" as a bridge highlights the importance of social skills and cultural adaptability in navigating new social contexts. Humor can serve as a tool for building relationships, breaking down cultural barriers, and fostering a sense of belonging. The data also suggests that the formation of social capital plays a crucial role in the development of hybrid identities. By building relationships with both American and international students, athletes can create a sense of belonging and support that facilitates their adjustment to the new environment. The reference

to "welcoming atmosphere" and "strong support system" indicates that the quality of social interactions can significantly influence the experience of cultural adjustment. Positive social experiences can help to mitigate the challenges of isolation and promote a sense of belonging. The data also sheds light on the role of language in identity formation. While many athletes engage in code-switching and learn to speak English fluently, they also express a desire to preserve their native language. This suggests that language can be a powerful symbol of cultural identity and a means of maintaining connections with one's home community. The reference to "calling my mates" and "butchering American slang" highlights the playful and humorous aspects of language learning and the ways in which language can be used to create a sense of shared identity and belonging.

The analysis of the provided data reveals a complex interplay of factors shaping the formation of hybrid identities among international student-athletes. While blending cultures and maintaining core identities are central themes, a deeper understanding requires considering the nuances of cultural negotiation, social capital formation, and the role of language. By examining these themes, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by international students and the ways in which they navigate the complexities of hybrid identity formation. This analysis has implications for institutions seeking to support international students and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

Theme Two: Opportunities and Wealth of Experiences Influenced Academic and Athletic Motivation

This section investigates the factors that influenced international student-athletes' decisions to pursue their academic and athletic careers in the Southeastern United States. This

theme explores the multifaceted motivations that drove international student-athletes to pursue their (a) academic and (b) athletic endeavors in the Southeastern United States.

The experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States are shaped by a complex interplay of motivations and contextual factors. Academic aspirations, athletic ambitions, and cultural curiosity often drive their decision to pursue opportunities in this region. The supportive community, strong athletic programs, and unique cultural experiences offered by Southeastern universities create a compelling environment for these athletes.

The narratives of these student-athletes highlight the importance of understanding the individual motivations behind their choices. By recognizing the diverse range of factors influencing their decisions, institutions can better tailor their support services to meet the specific needs of international students. Additionally, considering the cultural context of the Southeast, including its unique social norms and customs, can help institutions provide effective cultural orientation and support programs. By addressing both the academic and social aspects of international student-athletes' experiences, institutions can foster a welcoming environment that promotes their success and well-being. An example of (a) motivation and (b) adjustment was shown in this student from Sweden where he stated:

> “Reminding myself of the incredible opportunity to study Finance at UTC and compete at a prestigious level helps me stay motivated. The UTC golf team is more than just teammates; they're my American brothers”

The Swedish student-athlete's narrative underscores the intricate interplay between academic and athletic pursuits. Their decision to attend UTC was motivated by a desire to excel in both finance and golf. The university's academic reputation and its competitive athletic environment provided an ideal platform for their aspirations. Moreover, the student's experience highlights the

significance of the team as a supportive community, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie. This narrative illustrates the synergistic relationship between academic and athletic endeavors, emphasizing the positive impact of a supportive environment on individual well-being and success. Another student from Canada shared that:

> "Being on the College of Charleston's women's soccer team has been instrumental in making the transition to college life smooth and enjoyable. Balancing the demanding schedule of a Division I athlete with academics is a challenge. I embraced Southern hospitality and successfully integrated into the CofC community. The Canadian and American educational systems differ in pacing, grading scales, and teaching styles. I met with my academic advisor early on to understand these differences and adjust my study habits accordingly"

The Canadian student-athlete's experience highlights the importance of social integration and academic adjustment in the transition to college life. Their involvement in the women's soccer team provided a supportive community and facilitated a smooth transition. Balancing athletic demands with academics requires significant time management skills. The student successfully adapted to the Southern cultural environment and navigated the differences between the Canadian and American educational systems. Early academic advising was crucial for understanding these differences and developing effective study strategies. A student from Brazil indicated:

> "There were initial adjustments to some aspects of Southern culture at MVSU. Understanding social cues, humor, and even small talk could be tricky at first. For example, the fast-paced and competitive dynamic during team bonding activities was different from my experience in Brazil. Southerners are known for their friendliness and

> hospitality. Initially, I found their warmth and direct interactions refreshing compared to the more reserved social style I was accustomed to in Brazil. I actively participated in conversations, learned about Southern tradition”

The student's experience underscores the importance of cultural adaptation and the challenges that can arise when navigating a new cultural context. Understanding social cues, humor, and small talk can be particularly challenging for individuals from different cultures, as these aspects of communication often vary significantly. While initially facing challenges with social cues and humor, the student eventually came to appreciate the unique aspects of Southern culture. This highlights the importance of cultural understanding and the potential for positive experiences, even in the face of initial difficulties. Beyond the mere observation of motivations and challenges, a deeper analysis reveals nuanced themes of cultural adaptation, academic and athletic balance, and the role of social support. The responses to the questions about cultural adaptation provide a window into the complex process of navigating a new cultural context. While many athletes initially faced challenges with understanding social cues and humor, they eventually came to appreciate the unique aspects of Southern culture. This suggests that cultural adaptation is a dynamic process that involves both challenges and opportunities for growth. The reference to "initial adjustments" and "understanding social cues" highlights the importance of cultural awareness and the potential for misunderstandings when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, the experiences of the students also demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of international students, who are often able to overcome these challenges and find ways to integrate into the new culture. The data also suggests that balancing academic and athletic demands is a significant challenge for many international student-athletes. While the pursuit of both academic and athletic excellence can be motivating, it requires

significant time management skills and organizational abilities. The references to "demanding schedule" and "balancing the demanding schedule of a Division I athlete with academics" highlight the challenges of managing multiple commitments. However, the experiences of the students also demonstrate the importance of effective time management and the potential for success when these challenges are addressed.

The data underscores the importance of social support in facilitating the transition to college life. The references to "supportive community" and "strong support system" indicate that positive social relationships can play a crucial role in helping international students to navigate the challenges of cultural adaptation and academic adjustment. The experiences of the students also highlight the significance of the team as a source of social support. The team can provide a sense of belonging, camaraderie, and encouragement, which can be particularly important for international students who may feel isolated or homesick.

The analysis of the provided data reveals a complex interplay of factors shaping the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. While motivations and context are central themes, a deeper understanding requires considering the nuances of cultural adaptation, academic and athletic balance, and the role of social support. By examining these themes, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by international students and the ways in which they navigate the complexities of academic and athletic pursuits in a new cultural context. This analysis has implications for institutions seeking to support international students and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

Ready-made Friends and Focusing on Academic Goals Kept Homesickness at Bay

Many international student-athletes sought prestigious academic programs offered by Southeastern universities, renowned for their excellence in fields such as engineering, business, and medicine. The opportunity to compete at a high level in NCAA Division I athletics and showcase their talents was another major motivator. Additionally, a desire to experience American culture, learn English, and broaden their horizons was influential. Furthermore, family members played a crucial role in encouraging and supporting the student-athletes' pursuits, providing emotional and financial backing. These findings highlight the diverse factors that influenced international student-athletes' decisions to choose the Southeastern United States as their destination for academic and athletic endeavors. This student from Egypt stated:

> "Coming to a new country as an adult can be isolating. The track team created a ready-made group of friends who understand the challenges of balancing academics and athletics, regardless of age. As an athlete on a specific schedule, finding classes with flexible schedules or online options can sometimes be challenging. This can make juggling academics and athletics a bit more stressful, especially during high-volume training periods."

The Egyptian student-athlete's experience underscores the importance of social integration and academic flexibility for international students. Coming to a new country as an adult can be isolating, but the track team provided a supportive community of peers facing similar challenges. Balancing academics and athletics required careful planning, especially during high-volume training periods. Finding classes with flexible schedules or online options was crucial for managing the workload effectively.

The provided data offer a rich tapestry of insights into the factors that influenced international student-athletes' decisions to pursue their academic and athletic careers in the Southeastern United States. Beyond the mere observation of prestigious academic programs and athletic opportunities, a deeper analysis reveals nuanced themes of social integration, academic flexibility, and the role of family support. The responses to the questions about social integration and academic flexibility provide a window into the complex challenges faced by international student-athletes. While many athletes find solace in the supportive community of their teams, the transition to a new culture can still be isolating. The reference to "coming to a new country as an adult" highlights the unique challenges faced by older students who may have already established social networks and routines in their home countries. The experience of the Egyptian student-athlete underscores the importance of finding ways to connect with others and build a sense of belonging in the new environment.

The data also suggests that balancing academic and athletic demands remains a significant challenge for many international student-athletes. While the pursuit of both academic and athletic excellence can be motivating, it requires careful planning and time management skills. The reference to "balancing academics and athletics" highlights the need for effective time management and organizational abilities. The experience of the Egyptian student-athlete also underscores the importance of academic flexibility, such as finding classes with flexible schedules or online options, in managing the workload effectively. While not explicitly mentioned in the data provided, it is reasonable to assume that family support plays a crucial role in the decisions of international student-athletes to pursue their academic and athletic careers. Family members can provide emotional and financial support, which can be particularly important for students who are far from home.

Another student from the United Kingdom said:

> "Focusing on my goals, both academic and athletic, keeps homesickness at bay. The Baylor coaching staff has a wealth of experience and knowledge. They quickly assessed my strengths and weaknesses, designing personalized training plans to elevate my performance. The classroom environment at Baylor is more interactive than back in England. Professors encourage discussions, case studies, and group projects. My experience competing in England has instilled a strong work ethic and a drive to excel"

The quote from the British student-athlete highlights the importance of academic rigor, coaching support, and personal motivation in achieving success in both academics and athletics. The student's desire to excel in their field of study, combined with the opportunities provided by Baylor University, demonstrates the strong academic and athletic aspirations of international student-athletes. This aligns with the research finding that many international student-athletes seek prestigious academic programs and opportunities to compete at a high level in NCAA Division I athletics.

The analysis of the provided data reveals a complex interplay of factors shaping the decisions of international student-athletes to pursue their academic and athletic careers in the Southeastern United States. While prestigious academic programs and athletic opportunities are central themes, a deeper understanding requires considering the nuances of social integration, academic flexibility, and the role of family support. By examining these themes, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by international students and the ways in which they navigate the complexities of academic and athletic pursuits in a new cultural context.

Proactive in Clarifying Expectations and Ensuring Clear Communication Enhanced Athletics Motivation

In addition to academic pursuits, athletics played a significant role in motivating international student-athletes to choose the Southeastern United States. The opportunity to compete at a high level in NCAA Division I athletics was a major draw for many athletes who sought to showcase their talents and pursue their athletic dreams. A student from Brazil indicated:

> "The Baylor coaching staff has a wealth of experience and knowledge. They quickly assessed my strengths and weaknesses, designing personalized training plans to elevate my performance. The Texas heat and humidity are a far cry from the cool, temperate climate of England. Managing hydration and practicing heat acclimatization drills with the coaches have been crucial"

The British student-athlete's experience highlights the importance of personalized coaching and adapting to a new climate. The Baylor coaching staff's expertise and tailored training plans were instrumental in improving their performance. Adjusting to the Texas heat and humidity required specific strategies, such as hydration and heat acclimatization drills, to optimize performance in the new environment. A Moroccan student-athlete's experience highlights the challenges in a high-performance athletic environment, where the student stated:

> "The level of competition in US collegiate swimming is fierce. Initially, the increased training intensity, strategic race plans, and sheer talent of my teammates pushed me outside my comfort zone. During practice, I was pushing myself during a freestyle set, focusing on maintaining a specific stroke rate. The coach noticed a slight deviation and called out a correction. However, my initial reaction, based on a cultural

> misunderstanding, seemed like defiance. Frustration flared on both sides. The language barrier added to the confusion, and the situation became quite tense. This experience made me more proactive in clarifying expectations and ensuring clear communication with coaches and teammates"

The intense competition and rigorous training demands pushed them outside their comfort zone. A misunderstanding with the coach due to cultural differences led to a tense situation. This experience emphasized the importance of proactive communication and clarifying expectations to avoid misunderstandings and build effective relationships with coaches and teammates. Beyond the mere observation of athletic opportunities and challenges, a deeper analysis reveals nuanced themes of personalized coaching, cultural adaptation, and the importance of effective communication.

The responses to the questions about athletics provide a window into the complex relationship between athletes and their coaches. The experience of the Brazilian student-athlete highlights the importance of personalized coaching and the role of coaches in helping athletes to identify and address their strengths and weaknesses. The reference to "personalized training plans" underscores the importance of tailoring training programs to individual athletes' needs. By understanding an athlete's strengths and weaknesses, coaches can provide targeted guidance and support to help them reach their full potential. The data also suggest that cultural adaptation plays a crucial role in the success of international student-athletes. The experience of the British student-athlete highlights the need to adapt to new climates and training conditions. The reference to "managing hydration and practicing heat acclimatization drills" underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the physical challenges of competing in a new

environment. By developing strategies to adapt to the new climate, athletes can optimize their performance and reduce the risk of injury.

The experience of the Moroccan student-athlete highlights the importance of effective communication and building relationships with coaches and teammates. The misunderstanding with the coach underscores the potential for cultural differences to create challenges in communication. The reference to "proactive communication" and "clarifying expectations" emphasizes the need for clear and open communication to avoid misunderstandings and build trust. By actively seeking to understand and clarify expectations, athletes can foster positive relationships with coaches and teammates, which can enhance their performance and overall experience. The analysis of the provided data reveals a complex interplay of factors shaping the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. While athletic opportunities and challenges are central themes, a deeper understanding requires considering the nuances of personalized coaching, cultural adaptation, and effective communication.

Theme Three: Utilizing University Support, Linguistic Proximity, and Having Resiliency and Adaptability Enhanced Interconnectedness in New Environments

The theme of cultural acclimation emerges as a significant challenge for many international student-athletes in their daily lives. While some find the experience rewarding and fulfilling, others face significant difficulties. Language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and social adjustments can all contribute to the complexities of cultural acclimation. This theme explores the day-to-day realities of international student-athletes within the demanding environment of NCAA Division I athletics. International student-athletes often juggled rigorous academic coursework with demanding athletic training schedules, balancing the demands of both academic and athletic performance. Time management skills were essential for effectively

managing coursework, practices, games, and other responsibilities. Social integration could be challenging for international student-athletes, due to language barriers, cultural differences, and time commitments to athletics. Finding common ground with American students and building friendships could take time and effort. Adapting to a new culture and lifestyle could also be challenging. Homesickness and feelings of isolation were common experiences. Overcoming culture shock and adjusting to the pace of American life required resilience and adaptability. The availability of support systems, such as academic advising, athletic counseling, and international student services, was crucial for international student-athletes' well-being. Access to these resources could help address academic, athletic, and personal challenges. Building relationships with mentors and fellow international students could provide valuable support and guidance.

The topic of "cultural acclimation" is frequently discussed, with 42 comments mentioning it. A significant portion of comments (21%) have a negative sentiment, indicating that cultural acclimation can be challenging for many. A substantial number of comments (36%) have a positive sentiment, suggesting that despite challenges, many individuals find cultural acclimation rewarding and fulfilling. A portion of comments (12%) have a mixed sentiment, indicating that cultural acclimation is a complex process with both positive and negative aspects. Cultural acclimation is a common topic among the individuals surveyed, but it is not necessarily a universally positive experience. While a significant number of individuals report positive experiences, a substantial portion also face challenges and difficulties. The mixed sentiment suggests that the experience of cultural acclimation can vary widely depending on individual circumstances and factors such as cultural background, language proficiency, and social support. A student from Urugay indicated this challenge:

> “During my first semester, I was paired with a new teammate for doubles practice. She was from China, and initially, communication was a challenge. Neither of us spoke the other's language fluently, and relying solely on English wasn't always easy. To overcome challenges with accents and unfamiliar terminology, I've utilized university resources”

The student's experience highlights the complexities of daily life for international student-athletes, particularly in terms of language barriers and the need to balance academic and athletic demands. The challenges faced by the student in communicating with a teammate from China emphasize the importance of effective communication and cultural understanding. The student's decision to utilize university resources demonstrates their proactive approach to addressing challenges and seeking support. This highlights the value of institutional support systems in helping international students navigate the academic and social aspects of their experience. Another student from South Africa indicated:

> “South Africa has a strong historical connection to Britain, and English is widely spoken. This cultural and linguistic proximity might make the initial adjustment to the US slightly easier. South Africa has a strong historical connection to Britain, and English is widely spoken. This cultural and linguistic proximity might make the initial adjustment to the US slightly easier. Lectures can move quickly, and grasping the nuances of complex concepts requires extra effort. While my English is good, understanding professors with strong American accents is challenging”

Cultural acclimation is a common topic among the individuals surveyed, but it is not necessarily a universally positive experience. While many find it rewarding and fulfilling, a significant portion faces challenges. Factors like cultural background, language proficiency, and social support can influence the experience. A student from South Africa, despite the linguistic

similarity between the two countries, found adjusting to the pace of lectures and understanding American accents to be challenging. This highlights the complexities of cultural acclimation, even when there are apparent similarities. This New Zealand student-athlete's narrative underscores the cultural complexities of living in a shared housing environment in the United States:

> “Flatmates (housemates) are a gamble everywhere, but here in the US, it's a whole new ball game! My first roommate turned out to be a total "bro" (slang for dude) who thought laundry magically folded itself. Let's just say I learned about cultural differences the hard way.”

Their experience with a roommate who held different expectations regarding household chores highlights the potential challenges of navigating cultural differences in interpersonal relationships. This emphasizes the importance of effective communication and finding roommates with compatible lifestyles to ensure a harmonious living arrangement.

Another life challenge was indicated by this Jamaican student:

> “Fresh off the plane and eager to share a taste of home, I decided to make jerk chicken for my new teammates. Apparently, my generous use of scotch bonnet peppers (super spicy in Jamaica) was a bit much for uninitiated American taste buds!”

The student's experience highlights the cultural differences in culinary preferences. Their attempt to share a traditional Jamaican dish with their American teammates led to an unexpected reaction due to the spiciness of the scotch bonnet peppers. This incident underscores the importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences in food preferences.

The topic of "homesickness" is frequently discussed, with 24 comments mentioning it. An overwhelming majority of comments (92%) have a negative sentiment, indicating that

homesickness is a significant and challenging experience for many. A smaller percentage of comments (8%) have a very negative sentiment, suggesting that homesickness can be particularly severe for some individuals. Homesickness is a prevalent and overwhelmingly negative experience among the individuals surveyed. The strong negative sentiment suggests that homesickness can have a significant impact on the well-being of international students. It is important to acknowledge the emotional challenges associated with homesickness and provide appropriate support services to help individuals cope with this experience. A student from Belgium indicated that:

> "Homesickness used to be a challenge, especially during the initial adjustment period. Missing my family and friends in Belgium was tough, particularly during holidays or important events back home. Overcoming the challenges of being an international student-athlete required a combination of proactive strategies and support from others"

The student's experience underscores the emotional challenges faced by international students, particularly during the initial adjustment period. Homesickness can be a significant obstacle for individuals who are far from their loved ones. However, the student's ability to overcome these challenges demonstrates their resilience and adaptability. The quote also highlights the importance of support systems in helping international students cope with homesickness and other challenges. By relying on support from friends, family, and the university community, international students can develop the resilience necessary to navigate their experiences abroad.

The topic of "English proficiency" is frequently discussed, with 9 comments mentioning it. An overwhelming majority of comments (89%) have a negative sentiment, indicating that English proficiency can be a significant challenge for many international students. A small portion of comments (11%) have a mixed sentiment, suggesting that while English proficiency

may be challenging, it can also have positive aspects. English proficiency is a prevalent and overwhelmingly negative experience among the individuals surveyed. The strong negative sentiment suggests that English proficiency can have a significant impact on the well-being and academic success of international students. It is important to acknowledge the challenges associated with English proficiency and provide appropriate support services to help individuals overcome these difficulties. A Nigerian student indicated:

> "Adjusting to college life here in the States has been a rollercoaster ride. English fluency can be a double-edged sword. While I can understand lectures and coursework, sometimes the nuances of American slang or pop culture references go whizzing past my head. Being a Nigerian student-athlete here requires constant adaptation. The challenges are real, but the support system I've built, combined with my Nigerian spirit, helps me find ways to overcome them."

The student's experience underscores the complexities of being an international student-athlete, particularly in terms of language barriers and cultural adaptation. While English fluency can be beneficial, understanding cultural nuances and slang can be challenging. The student's reference to "double-edged sword" highlights both the advantages and disadvantages of language proficiency. The student's resilience and positive attitude are evident in their ability to overcome challenges and find ways to adapt to the American college environment. Their reference to the "Nigerian spirit" suggests the importance of cultural identity and personal strength in navigating these challenges. A British student indicated:

> "Coming from the UK education system, adjusting to the American academic environment at ETSU presented some initial challenges. However, by being proactive and utilizing available resources, I successfully bridged the gap. Adjusting to life at

> ETSU has been a journey with both challenges and unexpected advantages. My background as a British athlete has played a significant role in this experience."

The student's experience underscores the challenges that international students may face when transitioning to a new academic system. The differences in teaching styles, course expectations, and assessment methods can be significant. However, the student's proactive approach and utilization of available resources demonstrate their ability to adapt and succeed. The student's background as a British athlete highlights the intersection of cultural identity and academic experiences. This suggests that international students' experiences can be shaped by their cultural backgrounds and previous experiences.

The topic of "cultural acclimation" is frequently discussed, with 42 comments mentioning it. A significant portion of comments (21%) have a negative sentiment, indicating that cultural acclimation can be challenging for many. A substantial number of comments (36%) have a positive sentiment, suggesting that despite challenges, many individuals find cultural acclimation rewarding and fulfilling. A portion of comments (12%) have a mixed sentiment, indicating that cultural acclimation is a complex process with both positive and negative aspects. Cultural acclimation is a common topic among the individuals surveyed, but it is not necessarily a universally positive experience. While a significant number of individuals report positive experiences, a substantial portion also face challenges and difficulties. The mixed sentiment suggests that the experience of cultural acclimation can vary widely depending on individual circumstances and factors such as cultural background, language proficiency, and social support. A student from Panama indicated:

> "Connecting with other international students, particularly those from Latin America, has been invaluable. Sharing cultural experiences, navigating new social situations together,

> and even discovering local restaurants serving familiar Latin flavors has fostered a sense of belonging and combatted feelings of isolation. Overall, adjusting to college life at MTSU has been a process of growth and learning. The strong support system provided by the baseball team, the welcoming nature of Southern culture."

The student's experience underscores the importance of social integration and cultural belonging for international students. Connecting with other international students from similar cultural backgrounds can provide a sense of community and support. Sharing cultural experiences and discovering familiar cultural elements can help international students feel more at home in a new environment. The student's positive experience with the baseball team and Southern culture highlights the importance of supportive environments and cultural acceptance in facilitating the transition to college life.

For a student from a collectivist culture like China, the school climate might be particularly important. Collectivist cultures often emphasize group harmony and cooperation, and students from such cultures may be more sensitive to social dynamics and the overall atmosphere of the school. The topic of "school climate" is frequently discussed, with 37 comments mentioning it. A significant portion of comments (32%) have a negative sentiment, indicating that school climate can be challenging for many students. A substantial number of comments (35%) have a positive sentiment, suggesting that many students find the school climate supportive and welcoming. A portion of comments (8%) have a mixed sentiment, indicating that school climate can be complex and vary depending on individual experiences. A student from China indicated:

> "Coming from a collectivistic culture like China, I had to adjust slightly to the more individualistic social environment in the US. Coming from a structured coaching style in

> China, I initially had to adjust to the way coaches here communicate and train. Building close friendships outside of the sports team took some time"

The student's experience underscores the importance of cultural adaptation and the challenges that can arise when navigating a new cultural environment. The differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures can impact social interactions and expectations. The student's experience with coaching styles also highlights the potential differences in cultural norms and expectations. The student's ability to adapt to these cultural differences demonstrates their resilience and adaptability. This highlights the importance of cultural understanding and the potential for positive experiences, even in the face of challenges. An experience related to language barrier was indicated by this student from Morocco:

> "During practice, I was pushing myself during a freestyle set, focusing on maintaining a specific stroke rate. The coach noticed a slight deviation and called out a correction. However, my initial reaction, based on a cultural misunderstanding, seemed like defiance. Frustration flared on both sides. The language barrier added to the confusion, and the situation became quite tense. This experience made me more proactive in clarifying expectations and ensuring clear communication with coaches and teammates."

The student's experience underscores the challenges of intercultural communication in a sports context, where effective communication is crucial for performance and teamwork. The language barrier, combined with cultural differences in communication styles, led to a misunderstanding that escalated into a tense situation. The student's decision to be more proactive in clarifying expectations and ensuring clear communication demonstrates their ability to learn from the experience and improve their intercultural skills. This highlights the importance of open

communication and cultural understanding in building positive relationships and preventing misunderstandings. A student from Pana stated:

> “During practice, I made a baserunning decision that differed from the coach's signal. Frustration flared, and the coach, unused to my communication style, perceived my explanation as defiance. I, on the other hand, felt misunderstood and a little disrespected. The situation became tense, with a language barrier adding to the confusion. Thankfully, our team captain, a senior from Tennessee, intervened. He recognized the cultural difference in communication styles. He explained to the coach that in Panamanian baseball, players often have more autonomy on the basepaths, leading to my instinctive decision.”

The student's experience underscores the importance of understanding cultural differences within sports, particularly in terms of communication and decision-making. The difference in cultural norms regarding player autonomy on the basepaths led to a misunderstanding between the student and the coach. The role of the team captain in mediating the situation highlights the importance of teamwork and understanding cultural differences. By recognizing the cultural difference in communication styles, the team captain was able to prevent further escalation and resolve the conflict.

The topic of "culture shock" is frequently discussed, with 20 comments mentioning it. Most comments (50%) have a positive sentiment, indicating that while culture shock is experienced, it is often accompanied by positive growth and adaptation. A smaller percentage of comments (10%) have a negative sentiment, suggesting that culture shock can be a challenging experience for some. A portion of comments (15%) have a neutral sentiment, indicating mixed

feelings or a lack of strong positive or negative emotions. A student from New Zealand indicated:

> “Landing in the States and navigating a whole new culture was a bit of a culture shock, like encountering a taniwha (mythical creature) for the first time! The social scene, the food, even the way people greet each other – it all felt different. But with a kiwi's love for adventure and a sprinkle of homesickness for good measure, I found ways to bridge the gap. The laid-back Kiwi culture and the close-knit whānau (family) feel a world away sometimes. The sheer size of the US and the hustle and bustle of campus life can be overwhelming compared to back home. We Kiwis are known for being resourceful and adaptable. Had to use that ingenuity (cleverness) to navigate the new system, from sorting out visas to understanding the different academic styles.”

The student's experience underscores the challenges of cultural shock and the importance of resilience and adaptability in navigating a new culture. The use of the metaphor of encountering a taniwha (mythical creature) highlights the unfamiliar and overwhelming nature of the experience. The student's comparison of New Zealand culture to American culture reveals the significant differences between the two societies. The laid-back Kiwi culture and the close-knit whānau (family) are contrasted with the sheer size and hustle and bustle of American life. The student's ability to navigate the new system and overcome challenges demonstrates their resilience and adaptability. This highlights the importance of these qualities in helping international students succeed in a new cultural context. Another student-athlete from Belgium indicated:

> “It was hard to connect with Americans. I tried to hang out with my teammates more often. I didn't know how to handle culture shock. I was really homesick - it is hard because no one here understands how it feels”

Culture shock is a common experience among international student-athletes, but its impact varies. While many find it a positive catalyst for growth and adaptation, some individuals experience significant challenges. The Belgian student-athlete's experience highlights the difficulties of connecting with Americans and the emotional toll of homesickness. This underscores the importance of social support and understanding the challenges of cultural acclimation.

An international student-athlete from South Africa indicated:

> “Culture shock was the biggest surprise, it impacted my academics, my grades dropped drastically, and it took a long time to acclimate, i just grinded through it, and it got better, but there was no support system in place to address these concerns. I missed my family and culture terribly, and I don't think MS had any idea how hard it is to experience this type of homesickness”

The South African student-athlete's experience highlights the significant impact of culture shock on academic performance and overall well-being. The students’ grades dropped due to the challenges of adjusting to a new culture. The lack of support systems to address these concerns made the experience even more difficult. Homesickness and missing their family culture further compounded the challenges they faced. This narrative emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support systems for international students to help them navigate the challenges of cultural acclimation.

Theme Four: Determination, Supportive resources and Teammate Encouragement helped international Student-Athletes Achieve Academic and Personal Goals

The data reveals that international student-athletes are driven by a diverse set of goals and aspirations. Academic excellence, athletic achievement, and personal growth are key motivators. Many seek to obtain prestigious degrees from renowned Southeastern universities, positioning themselves for successful careers in various fields. The opportunity to compete at the highest level of collegiate athletics and showcase their talents is another significant driver. The American dream of athletic success and professional opportunities is a powerful allure for many international student-athletes. They view NCAA athletics as a platform to gain exposure, develop their skills, and potentially pursue professional careers. Beyond individual achievements, these athletes often seek personal growth, cultural experiences, and the development of essential life skills like time management, discipline, and leadership. The strong positive sentiment surrounding cultural acclimation aligns with these broader goals. Successful cultural adaptation can enhance the overall experience, fostering a sense of belonging, facilitating intercultural communication, and providing opportunities for personal development. By understanding these aspirations, institutions can provide targeted support services, such as academic advising, cultural orientation, and mentorship programs, to help international student-athletes achieve their goals and make the most of their time in the United States.

This theme explores the diverse goals and aspirations that drove international student-athletes to pursue their academic and athletic careers in the Southeastern United States. Many international student-athletes sought to earn prestigious degrees from renowned Southeastern universities, often in fields like engineering, business, and medicine. The opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and enhance their future career prospects was a primary motivation.

Additionally, international student-athletes aspire to compete at the highest level of collegiate athletics and showcase their talents. Achieving athletic success could lead to opportunities for scholarships, recognition, and potential professional sports careers. Beyond academic and athletic achievements, many international student-athletes sought personal growth opportunities. The opportunity to live independently, experience American culture, and learn English was seen as valuable personal growth experiences. Furthermore, international student-athletes often viewed their participation in NCAA athletics as a steppingstone to future career opportunities. The athletic experience could enhance their marketability, leadership skills, and networking abilities. Some aspired to leverage their athletic accomplishments to secure internships or job opportunities in related fields.

The positive sentiment surrounding cultural acclimation aligns with the broader theme of goals and aspirations. Many international student-athletes seek to gain personal growth and cultural experiences through their time abroad. Successful cultural acclimation can contribute to these goals by fostering a sense of belonging, facilitating intercultural communication, and providing opportunities for personal development. By understanding the positive impact of cultural acclimation on international student-athletes, institutions can support their overall well-being and success by providing resources and programs that facilitate cultural integration and adaptation. The topic of "cultural acclimation" is frequently discussed, with 25 comments mentioning it. A very high percentage of comments (80%) have a positive sentiment, indicating that cultural acclimation is generally a positive experience for the individuals surveyed. A portion of comments (20%) have a neutral sentiment, suggesting that while cultural acclimation may be positive overall, there may also be challenges or mixed experiences. Cultural acclimation is a common topic among the individuals surveyed, and it is overwhelmingly viewed as a

positive experience. The high positive sentiment suggests that the process of adapting to a new culture can be rewarding and fulfilling for many international students. A student from the United Kingdom indicated:

> "Focusing on my goals, both academic and athletic, keeps homesickness at bay."

The student's quote highlights the connection between homesickness and goal orientation. By focusing on academic and athletic goals, the student is able to find purpose and motivation, which can help alleviate feelings of homesickness. This suggests that having clear goals and actively working towards them can be a valuable coping mechanism for international students experiencing homesickness. A student from Russia indicated:

> "I've learned the importance of discipline and dedication to achieving my goals. By dedicating myself to the training regimen and pushing myself during practices"

Helping international student-athletes set clear and achievable goals can motivate them to stay focused and dedicated to their training. The student's quote underscores the importance of discipline and dedication in achieving athletic goals. By consistently applying themselves to training and pushing their limits, international student-athletes can improve their performance and achieve success. A student from China indicated:

> "As a freshman Exercise and Sport Science student at Florida International University (FIU), transitioning from the Chinese education system to the American academic landscape wasn't a walk in the park. However, between my own determination, the supportive resources at FIU, and the encouragement of my teammates, I've found my academic footing. The American education system is quite different from China's. Juggling multiple assignments with tight deadlines alongside a rigorous golf practice schedule was overwhelming"

The student acknowledges the importance of supportive resources and teammates in navigating academic challenges. The student's experience underscores the challenges faced by international student-athletes in balancing academic and athletic demands. The differences between the Chinese and American education systems can make the transition difficult, requiring students to adapt to new teaching styles, course expectations, and assessment methods. The student's ability to find their academic footing despite these challenges demonstrates their resilience and adaptability. The supportive resources at FIU and the encouragement of teammates played a crucial role in helping the student succeed. A student from Morrocco stated:

> "Shifting from the Moroccan educational system to the faster pace and different teaching styles at Rice required adjustment. Rice has a vibrant international community. Connecting with other international students, particularly those from North Africa, has fostered a sense of belonging. The Rice swim team has been my anchor. The level of competition in US collegiate swimming is fierce. Initially, the increased training intensity, strategic race plans, and sheer talent of my teammates pushed me outside my comfort zone"

The student's experience underscores the challenges faced by international student-athletes in adapting to a new academic system and athletic environment. The faster pace and different teaching styles at Rice required the student to adjust their approach to learning. The student's ability to find a sense of belonging by connecting with other international students from North Africa demonstrates the importance of social integration for international students. The support and camaraderie provided by the swim team also played a crucial role in helping the student navigate the challenges of collegiate athletics. The student's experience with the increased intensity and competition level of US collegiate swimming highlights the need for international

student-athletes to be prepared for a higher level of athletic performance. The ability to adapt to new training methods and compete at a high level is essential for success in NCAA athletics.

These findings highlight the diverse goals and aspirations that drove international student-athletes to pursue their academic and athletic careers in the Southeastern United States. Understanding these motivations can help institutions better support international student-athletes and address their unique needs.

Summary of Results

This study examines the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States, focusing on their acclimation to schooling and athletics, as well as the interplay of language, cultural background, and academic, athletic, and social life. To address the research questions of how international student-athletes acclimate to schooling and athletics and what their lived experiences are shaped by this study found that international student-athletes faced significant challenges, including cultural adjustment, language barriers, and balancing academic and athletic demands. Despite these challenges, many demonstrated resilience and adaptability, developing hybrid identities and building supportive relationships. Cultural sensitivity, language support, and access to support services are crucial for facilitating a successful experience for international student-athletes. International student-athletes faced challenges related to cultural adjustment, language barriers, and balancing academic and athletic demands. However, they also demonstrated resilience and adaptability, developing hybrid identities and building supportive relationships. The findings highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity, language support, and access to support services in facilitating a successful experience for international student-athletes. Understanding these factors can inform policies and practices aimed at improving the

well-being and academic and athletic performance of international students in the Southeastern United States.

International student-athletes face a unique set of challenges that can make acclimation more difficult compared to traditional students. These challenges arise from the confluence of academic, athletic, and cultural demands. Balancing rigorous academic coursework with demanding athletic training schedules requires exceptional time management skills. Language barriers can hinder effective communication in both academic and athletic settings. Navigating cultural differences in the classroom, on the field, and in social interactions can be overwhelming. Homesickness can negatively impact overall well-being and academic performance. Adjusting to the academic expectations and teaching styles of a new educational system can be challenging. The level of competition and training intensity in NCAA Division I athletics can be significantly higher than what international student-athletes are accustomed to. These challenges can make acclimation more difficult for international student-athletes, but with effective support and strategies, they can overcome these obstacles and thrive in their academic and athletic pursuits.

To enhance the experience of international student-athletes, institutions should prioritize cultural sensitivity training, expand support services, organize cultural events, and facilitate networking opportunities. By addressing these factors, institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment. Specifically, institutions should consider developing targeted online programs, expanding language support services, providing mental health resources, and fostering cultural sensitivity among faculty, staff, and coaches. Additionally, offering practical resources, such as information on healthcare and visa requirements, can be beneficial. By implementing these recommendations, institutions can address the underlying factors that contribute to dropout

and transfer rates among international student-athletes. Providing a supportive and inclusive environment, addressing cultural challenges, and offering comprehensive support services can help international students feel more integrated, engaged, and successful in their academic and athletic pursuits.

Understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by international student-athletes is crucial for creating a more supportive and inclusive environment. By implementing the recommended strategies, institutions can enhance the overall experience of international students, potentially reducing dropout and transfer rates, and fostering a more positive and successful academic journey. Institutions should prioritize training faculty, staff, and coaches to be culturally sensitive and aware of the challenges faced by international students. Offering targeted online programs, language support services, mental health resources, and practical resources can help address the needs of international students. Organizing cultural events and facilitating networking opportunities can help international students connect with their peers and the broader community. By addressing these factors, institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international student-athletes, potentially reducing dropout and transfer rates and fostering a more positive academic journey.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Building upon the findings and insights from the previous chapters, this final chapter presents a set of recommendations aimed at improving the experience of international student-athletes competing in NCAA Division I schools in the Southeast. By addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by these students, institutions can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that fosters their academic and athletic success. This chapter will delve into specific strategies and initiatives that institutions can implement to enhance the overall experience of international student-athletes. These recommendations will focus on areas such as cultural sensitivity training, expanded support services, cultural events, and networking opportunities. By prioritizing these factors, institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that addresses the underlying challenges contributing to dropout and transfer rates among international student-athletes.

This chapter culminates the data analysis by synthesizing key findings, discussing their implications for international student-athletes at Division 1 schools in the Southeastern United States, and proposing directions for future research on cultural adjustment. Building on the findings from Chapter 4, which explored the challenges international students face in adapting to new cultural norms and expectations, this chapter delves deeper into the specific experiences of international student-athletes at Southeastern universities. As Ward (2011) noted, "international students often report feeling isolated, frustrated, and misunderstood due to cultural differences," highlighting the initial challenges they encounter. Additionally, Glowinski et al. (2017) emphasized that "student-athletes face additional challenges balancing academic demands,

athletic commitments, and cultural adaptation," further compounding the complexities of their adjustment process. This study delves deeper into these specific challenges faced by international student-athletes, within the context of Southeastern universities in the US. This aligns with the findings in Chapter 4, underscoring the importance of addressing cultural adjustment challenges to ensure the success of international student-athletes.

Using qualitative research methods, this study delves deeper into adding to existing research by investigating the complex interrelationships between English proficiency, cultural adjustment, and academic performance among international students and student-athletes, using a combined quantitative (SAT/ACT scores, GPA) and qualitative (survey data on student experiences) approach. Some of the common themes that emerged were the intersection of language and cultural acclimation, where over 80% of respondents identified language barriers as a challenge, with many emphasizing the importance of cultural support beyond just language skills. Another theme was the aspect of addressing systemic barriers to success, where 65% of respondents indicated financial aid as a significant concern, suggesting broader systemic issues affecting access to quality education and standardized test preparation resources. This key theme concerns the need to address systemic barriers hindering academic success. Reflecting a broader issue documented in studies on equity and access to higher education (Nguyen & Ryan, 2013; Glowinski et al., 2017), respondents identified financial aid as a significant concern. This suggests that broader systemic issues exist, affecting access to quality education and standardized test preparation resources, which can disadvantage international students from diverse backgrounds.

To date, there has been limited research focused on the experiences of international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. By gaining a deeper understanding of the

challenges they face in acclimating to schooling, athletics, and cultural differences, we can better support their well-being and success within the NCAA Division I system.

The research questions are:

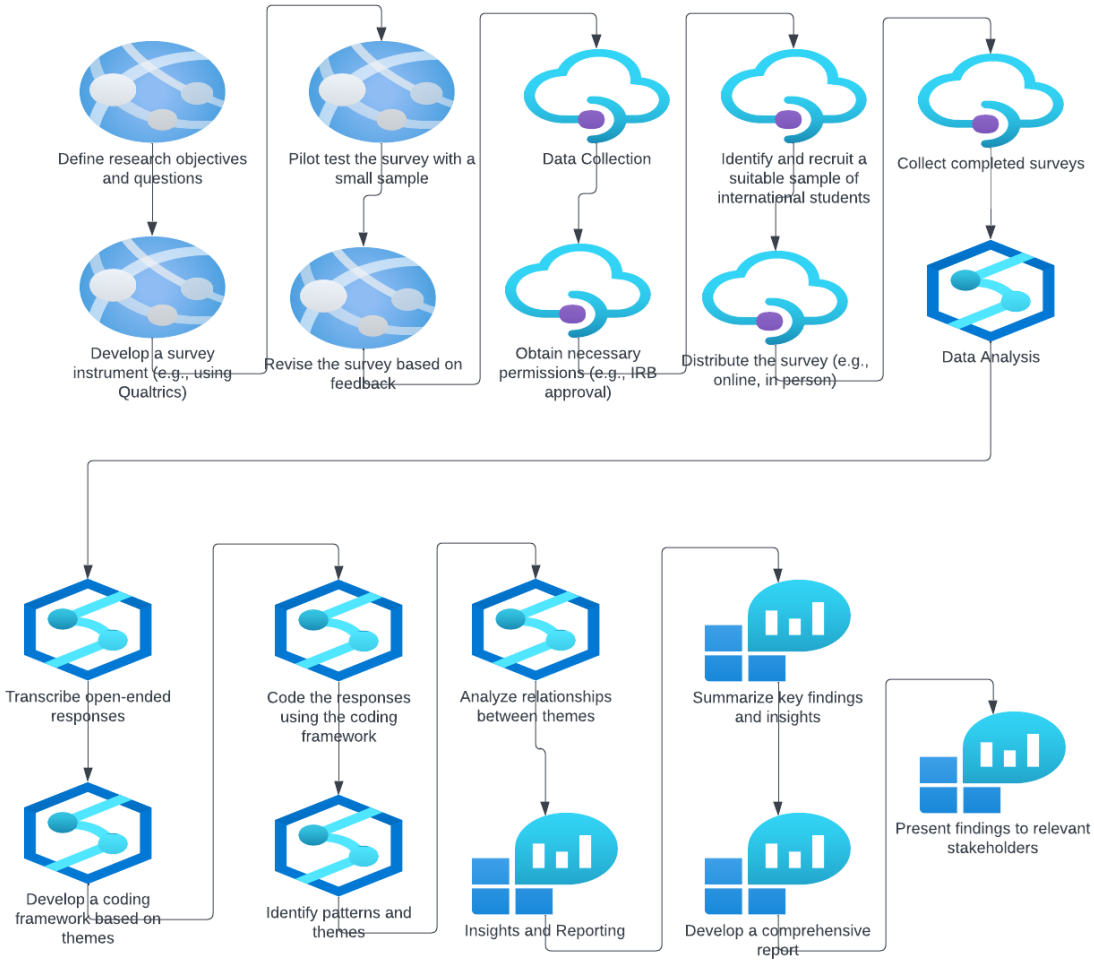
1. How did international student-athletes acclimate to their schooling and athletics at NCAA Division 1 schools in the Southeastern United States?
2. What are the lived experiences of international student-athletes at NCAA Division I universities in the Southeastern United States, as shaped by the interplay of language, cultural background, and the demands of academic, athletic, and social life?

This final chapter serves as the culmination of the data analysis, synthesizing key findings and discussing their implications for international student-athletes at Division 1 schools in the Southeastern United States. By building upon the insights from Chapter 4, which explored the challenges international students face in adapting to new cultural norms and expectations, this chapter delves deeper into the specific experiences of international student-athletes within the Southeastern university context. The significance of this chapter lies in its contribution to a growing body of research on the experiences of international student-athletes. Through qualitative research, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by these students, including cultural adjustment, language barriers, and systemic barriers to academic success. The chapter entails a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data, focusing on emerging themes and their implications. By examining the intersection of language and cultural acclimation and addressing systemic barriers to success, the study provides valuable insights for institutions seeking to improve the experiences of international student-athletes.

The significance of the study highlighted the complex interplay between academic performance, cultural adjustment, and access to resources. While the positive correlation between standardized test scores (SAT/ACT) and GPA suggests that access to resources like test preparation and strong English education can contribute to academic success, challenges such as limited language proficiency, as emphasized by Bennett (2009), can hinder international students' ability to fully engage with the host culture, leading to feelings of isolation and ultimately hindering their cultural acclimation. This, in turn, can further impact their academic performance, creating a cyclical challenge. The data revealed a nuanced understanding of academic success extending beyond standardized test scores. While the positive correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA suggests a link to academic performance, 90% of respondents emphasized the importance of cultural integration, well-being, and a positive overall experience, factors indirectly influencing academic achievement. This aligns with Lysonski & Wahrlich's (2011) assertion that "addressing systemic barriers such as limited financial aid options are crucial to ensuring equitable access to quality education and fostering the success of international students." Indeed, 70% of respondents expressed a need for increased cultural support and financial aid, indicating these resources could act as powerful levers to remove barriers and ultimately improve academic outcomes. This highlights the need for a holistic approach to supporting international students, recognizing that academic success hinges not only on traditional metrics but also on well-being, cultural integration, and access to essential resources as indicated in figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Conceptual Map as Representation of Findings



This study combined quantitative results (correlation analysis) with qualitative findings (surveyed student experiences) to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between English proficiency, cultural adjustment, and academic performance among international students. The conceptual map presented here provides a comprehensive overview of the research process undertaken to investigate the complex relationship between English proficiency, cultural adjustment, and academic performance among international students. The

study involved several key stages, beginning with the development of a survey instrument designed to measure these variables. After conducting a pilot test to refine the survey, necessary permissions were obtained, and a suitable sample of international students was recruited. The survey was then distributed and completed responses were collected. Data analysis commenced with the transcription of open-ended responses and the development of a coding framework to categorize these responses into meaningful themes. The coding scheme was applied to the data to identify patterns and themes, and the relationships between these themes were analyzed. By examining the coded data, significant patterns and themes were identified, leading to the summarization of key findings and insights. The final stage of the research involved the development of a comprehensive report that presented the findings, methodology, and implications of the study. The findings were subsequently shared with relevant stakeholders, such as university administrators, faculty, and international student services. This conceptual map offers a visual representation of the research process, highlighting the interconnectedness of the various stages and their contribution to the overall understanding of the relationship between English proficiency, cultural adjustment, and academic performance among international students.

Common Themes that Emerged

Intersection of Language and Cultural Acclimation

Both inquiries touch upon the importance of language skills in the context of international students' experience. The positive correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA suggests that English proficiency plays a role in academic success. However, the need for enhanced cultural support implies that language alone isn't enough for seamless acclimation. Understanding cultural nuances and navigating social situations are also crucial for academic

performance and overall well-being. The study's findings underscore the intricate relationship between language proficiency and cultural adjustment in the academic success of international students. While the positive correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA suggests that English proficiency is a significant factor, the qualitative data reveals that language skills alone are insufficient for seamless acclimation. Beyond linguistic competence, international students must navigate a complex tapestry of cultural nuances and social situations. Understanding unspoken rules, social cues, and cultural expectations is essential for effective communication, collaboration, and academic success. As Altbach and Knight (2007) noted, "International students often face challenges related to cultural adjustment, which can have a significant impact on their academic performance.". To illustrate this point, a student from a collectivist culture may struggle with the individualistic emphasis on self-promotion and competition in American classrooms. A student from a high-context culture may find it challenging to interpret indirect communication or subtle cues in American social interactions. A student with strong English proficiency may still face difficulties in academic settings if they lack cultural understanding of concepts or expectations. The study's findings emphasize the importance of providing enhanced cultural support services for international students. These services can help students understand cultural differences, develop intercultural communication skills, and navigate social situations. Additionally, cultural support can foster a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, which can have a positive impact on academic performance and overall well-being.

The study highlights a critical theme: the intersection of language and cultural acclimation for international students. While strong English proficiency, as measured by SAT/ACT scores, certainly correlates with academic success (GPA), it's not the sole factor. The research emphasizes the need for enhanced cultural support alongside language acquisition. This

is because successful acclimation hinges on understanding unspoken rules, social cues, and cultural expectations within the new environment. As Cartigny et al. (2024) aptly stated, navigating a new cultural landscape can be a period of crisis and confusion: "What am I doing here?" This quote reflects the potential disorientation international students can experience when faced with unfamiliar cultural norms.

Addressing Systemic Barriers to Success

Both themes highlight potential systemic barriers international students face. The need for increased financial aid suggests that affordability can be a hurdle, potentially impacting academic success and hindering engagement with cultural activities. Similarly, the correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA might reflect broader issues of access to quality education and standardized test preparation resources in different countries. Both themes highlight potential systemic barriers international students face. The need for increased financial aid suggests that affordability can be a hurdle, potentially impacting academic success and hindering engagement with cultural activities. As Altbach and Knight (2007) noted, "Financial constraints can limit international students' opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and fully immerse themselves in the academic and social life of the institution."

Similarly, the correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA might reflect broader issues of access to quality education and standardized test preparation resources in different countries. As Gardner and colleagues (2016) observed, "Differences in educational systems and access to resources can contribute to disparities in standardized test performance among international students." The reliance on standardized tests like the SAT and ACT can exacerbate these disparities, as students from certain countries may have limited access to test preparation resources or may face cultural challenges in interpreting and responding to test questions. To

address these systemic barriers, it is essential to implement policies and initiatives that promote equity and access for international students. This may include providing more generous financial aid packages that can help alleviate financial burdens and enable international students to focus on their academic and athletic pursuits. Offering targeted academic support services, such as tutoring and advising, can help international students overcome academic challenges and succeed in their courses. Providing access to standardized test preparation resources, including online courses, tutoring, and practice materials, can help international students improve their test scores and increase their chances of admission to competitive universities. Fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive campus environment can help international students feel welcomed and supported, which can have a positive impact on their academic and social experiences. By addressing these systemic issues, institutions can create a more equitable and supportive environment for international students, enabling them to thrive academically and athletically. The study reveals significant systemic barriers that hinder international students' success. These barriers include financial constraints and disparities in educational access and test preparation.

As Altbach and Knight (2007) noted, financial limitations can restrict international students' participation in extracurricular activities and full immersion in campus life. This can impact their overall well-being and academic performance. Additionally, the correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA highlights broader issues of educational equity and access to resources. As Gardner et al. (2016) observed, disparities in standardized test performance can be attributed to differences in educational systems and available resources. As Romsa et al. (2024) emphasize, addressing these systemic issues is crucial for creating a more equitable and supportive environment for international student-athletes. This enables them to thrive both academically and athletically. By implementing these strategies, institutions can play a vital role

in dismantling systemic barriers and ensuring that international students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Influence of Resources on Academic Performance

Both questions revolve around the impact of resources on academic performance, albeit from different angles. The positive correlation between SAT/ACT scores and GPA suggests that access to standardized test preparation resources or better English language education can lead to higher academic achievement. Similarly, the need for enhanced cultural support and financial aid implies that providing these resources can remove barriers and contribute to better academic outcomes for international students. As Gardner and colleagues (2016) noted, "Differences in educational systems and access to resources can contribute to disparities in standardized test performance among international students." International students who come from countries with weaker educational systems may face challenges in adapting to the academic rigor and expectations of American universities. Access to standardized test preparation resources, such as tutoring, online courses, and practice materials, can help level the playing field and improve the chances of success for international students. English language proficiency is another critical resource that can significantly impact academic performance. As Altbach and Knight (2007) observed, "Language barriers can pose significant challenges for international students, affecting their ability to participate in class discussions, complete assignments, and understand course materials." Access to quality English language education can help international students develop the language skills necessary for academic success. Providing enhanced cultural support and financial aid can also remove barriers to academic success. As discussed earlier, cultural support can help international students navigate cultural differences, develop intercultural communication skills, and foster a sense of belonging. Financial aid can alleviate financial

burdens and enable students to focus on their academic pursuits without the stress of financial concerns. The study's findings highlight the importance of providing resources to support the academic success of international students. By addressing systemic barriers such as access to standardized test preparation resources, English language education, cultural support, and financial aid, institutions can create a more equitable and supportive environment for international students, enabling them to thrive academically and achieve their goals. As Gardner et al. (2016) noted, differences in educational systems and access to resources can contribute to disparities in standardized test performance. International students from countries with weaker educational systems may face challenges adapting to the academic rigor of American universities. Access to standardized test preparation resources can help level the playing field. As Manwell et al. (2021) emphasize, providing these resources is essential for creating a supportive environment where international student-athletes can thrive. By addressing systemic barriers and ensuring access to these resources, institutions can significantly enhance the academic success and overall well-being of international students.

Beyond Scores and Grades: A Holistic View

Both themes encourage a broader perspective on international student success. While the SAT/ACT-GPA correlation reflects academic performance, it doesn't capture the full picture. The need for cultural support emphasizes the importance of well-being, social integration, and a positive overall experience, which can indirectly influence academic success as well. The need for cultural support emphasizes the importance of well-being, social integration, and a positive overall experience. These factors can indirectly influence academic success by creating a supportive and inclusive environment. As Gardner (2016) observed, "International students who feel supported and integrated into the campus community are more likely to succeed

academically." Chen (2015) found that cultural adjustment was a significant predictor of academic performance among international students, suggesting that "A positive cultural adjustment experience can help international students feel more comfortable and confident in their academic pursuits". A positive cultural adjustment experience can help international students feel more comfortable and confident in their academic pursuits. When students feel supported and integrated into the campus community, they are less likely to experience feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance. By adopting a holistic approach that considers not only academic performance but also well-being, social integration, and overall experience, institutions can better support the success of international students. This may involve providing a range of services and resources, such as counseling, cultural orientation programs, and social activities, to help students feel connected and supported. The study encourages a broader perspective on international student success that extends beyond scores and grades. While academic performance is important, factors like well-being, social integration, and overall experience also play a significant role. As Gardner (2016) noted, international students who feel supported and integrated into the campus community are more likely to succeed academically. Chen (2015) further emphasized the importance of cultural adjustment, finding it to be a significant predictor of academic performance. As Foo et al. (2021) emphasize, role modeling can also be a motivating factor for international student-athletes. By providing positive role models and mentors, institutions can inspire and support students in their academic and athletic pursuits. In conclusion, a holistic approach that considers not only academic performance but also well-being, social integration, and overall experience is essential for the success of international students. By providing comprehensive support and resources,

institutions can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that enables students to thrive.

Building a Supportive Ecosystem

The findings call for a multifaceted approach to supporting international students. While focusing on English language skills remains important, it's crucial to create a supportive environment that addresses cultural needs, financial constraints, and overall well-being. This holistic approach can empower international students to thrive academically and personally.

By exploring these common themes, we can gain a richer understanding of the complex factors impacting international student success and develop more effective strategies to support their academic and personal journeys. This study suggests building a supportive ecosystem with a holistic approach to supporting international students, addressing English proficiency alongside cultural needs, financial constraints, and overall well-being. This could involve providing culturally competent support services, financial aid programs, and opportunities for social integration. To create this ecosystem, various interventions can be implemented such as developing resources and services tailored to different cultural backgrounds. Offer multilingual counseling, mentor programs with culturally aware peers, and workshops addressing culture shock and navigating the new environment. Organize events and activities that encourage interaction with local and international students. Support student-led initiatives focused on cultural exchange and building social networks and organize cultural exchange activities and social events to foster a sense of belonging and community. Raise awareness about the financial challenges faced by international students and advocate for systemic changes to increase financial support. By implementing these strategies and fostering a supportive ecosystem, institutions can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for international students,

empowering them to thrive academically, culturally, and personally. This holistic approach will not only benefit individual students but also enrich the diversity and vibrancy of the campus community as a whole.

Studies such as Gardner, J. W., & colleagues (2016), emphasize the importance of social integration for international students' overall well-being and academic performance. Creating opportunities for social interaction and community building can foster a supportive environment. Also, Romsa, B., Romsa, K., Lim, J., & Ampaire, A. (2024) highlights the significant financial challenges faced by international students. Implementing financial aid programs can alleviate these burdens and improve academic outcomes. Addressing the financial challenges faced by international students and advocating for systemic changes to increase financial support is also crucial. By implementing these strategies and fostering a supportive ecosystem, institutions can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for international students, empowering them to thrive academically, culturally, and personally.

Qualitative Analysis Results

The study, employing thematic analysis, examined the relationship between being an international student-athlete on a sport scholarship and the challenges faced while attending a U.S. university. The findings reveal that international student-athletes on scholarships encounter a unique set of challenges that often differ from those experienced by international students not involved in sports. A key theme emerging from the analysis is the language barrier. A significantly higher percentage of student-athletes on scholarships reported this as a challenge compared to their non-athlete counterparts. This suggests that the demands of athletic training and competition can make it more difficult for these students to fully immerse themselves in language learning and academic pursuits. Another prominent theme is cultural differences.

Student-athletes on scholarships were more likely to report this as a challenge, indicating that navigating cultural nuances and adapting to a new environment can be particularly demanding for those balancing athletic commitments with academic and social life. Course evaluations and school climate emerged as additional challenges for student-athletes on scholarships. While both groups faced challenges related to course evaluations, student-athletes were more likely to report issues with the school climate, suggesting that they may encounter unique challenges related to fitting into the athletic community and balancing academic and athletic demands. Homesickness was also a reported challenge, though less frequently by student-athletes compared to non-athletes. This might be attributed to the support and camaraderie provided by the athletic community, which can help mitigate feelings of isolation. It's important to note that these are just some of the challenges faced by international student-athletes on sport scholarships. Other challenges not explicitly reflected in the data may include academic adjustment, financial aid, and mental health.

The study provides a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by international student-athletes on sport scholarships. While both international students and student-athletes encounter cultural and linguistic difficulties, the data suggests that these challenges are amplified for student-athletes. The demands of sports can make adapting to a new culture and language even more complex, as students must navigate team dynamics, academic expectations, and daily life in a foreign country while juggling rigorous training schedules. In addition to cultural and linguistic challenges, student-athletes face unique educational obstacles. The higher percentage of student-athletes reporting struggles with course evaluations highlights the difficulties they may encounter with the U.S. education system. Balancing sports with academics, understanding unfamiliar evaluation styles, and adapting to different teaching

methods can be overwhelming. While both groups face challenges with the school climate, international student-athletes may have specific issues within the athletic environment. Team dynamics, pressure to perform, and interactions with coaches and staff can pose unique challenges. Homesickness, while less frequently reported by student-athletes compared to non-athletes, remains a potential challenge. The built-in support network and sense of belonging provided by the team can help mitigate feelings of isolation. However, it's important to consider that athletes might not always readily express homesickness due to pressure or expectations. Negotiating their identity as both international students and athletes adds another layer of complexity for student-athletes. Balancing their academic and athletic pursuits while navigating cultural and linguistic challenges requires a unique set of skills and support. As Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. P. (2007) noted in their study, "International students: A comparative perspective," cultural adaptation is a significant challenge for international students. For student-athletes, this challenge is further compounded by the demands of athletic training and competition. In addition to cultural and linguistic challenges, student-athletes face unique educational obstacles. The higher percentage of student-athletes reporting struggles with course evaluations highlights the difficulties they may encounter with the U.S. education system. Balancing sports with academics, understanding unfamiliar evaluation styles, and adapting to different teaching methods can be overwhelming. Gardner, J. W., & colleagues (2016) observed in their study, "International students in U.S. higher education: A review of the literature," that international students often face challenges related to academic adjustment. For student-athletes, these challenges may be exacerbated by the demands of their sport. While both groups face challenges with the school climate, international student-athletes may have specific issues within the athletic environment. Team dynamics, pressure to perform, and interactions with coaches and staff can

pose unique challenges. Romsa, B., Romsa, K., Lim, J., & Ampaire, A. (2024) examined the experiences of international student-athletes and found that they often face challenges related to social integration and belonging. For student-athletes, the team environment can provide a sense of belonging, but it can also isolate them from the broader campus community.

Overall, the data suggests that international student-athletes, while benefiting from certain structures, face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students. The study explores the experiences of international student-athletes on sport scholarships, examining their GPAs, challenges, and motivations. While the data reveals a slight trend towards lower GPAs among student-athletes, it's important to consider the limitations of the analysis and explore the underlying mechanisms. Several factors may contribute to the observed trend. Balancing sports training with academics can be demanding, potentially impacting academic performance. Scholarship programs might offer specific academic support, attracting students who need additional assistance. Additionally, academic expectations might vary depending on the specific sport and its competitive landscape. Qualitative analysis provides further insights into the experiences of international student-athletes. The theme of academic performance emerges as a crucial factor for those seeking scholarships. The pressure to maintain good grades can be a significant motivator for student-athletes. The theme of challenges and opportunities also emerges from the qualitative data. International athletes discuss the challenges of navigating a new academic environment and balancing athletics with academics. Variations in scholarship opportunities across different sports highlight the diverse experiences of student-athletes. As noted by Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. P. (2007), international students often face challenges

related to academic adjustment. For student-athletes, these challenges may be exacerbated by the demands of their sport. Gardner, J. W., & colleagues (2016) emphasize the importance of social integration for international students' overall well-being and academic performance. For student-athletes, the team environment can provide a sense of belonging, but it can also isolate them from the broader campus community. Romsa, B., Romsa, K., Lim, J., & Ampaire, A. (2024) examined the experiences of international student-athletes and found that they often face challenges related to financial constraints. Balancing athletic commitments with part-time work or academic pursuits can be demanding.

Overall, the analysis paints a picture of international student-athletes navigating a demanding landscape where academic performance is paramount. While facing challenges, student-athletes also have opportunities to succeed academically and athletically. Understanding the nuances of their experiences is crucial for providing effective support and guidance.

Theoretical Applications

Theoretical Perspectives on Migration

The study explores relevant migration theories, including neoclassical economics, social capital, and transnationalism, to provide a framework for understanding the migration of athlete-students to the NCAA. Migration theory seeks to understand the causes, consequences, and processes of human migration. It examines the factors that motivate individuals to move from one place to another, as well as the impact of migration on both individuals and societies. This section explores relevant migration theories to understand the migration of athlete-students to the NCAA. Neoclassical economics theory emphasizes economic factors, arguing that people migrate for economic well-being (Sjaastad, 1962). Social capital theory highlights social networks and resources influencing migration decisions (Portes, 1998). Transnationalism theory

focuses on ongoing connections migrants maintain with their home countries (Basch et al., 1994). These theories provide valuable insights into the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes. The push-pull migration concept offers a nuanced understanding of factors motivating individuals to migrate. Push factors like economic hardship or political instability in the home country can drive individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Pull factors like economic prosperity or educational opportunities in the destination country can attract individuals to migrate. For international student-athletes, the combination of athletic scholarships and educational opportunities in the United States can serve as powerful pull factors. However, factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, and financial constraints can also influence their decision to migrate. By understanding the theoretical perspectives on migration and the specific factors that influence the experiences of international student-athletes, we can gain a deeper appreciation of their unique journeys and the challenges they face.

Transnationalism theory focuses on ongoing connections migrants maintain with their home countries (Basch et al., 1994). These theories provide valuable insights into the motivations and experiences of international student-athletes. The push-pull migration concept offers a nuanced understanding of factors motivating individuals to migrate. Push factors like economic hardship or political instability in the home country can drive individuals to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Pull factors like economic prosperity or educational opportunities in the destination country can attract individuals to migrate. Altbach's push-pull model suggests that international students are motivated by a combination of factors that push them away from their home countries and pull them towards their destination countries (Altbach, 1998). Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman (2012) provide a comprehensive review of the research on the push-pull factors that influence international student mobility. They argue that Altbach's push-pull

model is a useful framework for understanding the motivations of international students and the factors that influence their decision to study abroad. They found that both push and pull factors play a role in student decision-making, and the relative importance of these factors can vary depending on the individual student and their circumstances. Jones, Koo, Kim, Andrew, and Hardin (2009) investigated the reasons why international student-athletes come to the United States to play college sports. They found that the most common motives were to receive a high-quality education, compete at a high level, and experience a new culture. Berry (1999) found that academic and athletic achievement were two of the most important factors for international student-athletes to come to the United States.

International student-athletes often face significant challenges in adjusting to life in the United States, both academically and athletically. By being successful academically and athletically, international student-athletes can increase their chances of success in the United States and after graduation. Understanding the nuances of their experiences is crucial for providing effective support and guidance.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism examines people's cross-border activities and the sense of belonging that develops because of economic, political, and social transactions across borders (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). It is a theoretical perspective that examines the cross-border activities and relationships of people and communities, based on the understanding that people's lives are increasingly shaped by forces that transcend national borders. Transnationalism can be seen in a variety of contexts, including migration, economics, culture, and politics (Faist, 2010). One of the key concepts in transnationalism is the idea of multiple belongings. Transnational people often maintain strong ties to their home countries,

even as they build new lives in their destination countries. This can lead to a sense of multiple belongings, as people identify with both their home and destination countries (Carter, 2011). Basch (1994) argues that transnational migrants are inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism and must be understood in relation to the dialectic between capital and labor. Basch's argument is that transnational migrants must be understood in relation to the dialectic between capital and labor because their experiences are shaped by the changing conditions of global capitalism. For example, the rise of neoliberal economic policies has led to the globalization of production, which has led to an increase in the number of transnational migrants. It is important to understand the dialectic between capital and labor in order to understand the experiences of transnational migrants. By understanding the forces that shape their lives, we can develop policies and programs that support transnational migrants and their communities.

The data suggests that international student-athletes, while benefiting from certain structures, face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students. The study explores the experiences of international student-athletes on sport scholarships, examining their GPAs, challenges, and motivations. While the data reveals a slight trend towards lower GPAs among student-athletes, it's important to consider the limitations of the analysis and explore the underlying mechanisms. Several factors may contribute to the observed trend. Balancing sports training with academics can be demanding, potentially impacting academic performance. Scholarship programs might offer specific academic support, attracting students who need additional assistance. Additionally, academic expectations might vary depending on the specific sport and its competitive landscape.

Qualitative analysis provides further insights into the experiences of international student-athletes. The theme of academic performance emerges as a crucial factor for those seeking scholarships. The pressure to maintain good grades can be a significant motivator for student-athletes. The theme of challenges and opportunities also emerges from the qualitative data. International athletes discuss the challenges of navigating a new academic environment and balancing athletics with academics.

Transnational sport migration theory examines the movement of athletes across national borders (Maguire, 2009). It considers the social, economic, and political factors influencing athletes' migration decisions and their experiences during and after migration (Maguire, 2009). Carter's transculturation theory argues that transnational sport migration is a complex process involving cultural exchange and adaptation (Carter, 2011). Transnational sport migration theory has implications for understanding the experiences of international athletes. It highlights the importance of athletes' agency in making migration decisions, shows that athletes' migration experiences are shaped by various factors, and emphasizes the importance of transnational ties and networks. Overall, the data suggests that international student-athletes, while benefiting from certain structures, face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students. The study explores the experiences of international student-athletes on sport scholarships, examining their GPAs, challenges, and motivations. While the data reveals a slight trend towards lower GPAs among student-athletes, it's important to consider the limitations of the analysis and explore the underlying mechanisms. Several factors may contribute to the observed trend. Balancing sports training with academics can be demanding, potentially impacting academic performance.

Scholarship programs might offer specific academic support, attracting students who need additional assistance. Additionally, academic expectations might vary depending on the specific sport and its competitive landscape. Qualitative analysis provides further insights into the experiences of international student-athletes. The theme of academic performance emerges as a crucial factor for those seeking scholarships. The pressure to maintain good grades can be a significant motivator for student-athletes. The theme of challenges and opportunities also emerges from the qualitative data. International athletes discuss the challenges of navigating a new academic environment and balancing athletics with academics.

Cross-cultural Adjustment Theory

Cross-cultural adjustment theory examines the psychological and social challenges and opportunities faced by individuals who transition from one culture to another (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2011). Culture shock is a feeling of disorientation and confusion that can be experienced when moving to a new culture. Oberg's stages of cultural adjustment include the honeymoon stage, irritation stage, adjustment stage, and adaptation stage. Overall, the data suggests that international student-athletes, while benefiting from certain structures, face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students. The study explores the experiences of international student-athletes on sport scholarships, examining their GPAs, challenges, and motivations. While the data reveals a slight trend towards lower GPAs among student-athletes, it's important to consider the limitations of the analysis and explore the underlying mechanisms. Several factors may contribute to the observed trend: balancing sports training with academics can be demanding, scholarship programs might offer specific academic support, and academic

expectations might vary depending on the sport. Qualitative analysis provides further insights into the experiences of international student-athletes, highlighting the importance of academic performance and the challenges and opportunities they face in navigating a new academic environment and balancing athletics with academics. Cross-cultural adjustment theory provides a framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities that international student-athletes face in adjusting to a new culture. Pastore's model (2000) consists of three components: antecedent factors, adjustment factors, and outcome factors. Antecedent factors include individual, social, and organizational factors that influence an international student-athlete's ability to adjust. Adjustment factors include academic, athletic, and social adjustment challenges. Outcome factors include academic success, athletic success, and personal satisfaction. While the data suggests that international student-athletes face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges, they also have opportunities to succeed academically and athletically. Addressing these challenges requires tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students.

Transnationalism theory and cross-cultural adjustment theory are the two theoretical lenses used in this dissertation research study to understand the factors that influence athlete migration and the college experiences of international student-athletes in U.S. universities and colleges. Transnationalism theory examines how people maintain ties to their home countries while living and working in other countries. Cross-cultural adjustment theory examines the challenges and opportunities that people face when they move to a new culture. Overall, the data suggests that international student-athletes, while benefiting from certain structures, face amplified cultural, linguistic, and educational challenges. Addressing these challenges requires

tailored support systems that consider the specific needs and complexities of their dual identities as athletes and international students.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this dissertation research study have several implications for future research on the experiences of international student-athletes in NCAA Division I schools in the Southeast. To gain a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of the challenges and experiences faced by international student-athletes, longitudinal studies should be conducted. These studies can track the progress of international students over time, examining their academic and athletic performance, as well as their overall well-being and cultural adjustment. Comparative studies between different regions or countries can provide valuable insights into the unique experiences of international student-athletes in different contexts. By comparing the experiences of international students in the Southeastern United States with those in other regions, researchers can identify common challenges and opportunities, as well as region-specific factors that may influence their experiences. The role of technology in the experiences of international student-athletes should be further explored. How do social media, online communication tools, and virtual learning platforms impact their adjustment to a new culture and their academic and athletic performance? The effectiveness of various support services, such as academic advising, counseling, and cultural orientation programs, should be evaluated. Research can investigate how these services can be improved to better meet the needs of international student-athletes. While this study included both male and female student-athletes, future research could focus specifically on the experiences of women student-athletes. There may be unique challenges and opportunities faced by women athletes that require further investigation.

The impact of athletic scholarships on the experiences of international student-athletes should be examined. How do scholarship programs influence their academic and athletic performance, as well as their overall well-being? By conducting further research in these areas, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of international student-athletes and develop more effective strategies to support their success.

Conclusion

International student-athletes in the Southeastern United States faced significant challenges, including cultural adjustment, language barriers, and balancing academic and athletic demands. Despite these obstacles, many demonstrate resilience and adaptability, developing hybrid identities and building supportive relationships. Cultural sensitivity, language support, and access to support services were identified as crucial factors in facilitating a successful experience for these students. Specific challenges encountered by international student-athletes included cultural adjustment, language barriers, balancing academic and athletic demands, homesickness, adjusting to academic expectations, and the intense competition in NCAA Division I athletics. To enhance the experience of international student-athletes, institutions should prioritize cultural sensitivity training, expand support services, organize cultural events, and facilitate networking opportunities. The study employed transnationalism theory and cross-cultural adjustment theory to understand the factors influencing athlete migration and the college experiences of international student-athletes. Transnationalism theory examines how individuals maintain ties to their home countries while living and working abroad. Cross-cultural adjustment theory explores the challenges and opportunities faced by individuals who transition from one culture to another.

Understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by international student-athletes is crucial for creating a more supportive and inclusive environment. By implementing the recommended strategies, institutions can enhance the overall experience of international students, potentially reducing dropout and transfer rates, and fostering a more positive and successful academic journey. Institutions should prioritize training faculty, staff, and coaches to be culturally sensitive and aware of the challenges faced by international students. Offering targeted online programs, language support services, mental health resources, and practical resources can help address the needs of international students. Organizing cultural events and facilitating networking opportunities can help international students connect with their peers and the broader community. By addressing these factors, institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international student-athletes, potentially reducing dropout and transfer rates and fostering a more positive academic journey.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SURVEY / QUESTIONNAIRE INVITATION

Title: *The impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Students and Athletes at United States D1 Higher Education Institutions in the Southeast.*

Thank you for being interested in participating in the dissertation study on "*The impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Students and Athletes at United States D1 Higher Education Institutions in the Southeast."* This research investigation is being conducted by Chenelle K. Goyen, a Ph.D. candidate, and Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson, Professor in Sport Management and Policy in the Department of Kinesiology at The University of Georgia.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the impact of English proficiency and culture on educational performances of international student-athletes, and more specifically, the international student and athlete cultural acclimation processes. This survey seeks to explore the experiences of international students during the acclimation process and to identify potential strategies for enhancing their success.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to take part or

stop at any time without penalty. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer. The information collected from the survey will be completely confidential and will not be linked to your identity. Data will only be shared with researchers working on the project. Completion of the survey will take approximately 10 minutes. This research study may raise psychological, social, legal, or economic concerns for you, and the questions may trigger emotional responses. If you feel any discomfort, please remember that you are free to leave the survey at any time. Reflecting on past or current experiences may produce negative thoughts and emotions, so please take care of yourself and only participate if you feel comfortable doing so.

The acclimation process for international students can be challenging, as students must adapt to a new culture, academic system, and social environment. This survey aims to explore the experiences of international students during the acclimation process and to identify potential strategies for enhancing their success.

Please proceed to the next page to answer the questions to the best of your ability!

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with our research study!

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Examination of the impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Student-Athletes at NCAA Division 1 Higher Education Institutions in Southeastern United States.

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study; but before you decide to participate in this study, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This consent form is designed to give you the important information about the research study so you can decide whether to be involved in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask me the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or need more information about the research study. When all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, then you can decide if you want to be involved in the study. The process of reading and deciding whether to be involved in the research study or not is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson, Professor
Director, Cultural Studies in Physical Activity Lab,
Department of Kinesiology, University of Georgia
Email: jchepyat@uga.edu

Co-investigator: **Chenelle K. Goyen, Doctoral student**
Director, Cultural Studies in Physical Activity Lab,
Department of Kinesiology, University of Georgia
Email: chenelle@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Student-Athletes at NCAA Division 1 Higher Education Institutions in Southeastern United States. The researchers of this study seek to understand cultural adjustment of international student-athletes attending NCAA division schools to enable a better understanding of their experiences. Hence you are cordially invited to participate in this research project if you were enrolled or are a currently enrolled as male or female international student attending a four-year university.

Intended outcomes of this research study are important. The expected outcomes of the research on the impact of cultural adjustment on international student-athletes at Division 1 higher education institutions in the Southeast of the United States include: A better understanding of the specific challenges that international student-athletes face as they adjust to their new cultural environment. Identification of the factors that contribute to successful cultural adjustment for international student-athletes. Development of recommendations for how colleges and universities can better support international student-athletes during their transition to the United States. The information generated will be used for academic research and possibly for writing of papers for publication purposes.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

- Participate in a qualitative survey questionnaire via Qualtrics (on online survey instrument) that will be sent out to you by email.
- The survey should not take more than 10 minutes, and consists of around 20 questions that allow you to answer closed and open-ended questions that concern academics, migration, and cultural acclimation

Risks and discomforts

- There will be minimal psychological, social, legal, economic or physical discomfort, stress or harm that will occur as a result of participation in this research study. However, should you feel any discomfort during the process of completing this survey, please free to discontinue or skip the question, if need be, seek help from your university's counselling and psychiatric services (CAPS).
- Data collected will be confidential, thus in the analysis, pseudonyms will used with data derived from this study to avoid any connection to your name or identity in writing of the results.

Benefits

- There are no monetary benefits for you as a participant in this research study. However, the research may help you understand your experiences surrounding the cultural acclimation process in a way that you did not think of it before and further, you may find satisfaction in completing the survey instrument and sharing your thoughts about your academic, immigration and your acclimation processes with others near and far.

Privacy/Confidentiality

All completed questionnaires will be kept confidential by the researchers, hence only we will know the actual names of the participants, unless otherwise agreed by all parties involved. In order to protect your identity, you will be given pseudonyms that will be used to reference data linked to you. In addition, any defining characteristic (organization, nationality, hometown) that can be linked to you will not be identified in the study. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law. If you participate in the study, please note that your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties, but we think this is unlikely. After analysis, the data from this study will be written up for publication in academic journals and long-term theoretical perspective derived from this study will be written for publication in the future.

Signed consent forms will be kept separate from transcripts in a secure location. Only the researchers will have access to information from the questionnaires after transcriptions are completed.

Taking part is voluntary

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision to take part or not to take part in the research will not affect your grades or class standing at your institution, and will not impact, in anyway, your immigration status. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, and find that you cannot complete the survey for any reason, you may withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty.

Contact information

If you have any questions at any time about the research study and the procedures, or if you experience any discomfort as a result of participating in this study, you may contact:

Dr. Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson:
365 Ramsey Student Center
330 River Road
Athens, Georgia 30602
Email: jchepyat@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

THE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONAIRE INSTRUMENT

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of cultural adjustment on international student-athletes attending NCAA Division 1 higher education institutions in the Southeast region of the United States. Welcome to survey on "Examination of the impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Student-Athletes at NCAA Division 1 Higher Education Institutions in Southeastern United States.". In this survey, we will be asking you about the experience you've had as an international student at a USA college or university, and we will learn about how we can improve the international student acclimation processes in the future.

This survey will take approximately 7 minutes.

Page Break

Q2

Skip to

End of Block if No, I do not consent Is Selected

Do you consent to taking part in this survey?

- Yes, I do agree or consent
- No, I do not consent

Page Break

Q3

Are you considered an international student or an American (US) citizen?

- International Student (On another visa category such as F-1, H, L, E, DACA, Refuge, etc.)
- US Citizen

Page Break

Q4

How old are you?

- ○ 18 - 21
- ○ 22 - 25
- ○ 26 and above

Page Break

Q5

What is your gender, as displayed in your passport?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Gender Neutral
- ○ Non-Binary
- ○ Transgender
- ○ Other

Q6

What is your race / ethnicity?

- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ○ White
- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Other

Page Break

Q7

What is your country of origin, as displayed in your passport?

Fill in the box below:

Page Break

Q8

What is your academic degree or major?

Fill in the box below:

Page Break

Q9

Are you an athlete on a sport scholarship? Or or are you an athlete on no sport scholarship?

- Athlete - On a sport scholarship
- Athlete - Not on a sport scholarship

Page Break

Q10

Do you think that playing on a sports team can help with acclimating to US higher education?

- Yes
- No

Page Break

Q11

Does your athletic results correlate with your GPA? For example, if you have good grades, do you tend to have good results in sport as well?

- Yes
- No

Page Break

Q12

Do you have an academic scholarship?

- Yes
- No

Page Break

Q13

How has it been adjusting to American culture?

- ○ Extremely challenging
- ○ Moderately challenging
- ○ Slightly challenging
- ○ Not challenging at all

Page Break

Q14

Is English your primary language?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Page Break

Q15

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced at your USA University?

- ○ English proficiency barrier
- ○ Cultural adjustment
- ○ Academic expectations
- ○ Financial challenges
- ○ Homesickness

Page Break

Q16

How confident are you in your ability to use English in a variety of contexts, such as in class, at work, or in social situations?

Not confident at all										Extremely confident
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q17

How do you find the academic rigor of USA higher education compared to your previous academic institution?

- ○ Extremely challenging
- ○ Moderately challenging
- ○ Slightly challenging
- ○ Not challenging at all

Page Break

Q18

How would you rate your overall acclimation to USA higher education?

Not acclimating well										Acclimating extremely well
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q19

How would you rate your overall level of homesickness?

Not homesick at all										Extremely homesick
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q20

How would you rate your overall level of experienced culture shock to USA higher education?

Experienced no culture shock at all				Mildly challenging experience with culture shock			Extremely challenging experience with culture shock			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q21

Have you found it difficult to connect with Americans?

Not difficult at all									Extremely difficult	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q22

Has your own cultural background had an impact on how successful you were at acclimating to the USA? Why or why not?

Page Break

Q23

How did you cope with culture shock?

Page Break

Q24

Do you think coming from a collectivist cultural background, or an individualist cultural background helps you better acclimate to the USA?

(Collectivism stresses the importance of the community - groups are of primary importance, while individualism is focused on the rights and concerns of each individual person - independence and self-sufficiency very important)

- ○ Collectivism cultures acclimate best to USA
- ○ Individualism cultures acclimate best to USA

Page Break

Q25

What were some of the biggest challenges you have faced while attending a USA university or college?

Page Break

Q26

What can USA universities do to help international students acclimate better?

Q27

What was your English proficiency test score from a TOEFL, IELTS or SAT Verbal section, when yo applied to a US University? (If you can't remember - take an educated guess, for example: SAT 700)

Q28

What was your Grade Point Average (GPA) at the end of your freshman (first) year of college?

GPA ranges from 0.0 (worst) to 4.0 (best)

- 0.0
- 1.0
- 1.5
- 2.0
- 2.5
- 3.0
- 3.5
- 4.0 or higher

Q29

What was your Grade Point Average (GPA) at the end of your senior (last) year of college?

GPA ranges from 0.0 (worst) to 4.0 (best)

- 0.0
- 1.0
- 1.5
- 2.0
- 2.5
- 3.0
- 3.5
- 4.0 or higher

Q26

What can USA universities do to help international students acclimate better?

Q27

What was your English proficiency test score from a TOEFL, IELTS or SAT Verbal section, when yo applied to a US University? (If you can't remember - take an educated guess, for example: SAT 700)

Q28

What was your Grade Point Average (GPA) at the end of your freshman (first) year of college?

GPA ranges from 0.0 (worst) to 4.0 (best)

- 0.0
- 1.0
- 1.5
- 2.0
- 2.5
- 3.0
- 3.5
- 4.0 or higher

Q29

What was your Grade Point Average (GPA) at the end of your senior (last) year of college?

GPA ranges from 0.0 (worst) to 4.0 (best)

- 0.0
- 1.0
- 1.5
- 2.0
- 2.5
- 3.0
- 3.5
- 4.0 or higher

Import from library | Add new question

Add Block

End of Survey

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Director,

My name is Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson, and I am a professor in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a study that involves participation of international students and international student-athletes enrolled in four-year universities located in the Southeastern region of the United States, and Chenelle K. Goyen is the co-investigator of this study. We are examining the impact of cultural adjustment on international students and international student-athletes at Division 1 Higher Education SEC institutions in the United States.

We are writing to request your permission to access the international student email addresses at the University of Georgia for this research study that we are conducting. The study involves the participation of international students and international student-athletes who are currently enrolled at four-year universities (both undergraduate and graduate students) located in the Southeastern region of the United States. We are particularly interested in surveying international students from SEC schools who enrolled in the Fall of 2021 through the Fall of 2023.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of international students and international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States. We are interested in learning about their academic, social, and athletic experiences, as well as their challenges and successes. We believe that this study will provide valuable insights into the experiences of this important population and will help to inform the development of programs and services to support international students and international student-athletes in the Southeastern United States.

The involvement of SEC schools in this research study would be groundbreaking and innovative. It would be the first time that a study of this scale and scope has been conducted on the experiences of international students and international student-athletes at SEC schools. The findings of this study would be of great interest to the NCAA office of inclusion, SEC schools, and other stakeholders who are committed to supporting international students and international student-athletes.

We will use the international student email addresses that you provided to recruit participants for this study. We will send a recruitment email to all international students, explaining the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Interested participants can click on a link in the email to complete an online survey.

We understand that the protection of student privacy is of utmost importance. We will take all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data that we

collect. We will only use the data for the purposes of this research study. We will not share the data with anyone else without the participant's consent.
We would be grateful if you would consider this request. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.
Sincerely,

Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson Co- principal investigator: Chenelle K. Goyen
Tel: 706-542-4434 Tel :706-542-2112
Email: chenelle@uga.edu

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Examination of the impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Student-Athletes at NCAA Division 1 Higher Education Institutions in Southeastern United States.

Follow-up: Invitation to participate in a research study

Dear [Name],

I am writing to follow up on my previous email inviting you to participate in a research study on the examination of the impact of Cultural Adjustment on International Student-Athletes at NCAA Division 1 Higher Education Institutions in Southeastern United States.

We are still recruiting participants, and we would be honored if you would consider joining the study. Your participation would be invaluable in helping us to better understand the experiences of international student-athletes and to develop recommendations for how colleges and universities can better support them.

Your participation in this study will involve taking a survey that includes multiple choice and open-ended questions. The completion of survey will take you approximately 10 minutes. We would appreciate very much if you could consider participating in this study. There will be an informed consent for you to review and sign before starting to complete the survey.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study through completing the survey. Your insights will be invaluable to incoming international students as they adjust to a new environment with social and academic expectations of four-year universities in the United States.

If you are interested and willing to participate in this study, we will send you an email with a link to an informed consent form. Please read and sign the form and send it back to us via email before starting the survey.

Should you have any questions regarding the research study please contact:

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APPENDIX F

ANALYTIC LIST (CODEBOOK)

1. **Language Barriers:** Challenges faced due to language differences.
2. **Academic Support:** The availability and effectiveness of academic support services.
3. **Cultural Adjustment:** Difficulties and successes in adapting to a new culture.
4. **Social Integration:** The formation of friendships and social networks.
5. **Athletic Expectations:** Pressure to perform at a high level in both academics and athletics.
6. **Homesickness:** Feelings of longing for home and family.
7. **Financial Stress:** Concerns about tuition, fees, and living expenses.
8. **Origin:** Country of nationality
9. **NCAA**
10. **Decision:** how participant describes decision to migrate
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. **College**: perspective on going to college in U.S.
16. **Recruiting:** descriptions of a coach recruiting, evaluating or connecting to participant
17. **Goal:** what participant wanted during time as student-athlete
18. **Acculturate**: describing assimilating to U.S. culture
19. **Eligibility**: participant speaking of NCAA Eligibility; whether athletically or
20. Academically
21. **Academic Struggles:** Instances where the athlete faced academic challenges, such as difficulty with coursework, language barriers, or time management.
22. **Academic Success:** Examples of the athlete's academic achievements, such as maintaining a high GPA, earning academic honors, or graduating on time.
23. **Athletic Performance:** The athlete's level of athletic performance, including statistics, awards, and recognition.
24. **Injury:** Any injuries sustained during their athletic career and the impact on their academic and athletic performance.
25. **Coaching Relationships:** The quality of the athlete's relationships with their coaches, including support, guidance, and expectations.
26. **Culture Shock:** Experiences of culture shock, such as feelings of disorientation, homesickness, or isolation.
27. **Cultural Adaptation:** Strategies used by the athlete to adapt to the new culture, such as learning the language, adopting local customs, or forming friendships with host nationals.
28. **Social Integration:** The extent to which the athlete integrated into the social life of the university, including involvement in clubs, organizations, or social events.
29. **Stereotyping and Discrimination:** Any experiences of stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination based on their nationality, race, or ethnicity.
30. **Stress and Anxiety:** The athlete's experiences of stress and anxiety related to academic, athletic, or social pressures.

31. **Mental Health:** Any mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety, and how they were managed.
32. **Coping Mechanisms:** Strategies used by the athlete to cope with stress, challenges, and adversity.
33. **Resilience:** The athlete's ability to bounce back from setbacks and challenges.
34. **Family Influence:** The role of family members in the athlete's decision to attend a U.S. university.
35. **Financial Considerations:** The impact of financial factors, such as scholarships and financial aid, on the athlete's decision.
36. **Career Aspirations:** The athlete's long-term career goals and how attending a U.S. university fits into those plans.
37. **Risk-Taking:** The athlete's willingness to take risks and step outside of their comfort zone.
38. **Time Management:** Strategies used to manage time effectively between studies, training, and social activities.
39. **Academic Support Services:** The effectiveness of academic support services provided by the university.
40. **Athletic Expectations:** The pressure to perform at a high level and meet the expectations of coaches, teammates, and fans.